

New Curriculum Reform at KS3 and KS4 – How will this impact on my child?

1. Introduction

The government has recently introduced radical new changes to the curriculum at both KS3 and 4 which in turn has changed the structure and assessment of GCSEs. We are moving away from the familiar system of A*-G grades to a system of grading with numbers 9-1. In addition to the changes to the structure of GCSEs, the government is also recognising two levels of a 'pass' grade. These are a 'standard' pass which is a grade 4 and the equivalent to the old grade C and a 'good pass' which is a grade 5, and represents the top third of a C and the bottom third of a B. This is to align the UK with the best education systems in the world.

From September 2015 new reformed GCSEs will be taught in English language, English literature and maths, with the first results issued in August 2017. Further subjects will see new GCSEs introduced over the following two years (see section 3).

2. Changes to the KS3 curriculum

In May 2013, the Secretary of State announced: 'as part of our reforms to the national curriculum, the current system of 'levels' used to report children's attainment and progress will be removed and will not be replaced. These announcements made it clear that central government was no longer going to dictate how schools should record and report progress between statutory tests. As a result new programmes of study within the new National Curriculum (Sept 2014) were released and set out expectations for the end of each key stage, enabling all maintained schools a freedom to develop a curriculum relevant to their pupils that teaches this content.

It is stated that the curriculum must include an assessment system which enables schools to check what pupils have learned and whether they are on track to meet expectations at the end of the key stage, and to report regularly to parents.

Arnold Hill, as a member of Trent Academies group, have developed a system to track students across all five years using a uniform approach based around new GCSE numbered grades from 9 – 1. This will support Teachers, parents, and the students themselves to view progress as a journey over five years, with progress towards target GCSE grades clearly visible at all times. The system is to be phased into Year 7 from September 2016 and will be extended to include all students from September 2017.

Faculties have developed the schemes of work and assessment criteria that provide a robust and meaningful tracking system throughout years 7-11. The use of rigorous assessments matched to (9-1) GCSE criteria will also enable faculties to provide timely intervention when required to ensure maximum progress is made.

A mapping of the legacy national curriculum levels onto the new 9-1 GCSE grades can be found in section 5 - New GCSE Grading Scheme.

3. What new GCSEs will look like?

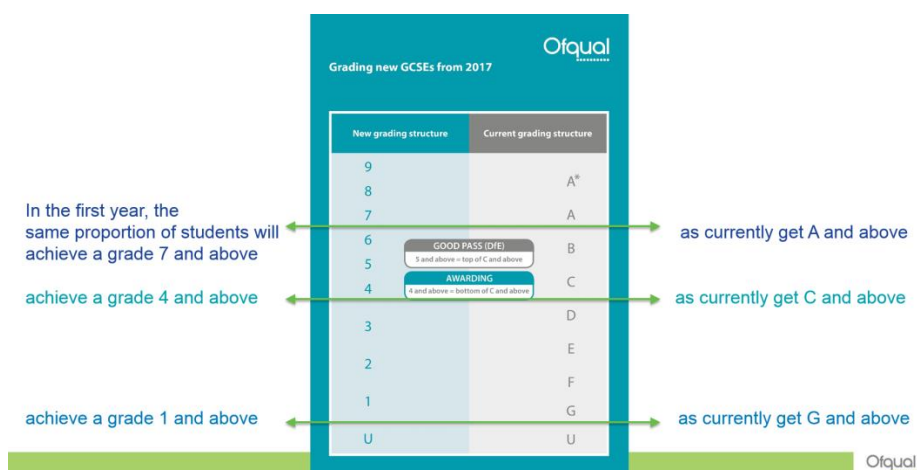
The main features of the new GCSEs are:

- 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 in section 4.
- Assessment will be mainly by exam, with other types of assessment used only where they are needed to test essential skills
- There will be new, more demanding content, which has been developed by government and the exam boards
- Courses will be designed for two or three 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 Maths

4. Dates when subjects are replaced by the new GCSE?

	Start 2015 Exams 2017	Start 2016 Exams 2018	Start 2017 Exams 2019
GCSE	English literature, English language and maths only	English and maths plus ... art, biology, chemistry, combined science, computer science, drama, food preparation and nutrition, French, geography, history, music, PE, RS and Spanish	2015 and 2016 subjects plus ... design and technology

5. New GCSE Grading Scheme



Information has been taken from the Ofqual PowerPoint for parents explaining the new education reforms for GCSE and A-Levels.

Key points

The new 9-1 grading system will mean that it will be clear to employers and colleges or universities whether students have taken the unreformed GCSEs or the reformed, more challenging ones. The new grade scale will not be directly equivalent to the existing one, and in the first year the following points can be made:

- 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. the new maths GCSE will be tiered, with grades 4 and 5 available through both tiers

Below is an approximate interpretation of the grade cross-over.

Old GCSE	Old NC	New GCSE	Assessment model.
A*	1	9	9
	2		
	3		
A	1	8	8
	2		
	3		
B	8	a	6
		b	
		c	
C	7	a	5
		b	
		c	
D	6	a	4
		b	
		c	
E	5	a	3
		b	
		c	
F	4	a	2
		b	
		c	
G	3	a	1
		b	
		c	
	2	a	A5
		b	A4
		c	
	1	a	A3
		b	A2
		c	
	P8		
	P7		
	P6		A1

6. How will the changes affect my child's grade report?

From September 2017

- Year 11 will incorporate the new 1-9 grading for all subjects that have converted to the new specifications with A*-G grades for the rest of the GCSE subjects.
- Years 9 and 10 will use the 9-1 grading system for all GCSE subjects and the relevant OCR and BTEC grading system for all others.
- Years 7 and 8 will use the 9-1 grading system for all subjects.

7. Website links:

Further information on the GCSE reforms can be found at the following DfE websites:

PowerPoint for parents explaining new education reforms for GCSE and A-Levels

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/538640/Qualifications_reform_-_resources_for_teachers_-_slide_pack.pptx

New GCSEs – get the facts

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-the-facts-gcse-and-a-level-reform/get-the-facts-gcse-reform>

Grade descriptors for each GCSE subject

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/grade-descriptors-for-gcse-graded-9-to-1>

New Maths GCSE – parents information guide

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/261118-gcse-9-1-maths-parent-learner-guide.pdf>

New GCSE grading scale factsheet

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-new-grading-scale-factsheets>