

How we award International GCSE (9-1) qualifications

This document outlines the standard framework we use to award International GCSE (9-1) qualifications and specific information on the awarding of the International GCSE English suite to ensure comparability:

- How we have ensured consistency in the transition from legacy (A*-G) to redeveloped (9-1) specifications.
- The importance of 'judgemental grades' as part of the awarding process.
- How we ensure a consistent approach to awarding International GCSEs and GCSEs.
- Specific information on the awarding of **International GCSE (9-1) English Language A**.

How we have ensured consistency in the transition from legacy to redeveloped qualifications

Our approach is to ensure that results are as stable as possible moving from the legacy (A*-G) to the redeveloped (9-1) specifications.

To help us do this, we balance a range of evidence. This includes using historical outcomes of common centres to benchmark the legacy statistical standard and carry it forward, as far as possible, at the key anchor grades - otherwise known as 'judgemental grades' - of 7/A, 4/C and 1/G.

	NEW GRADING STRUCTURE	OLD GRADING STRUCTURE
<p>The new grade 9 represents a new level of attainment and has been introduced to differentiate your top performing students.</p> <p>The bottom of the grade 7 broadly aligns with the bottom of the grade A.</p>	9	A+
	8	
	7	A
<p>There's greater differentiation in the middle of the scale with three new grades 6, 5 and 4 rather than two grades (B and C).</p> <p>The bottom of the grade 4 broadly aligns with the bottom of the grade C.</p>	6	B
	5	
	4	C
<p>The bottom of the grade 1 broadly aligns with the bottom of the grade G.</p>	3	D
	2	E
	1	F
	U	G
		U

What are judgemental grades and how do we use them?

Grades 7, 4 and 1 are 'judgemental grades', which means we look at student work at these key grades as part of the awarding process. We do this to check that the quality of student work at the subject level boundary marks, recommended by the statistics, matches what the Senior Examiners would expect to see from candidates at that level.

The component marks that we publish are notional only – they do not equate to a grade. However, when the subject level grade boundaries are recommended by the senior examiners, it helps them to consider the component performance for a candidate who will achieve, for example, a borderline grade 7 performance for the subject by producing a borderline grade 7 performance on each component¹. You can find a [brief video](#) on our website explaining the Awarding for our new International (9-1) GCSEs.

How we ensure a consistent approach to awarding GCSE (9-1) and International GCSE (9-1)

We use a consistent approach to award our GCSE (9-1) and our International GCSE (9-1). For example:

- We briefed our International GCSE (9-1) senior examiners about the [sawtooth effect](#) to make sure they looked at the quality of work with this concept in mind.
- We take the same approach to setting grade 9 on the International GCSE (9-1) and the GCSE (9-1).
- For tiered subjects such as Mathematics, grades 4 (both tiers) and grade 5 (Foundation) are aligned using the same tier equating methodology for the International GCSE (9-1) Mathematics A as we use for our reformed GCSE (9-1) Mathematics.
- The awarding committee for the International GCSE (9-1) has overlapping members from its counterpart GCSE (9-1).
- We also introduced the use of archive materials from the counterpart GCSE (9-1) to help the International GCSE (9-1) awarding committee better align student performance standards.

How we award the International GCSE (9-1) English Language A

For the first award in Summer 2018 we balanced all of the evidence available to us, ensuring that we used the best data, in the right way, to reach the most robust decisions.

The subject marks for the two optional routes at grades 7, 4 and 1 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Summer 2018 International GCSE (9-1) English Language A subject marks at grades 7, 4 & 1.

English Language A						
Overall grade boundaries			Max Mark	7	4	1
4EA1	English Language A Papers 01 & 02	Subject	150	96	66	16
4EA1	English Language A Papers 01 & 03	Subject	150	98	67	17

¹For teachers, the notional component grade boundaries can be useful as an indicator of grade performance when, for example, an examination paper is used as a future mock examination.

We found that, across the two options, there was a difference of two subject marks at grade 7 and one subject mark at grades 4 and 1. Paper 01 is the common component, but papers 02 (written paper) and 03 (coursework) are alternatives to each other and the subject marks and the notional component marks were set to reflect that difference.

Ahead of the Summer 2019 awards there were two key questions that we needed to be able to address:

- 1) What data could be used to evidence the intended comparability across our International GCSE (9-1) qualifications and GCSE (9-1) qualifications.
- 2) How could we check and make measured adjustments (if required) to ensure comparability of the optional routes within the International GCSE (9-1) English suite².

For the International GCSE (9-1) and GCSE (9-1) comparability, a series of analyses was carried out by comparing two groups of candidates; a group of students who had taken International GCSEs (9-1) and reformed GCSEs (9-1), and a second group who had taken only the reformed GCSEs (9-1).

The analysis aimed to determine whether the achievement of one group of students differed from the achievement of the other group. This was measured in two ways: firstly, a measure of the relationship between a student's attainment in the subject compared with their mean attainment in other GCSEs (9-1) (a mean GCSE measure), and secondly, an overall measure of attainment in one subject compared to attainment in another subject (a "Subject Pairs" measure).

In addition, a psychometric approach was developed for the English suite to equate scores across the two optional routes. Since all candidates sit a common paper, this method links the marks on paper 2 and paper 3 to the common paper (paper 1), and uses that relationship to obtain equated scores. The equating analysis was carried out retrospectively on the Summer 2018 data and showed that we needed to look more closely at the alignment of the optional routes and with more focus on the coursework. In Summer 2019, the equating method was used to make an indicative adjustment across the two routes. The adjustment was smaller than the equating measure but was a balance between moving towards closer alignment and delivering a fair outcome for the Summer 2019 cohort; our agreed approach was an incremental re-calibration.

English Language A is used here to exemplify the alignment process, with the same process being followed for English Literature. The Summer 2019 subject marks for the two optional routes (grades 7, 4 and 1) are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summer 2019 International GCSE (9-1) English Language A subject marks at grades 7, 4 & 1.

English Language A						
Overall grade boundaries			Max Mark	7	4	1
4EA1	English Language A Papers 01 & 02	Subject	150	98	68	18
4EA1	English Language A Papers 01 & 03	Subject	150	102	71	21

²Specifically International GCSE (9-1) English Language A and International GCSE (9-1) English Literature.

The actual subject marks set (compared with Summer 2018 in Table 1) depend on the way the assessments worked this series, but the important thing to note is the **difference** in the subject marks across the two options. In Summer 2019 the difference at grade 7 is 4 subject marks, at grades 4 and 1 it is 3 subject marks. This compares with 2 and 1 subject marks (respectively) in Summer 2018 (Table 1).

Further adjustments are likely to be needed in 2020 to continue this ongoing alignment process. We cannot say exactly what these adjustments will look like, as the examinations have not been sat yet, but the coursework remains the likely focus.

We will continue to use all the evidence, including checking alignment with the GCSE (9-1), in a measured and responsible way to be as fair as possible to each cohort, with the aim of completing this recalibration in 2020. With that in mind, the difference in the subject marks between the two options is likely to be somewhat bigger again in 2020, but we will use the January and Summer series judiciously to complete this work.

What actions do teachers need to take?

There is no need for teachers to make any changes to their approach to marking coursework. As previously, they should apply the marks accordingly.