



Do you use GCSE grades to assess applicants to your business, college or university?

If so, we want you to be aware that **GCSEs in England are changing – this started with English and maths in 2017. The new GCSEs have a 9 to 1 grading scale to replace A* to G, with 9 the highest grade.** 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 the strongest performing education systems elsewhere in the world. Changing from numbers to letters means you can see easily whether an applicant has taken an old (unreformed) or a new (reformed) GCSE.

What you need to know

- A new 9 to 1 grading scale was introduced in England for reformed GCSE English language, English literature and maths from summer 2017, and will be rolled out for the remaining subjects over the next three years.
- 9 is the highest grade, and will be awarded to fewer students than the current A*.
- The new grading scale has more grades at the higher end, to provide greater differentiation for higher achieving students.
- Between 2017 and 2019, exam certificates will have a combination of number (9 to 1) and letter (A* to G) grades as students sit a mix of new and old GCSEs.
- By 2020, GCSE exam certificates will contain only number (9 to 1) grades.
- Letter grades (A* to G) awarded for old (unreformed) GCSEs will remain valid for future employment or study.
- 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.
- Most GCSEs taken by students at schools in Wales and Northern Ireland will continue to be

Grading new GCSEs from 2017

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

graded A* to G. The grading scales for AS (A to E) and A levels (A* to E) are not changing. A new GCSE grade 4 is broadly equivalent to a low / medium grade C, the standard for a level 2 qualification. If you have previously set grade C as your entry requirement, it would be reasonable to ask for a grade 4 under the new system, unless you have made a deliberate decision to raise the entry bar.

The Department for Education recognises grade 4 and above as a 'standard pass'; this 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. A GCSE pass at new grade 4 is therefore a credible achievement and should be viewed as such for work or further study opportunities. To continue to raise standards in schools, the Department for Education recognises a grade 5 and above in English or maths as a 'strong pass' and uses this in its headline measures for school performance; a benchmark comparable with the strongest performing education systems.

What you need to do / when are GCSEs changing

- Update recruitment materials, training and practices ready for applicants having GCSE certificates and CVs with numbers as well as letters, starting with English and maths.
- Continue to set the level of GCSE grades needed to meet your entry requirements. The comparison points described above should help you to set realistic expectations for students who have taken the new, more demanding GCSEs.

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 (including 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	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, physical education short course, Polish, psychology, Russian, sociology, statistics and Urdu	All previous subjects plus... Biblical Hebrew, Gujarati, Persian, Portuguese and Turkish