

# Grade Boundaries for the new Pearson Edexcel French, German and Spanish GCSEs

Answering your frequently  
asked questions



## What will the grade boundaries be for the MFL GCSE specifications in 2026?

Even when a qualification is not new, and has not changed its content or assessment model, grade boundaries are not set until after the assessments have been marked. This is the case for existing qualifications, as well as new ones, because until students have taken the assessments, we can't know how demanding they will find the questions and papers, compared to previous years. This is even more so the case when there is a qualification that is entirely new and the assessment model, content, number of marks, paper weightings, etc. have changed.

## Why isn't it possible to give an idea of where the grade boundaries will be?

Grade boundaries are not based upon a particular percentage of the raw marks, but are set in consideration of several different factors and evidence which are only available after the exams and NEA have been completed. As this is a new qualification, a standard setting activity will be carried out to set the performance standard at the judgmental grade boundaries.

Grade boundaries are set by balancing subject experts' professional judgement on the quality of work seen and the statistical data. A range of evidence will inform where the grade boundaries are set. This includes:

- **Reports from the Principal Examiners** which detail how the question papers have functioned and in comparison to similar questions in the previous specification
- **Statistical data** such as:
  - ➔ the average mark students achieved on an exam paper as a whole, which can help identify whether

any questions were more or less challenging than expected.

- ➔ how many students gained each mark.
- ➔ statistical modelling that considers comparable outcomes whilst considering the ability of the cohort.

Additional statistical data will be used where appropriate to inform decision making.

The Ofqual principle of comparable outcomes means that if the group of students taking exams this year are of a similar ability to students taking the exams last year, the total number of students getting each overall grade should be roughly the same.

If it is the first time an exam has been assessed, the awarding committee also review completed student work for a range of marks and compare this to the standard of comparable assessments from the 2016 specification.

Ofqual will also provide awarding organisations with guidance on setting standards for new qualifications, which we do not have yet.





## **We have to set predicted grades for our new languages cohort. How can we do that when we don't have grade boundaries for the new papers?**

In terms of estimating grades, the standard itself has not changed, even though the assessments have. This means that the students for whom you would have predicted a grade 4 in the legacy specification (or any other grade), are likely to get that same grade following the new specification, based on your knowledge of that student, their language competency and so on.

This is because, in addition to all the factors above that help determine where the grade boundaries will fall, there is also the Ofqual

principle of comparable outcomes. Prior attainment data is used to predict the total number of students in England we would expect to achieve each grade in that age group, but not used to predict what grade an individual student should get.

In the context of the new French, German and Spanish GCSE specifications, this means that broadly the same proportion of 16-year-old students in England will achieve a grade 4 and above, for example, as previously achieved a grade 4 and above on the legacy specification. This is unless there is a grading recalibration as we have seen in 2023 and 2024 for MFL, where the percentage of students at a particular grade boundary is changed by Ofqual.

## **Need more support?**

Our dedicated Languages subject advisor, Rebecca Waker, is always available to help answer any of your language-specific queries.

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