

# GCSE English Language and English Literature

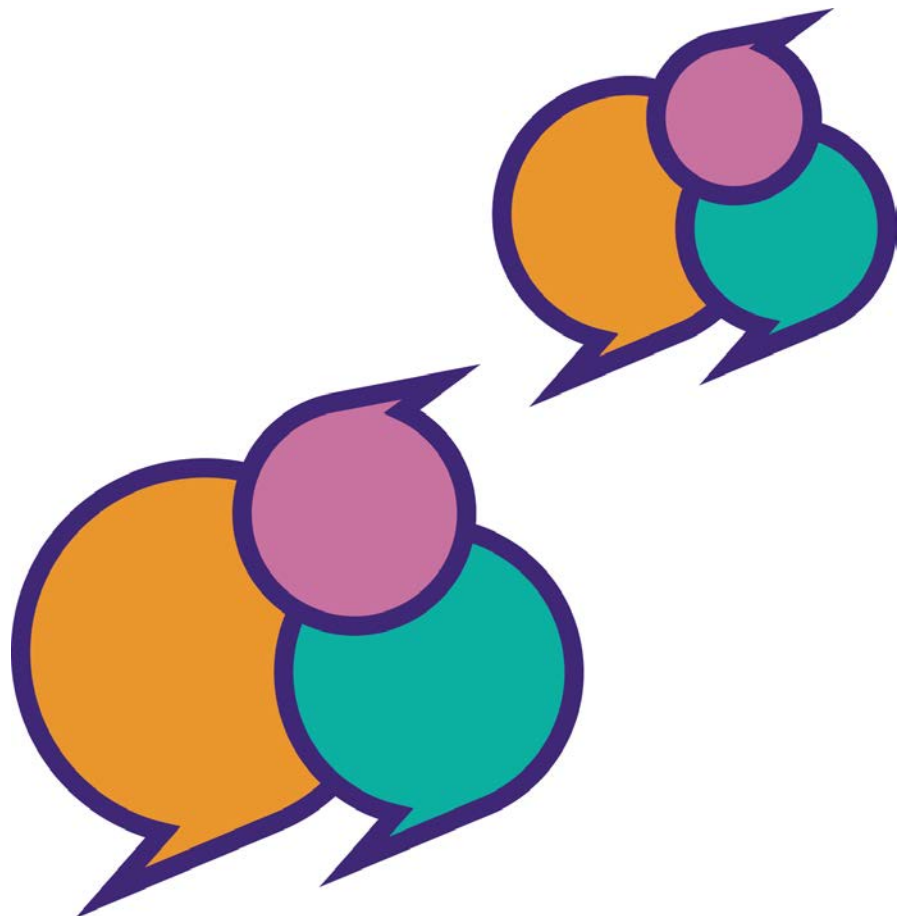
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English Hub School networks, summer 2017

Assessment and awarding demystified

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# About the session

We understand the challenges you face every day. From changing schedules to exam pressures and the shift in assessment methods, we know that this year more than ever you need our support to help inspire and excite your students.

Free English Hub School networks are a chance for teachers to meet and support peers in their region.

The summer 2017 networks are for teachers of both GCSE English specs, and the theme is 'Assessment and awarding demystified'.

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# Session slides

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# English Hub School networks

## GCSE English specifications

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Summer 2017

## What we will cover today

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- Marking processes for the new papers and how we make sure students get the right results.
- How we set grade boundaries and what it means for the new specifications.
- Ways of reviewing and analysing your students' results this summer.
- The systems and support we have available to help you.

## Structure of the day

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- You are going to discuss some statements about the examination system in place for GCSE English specifications in 2017 and work out which might be true or false.
- Follow an examiner journey in order to understand better our marking processes.
- Learn a bit more about how we award and ultimately grade your student scripts.
- Consider the information you will get on results day and the post results services you have available to you.

## Statements about the GCSE English 2017 summer series

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Which are correct and which are false?

## Marking

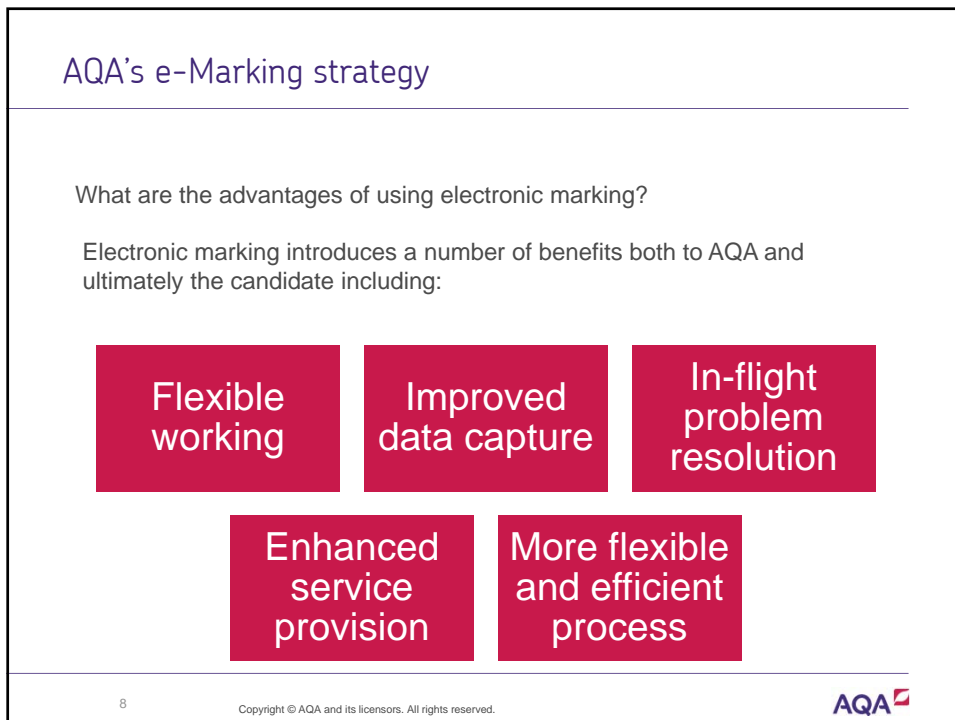
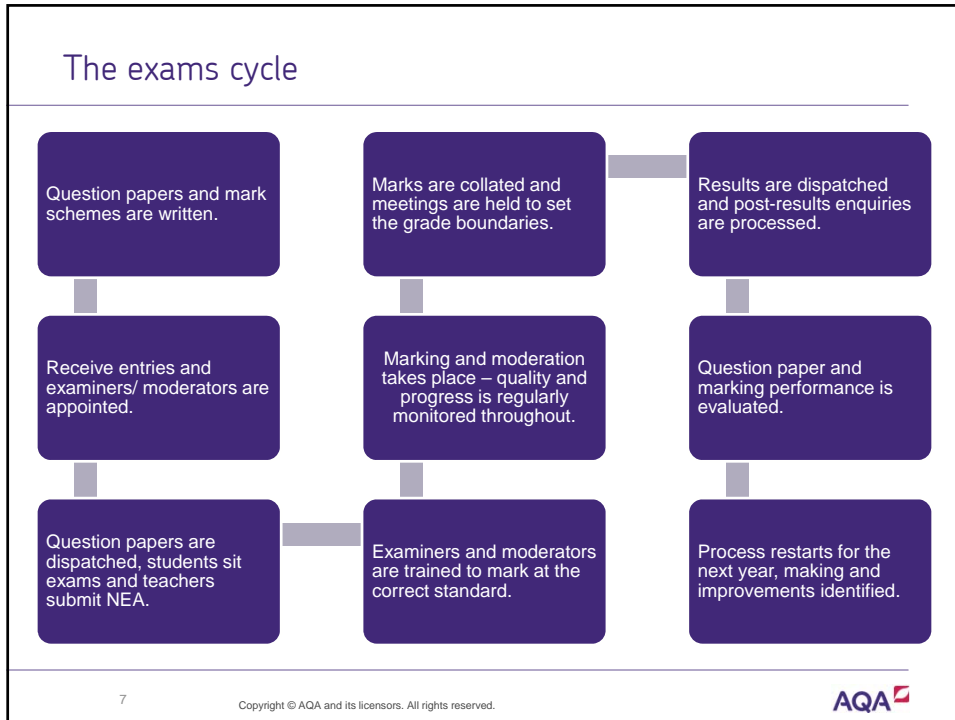
Overview and recap

So....how does it work?

How exams work, a guide to awarding: [bit.ly/2s6hWwH](https://bit.ly/2s6hWwH)







## Quality of examiners

- The examiners complete a range of scripts in advance of being allowed to mark.
- They have to show that they understand the standard before being allowed to start marking live scripts.
- The nature of the training is through an online standardising platform.
- It provides a consistency in the feedback across all the associates.

## Reliability: quality of examiners

The screenshot shows a marking interface for a math problem. The question is: "8 (a) Work out 10 km + 1.5 km + 500 m. Give your answer in metres. [2 marks]". The student's handwritten answer is: "10 km + 1.5 km = 11.5 km", "500 m = 0.5 km", "11.5 km + 0.5 km = 12 km", and "12 km = 12000 m". The examiner has awarded marks: "M1" for the first two lines, "A0" for the third line, "M1" for the fourth line, and "A0" for the final answer. The interface also shows a list of items on the left and a toolbar at the top.

## Reliability: quality of examiners



Task 5 Standardisation Scripts 18 Jun 15:00

Overview Standardisation Scripts

Script:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2b	1/2	2/1	1/0	1/1	2/1	1/1	0/0	2/2		
	0/3	0/2	2/2	2/3	2/3	2/2	2/1	2/2	2/2	2/1
3a										
3b										
4a	2/2	2/1	2/1	1/1	0/0					
	0/1	2/2	1/1	0/1	2/2					
4b										
4c										
5c	2/2	2/2	1/1	0/0	0/0					
6a										

Conversation with team leader needed. Another attempt at items before marking.

Cleared to start marking



## Awarding

What do you need to know and how does it work?

## Things to know about the new GCSE grades – from Ofqual

- GCSEs in England are being reformed and will be graded with a new scale from 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade.
- New GCSE content will be more challenging.
- The new grades are being brought in to signal that GCSEs have been reformed and to better differentiate between students of different abilities.
- Fewer grade 9s will be awarded than A\*s.
- In the first year each new GCSE subject is introduced, Ofqual have stated that broadly the same proportion of students will get a grade 4 or above as would have got a grade C or above in the old system.

## Pass mark

New grading structure	Current grading structure
9	
8	A*
7	A
6	B
5	C
4	
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

Diagram illustrating the pass mark comparison between the new grading structure (9 to 1) and the current grading structure (A\* to G). A horizontal dashed line is drawn between grade 4 and grade 3. An arrow labeled 'Standard pass' points to grade 4 in the new structure. An arrow labeled 'Strong pass' points to grade 5 in the new structure.

