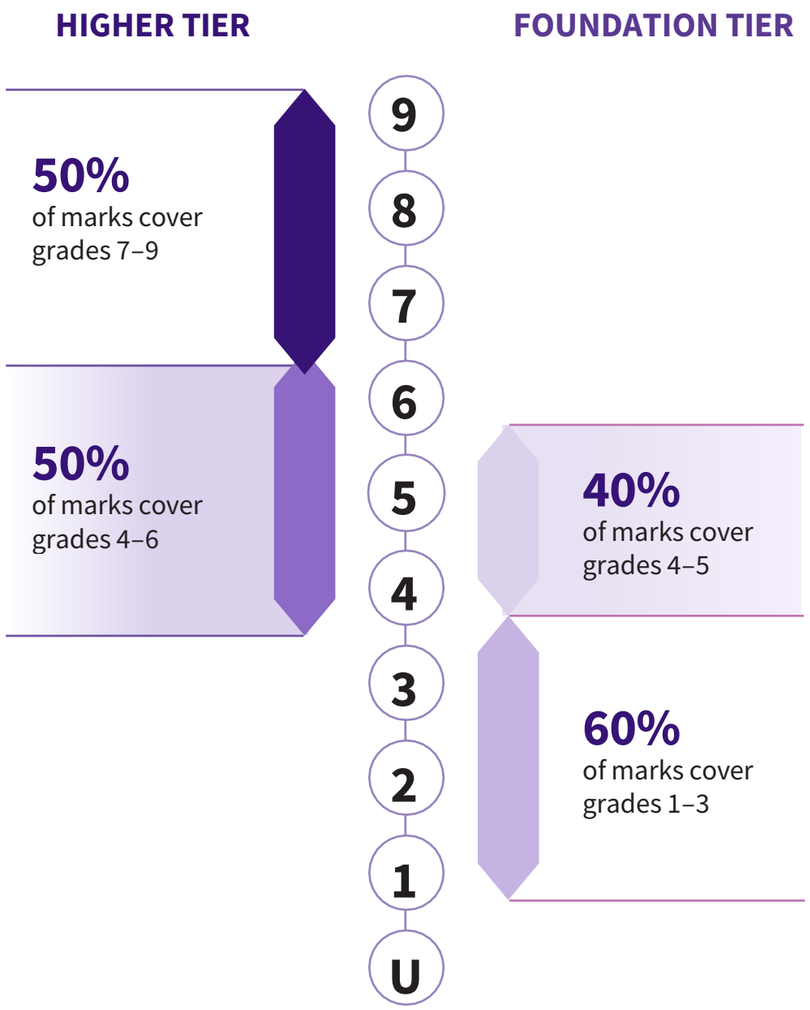
GCSE MFL grade 4 and 5 students: Foundation or Higher – what's best?

For most students, appropriate tier choices are relatively straightforward. However, for potential grade 4 and 5 students it can be more uncertain. There are a number of factors to consider.

How are the marks targeted in Listening and Reading papers in each tier?



Foundation tier reaches grade 5 (equivalent to a low grade B in the old A*–G specification). The most straightforward questions on Higher tier papers target grade 4 and these are more demanding than the most straightforward ones on legacy Higher tier.

Foundation and Higher papers contain a number of questions common to both tiers. **Students who are unable to answer many common questions in the 2018 and sample assessments are unlikely to have a good experience at Higher tier** as 2/3 of the paper is aimed at students expecting a grade 6 and above.

Students aiming to achieve a grade 4 in a language at GCSE will be able to access more marks in the Foundation tier than the Higher tier.

Copyright © 2018 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Key considerations

Did the student perform consistently well on the common questions (questions that feature in both tiers) in Papers 1 and 3 aimed at grades 4 and 5 in mock exams?

Is the student confident in dealing with the more complex language and grammatical structures which will be used in Higher tier papers?

Does the student consistently meet the requirements of the higher mark bands in speaking and writing?

Can the student deal with questions which require inference/drawing conclusions in more abstract material?

Is the student able to comfortably respond to unseen tasks which are more open ended in the Higher tier writing paper?

Taking the answers to the questions above into consideration will help decide the most suitable tier for your student.