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# How to Reduce Errors When Recording Student Marks in Kenyan Schools

CBE Assessment · 14 Nov 2026

*Most student mark errors are process errors - copied too many times, entered too late. A practical guide for Kenyan schools to record marks once, audit a sample and lock results before report cards.*

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Most errors in student marks are not caused by careless teachers. They come from a process that asks teachers to copy numbers three or four times — from script, to mark book, to spreadsheet, to report card — and each copy is a chance to drop a digit, shift a column or put Muthoni's score on Wanjiku's row. The reliable fix is to record each mark once, close to the assessment, in a format that does not need re-typing, then audit a small sample before results go out. This guide shows how to build that process, whether you use a mark book, a spreadsheet or school software.

### *Who this guide is for*

Class teachers and subject teachers entering scores, heads of department who moderate them, and principals who sign off report cards. It applies to Kenyan schools running CBE (Competency-Based Education) assessments — school-based assessment tasks, end-of-term exams and everything in between.

### *Why mark errors matter more under CBE*

Under CBC/CBE, assessment is continuous. A learner's report is built from many small scores across the term, not one end-of-year exam, so a transcription mistake in week three quietly distorts the final performance level. School-based assessment (SBA) tasks are scored on rubrics at one of four levels — Exceeding Expectations (EE), Meeting Expectations (ME), Approaching Expectations (AE) and Below Expectations (BE) — and for the 2025 Kenya Junior School Education Assessment (KJSEA), KNEC reported results on an eight-point scale, EE1 down to BE2, with no aggregate score. When every data point feeds a level, there is no room for a "roughly right" mark book.

### *Step 1: Standardise the mark book before the term starts*

Half of all mark errors are layout problems. Before the first assessment is marked, agree on one format across the school:

- **One row per learner, identified by admission number** — not just a name. Kenyan schools have many learners who share first and second names; the admission number is the only reliable key.
- **One column per assessment, labelled with the date and the total.** "English Opener 12/02 out of 30" cannot be confused with "English Mid-term out of 50" the way "Eng 2" can.
- **A stated marking scale.** If one column is out of 30 and the next is out of 100, a mark of 24 means different things. Write the maximum on every column.

- **Agreed codes for missing work.** Decide whether an absent learner gets "AB", a zero, or a blank — and use it the same way everywhere. A zero recorded for a child who was absent is the most common cause of a wrongly lowered performance level.

### *Step 2: Enter marks as you mark, not at the end of term*

Bulk entry at the end of term is where errors multiply. A teacher facing 240 scripts and a deadline works fast, tired, and from memory of which pile was which class. Two habits prevent most of it:

- **Enter scores within 24–48 hours of marking.** The script is still on your desk if a number looks wrong.
- **Keep the scripts until results are published.** If a parent or learner queries a mark, the answer is in the script — not in an argument.

If several teachers share a class, each teacher enters the marks for the papers they marked. Never have one person re-type everyone else's mark books "to save time"; that re-typing is where the errors live.

### *Step 3: Separate the raw score from the reported level*

A frequent CBE error is converting too early. The raw score (say, 23 out of 30) is the evidence; the performance level (EE, ME, AE, BE) is a judgement made from it under your school's agreed scale or current KNEC guidance. If you record only the level and lose the score, you cannot check the conversion later, and you cannot recalculate if the guidance changes.

Keep both: the raw score in the mark book, and the level in the report. Agree the conversion bands as a school — many Kenyan schools use ranges such as 80% and above for EE, but check the current KNEC and KICD guidance for your grade and learning area rather than assuming last year's bands still apply.

### *Step 4: Audit a sample before reports go out*

You do not need to check every mark to catch most errors. A 10% sample, checked by a second person, catches the systematic mistakes — a shifted column, a missed page of scripts, a formula that divided by the wrong total:

- **Spot-check 5–10 learners per class against their scripts.** If the sample is clean, the column probably is too. If you find one error, check the whole column.
- **Read the outliers aloud.** A top learner suddenly at BE, or a 112 on a paper marked out of 100, is a flag, not a result.
- **Compare against last term.** A whole class dropping two levels at once usually means the assessment or the recording changed, not thirty learners at once.

