



Is your child studying for GCSEs?

If so, or if they will in the future, we want you to be aware that **GCSEs in England are changing – this started with English and maths in 2017**. The reforms 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 high performing education systems elsewhere in the world.

Top facts about the new GCSEs

1. The new GCSEs in England have a 9 to 1 grading scale, to better differentiate between the highest performing students and distinguish clearly between the old and new qualifications.
2. Grade 9 is the highest grade and will be awarded to fewer students than the old A*.
3. The first exams in new GCSEs for English language, English literature and maths were sat in summer 2017 and the rest of the new GCSEs will be introduced over the following three years to 2020.
4. 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.
5. Although the exams will cover more challenging content, students will not be disadvantaged by being the first to sit the new GCSEs. The approach used by Ofqual, the qualifications regulator in England, ensures that, all things being equal, broadly the same proportion of students will get grades 1, 4 and 7 and above in the reformed subjects, as would have got G, C or A and above in the old system.

The diagram is titled 'GCSE Grading' and is presented as a table comparing the 'New Grading Structure' with the 'Old Grading Structure'. The new structure uses grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and U. The old structure uses grades A*, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and U. Horizontal lines in the new structure align the bottom of grade 7 with the bottom of grade A, the bottom of grade 4 with the bottom of grade C, and the bottom of grade 1 with the bottom of grade G. An arrow labeled 'Standard Pass' points to grade 4. The Department for Education logo is in the top right corner.

GCSE Grading	
New Grading Structure	Old Grading Structure
9	A*
8	
7	A
6	B
5	
4	C
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

6. The Department for Education recognises grade 4 and above as a 'standard pass' in all subjects. A grade 4 or above marks a similar achievement to the old grade C or above. It is a credible achievement for a young person that should be valued as a passport to future study and employment. A grade 4 is the minimum level that students need to reach in English and maths, otherwise they need to continue to study these subjects as part of their post-16 education. This requirement does not apply to 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 they previously set grade C as their minimum requirement, then the nearest equivalent is grade 4. The old A* to G grades will remain valid for future employment or study.

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 may have a combination of number and letter grades, depending on the mix of subjects taken. By 2020, all 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