



Department
for Education

Ofqual



AS and A level reforms in England



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**What is happening,
when?**

Why and how are AS and A levels changing?

GCSEs and A levels in England are being reformed, to match the best systems in the world and keep pace with universities' and employers' demands.

- GCSE content will be more challenging but still suitable for all abilities
- GCSEs will be graded on a new scale of 9 to 1 rather than A* to G as now, with 9 the highest grade, to distinguish clearly between the reformed and unreformed qualifications
- A levels will allow more time for studying and better prepare students for university
- AS levels will be stand alone qualifications to reduce exam burden on students and teachers.



When do these reforms affect AS and A level students?

Level	Start course in 2015, A level exams 2017, AS level exams 2016	Start course in 2016, A level exams 2018, AS level exams 2017	Start course in 2017, A level exams 2019, AS level exams in 2018	Start course in 2018, A level exams 2020, AS level exams 2019
AS and A Level	Art and design, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English language, English language and literature, English literature, history, physics, psychology, and sociology.	2015 subjects plus... Dance, drama and theatre, French, geography, German, classical Greek, Latin, music, physical education, religious studies and Spanish.	2015 and 2016 subjects plus... Accounting, ancient history, archaeology, Chinese, classical civilisation, <u>design and technology</u> , electronics, environmental science, film studies, <u>further maths</u> , geology, history of art, Italian, law, <u>maths</u> , media studies, music technology, philosophy, politics, Russian, and statistics.	All previous subjects plus... Arabic, Bengali, biblical Hebrew, Gujarati, modern Greek, modern Hebrew, Japanese, Panjabi, Persian, Portuguese Polish, Turkish, and Urdu.





Reformed AS and A levels

Reformed AS level

- **Content** Drawn from the new A level content
- **Demand** Same as current AS qualifications
- **Structure** AS is now a separate qualification with the marks no longer counting towards A level
May not be offered in all subjects in your school or college
Taught over 1 or 2 years
Exams at end of the course
- **Assessment** Most subjects have no non-exam assessment
- **Grading** Remains A to E plus U



Reformed A levels

- **Content** Changes to better prepare students for university
- **Demand** Same as current A levels
- **Structure** All exams at the end of the two-year course
Marks from the AS do not count towards the A level
- **Assessment** Mainly by examination
Non-exam assessment only where necessary
- **Grading** Remains A* to E plus U
A separate grade for science practical work



Awarding

- The standards of AS and A levels are not being changed; on average students who would have got Bs previously will get a B in reformed subjects.
- Exam boards will still use predictions (based on GCSE prior attainment) to guide their awards
- Key grade boundaries will be set, as now, using predictions and senior examiner judgement of students' work
- No UMS (uniform mark scale) – decoupling means there is no need for UMS which helped standardise results across units, qualifications and boards in a modular system
- The effect of decoupling AS on entry cohort



