



**MERCHANT  
TAYLORS'  
SCHOOLS**

For Boys and Girls  
aged 4 to 18 years

# Assessment and Reporting policy

**Assessment and Reporting policy**

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Last Amended: October 2013  
Review: October 2014

## ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING POLICY

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### Purpose

Our approach to assessment is underpinned by the philosophy of “assessment **for** learning”. Assessment, at its best, should be far more than a proof-reading exercise, it should form a dialogue between teacher and learner. As a result of this two-way process, the teacher is able to more effectively chart the best way forward in terms of an individual’s (and group’s) progress whilst the learner can celebrate what he’s done well and has a clear signpost to where he he’s got to go next!

### 1 Learners should receive constructive guidance about how to improve

All of our students need information and guidance in order to plan the next steps in their learning. We are gradually building a whole school assessment policy with shared markschemes and quality standards which:

- pinpoint the learner's strengths and advise on how to develop them
- are clear and constructive about any weaknesses and how they might be addressed
- provide opportunities for learners to improve upon their work
- have a common marking/grading “spine” which students can easily understand (although we realise that not every piece of work in every subject could or should be straight-jacketed to “fit” a generic markscheme)
- share a rewards system (eg merit stickers, postcards and HM commendations) which celebrates excellence and hard work
- regularly provide “snapshots” of attainment (see section on HTA – Half Term Assessments)

### 2 Assessment for learning should take account of the importance of learner motivation

Assessment that encourages learning fosters motivation by emphasising progress and achievement rather than failure. Comparison with others who have been more successful is unlikely to motivate learners. It can also lead to their withdrawing from the learning process in areas where they have been made to feel they are 'no good'. PSHE / bespoke lessons on study skills are strongly focused on motivation and attitudes to learning.

### 3 It should help students become reflective and self-managing

One of the school’s key aims is to develop “independent” learners. Assessment forms one of the key elements of our “scaffolding” process. We look to shore up the Y7 student with plenty of support and regular monitoring. Gradually, we hope to remove this scaffolding as the student progresses. Independent learners have the ability to seek out and gain new skills, new knowledge and new understandings. They are able to engage in self-reflection and to identify the next steps in their learning. Teachers should equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of self-assessment. Learners should become as aware of the 'how' of their learning as they are of the 'what'.

### 4 Assessment for learning should be part of effective planning

A teacher's planning should provide opportunities for both learner and teacher to obtain and use information about progress towards learning goals. It also has to be flexible to respond to initial and

emerging ideas and skills. Planning should include strategies to ensure that learners understand the goals they are pursuing and the criteria that will be applied in assessing their work.

### 5 Assessment for learning should be recognised as central to classroom practice and a key professional skill for teachers

It is vital that our staff fully understand the importance of high quality assessment as part of a powerful modern pedagogy. Through various systems (appraisal, professional development and monitoring of work/marking) we seek to embed best practice across all departments so that every student has a clear understanding about how their work is marked and how best to make use of diagnostic commentaries. Recent InSeT on Assessment for Learning (October 2011) has focused on the work of Professor Dylan Wiliam and sought to embed A4L as integral to both planning and classroom practice.

### SCHOOL MARKING POLICY

Practice at Merchants' has evolved over recent years to reflect the best features of A4L we hope. Whilst there is still evidence of "good old-fashioned rigour" in some of our marking – that feedback whilst candid should never be destructive or simply intended to humiliate

<u>ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING</u>
FREQUENT -fills up markbook -it's in the handbook...! -keeps parents happy	MIX FREQUENT with SOME IN-DEPTH -colour coded Excel spreadsheet!?!/parents v happy -key pieces get the full treatment -markbook has less grades but more context
TICK AND FLICK B+ Well done!	"HOW TO IMPROVE" COMMENTS -scaffolds next stage in learning "Two stars & a wish" (2 positives/1 improvement)?
ACKNOWLEDGES WORK'S BEEN DONE -one way (boy allowed to be passive recipient)	DIALOGUE WITH THE STUDENT -marking cements the 2 way process -becomes a running commentary (progression)
FOCUS ON MECHANICS -neatness/underlining/ink pen/ruler etc	FOCUS ON LEARNING -has he understood it?
INDIVIDUAL MARKSCHEMES -each wo/man for themselves (confusing?) -not shared with students	COMMON MARKSCHEME -shared criteria across depts (boys understand it?) -stuck into exercise books/folders
STICK THEN CARROT -don't smile/reward before Christmas -late slips/reports	CARROTS AND THEN INTERVENTION -merit stickers/postcards/HM commendations access to 1:1 support when needed
HALF TERM ORDERS	HALF TERM ASSESSMENTS

