

**GCSE (A* to G) Qualification
Level Conditions and
Requirements**

June 2016

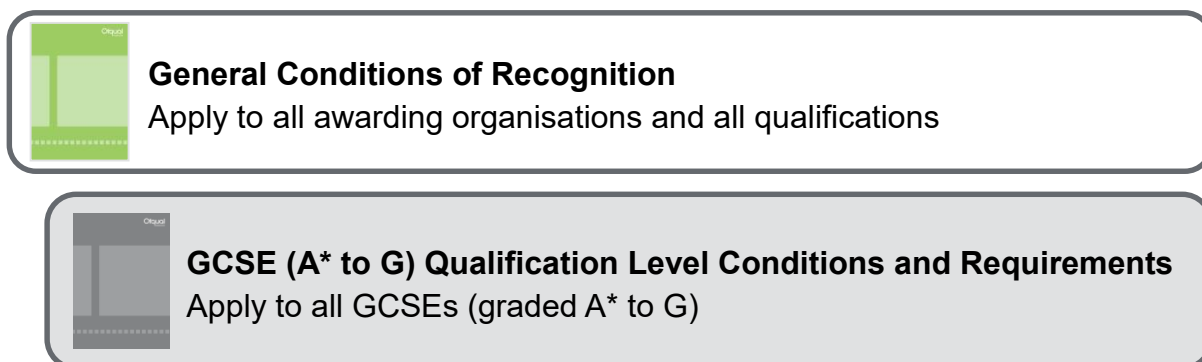
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Introduction

About this document

This document (highlighted in the figure below) is part of a suite of documents which sets out our regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering GCSE qualifications (graded A* to G).



Requirements set out in this document

This document sets out the GCSE (A* to G) Qualification Level Conditions. These conditions will come into effect at 5.01pm on Friday 24 June 2016 for all GCSE qualifications (graded A* to G).

It also sets out our standard setting requirements for all GCSE qualifications (graded A* to G) – awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCSE(A* to G) 1.1

With respect to these qualifications, awarding organisations must also comply with:

- our *General Conditions of Recognition*,¹ which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications; and
- all relevant Regulatory Documents.²

With respect to GCSE qualifications graded from 9 to 1, awarding organisations must continue to comply with the General Conditions of Recognition, our *GCSE (9 to 1) Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements*,³ the relevant GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements⁴ and the relevant Regulatory Documents.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-conditions-of-recognition

² www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-document-list

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-qualification-level-conditions

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/collections/gcses-9-to-1-requirements-and-guidance

Qualification Level Conditions

GCSE (A* to G) Qualification Level Conditions

Condition GCSE(A* to G)1 Standard setting

- GCSE(A* to G)1.1 In respect of each GCSE qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must comply with any requirements, and have regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time in relation to –
- (a) the promotion of consistency between the measurement of Learners' levels of attainment in that qualification and similar qualifications made available by other awarding organisations, and
 - (b) the setting of specified levels of attainment.
- GCSE(A* to G)1.2 In setting the specified levels of attainment for a GCSE qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must have regard to an appropriate range of qualitative and quantitative evidence.
- GCSE(A* to G)1.3 In respect of each GCSE qualification which it makes available, the range of evidence to which an awarding organisation has regard for the purposes of Condition GCSE(A* to G)1.2 will only be appropriate if it includes evidence of –
- (a) the Level of Demand of the assessments for that qualification,
 - (b) the level of attainment demonstrated in those assessments by an appropriately representative sample of Learners taking that qualification,
 - (c) the level of attainment demonstrated by Learners taking that qualification in –
 - (i) a prior assessment (which was not for that qualification), whether or not that assessment was for a regulated qualification, or
 - (ii) a prior qualification, whether or not that qualification was a regulated qualification,
- and

- (d) the level of attainment demonstrated by Learners who have previously been awarded the qualification.

GCSE(A* to G)1.4 An awarding organisation must maintain a record of –

- (a) the evidence to which it has had regard in setting the specified levels of attainment for each GCSE qualification which it makes available, and
- (b) its rationale for the selection of and weight given to that evidence.