## How grades 9 and 8 will be set in the first year of awarding new GCSEs

**Stage 1**  
Set the grade 7, 4 and 1 grade boundaries

**Stage 2**  
Calculate the grade 9 proportion

**Stage 3**  
Set the grade 8 grade boundary

Grade 7 — Grade A  
Grade 4 — Grade C  
Grade 1 — Grade G

Grade 9  
Grade 8  
Grade 7  
bottom of 7 = bottom of A

Grade 8 boundary set arithmetically

Grade boundaries for grades 6 & 5 and grades 3 & 2 will be set arithmetically

The proportion of students that get a **grade 9** will vary by subject. Following the reforms, we expect about 5% of awards to be a grade 9 on average across all GCSE subjects, compared to about 8% at A\* today.

⚠️ HEALTH WARNING: These are national estimates; individual school and exam board results will be different from the national results.

Broadly the same proportions of students will get **grades 7, 4 & 1 and above** in the first year of awarding each new subject as currently achieve **grades A, C & G and above**.

The grade 8 boundary will be halfway between grades 7 and 9.

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## What exactly is awarding?

Awarding is the process by which the grade boundary marks are determined at subject level.

We do this in a way that ensures the standard will be comparable with previous series and with that of other awarding organisations.

A basic guide to standard setting  
Version 1.3

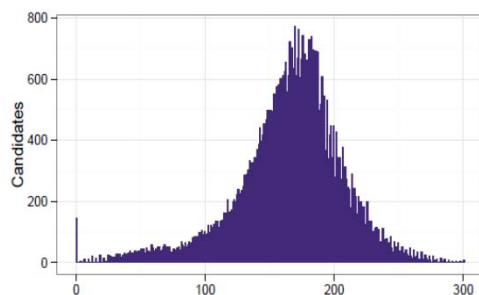
For more information contact a member of the Centre for Education Research and Policy (CERP) at [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)

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## What is the start of the awarding process?

- Once we have enough marks in the system it creates a distribution of student marks.

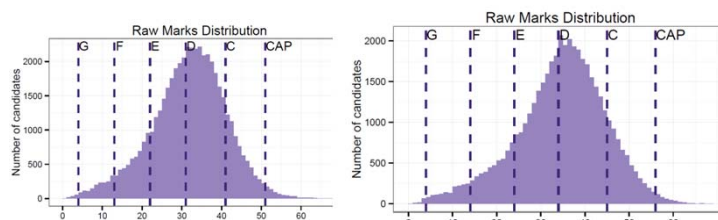


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## What is the start of the awarding process?

- Here are some distribution curves from GCSE Mythological Studies over a 2 year period. *Year 1* is on the left, *year 2* on the right.
- This shows that that the curve has shifted slightly to the right in *year 2*.
- This leads to the grade boundaries moving from one year to the next.



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## Who is involved in awarding?

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At the awarding meeting there will be various people with different roles

- The Chair – responsible for the whole subject.
- The Chief – responsible for the particular specification.
- The Lead Examiners – responsible for the marking of each paper.
- The Lead Assessment Writers – responsible for the writing of questions for each paper.
- The Principal Moderator – responsible for any non examination components.

## So what happens then?

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- The awarding meeting use a balance of judgemental and statistical evidence to make recommendations.
- The committee will look at a range of scripts for each 'judgemental grade boundary' (7, 4 and 1 for GCSE).
- The range covered is based around the judgements of the senior examiners and the use of statistical evidence.
- The statistical evidence considers the ability of the entering cohort of students and also the distribution of marks.

## How is a grade boundary decided?

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### **The 'statistical' element**

Our Centre for Education Research and Compliance (CERP) use a range of statistics to make predictions which suggest the most appropriate statistically recommended grade boundaries. These are based on how comparable students have performed in previous series.

### **The 'judgemental' element**

Senior examiners review a sample of exam answer papers (scripts) from this year's exam series to make judgements on where the grade boundaries should be set. These scripts will be archived and referenced in future series to ensure a comparable standard.

## What exactly happens when setting a grade boundary?

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For each paper, the sample scripts on and around the statistically recommended boundaries are scrutinised by the senior examining team.

The awarding panel will judge whether or not scripts on the marks around the boundaries are worthy of the grade in question. Ultimately, the Chair of Examiners will recommend the boundary mark for that grade.

How does it work if the examiners disagree with the statistical recommendations?



## Tick chart

This is a typical chart that we might see for any paper which shows what the awarders consider when making decisions.

**Upper limiting mark:**  
marks of 68 and above are definitely worth the grade

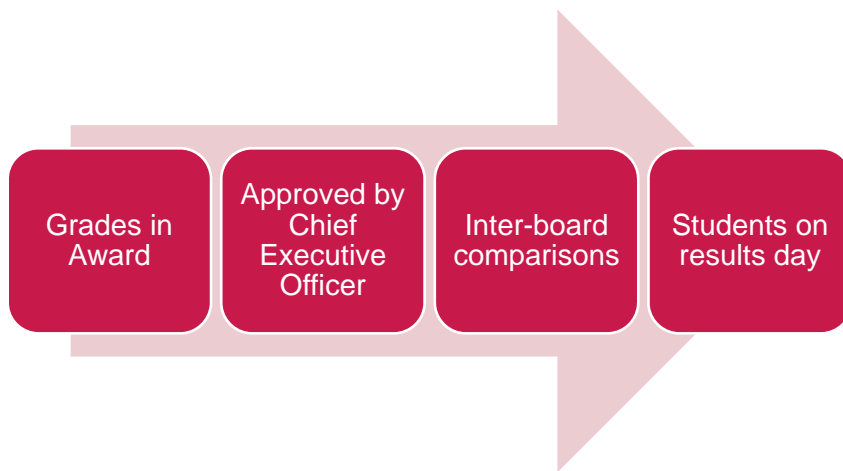
Mark	Awarder 1	Awarder 2	Awarder 3	Awarder 4
69	✓	x✓✓	✓✓✓	x✓
68	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓x	✓✓
67	✓✓x✓	x✓✓	✓✓	✓x?
66	✓✓	✓?	✓✓x	xx
65	✓x	xx	x	xx

✓ script 'worthy' of the grade in question  
script

x 'not worthy' of the grade in question

? awarder unsure of whether the script is worthy of the grade in question

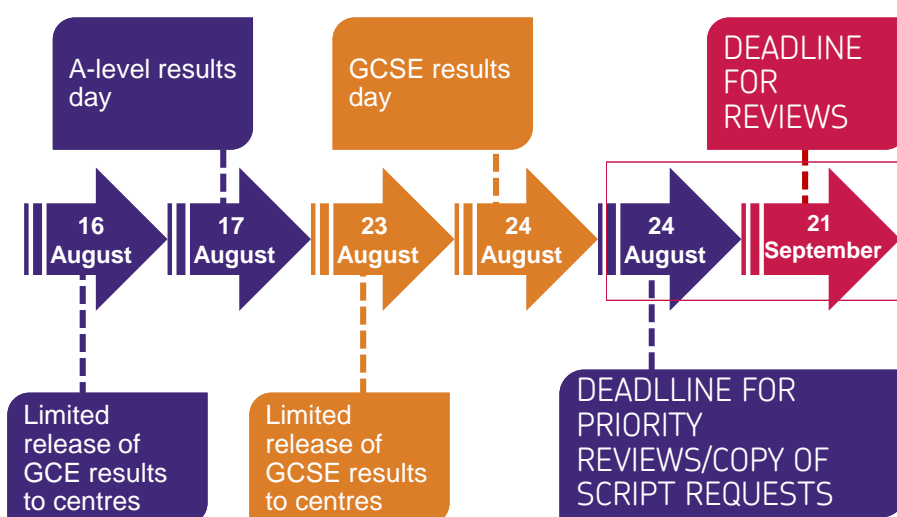
## The bigger process



## Results Day information

What support is available for us on results day?

## Results and post-results timeline



## Restricted release and results days

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### Restricted release day (Wednesday)

- A day before results day.
- Available at 00:01.
- e-AQA is the only place you can access our results e-documents and any late changes or amendments.
- grade boundaries available (00:01 on e-AQA, 08:00 on website).
- Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA).

### Results day (Thursday)

- Can be released to students 06:00 hours.
- Students must not receive results, by post or otherwise, prior to this time.

## What support is available for us?

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- Customer Services team - 0800 197 7162.

[eos@aqa.org.uk](mailto:eos@aqa.org.uk)

<https://www.facebook.com/AQAforexamsofficers>

- Relationship Managers who are linked to your school.
- Enhanced Results Analysis ([aqa.org.uk/era](http://aqa.org.uk/era)).
- Reports on the exam ([aqa.org.uk/eaqa](http://aqa.org.uk/eaqa)).
- Longer term – feedback courses ([aqa.org.uk/cpd](http://aqa.org.uk/cpd)).

## Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)

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- [aqa.org.uk/era](http://aqa.org.uk/era)
- User guides to allow your teachers to be make the best use of the resource.

### Uses for ERA

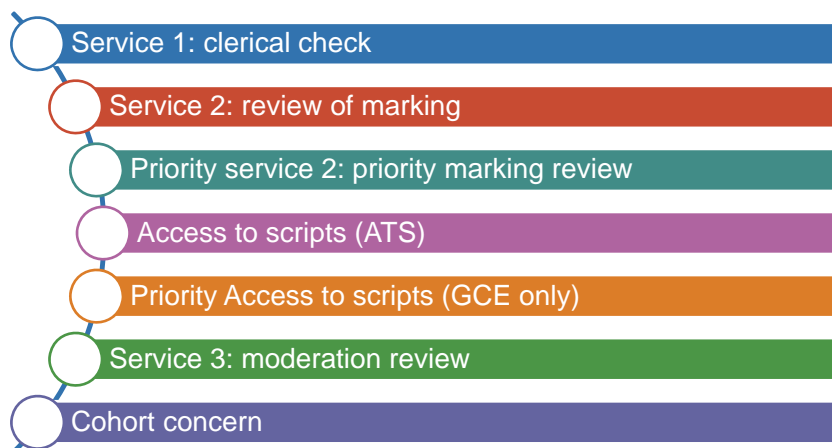
- See how students performed in specific topics .
- Find information to tailor your lesson plans and focus your teaching where it's needed most to maximise every student's progress.
- Spot year-on-year trends and measure achievement against other schools and colleges for a broader perspective.

## Post results services

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The post results services and recent Ofqual's changes to these

## Post-results services



## Post results services – 2016 Ofqual changes

In 2016 Ofqual published 'Decisions on marking reviews and appeals, grade boundaries and The Code of Practice'.