-rankings/70 average -compete against peers (but hides coasters)	-standardised assessments -colour coding (compete against personal best)
100% TEACHER ASSESSED -don't trust 'em! /quality assurance	SELF-ASSESSMENT -sometimes get them to mark it/pick out mistakes

### Purpose

Marking a pupil's work is an essential part of the learning process and provides a positive, constructive response to tasks set.

### Guidelines

1. Work should be marked regularly and consistently.
2. Where appropriate, written comments should supplement the mark awarded, so that students can improve their standards.
3. Each department should have a specific marking policy which reflects the needs and criteria for that particular subject. All members of a department should follow its guidelines.
4. Pupils should be made aware of the criteria for marking where appropriate.
5. A record of marks must be kept by each teacher.
6. Heads of Department should provide records of examination marks and be able to justify setting policy on academic grounds.

### **MTS MARKING POLICY – TOWARDS A COMMON “SPINE”**

- HODs should ensure that there is a common approach to marking work within their department. The primary aim of this should be to allow the boys, whatever their age/ability/teacher to understand what that mark really means and to gauge their own progress over time. Departments may well wish to build in a degree of autonomy/flexibility for individual teachers and yet a common “spine” should be evident in the day-to-day marking that goes on
- HODs are also asked to ensure that their departmental policy shares common features with the whole school view on marking ie that it should:
  - have 7/10 (or B+ if a grading system is employed) as Merchants' “par” score (NB this harks back to the 70% figure used for many years in the *Orders* system and is therefore an established benchmark with boys, parents and staff)
  - rewards “going the extra mile” (curiosity of MAGIC) via merit system in Lower School and postcards/commendations further up the school.
  - challenges under-achievement – link to sanctions/intervention strategies
  - transparent, easy to work with, boys & parents understand what it means
  - context of “Assessment for Learning” (AfL) – reference to how to improve next time
  - the metalanguage (commentary between staff and student) gradually shifts from mechanics (eg underline title, write neatly) in Y7 to attitudinal themes drawn from the MAGIC document (eg go that extra mile, dig deeper, back it up with evidence, have you thought about looking at this next time...) Many of these themes are rooted in work done on BLP (Building Learning Power) and recognise the need to gradually exercise “learning muscles” (eg creativity, stickability, resourcefulness)

- departmental marking policies shouldn't be a mystery to students, they must be stuck into exercise books (especially in Y7-9) and/or available as handouts for GCSE/GCE students to act as an aide memoire when they come to reflect on the feedback they have been given. Gradually, it is hoped, students as they get older, will primarily rely less on the mark they are given and instead pay more attention to the comment. Ideally this should "scaffold" the next stage in their learning.
- The table below shows a typical mark scheme. It highlights the 7/10 "par" and outcomes at the top (merits) and bottom end (intervention/repeat) which are part of the Merchants' "spine". HODs are encouraged to tailor this to suit their own situations rather than slavishly following the party line.

