

UMS

Awarding Modular GCE Qualifications

INTRODUCTION

UMS stands for Uniform Mark Scale. The Uniform Mark Scale is used to convert candidates' component 'raw' marks into uniform marks. This is done in order to standardise marks from year to year. For example, a candidate who just achieves a grade A in a unit one year will receive the same uniform mark as a candidate achieving that same level the following year, regardless of their raw marks.

THE CONVERSION PROCESS

Raw Marks to Grades

Following the marking of scripts, a committee of senior examiners reviews the quality of the work submitted for each individual unit. Using their professional judgement, and statistical and technical evidence, they decide where to set the raw mark grade boundaries for each unit. Table 1 shows possible raw mark grade boundaries for selected units.

Table 1

Unit	Maximum Raw Mark	Raw mark boundaries					
		A	B	C	D	E	N
6341	60	52	46	40	35	30	25
6342	80	69	58	47	37	27	17
6343	60	45	38	31	25	19	13
6344	80	71	60	49	39	29	19
6345	60	55	48	41	34	28	22
6346	60	48	40	32	24	17	10

The table shows that the minimum raw mark required to obtain each grade can vary between units, even when they are marked out of the same total. It should be noted that N will not be published as a grade at any level; it is only used in the conversion of raw marks to uniform marks.

Raw Marks to Uniform Marks

The raw mark grade boundaries and all the candidates' raw marks are entered into Edexcel's computer. The computer converts the raw marks into uniform marks.

A whole A Level is out of 600 uniform marks. These uniform marks are divided between the contributing units in a manner that reflects their weighting. For example, unit 6341 contributes 15% of the A Level and so is out of 15% of the 600 uniform marks, namely 90 uniform marks.

A whole AS level is out of 300 uniform marks. The maximum uniform mark available in any unit remains the same when contributing to an AS level award or an A Level award.

The uniform grade boundaries for each unit are fixed and are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Unit and percentage contribution		Max UMS	Uniform Mark Boundaries					
			A	B	C	D	E	N
6341	15%	90	72	63	54	45	36	27
6342	20%	120	96	84	72	60	48	36
6343	15%	90	72	63	54	45	36	27
6344	20%	120	96	84	72	60	48	36
6345	15%	90	72	63	54	45	36	27
6346	15%	90	72	63	54	45	36	27

It is important to note that the scaling is not a single linear scale of maximum raw mark to maximum uniform mark. This is because the intervals between consecutive raw mark grade boundaries are not necessarily constant, however they are fixed for the uniform marks.

In unit 6343, all candidates who obtain raw marks of 45 or more receive 72 or more uniform marks, up to a maximum of 90 uniform marks. Those scoring raw marks of 38-44 receive 63-71 uniform marks and so on.

The Conversion to Uniform Marks Illustrated

The conversion below uses unit 6343 as an example. Table 3 shows the raw marks and the uniform marks. These marks have been taken from Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 3

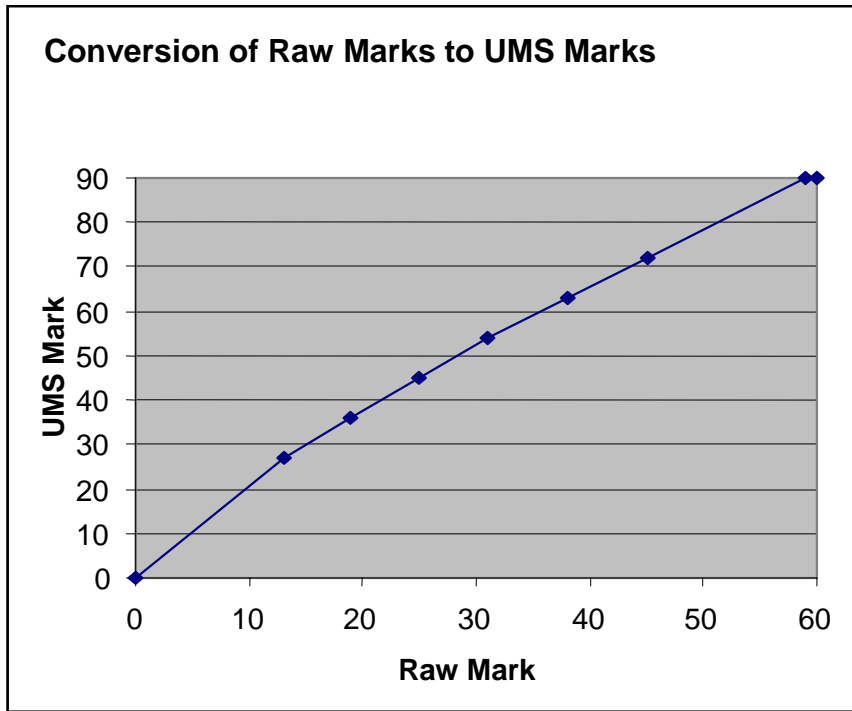
	Maximum Mark	Boundary at each grade					
		A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw Mark	60	45	38	31	25	19	13
UMS Mark	90	72	63	54	45	36	27

