

5 February 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians,

MFL Grading

You will soon be receiving your son's mock exam grades and this letter is to explain an important aspect of grading in MFL and the distinction between Higher and Foundation tier.

MFL GCSE exams can be taken at Higher or Foundation tier. At Higher tier students can score between a Grade 3 and a Grade 9. As you will see from the grade boundaries sent home with the exam report, there is a very narrow gap between a 3 and a 4 (the grade considered to be a pass). If they miss a 3 they then drop straight to a U.

At Foundation tier students can score between a Grade 1 and a Grade 5. You will see from the grade boundaries that there is a much wider gap on Foundation between a 3 and a 4, and if students miss out on a 3 they can still get a 1 or 2, rather than dropping straight to a U. These are the grade boundaries used by the exam board.

The vast majority of RGS students sat the Higher tier mock exam. If your son has come out with a 3 or a U on the Higher tier mock exam, he will be strongly advised to sit the Foundation tier exam in the summer. Whilst this limits his top grade to a 5, you will see from the Foundation grade boundaries that the % required to secure the top grade on this paper (a 5) is much lower than the % to secure the top grade on a Higher tier paper (a 9). It also significantly decreases the risk of students 'crashing out' to a U grade or getting a 3.

We want students to get the grades they are capable of in the summer and be able to pass their MFL GCSE, so if your son is advised to do Foundation tier, he should strongly consider it. Sitting Foundation tier may also relieve some overall exam pressure, as the writing exam in particular is much more scaffolded. The reading, listening and speaking exams are also more accessible. AQA state as a rough guide that two thirds of a Higher tier paper is targeted at Grade 6 level and above, making Higher tier papers significantly challenging for students aiming for a Grade 4 or 5.

Please be in touch with your son's MFL teacher if you have any concerns or questions about their mock grade and Foundation tier exams.

Yours faithfully,

Miss Sarah Sheppard
Head of MFL