# Update to schools and colleges about AL ML exams Summer 2015

This update is being issued by Headteacher organisations (ASCL, NAHT, HMC) and Language teacher organisations (ALL (The Association for Language Learning), ISMLA (The Independent Schools Languages Association)) to schools, colleges and other institutions with candidates sitting the A/L Modern Language exams in the Summer 2015 series (AS 21st May, A2 15th June).

It is an update to the Press Release issued by the organisations on 26th Sept 2014 following the publication of the Ofqual Report *Exploration of Assessment Quality Issues in A-Level Modern Foreign Languages,* published on 26 September 2014

The organisations welcomed the Report and especially that in §10.6 Recommendations (pp92 - 95) Ofqual were requiring the exams boards to make some changes to the exams in Summer 2015 regarding :

* the bunching of raw marks and the methodology of awarding A\* grade has, indeed, led to a lower than expected allocation of A\* grades. It recommends that the exam boards ensure a wider spread of raw marks for the summer 2015 exams so that a fair number of A\* grades is awarded to the right candidates.
* specific aspects in the design of the exam boards’ mark schemes have led to unreliable/ variable marking, with details varying from board to board and language to language. Ofqual intends to require changes at exam boards in time for this summer’s exams. This means that schools should find that the ‘rank order’ of their candidates is more in line with expectation.

The recommendations will NOT require teachers or students to change teaching and learning or the way they prepare for exams. The most visible difference to teachers and students will be that the exam paper for listening and reading will contain fewer questions where nearly all the candidates are securing very high marks (i.e. do not lead to a spread of marks amongst the candidates taking the exam), and more questions with a greater spread of marks.

The changes will NOT affect the proportion of candidates obtaining each grade in general (except potentially A\*) as the grade boundaries will be adjusted to match the wider spread of marks.

However, students and teachers are likely to feel that OVERALL the exam papers for listening and reading are "harder" than in previous years, and could become anxious that ML grades generally will be lower. A key purpose of this update is to ensure that ML teachers in schools are aware of the situation and can reassure students

Links:

Ofqual Report: [*http://ofqual.gov.uk/news/improvements-made-level-foreign-languages/*](http://ofqual.gov.uk/news/improvements-made-level-foreign-languages/)

HMC / NAHT / ASCL joint press release

*http://www.ascl.org.uk/news-and-views/news\_news-detail.heads-and-universities-welcome-ofqual-intervention-in-the-grading-of-a-level-modern-languages-exams.html*