

# Using Alps to set aspirational targets with students

The ethos of driving an Alps culture in schools and colleges begins by encouraging staff and students to be aspirational. This starts in September in the setting of targets, or Minimum Expected Grades (MEGs) and with Alps, this means basing all targets on the progress made by students in the top 25% of schools and colleges nationally.

## How do I generate Alps MEGs?

Target setting software is incorporated into Connect Data for both Key Stages and all qualification types. Once you have submitted student and subject details into Connect Data, it will automatically generate your MEGs. These are available in the MEG Reports area of your Connect homepage, and you can export them to excel or to a PDF.

**Fig. 1** gives a quick overview of the methodology we adopt to generate your MEGs – more details are available in the Alps Guide, also on the Connect homepage.

## When is the best time to set targets?

The start of a new academic year is the perfect time to share new targets or review existing targets with your students, but this varies across schools/colleges. The great news is that the software is there for whenever you want to use it.

## Sharing the Alps aspirational message

- Top performing Alps schools/colleges train students to understand how the target setting process supports them in being aspirational.
- Get students to calculate their own MEGs by sharing prior attainment data and banding tables. Make sure to point out that these are minimum grades only.
- Plan time in your quality assurance cycles for dialogue to occur between subject staff and students to agree subject specific targets.
- Ideally parents should be involved by having the target setting process explained. This could be via an early parents meeting followed up by regular written communication.
- Show students past results, with examples of those who have smashed their MEGs in previous years, MEGs are after all just the starting point.

**Fig. 1**

A potted overview of MEGs for all staff in September – this is common to all Key Stages.

- Each of your students are placed in a prior attainment band.
- We analyse the national dataset and work out the **average** grades achieved by students in each prior attainment band.
- We then identify the school or college whose progress hit the top 25% mark for each band.
- We then call these grades the **Minimum Expected Grades** or **MEGs**.
- They represent the average grade, or even better, point score, which if all students reached would place you in the top 25% in terms of progress – in Alps terms, this means that your Quality Indicator would be **RED HOT**.

## Using your MEGs to set personalised subject targets

- Firstly, MEGs are minimum grades and not a ceiling. Some schools and colleges now use 90% MEGs as a standard to encourage students to aim even higher.
- Crucially, teaching staff have to understand how progress in their subject compares to the MEG. For this we turn to the subject thermometers.
- It is great practice in September for all staff to revisit the Alps methodology, remind themselves of what MEGs are, identify how their subject has performed against the MEGs nationally and finally review their targets. This can be done through staff training sessions delivered 'in-house' by your Alps Champion or by watching one of our on-demand videos, or joining our Alps Champion training programme. We can deliver training on site or through video conference for a fee.

## The subject thermometer

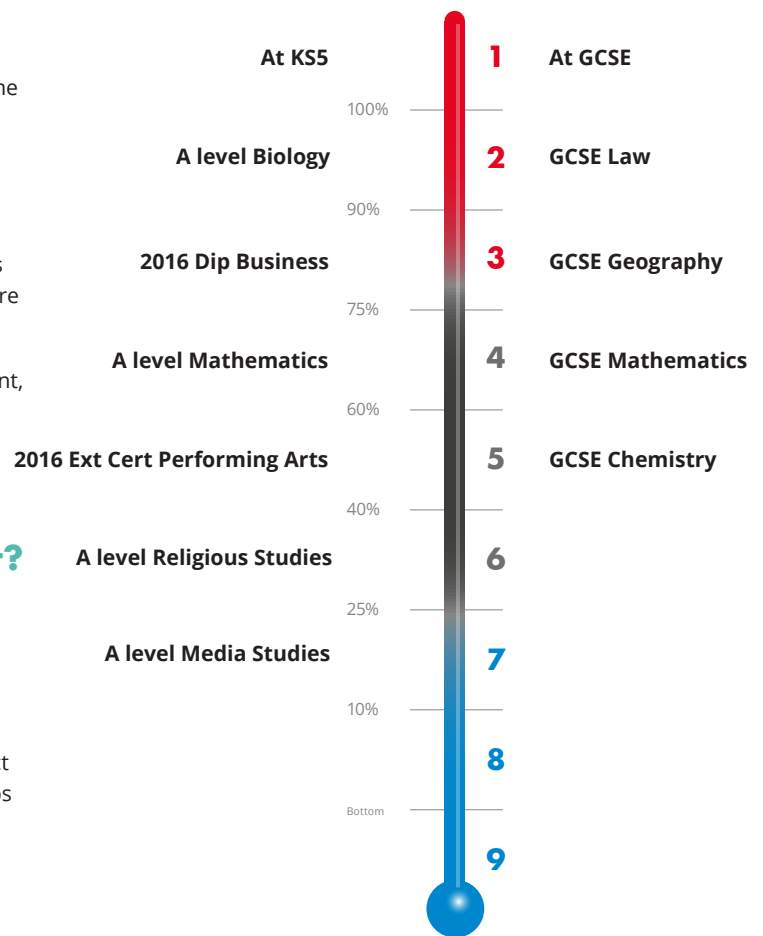
- Staff need to understand the unique nature of their thermometers – what Alps grade will a score of 1.00 get them?
- Take a look at the thermometer – you can see that an Alps score of 1.00 – in other words, all students reaching their MEG, yields very different Alps grades for different subjects.
- This is because students nationally make better progress in some subjects than in others.
- Staff need to set personalised subject targets to ensure that their subject performs at the required level on their subject thermometer, for example students in Biology might have personalised targets that are in line with the Alps MEG, whereas students in Media Studies may have personalised targets that are one above the Alps MEG.
- Finally, subject staff should clearly take other factors into account, i.e. if a student has a particular flair in your subject then you would want to target set above the MEG.

## We have our targets – What will I be able to do in September?

- You will be able to enter your personalised subject targets in to Connect Data and create exports containing the MEGs and the personalised targets in excel or as a PDF.
- You will be able to check whether the personalised targets set by subject staff are aspirational – create a gradepoint in Connect and submit these personalised target grades. Are all subject Alps grades **RED HOT**? If not, you might consider discussing this with the subject staff.
- The 'What If' feature of Connect could help here in modelling aspirational target setting.

An Alps score of 1.00 means that students on average have achieved their MEG.

A change of 0.2 represents a grade per student difference.



## Reviewing targets

The close tracking of assessments and homework against targets at each level of your school or college during the year is key to ensuring successful final outcomes.

- Connect allows you to monitor progress towards MEGs across the year.
- Subject staff and pastoral staff can play a crucial role in reviewing targets – use both the subject area and the Student Analysis Overview.
- Use the Staff checklists from our Knowledge Base – we provide some key questions to ask of the data in Connect.

### Contact Alps

Speak to us today about starting your own improvement journey with Alps.

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