

A guide to the new GCSEs and their grading system

All pupils in England do GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education). It is compulsory to take English, Maths and Science. There are also International GCSEs (IGCSE qualifications) and Applied GCSEs. Pupils start the qualifications in Year 10 and are assessed through exams at the end of Year 11.

GCSE's were previously graded (highest to lowest) from A* to U, but from the Summer of 2017 the Department of Education reformed GCSEs in England. They are now graded with a new scale from 9 to 1 (with U still representing Ungradable) from 9 being the highest and 1, the lowest. The new GCSE grading scheme is part of a new curriculum introduced in England's schools in 2014 by the then Education Secretary, Michael Gove.

The new curriculums are more challenging than the previous GCSEs with fewer coursework assignments, and grades in almost all subjects depending on exams at the end of year 11, rather than in modules along the way. Moreover, fewer grade 9s are generally awarded than A*s, to better differentiate between students of varying abilities.

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

There are comparable points at key grades:

- The bottom of grade 7 = bottom of the old grade A
- The bottom of grade 4 = bottom of the old grade C
- The bottom of grade 1 = bottom of the old grade G

Therefore, if previous entry requirements for employers, universities and others were of at least a grade C, the equivalent now would be to gain at least a grade 4.

(5) Strong Pass – teachers and students will aim for this grade instead of a 4

(4) Standard Pass – the minimum grade needed to not to re-sit English or Maths post-16

The change to the GCSEs has come about slowly, with English Language, Literature and Maths the first to be graded from 9 to 1 in 2017.

- Others added at later dates: 20 in 2018, 15 in 2019 and 2 more will be added from September 2020
- Students who took exams within the earlier periods of change received a mixture of letter and number grades (see below which subjects change)

Combined science (Double/ Trilogy)

Students study all three sciences but gain two qualifications, as they study only 2/3 of the content that Triple Science pupils do. Under the old system, candidates would be given a combined score that was effectively a single grade doubled up - so A*/A*, A/A, B/B etc.

The new system allows for a little more differentiation, so that students will be given two equal grades (for example 5/5) or adjacent grades (for example 5/4).

In total, there are 17 possible grade combinations from 9/9 to 1/1

The academic years subjects were reformed:

2018:

- | | |
|--|--|
| - Ancient languages (Classical Greek, Latin) | - Food Preparation and Nutrition |
| - Art and Design | - Geography |
| - Biology | - History |
| - Chemistry | - Modern Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish) |
| - Citizenship Studies | - Music |
| - Combined Science (Double Award) | - Physics |
| - Computer Science | - Physical Education |
| - Dance | - Religious Studies |
| - Drama | |

2019:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| - Ancient History | - Geology |
| - Astronomy | - Media Studies |
| - Business | - Modern Foreign Languages (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek, Modern Hebrew, Panjabi, Polish, Russia, Urdu) |
| - Classical Civilisation | - Psychology |
| - Design and Technology | - Sociology |
| - Economics | - Statistics |
| - Electronics | |
| - Engineering | |
| - Film Studies | |

2020:

- Ancient Languages (Biblical Hebrew)
- Modern Foreign Languages (Gujarati, Persian, Portuguese, Turkish)