

Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1) Mathematics



**Making a difference:
Insights from
summer 2018**

Making a difference

We hope you have had an opportunity to review our summer 2018 Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) Mathematics exam papers, and seen for yourself the results of the improvements we've made to our Foundation and Higher tier assessments.

After every exam series we listen to your feedback, carry out research and carefully analyse the performance data.

Feedback from the summer 2018 assessments has shown that our improved papers really have made a difference.

Here is what we found:

1. We said we'd ensure that the early questions on Foundation Tier papers would be accessible to all students and mainly comprise of one-mark questions.

- 88% of the feedback strongly agreed or agreed with this.
- The average for all students on the first six questions of the papers this year was 78%; last year it was 66%.
- For those students achieving a grade 1, this year they scored an average of 55% on those questions compared to 43% last summer.

What teachers had to say:



"Much more accessible. Nice ramping of difficulty and was a real opportunity to show what students know so that the problem-solving aspects weren't made out of reach of the less able students."



"A positive experience for all especially lower ability - liked the starting questions."



2. We said we'd ensure that the common questions which appear on both Higher and Foundation tier papers are fully accessible to students targeting grades 4 and 5.

- 73% of the feedback strongly agreed or agreed with this.

What teachers had to say:



"The common questions stretched the Foundation tier students while allowing the Higher tier students to 'get going'."

"Accessible common questions on the Higher paper gave students confidence at the start of the paper."

3. We made sure that appropriate language and contexts were used on all questions so that we were testing mathematical ability only.

What teachers had to say:



"The language was much simpler and more accessible to students with weaker language skills (and ESOL). Students said they knew what they were being asked about mathematically."



"The language is clear, simple and doesn't obstruct in any way the application of knowledge."

"The contexts used were much better, and the questions were accessible to students - less complicated wording."

4. We tried to make sure that there was a good coverage of topics tested, including those which are new to the curriculum.

What teachers had to say:



"There seems to be a better balance of content across the papers than last year."

"It's good to see that some major topics were not omitted, this was encouraging for students and teachers."

5. We said the layout of the papers would be reviewed to ensure the diagrams were large enough and students had enough working space.

- 98% of the feedback strongly agreed or agreed with this.

- During the marking period, there was little evidence to suggest that students had difficulties finding enough space to answer questions.

How have these improvements made a difference to results?

We're keen to ensure that our assessments give students the chance to show what they do know rather than what they don't and we've been working hard to ensure there are no barriers that may prevent students demonstrating their mathematical ability.

Grade boundaries and overall performance

The grade boundaries were higher this year than last summer, but we would expect that following on from the improvements to the papers. Research from Ofqual also indicates that during times of reform students performance typically improves as qualifications become embedded.

The mean performance of Year 11 students at both tiers increased in 2018 - up by around 12.5 marks at both Foundation and at Higher tier. We're encouraged that students are being given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge when answering questions, which suggests an overall more positive exam experience.

Tier entry

For those students sitting GCSE 9-1 for the first time, both nationally and at Pearson, there were slightly more entries at Higher tier and fewer at Foundation tier in 2018. The percentage of students gaining a Grade 4 and above at Higher tier (95.9%) is a positive indication that most centres made appropriate tier entry decisions for their students.

Post-16 resits

The cumulative percentage of students achieving a Grade 4 or above has fallen from 70% last summer to 60% this summer. This is due to the fact that this year's cohort comprised a large number of resit candidates (23%) taking the new GCSE 9-1, where last year they had opted for the outgoing A*-G specification.

If we compare purely Year 11 students: last summer 70.9% achieved a Grade 4 and above and this year there was a slight increase to 71.3% achieving a Grade 4 and above.

2018 autumn mock exams

We hope that through the summer 2018 papers you've been able to see the results of the improvements we have made to our Foundation and Higher tier assessments.

These improvements will continue throughout all our future GCSE 9-1 assessments, and we have ensured our 2018 mock papers further exemplify this approach.

You can download the 2018 mock exams and mark schemes now at quals.pearson.com/mathsmaths18autumnmock.

Access to all summer 2018 performance data

We have lots more information and performance data on the 2018 summer exam series. You can download reports, data tables and more from the Maths Emporium. www.mathsemporium.com.



Support that counts

We are here to provide you with continued support throughout the life-time of the GCSE (9-1) Mathematics qualification.

Trusted advice from the leading expert

Our maths expert, Graham Cumming and his team, are available to answer any questions and provide guidance and support, plus you have access to a huge range of free teaching resources and documents at the Maths Emporium.

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Join us at your local network event

We'd love to see you at a collaborative network event in your region where you can network with colleagues, talk to our maths experts and get specific advice you need.

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