Condition GCSE(A* to G)2 Interpretation

- GCSE(A* to G)2.1 The rules of interpretation and definitions outlined in General Condition J1 shall apply to the GCSE (A* to G) Qualification Level Conditions.
- GCSE(A* to G)2.2 Except in the circumstances described in Condition GCSE(A* to G)2.3, the requirements imposed by the GCSE (A* to G) Qualification Level Conditions apply in addition to the requirements imposed by the General Conditions of Recognition.
- GCSE(A* to G)2.3 To the extent that there is any inconsistency between a requirement of a GCSE (A* to G) Qualification Level Condition and a requirement of a General Condition of Recognition, such that an awarding organisation could not comply with both such requirements, the awarding organisation must comply with the requirement of the GCSE (A* to G) Qualification Level Condition and is not obliged to comply with the requirement of the General Condition of Recognition.

Standard setting requirements

Requirements for setting specified levels of attainment for GCSE (A* to G) qualifications

Condition GCSE(A* to G)1.1(b) allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the setting of specified levels of attainment for GCSE qualifications graded A* to G.

The requirements for setting specified levels of attainment in respect of assessments of speaking and listening for GCSE (A* to G) qualifications in English and English Language are found in the *Criteria for GCSE Qualifications (graded A* to G)*⁵.

In respect of all other assessments for GCSE (A* to G) qualifications, we set out below our requirements for the purposes of Condition (A* to G)1.1(b).

For ease of reference, the specified levels of attainment used in such qualifications are referred to below as 'grades'.

Setting specified levels of attainment for GCSE (A* to G) qualifications that do not use uniform marks

1. For GCSE and GCSE (short course), non-tiered Components, the three key grade boundaries are:
 - (a) C/D
 - (b) A/B
 - (c) F/G.

An awarding organisation must set the grade boundaries in the sequence given above.

2. For GCSE and GCSE (short course), tiered Components, the four key grade boundaries are:
 - (a) C/D foundation tier
 - (b) C/D higher tier
 - (c) A/B higher tier
 - (d) F/G foundation tier.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criteria-for-gcse-qualifications-graded-a-to-g>

An awarding organisation must set the grade boundaries in the sequence given above.

3. For GCSE and GCSE (short course), non-tiered and tiered examinations, the three key qualification grade boundaries are:
 - (a) C/D
 - (b) A/B
 - (c) F/G.

An awarding organisation must set the grade boundaries in the sequence given above.

4. An awarding organisation must set grade boundaries for the qualification as a whole using the following method:
 - (a) The boundary mark for each Component is scaled as necessary to reflect the mark allocation for that Component as detailed in the specification.
 - (b) The resulting scaled Component boundary marks are added and the result is rounded to the nearest whole number (with fractions of 0.5 and above being rounded up).
5. An awarding organisation must determine the other qualification grade boundaries arithmetically as follows:
 - (a) The B/C boundary is obtained by dividing the mark interval between the A/B and C/D boundaries by two. Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the grade B interval.
 - (b) The D/E and E/F boundaries are set by dividing the mark interval between the C/D and F/G boundaries by three. Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the grade D interval. Where there is a remainder of two, one extra mark is added to each of the grade D and grade E intervals.
 - (c) In a tiered examination, if the mark range below C/D is equal to, or greater than, twice the B/C to C/D mark range, the grade D/E boundary on the higher tier is provisionally set as far below the grade C/D boundary as the grade B/C boundary is above the grade C/D boundary. If the mark range below C/D is less than twice the B/C to C/D mark range, the grade D/E boundary on the higher tier is provisionally set halfway between the C/D boundary and zero. Where this gap does not divide evenly, the D/E boundary will be rounded down to the lower mark (for example, 35.5 would

become 35). Where a review of technical and statistical evidence leads the awarding organisation to judge that the D/E boundary should be set at a different mark, consideration will be given to moving the grade D/E boundary, and the reasons for this must be recorded.

