

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries will be published on the following pages of the awarding bodies at 8:00am on Results Days: 18th August for GCEs and 25th August for GCSEs:

AQA: [AQA | Exams admin | Results days | Grade boundaries](#)

OCR: [Grade boundaries \(ocr.org.uk\)](#)

Pearsons: [Grade boundaries | Pearson qualifications](#)


WJEC: [Results and Grade Boundaries \(eduqas.co.uk\)](#)

How are the Grade Boundaries calculated?

The awarding bodies illustrate/explain how they calculate the grade boundaries:

AQA

[A guide to notional component grade boundaries](#) [A guide to notional component grade boundaries \(aqa.org.uk\)](#)



New linear qualifications (AS, A-level and GCSE)

A guide to notional component grade boundaries

In modular qualifications, components can be taken at different times during the course, and grade boundaries are set for each component separately. In linear qualifications, students are given a single overall grade for the subject. However, we are able to provide 'notional grade boundaries' for individual components in linear qualifications, for illustrative purposes only.

Although there are no official grades for individual components in linear qualifications, it can be useful for students and teachers to see how the overall subject grade was achieved. The grade boundaries given for each component are known as 'notional grade boundaries', as they are for illustrative purposes only.

The notional component boundaries do not always add up to the subject grade boundaries. The example below explains why this might happen.

Sample subject and notional component grade boundaries in a linear AS qualification

Subject	Max mark	A	B	C	D	E
	100	80	70	60	50	40
Paper 1	50	45	38	32	26	20
Paper 2	50	35	31	27	23	20

In this example, the subject boundary mark for a grade B is 70 (out of 100). The notional component boundary marks for a grade B are 38 out of 50 on Paper 1, and 31 out of 50 on Paper 2. These add up to 69, not 70. Why is this?

The reason is that there are rules that all awarding bodies must follow for setting the subject boundary marks for B, C and D, based on the A and E subject boundaries. Grades A and E are known as 'judgemental' grades, and the awarding committee for each subject sets these by looking at students' work. The B, C and D boundaries are then set arithmetically so that they fall as evenly as possible between A and E.

In this example, there are 40 marks between the subject boundary for grade A (80), and the subject boundary for grade E (40). The B, C and D boundaries are set at 10 mark intervals, because $40 \div 4 = 10$.

If the difference between the A and the E boundaries is not exactly divisible by four, the remainder of the marks are allocated to each of the intervals between A and B, B and C, and C and D – in that order.

So, let's apply this to Paper 1 in the example above.

- The difference between the A boundary and the E boundary is $45 - 20 = 25$.
- $25 \div 4 = 6$, with a remainder of 1.
- This remainder is allocated to the interval between A and B, so the B boundary is set 7 marks ($6 + 1$) below the A boundary, i.e. at $45 - 7 = 38$ marks.
- There are no more remainder marks to use up, so the C boundary is set 6 marks below grade B, i.e. at $38 - 6 = 32$ marks.
- The D boundary is set 6 marks below grade C, i.e. at $32 - 6 = 26$ marks.

As shown here, applying the rules that are used to calculate subject grades B, C and D to each separate paper can lead to a situation where it is possible to get, for example, a notional 'B' on both papers (38/50 and 31/50), but a subject grade of C (69/100).

The reason this happens is that the mark intervals between A and E on the separate papers may divide more or less evenly than the mark intervals between A and E on the subject overall.

Although this example is for AS, the principle is the same for A-level and GCSE. The 'judgemental' grades for A-level are A and E; for GCSE they are 7, 4 and 1.

For A-level, grade A* is also available and this subject boundary mark is determined statistically by carrying forward the standard from the previous specification. This means there are no simple arithmetic rules for setting this subject boundary mark - and so no rules that can similarly be used to derive notional component boundary marks. For the components, the grade A* notional boundaries are therefore set so that they are in the same relative position as the subject grade A* boundary. For example, if the subject boundary for grade A* is halfway between the grade A boundary and the maximum subject mark, the notional component grade A* boundaries are also set to be halfway between the grade A boundary and the maximum component mark (rounding to the nearest whole number if necessary).

For GCSE, the grade 9 notional component boundaries are set in a similar way. For example, if the subject grade 9 boundary is halfway between the grade 7 boundary and the maximum subject mark, the notional component grade 9 boundaries are also set halfway between the component grade 7 boundary and the maximum component mark (again, rounding to the nearest whole number if necessary).

GCSE grade 8 notional component grade boundaries are then set halfway between the component grade 7 and 9 boundaries, rounding down to the next whole number if necessary.

It is therefore important not to put too much emphasis on the notional component grades. The sole determinant of a candidate's grade on a linear exam is his/her total subject mark. It is not calculated by combining grades on the individual components.

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How do we calculate your A Level grade?

Linear qualifications

A Levels are 'linear qualifications'. This means all the assessment takes place at the end of the course. Linear qualifications are made up of a number of separate exams or non-exam assessment (coursework) called 'components'.

1 In most cases, we just add the component marks together to get your total mark. For a few qualifications, some components are worth more than the others so we have to work this out first (see next page).

2 We check the total mark against the qualification grade boundaries to get your qualification grade.

$$\begin{matrix} \text{Component 1 mark} \\ 53 \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} \text{Component 2 mark} \\ 54 \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} \text{Component 3 mark} \\ 60 \end{matrix} = \begin{matrix} \text{Total mark} \\ 167 \end{matrix}$$

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Mark	252	228	194	160	126	92

Grade
C

Component marks

The mark you get on each exam paper or non-exam assessment will be your component mark. You don't get a grade for each component – just a mark. This is sometimes called a 'raw' mark.