Heads of department should sample across streams, not just their own. Moderation is how you catch the teacher whose "out of 40" was everyone else's "out of 50".

### *Step 5: Lock the numbers before report cards are generated*

Once reports are printed or sent to parents, a correction means an embarrassing recall. Set a marks-entry deadline a few days before report generation, confirm who has submitted and who

has not, then treat the mark book as final. Any change after that point should go through the head of department with a reason attached — that small friction is what stops "I thought it was a 7 not a 1" corrections after parents have seen the report.

### *Common mistakes to avoid*

| Mistake | What it causes | Fix |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Recording only the performance level, not the raw score | No audit trail; impossible to re-check conversions | Always store the score; derive the level |
| Zero for absent learners | Unfairly lowered levels and parent disputes | Use an "absent" code; exclude from averages |
| Identifying learners by name only | Marks swapped between same-name learners | Record by admission number |
| Different totals in different columns | Percentages that compare nothing | Label every column with its maximum |
| One person re-typing everyone's marks | Transcription errors nobody can trace | Each teacher enters their own |
| No entry deadline | Changes after reports are printed | Deadline + moderation before release |

### *A worked example: catching a column shift*

Say a Grade 7 teacher marks Integrated Science out of 40 and enters: 32, 28, 4, 36, 30 … The 4 looks like a weak learner — until the audit shows the script actually scored 34, and the "4" was the last digit of the previous learner's 24 dropped into the wrong row during a hurried evening of bulk entry. One wrong cell changed the learner's level from ME to BE. A 10-minute sample check against the scripts caught it before the report card went home. That is the whole argument for auditing.

### *Where Mwalimu Ease fits in*

Mwalimu Ease is built around exactly this workflow. Teachers enter marks once per assessment — by class and subject — or use bulk upload for large entry sessions, so there is no re-typing from mark book to spreadsheet to report card. A marks-completion view shows the principal which teachers have submitted and which have not, so nothing goes into a report card half-finished, and deadline reminders go out automatically before the window closes. Because scores are stored against each learner's record, the performance-level conversion and the end-of-term report are generated from the same numbers the teacher entered — the audit trail is built in. For schools using the assessment portal, objective questions (multiple choice, true/false, matching) are auto-marked by the system, which removes transcription from the process entirely for those papers.

## *Frequently asked questions*

### *Should marks be recorded as scores or as EE/ME/AE/BE levels?*

Record the raw score first and derive the level from it. Levels without scores cannot be audited, and if guidance on bands changes you would have to re-mark instead of recalculating.

### *What is the official CBE grading scale in Kenya?*

KNEC reports learning using four performance levels — Exceeding, Meeting, Approaching and Below Expectations — and for KJSEA 2025 used eight sub-levels (EE1 to BE2). Exact percentage bands attached to each level have varied; confirm the current KNEC or KICD guidance for your grade before setting your school's conversion table.

### *How do we handle a learner who missed an assessment?*

Mark them absent rather than zero, and either arrange a make-up or exclude that column from their average. A zero says "attempted and failed"; that is a different claim from "was not there".

### *Who should check marks before report cards are issued?*

A second person — ideally the head of department — sampling about 10% of entries per class, plus a read-through of obvious outliers. Full double-marking is ideal but rarely practical.

### *How long should we keep marked scripts?*

At least until the term's reports are issued and the query window closes. Many schools keep them for the full year so SBA evidence is available if KNEC or a parent asks for it.

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*Last reviewed: 14 November 2026. Sources: Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC); KNEC's reported clarification of KJSEA grading (The Star, December 2025); KICD curriculum designs; the Competency-Based Assessment framework under the Basic Education Curriculum Framework. Grading bands change — always confirm against the latest official guidance before setting school policy.*

Published 14 Nov 2026 ·
mwalimuease.com/news/how-to-reduce-errors-when-recording-student-marks-in-kenyan-schools/