- (d) In a tiered examination, the E/U boundary on the higher tier is provisionally set by subtracting half the mark interval between the C/D and D/E boundaries (rounding up half marks) from the D/E boundary. Where a review of technical and statistical evidence leads the awarding organisation to judge that the E/U boundary should be set at a different mark, consideration will be given to moving the grade E/U boundary, and the reasons for this must be recorded.
 - (e) The G/U boundary is the same number of marks below the F/G boundary as the E/F boundary is above the F/G boundary.
6. An awarding organisation must provisionally set the A*/A grade boundary as follows:
- (a) If the mark interval between the A/B boundary and the maximum mark is more than twice the mark interval between the A/B and B/C boundaries, the A*/A boundary is set the same number of marks above the A/B boundary as the B/C boundary is below the A/B boundary.
 - (b) If the mark interval between the A/B boundary and the maximum mark is less than or equal to twice the mark interval between the A/B and B/C boundaries, the A*/A boundary is set halfway between the A/B boundary and the maximum mark, rounded down where necessary to the nearest whole number below (for example, 78.5 is rounded to 78).
7. Where a review of technical and statistical evidence leads the awarding organisation to judge that the A*/A boundary should be set at a different mark, consideration will be given to moving the grade A*/A boundary, and the reasons for this must be recorded.

Setting specified levels of attainment for GCSE (A* to G) qualifications that use uniform marks

Use of aggregate marks

8. Aggregate marks must be calculated on the basis of a uniform mark scale:

- (a) Uniform marks for each unit⁶ must be calculated in such a way as to maintain the Learners' relative position between the raw grade boundaries.
- (b) Each unit must be reported in uniform marks.
- (c) Uniform marks for individual assessment units must be added to generate a final total mark for the qualification as a whole. A grade is then generated.
- (d) Where a Learner has taken more than the required number of units, the awarding organisation must generate the best grade for the Learner, taking into account the requirement in paragraph 9 of the *Criteria for GCSE Qualifications (graded A* to G)*⁷ that unitised specifications must require that 100 per cent of the assessment is terminal.

Non-tiered units/Components

9. For GCSE and GCSE (short course), non-tiered units/Components, the three key grade boundaries are:

- (a) C/D
- (b) A/B
- (c) F/G.

An awarding organisation must set the grade boundaries in the sequence given above for each unit/Component.

10. An awarding organisation must set the other unit/Component grade boundaries arithmetically as follows:

- (a) The B/C boundary is obtained by dividing the mark interval between the A/B and C/D boundaries by two. Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the grade B interval.
- (b) The D/E and E/F boundaries are obtained by dividing the mark interval between the C/D and F/G boundaries by three. Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the grade D interval. Where

⁶ For the purposes of these requirements a 'unit' is the smallest part of a qualification that is formally reported and can be separately certificated. A unit may comprise separately assessed Components.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criteria-for-gcse-qualifications-graded-a-to-g>

there is a remainder of two, one extra mark is added to each of the grade D and grade E intervals.

- (c) The G/U boundary is the same number of marks below the F/G boundary as the E/F boundary is above the F/G boundary.
11. An awarding organisation must provisionally set the A*/A grade boundary as follows:
- (a) If the mark interval between the A/B boundary and the maximum mark is more than twice the mark interval between the A/B and B/C boundaries, the A*/A boundary is set the same number of marks above the A/B boundary as the B/C boundary is below the A/B boundary.
 - (b) If the mark interval between the A/B boundary and the maximum mark is less than or equal to twice the mark interval between the A/B and B/C boundaries, the A*/A boundary is set halfway between the A/B boundary and the maximum mark, rounded down where necessary to the nearest whole number below (for example, 78.5 is rounded to 78).
12. Where a review of technical and statistical evidence leads the awarding organisation to judge that the A*/A boundary should be set at a different mark, consideration will be given to moving the grade A*/A boundary, and the reasons for this must be recorded.

Tiered units/Components

13. For GCSE and GCSE (short course), tiered units/Components, the four key grade boundaries are:
- (a) C/D foundation tier
 - (b) C/D higher tier
 - (c) A/B higher tier
 - (d) F/G foundation tier.

