

STEP ONE**Determining the offence category**

The court should determine the offence category with reference **only** to the factors listed in the tables below. In order to determine the category the court should assess **culpability** and **harm**.

The level of culpability is determined by weighing up all the factors of the case. **Where there are characteristics present which fall under different levels of culpability, the court should balance these characteristics to reach a fair assessment of the offender's culpability.**

Where the offence is committed in a domestic context, consideration must be given to the definitive guideline 'Overarching Principles: Domestic Abuse'

Culpability demonstrated by one or more of the following:**A - High culpability:**

- Offence committed in domestic context
- Targeting of vulnerable victim, where victim vulnerable by personal characteristics or circumstances
- Prolonged assault
- Offence involves a serious level of violence
- Use of weapon or weapon equivalent*
- Leading role in group activity

B – Lesser culpability

- Lesser role in group activity
- Mental disorder or learning disability, where linked to the commission of the offence
- All other cases not captured by category 1 factors

*Examples of a weapon equivalent can include but are not limited to: a shod foot, use of acid, use of animal in commission of offence.

Harm

The court should consider the factors set out below to determine the level of harm that has been caused or was intended to be caused to the victim.

Category 1	Serious physical or psychological harm
Category 2	Cases falling between categories 1 and 3
Category 3	Minor physical or psychological harm

STEP TWO

Having determined the category, the court should use the corresponding starting points to reach a sentence within the category range below. The starting point applies to all offenders irrespective of plea or previous convictions. A case of particular gravity, reflected by multiple features of culpability in step one, could merit upward adjustment from the starting point before further adjustment for aggravating or mitigating features, set out below.

HARM	CULPABILITY	
	A	B
Harm 1	Starting point Category Range	Starting point Category Range
Harm 2	Starting point Category Range	Starting point Category Range
Harm 3	Starting point Category Range	Starting point Category Range

The table below contains a non-exhaustive list of additional factual elements providing the context of the offence and factors relating to the offender. Identify whether any combination of these, or other relevant factors, should result in an upward or downward adjustment from the starting point. In some cases, having considered these factors, it may be appropriate to move outside the identified category range.

When considering imposing a custodial sentence, the court should also consider the Imposition guideline, and specifically the section on imposition of custodial sentences. In particular the following must be considered;

- 1) **Has the custody threshold been passed?**
- 2) **If so, is it unavoidable that a custodial sentence be imposed?**

Factors increasing seriousness

Statutory aggravating factors:

Previous convictions, having regard to a) the **nature** of the offence to which the conviction relates and its **relevance** to the current offence; and b) the **time** that has elapsed since the conviction

Offence committed whilst on bail

Offence motivated by, or demonstrating hostility based on any of the following characteristics of the victim: disability, sexual orientation or gender identity

Other aggravating factors:

Spitting

Offence committed against those working in the public sector or providing a service to the public

Offence committed in prison

Presence of children

Gratuitous degradation of victim

Abuse of power and/or position of trust

Any steps taken to prevent the victim reporting an incident, obtaining assistance and/or from assisting or supporting the prosecution

Commission of offence whilst under the influence of alcohol/drugs

Other offences taken into consideration (TICs)

Offence committed whilst on licence or subject to post sentence supervision

History of failure to comply with court orders

Factors reducing seriousness or reflecting personal mitigation

No previous convictions or no relevant/recent convictions

Remorse

Good character and/or exemplary conduct

Significant degree of provocation

Age and/or lack of maturity

Mental disorder or learning disability, where not linked to the commission of the offence

Sole or primary carer for dependent relative(s)

Determination and/or demonstration of steps taken to address addiction or offending behaviour

Serious medical conditions requiring urgent, intensive or long-term treatment