

## **Frequently Asked Questions – Unit combinations and grading rules**

### **What units make an A level? What about Further Maths?**

The best way to find what combinations of units make up A level Maths or Further Maths is from pages 22 – 24 of the specification [here](#). Exams officers could also look at the OCR Admin Guide.

In summary:

There are 3 combinations for AS Mathematics: C1, C2 plus one of M1, S1, D1.

There are 7 combinations for A level Mathematics: C1 – C4 plus one of these 6 pairs: M1&M2, S1&S2, D1&D2, D1&DC, M1&S1, M1&D1, S1&D1.

For AS Further Mathematics a candidate has to take FP1 and two other units. You must be taking or have taken AS Maths or A level Maths, and none of the units can be shared.

For A level Further Mathematics you have to sit FP1 and FP2, and 4 other units (2 of which have to be A2 units). You need to be taking or have taken A level Maths, and have entered at least 12 units for the two qualifications.

### **How do I enter for Further Maths if my Maths qualification is with another specification or exam board?**

We need to know what specification the Maths qualification was entered for, and what units were used to do so. It is important that the units for Maths and Further Maths do not overlap. We ask centres to complete a [form](#) to give us this information.

### **What are the rules for working out grades? Which units go in Further Maths?**

Some units can count towards either Mathematics or Further Mathematics. JCQ issue rules about which units count towards which qualification. These rules are complicated and can be found [here](#).

This example illustrates the process. An example with numbers can be seen at the end of this document.

If a candidate enters for 12 units and certificates for A level Mathematics and A level Further Mathematics there will usually be different combinations of the units that are valid. The rules say that of all the valid combinations of units possible the only ones considered are those that give the best possible grade for A level Maths. Of these combinations only the ones that then give the best possible grade for A level Further maths are considered. Of these combinations one is selected that gives the highest possible UMS score for A level Maths.

### Why re-certificate? Is it always the best option?

We advise candidates that when they enter for a qualification in the GCE Maths suite they should re-certificate for any qualification that they have previously entered. This often has the potential to lead to an improved grade.

For example if you enter for AS Maths using C1, C2, S1 one summer and then A level Maths the following summer with C3, C4, M1 you might improve your AS grade (or UMS) by re-certificating; C1, C2, M1 might be a higher-scoring combination. Another example would be if you enter for A level Maths using C1-4, M1, S1 one summer and then AS Further Maths using FP1, M2, D1 the following summer. By re-certificating for the A level you are opening up the possibility that you might improve your result from a combination like C1-4, M1, D1 or C1-4, M1, M2.

There is one situation where this might not be to the advantage of the candidate. Sometimes we hear of universities that make offers based on (say) over 90 UMS on all A level Maths units, with Further Maths ignored. In this case you might wish to contact someone in the Maths team to discuss what the best approach is.

There is an example at the end of the document that illustrates the importance of re-certification.

### What are the rules for A\* in GCE Mathematics?

A\* can be awarded for an A level qualification, but not for an AS or an individual unit. For A level Mathematics you need to

- Get grade A for the A level (an average of at least 80 UMS)
- Get an average of at least 90 UMS on Core 3 and Core 4

For A level Further Mathematics you need to

- Get grade A for the A level (an average of at least 80 UMS)
- Get an average of at least 90 UMS on your best three A2 units

[Here](#) is a leaflet from OCR that explains it.

### An example of grading, and the need to re-certificate

At the end of Year 13 a candidate has the following UMS:

C1 94, C2 99, C3 82, C4 79, FP1 71, FP2 79, M1 77, M2 57, S1 95, S2 48, D1 43, NM 70

Five of the allowed A level combinations are available.

Combination	Applied units in A level Maths	A level Maths grade	A level Maths UMS	A level Further Maths grade	A level Further Maths UMS
P	M1 M2	A	488	Invalid combination for Further Maths	
Q	S1 S2	A	497	Invalid combination for Further Maths	
R	M1 S1	A	526	C	368
S	M1 D1	B	474	B	420
T	S1 D1	A	492	C	402

Combinations P and Q do not leave a valid combination for Further Maths A level – you need to have three A2 units.

Combinations R and T both give grades A and C – these are preferred over combination S as the best possible grade is always awarded for Maths. Combination R is chosen as it puts more UMS into the Maths qualification than T.

Now imagine that the candidate had entered for AS Maths and AS Further Maths in Year 12, and had not re-certificated these qualifications in Year 13.

#### Scenario 1

In Year 12 M1 is used for AS Maths, S1 D1 for AS Further Maths. Because of locking, only combination P is available in Year 13 – the candidate does not get a grade for A level Further Maths. Re-certificating the two AS qualifications solves this.

#### Scenario 2

In Year 12 M1 is used for AS Maths, S1 S2 for AS Further Maths. Because of locking, only combinations P and S are available in Year 13. The candidate is awarded a grade B for A level Further Maths, but may need a grade A for University. Re-certificating the two AS qualifications solves this.