



Is your child studying for GCSEs?

If so, or if they will in the future, you might be interested to know that GCSEs in England are changing. The courses and exams are changing to ensure that young people have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the 21st Century. The new GCSEs ensure that students leave school better prepared for work or further study. They cover more challenging content and are designed to match standards in the strongest performing education systems elsewhere in the world.

Top facts about the new GCSEs

- The new GCSEs in England have a new 9 to 1 grading scale, to better differentiate between the highest performing students and distinguish clearly between the old and new exams.
- Grade 9 is the highest grade and will be awarded to fewer students than the current A*.
- The first exams in new English language, English literature and maths GCSEs were sat in summer 2017 and the rest of the new GCSEs will be rolled out over the next three years.
- The old and new GCSE grading scales do not directly compare but there are three points where they align, as the diagram shows:
 - The bottom of grade 7 is aligned with the bottom of grade A;
 - The bottom of grade 4 is aligned with the bottom of grade C; and
 - The bottom of grade 1 is aligned with the bottom of grade G.
- Although the exams will cover more challenging content, it is right that pupils are not disadvantaged simply by being the first to sit the new GCSEs. The approach used by Ofqual, the exams regulator ensures that, all things being equal, broadly the same proportion of pupils get grades 1, 4 and 7 and above in any subject, as would have got G, C or A and above respectively in the old system.
- The Department for Education recognises grade 4 and above as a 'standard pass'; this is the minimum level that students need to reach in English and maths, otherwise they need to

Grading new GCSEs from 2017

| New grading structure | Current grading structure |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 9 | |
| 8 | A* |
| 7 | A |
| 6 | B |
| 5 | C |
| 4 | |
| 3 | D |
| 2 | E |
| 1 | F |
| U | G |
| | U |

continue to study these subjects as part of their post-16 education. There is no re-take requirement for other subjects.

- 7 Employers, universities and colleges will continue to set the GCSE grades they require for entry to employment or further study. We are saying to them that if you previously set grade C as your minimum requirement, then the nearest equivalent is grade 4. The old A* to G grades will remain valid for future employment or study.
- 8 For measuring school performance, we will publish the proportion of students achieving a grade 5 and above in English and maths. The Department for Education recognises grade 5 and above in English and maths as a “strong pass”, a benchmark in line with the expectations of top performing education systems around the world – this is one of the headline measures of school performance. We will also publish the proportion of students achieving a grade 4 or above in English and maths for transparency and to enable schools to show their students’ achievements.
- 9 Most GCSEs taken by students at schools in Wales and Northern Ireland will continue to be graded A* to G. The grading scales for AS (A to E) and A levels (A* to E) are not changing.

When is this happening?

- The first exams for new GCSEs in English language, English literature and maths were sat in 2017. An additional 20 new GCSE subjects will have their first exams in 2018.
- All GCSE subjects will be revised for courses starting by 2018 and examined by 2020.
- Between 2017 and 2019, GCSE exam certificates will have a combination of number and letter grades. By 2020, exam certificates will contain only number grades.

| First teaching in 2015, first exams 2017 | First teaching in 2016, first exams 2018 | First teaching in 2017, first exams 2019 | First teaching in 2018, first exams 2020 |
|--|---|---|--|
| English language, English literature and maths | English and maths plus... art and design, biology, chemistry, citizenship studies, combined science, computer science, dance, drama, food preparation and nutrition, French, geography, German, classical Greek, history, Latin, music, physical education (including short course), physics, religious studies (including short course), and Spanish | 2015 and 2016 subjects plus... ancient history, Arabic, astronomy, Bengali, business, Chinese, classical civilisation, design and technology, economics, electronics, engineering, film studies, geology, Italian, Japanese, media studies, modern Greek, modern Hebrew, Panjabi, Polish, psychology, Russian, sociology, statistics and Urdu | All previous subjects plus... Biblical Hebrew, Gujarati, Persian, Portuguese and Turkish |