

Spotlight on Marking

For students, the exams are sat and the summer holidays are stretching out ahead. For exam boards and their examiners (usually teachers), it is time to mark and set grade boundaries in time for the results days in August.

I have just sat my exam, what happens now?

At the end of the exam, the invigilators in the exam hall seal the completed papers and send them to the exam board, either directly to an examiner or a scanning centre.

For exams that are marked on-screen, the answer booklets (we call these 'scripts') are sent to a

secure scanning facility. Once they have been scanned, digital copies are sent through a secure online system to examiners to be marked.

For exams that are marked on paper, the scripts are sent directly from the school to individual examiners.

Who marks my work?

Every single examiner that marks for WJEC is a qualified teacher with a minimum of one year's teaching experience.

Each year, all examiners are trained thoroughly on the correct application of the mark scheme at face-to-face training conferences.

The mark scheme is written by the principal examiner for the exam board. It provides detailed guidance and sample answers for each question in that exam paper.

Do all examiners give the same marks?

Before examiners can begin marking, they must first mark a sample of scripts and then attend a standardisation meeting. The meeting is led by the senior examiners who have written the question papers. In the meeting, examiners carefully review and discuss the mark scheme to make sure they can all apply it consistently. For example, if an unexpected answer is given to a question, they will agree how many marks to give other similar answers.

Throughout the marking period, examiners are monitored to make sure they are marking accurately and consistently.

For exams marked on paper, examiners must send a random sample of the scripts they have marked to a senior examiner to be checked. The senior examiner gives feedback on the examiner's marking. If an examiner is not marking accurately or consistently, the examiner will be stopped from marking. His or

her scripts will then be reallocated to a different examiner to be marked. Any scripts they have already marked are checked and, if necessary, remarked.

These days, many exams are marked on-screen, where the process is slightly different. Examiners are allocated specific questions to mark, so an examiner will not usually see all of a student's answers. It also makes it very unlikely that a school's exams will be marked by a single examiner.

With on-screen marking, an examiner's work is checked automatically. Every so often an examiner will be given a question to mark that has already been marked by a senior examiner. The examiner does not know which questions these are. If his or her marking differs from the senior examiner, then the system will immediately stop them from marking and the same quality control measures as for exams marked on paper will apply.

How are grade boundaries decided?

Once all scripts have been marked, the senior examiners meet to decide on where to set the grade boundaries. In reaching their decisions they will: consider the standard of the work they have marked, review a range of student work with marks near to the grade boundaries they are considering and consider statistical evidence.

Senior examiners consider all this evidence when recommending what the grade boundaries should be for this exam series.

How is Qualifications Wales involved?

Qualifications Wales monitors and oversees the awarding phase, which happens after scripts are marked and returned to exam boards.


Before the award of a qualification is confirmed, the exam boards must report their proposed grade boundaries and outcomes to us. If the overall outcomes are different to what we would expect them to be, we ask the exam board to explain why. If we are not satisfied we can ask the exam board to look again at the award or to conduct additional analysis to confirm its proposed award.

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