

GCSEs and A-levels: how they are changing

Essential information for parents

I have heard GCSEs are changing, what does this mean?

- ▶ GCSEs are now graded on a new 'reformed' scale of 9 to 1, with 9 the highest grade (rather than A* to G for the 'unreformed' GCSEs), to distinguish clearly between the reformed and unreformed qualifications.

Grading new GCSEs from 2017

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

If the exams are harder, what will happen to the grades this summer?

- ▶ Although the exams will cover a wider, more challenging range of content, with many more terminal exams and very little Non Examined Assessment (NEA), the independent exam regulator Ofqual has made it clear that students sitting these examinations for the first/second time will not be disadvantaged.

Will my child be disadvantaged taking these exams?

In short, no. Whilst it takes a few years for teachers and students to get used to new qualifications and there are fewer past exam papers for students to practise on, the exam regulator Ofqual recognises that teachers are not as familiar with the new qualifications as they were with the old ones. Understandably, it would not be fair to penalise students for this, so the exam boards use statistics to help set grade boundaries. *Be aware Grade Boundaries will change each year*

For example, a student who would have previously achieved a grade C or above would be expected to get a grade 4 or above in the new GCSEs.

- ▶ While the content and assessment have changed, Ofqual will make sure that grades are awarded fairly and your child will not be disadvantaged by the changes.

Why has this new grading system been introduced?

- ▶ The introduction of the 9-1 system increases the number of higher grades than the previous A* - G system. By using 9-1, there are now six different grades from 4 to 9, rather than four in the old system (A*, A, B, C), which means individual students can be more accurately recognised in terms of their results. The revised scale will also enable employers and others to easily identify which students have taken the new, more challenging GCSEs

As the top grade is grade 9, will there be similar numbers of 9s awarded to A*s currently?

- ▶ There is more differentiation in the reformed qualifications, as there are three top grades (7, 8 and 9), compared to two in the unreformed qualifications (A and A*), so it will be the case that there will be less grade 9s than A*s previously.

I want my child to aim for the equivalent of a grade C across all subjects but I am confused as to whether they should be aiming for a 4 or a 5

- ▶ Because the same proportion of candidates will get a 4 and above as currently get a C and above, aiming for 4 and above is equivalent to aiming for C and above.
- ▶ This is, and will remain the level that pupils must achieve so they are not required to continue studying English and maths after secondary school. The government has defined a grade 4 as a 'standard' pass.
- ▶ Where employers, FE providers and universities currently accept a grade C, the government expects them to continue recognising a grade 4.

Will A levels be changing their grades too?

- ▶ No, A levels will retain their A*-E grades, and AS qualifications their A-E grades.

Any Questions

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