

New Marking System (NMS) and new conversion tables for European BAC

Summary

- For the first time since the founding of the EU Schools more than 60 years ago, **a change in the marking system** of the EU Schools has been decided (NMS) - for this purpose, the member states (MS) had to **adapt their conversion tables**. This year the first BAC is written under the NMS
- In March and October 2019 the General Secretary of the EU Schools officially **informed** the heads of delegation about the new system and **its effects on the grades**, as well as giving advice for an **appropriate conversion**:
- As anticipated, the **average** of the finalmarks is **0.5 point lower** (which can be explained by the fact that now there are more positive marks) and **it has become more difficult to achieve the same high mark** as under the previous marking system
- Nevertheless, some countries **did downgrade** the EU BAC marks. Which is first inconsistent with logic of NMS, and secondly, the often applied just linear mathematical conversion to a certain % of students to each national grade is inconsistent with the competence-based approach of the NMS
- Although **learning is harmonized at all levels** with all member countries, with the new BAC conversion the difference of the local value of the EU BAC, even not before having been the same now, is now **highly divergent**
- In order to **protect the reputation of the European Schools** and not to **cause irrevocable damage** on the students' further careers, a solution must be found urgently

The OSGES informed the member states clearly about the consequences of the NMS regarding the average mark and the difficulty to achieve upper marks

- „...In most of the member states the European Baccalaureate has a **very good reputation** and it is **crucial to retain** an appropriate equivalence..“
- „... in member states where the current situation is less favourable for the ES pupils, the introduction of the NMS is a **great opportunity** to work together with the national authorities to **improve** the situation ...“
- „...a first analysis of the results of the pupils (shows) in particular,
 - **no “lowering of standards”** can be observed.“
 - „As anticipated, the **average** of the finalmarks is **0.5 point lower** (which can be explained by the fact that now there are more positive marks)“
 - „Given the above-mentioned observations and in order to ensure also in future a fair treatment of our graduates in line with their qualifications, it is important that Member States take into consideration the fact that with the New Marking System **it has become more difficult to achieve the same high mark as under the previous marking system**“
 - „It is **strongly recommended that this fact would be reflected by Member States** when establishing the revised equivalence tables“.

The Analysis of Document 2019-11-D-23-en-5 (update on the Introduction of the New Marking System) reveals a highly divergent approach inconsistent with the NMS concept

Effects of NMS		Member States (or UK)
overcompensated	↘↗	Cyprus
partially overcompensated	↘↗→	Slovakia
compensated	↘→	Slovenia
partially not compensated	↘→↘	Czech Republic
not compensated	↘↘	Croatia
partially aggravated	↘↓↘	Bulgaria, Finland, Lithuania, Malta
aggravated	↘↓	Germany, Hungary, UK

Source: Internal analysis done on the basis of the non-public document: *Update on the Introduction of the New Marking System* (2019-11-D-23-en-5) presented at the Board of Governors of the European Schools meeting of 13-15 April 2021.

Problematic cases in detail (1) :

Member State (or UK)	Description of problematic change of equivalence	marking range NMS concerned	% of range NMS 50-100 concerned	bad examples
Bulgaria (BG)	NMS effects not compensated between BG marks 3,50 and 5,50, aggravated below BG mark 3,50	50 – 80	60%	ES 60 (NMS) = BG 3,50 previously = BG 4,35 (0,85 grades higher)
Czech Republic (CZ)	NMS effects not compensated for some of the CZ marks 1 and 2	87,5 – 90 75 – 80	15%	ES 78 (NMS) = CZ 3 previously = CZ 2 (1 grade higher)
Croatia (CR)	NMS effects not compensated for some of CR marks 5-3 some positive ES grades are negative grades in CR!	87,5 – 90 75 – 80 62,5 – 70 50 – 60	50%	ES 55 (NMS) = CR 1 (negative grade!) previously = CR 2 (1 grade higher)
Finland (FI)	NMS effects not compensated for some of the FI marks “L”, “M”, “E” and “C” For NMS marks 50-60: (positive) FI marks, awarded for negative ES marks previously	87,5 – 90 75 – 80 62,5 – 70 50 – 60	50%	ES 53 (NMS) = FI “A” previously = FI “C” (2 grades higher)

Problematic cases in detail (2) :