Mark	What does it mean?	
10/A*	superb – "gone the extra mile"	definite merit
9/A	excellent	probably a merit
8/A-	very good	
7/B+	good piece of work, the standard which Merchants' expects (par)	
6/B	fine	
5/C	OK just	
4/D	below par – errors/gaps	improve? – expect you to respond to advice
3/D-	well below what we expect	
2/E	poor/minimal	repeat – ePortal record - inform tutor - pattern? - intervention
1/U	very poor	
0/X	nothing	

## HALF TERM ASSESSMENTS (HTA)

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### Background

Students at Merchant Taylors' have always been closely monitored to make sure that they working hard and are ultimately able to succeed in public examinations. Traditionally this was done by means of regular *Half Term Orders* (HTOs) five or six times a year, supplemented by annual examinations. As the external assessment burden has increased (with the advent of modular A levels and now GCSEs) the school has sought to reduce the internal burden on both staff and students by halving their frequency and reformatting as *Half term Assessments* (HTAs). The thinking behind this is that "less in more". HTAs are managed by the Group Tutor (Learning and Teaching) and incorporate the following features:

#### 1 DEPARTMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- \*less frequent assessment "snapshots" – 4 times annually (3 "orders" plus 1 exam) approximately every 8 weeks
- \*part of a more formative framework (assessment *for* learning rather than *of* learning) ie offering learners not just a score/grade but advice/support for improvement
- \*data generated by a varied diet of end-of-topic tests, standard tasks, projects, orals
- \*responsibility on HODs to standardise data across teaching groups

#### 2 BASELINE DATA

- \*more systematic use of CEM benchmarks (Midyis, Yellis, Alis) to set "par" scores for

each individual (NB students have an input into target setting to insure “ownership”)  
\*explicit target setting for GCSE/GCE groups (adjusted twice annually)

### 3 RECOGNISING EFFORT LEVELS

\*incorporate effort score (1-5) using standard criteria (see separate policy)  
\*pilot use of student generated effort levels to compare with our judgements (use internally initially)

### 4 SMART SYSTEM (KS3 only)

\*proportion of each grade awarded reflects MTS 5 year average at GCSE (58%A\*/A) (which effectively “locks in” standard profile and “locks out” grade inflation)  
\*grades are colour coded using traffic light motif (blue = overachieving/better than par, white = on target/par, red = underachieving/worse than par) NB system builds in tolerance levels to recognise inevitable “noise” (1/2 grade above; whole grade below)

### 5 AUDIENCES

\*students/parents get colour coded grades which indicate level of attainment relative to cohort (explicitly) and nationally (implicitly) plus a recognition of effort levels. They also get follow-up eg mentoring, congratulatory letters etc  
\*tutors/hods/group tutors able to see patterns and plan individual intervention strategies (orchestrated by SPS – Group Tutor Learning and Teaching)  
\*senior management can see patterns within departments and cohorts

### 6 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES (GROUP TUTORS “PLAYBOOK”)

\*build on current options to include academic boards, mentoring, “shake&vac”, generic letters and “learning conversations”  
\*focus shifts from generating data to acting on that information – bespoke package of measures to provide the necessary academic “scaffolding” for each student, following academic review with senior staff,

The system is communicated to parents via this (annual) letter:

### ACADEMIC TRACKING & HALF TERM ASSESSMENTS (HTAs)

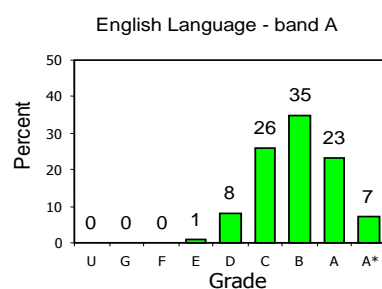
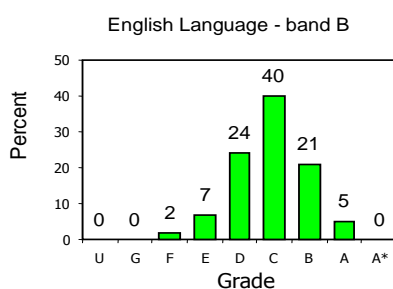
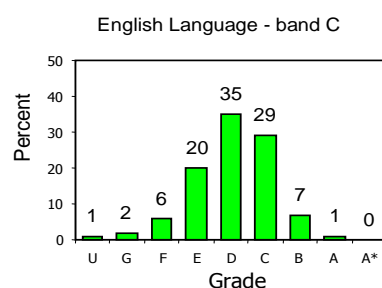
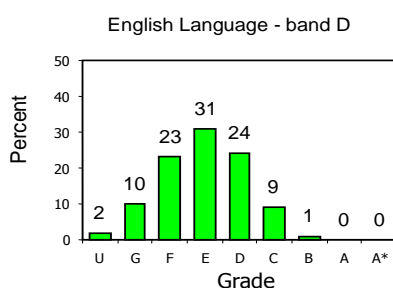
You will receive regular updates on how well your son is progressing. We will usually provide six academic snapshots each year which works out to roughly one for each half term. Typically students receive three half term assessments (**HTAs**), two full reports and one parents evening. Those in the top half of the school will, of course, be sitting public examinations usually in the January and May/June sessions. Year 7-10 have internal exams in the summer term and each department will test fairly regularly throughout their respective courses. Obviously, if things aren’t going well, we will intervene between these snapshots to provide the academic “scaffolding” your son might need to get back on track. This support comes in various forms ranging from an academic review (interview with senior members of staff) to a daily report or perhaps 1:1 mentoring.

