



23 January 2020

For the attention of heads of modern foreign languages (MFL)

Dear Head of MFL

GCSE MFL in summer 2020

Ahead of the entry deadline for the summer 2020 exams, I would like to remind you of the [advice we have previously given](#) about making appropriate tier entries for your students. This applies to GCSEs in modern foreign languages (as well as to maths and the sciences).

In these tiered GCSEs, the available grades are 9 to 4, with a 'safety net' grade 3. Higher tier students who just miss a grade 4 will be awarded a grade 3; this safety net grade is intentionally narrower, and is set at half a grade width. Students below this safety net grade will receive an unclassified result (U). We therefore recommend that students who are expected to achieve a grade 4 or 5 should be entered for foundation tier.

Previously, we have been aware that some membership organisations recommended the opposite approach. I would caution you against following that advice, as such students are at risk of missing out on a GCSE grade if they do not perform as well as expected.

I can reassure you that a grade 5 gained on foundation tier is the same as a grade 5 gained on the higher tier, and this is also true for grade 4. Exam boards are required to make sure that it is no easier or more difficult to achieve a grade 5 or 4 on higher or foundation tier. There is nothing on certificates that details the tier of entry.

In November 2019, we [announced](#) that we will make a small adjustment to grading standards in French and German GCSEs in summer 2020. We will publish more detail later in the year about how that adjustment will be made. Given that it will be a small adjustment at grade 4, our strong advice is that this should not influence your tier entry decisions for 2020.

Please [visit our blog](#) for more information about GCSE tiering decisions for summer 2020 and feel free to use any of this material in your communications to parents/guardians. And do get in touch with your exam board if you need more specific advice.

Yours sincerely,

S Collier

Sally Collier

Chief Regulator, Ofqual