### Post-results key points

- Require marking and moderation errors to be corrected, but not otherwise allow marks to be changed.
- Permit exam boards to accept marking review requests directly from students.
- Permit exam boards to extend the priority access to scripts service to GCSE qualifications.

## Ofqual changes – what they mean to AQA and you?

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**Exam boards required to correct marking and moderation errors but not otherwise change marks.**

We will only review papers to correct genuine marking errors – we can't change reasonable marks.

- Marks may be changed when there is a marking error (can be adjusted upward or downward to correct the mark).
- Marks may be changed when the original marking cannot be supported by evidence from the mark scheme and “the original marking represents an unreasonable application of academic judgement”.

## Ofqual changes – what they mean to AQA

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**Exam boards are permitted to accept requests for reviews and appeals directly from students.**

- We will not be accepting post-results requests directly from students in summer 2017.
- We agree with the JCQ that it's really important that students have the right support when making decisions like this, and schools have the expertise to discuss these issues with exam boards.

**Allow exam boards to offer priority GCSE access to scripts to schools/colleges who want to see them before deciding whether to ask for a review.**

- We're unable to offer priority GCSE access to scripts service summer 2017. We recognise the value of this service, so we're looking into providing this service for future series.

## Enquiries about results: student consent

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- Students must be made aware of the risk of mark and grade changes resulting from a marking review.
- Schools/colleges should have the written consent from a student for any review of marking request (except review of moderation).
- Schools/colleges should keep this consent on file for six months.

## Extended review of marking

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More Ofqual procedural changes for 2017 concerned the extended review of marking.

- The service for AQA is listed as cohort concern.
- Grade protection removed by Ofqual (grades can go down when scripts are reviewed).
- Head of centre will have to endorse the application, ensuring students are aware of the possibility of downward mark change.
- Must be a full cohort review – we can't limit to those students who accept the new risk.



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Thank you

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# True or false? GCSE English summer exams

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## True or false? GCSE English summer exams

Nine statements are listed below. Can you identify these as true or false? We've reproduced three key Ofqual blogs which will help you answer. Find these overleaf.

Statement	T/F?
"Awarding organisations use statistical predictions to help set grade boundaries."	
"One examiner will mark all of a school's question papers for a particular component, ie a Paper 1 or Paper 2."	
"Once an examiner has shown they can mark to the agreed standard, we monitor and check their standard daily."	
"The structure of the GCSE question papers in future years will remain the same as we have seen in 2017."	
"Once examiners have finished marking, AQA will make blanket adjustments to bring marks in line with the correct standard."	
"After the summer, AQA will be able to tell us what grade a response to an individual question would get."	
"The grade boundaries for each paper will stay fixed after we have established them in 2017."	
"It is easier to get a particular grade with one awarding organisation rather than another."	
"Awarding organisations give out a certain fixed number of each grade and this does not change each year."	

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## Prediction matrices explained (Ofqual)

This information is lifted directly from Ofqual's Prediction matrices explained, available in full here: [bit.ly/2rXBP8D](https://bit.ly/2rXBP8D) It contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v.3.0.

"We have said that exam boards will rely more heavily on predictions this year for the new qualifications. But how are the predictions generated? And what do we mean by prediction matrices?"

I've talked in the Levelling the playing field blog ([bit.ly/2s2IP3g](https://bit.ly/2s2IP3g)) about how exam boards use predictions based on prior attainment. They are used to guide awarders' decisions, to make sure standards are aligned between boards, and to maintain standards when qualifications change.

We've made a short explanatory film to show how the exam boards use results from a previous year to predict results for the current year. Watch this film here: [bit.ly/2rXty4E](https://bit.ly/2rXty4E)

### A reminder of how these predictions will be used in 2017

At A-level, exam boards will use predictions to make sure that, in general, a student who would previously have achieved a particular grade will achieve the same grade this year. At A-level, the demand has not changed – in general, it will not be more difficult to achieve a particular grade – but the structure has changed, the subject content has been revised, and the style of papers has changed in some subjects. Senior examiners will, as is always the case, look at student work, to make sure that the grade boundaries suggested by the predictions are appropriate.

In the new 9 to 1 GCSEs, there are changes to the structure and the content is more demanding. In setting standards in these new qualifications, we have been clear that we want to provide an anchor between new and old grades. Exam boards will achieve this by using predictions to achieve the following:

- broadly the same proportion of students will achieve grade 4 and above as previously achieved grade C and above
- broadly the same proportion of students will achieve grade 7 and above as previously achieved grade A and above
- the bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G.

Just like in A-level, senior examiners will look at student work at these key grades, to make sure the grade boundaries suggested by the predictions are appropriate.

Exam boards will also use predictions to maintain standards in the unreformed qualifications.

If you have any suggestions for topics you would like us to cover ahead of this summer's exam series do let us know by either commenting at the end of this blog or emailing [public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk)"

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## Grade boundaries: the problems with predictions (Ofqual)

This information is lifted directly from Ofqual's Grade boundaries: the problems with predictions, available in full here: [bit.ly/2kpTjqZ](http://bit.ly/2kpTjqZ)

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“Would you believe someone who told you now that they could predict, to 1 degree Celsius, the temperature on the day your students get their GCSE results this summer? Perhaps not. You might expect they could get reasonably close, based on previous average temperatures, but the British summer is infamously unpredictable.

We know that the big question for schools this year is where the grade boundaries – the minimum mark required for a grade – will be set in the new GCSEs in English and maths. It's clear why this information would be helpful: to predict likely achievement, to motivate students, to report to parents and others.

Exam boards are not predicting the boundary marks, and are rightly urging caution. Other organisations, responding to teacher requests, are far less cautious. Some organisations have had their member schools sitting their own mock exams and have provided 'results' and 'grade boundaries' on the basis of that exercise. That's really helpful, yes?

Actually, no.

There are many good reasons to be cautious ahead of 2017. Here are our top three.

**1) Even in well-established qualifications, grade boundaries are never set in advance.**

And for good reason. It's almost impossible to predict precisely how much easier or more difficult students will find a paper compared to previous years. Even the examiners who write the papers find it challenging. So exam boards wait until the students have taken the exam, compare their performance to that of previous cohorts, and then set the grade boundaries. 2017 is no different.

**2) 2017 sees the first live exams of new GCSEs in English language, English literature and maths.**

Exam boards have issued specimen papers and some sample answers, but this will be the first time these new style papers are taken by students and so we should be cautious in speculating about where the grade boundaries might be set.

**3) Statistics will play a key role in making sure this year's students are not disadvantaged by being the first to sit these new GCSEs.**

Exam boards will use prior attainment at Key Stage 2 for the 16-year-old cohort to predict likely achievement at the key grades – 1, 4 and 7. The bottom of these grades will be aligned with the bottom of grades G, C and A respectively so the proportions of students achieving these grades or higher will be broadly similar to the previous year. We, and the exam boards, will have the full

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national picture; other organisations will only have a sub-set of the cohort, which may not be representative of the national situation.

Our advice to schools would be this: do not rely on any predictions of grade boundary marks for new GCSEs next summer. They are only a best guess, regardless of any modelling that might have been done. If the boundaries in the summer turn out to be different, which is quite likely for all the reasons set out above, you and your students might be disappointed.

So what can schools rely on? Well, we've already said that exam boards will set standards so that broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as previously achieved a C and above. Similarly, the proportions achieving grade 7 and above will be broadly the same as those achieving the old grade A and above. And we'll be basing this on 16-year-old students (see post *Comparing like with like in 2017*, available here: [bit.ly/2qjkhqt](http://bit.ly/2qjkhqt)).

What does that mean in terms of numbers? In 2016, in English and in maths, about 70% of 16-year-old students achieved a grade C or above. So we'd expect a similar percentage to achieve a 4 and above in 2017. At A, the figures are different in English and maths: in 2016 16% of 16-year-olds achieved an A or above in English and 20% achieved an A or above in maths. Again, we expect these figures to be broadly the same in 2017.

Our priorities during any series are that exams are delivered to plan, results are issued on time and are accurate, and that standards are maintained. We can't tell you what the temperature will be on 24 August this year, but we can tell you that about 70% of 16-year-old students in England will achieve a grade 4 or above. I hope this gives you reassurance as you and your students continue your preparations for this summer."

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## Levelling the playing field (Ofqual)

This information is lifted directly from Ofqual's Levelling the playing field, available in full here: [bit.ly/2s2IP3g](https://bit.ly/2s2IP3g)

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"We often talk about creating a level playing field for students taking their GCSEs, AS and A levels, regardless of which exam board they enter with. That's our aim this summer, in both reformed and unreformed qualifications.

Our priority is to make sure that it is no easier to get a particular grade with one board than another; in other words to align the grade standards between boards (and between tiers for each board in tiered subjects such as GCSE maths). This is particularly important in the reformed qualifications, as exam boards this summer will set the standard for future years.

We judge the comparability of grade standards using the statistical predictions of how many students were expected to each be awarded each grade. We compare each board's results to its prediction and if each board is reasonably close to its prediction, then we judge that the grade standards across all boards are aligned.

### Generating predictions

Here's a recap on how predictions are generated, and an example that I hope will bring this to life.

#### Predictions step 1

First, select an appropriate 'reference year' in the past (for example, 2016). Then, match as many of those students in the reference year to their prior attainment (for A-level, that would mean matching those students to their GCSE results two years earlier and calculating a 'mean GCSE score'). Next, separate those students according to their mean GCSE score and look at how many in the top group achieved an A\*, A, B and so on. If you put all that in a table, you have an 'outcome matrix'. This will tell you what the probability is of a student in the top group for mean GCSE achieving a grade A, or an A\*, for example.

#### Predictions step 2

Once you have that outcome matrix, you can use it with the current year's students. Each board will match its current students to their GCSE prior attainment, and use the outcome matrix to generate a prediction for the key grades (for A-level, that's A\*, A and E). The predictions will reflect the ability profile of the students entering for each board, so one board might have a higher prediction at A\* if it has more students with higher mean GCSE scores.

All of this is done at cohort level, so we are not predicting individual results.

We set 'reporting tolerances' around those predictions, at 1, 2 or 3% **[1]** depending on the number of matched students. The predictions are more reliable the more students you include. So the greater the entry size the closer to prediction the outcomes should be (and the lower our tolerance).

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When the boards set their grade boundaries, they report results to us, and they report how far they are from the prediction for each specification.

### A real-life example

Here's a real example from 2016, taken from the data we publish each year on inter-board comparability: [bit.ly/2roiBvZ](http://bit.ly/2roiBvZ)

In A-level Media Studies there are three specifications offered by AQA, OCR and WJEC. All three have more than 3000 students matched to their mean GCSE score, so the reporting tolerance at grade A for all three boards is plus or minus 1%. That means if each board is within 1% of its prediction at grade A, it does not have to provide any additional evidence to us to support its decision on where to set the grade boundaries. If a board wants to set grade boundaries that means results are outside that 1% tolerance, we consider their evidence but we also consider whether that might affect inter-board comparability.

