

A-level maths pupils need only 14% to pass this year

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Pupils have passed A-level maths this year by getting 14 per cent of the questions right, leaked figures show.

Grade boundaries for the Edexcel exam, which emerged a day before [A-level results](#) go public, showed that the board had also awarded an A grade to those who got 55 per cent of the answers right. Students with 45 per cent have been awarded a B, and those with 34 per cent will get a C.

This morning thousands of teenagers will receive their A-level results. This year completes the introduction of the new-style exams and more challenging content, making them a better preparation for [university](#).

Maths was the last subject to be reformed and some lowering of the pass mark and grade boundaries was expected, to reflect the higher level of difficulty. However no one expected the drop to be quite so dramatic.

Last year the old A level had a pass mark of 40 per cent, with 80 per cent required for an A grade.

Edexcel is the most popular exam board for maths, with 60,000 of the 86,000 pupils who took maths A level sitting its papers. However, the row over this year's paper may jeopardise that dominant position, [teachers](#) said.

It began when pupils sat Paper 2 in June: teachers reported children leaving the exam hall speechless or even in tears. Both groups said the questions bore little relation to specimen papers and appeared designed to trip up pupils.

Martin Collier, the master of Haileybury School in Hertfordshire, said Edexcel had been forced to slash the pass mark to save the day and now had difficult questions of its own to answer.

"It's not that it was too hard. It was that the questions were unexpected and just not recognisable, even to the best pupils," he said, adding that good examining "gives candidates a reasonable opportunity to show how able they are, how hard they have worked and how well prepared they are".

"Poor examining knocks children off their stride, undermines their confidence and gives them unexpected questions. The exam board trips them up, which is what happened here."

Pete Langley, director of the Student Room forum where the grade boundaries were leaked, said thousands of students were upset and worried by the maths [A-level exams](#) this year. "Some left the exam hall crying. The fact that the 2019 maths grade boundaries are lower than last year is recognition of how demanding those exams really were. Now we wait to see what plans the exam boards can put in place to protect students from this situation repeating next year," he said.

Pearson, which owns Edexcel, has already been forced to defend the paper. In a video statement last week, Pearson said it was aware that some had found Paper 2 "more difficult than they were expecting" and admitted that the first two questions were "more challenging than we traditionally expect initial questions to be". The board said that independent experts had analysed the paper and confirmed it was a "fair and valid exam testing across the ability range and the course curriculum".

However, heads were unconvinced. Mr Collier said Edexcel had had to slash grade boundaries "to preserve the integrity of its bell curve" so that roughly the same proportions of pupils got A*, A and B grades as they did last year.