

---

# Level 2 Certificate in Further Mathematics (8365)

## Summer 2021 exam changes and support

---

Version 1.0, Created 1 April 2021

---

**Following JCQ's guidance on putting together a range of evidence for your students and deciding grades, here are some things to consider.**

### Think about what's been taught

---

The first stage in considering grading students this summer is to think about what content has been taught and to what depth, and compare this with a 'normal' year. In Level 2 Further Mathematics (L2FM), the taught is normally delivered in a variety of ways with dedicated, timetabled lessons being unusual. Hence, the judgement of what's different this year isn't always straightforward.

It's important that content essential for progression has been taught, and this will generally be the algebra content that facilitates a good start of A-level courses. It's also important that all students have covered and can be assessed across both assessment objectives (AOs). Students should be graded on both technical fluency and their ability to reason through sophisticated multi-step, abstract problems.

Finally, in considering what's been taught, you'll also want to think about what had been covered when particular assessments were carried out. This will help in judging how to use those results, and in thinking about any essential learning gaps you wish to address and then assess.

### Choose the range of evidence that you'll look at

---

The evidence you collect should, ideally, cover a broad sample of taught content including all content that you consider essential for progression and it should address both assessment objectives. The range of evidence should be the same for all students in a class or cohort as far as possible.

So, mock exams and past papers are likely to be key but may need to be adapted depending on circumstances. This is developed in the next section.

Other material that draws on examination questions is likely to be useful. This could include the following:

- Assessment materials from AQA (<https://www.aqa.org.uk/2021-exam-changes/about-our-assessment-and-support-materials>) – for L2FM, we've focussed particularly on algebra questions though materials covering other content are also available. Of course, there's no requirement to use these materials but they may be helpful. They are supported by marking exemplification.
- Your own collections of past questions – you may create bespoke assessments for your students using items from past papers or specimen materials or other sources.

- 
- Internal tests and homework/classwork that may be relevant – such materials may provide good evidence of attainment against grade descriptors but, as with all evidence, you'll need to be confident that it represents a student's own work.

## Using mocks and past papers

---

Using past exam papers as full or part mocks is a key source as they can give objective evidence using proven materials that cover all aspects of the specification and come with established grade boundaries. However, simply setting mocks and taking the set grade boundaries will not be the fairest approach for all students.

If students cover all content in the depth they usually would and take a mock exam at a time close to the grades submission date, then the established grade boundaries would be a very good guide. However, even that would be one, albeit significant, source of evidence and other material may indicate a different judgement.

It's more likely that mock exams will have taken place earlier in the school year before the course of study was completed. In those circumstances, the grade suggested by the established boundary may well be unrealistic though it may provide a good guide to the minimum overall grade that might be awarded. It would then be a matter of looking at whether other, more recent evidence indicated that a higher grade was most appropriate. So, existing grade boundaries are a guide but should not be taken as definitive.

For level 2 Further Maths, there have been no exams sat for the revised specification. Past papers for the legacy specification will provide good evidence as the content hasn't changed hugely but the grade boundaries will be for the old lettered grading system. The guidance in the next section discusses the relationship between the old and new grading systems.

Individual past paper questions can also provide performance evidence in the same way as other material. Student performance on certain questions can be judged against the grade descriptors (<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/JCQ-Guidance-on-the-Determination-of-Grades-for-A-AS-Levels-and-GCSEs-Summer-2021.pdf>) and the grading exemplification. In maths, this has to be done with care as most questions are relatively short. A fully correct response to one 5-mark question that's considered at grade 7 standard doesn't mean that a student should be awarded a grade 7, especially if most of their responses are less strong.

## Aligning numbered and lettered grades

---

The change from lettered to numbered grades in L2FM is somewhat different from the approach that was taken in GCSE. There are two reasons for this.

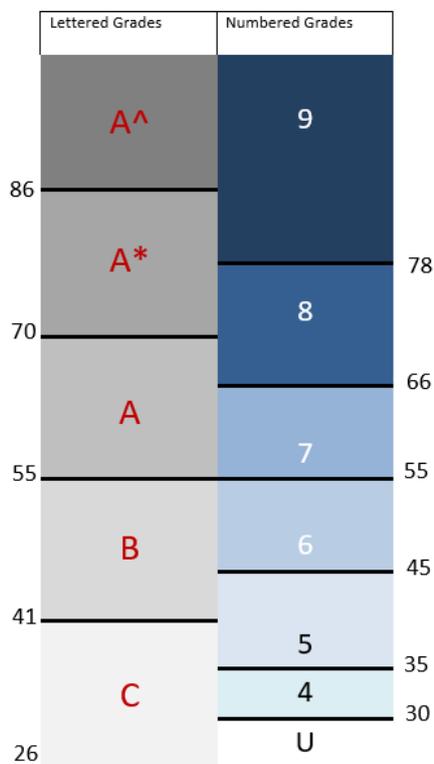
- L2FM was unique in having a grade above A\* from its inception (the A\* with distinction also known as A^). However, it hasn't been awarded in the same way as grade 9 in the past. In moving to numbered grades, we decided that grade 9 in L2FM should be awarded on the same basis as grade 9 in all GCSEs.

- In the revised L2FM, grade 4 is an allowed grade. This means that no marks are targeted at grade 4 and it's a narrower grade width to 'catch' any students who just fail to achieve grade 5. For a qualification aimed at students expected to get grades 7 to 9, this makes sense but it also means that the normal relationship between the bottom of grade 4 and the bottom of grade C does not hold for L2FM.

This means our only easy point of comparison for old and new grading is at grade 7 where the bottom of the grade is aligned with the bottom of A as with GCSE. It's also the case that grade 5 is set so it's likely to be achieved by the top third of students who would have gained grade C under the old structure. The formula used for setting grade 9 means that the boundary is likely to lie somewhere between A\* and A^.

### Comparison with 2019

If the methodology outlined above is applied to the 2019 award then this gives an approximate comparison as shown below. Actual 2019 boundaries (as percentages) are on the left and estimated numbered boundaries, modelled on 2019 data, are on the right. To be clear, these notional 2019 numbered boundaries do not indicate where grade boundaries may be set when the first actual live examination of L2FM under the new structure takes place. In this set of modelled boundaries, it happens that the grade 9 boundary sits half-way between A\* and A^.



---

## Balancing the evidence

---

Once you have all the evidence to make a grading decision, you'll need to consider it holistically to arrive at a final grade. Ideally, the range of evidence will cover all the main content areas (eg algebra, calculus etc) and should address both AOs. It won't be expected to cover all content or every element of the objectives.

It should, however, address the content and skills that you judge are essential for progression at the appropriate level. In L2FM, it may be that evidence from GCSE Maths can be used. However, this must be evidence that's relevant to the content of the level 2 Certificate.

## Relevant resources

---

Assessment materials - <https://www.aqa.org.uk/2021-exam-changes/about-our-assessment-and-support-materials>

Practice papers on All About Maths <https://allaboutmaths.aqa.org.uk/1684>

Past papers (old specification) <https://allaboutmaths.aqa.org.uk/level2FM>

**Available on Centre Services (or e-AQA if you're not yet registered for Centre Services)**

- Grading exemplification