

Uniform mark (UMS) guidance: an example GCSE History A & B

What are uniform marks and why do we use them?

Grade boundaries are set using raw marks. For each unit, raw marks are mapped to uniform marks. A GCSE qualification grade is determined from the unit uniform mark scores.

Uniform marks are used to ensure that the standard required to gain a particular unit score is the same from exam series to exam series.

Below we have exemplified what the use of uniform marks mean in GCSE History A&B.

Mark & Karen are both re-taking GCSE History Modern World Unit 2 option A in this examination series. Unit 2 (5HA02/2A) is out of 50 raw marks and has a total 100 UMS marks.

After they have sat the examination and their papers have been marked, Edexcel's senior examiners recommended the raw mark grade boundaries using their professional judgement and the statistical evidence available as follows:

| GCSE MW Unit 2 Option A | Max. Mark | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Raw Mark boundary <u>this</u> exam series (June 2010) | 50 | 38 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 19 | 16 | 13 |
| Raw Mark boundary <u>last</u> exam series (Jan 2010) | 50 | 39 | 35 | 31 | 27 | 23 | 20 | 17 | 14 |
| Uniform Mark boundary | 100 | 90 | 80 | 70 | 60 | 50 | 40 | 30 | 20 |

Why are the raw marks boundaries different in this series compared to the last series?

You will notice, for example, that at grade C, the raw boundary mark was 27 last series; this series it is 26. However, you will also notice that C will always have a uniform mark of 60.

Why do raw mark boundaries change?

Raw mark boundaries change from series to series since exam papers can perform differently from year to year, depending on the tasks set. Even though the raw mark boundaries have changed, the uniform mark for each grade boundary remains the same for all examination series.

In the last examination series (Jan 2010) when Mark & Karen took the exam for the first time, the raw mark boundaries were slightly higher.

Mark scored 26/50 and Karen scored 33/50 in raw marks. This equated to a grade D for Mark and grade B for Karen at unit level.

This series, Mark scored a raw mark of 31/50 and Karen scored 46/50 raw marks. This equates to a grade B for Mark and a grade A* for Karen at unit level.

The best mark will automatically be chosen to make up the final grade in this example.

Note: Mark and Karen may not re-sit this unit again and they must also ensure that 40% of the course (i.e. 2 units) is sat in the final summer series when cashing in.

The GCSE History qualifications are each made up of 4 equally weighted units (25% each). Each unit is worth 100 UMS marks and therefore the total UMS for the qualification is 400.

The UMS grade boundaries for the full GCSE qualification (i.e. when all 4 units are cashed-in) are:

| Qualification Grade | Max. Mark | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Uniform Mark boundary | 400 | 360 | 320 | 280 | 240 | 200 | 160 | 120 | 80 |

Mark achieved 73 uniform marks in his unit 2A re-sit in June 2010. Looking forward to next summer, imagine he has also taken units 1, 3 & 4 Year 11.

Mark achieved:

| Unit | Jan 2010 | June 2010 | June 2011 |
|------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | | | 66 UMS |
| 2 | 58 UMS | 73 UMS | |
| 3 | | | 60 UMS |
| 4 | | | 72 UMS |

Mark's total score at cash-in is $72 + 66 + 60 + 73 = 271$ uniform marks. With reference to the table above, he will achieve a grade C.

What is the Terminal Assessment Rule?

There is a new rule with modular GCSEs called the Terminal Assessment rule. It states that students must take at least 40% (i.e. 2 units) of the assessment in the final examination series when they cash-in or certificate and the results of the terminal assessments will contribute towards the final grade.

In practice it means that two units must be sat at the end of the course, however controlled assessment can be submitted as one of these terminal units, in which case students only need to sit one final exam.

With re-sits, the best mark usually counts. However, if a re-sit is being used as one of the two final terminal units then the re-sit mark will count, even if it is worse.

Karen achieved 96 uniform marks in her unit 2A re-sit in June 2010.

Looking forward to next summer, imagine she had taken units 1 and 3 in January 2011, and intended to submit controlled assessment unit 4 in June 2011. This does not meet the terminal assessment rule and therefore Karen must re-sit either unit 1 or 3 in June 2011 to ensure that two units are sat when cashing-in. In this instance the re-sit mark would count, even if it was worse.