

**Understanding the new  
GCSE grades  
and  
Assessment systems**

### **Changes in GCSE Specifications and Assessment**

There have been some significant changes introduced by the government in the expectations of assessment in all key stages, from the primary stage, right through to new A-level examinations.

There are many changes taking place with GCSE examinations, some of which have already begun and some final changes will take place from next September. This can be very confusing for both students and their parents, this booklet aims to summarise these changes. If you have any further questions, please do get in touch with either specific subject staff or Dr Mawson, Deputy Headteacher.

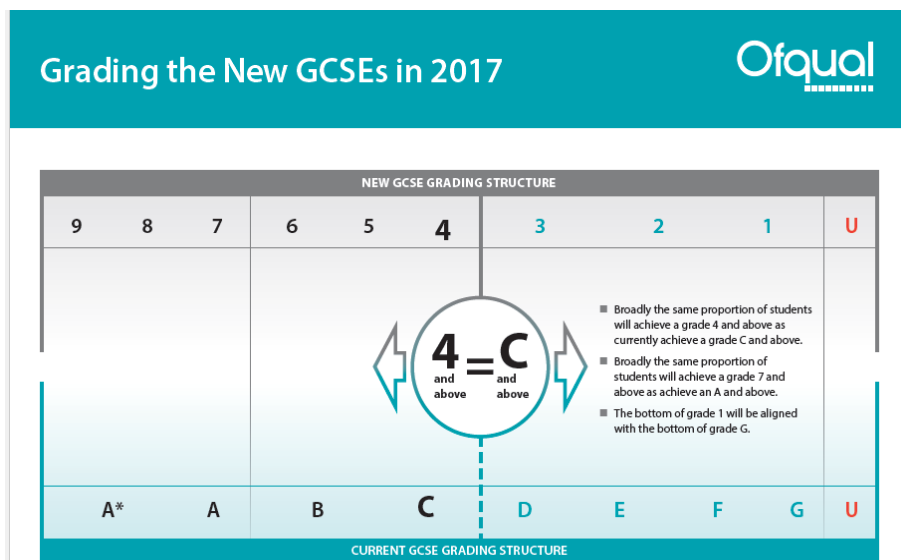
The main features of the new GCSEs are:

1. A new grading scale of 9 to 1 is going to be used, with 9 being the top grade. The government are also raising expectations of the standard of GCSE which will be considered a 'Good Pass' from a 'C' grade to a new grade '5'.
2. Assessment will be mainly by exam, with much less coursework or controlled assessment. Other types of assessment will only be used where needed to test essential skills, such as in practical subjects.
3. There will be new content and more depth of content in all subject areas, necessary for them to be approved by Ofqual.
4. Courses have been designed to have final terminal examinations and will no longer be divided up into modules. All exams will be taken at the end of Year 11.
5. There will be different tiers of entry in examinations in some subjects – Foundation and higher tiers. This will only be in subjects where one exam paper does not give all students the opportunity to show their knowledge
6. Resit opportunities will only be available each November in English language and maths.

### The New Number Grade System: How does it work?

The content of the new subject specifications is very different from the old GCSEs and so it is very difficult to make any sort of simple comparison or conversion between the old GCSE grades A\*-G to the new grades 9 – 1. To ensure the new system is fair to all students, the government has fixed the percentage of students gaining each grade against the old system. For example, the same proportion of students who gained an 'A' grade or above in the old GCSE system, will now gain a grade '7' or above in the new system. This does not necessarily mean that a new grade '7' is the same as an 'A' grade as the content is so very different. You can read more explanation on the grading system from Ofqual here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/how-the-top-grades-will-be-awarded-in-new-gcse-in-2017>

The diagram below shows the distribution of grades in comparison to the old structure of Grades.



A grade 5 will be awarded to approximately the top third of those students who would have gained a grade C and bottom third of those who would have gained a Grade B. This will represent the new 'Good Pass' grade; it will therefore be more demanding than the present grade C and broadly in line with what the best available evidence tells us is the average PISA performance in countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

**The New Number Grade System: When does it come into use?**

As the new GCSE courses are approved by Ofqual, they then begin to be taught in schools, but this is not happening all at the same time. English and maths have already changed from September 2015 (Current Year 11) but other subjects are changing at different times. This means that, depending on the subjects studied, your child may well have a mixture of number and letter grades in their target grades.

The table below details the timeline for subject changes:

<b>First teaching of 9-1 course</b>	2015	2016	2017
<b>First examination of 9-1 course</b>	2017	2018	2019
<b>Current year group</b>	Year 11	Year 10	Year 9
<b>Subjects</b>	English Literature; English Language; maths	Art and design; biology; chemistry; drama; food preparation and nutrition; French; geography; German; history; music; physical education; physics; and religious studies.	Design and Technology; Engineering.