An awarding organisation must set the grade boundaries in the sequence given above for each unit/Component.

14. An awarding organisation must determine the other unit/Component grade boundaries arithmetically as follows:
- (a) For the higher tier:

- (i) The B/C boundary is obtained by dividing the mark interval between the A/B and C/D boundaries by two. Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the grade B interval.
 - (ii) If the mark range below C/D is equal to, or greater than, twice the B/C to C/D mark range, the grade D/E boundary on the higher tier is provisionally set as far below the grade C/D boundary as the grade B/C boundary is above the grade C/D boundary. If the mark range below C/D is less than twice the B/C to C/D mark range, the grade D/E boundary on the higher tier is provisionally set halfway between the C/D boundary and zero. Where this gap does not divide evenly, the D/E boundary will be rounded down to the lower mark (for example, 15.5 would become 15). Where a review of technical and statistical evidence leads the awarding organisation to judge that the D/E boundary should be set at a different mark, consideration will be given to moving the grade D/E boundary, and the reasons for this must be recorded.
 - (iii) The E/U boundary is provisionally set by subtracting half the mark interval between the C/D and D/E boundaries (rounding up half marks) from the D/E boundary. Where a review of technical and statistical evidence leads the awarding organisation to judge that the E/U boundary should be set at a different mark, consideration will be given to moving the grade E/U boundary, and the reasons for this must be recorded.
- (b) For the foundation tier:
- (i) The D/E and E/F boundaries are obtained by dividing the mark interval between the C/D and F/G boundaries by three. Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the grade D interval. Where there is remainder of two, one extra mark is added to each of the grade D and grade E intervals.
 - (ii) The G/U boundary is the same number of marks below the F/G boundary as the E/F boundary is above the F/G boundary.
15. An awarding organisation must provisionally set the A*/A grade boundary as follows:
- (a) If the mark interval between the A/B boundary and the maximum mark is more than twice the mark interval between the A/B and B/C boundaries, the A*/A boundary is set the same number of marks above the A/B boundary as the B/C boundary is below the A/B boundary.

- (b) If the mark interval between the A/B boundary and the maximum mark is less than or equal to twice the mark interval between the A/B and B/C boundaries, the A*/A boundary is set halfway between the A/B boundary and the maximum mark, rounded down where necessary to the nearest whole number below (for example, 78.5 is rounded to 78).

16. Where a review of technical and statistical evidence leads the awarding organisation to judge that the A*/A boundary should be set at a different mark, consideration will be given to moving the grade A*/A boundary, and the reasons for this must be recorded.

General requirements

17. Where a unit consists of two or more Components, the key grade boundary marks must be determined for each Component separately. The boundary mark for each Component must be scaled as necessary to reflect the weighting for that Component as detailed in the specification, and these scaled Component boundary marks must be added to give unit boundary marks. These unit boundary marks must then be used as the basis for conversion to uniform marks.
18. In all GCSE specifications using uniform marks, the raw grade boundary marks for each Component/unit must be converted to the equivalent uniform mark scale boundary marks based on the percentages given in the table below. Awarding organisations must select an appropriate maximum uniform mark for the qualification award in light of the assessment scheme. At qualification level, the uniform mark grade boundaries are set at the same percentages of the maximum uniform mark for the qualification unless affected by tiering arrangements:

For GCSE	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Percentage of available uniform marks	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

19. For all units, a raw mark of zero must convert to a uniform mark of zero. For un-tiered and higher tier units, the maximum raw mark must be converted to the maximum uniform mark. For foundation tier units, the maximum raw mark must convert to the maximum uniform mark allowed for the grade range, or one below the lowest uniform mark above the targeted grades.
20. The qualification grade awarded for those qualifications that use uniform marks must be determined by the total uniform mark. However, for some qualifications the grade range will be restricted by the tier of entry of the assessment.

21. For GCSE double awards, the grade range allows credit for intermediate performance according to the following table:

For GCSE double award	A*A*	A*	A	A	B	B	C	C	D	D	E	E	F	F	G	G
Percentage of available uniform marks	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346