With the exception of Year 7, all students have individual targets for each subject. These are benchmarked using external testing (via the CEM Centre at Durham University). However, we feel it very important that boys themselves have some ownership of their targets, thus they each have the opportunity to alter them (up or down!) in consultation with Mr Sutcliffe (Group Tutor Learning & Teaching) who oversees the whole process. It is important to realise however that such targets, once set, do not guarantee being met! The Durham data provides a “chances graph” (see below NB the

majority of Merchants' students will be in Band A) and we urge students to aim near the top end of this grade range. You will see on the HTAs that we use a traffic light system (blue for overachievement, red for under) which allows students, parents and teachers to pick out patterns, celebrate success and intervene where necessary. Finally, there is an effort level which tells you how hard we feel they're working!



## Chances Graphs

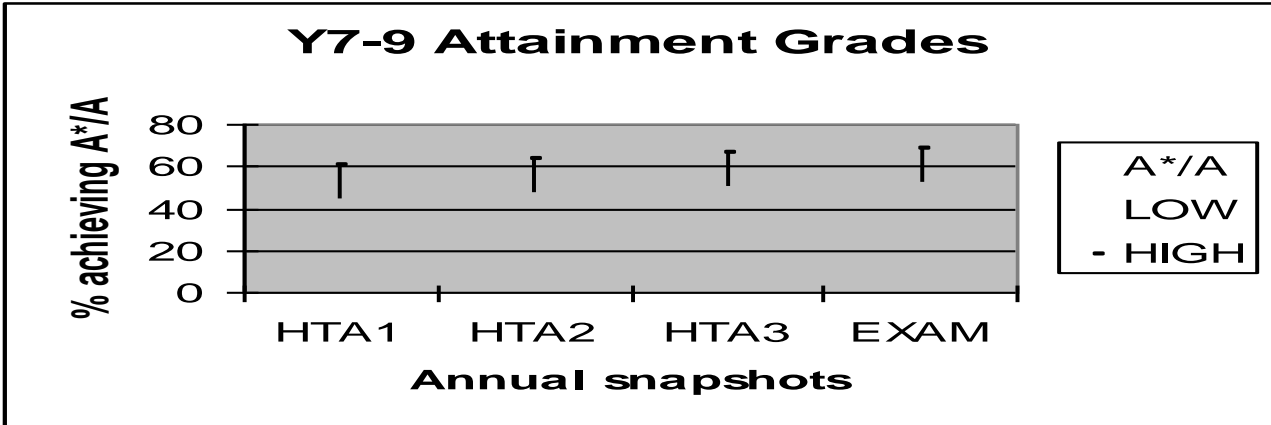


If you ever have any concerns over your son's academic performance, especially having received their half term assessment (HTA) please feel able contact us initially via his Form Tutor.

