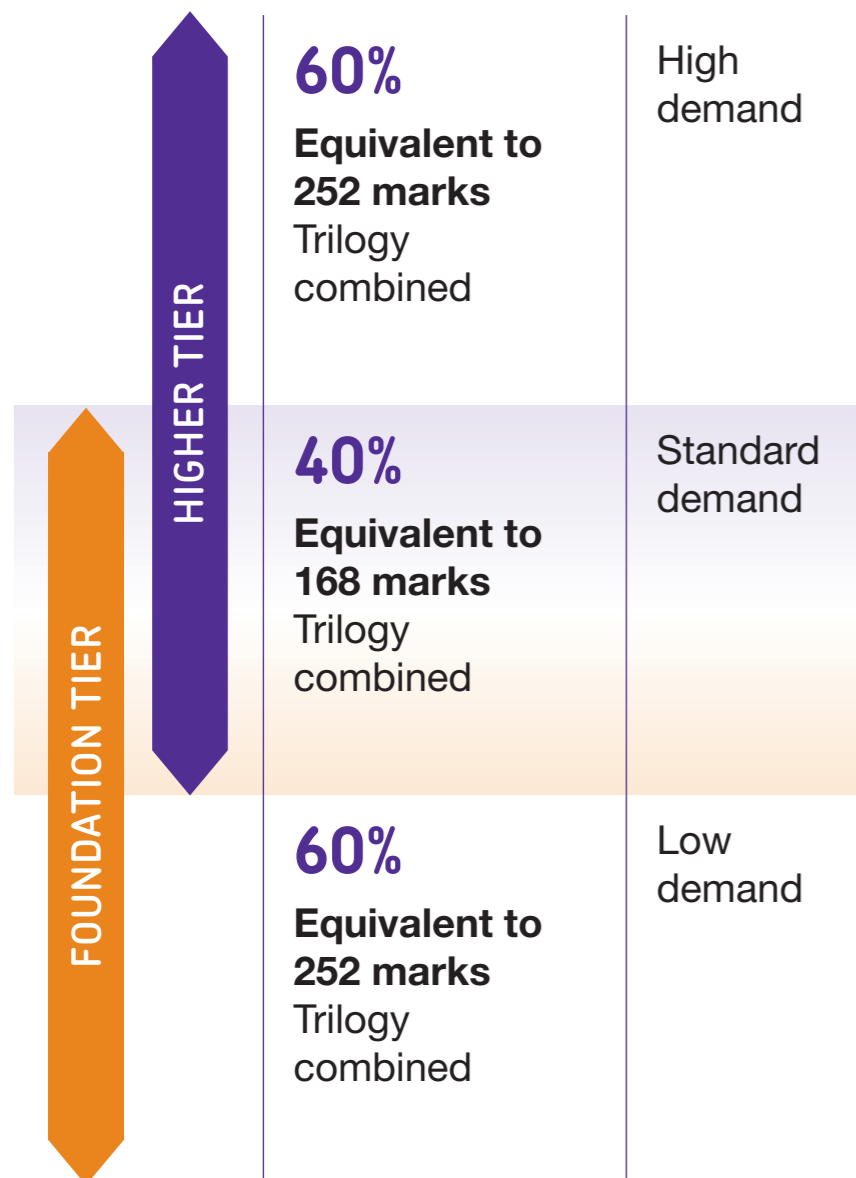


GCSE science grade 5 students: Foundation or Higher – what’s best?

For many students the choice of tier is relatively straightforward. However, for potential grade 5 students the choice may be less clear-cut. A number of factors will affect a student’s performance.

The level of demand of the questions in each tier will determine the suitability for each individual.



30% of the marks are common between tiers. These are standard demand.

There are no low demand questions on the Higher tier.

The grades available on each tier have changed from the legacy papers.

The Foundation tier reaches a grade 5 (equivalent to the bottom end of a grade B on the legacy specifications).

Legacy GCSE science		Current GCSE science	
Foundation	Higher	Foundation	Higher
			9
	A*		8
	A		7
	B		6
	C	5	5
	C	4	4
	D	3	(3)
	E		2
	F		1
	G		
	U	U	U

The shaded area denotes the tier overlap grades available on the current vs legacy GCSE sciences.

The tier overlap grades are at a higher level of demand than on the legacy specifications.

Key considerations

Does the student perform consistently across all three sciences in both content and skills?

Combined science: students must sit the same tier for all papers.

Separate sciences: students must sit the same tier within each separate science but do not have to sit the same tier for all three separate sciences.

Is the student performing consistently well on common questions?

Common questions (questions that feature in both tiers) are set at standard demand.

Does the student show resilience when tackling the papers under exam pressure?

There are no low demand questions on the Higher tier and there is less scaffolding in standard demand questions, especially with formulas in physics.

How well can the student apply their maths skills?

Students need to be confident with transferring their maths skills to science lessons and questions written in a scientific context.

Is the student confident in their understanding of the required practicals, the science behind the required practicals and all aspects of working scientifically?

Is the student confident at tackling questions when the science content or required practical skills are put in an unfamiliar context?

Taking the answers to the questions above into consideration will help decide the most suitable tier for your student.