Member State (or UK)	Description of problematic change of equivalence	marking range NMS concerned	% of range NMS 50-100 concerned	bad examples
Germany (DE)	aggravation of NMS effects for DE marks 1,0 – 2,0 only partial compensation of NMS effects for DE marks 2,0 – 3,5	56,3 - 93,6	75%	ES 87,5 (NMS) = DE 1,5 previously = DE 1,0 (0,5 grades higher)
Hungary (HU)	aggravation of NMS effects throughout the entire positive HU marking scale from 25 to 100	50 - 99	98%	ES 90 (NMS) = HU 85 previously = HU 94 (9 points higher)
Lithuania (LT)	NMS effects not compensated for some of the LT marks 1 and 2 aggravated for top LT mark 10	91,1 – 94,9 82,3 – 84,9 73,7 – 74,9 64,4 – 64,9	17%	ES 92 (NMS) = LT 9 previously = LT 10 (1 grade higher)
Malta (MT)	NMS effects aggravated for marks “A”-“C”, only partially compensated for MT mark “D”	71,3 – 90 53,8 - 70	70%	ES 79 (NMS) = MT “C” previously = MT “A” (2 grades higher)
UK	aggravation of NMS effects below for all UK marks from AAA* until the end of the positive spectrum	50-87,55	75%	ES 70 (NMS) = UK “CCD” previously = UK “ABB” (1,7 grades higher)

There are many examples of negative effects of the combination of NMS and new equivalences

Member State (or UK)	Mark (NMS)	Old equivalence	New equivalence	Negative effect
Bulgaria	60,00	4,35	3,50	minus 0,85 grades
Croatia	55,00	2 (positive)	1 (negative)	minus 1 grade
Czech Republic	78,00	2	3	minus 1 grade
Finland	53,00	C	A	minus 2 grades
Germany	87,50	1,0	1,5	minus 0,5 grades
Hungary	90,00	94	85	minus 9 points
Lithuania	92,00	10	9	minus 1 grade
Malta	79,00	A	C	minus 2 grades
UK	70,00	ABB	CCD	minus 1,7 grades

In some countries the scale of negative effects of the combination of NMS and new equivalences is very broad

Member State (or UK)	marking range NMS concerned (positive marks)										% of range NMS concerned	
	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95		
Hungary	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	98%
Germany		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		75%
UK	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				75%
Malta	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				70%
Bulgaria	X	X	X	X	X	X						60%
Croatia	X	X	X	X		X		X				50%
Finland	X	X	X	X		X		X				50%
Lithuania			X		X		X		X			17%
Czech Republic						X		X				15%

By ignoring the specifics of the NMS and devaluing the BAC in the conversion, the impression is created that the quality of the European BAC has decreased under NMS

- Some member states calculate equivalences **not based on the performance of the individual graduate, but allocates linear a certain % of students to each national grade.**
- This approach is **inconsistent with the competence-based approach** enshrined in the NMS and thus should be replaced by a calculation taking the performance levels of ES graduates fairly into consideration
- They have provided a new equivalence that **does not balance the effects of the NMS but aggravates them** (the marks are lowered first due to the effects of the NMS and then lowered a second time by means of such an equivalence calculation)

Questions that need to be answered

- How can we, how can all parties involved, still find a way to avert
 - irrevocable damage to the future of our students?
 - And, not to forget, the reputation of the European Baccalaureate and consequently for the EU institutions?

For all parties involved the situation has negative effects and also long term risks for the reputation of our schools are not unlikely

- **For the students**: fair access to university places is decreased for them, and in some cases irrevocably, since a numerus clausus without the option of a waiting period **closes the doors forever**.
- **For the member states**: They will **lose excellently educated young people** who have grown up in the European spirit for their labour market.
- **For the European Schools as a whole**: the devaluation by half of the member states is a **dangerous signal for the reputation of the schools** and their future - the **attractiveness** of our schools for families from some countries is **strongly decreasing**. With the consequence of **losing pupils** especially in the AES or Cat III **as well as staff** for the institutions of the European Union who will be reluctant to have their children educated in our schools

A long term solution is ad hoc not to find - interim solution is necessary

- There is the clear obligation to **re-assess the conversion tables** and **align** those EU wide
- The new tables were created while many stakeholders had to deal with „**fire-fighting**“ of the **pandemic** and might not be conclusively thought through
- If a new conversion system were to be armed now, when no one had time to deal with it comprehensively, and the system were then changed again in the coming year(s), the **credibility of the EU BAC would be at stake**
- It would be **responsible to opt for - even not ideal, and therefore just interim solution** that is more flexible in scope than the current one (re-conversion new to old marking system?) , and **leaves the door open for a final, comprehensively thought** out version to be enacted next year
- In this sense, it should be considered whether the **mutually influencing effects of "pandemic/teaching restrictions" and "NMS"** (in particular the lack of experience through external correctors) should not be **reduced by the point "NMS"** and a **recalculation** of the NMS into the old grading system should be carried out for the pandemic year 20/21