GCSE (9-1) MFL

Advice on tier entry decisions

Summary

- On a Higher Tier paper, a candidate will encounter content targeted at grades 4–9.
- On a Foundation Tier paper, a candidate will encounter content targeted at grades 1–5.
- A candidate predicted to achieve a grade 5 is likely to feel much more at ease with the overall demand of the Foundation Tier papers.
- The same candidate will encounter content targeted well beyond grade 5 in the Higher Tier papers and may well find this very challenging and demotivating.
- Performance in mocks, particularly in 'crossover questions', could be used to inform decisions around tier of entry.

Advice on entry decisions

The choice of tier of entry must be determined by teachers at the school where candidates are entered and it is acknowledged that such decisions can be difficult to make, particularly in languages, where candidates may perform better in some skills than others. Care must be taken if, for example, a candidate is strong at speaking and writing, but is weaker in the receptive skills of listening and reading, which together account for 50% of the qualification.

Although there is some overlap of content at each tier and some safety-netting, it is important to remember that borderline students will encounter content targeted at levels 9, 8, 7 and 6 in a Higher Tier paper and are likely to find this very challenging if they are working at grade 4–5. If entered at Foundation Tier, they should be more at ease with the overall demand of the assessments.

Students entered for a GCSE at Foundation Tier can access grades up to 5 and those entered at Higher Tier may access grades 4–9. It is possible that a grade 3 can be issued to a Higher Tier candidate if the marks are extremely close to those required for a grade 4, but **a grade 3 cannot be regarded as a default grade at Higher Tier**. This is in line with the regulatory requirements.

Performance in mocks

Your students' performance in mock exams could be used to inform tiering decisions. Particular focus could be given to mocks marking of 'crossover questions' (specifically targeted at grades 4 and 5) from each of papers 1, 3 and 4. If a student struggles to access the marks for these questions in the Higher Tier paper, they are likely to have a more comfortable experience if entered for Foundation Tier.
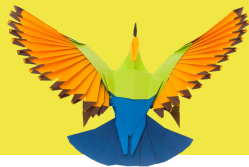
The crossover questions are as follows:

Paper 1, Listening:
The Listening component has four crossover questions equating to approximately 33% of the paper and 17 marks.

Paper		Total Marks
1F/1H		50
Crossover questions		Total Marks for Crossover Question
1F question no.	1H question no.	
9	3	4
11	4	3
13	1	5
14	2	5

Paper 3, Reading:
The Reading component has four crossover questions equating to approximately 33% of the paper and 17 marks.

Paper		Total Marks
3F/3H		50
Crossover questions		Total Marks for Crossover Question
3F question no.	3H question no.	
5	1	3
6	2	4
8	7	5
9	8	5

Paper 4, Writing:
The Writing component has one crossover question equating to approximately 33% of the paper and 20 marks. The candidate is required to select either option (a) or option (b) for the crossover question.

	Paper		Total Marks
	4F/4H		60
	Crossover questions		Total Marks for Crossover Question
	4F question no.	4H question no.	
Either/or	3a	1a	20
	3b	1b	