### HTA STANDARDISATION – HODS ROLE

#### 1. Standardisation

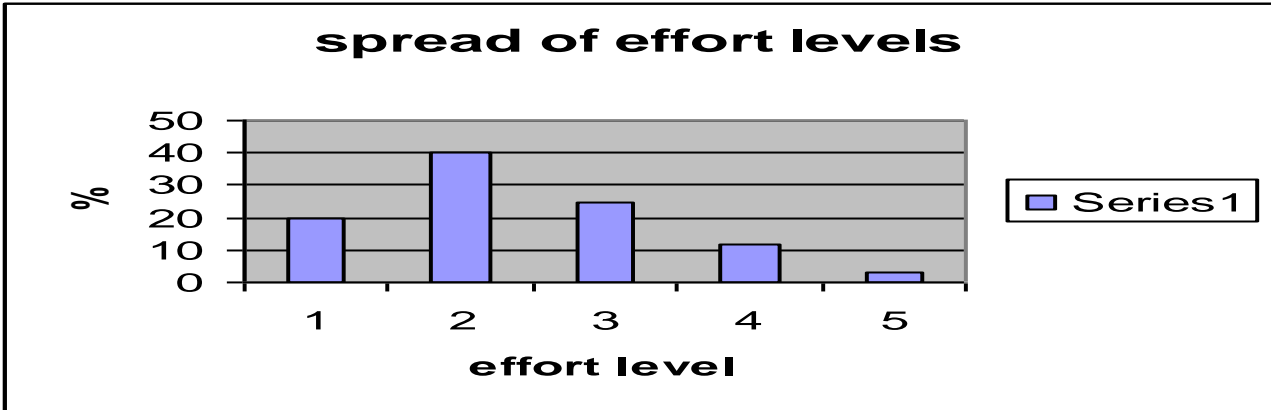
- attainment grades must be derived from common sources across sets
- depts agree common "weighting" of each source
- avoid over-reliance on one-off testing (max 50%)
- ideally include range of assessment opportunities (projects, test, homeworks, portfolios, orals etc)
- HOD (or delegate) takes in raw data from year group teachers to decide where to put the grade boundaries
- %A\*/A should "fit" MTS 5-year average at GCSE (58%) with tolerance +/-10% (see below – you may want to build in some progression through year)
  - HODs responsibility to "moderate" where necessary if significant discrepancies between sets (variance should ideally come from students not staff!)



	HTA1	HTA2	HTA3	EXAM
A*/A	52	55	58	60
LOW	44	47	50	52
HIGH	60	63	66	68

2. Effort

- see SPS effort criteria
- ideally we would like to think all MTS students working at 2 or above
- they averaged 2.2 for effort in 07/08 which is ideal (but do we need to guard against either grade inflation 3 to 2 & reluctance sometimes to give a 1 if uncertainty about what constitutes “going the extra mile”)





## REPORTS – SUBJECT STAFF

### Introduction

Reports are stored by the School's management information system (WCBS) and entered through the ePortal web interface. Individual comments (form, subject and extra curricular) can be entered at school or at home.

A more detailed set of guidelines explaining how to use ePortal is available on the school network in StaffShared | ePortal and advice can be obtained from the ICT department.

Reports can either be entered straight on to the database via ePortal or can be typed into a word processing programme first and then copied and pasted in to Facility. This method is recommended for backup, and also because Word has a better spell checker. Save or print out a draft for future reference. **It is vital to check that all spellings etc are correct at this stage.**

### Attainment and Effort data

In Years 7-9 the attainment grades will have been standardised by HODs. (Departmental profiles should be in line with the normal Merchants' GCSE spread with an A\*/A rate of 58% with plus or minus 10% tolerance.)

In Years 10-13 grades are related to the GCSE/AS/A2 levels at which the pupil is working.

Effort grades will have been determined for HTAs according to the published criteria determined by the Head of Learning and Teaching and the Deputy Head Academic

The data for attainment and effort will be transferred directly from the HTA database onto the printed Report.

### Subject Comments

Every report should have at the very least two sentences: a reference to how well the pupil is doing, and a suggestion as to how he may improve further. (Even for the very best pupils some advice about challenging themselves further is likely to be appropriate. The essence of 'Assessment for Learning' is that our reporting should guide the boys to the next stage of their learning.)

