

GCSE French and German June 2020 and the Ofqual adjustment regarding severe grading

Much preparation and work has gone into persuading Ofqual to make an adjustment to the grading in ML, and in November 2019, a decision was announced that there would be uplifts to GCSE French and German to bring them into line with GCSE Spanish.

Schools submitted CAGs without the adjustment factored in, on the instructions of Ofqual so that exam boards could then apply the adjustments consistently across centres into the awarded grade.

On the instructions of Ofqual, exam boards factored in the additional adjustment into the calculated grades. A detailed document "GCSE Fr + Gn with Ofqual 2020 adjust v3.docx" has been prepared showing the effect of the Ofqual adjustments if they had been applied in June 2019.

On Monday, the decision was made that instead of everyone receiving a calculated grade, pupils would be given a "final grade" which is the "better of calculated grade and CAG". The calculated grades have had the 2% adjustment factored into the calculation. However, this is complex to unpick. Schools have today just been sent a single grade for each pupil, the "final grade". You can deduce by comparison where the calculated grade was higher than the CAG if you do a result by result comparison against the final grade, but you don't know whether a calculated grade was equal to or lower than the CAG, and so can't calculate the overall grade distribution which is what you need to make a proper comparison

The grades being awarded will depend on the approach taken by the school. We saw from FFT Datalab analysis in June that different schools had taken differing approaches. CAGs on average 0.3 grades above 2019 outcomes, and the Ofqual Summer Symposium presentation showed that in the end the CAGs were actually on average 0.5 grades above 2019, a substantial uplift. Within that average, a good number of schools submitted CAGs not too far from 2019 outcomes, whereas others submitted CAGs substantially above.

So the 2% adjustment has been made to the calculated grades by the exam boards, but in practice there are few pupils whose grade will be higher just because of the 2% adjustment. In the vast majority of cases the increase in grade will be because in the majority of schools, the CAGs will be in excess of the calculated grades even with the 2% adjustment.

For the record, the rest of this document is as was before the announcement about the move to use CAGs, but much of it has been superseded

There is a very real risk that the national change to benefit GCSE French and German in the light of severe grading may be mixed up with the difference between CAGs and calculated grades, and as a result the benefits of this change may not be seen. Centres were asked to make submissions on the basis of 2019 standards, with Ofqual making the adjustments at the awarding stage.

We know nationally that there is a significant variation between schools in terms of the extent to which the CAGs exceeded the calculated grades. At a national level, FFT had already shown from figures given to them by schools before submission that the average CAG score is nearly 0.3 grades higher than the average calculated score, meaning that somewhere in the region of 30% of students were given a CAG higher than the grade they will be given. The Ofqual Summer Symposium confirmed that these are likely to be under-estimates.

To put those figures into perspective, the Ofqual adjustment increases the average score nationally by 0.11 grades, weighted towards the higher grades. Correspondingly, around 11% of pupils will get a higher grade than they otherwise would have been awarded. In many schools, this increase will be less than the reduction arising from the use of calculated grades, and so the grades awarded will still be lower than the grades submitted even though there will have been a nationally applied increase to GCSE French and German.

How can I see what adjustment has been made to the GCSE French and German grades?

To the right is an example of how the additional subject level information may be sent through by the exam board for each subject. The columns may not be in this order, but it is worth re-ordering,

Historical data			Prior attainment adjustment		calculated grades			CAGs		
9	6	2.7%	9	2.1%	9	14	6.8%	9	12	6.0%
8	10	4.5%	8	3.7%	8	16	8.2%	8	17	8.5%
7	22	9.9%	7	0.5%	7	21	10.4%	7	24	12.0%
6	35	15.7%	6	-2.0%	6	27	13.4%	6	27	13.5%
5	41	18.4%	5	-3.0%	5	30	15.1%	5	37	18.5%
4	50	22.4%	4	0.5%	4	45	22.6%	4	47	23.5%
3	42	18.8%	3	0.2%	3	37	18.7%	3	25	12.5%
2	12	5.4%	2	-3.0%	2	4	2.0%	2	6	3.0%
1	3	1.3%	1	1.0%	1	4	2.0%	1	3	1.5%
U	2	0.9%	U	0.0%	U	2	0.9%	U	2	1.0%
Total	223	100%	Total	0.0%	Total	200	100%	Total	200	100%