In 2016, all three boards were within that 1% tolerance. AQA had a prediction of 11% and their results for matched students were 0.4% above prediction. OCR's prediction was 10.2% and their results were 0.4% below prediction. WJEC had a prediction of 10.6% and its results were 0.8% below that prediction. We judge that if all awards are within tolerance, then the grade standards between boards are aligned. Some people describe our approach as norm referencing. It's not, because results can go up and down depending on the ability profile of the cohort (see mythbusting blog, here: [bit.ly/2qj4Bna](http://bit.ly/2qj4Bna)). We don't expect the percentage of students at each grade to be the same across all boards, because the ability profile of each board will be different.

This summer, we'll be comparing exam board results for matched students (those for which the exam boards have prior performance data) against the predictions for each board, and using that to judge the alignment between them.

If you want more information about how boards will align grade standards between tiers in GCSE maths, we have published some slides and commentary, available here: [bit.ly/2ro1OsE](http://bit.ly/2ro1OsE)

And there is also more information about inter-board comparability in 2016.

### Footnote

**[1]** In the case of reporting tolerances, the percentages refer to percentage points. For example, if the prediction is 54% and there is a reporting tolerance of 1%, the exam board can set boundaries that produce results between 53% and 55% without needing to provide additional evidence to support those decisions."

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## Notes



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# Activity: examiner journey

## Activity: examiner journey

This is a randomised list of 16 steps in the examiner recruitment and marking process. Have a go at numbering the steps. The first and last steps have been labelled for you.

<p>Examiners are first contacted by their Team Leader for a supportive discussion.</p> <p><b>#</b></p> <p><i>What do you think they may discuss?</i></p> <p><i>Why do we think this is beneficial?</i></p>	<p>Team Leader makes contact with their examiners half way through the marking period.</p> <p><b>#</b></p> <p><i>What do you think they may discuss?</i></p>	<p>Senior examiners finalise the mark scheme that all examiners will use.</p> <p><b>#</b></p>	<p>Examiners are requested to mark the standardising material.</p> <p><b>#</b></p>
<p>Examiners are trained about the administrative element of marking and how to use the online marking systems.</p> <p><b>#</b></p>	<p>Examiners are given guidance about the standard of their marking, and approved to mark their allocated student responses.</p> <p><b>#</b></p>	<p>Teacher applies to become an examiner through <a href="http://aqa.org.uk/apply">aqa.org.uk/apply</a></p> <p><b>#1</b></p>	<p>Grade boundaries are established.</p> <p><b>#</b></p>

<p>Examiners are given feedback on their overall performance.</p> <p>#16</p>	<p>Exam day.</p> <p>#6</p>	<p>Senior examiners pick standardising material and seeded items that will ensure examiners are monitored throughout their marking.</p> <p>#</p> <p><i>The standardising material is made up from the senior examiners looking at live student responses.</i></p> <p><i>A seed is a response to a question that is marked by the senior examiners. Examiners have certain seeds that they have to mark as part of their allocated scripts.</i></p>	<p>Examiner is requested to do some online training so they understand the principles of the mark scheme.</p> <p>#</p>
<p>All the marking is completed.</p> <p>#</p>	<p>Teacher meets criteria to be an examiner.</p> <p>#</p>	<p>The standard the examiner applies is monitored every day through seeded scripts.</p> <p>#12</p> <p><i>What do you think happens if their marking is not accurate?</i></p>	<p>Examiners download batches of scripts to mark. These include seeded scripts.</p> <p>#</p>

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# A basic guide to standard setting

This guide is available as a standalone download via; [bit.ly/2rWbvhb](https://bit.ly/2rWbvhb)

For more information contact a member of AQA's Centre for Education Research and Policy (CERP) team via [research@qa.org.uk](mailto:research@qa.org.uk)

# A basic guide to standard setting

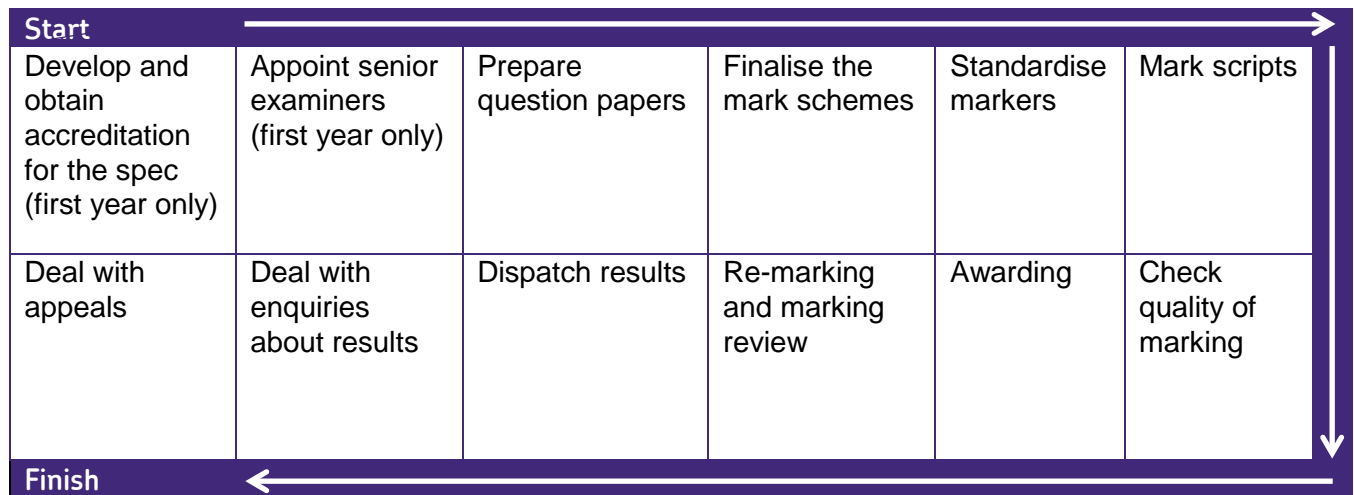
## Introduction

This is a guide to AQA's normal procedures for setting standards in all its qualifications. These procedures comply with those specified in the various A-level and GCSE qualification level conditions and guidance documents issued by Ofqual (links for the A-level and pre-reform GCSE versions are attached below<sup>1</sup>). (At the time of writing the versions for reformed GCSEs have not been published.) These are generally referred to as the **standard setting requirements** and are designed to promote quality, consistency, accuracy and fairness in assessment and standard setting. On occasion, alternative procedures, still within the standard setting requirements, may be used, if necessary. The **Data Exchange Procedures** for each series (which are published on Ofqual's website) are also observed. The standard setting requirements and Data Exchange Procedures help to ensure that standards are maintained in each subject, across awarding organisations and different specifications from year to year, and provide a basis for good practice in all aspects of the examining process. The process of standard setting is often referred to as awarding, and comprises determining the grade boundaries for an examination.

## Where does awarding fit in the exam cycle?

Awarding is a crucial part of the examination process which, once the qualification is established, begins with the setting of question papers and mark schemes and ends when the final results are produced. The examination process and all its inter-related procedures altogether take about two years to complete.

## Exam process overview



<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-qualification-level-conditions-and-requirements](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-qualification-level-conditions-and-requirements);  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-qualification-level-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-qualification-level-guidance);  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-qualification-level-conditions-for-pre-reform-qualifications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-qualification-level-conditions-for-pre-reform-qualifications);  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-reform-gce-qualification-level-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-reform-gce-qualification-level-guidance);  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-a-to-g-qualification-level-conditions-and-requirements](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-a-to-g-qualification-level-conditions-and-requirements);  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-a-to-g-qualification-level-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-a-to-g-qualification-level-guidance);  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-reform-gce-qualification-level-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-reform-gce-qualification-level-guidance);  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-a-to-g-qualification-level-conditions-and-requirements](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-a-to-g-qualification-level-conditions-and-requirements);  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-a-to-g-qualification-level-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-a-to-g-qualification-level-guidance).

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## Why hold an awarding meeting?

In developing their question papers, examiners aim to produce papers of similar demand to those of previous years but, in practice, it is impossible to determine precisely the relative difficulty of the questions for the students until they have taken the examination. A paper may turn out to be slightly more difficult, or slightly easier, than those of previous years. Therefore, a student's script given a particular mark this year cannot necessarily be assumed to deserve the same grade as a student's script given the same mark last year. The demand of the paper may be different; the marking scheme may be more severe or more lenient. These, and further factors, must be taken into account before students' marks can be translated into grades.

Consequently, once the examination scripts have been marked, an awarding meeting is held for every specification to set grade boundaries on each question paper (or other external or internal assessment), otherwise known as **components**. The **boundary mark** for a given grade is the minimum mark a student must score on that paper, or subject, to obtain the grade in question<sup>2</sup>. The primary aim when setting grade boundaries in established specifications is to maintain standards in the subject from the previous year and across awarding organisations by ensuring it is no harder or easier for a student to obtain a particular grade than in previous years. (This is called the **comparable outcomes** approach and is promoted by Ofqual.) In new specifications, the aim is to maintain the inter-awarding organisation standards of previous specifications in the subject, following the principle of comparable outcomes.

## Who attends an awarding meeting?

Awarding committees are usually made up of between four and eight members, who together are responsible for assisting the Chair of Examiners in recommending appropriate grade boundary marks for the examination. The committee normally includes:

- **the Chair of Examiners (one for each subject):** responsible for maintaining standards across different specifications in a subject within a qualification, and from year to year
- **the Chief Examiner (one for each specification):** responsible for ensuring that the examination as a whole, including both internal and external assessment, meets the requirements of the specification and maintains standards from year to year
- **the Lead (or Principal) Examiner (one for each externally assessed paper):** responsible for maintaining standards within a question paper from year to year and for standardising the marking<sup>3</sup>
- **the Lead (or Principal) Moderator (one for each internally assessed paper):** responsible for maintaining standards within an internal assessment from year to year. The Lead Moderator ensures that the assessment criteria are being applied to consistent standards
- **two awarding organisation officers:** the Awarding Officer and the Statistical Officer.

Where necessary, the awarding committee may include other individuals with particular expertise in the subject concerned. In addition, non-participatory observers, for example from Ofqual, sometimes attend the meeting.

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<sup>2</sup> Note that in linear specifications, the grade boundaries are meaningful only at subject level; on the individual papers the grade boundaries are purely notional.