Graph 1 shows the pairs of marks plotted with the raw mark on the horizontal axis against the uniform mark on the vertical axis. Straight lines join adjacent points. The line connecting the points for Grade A and Grade B is extended to give the raw mark at which the maximum of 90 uniform marks is reached.

For any raw mark, the uniform mark can be read off the graph. In this example, the maximum uniform mark is awarded for a raw mark below the maximum of 60. In fact, the raw mark is 59 when the maximum uniform mark is reached. All candidates who gain 59 or 60 raw marks will be awarded a uniform mark of 90.

If extending the line connecting Grade A and Grade B results in the maximum raw mark converting to less than the maximum uniform mark then this extension is not used. Instead, a point is plotted of maximum raw mark against maximum uniform mark. A straight line is drawn from Grade A to this point and the resulting line is used to read off the uniform marks in this range.

Graph 1



MAKING THE AWARD

Cashing-in

Table 4 shows the number of uniform marks required to achieve each grade in AS and A level. Like the unit boundaries, these are also fixed.

Table 4

	AS	A level
Maximum mark	300	600
A	240	480
B	210	420
C	180	360
D	150	300
E	120	240

When a candidate 'cashes-in' for an AS or A Level award, assuming eligibility rules are satisfied, the uniform marks from the contributing units are simply totalled to give a final subject mark.

Examples

Using the earlier examples of raw grade boundaries, these examples show how candidates' raw marks for each unit convert to their overall qualification grade.

Table 5 - Cashing-in for an A Level

Unit	Raw Mark	UMS Mark
6341	58	86
6342	42	66
6343	59	90
6344	52	75
6345	37	49
6346	47	71
Total UMS		437

6341: A raw mark of 58 falls within the A range. The number of uniform marks available in this range are: 72-90. 58 raw marks convert to 86 uniform marks.

6342: A raw mark of 42 falls within the D range. The number of uniform marks available in this range are: 60-71. 42 raw marks convert to 66 uniform marks.

6343: The maximum uniform mark is achieved at 59 uniform marks, therefore with 59 raw marks this candidate would achieve 90 uniform marks.

6344: A raw mark of 52 falls within the C range. The number of uniform marks available in this range are: 72-83. 52 raw marks convert to 75 uniform marks.

6345: A raw mark of 37 falls within the D range. The number of uniform marks available in this range are: 45-53. 37 raw marks convert to 49 uniform marks.

6346: A raw mark of 47 falls within the B range. The number of uniform marks available in this range are: 63-71. 47 raw marks convert to 71 uniform marks.

Totalling the uniform marks achieved in each unit gives 437 uniform marks. Reading off from Table 4, it can be seen that the candidate will be awarded a Grade B for the A level.

Table 6 - Cashing-in for an AS Level

Unit	Raw Mark	UMS Mark
6341	38	50
6342	49	74
6343	39	64
Total UMS		188

6341: A raw mark of 38 falls within the D range. The number of uniform marks available in this range are: 45-53. 38 raw marks convert to 50 uniform marks.

6342: A raw mark of 49 falls within the C range. The number of uniform marks available in this range are: 72-83. 49 raw marks convert to 74 uniform marks.

6343: A raw mark of 39 falls within the B range. The number of uniform marks available in this range are: 63-71. 39 raw marks convert to 64 uniform marks.

Totalling the uniform marks achieved in each unit gives 188 uniform marks. Reading off from Table 4, it can be seen that the candidate will be awarded a Grade C for the AS level.