

Reformed GCSEs – A Parent’s Guide

As you are probably aware the government has introduced radical new changes to the structure and assessment of GCSEs. The familiar system of A*-G grades is being replaced with number grading, 1-9. Also, in addition to the changes to the structure of GCSEs, the Department of Education has re-defined a ‘standard pass’ to be a grade 4 (the equivalent to a C in the old GCSE grading system) and a ‘strong pass’ to be a grade 5 (the equivalent to a high C or low B).

Only reformed subjects will be available to start studying from 2018.

- Until 2020, pupils will receive a mixture of grades A* to C and 9 to 1 grades for the legacy and reformed GCSE subjects.
- The timeline below shows the rollout of the delivery and examination of the reformed GCSE qualifications.

Start course in 2015	Start course in 2016	Start course in 2017	Start course in 2018
Exams in 2017	Exams in 2018	Exams in 2019	Exams in 2020
English language English literature Mathematics.	Art and design, biology, chemistry, citizenship studies (and short course), combined science, computer science, dance, drama, food preparation and nutrition, French, geography, German, classical Greek, history, Latin, music, physical education, physics, religious studies (including short course), and Spanish.	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, physical education short course, Polish, psychology, Russian, sociology, statistics, and Urdu.	Gujarati, biblical Hebrew, Persian, Portuguese, and Turkish.

In reformed GCSEs, the ‘lettered’ A*-G system is replaced with numbers, ranging from 9 to 1. 9 is the highest grade that candidates can achieve and 1 is the lowest. In addition, GCSE content is becoming significantly more difficult over the coming years.

For new GCSEs a numbered system will now range from 9 (highest) to 1 (lowest).

Here's a diagram of how the old scores compare to the newer ones:

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

The main features of the new GCSEs are:

- The new grading system help distinguish the new GCSEs from previous versions.
- Assessment to be mainly by exam, with other types of assessment used only where they are needed to test essential skills.
- There is new, more demanding content, which has been developed by government and the exam boards. Extended writing skills and advanced text comprehension are essential skills in new qualifications.
- Courses are 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.
- 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.
- Resit opportunities will only be available each November in English Language and Mathematics.