<sup>3</sup> The Lead Assessment Writer is responsible for preparing the questions and mark schemes for one or more question papers, but does not normally attend the award

## Which grades does the awarding committee consider?

The awarding committee does not look at work at every grade of each paper, but scrutinises work and explicitly recommends grade boundaries for specific grades only. These are, consequently, called the judgemental grades in recognition of the fact that awarders' judgements are directly involved in the boundary setting. The judgemental grades for the papers differ according to the examination (see table below).

Examination	Judgemental grades (in scrutiny order)
AS; A-level; Level 3 Certificates	E, A
Unitised GCSE; Level 1/2 Certificate (untiered)	C, A, F
Unitised GCSE; Level 1/2 Certificate (tiered)	C, F (Foundation); C, A (Higher) <sup>4</sup>
Unitised (outgoing) GCSE English/English Language Speaking and Listening Endorsement	Grade 3, Grade 5, Grade 1
Linear GCSE; (untiered)	Grade 4, Grade 7, Grade 1
Linear GCSE; (tiered)	Grade 4, Grade 1 (Foundation); Grade 4, Grade 7 (Higher) <sup>5</sup>
Entry Level Certificate	Entry 2, Entry 3, Entry 1 <sup>6</sup>
Level 1/2 Certificates (Short Course) in Preparation for Working Life and Enterprise & Employability	Level 1, Level 2
Functional Skills Entry and Levels	Pass (at the appropriate Level of Entry)
FCSE	Merit, Distinction, Pass
Tech Level 3 / Applied General	Pass, Distinction
Foundation Project (Level 1)	B, A*
Higher Project (Level 2)	C, A*
Extended Project	E, A*

Any remaining grade boundaries are called **arithmetic boundaries** because they are determined by calculation, without any judgement involved. The arithmetic grades are either set evenly between the judgemental grades already proposed, statistically (for example, GCSE grade 9), or calculated by extrapolation (for example unitised GCSE grade G).

For example, on a unitised A-level (A2) unit with a maximum raw mark of 90 for which the judgemental grade A and E boundaries have been set as 77 and 35 respectively, grades B, C and

<sup>4</sup> The judgemental boundaries for tiered unitised GCSEs are taken in the order C (Foundation), C (Higher), A, F.

<sup>5</sup> The judgemental boundaries for tiered linear GCSEs are taken in the order grade 4 (Foundation), grade 4 (Higher), grade 7, grade 1

<sup>6</sup> In ELC Step Up to English (Silver), the judgemental boundaries are taken in the order Entry 1, Entry 2. In ELC Step Up to English (Gold), Entry 3 is the only judgemental boundary.

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D would calculate to 66, 55 and 45. The difference between 77 and 35 is 42, which, divided by 4, is 10, with 2 remainders. A difference of 10 marks between the grades is therefore used as the basis but, working progressively from the top grade downwards, one remainder is included in the mark calculation each time until they are used up, thus:

- 77 has already been established judgementally as the mark to be recommended for grade A
- $77 - 11$  (ie 10, plus one of the remainders) = 66 = grade B
- $66 - 11$  (ie 10, plus the second remainder) = 55 = grade C
- $55 - 10$  (there are no further remainders to use) = 45 = grade D
- $45 - 10$  then correctly calculates to 35, the mark already established judgementally for grade E.

A similar approach is used to calculate the arithmetic boundaries on all other examinations.<sup>7</sup>

To calculate the A\* conversion point for an A2 unit in a unitised A-level specification, the approach is as follows:

- where the difference between the grade A boundary mark and the maximum mark on the unit is more than twice that between A and B, the A\* conversion point is normally the same distance above A as B is below A
- where the difference between the grade A boundary mark and the maximum mark on the unit is less than or equal to twice that between A and B, the A\* conversion point is normally halfway between A and the maximum raw mark. This is rounded down, where necessary, to the nearest whole number below (eg 78.5 is rounded to 78).

In the example above, the A\* conversion point for the A2 unit would be calculated by the second approach, because the difference between A and the maximum mark for the unit is  $90 - 77 = 13$  marks, which is less than twice the difference between A and B ( $2 \times (77 - 66) = 22$ ). The A\* conversion point is therefore  $77 + (13 \div 2) = 83.5$ , which is rounded down to 83.

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<sup>7</sup> Again note that in linear specifications, the grade boundaries are meaningful only at subject level; on the individual papers the grade boundaries are purely notional.



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## What information is available to the awarding committee to guide its recommendations?

Before the meeting, the awarding committee members are sent various materials to help them prepare, including:

- question papers and mark schemes from last year and this year
- students' work at the judgemental grade boundaries for last year (where appropriate)
- in legacy unitised specifications only, if available, performance descriptors or grade descriptors for the specification. These summarise what is expected from students at each judgemental grade.

Within the meeting, the awarding committee's grade boundary recommendations are based on:

- the members' professional judgement of how the quality of the current students' work seen in this year's scripts (or other external or internal assessment) compares with that of previous students in last year's scripts, taking into account any change in the demand of the question paper
- the statistical data which are available, showing how the marks awarded in the current examination compare with those awarded in previous years.

Both forms of evidence are used to balance the decision-making process and ensure that the committee members are fully aware of the implications of each recommendation. Before considering each grade boundary the committee reviews the information available to help it understand how the examination has operated in practice, including:

- reports from the Lead Examiner or Lead Moderator on how the question paper (or other external or internal assessment) functioned this year, including, where necessary, his/her recommendations for the judgemental grade boundary marks for that paper;
- statistical information relevant to the examination and/or to each paper, which will normally include:
  - the mark allocations for each paper and any scaling factors applied to achieve the weightings set out in the specification
  - details of how many students obtained each mark (that is the mark distribution)
  - statistical predictive modelling taking into account the ability of students this year compared to previous years to ensure that, having accounted for ability, the comparable outcomes approach is upheld, ie that the proportions of students being awarded each judgemental grade are maintained
  - statistical recommendations for the component's judgemental grade boundary marks for the paper, which take into account evidence from other AQA specifications in the same subject, where relevant, and also from other awarding organisations.

Other statistical information may be used in addition, or alternatively, if there is sufficient evidence that it would enhance the decision-making in the award.

## How does the awarding committee recommend each grade boundary mark?

On each judgemental grade boundary, each committee member independently scrutinises scripts in a mark range covering the grade boundary mark suggested by the statistical evidence (the **Statistically Recommended Boundary** or **SRB**) and records whether or not he/she considers it worthy of the grade. Between them, the committee members scrutinise as many scripts in the range as possible.

They do not all look at the same scripts and each member is encouraged to come to his/her own recommendation about each script he/she has seen. Scripts on the grade boundary from last year, grade descriptors and performance descriptors are also referred to, as appropriate, during the scrutiny.

A **tick chart** is then used to summarise the committee's recommendations overall. The committee determines two limiting marks within which they consider the grade boundary lies (here 68 and 66, see Figure 2). The Chair then selects a recommended boundary mark, within the limiting range, taking both the committee's judgement and the statistical evidence into account<sup>8</sup>. The limiting range can also be referred to as the **zone of uncertainty**. As shown in Figure 2, the SRB is included at the top of the tick chart, for the committee's ease of reference during the grade boundary discussions.

### Example tick chart for a judgemental grade boundary of a particular paper

SRB = 67

Mark	Awarder 1	Awarder 2	Awarder 3	Awarder 4
69	✓	x✓✓	✓✓✓	x✓
68	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓x	✓✓
67	✓✓x✓	x✓✓	✓✓	✓x?
66	✓✓	✓?	✓✓x	xx
65	✓x	xx	x	xx

**Upper limiting mark:**  
marks of 68 and above are definitely worth the grade

**Lower limiting mark:**  
marks of 65 and below are definitely not worth the grade

- ✓ script 'worthy' of the grade in question
- x 'not worthy' of the grade in question
- ? awarder unsure of whether the script is worthy of the grade in question

<sup>8</sup> In the first award of a reformed specification, for various reasons (for example the change to the specification structure) the statistical evidence provides the best indication of where the subject boundaries should be positioned. Therefore, in the initial awarding series the awarding committee will not normally move away from the SRB within the zone of uncertainty.

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## What happens after grade boundary recommendations?

Once grade boundary recommendations are made on all the individual papers, they are combined to establish the outcomes for the subject as a whole. In specifications which were designed as, or thought likely to become, modular, this process requires the use of uniform marks (see below). In specifications which were designed to be linear the component boundaries for each paper are scaled and summed to establish each student's mark for the overall subject. The scaling takes account of the weightings of the components.

In all specifications the subject outcomes are then reviewed by the committee. In an established specification with large numbers of students taking the examination, the percentage of students obtaining each grade is not be expected to change much from year to year. If the qualitative and quantitative evidence are in agreement, the Chair of Examiners summarises the awarding meeting outcomes in a short, general report. Otherwise, the Chair must justify his/her recommendations in a detailed, written report.

## Who decides whether the committee's recommendations are right?

All the grade boundary recommendations and the resulting outcomes are recorded and combined with the reports from the meeting. A senior member of staff who has been authorised to approve awards considers the outcomes in a provisional approval meeting with the Awarding Officer, Statistical Officer and, if necessary, the Chair of Examiners. The documents are then passed to the AQA Responsible Officer, who considers and comments on every award, taking into account the Approver's written report from the provisional approval meeting, the Chair's documented comments and the statistical and technical evidence. Final approval for the award rests with the AQA Responsible Officer.

## The use of uniform marks in unitised specifications

In specifications which were designed as, or thought likely to become, modular, after the grade boundaries for each unit<sup>9</sup> have been agreed, the students' raw marks<sup>10</sup> are converted into uniform marks. The conversion uses the grade boundaries set at the awarding meeting and is carried out according to a standard procedure agreed between the awarding organisations and the regulators. Although a given raw mark may not represent the same level of achievement in different exam series, a given uniform mark always represents the same level of achievement and can be directly related to a grade.

The uniform mark for a unit also takes account of the weighting of the unit within the specification. If one unit has twice the weighting of another, the maximum uniform mark available for the first unit will be twice that available for the second. The relationship between uniform marks and grades (for each unit and for the qualification overall) is shown in tables on the Exams Administration pages of the AQA website, where there is also a convertor which can be used to calculate uniform marks from raw marks.

To determine a student's qualification grade, the student's uniform marks for the units in the specification are added together. The total uniform mark is then converted to a grade using the equivalences shown in the tables on the Exams Administration pages of the AQA website. Uniform marks and grades are reported for each unit, as well as for the overall qualification.

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<sup>9</sup> ie for each question paper and/or other internally or externally assessed task.

<sup>10</sup> The marks awarded by the examiners for the external units, and the moderated marks for any internal units.

## Grade A\* and grade 9

To be awarded A\* in unithised A levels, students must achieve grade A on the A-level overall and at least 90% of the maximum uniform mark on the aggregate of the A2 units. The same requirement applies in GCSE A\* to G qualifications.