Changes to Practical Science

Practical Science Assessment

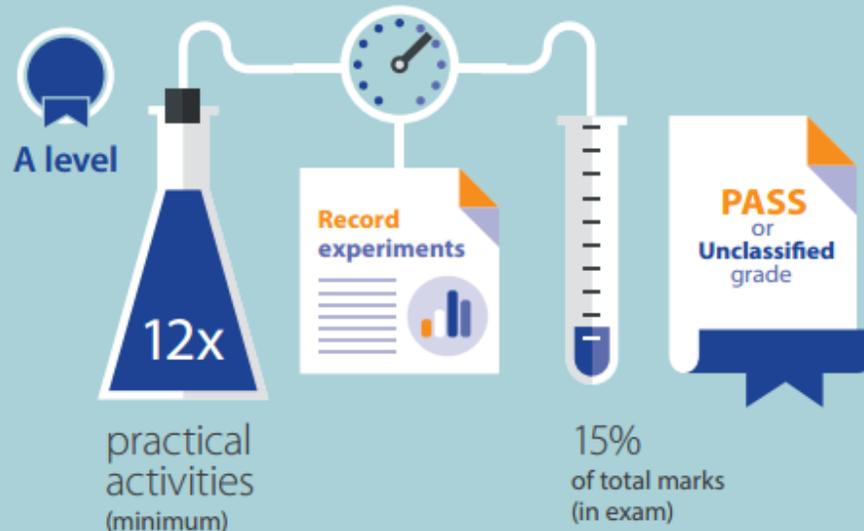
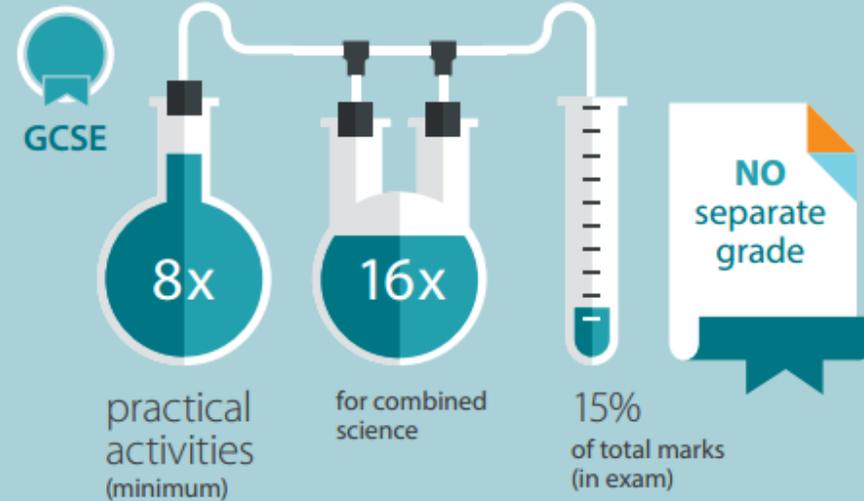
GCSE:

- Students do at least 8 practical activities (16 for combined science) covering specific techniques
- Written questions about practical work will make up at least 15% of the total marks for the qualification
- There will be no separate grade for practical skills
- Students studying combined science will receive one of 17 grades from 9-9 (highest) to 1-1 (lowest)

A level:

- More practicals – at least 12 in each science subject
- Written questions about practical work will make up at least 15% of the total marks for the qualification
- Students will need to record their experiments as they do them
- Students' competence in practicals will be reported separately (**pass/unclassified**)
- Practical 'pass' for A level science likely to be required by universities – **check admissions information**

Improving science practicals





Resits

Will there be an opportunity to resit?

Unreformed qualifications

- GCSE resits available for:
 - English, English language and maths in November 2016 AND summer 2017
 - All science and additional science qualifications (not individual sciences) no later than summer 2018
 - Exam boards may also offer resits in any other subject – including biology, chemistry and physics – in the year after the last sitting.

- AS and A levels resits available for all subjects in May or June of the year following the last legacy exam

- There are restrictions on who can take these resits

Will there be an opportunity to resit?

Reformed qualifications

- Students will be able to resit GCSE maths and English language in a November exam series.
- For all other GCSE and all AS and A levels, as now, students will resit by taking the qualification again the following year

Post-16 school/college measures

- As for secondary schools, the Department for Education's new post-16 performance measures place more emphasis on the progress of students.
- There will be five headline measures:
 - **Progress** – how well are students progressing?
 - **Attainment** – are they getting good grades?
 - **Retention** – are they dropping out?
 - **English and maths** – for students who did not get a good pass in these subjects at GCSE
 - **Destinations** – are they getting university/college places, apprenticeships and jobs?





