

Grade boundaries: Awarding mini guide

Stage 1 – Examining:

- 1 At the end of the exam the completed booklets known as scripts are usually scanned and sent to specialist examiners for on-screen marking.
- 2 Examiners are usually qualified teachers that are trained to mark to that required standard. They practise marking scripts using a mark scheme which provides sample answers to each exam question and this ensures their work is accurate.
- 3 The exam marking period usually lasts for around 12 weeks – throughout this time the examiners' work is rigorously checked to ensure their marking is consistent, fair and to the required standard. We also use software to monitor examiners in real time.
- 4 As part of this checking process highly experienced senior examiners review a sample of marking by each examiner to ensure they are applying the mark scheme correctly and that students have been given the right marks.
- 5 The senior examiners provide detailed feedback to ensure the examiners keep on track. If an examiner is not marking correctly they are not allowed to continue and their scripts are given to a different examiner.
- 6 Once the exam scripts have been marked we set the grade boundaries.



We're here to support you, when it matters

Grade boundaries: Awarding mini guide

Stage 2 – Setting grade boundaries:

- 1 Once the exam scripts have been marked we set the grade boundaries for each individual exam.
- 2 The process for deciding grade boundaries is called awarding and its overall aim is to ensure that standards are maintained from one year to the next.
- 3 Awarding is carried out by senior examiners who are experts in a particular subject and the process is overseen by the qualifications regulator.
- 4 Once the exam scripts have been marked a group of senior examiners meet to set the grade boundaries. They look at scripts on the grade boundary from last year and a range of scripts from the current year.
- 5 Those awarding committees are guided by the principle of comparable outcomes and that's the principle that the student should get the same grade this year that they would have got if they'd sat last year's paper.



- 6 They then compare the scripts to decide the mark for this year's boundary, which represents the same standard as last year. They also use statistics to guide their judgment.
- 7 These statistics look at how students performed in previous tests, we use Key Stage 2 data for GCSE awarding or GCSE data for A-level awarding. This means that while we're looking to carry over the standard from last year, if we have a slightly more able cohort than last year then there will be slightly more top grades available.
- 8 After careful consideration, the senior examiners decide what the minimum mark for each grade should be.
- 9 The final result is that a student who performed at the same level should get the same grade whether they sat the exam this year or last year. As well as being fair to students this means the qualification will continue to be valued by potential employers, colleges and Universities.

**On results day, you can find
grade boundaries for your subject
here: [aqa.org.uk/grade-boundaries](https://www.aqa.org.uk/grade-boundaries)**