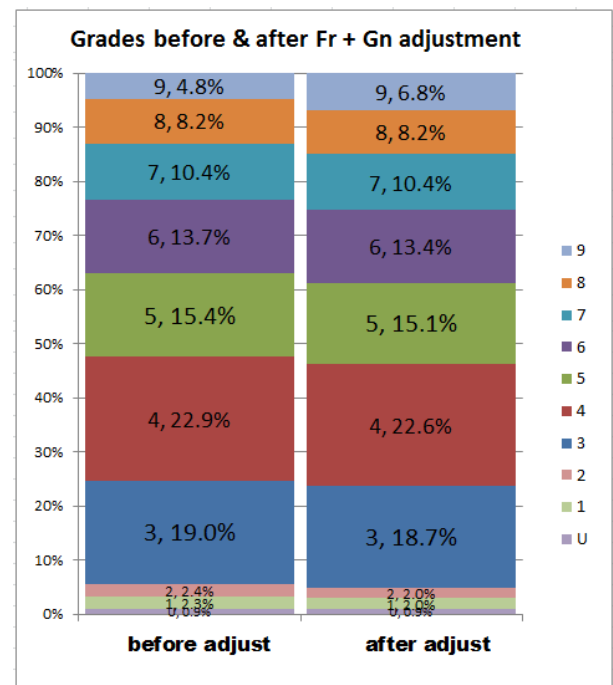
Then, in order to understand the factors contributing to the calculated grades, it is necessary to calculate and add in an set of numbers (both per grade and cumulative) for any additional national and centre-level adjustments incl the Fr + Gn one. This is illustrated in the screenshot below, with the extra columns in red, as well as one adding together the historic data and the prior attainment adjustment.

Historical data			Prior attainment adjustment		before adjust historic + prior			per grade Nat. & centre adjustment		CUMULATIVE Nat. & centre adjustment		after adjust calculated grades			CAGs		
9	6	2.7%	9	2.1%	9	10	4.8%	9	2.00%	9	2.00%	9	14	6.8%	9	12	6.0%
8	10	4.5%	8	3.7%	8	16	8.2%	8	0.00%	8	2.00%	8	16	8.2%	8	17	8.5%
7	22	9.9%	7	0.5%	7	21	10.4%	7	0.00%	7	2.00%	7	21	10.4%	7	24	12.0%
6	35	15.7%	6	-2.0%	6	27	13.7%	6	-0.33%	6	1.67%	6	27	13.4%	6	27	13.5%
5	41	18.4%	5	-3.0%	5	31	15.4%	5	-0.33%	5	1.33%	5	30	15.1%	5	37	18.5%
4	50	22.4%	4	0.5%	4	46	22.9%	4	-0.33%	4	1.00%	4	45	22.6%	4	47	23.5%
3	42	18.8%	3	0.2%	3	38	19.0%	3	-0.33%	3	0.67%	3	37	18.7%	3	25	12.5%
2	12	5.4%	2	-3.0%	2	5	2.4%	2	-0.33%	2	0.33%	2	4	2.0%	2	6	3.0%
1	3	1.3%	1	1.0%	1	5	2.3%	1	-0.33%	1	0.00%	1	4	2.0%	1	3	1.5%
U	2	0.9%	U	0.0%	U	2	0.9%	U	0.00%	U	0.00%	U	2	0.9%	U	2	1.0%
Tot	223	100%	Tot	0.0%	Tot	200	100%	Tot	0.00%	Tot	11.00%	Tot	200	100%	Tot	200	100%

The Ofqual adjustments for French and German were quantified on p.25 of "Requirements for the Calculation of Results in Summer 2020" - 7th July 2020:

For GCSE French and German, national prediction including the following adjustments:
 +2% at grades 7, 8 and 9, +1.67% at grade 6, +1.33% at grade 5, +1% at grade 4, +0.67% at grade 3 and +0.33% at grade 2.

Note that exam boards usually work in terms of cumulative percentages, which can then be expressed in terms of percentages getting a particular grade. Do be aware that because the percentages must add up to 100%, an increase in one grade will carry through in the cumulative percentages until there is a corresponding reduction. Stacked column graphs are very helpful for demonstrating this - please see associated document "GCSE Fr + Gn with Ofqual 2020 adjust v3.docx" for the national adjustments in this format.



This is what has happened in this case. The figures from Ofqual apply to the **cumulative** percentages, and so in fact the percentage getting grade 8 remains the same, but it now includes pupils who would have gained a grade 7.

"Historical data"

Although this is presented as a single set of data, it will have been generated from the relevant number of previous years, typically two years for GCSE and three for A-level. The total number of students may well be different from the number for 2020.

"Prior attainment adjustment"

This accounts for any change in prior attainment between the years for the historical data and for 2020, and is expressed in terms of changes to the percentage of output grades. Overall these must add to 0.

"National and centre-level adjustment"

This may well not be in the information sent out by the exam boards, but is worth calculating as the difference between the calculated grade percentage and the sum of the historical data and the prior attainment adjustment. This will include any changes made at a national level in a particular subject to maintain comparable outcomes (and any changes resulting from the National Reference Test) as well as the GCSE ML adjustment in French and German. At a centre level this will deal with particular cases such as very small numbers etc where the CAGs are given greater weight. Overall these must add to 0.

"Calculated grades"

These are the percentages actually awarded and should match the figures from the individual pupil lists.

"CAGs"

These are the percentages from the grades submitted and should match the figures from the individual pupil lists.