Total mark

This is the total of your component marks.

Qualification grade boundaries

A grade boundary is the minimum mark you need to get a grade. For example, if the grade boundary for a Grade C is 160 marks, you need to get at least 160 to achieve a Grade C. A mark of 159 would therefore be a Grade D.

Grade boundaries for linear qualifications are set at qualification level. This means it's how you did overall which decides your qualification grade.

Qualification grade

This is your final result and what will appear on your certificate.

Component grade boundaries

We know it's useful to see how you did in each component so we also publish component grade boundaries. These show what the grade would be if we gave out grades for components. 'Grades' at component level don't automatically add up to the same grade at qualification level.

What happens if one component is 'worth' more than another?

Weighting factors and weighted marks

Each component contributes a certain percentage to the total qualification mark. In most cases, this contribution is equal – but not always. We use 'weighting factors' to make sure each component contributes the right amount towards the total mark.

For example, a qualification has three components marked out of 60, 60 and 40 and components 1 and 2 are weighted to be each worth 40% of the total marks:

	Component raw mark	Contribution to qualification	Weighting factor	Total marks
Component 1	60	40%	1.333	80
Component 2	60	40%	1.333	80
Component 3	40	20%	1.0	40
Total		100%		200

1 You get your total mark by multiplying your raw marks by the weighting factor and then adding these marks together.

2 We check the total mark against the qualification grade boundaries to get your qualification grade.

$$\begin{matrix} \text{Component 1 mark} \\ \text{(raw mark} \times \text{weighting factor)} \\ 64 \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} \text{Component 2 mark} \\ \text{(raw mark} \times \text{weighting factor)} \\ 68 \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} \text{Component 3 mark} \\ \text{(raw mark} \times \text{weighting factor)} \\ 30 \end{matrix} = \begin{matrix} \text{Total mark} \\ 162 \end{matrix}$$

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Mark	185	174	152	130	109	88

Grade
B

Component marks

Total mark

Qualification grade boundaries

Qualification grade

GCSE (9–1) Grade Calculations (ocr.org.uk)

How do we calculate your GCSE (9–1) grade?

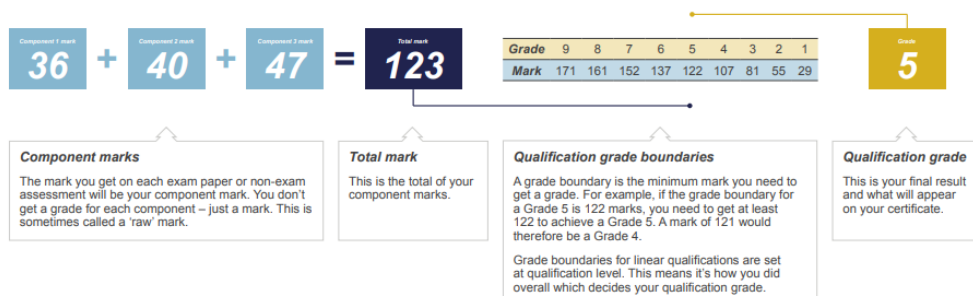


Linear qualifications

GCSEs are 'linear qualifications'. This means all the assessment takes place at the end of the course. Linear qualifications are made up of a number of separate exams or non-exam assessment (coursework) called 'components'.

1 In most cases, we just add the component marks together to get your total mark. For a few qualifications, some components are worth more than the others so we have to work this out first (see next page).

2 We check the total mark against the qualification grade boundaries to get your qualification grade.



Component grade boundaries

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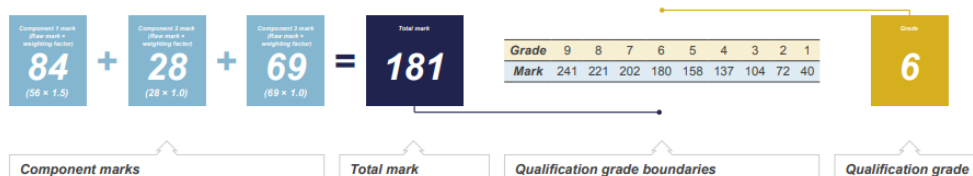
Each component contributes a certain percentage to the total qualification mark. In most cases, this contribution is equal – but not always. We use 'weighting factors' to make sure each component contributes the right amount towards the total mark.

For example, a qualification has three components marked out of 100, 45 and 105 and component 1 is weighted to be worth half the total marks:

	Component raw mark	Contribution to qualification	Weighting factor	Total marks
Component 1	100	50%	1.5	150
Component 2	45	15%	1.0	45
Component 3	105	35%	1.0	105
Total		100%		300

1 You get your total mark by multiplying your raw marks by the weighting factor and then adding these marks together.

2 We check the total mark against the qualification grade boundaries to get your qualification grade.



Pearson

Pearson have issued a series of mini films to illustrate how they set grade boundaries:

[Understanding marks and grades | Pearson qualifications](#)

WJEC

Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. Whilst exam papers are written to the same level of difficulty, they do vary each year. Grade boundaries ensure that whenever the exam is sat, students receive the same grade for the same level of performance.

For unitised specifications, grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.

For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the overall subject, rather than for each component/unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.

The 'notional' grade boundaries for each component are also available from 8am on publication of results days. Component boundaries are 'notional' and intended only as a guide, they are not official grades.