

Uniform mark (UMS) guidance: an example GCSE Design & Technology -2EP01, 2FT01, 2GR01, 2RM01 and 2TT01.

What are uniform marks and why do we use them?

Grade boundaries are set using raw marks. For each unit, raw marks are mapped to uniform marks. A GCSE qualification grade is determined from the unit uniform mark scores.

Uniform marks are used to ensure that the standard required to gain a particular unit score is the same from exam series to exam series.

Below we have exemplified what the use of uniform marks mean in GCSE Design & Technology.

Jenny is re-taking GCSE Design & Technology: Graphic Products Unit 2 in this exam series.

Unit 2 (5GR02/01) is out of 80 raw marks and has a total 80 UMS.

After she sat the examination and the papers have been marked, Edexcel senior examiners recommend the raw mark grade boundaries as follows:

Unit 2	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Raw Mark boundary this exam series	80	66	58	50	42	34	26	18	10
Raw mark boundary last exam series	80	67	59	51	43	34	26	18	10
Uniform Mark boundary	80	72	64	56	48	40	32	24	16

IMPORTANT NOTE:

*The raw boundary marks listed above are for illustration only to show how raw marks map to uniform marks in this subject area and should not be taken as the actual grade boundaries for the unit.

Why are the raw marks boundaries different in this series compared to the last series?

You'll notice, for example, that at C the raw boundary mark was 43 last series; this series it is 42. However, you will also notice that C will always have a uniform mark of 48.

Why do raw mark boundaries change?

Raw mark boundaries change from series to series since examination papers can perform differently from year to year, depending on the tasks set. Even though the raw mark boundaries have changed, the uniform mark for each grade boundary remains the same for all series.

In the last examination series when Jenny took the exam for the first time the raw mark boundaries were lower. Jenny scored 38/80 in raw marks. This series, Jenny scored a raw mark of 62/80.

The best mark will automatically be chosen to make up the final grade in this example.

Note: Jenny can not re-sit this unit again and she must also ensure that 40% of the course (i.e. one unit in the case of Design & Technology) is sat in the final summer series when cashing in.

Looking forward to next summer (2011): Calculating results at cash-in

The GCSE Design & Technology qualifications are each made up of 2 units (Unit 1 weighting 60% and Unit 2 weighting 40%). Unit 1 is worth 120 UMS marks and Unit 2 is worth 80 UMS marks, therefore the total UMS for the qualification is 200.

The UMS grade boundaries for the full GCSE qualification (i.e. when all 2 units are cashed-in) are:

Qualification Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Uniform Mark boundary	200	180	160	140	120	100	80	60	40

Calculating Results (2011 possible scenario) - GCSE Design & Technology Cash in code: 2GR01

Jenny achieved 68 uniform marks in her unit 2 resit. She has also taken unit 1 in this series.

Jenny achieved:

Unit	Uniform Mark	
	This series	Last series
1	72	
2	68 (resit)	44

Jenny's total score is $72 + 68 = 140$ uniform marks. With reference to the table below, she will achieve a grade B overall at subject level for the two units combined.

Qualification Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Uniform mark grade threshold	180	160	140	120	100	80	60	40

What is the Terminal Assessment Rule?

There is a new rule with modular GCSEs called the Terminal Requirement rule. It states that students must take at least 40% (i.e. either Unit 1 or Unit 2) of the assessment in the final examination series when they cash-in or certificate and the results of the terminal assessments will contribute towards the final grade.

In practice it means that one of the two units must be sat at the end of the course, either Unit 1 or Unit 2.

With re-sits, the best mark usually counts. However, if a re-sit is being used as the final terminal unit then the re-sit mark will count, even if it is not the better mark.