

Briefing note on new 9-1 GCSE grades

This academic year has been one of significant change for schools with fundamental changes being made to the way GCSEs are assessed and graded.

When do the new 9-1 grades come in?

The new grades are being phased in, starting with some of this summer's exams. More challenging GCSE examinations have been introduced in English and mathematics. The grading for these two subjects has changed, moving from an A*-G scale to a 9-1 scale. Grade 4 is considered a Standard Pass and Grade 5 a strong pass.

Due to these changes it is impossible to know if results in English and mathematics have gone up or down so 2017 is being called a 'Year Zero' as we are not in the position to imply a trend in results this summer.

For most other subjects - including biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, French, Spanish, religious education, geography, music and history - the new grades will be awarded from the summer of 2018.

A third wave of 9-1 graded GCSEs - including psychology, ancient history, business, information and communications technology (ICT) and media studies - will be taught from September 2017 with exams in 2019.

So some teenagers will have a mix of GCSEs under different marking schemes?

Yes, that's right. The current Year 11s will get English and maths results under the new numerical grading scheme and the rest of their options will be graded A*-G.

The current Year 10 students will then sit most of their GCSEs under the new system, but they might have some under the old system, for example if they are taking ancient history or ICT, while those pupils now in Year 9 will be fully "moved over" on to the numerical grading system.

How do the new grades compare to the old ones?

Grades nine, eight and seven are broadly equivalent to an A* and A. Grades six, five and four are in line with B and C grades. A three would be broadly similar to a D grade, with two and one taking in grades E, F and G.

There is still a U (ungraded) mark.

Why are GCSE grades being changed?

The new GCSE grading scheme is part and parcel of a new curriculum which was introduced in England's schools in 2014 by the then Education Secretary Michael Gove.

The new GCSEs courses include much less coursework than before, with grades in almost all subjects depending on exams.

Courses are designed to be more rigorous with exams taken after two years of study, rather than in modules with exams along the way.

Further information on the new grading system can be found on the Department of Education Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-gcse-9-to-1-grades-coming-soon>

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