

# Changes to Education – A Parent’s Guide Factsheet: GCSE reform

## 1. Introduction

New GCSEs in English language, English Literature and Maths will be taught in schools in England from September 2015, with the first results issued in August 2017.

Further subjects will see new GCSEs introduced over the following two years.

## 2. What new GCSEs will look like?

The main features of the new GCSEs are:

1. A new grading scale of 9 to 1 will be used, with 9 being the top grade. This will allow greater differentiation between students and will help distinguish the new GCSEs from previous versions. Please see the table (on the next page) to show when each subject will award grades using the new grading scale.
2. Assessment will be mainly by exam, with other types of assessment used only where they are needed to test essential skills.
3. There will be new, more demanding content, which has been developed by government and the exam boards.
4. Courses will be designed for two years of study – they will no longer be divided into different modules and students will take all their exams in one period at the end of their course.
5. Exams can only be split into ‘foundation tier’ and ‘higher tier’ if one exam paper does not give all students the opportunity to show their knowledge and abilities.
6. Resit opportunities will only be available each November in English language and Maths.

### 3. Timetable

New GCSE to be taught from:	First results will be issued in:	Subjects	New grades from 9 to 1
September 2015	Summer 2017	English language English literature Maths	Yes Yes Yes
September 2016	Summer 2018	Geography History Biology Chemistry Physics Combined science Modern foreign languages Religious studies (Philosophy and Beliefs) Design and technology Cooking and Nutrition Art and Design Drama Music Physical Education Computer Science	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
September 2017	Summer 2019	All other GCSE subjects taught from this point will be new, with the current ones withdrawn. Exam boards will have to meet new rules for content and design when deciding which subjects to offer. More information on available subjects will follow.	Yes

### The new GCSE grading scale

## Grading the New GCSEs in 2017

NEW GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	U
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A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	U

CURRENT GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE

- Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a grade C and above.
- Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 7 and above as achieve an A and above.
- The bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G.

September 2014
Ofqual/14/5517

## **Key points**

- Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a grade C and above.
- Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 7 and above as currently achieve an A and above.
- For each exam, the top 20 per cent of those who get grade 7 or above will get a grade 9 – the very highest performers.
- The bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G.
- Grade 5 will be positioned in the top third of the marks for a current grade C and bottom third of the marks for a current grade B. This will mean it will be of greater demand than the present grade C, and broadly in line with what the best available evidence tells us is the average PISA performance in countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland.
- The new maths GCSE will be tiered, with grades 4 and 5 available through both tiers.

For further information about how education is changing please see:

- **Changes to Education – A Parent’s Guide Factsheet: Court Field School Assessment from Year 7 to Year 9**
- **Changes to Education – A Parent’s Guide Factsheet: GCSE reform**
- **Changes to Education – A Parent’s Guide Factsheet: The New Progress 8 measure**