Changes to marking, reviews and appeals

The Quality of Marking

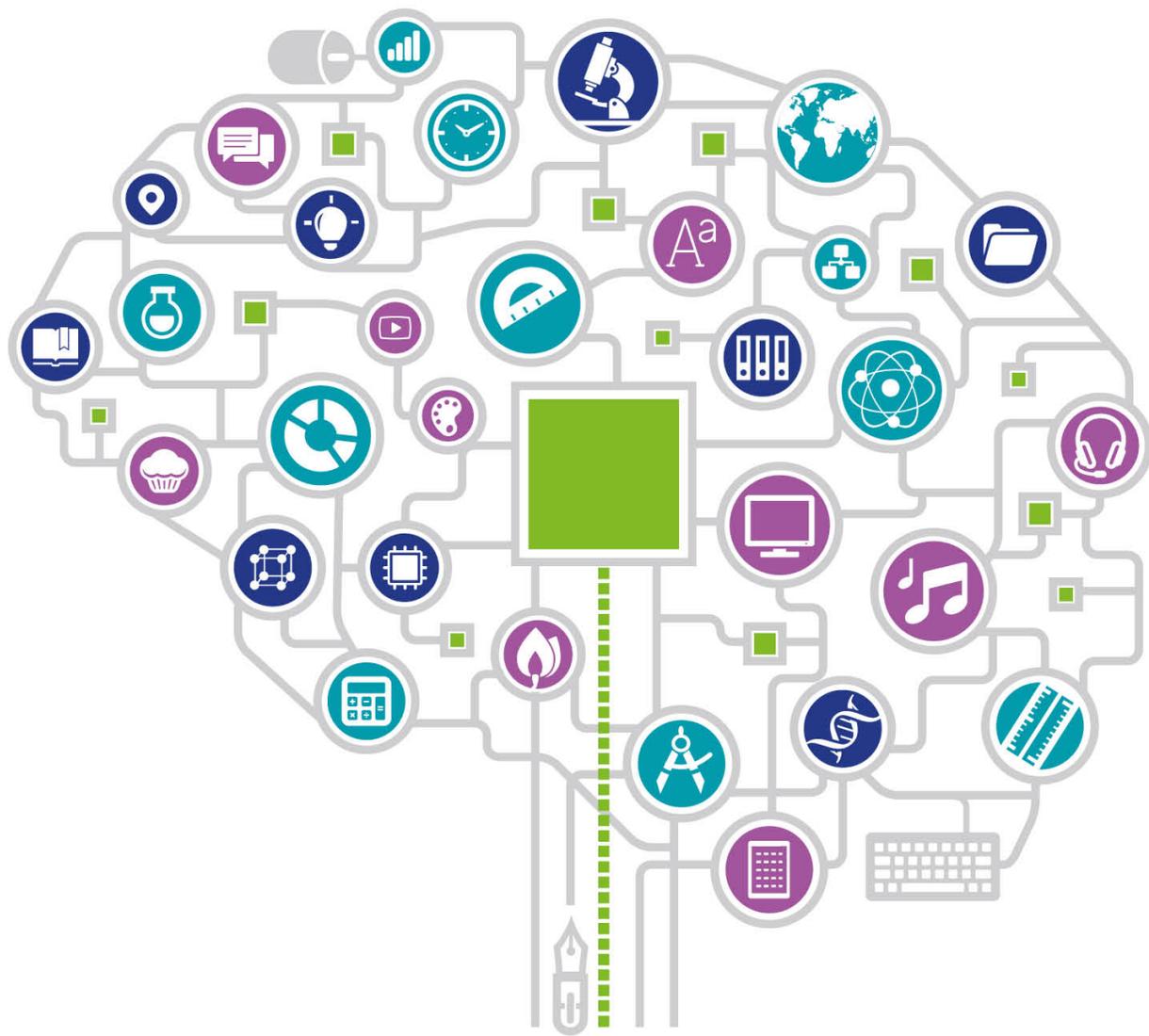
- The exams system is very large; around 8 million GCSEs, AS qualifications and A levels are awarded each year
- Exam outcomes are increasingly high stakes – for students, teachers and schools/colleges
- Growing number of reviews of marking being requested – typically where the mark is just below the grade boundary

Ofqual's aims:

- Marking errors are found and corrected
- Review and appeal arrangements are more transparent and consistent
- The system is as **fair** as it can be for all

Ofqual's decisions:

- Trained reviewers will check the original marking
- If they find an error they must correct it – however large or small
- Otherwise they must leave the mark unchanged



Further Information

Responsibilities for Qualifications

■ **Government:**

- Policy, purposes and priorities
- Curriculum and subject content
- Use of qualifications for school/college accountability purposes

■ **Ofqual:**

- Standards
- Validity
- Efficiency and value
- Oversight of the system

■ **Exam Boards:**

- Design and delivery
- Award qualifications to students

