

How has the pandemic made it harder for us to predict grades for Year 13 students in 2020-21?

Year 12 students receive school progress reports twice during the academic year (Christmas and the end of the academic year); the Class of 2021 therefore received reports with their then current grades at each reporting point. The latter of the two reports provided a current grade which reflected the students' attainment in an end of Year 12 summer exam that they could choose to take at home or at school on the allocated date and time. With highly variable commitment to the Year 12 exams and widely differing levels of remote engagement for online learning, it proved difficult for teachers to form a clear and robust view of academic progress. In spite of this difficulty, Year 12 teachers used the end of Year 12 summer exam, along with attainment prior to lockdown, to provide an 'end of Year 13 projected grade' which was published as an additional data point in the Year 12 summer progress report. Year 13 students will have received their set of UCAS predicted grades by mid-October 2020 but these will not necessarily reflect students' true potential, as so much of the first half term of Year 13 will have been spent on reengaging students and assessing gaps in their knowledge caused by school closure. They will have received a much clearer set of predicted grades at Christmas of 2020, though they will only have taken an interim mid-term test ahead of the Christmas break. With mock examinations not starting until the second school week in January, grades for these mocks will not be available to inform predicted grades until after the 15th January UCAS deadline, by which time Year 13 students destined for university will have already made their applications.