In general, comments should be positive, and negative remarks should be tempered with constructive advice. Having said this, it is also essential that parents get an accurate statement of the academic position of their son, so do not hide the truth.

**Please try to eliminate any mismatches between effort/attainment grades and written comments. Sometimes there is a time lapse between the generation of data and actually writing the report. So, for example, it might be necessary to say something like: "Although James did not really commit himself to the project on Medieval Castles, hence his rather low Assessment grade in November, he has certainly worked a lot harder on Becket, and his attainment has been higher in the weeks leading up to Christmas. This will be reflected in his next Half Term Assessment."**

**Written guidance on report writing and exemplar material is provided at the start of each major reporting session by the Deputy Headmaster Academic.**

### **Minutiae / House Style**

- Make sure that a spell and grammar check has been used either initially through Word or using the spellcheck on Facility.
- Check the spelling of the boy's name. (It appears on ePortal)
- Avoid using abbreviations such as can't, won't etc.
- If mentioning your subject by name use upper case for first letter.
- Take care over spellings which would not be shown up on a spellcheck – e.g. practice / practise, affect / effect. (Please use focusing rather than focussing.)
- Take care over punctuation, use of commas, semicolons, apostrophes.
- For the names of modules use a capital letter (Documents Studies, Transport Module), otherwise lower case, e.g. summer modules.
- Reports should use the third person, not the second – 'John has done....', not 'You have done....John'.
- At the end of the report leave a line and then add your initials in capitals.
- Read advice on Report Writing by the Head of Learning and Teaching and the Deputy Head Academic. Copies are sent annually to all teaching staff.

### **Form Tutor Comments**

- Check that subject comments have been completed by the specified dates and that they follow the guidelines.
- Wherever possible make a reference to the boy's extra-curricular involvement or other achievements, in addition to the comment on academic progress. Via the report encourage boys who are not involved in anything much outside the classroom to get involved.
- Ensure that if a boy is involved in an extra-curricular activity he has been given a report for it.
- Check that there are no errors on the reports. Either correct simple errors or contact the original writer.
- If there is a mismatch between a grade and comment seek the relevant Group Tutor's advice.

### **Exemplars**

<b>English</b>	Matthew has made a very sound start to his career at Senior School. He is a conscientious and courteous pupil who works hard and keeps to deadlines. His work shows both accuracy and flair. He should read as much as possible at home in order to develop his vocabulary.
<b>Geography</b>	Peter has shown a keen interest in class and should be encouraged by his performance this term. He is very receptive to advice, and I have been impressed by his project, written work and class contributions. He should spend some time clarifying his knowledge of mapping processes.
<b>French</b>	Frank is such a focused and industrious pupil that the only area of his study requiring urgent improvement is the oral aspect of French. He should try to contribute more regularly in class, and practise speaking the language at home, even if only to himself! Apart from this all the news is positive: his comprehension is improving all the time and his written French is accurate and beautifully presented.
<b>Mathematics</b>	Stuart does not find this subject at all easy. His class work and tests have been of a low standard so far. Nevertheless, if he shows the determination to succeed he can still achieve a respectable grade. He must ask for clarification of any specific

	difficulties well ahead of the submission deadlines, and he should attend Maths Clinic on a regular basis.
<b>History</b>	Joe has worked fairly hard throughout the term and seems to be enjoying his study of History. His knowledge and understanding of the Tudors is secure, and this has been demonstrated in a variety of work handed in so far. He did a particularly good project on the Spanish Armada. The only area of weakness is source interpretation, and he needs now to look again carefully at the guidance for identifying ways in which historical documents have varying levels of reliability.
<b>Physics</b>	Harry has worked very hard on trying to apply his knowledge of formulae this term, and he is now becoming more accurate in his identification of the appropriate formula for each problem. His last test, however, suggested that under pressure he is still prone to error in this respect. He must continue to work conscientiously and to put mistakes behind him. He will get there in the end if he persists.
<b>Chemistry</b>	William has worked with a degree of inconsistency this term. His approach to experiments is rather casual and his recording of data often careless and inaccurate. Thus, there has been a mismatch between his knowledge of theory, which is very sound, and his application of theory to practical lab work. His target is therefore clear – to show much greater accuracy in accumulating the data on which his conclusions are based.

