# Computer Science Assessment Policy

The aim of this document is to help you understand how the Computer Science department will track you progress and help you appreciate how effectively you are learning.

## “Homework”

I have tried to call independent learning tasks many things but students insist on calling it homework. You will be set work to do outside of lessons every week.

These will include:

* Practice questions
* Programming tasks
* Exam style questions

Some will be marked by your teacher and some will be assessed in class to give you instant feedback on how well you have done. Usually you will be given a week to complete tasks. Home work will not usually be “graded” but you will be given feedback and sometimes a “score”. The score is not to most important part homework is for learning rather than assessment. Work handed in late will be acknowledged and feedback given if it is still valuable at the time of receipt.

### Coursework (Year 2 only)

Between September and March in your second year, you will have a series of coursework deadlines. These are designed to keep you on track to do as well as possible in the Non-Examined Assessment (coursework) section of the course. It is worth 20% of the overall grade.

### Tests, Benchmarks and Exams

These are all terms for timed individual work completed in exam conditions. We conduct a benchmark every half term made up of one or two test papers. These are always of AS/A-level standard, marked to AQA mark schemes and standardised to have appropriate grade boundaries. Tests will include topics from all areas of the course you have covered so far BUT will have a greater number of questions related to topics covered in the last half term.

### Why do we have so many tests?

These tests have several aims:

* To provide a focus point to encourage revision and develop more secure understanding of the topics.
* To provide an experience of completing work in exam conditions, hopefully reducing the stress come the final exams
* To provide high quality information about how well you are able meet the assessment objectives of the exam board. (The AQA assessment objectives match well the requirements of developing as a Computer Scientist) so…
* Allow you to demonstrate how well you have learnt the knowledge and developed the skills that will enable you to succeed as a computer scientist.
* Allow teacher to make decisions on how best to help you develop.
* Provide a secure basis for setting targets and predicated grades.

A lot of time, thought and effort is put into creating tests, we take assessment seriously, we hope you will prepare as thoroughly as possible for every test.

### Programming Tests based on Pre-release code

The Paper 1 exam in computer science is totally unique. Computer based with a lot of information given over 6 months before the exam and no rules on how you can prepare for the exam. During the exam you have full and open use of the programming IDE, but access to nothing else other than a word processor. (Obviously no internet!!) The exam is an excellent tool for gauging your proficiency in programming, but relies upon you preparing thoroughly working through many scenarios with the pre-release code. From Christmas in the first year though to the end of the course you will practice this style of assessment. It is vital you always give these test your best, as they will be used to judge how well your programming skills have developed.

### Timing

Tests are at the end of every half term, but you will be given at least 2 week notice as to exactly which lesson the test will be conducted.

### Special Exam Conditions

If you are eligible for special conditions, (e.g. extra time) this will wherever possible be arranged the same as exam condition. (there may need to be a slight degree of flexibility in order to minimise disruption to your other lessons)

### Annual Review Grade (ARG)

The ARG is an overall assessment of you progress for the year. It is expressed as an A-Level standard grade. (U,E,D,C,B,A,A\*) It is a weighted average of your performances across all benchmarks in the year combined with the end of year exam. The weightings are applied regressively, so one poor score wont unduly drag the average down (or one good score pull everything up) with the end of year exam is more heavily weighted than the half termly tests. Ultimately a teachers professional judgement will be utilised to produce a grade for your years learning.

### Predicted grades

If you are applying for university or an apprenticeship the college will write a reference based on your academic performance. As part of this reference we are asked to provide a predication of what grades you will achieve at the end of your course. By default this predicted grade will be the same as your ARG, but if after discussing how you intend to improve your teacher feels you will do better than your ARG they will predict a maximum of one grade above the ARG.

### Monitoring

We want everyone to learn and progress as well as possible.

After the first round of assessments you will discuss with your teachers how you have done and initial targets will be set. If in future test you are well below your target grades, we will work with you to understand why and how we can best help you improve. If it is helpful we will share these discussions with your parents and if needed write a more formal action plan to help you develop your study and academic skills.

### Summary

We hope that the way you are exposed to different forms of assessment will prepare you for your final exams and give to the very best chance demonstrating what you have learnt and making a successful progression to Higher Education, apprenticeship or employment.