In the new linear A-levels, the A\* subject boundary will be set statistically to ensure that standards at this grade are maintained from the unithised A-level specifications and remain comparable across awarding organisations.

In the new linear GCSEs, the grade 9 boundary will be set in the first year according to a statistical formula which ensures that, across all subjects, about 20% of grades at 7 or above will be a grade 9. In subsequent years the grade 9 boundary will be set statistically to ensure that standards at this grade are maintained from the previous year.

## Overall, how does the process fit together?

Below summarises the steps normally followed in an awarding meeting<sup>11</sup>. The aspects of the process which are central and which are repeated for each paper and judgemental boundary are highlighted in bold.

### Overview of the process followed in an awarding meeting

	Welcome from the Chair of Examiners
	Introduction by Awarding Officer and Statistical Officer
	General statistical comment by Awarding Officer and Statistical Officer
Repeat process for each judgemental grade of each paper	<b>Report by the Lead Examiner or Lead Moderator for the paper</b>
	<b>Presentation of detailed statistics for the paper</b>
	<b>Study of last year's scripts at that grade boundary</b>
	<b>Scrutiny of this year's scripts for that grade boundary</b>
	<b>Recommendation for that grade boundary</b>
	<b>Complete awarding documentation</b>
	Evaluation of outcomes of all papers and confirmation of subject outcomes
Chair closes meeting and writes report	
Provisional approval meeting to discuss the outcomes of the award	
Awarding documentation sent to AQA Responsible Officer for final approval	

<sup>11</sup> In an award held on-line, certain aspects will change by necessity, for example the oral reports and introductory comments will be presented in written form. Also, in the first award for a reformed specification studying scripts at the last year's grade boundary is not appropriate.

## Glossary

<b>Arithmetic grade boundary</b>	A grade boundary for a paper which is determined by calculation, based on the judgemental boundaries which have already been established for that paper.
<b>Awarding</b>	The process of translating the marks which students have been given into grades.
<b>Awarding committee</b>	The group of people, comprising senior examiners and awarding organisation staff, who are collectively responsible for recommending the grade boundaries for an examination.
<b>Awarding meeting</b>	The meeting at which grade boundaries are determined for an examination. For an established specification, the aim of the meeting is to place this year's boundaries on marks which produce outcomes comparable to those of previous series.
<b>Awarding Officer</b>	The AQA officer who oversees the running of the award. The Awarding Officer does not scrutinise scripts in the awarding meeting but is still a full member of the awarding committee, advising the awarding meeting and directing its procedures.
<b>Comparable outcomes</b>	The approach to awarding promoted by Ofqual which statistically maintains subject standards both between years and between awarding organisations by ensuring that a student achieving a certain grade in a subject in the current year could expect to have achieved the same grade in previous years.
<b>Component</b>	A discrete assessable element within a qualification for which the results are not formally reported.
<b>External assessment/unit</b>	A form of assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are set by the awarding organisation, taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marked by the awarding organisation.
<b>Grade boundary</b>	The minimum mark required to achieve a particular grade on a paper.
<b>Judgemental boundary</b>	A grade boundary for a paper which is determined directly by script scrutiny and discussion of all the evidence available, both qualitative and quantitative.
<b>Lower limiting mark</b>	The lowest mark in the awarding committee's zone of uncertainty for a particular grade. Any marks below this are not considered worthy of the grade in question
<b>Non-exam assessment (NEA)</b>	A term used in reformed specifications to denote a form of assessment in which full exam conditions do not apply. The subject-level conditions will specify the controls that will apply to how tasks are set, the conditions under which they will be done and how they will be assessed.
<b>Regulatory authorities</b>	The three key partners overseeing the maintenance of consistent standards across awarding organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), Qualifications Wales and the regulatory arm of the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).
<b>Responsible officer</b>	The person in each awarding organisation who is ultimately responsible for the standards of all examinations offered by that awarding

	organisation, as required by the standard setting requirements.
<b>SRB</b>	The Statistically Recommended Boundary for a judgemental grade. This is based on the best quantitative evidence available for the paper under discussion and calculated as the mark which maintains standards from last year as closely as possible.
<b>Statistical Officer</b>	The AQA officer who attends the awarding meeting as a statistical and technical advisor. The Statistical Officer is a full member of the awarding committee but, like the Awarding Officer, does not scrutinise scripts in the awarding meeting.
<b>Tick chart</b>	Essentially a grid, which is completed for each judgemental grade boundary. It shows each awarding committee member's decisions as to whether each of the scripts he/she scrutinised was, or was not, worthy of the grade in question. Once completed, this grid depicts the view of the awarding committee as a whole.
<b>Unit</b>	The smallest part of a non-linear qualification for which the results are formally reported. In rare instances a unit may comprise two separately assessed components.
<b>Upper limiting mark</b>	The top mark of the awarding committee's zone of uncertainty for a particular grade. Scripts at this mark and above are considered definitely worthy of the grade in question (see Figure 2).
<b>Zone of uncertainty</b>	The limited range of marks within which the awarding committee's judgements indicate that the grade boundary should lie. By definition, within this range, the committee as a whole is uncertain about exactly where the grade boundary should be situated.

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# Case study: 5 Enhanced Results Analysis uses every HoD should know about

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## Case study: 5 Enhanced Results Analysis uses every HoD should know about

**Rory McQueen**



### About the contributor

Rory McQueen is now in his eighth year of teaching and has been Head of the English Department at Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy in Stoke-on-Trent for 3 years. He is currently an English ENG8700 examiner and a keen Rugby League player. Rory enjoys blogging, when his two young children allow him the time, and some of his views can be found via @WeROssma on Twitter.

Access Enhanced Results Analysis: [aqa.org.uk/era](https://aqa.org.uk/era)

### The role of ERA

Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA) completely transformed how our youthful, enthusiastic but inexperienced English team used external data. Previously we just used grades to measure outcomes and manage staff performance, but ERA helped us challenge the efficiency with which we used the data our school experience is judged on. We learned to fear our data less, and better utilise it to enhance performance.

### Identifying issues and addressing them faster

With ERA we were able to view our performance in the exam by question.

Not only that but we also had the option to compare our performance on each question to other centres in similar contexts, as well as compare nationally. Instantly we were made aware of areas we needed to develop, and also the areas where we had bucked a trend of underperformance, either nationally or with similar centres. ERA helped accelerate our department towards addressing these issues; creating actions that had used limited effort and time in terms of input, but had huge impact for both staff and students.

### Ranking student performance question-by-question

ERA allowed us to rank student performance by question. Instantly we were able to view which students analysed language most effectively, which did not, and where our more successful persuasive writers came from in terms of class and teacher. This instant insight (viewable from the day results were released) created a number of avenues to explore.



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### Focussing CPD more smartly

In-house CPD suddenly became more specialised and cost effective – skills and expertise of specific teachers were shared and secrets to individual successes disseminated within the department; then embedded in all lessons for all learners.

This, added to the Chief Examiner's report, is still an essential part of developing and planning how to shape teaching and learning for the following year – especially in regard to exam practice and enhancing the exam performance for pupils. We found that a particular staff member taught language analysis in a very specific way, on average out performing groups of similar ability students (in different groups) by 2.3 marks. With this insight, we were able to bring all students broadly in-line.

### Differentiating exemplar scripts

Paying to have selected scripts returned from the exam board became far more worthwhile – we could create differentiated exemplar scripts for middle ability and higher ability students.

We could identify which students achieved the most marks per question, meaning we had an informed decision on which scripts to request on results day. We now use the exemplar scripts as anchoring points for future departmental moderation as well as marking our own mock papers in-line with examiner expectations. Students also see the value in using them as a comparison when peer and self-assessing. Sometimes it is difficult to explain why a response achieved 10 out of 16 marks, whereas a response marked by an examiner to compare their own to enables them to evaluate and compare what they have produced.

### Matching students with the right staff

We created our own ERA sheets after in-house assessments and mock exams, which meant we could ensure that the right student was placed with the right member of staff based on their individual skill deficit (or strength) in specific questions.

For example, if Student A struggled to evaluate language and form a viewpoint, we could see that it was Mr X's class that excelled in that area. Therefore, he would either: teach that pupil next year as a class teacher, become that student's revision tutor, or work closely with student A's teacher to ensure that class received the best guidance.

### Before and after

ERA helped us extract greater value from our data – something I believe contributed distinctly to our improved results.

When we were introduced to ERA our cohort consisted of 158 pupils, achieving 26 grades at B and two grades at A. We achieved no certification of A\*.

After 3 years of using ERA effectively, in August 2016 of a cohort of 138 pupils, 48 achieved a grade B, a further 17 students achieved grade A and 3 students achieved A\*. A transformational change in a cohort with the same starting points contextually and academically (KS2 data).

### What next?

As we move into an exam only assessment environment, understanding the mark schemes and demands in the exam room will become all the more valuable.

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I believe other than actually being an examiner ERA may be the most cost effective and beneficial means of:

- identifying areas for students to focus on in future cohorts
- identifying where CPD needs to take place for your staff.

As a department we have led whole-staff CPD on how to utilise ERA in other subjects. In the English department we currently have 7 AQA English examiners (Literature and Language combined) in our department of 10. This, added to the way we use ERA to inform more impactful practice, makes for a very exciting future for English Language and Literature at Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy.

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# The complete ERA reference guide

Enhanced Results Analysis is a free online tool offering you instant analysis on your students' exam results. We've directly reproduced our user guide, available to download from [aqa.org.uk/era](https://aqa.org.uk/era)

# Unleash the potential...

## Getting started



Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA) is a free online tool, offering instant exam results analysis by school, subject, classes/groups and individual students. ERA is used by thousands of teachers to identify their students' strengths and weaknesses, and improve performance. **More than 43,000 teachers are already using ERA so what are you waiting for? Unleash its potential today!**

“ERA is really easy to use. Any service that **informs departments** and can be used in an empowering way to **enhance teaching and learning** – and is free – has to be a fantastic educational tool. It would be foolish to overlook its value.”

Melanie, Head of English

### Top tip

“Play around with ERA and take the time to become familiar with it, as it saves a lot of time doing independent analysis.”  
Katie, Head of English

### ERA will help you:

- 1 see how students performed in specific topics and identify those who need extra support
- 2 tailor your lesson plans and focus your teaching where it's needed most to maximise every student's progress
- 3 inspire your students: teachers who use ERA say their students are keen to see their marks for themselves so they know exactly where they need to improve to get the grade they aspire to
- 4 spot year-on-year trends and measure achievement against other schools and colleges for a broader perspective
- 5 create management reports for senior leadership teams.