#### 14 UVI Pre-UCAS Report

The following sets out our approach to reporting on LVI and UVI students as they prepare for university applications (UCAS).

- The report is designed to highlight where we perceive your strengths and relative weaknesses to be. Of course, each individual coloured box is based on a judgement from your teachers and is certainly less empirical than more quantitative exam results. We look for patterns, especially of “blues” and it is these strengths which we tend to emphasise in your UCAS reference.
- There is also a summary of your AS scores. Normally, none of these are formally “cashed-in” until the end of the Upper VIth. Indeed the individual grades won’t appear on UCAS forms (although GCSE grades will). Our policy is instead to use them to part-inform our eventual predicted grades (which do appear on UCAS references) and we like to highlight your best AS scores in the school reference itself.
- PPGs are designed to give an indication of possible A2 grades and are a combination of “real” AS data and “aspirational” A2 progress. They give an idea about which courses should be accessible to students as they decide on their 5 UCAS choices. Heads of Department are always happy to discuss predictions with students. We like to maximise student’s chances of getting offers by being positive with our predictions but always with the caveat that grades should be realistically achievable for them.
- Over the first few weeks of this term, UVI students can spend Friday morning tutor periods working on their applications with their advisors. Oxbridge, law, medical and dentistry

applicants need to have their applications ready by **15<sup>th</sup> October**. For others the advice is simply “the earlier the better” and we have an internal deadline of the last Friday before the Christmas break for online registration details and personal statements to be completed.

- Currently, the colour-coded “pre-UCAS” report is used on an in-house basis to collate comments, competences and PPGs from which initially VI form tutors and then the Head of Sixth Form constructs UCAS references:
  - Subject Comments – AS/A2 teachers are encouraged to be candid and as positive as possible (these comments will only be used internally). It is recognised that UCAS references are not a vehicle for overtly negative comments on a particular rather a shop window for their perceived strengths and suitability to that university course. The MTS policy is to back our students to the hilt both in terms of PPGs and the commentary without misleading admissions tutors or overselling that individual’s academic potential. Subject teachers are asked to contextualise their comments where possible ideally by providing an exemplar of a piece of work/event (eg “in H’s recent project on nanotechnology...”)
  - PPGs – at the discretion of subject teachers and monitored by HODs. These should take into account the student’s academic track record (incl GCSE and AS UMS scores) plus the start they have made to A2 (from late June in Y12 to present). As mentioned above, our policy is to be positive acknowledging that 80% of our students now get on to Russell group courses and that these invariably require A/B predictions (indeed that Cantab/Imperial etc) now asking for A\*s. The Head of Sixth Form arbitrates in cases whereby there is a mismatch between student/parental “expectations” and dept predictions. S/he enjoys some room for manoeuvre by either putting, for instance, A on the front cover (drop down grade menu) of the UCAS form whilst stating A/B in the body of the reference or backing the higher grade but with a letter home explaining any worries the school might have in terms of the solidity of that prediction. At the end of the day, predicting grades isn’t an exact science more a “chances graph”. Students will normally be given the benefit of the doubt but only if they are prepared to respond to that show of faith and that the prediction remains within the tolerance of that chances graph.
- a traffic light system (using the same leitmotif as the HTA system) is used to highlight patterns of competences. VI form tutors should use these to identify overall strengths and weaknesses. For the most competitive courses (eg medicine, Oxbridge) they should look carefully at the top end of each set of competences especially the Bloom taxonomy (ie these students really should be exhibiting high order thinking analytical skills rather than just the ability to regurgitate facts, equally they should be able to put together extended/complex arguments perhaps in essay format instead of just being adept with bitesize data response questions). The fourth set of competences referring to “soft” skills should be used usually in the final paragraph of the reference (see section on UCAS) and help the tutor provide a more 3 dimensional/holistic picture of the student for admissions tutors rather than merely a list of academic achievements.

*Updated October 2013*