

January 2019

For the attention of all post-primary Principals:

Dear Colleagues

Tiered GCSEs offered by AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC (Eduqas)

This letter concerns the grading of GCSE combined science and modern languages offered by the above awarding organisations in summer 2019. If your centre offers any of these qualifications please pass on this letter to the relevant Head(s) of Department.

This letter is to clarify arrangements for the grading of higher tier GCSEs in combined science and modern languages ahead of the entry deadline for the 2019 summer series.

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

I want 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 2019. Furthermore, the 'safety net' grade of 4-3 on higher tier combined science; and, 3 on higher tier modern languages will be set at half a grade width, as per existing rules.

In 2018, around a third of schools in the UK had some higher tier students awarded grade 3-3 in combined science, but many more will have had students who benefitted from the wider grade 4-3 – or 3 for modern languages – in 2018. Very careful consideration needs to be given before deciding to enter students for higher tier papers if teachers think they are likely to be graded around the grade 4 boundary.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact Clare McNicholl by email:

cmcnicholl@ccea.org.uk ; or, by telephone: 02890261200 ext. 2439

Yours Sincerely



Roger McCune, MBE,

Head of Regulation