

GCSE AQA GCSE Physics

Spec code: 8463 · Command Word Guide & Grade Boundary Tracker

Grade Boundaries

Session	Max	9	8	7	6	5	4	3
Jun 2025 Higher	200	152	139	126	107	88	70	61
Jun 2024 Higher	200	151	136	122	103	85	67	58
Jun 2023 Higher	200	147	133	120	102	84	67	58
Jun 2025 Found (F)200		—	—	—	—	144	131	95
Jun 2024 Found (F)200		—	—	—	—	136	122	89

AQA GCSE Physics (separate/triple science). Two written papers: Paper 1 and Paper 2, each 100 marks; total 200. No coursework or practical endorsement assessed separately. Higher tier eligible for grades 9–3 (with safety net); Foundation tier eligible for grades 5–1. Source: AQA published subject grade boundaries, official PDFs. Always verify at [aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk).

Command Word Mastery

Mark schemes attach specific meaning to each command word below. Misreading one of these costs marks that working had already earned.

Command Word	What It Demands	Common Student Error	Workshop Fix
Describe	State what happens — using precise scientific language, stating the direction, magnitude, or trend as appropriate.	Vague language: "it gets bigger" rather than "the current increases as resistance decreases." AQA mark schemes require named quantities and directions.	Anatomy phase: students compare a 0-mark and 2-mark "describe" answer for the same graph and identify the missing specifics.
Explain	State the cause, describe the mechanism, and link it to the observed effect — three elements, in order.	Restating the observation instead of explaining it. "The resistance increases because it gets hotter" earns no more than one mark without the mechanism.	PEE structure (Point, Evidence, Explanation) is required for every "explain" answer. Peer reviewer checks for all three elements.
Calculate	Use the data given to produce a numerical answer. Write the equation first, substitute values, then calculate — with units on the final answer.	Entering numbers into a calculator and writing only the answer. If wrong with no working, all marks are lost.	Equation → substitution → answer: three mandatory lines. Students announce the equation by name before writing it.
Evaluate	Assess the evidence — consider what supports the claim and what limits it — then state a justified conclusion.	Listing only evidence in favour, or only limitations, without reaching a balanced conclusion.	Students allocate 50% of their answer to "for" and 50% to "against/limitation", then write a one-sentence conclusion that names which outweighs the other.

How EMI uses this: AQA 8463 Physics examiner reports consistently identify "describe" and "explain" as the command words where most marks are lost — not calculation questions. EMI workshops open each session with a five-minute examiner-report extract, then drill the specific command word that cost the cohort most marks in the last series before moving to content.

Data sourced from official board grade boundary documents. Always verify current boundaries at [aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk) · This guide is produced by Exam Mastery International (examasteryinternational.com) for student and school use. Not affiliated with or endorsed by the examining board.