**Life after Levels at QEGS**

National curriculum levels have been removed by the Government from KS1, KS2 and KS3. This has created a system of 'life after levels' where schools identify the assessment model that would be most appropriate for their students. At QEGS we, like many schools, see the learning leading to GCSE's as a five year experience. The system of progress is based on the milestones which each student should achieve by the end of each year in pursuit of their target grades at the end of Year 11. We recognise that not all subjects that are studied in Year 7 will be carried through to year 11 but would guide students on the flightpath appropriate for them in each year that they study a subject.

An example of the flightpath we might expect a student with a target of Grade 7 to be on is shown below; It is worth noting that for some subjects particularly in applied subjects such as Technology, PE, Art and Music, as well as in Languages students will start from a lower baseline so will follow a modified pathway. This is a general path used for students in core subjects like Maths, English, Science and Humanities.

					7+ or above
				6+ or above	7 7- 6+
		5- or above	5+ or above	6	6 6-
Exceeding target	4 or above	5- or above	5	6- 5+	6- 5+
		4+	5-	5	5
		4	4+	5-	5-
		4-	4	4+	
Securely on target	4- 3+ 3 3-	4- 3+ 3 3-	4- 3+	4	4+ or below
		3+	3	4- or below	
		3-	3+		
Approaching Target	2+ 2 2-	2+ 2 or below	3 or below		
		2 or below			
Below Target	1+ or below				
	End of year 7	End of year 8	End of year 9	End of year 10	End of year 11

Throughout our reporting system students will not be allocated grades for their expected outcome or current working level until towards the end of Year 10. This is because although we will use a reference system linked to the new numbered grades for assessments, achieving a Grade 4 in Year 8 does not mean that if we entered the student for the examination at this stage that it is the grade they would achieve as they have not covered all of the required content and knowledge. Towards the end of Year 10 we will be able to provide a clearer expected grade based on the new criteria. The focus for feedback from staff will be around what students need to do to improve.

For each subject you are given three pieces of information: A progress grade; An attitude to learning score and a target grade for the end of year 11.

We see the learning process for all students to achieve GCSE Level as a five year journey from year 7 to 11. Accordingly, we set students a target grade for their journey to Year 11. This is the grade we feel they should be aspiring to based upon their prior attainment and a range of other factors, including their entrance test data and CAT scores. It will be reviewed as they progress through the school. The targets we set are designed to be challenging and aspirational and hope that students will seek to achieve these grades at the end of Year 11 through their hard work, determination and the partnerships they have with school and home to support them.

The progress grade they are given will be either A, B, C or D. We would expect the majority of students to be gaining a Grade B or C. This indicates that they are broadly on track to meet the target grade at the end of year 11 and are meeting the required milestones at this point. Those students who gain a grade A are demonstrating exceptional progress above where we would expect them to be at this point, which is excellent. If your son/daughter has gained a grade D in a subject this would be seen as a cause for concern and we would like to work with you to support your child to improve their current level of performance in that subject and will contact you separately regarding the issues that need to be tackled.

The progress grades are defined as:

**A:** The student is progressing exceptionally well. Their current progress means that they are likely to exceed their target grade at the end of Year 11.

**B:** The student is progressing very well. Their current progress means that they are likely to meet the target grade at the end of Year 11.

**C:** The student's progress is currently below our high expectations. Their current progress means that they are working below their target grade at the end of Year 11. This is not currently a cause for concern, but will be monitored.

**D:** The student's progress is significantly below our expectations. Intervention is required and will be discussed with the student and their parents.

The attitude to learning score represents the level of effort and their approach to their learning in each subject; this will be given as a score from 1 - 4. The tutor has also scored the student in this area for their general approach to school. We would expect that the majority of students would be scored 2 for their attitude to learning. Those who have had an exceptional attitude to learning will be awarded a score of 1. Those who score a 3 need to consider their approach to learning in school and make improvements. If a student has been scored a 4 then this is a cause for concern and we will contact you to work with you to help your son/daughter to make improvements in this area.

The attitude to learning grades are defined as:

**1:** The student shows an exceptional attitude to learning in this subject and deserves particular praise.

**2:** The student shows a good attitude to learning in this subject and deserves praise.

**3:** The student's attitude to learning in this subject is not as good as expected. This needs to be addressed.

**4:** The student's attitude to learning in this subject is a major cause for concern. This will need to be addressed with the student and their parents.

There will be three points of reporting throughout the year. You will see your child's report build up at each point of data gathering to help you see how they are progressing in their learning. The most recent data capture will have the grades and scores coloured to help make current data clear.

This system has been created working with students, parents and teachers and we welcome any feedback you may have to develop it further.

**Commented [EM1]:** Do we want headline measure information? Info about progress 8?

Dr E Mawson

Deputy Headteacher