### Register for ERA in five easy steps

- 1 Complete the online form at: [aqa.org.uk/era-register](http://aqa.org.uk/era-register)
- 2 Your form is sent to your school or college's centre administrator for verification. This may take a few days, but it's important to make sure that access to results is only given to teachers at AQA centres.
- 3 As soon as your request is approved, we will send you a confirmation email.
- 4 Click the link in this email to log onto e-aqa at [aqa.org.uk/era-login](http://aqa.org.uk/era-login)
- 5 You're ready to unleash ERA's potential!

### Who's using ERA?

- 22.6% Heads of department
- 16.7% Subject heads
- 50.1% Teachers
- 8.2% Exam officers
- 2.4% Other

### and when?

- 36% Summer results period
- 14% March results period
- 50% Outside main results periods

Don't forget to download our other ERA guides from [aqa.org.uk/era](http://aqa.org.uk/era)



Subject performance



School performance



Student performance



Group performance

# Unleash the potential...

## Review your school's performance



ERA allows you to take a snapshot of your school or college's performance. You can also view results according to qualification (for example A-level or GCSE), an individual examination, different classes and so much more.

“ This feature is really useful, because the first thing I want to see on results day is the overall performance for my subject, in terms of the number of students receiving A\*-C, A\*-B, etc and the performance of specific groups.”

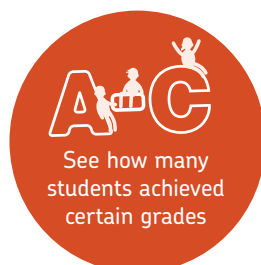
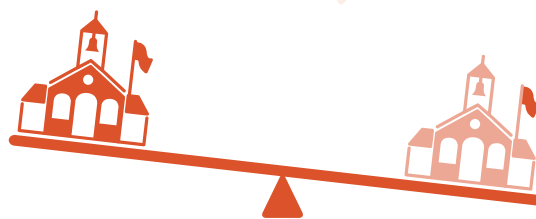
Katie, Head of English

### Dig a little deeper

Find out the percentage of students who have achieved an A\*-C overall, compared to previous years, similar centres or the AQA national average.

Or...

See how many students in your school/college got an A\*-C in your subject.



See how many students achieved certain grades

## Grades overview – two easy steps!

- 1 Access 'Grades overview' from the left-hand panel on the ERA start page.
- 2 For more detailed analysis, select:
  - 'Entry code' for the specific assessment taken
  - 'Groups' to show any specific groups you have created (see our 'Group performance' guide for more on creating groups).

## Did you know...?

ERA's not just for results time:

**50%** of ERA usage occurs outside of the main results periods to help teachers plan, set targets, provide feedback to students and create reports.

“ERA is a powerful tool that allows us to compare. As a department head, I use ERA to see how well our students have achieved in relation to other centres and the AQA national average. It's also invaluable for the analysis report that we produce for the senior leadership team and governors.”

Melanie, Head of English

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Getting started



Subject performance



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# Unleash the potential...

## Review subject performance



ERA allows you to see how your students have performed in your subject. You can create general performance summaries and comparisons with previous years, analyse results for each exam component – right down to individual questions – and highlight areas that need extra attention.

“ On results day, the first thing I want to know is **how well my students have done** overall, compared to our expectations. I then want to see how near or far they were from the next grade. The **subject breakdown** allows us to see if one particular area has let a student down.”

Simon, Head of Chemistry

### Quick win

You can click the 'Download results' tab to build customised performance records and create reports throughout the year to track improvements and trends.

### Top tips

**Get started:** click on the 'Marks analysis' tab in the left-hand panel on the ERA start page.

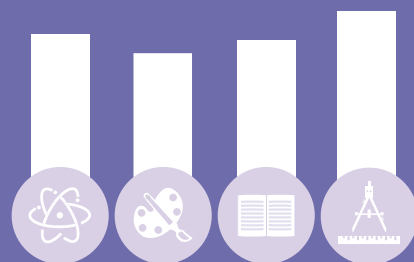
**Compare your results:** on the 'Marks analysis' page, use the tabs in the top toolbar to make comparisons with other centres, previous years and between groups (eg males and females). See our 'Group performance' reference guide for more on creating groups.

**Analyse different subject components** (eg for French these will be reading, writing, listening and speaking) by clicking the 'View components' tab.

**See a question-by-question breakdown** within each component, by clicking on 'View questions'.

**View performance** by question paper and mark scheme and see examiners' reports via the 'View questions' tab.

**View the user guide in the ERA section on our website to view these steps in more detail.**



### Five reasons to review performance by subject

- 1 Find out instantly if your performance is better than last year.
- 2 View your students' marks for each question on a given paper.
- 3 Pinpoint exactly where individual students have lost marks.
- 4 Highlight topics/subject areas for improvement, or that need additional focus.
- 5 Identify the students who need extra help and in what areas.

### Did you know...?

**34%** of the total ERA usage is in the autumn term, following the summer results period. Teachers use ERA to identify areas for improvements and to tailor their teaching plans for the year ahead.

Don't forget to download our other ERA guides from [aqa.org.uk/era](http://aqa.org.uk/era)



Getting started



School performance



Student performance



Group performance

# Unleash the potential...

## Review individual student performance



With ERA, you can see your students' performance in every subject and highlight near misses, so you can focus your teaching where it's needed most. You can also give this detailed feedback to your students to help them prioritise their studies.

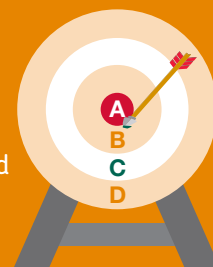
“ERA's really helped us **build a much clearer picture** of what our skills priorities are for our students. It has enabled us to **pinpoint individual students, skills and topics** that we now know we need to focus on.”  
Bradley, Key Stage 4 Coordinator, English

### Identify areas for improvement by:

- highlighting which topics your students answered well and those where improvements could be made
- understanding how students fared against the key skills and assessment objectives for each specification
- downloading students' results for selected subjects to analyse them in applications – such as Microsoft Excel – create your own reports and feed back to your students.

### Zoom in on your students' results

- 1 Click on 'Marks analysis'.
- 2 Choose your qualification and subject.
- 3 View components.
- 4 Select 'View skills and topics analysis'.
- 5 Choose the assessment area or specific question you are interested in.



“ERA is useful as a diagnostic tool, allowing us to look closely at the questions on which our students have performed less well. This enables the department to focus on that particular area in our planning and teaching. But it is important to exercise caution to ensure that other questions and topics are not then ignored.”

Melanie, Head of English

Don't forget to download our other ERA guides from [aqa.org.uk/era](http://aqa.org.uk/era)



Getting started



School performance



Subject performance



Group performance

# Unleash the potential...

## Review group performance



Our 'Maintain groups' feature lets you create and customise different areas for comparison. You can create as many groups as you like – using your own data and a little imagination!

“ I have to report on gender performance at school and I can create groups of male and female students to compare their results.”

Shaun, English teacher



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### Before you get started

- Make sure you have all the data you need to create the group – for example, if you are comparing performance of those who are learning a language against those who don't, you will need to have this information for every student.
- Ask your colleagues to add their class lists so you can use them to compare the performances of different classes.
- Decide on the level of security for your group(s). 'Private' means only you can see and edit the group; 'Read' allows others to see and report using the group, but they can't edit it; 'Read/write' allows all teachers in your centre to see and edit the group.
- You can only set up groups once candidates' entries have been submitted.

### Step by step – creating your own groups

- 1 Select 'Maintain groups'.
- 2 Click 'Create new'.
- 3 Name your group: eg 'French A'.
- 4 Decide if the group is private.
- 5 Add students by ticking the box next to their name.
- 6 Save your group – you're done!

### Viewing the results for your groups

- 7 Select 'Maintain groups'.
- 8 Choose which groups you want to compare.
- 9 Click the 'Marks analysis' icon.
- 10 Pick a subject and tick the 'Include groups' box then click 'Search' to view the results.

### Make meaningful comparisons



Don't forget to download our other ERA guides from [aqa.org.uk/era](http://aqa.org.uk/era)



Getting started



School performance



Subject performance



Student performance



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# What results look like

Overleaf is an example of what students' results certificates will look like in summer 2017.

# Candidate Statement of Provisional Results

## General Certificate of Secondary Education

JUNE 2017



Centre  
00000 SAMPLE SCHOOL

Candidate	Unique Candidate Identifier	Unique Learner Number	Sex	Date of Birth
0000 SAMPLE CANDIDATE	00000000000A	000000000	0	00/00/00

Series	Code	Unit (max UMS)	UMS	Subject Award	UMS	Unit grade
<b>Double Award Course</b>						
4854	ENGINEERING		300	AB(ab)		
	<b>Jun</b>	<b>48501</b>				<b>64 A</b>
	<b>Jun</b>	<b>48502</b>				<b>93 B</b>
	<b>Jun</b>	<b>48503</b>				<b>61 B</b>
	<b>Jun</b>	<b>48504</b>				<b>82 C</b>
<b>Full Course</b>						
8700	ENGLISH LANGUAGE			7(seven)		
8701	Spoken Language			Merit		
8702	ENGLISH LITERATURE			7(seven)		
8300H	MATHEMATICS			8(eight)		
4401	BIOLOGY		308	B(b)		
4402	CHEMISTRY		236	D(d)		
4658	FRENCH		276	A*(a*)		
4403	PHYSICS		297	B(b)		
<b>Short Course</b>						
4056	RELIGIOUS STUDIES		53	D(d)		
* * * * *						

**This Candidate Statement of Provisional Results is not a certificate.**

AQA reserves the right to amend the information given on the Candidate Statement of Provisional Results.

A certificate confirming the result(s) will be issued where appropriate in due course.

