

15 January 2019

For the attention of headteachers

Dear Headteacher,

Tiered GCSEs in summer 2019

Ahead of the entry deadline for the summer 2019 exams, I would like to clarify the arrangements for grading of higher tier GCSEs in combined science and modern foreign languages (MFL).

The lowest grade for candidates entered at higher tier for combined science is 4-4; or 4, for MFL. A small number who just miss the lowest grade may be awarded 4-3 (combined science) or 3 (MFL); below this, their grade will be unclassified (U).

I write now to remind you of these rules, and to confirm that the decision to allow some candidates to be awarded the grade 3-3 on higher tier combined science in 2018 was exceptional and will not be permitted in summer 2019. Furthermore, the 'safety net' grade of 4-3 on higher tier combined science and 3 on higher tier MFL will be set at half a grade width, as per our existing rules.

Around a third of schools had some higher tier students who were awarded a grade 3-3 in combined science last summer, but many more will have had students who benefited from the wider grade 4-3 – or 3 for MFL – that exam boards awarded in 2018. It is essential, therefore, that very careful consideration is given before deciding to enter for higher tier students who schools think are likely to be graded around the grade 4 boundary. We recommend that students who are predicted to achieve a grade 4-4 or 5-4 in combined science, or 4 in MFL, should be entered for foundation tier.

We have prepared more detailed letters, setting out the arrangements in science and MFL. **I would be grateful if you could ensure these were shared with the relevant heads of department.**

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Collier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

Sally Collier
Chief Regulator, Ofqual