Further information can be found on the Exams Office pages at [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

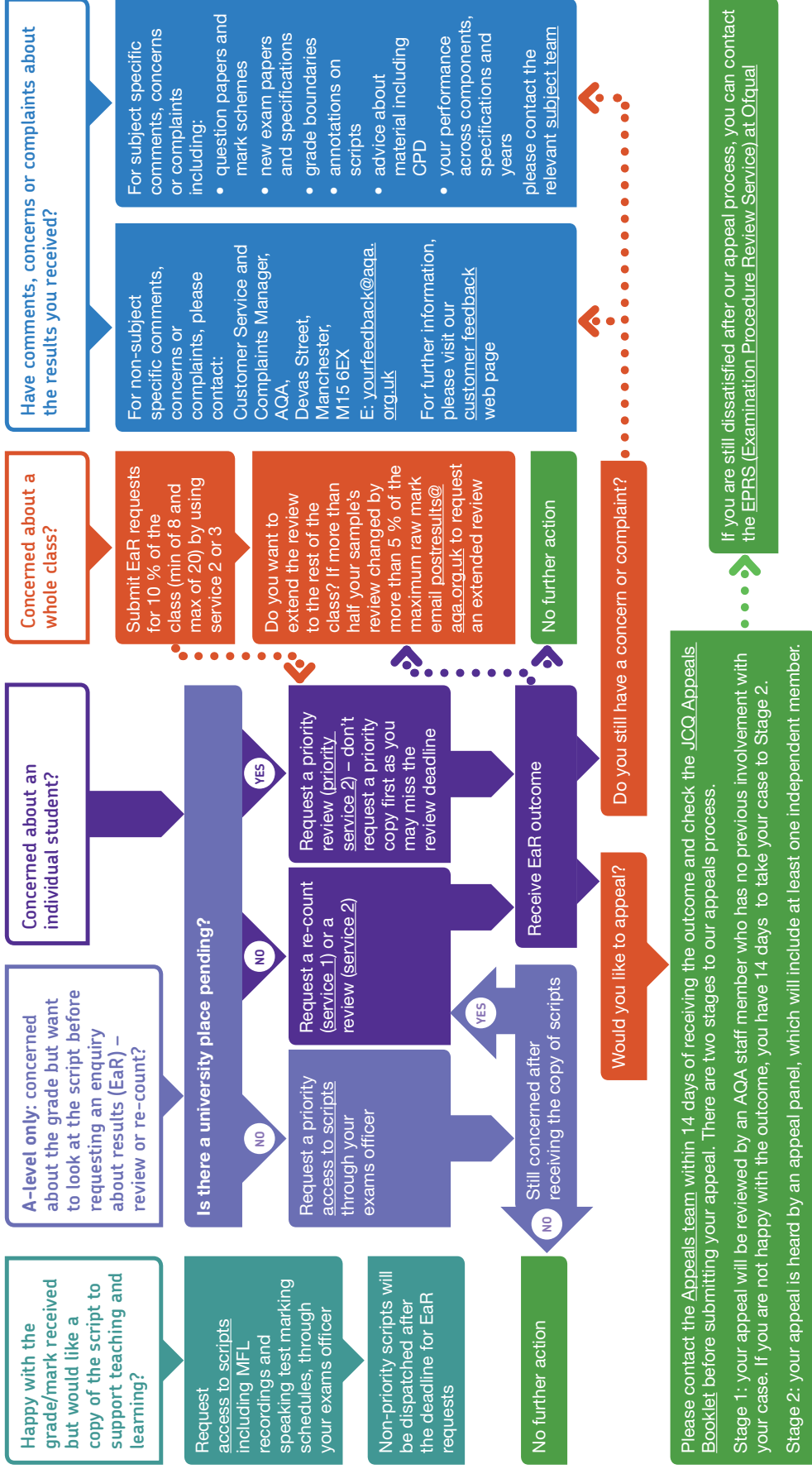
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# How to find the right post- results service

# Post-results

## How to find the right post-exam results service



Use the interactive version of this chart, here: [bit.ly/2moYyC](https://bit.ly/2moYyC)

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# Appendix

## True or false? GCSE English summer exams

Did you identify these as true or false? This is a duplication of the 'true or false' activity at the start of this hand-out, completed with commentary.

Statement	T/ F?
<p>“Awarding organisations use statistical predictions to help set grade boundaries.”</p> <p>The Ofqual blog post <i>Prediction-matrices-explained</i> (<a href="http://bit.ly/2rXBP8D">bit.ly/2rXBP8D</a>) unpacks the grade boundary setting process that all GCSE and A-level awarding organisations must adhere to. The process involves a mixture of statistical predications based on previous attainment and a review of student work at key grades. The predications make sure that, in general, a student who would have achieved a particular grade the previous year will achieve the same grade the next year. Students' work is reviewed by senior examiners to make sure the raw marks suggested by the predictions are appropriate as grade boundaries.</p>	T
<p>“One examiner will mark all of a school’s question papers for a particular component, ie a Paper 1 or Paper 2.”</p> <p>This used to be true when examiners were sent batches of paper scripts to mark, but the move to electronic marking across both GCSE papers means that individual questions or scripts are downloaded and marked by examiners. An examiner will download a batch of responses and these will consist of either individual questions (GCSE English Language) or whole scripts (GCSE English Literature). However, for either approach, the responses are from a random selection of schools. For instance, it could be that one GCSE English Language paper is marked by five different examiners and so, hypothetically, 100 different examiners may mark 20 students GCSE English Language Paper 1.</p>	F
<p>“Once an examiner has shown they can mark to the agreed standard, we monitor and check their standard daily.”</p> <p>A monitoring script is included with every batch of questions or scripts downloaded. The monitoring scripts are called 'seeds' and they have been selected and marked by a senior examiner. Examiners don't know which scripts are seeds, and they must mark it within a defined tolerance. If an examiner doesn't mark the seed within tolerance, then they are stopped from marking that question (or whole paper) until they can have a review conversation with a senior examiner and show that they understand the mark scheme.</p>	T
<p>“The structure of the GCSE question papers in future years will remain the same as we have seen in 2017.”</p> <p>The format and style of the question papers that have been established will be consistent for the lifetime of the specifications.</p> <p>It would only be if a format of a question was clearly not working that well that we may consider making any changes. In this way, any changes to the assessment strategy would have to be approved by Ofqual and have a very clear and rigorous communications plan</p>	T

should Ofqual agree with any proposed changes.	
<p>“Once examiners have finished marking, AQA will make blanket adjustments to bring marks in line with the correct standard.</p> <p>Once upon a time this was true for some subjects. Now, with electronic marking, there is no need to make adjustments due to the regular and rigorous checks that are made throughout the marking period.</p>	F
<p>“After the summer, AQA will be able to tell us what grade a response to an individual question would get.”</p> <p>On results day, we'll provide notional grade boundaries for components (question papers). These notional grade boundaries are calculated from subject level data and we provide them to support teachers' understanding and practice. We don't break these notional boundaries down into questions because of the many combinations of marks which will lead a student to their final, overall mark and grade. Students' marks across the components are added together to work this out.</p> <p>Awarding organisations wait until the vast majority (if not all) the marking is complete before using a combination of predications based on previous attainment and a review of student work to set grade boundaries. We never consider grade boundaries at question level; we only ever look at whole scripts when setting grade boundaries, considering how students have performed overall.</p> <p>See our short video, <i>Making the grades</i>: <a href="http://bit.ly/2thqIn5">bit.ly/2thqIn5</a></p>	F
<p>“The grade boundaries for each paper will stay fixed after we have established them in 2017.”</p> <p>Just as we don't set grade boundaries when we write question papers, we don't fix grade boundaries for question papers between series. We do our best to make sure that question papers are written to the same level of difficulty every series, but we certainly wouldn't want to predict how students will perform on the day. It's almost impossible to predict precisely how much easier or more difficult students will find a paper compared to previous years.</p> <p>The Ofqual blog post <i>Grade boundaries: the problems with predictions</i> is available in full here: <a href="http://bit.ly/2kpTiqZ">bit.ly/2kpTiqZ</a></p>	F
<p>“It is easier to get a particular grade with one awarding body rather than another.”</p> <p>Ofqual's <i>Levelling the playing field</i> blog post (available in full here: <a href="http://bit.ly/2s2IP3g">bit.ly/2s2IP3g</a>) explains the measures they take to ensure this is not the case.</p>	F
<p>“Awarding bodies give out a fixed number of each grade and this does not change each year.”</p> <p>Using parameters set by Ofqual, every year awarding organisations use statistical</p>	F

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predications based on prior attainment to estimate how many students might be expected to each be awarded each grade. It may be that one year, the evidence from this prior attainment shows students entering are suggested to be weaker or stronger than in previous years. This process is completed every series so that it is reflective of each cohort. *Levelling the playing field* explains more, here: [bit.ly/2s2IP3g](http://bit.ly/2s2IP3g)

As mentioned in *Prediction matrices explained* ([bit.ly/2rXBP8D](http://bit.ly/2rXBP8D)) Ofqual have advised awarding organisations that:

- broadly the same proportion of students will achieve grade 4 and above as previously achieved grade C and above
- broadly the same proportion of students will achieve grade 7 and above as previously achieved grade A and above
- the bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G.



## Activity: examiner journey

This is a completed version of the randomised list of 16 steps in the examiner recruitment and marking process featured earlier in the hand-out.

<p>Examiners are first contacted by their Team Leader for a supportive discussion.</p> <p><b>#5</b></p> <p><i>What do you think they may discuss?</i></p> <p><i>Why do we think this is beneficial?</i></p>	<p>Team Leader makes contact with their examiners half way through the marking period.</p> <p><b>#13</b></p> <p><i>What do you think they may discuss?</i></p>	<p>Senior examiners finalise the mark scheme that all examiners will use.</p> <p><b>#7</b></p>	<p>Examiners are requested to mark the standardising material.</p> <p><b>#9</b></p>
<p>Examiners are trained about the administrative element of marking and how to use the online marking systems.</p> <p><b>#4</b></p>	<p>Examiners are given guidance about the standard of their marking, and approved to mark their allocated student responses.</p> <p><b>#10</b></p>	<p>Teacher applies to become an examiner through <a href="http://aqa.org.uk/apply">aqa.org.uk/apply</a></p> <p><b>#1</b></p>	<p>Grade boundaries are established.</p> <p><b>#15</b></p>

<p>Examiners are given feedback on their overall performance.</p> <p><b>#16</b></p>	<p>Exam day.</p> <p><b>#6</b></p>	<p>Senior examiners pick standardising material and seeded items that will ensure examiners are monitored throughout their marking.</p> <p><b>#8</b></p> <p><i>The standardising material is made up from the senior examiners looking at live student responses.</i></p> <p><i>A seed is a response to a question that is marked by the senior examiners. Examiners have certain seeds that they have to mark as part of their allocated scripts.</i></p>	<p>Examiner is requested to do some online training so they understand the principles of the mark scheme.</p> <p><b>#3</b></p>
<p>All the marking is completed.</p> <p><b>#14</b></p>	<p>Teacher meets criteria to be an examiner.</p> <p><b>#2</b></p>	<p>The standard the examiner applies is monitored every day through seeded scripts.</p> <p><b>#12</b></p> <p><i>What do you think happens if their marking is not accurate?</i></p>	<p>Examiners download batches of scripts to mark. These include seeded scripts.</p> <p><b>#11</b></p>

# Join our team

Over 20,000 teachers mark GCSE and A-levels with us every year. Find out why, by becoming an examiner.



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[examine@aqa.org.uk](mailto:examine@aqa.org.uk)

We are now accepting applications for 2018 for GCSE and A-Level English

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- free training and insight into the exam marking process
- earn extra income ahead of the holidays

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