

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

UK NARIC Benchmarking Report – Executive Summary

Submitted to Pearson Education Ltd by UK NARIC

The National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom

The national agency responsible for providing information and expert opinion on
qualifications and skills worldwide

April 2019

Context and Scope

Pearson Edexcel offers a suite of International GCSEs to students aged 14-16, both within the UK independent school sector and across over international markets, alongside the Ofqual regulated GCSEs. From 2015, International GCSEs have been redeveloped to reflect reforms to the GCSEs. The principal changes to the GCSE have included the adoption of a new linear scheme of assessment and the 9-1 grading system across all subjects. The redeveloped International GCSE qualifications were launched in September 2016 with first assessments in 2018.

Following their introduction, Pearson has commissioned UK NARIC to conduct a benchmarking exercise to evaluate the comparability of the redeveloped International GCSE qualification in relation to the redeveloped GCSEs.

Methodology

UK NARIC has applied a well-established methodology, based on the principles of credential evaluation, which includes consideration of the International GCSE core components such as duration and entry requirements, learning outcomes and assessment, and associated outcomes (progression). Consideration has been given to the key design principles and the overall evaluation of the International GCSE draws on the findings of a subject-level comparative analysis of qualification and assessment design. Six International GCSEs including Business, Chemistry, Science (Double Award), English Language A, History and Mathematics A were examined in detail and compared to GCSE subject counterparts in terms of their aims, learning outcomes, content and assessment.

Key Findings

In summary, similarities are clearly observed between the GCSE and International GCSE in relation to qualification size and duration, content, learning outcomes and assessment across all subjects. Whilst some aspects of the International GCSEs have been adapted to suit an international audience, the depth and breadth of content covered in each subject reviewed are comparable.

A linear scheme of assessment continues to be adopted with externally set written examinations used for all subjects, with an exception being the International GCSE English Language A which includes an optional coursework component. Assessment objectives reveal similarities in the scope and balance of assessed skills across the different subjects between the GCSEs and International GCSEs. A review of sample assessment materials and mark schemes highlights similarities in the volume of assessment, question types, command words and cognitive skills assessed.

The Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs have been designed according to Pearson's *World Class Qualifications Design Principles*. Embedded within the International GCSE programmes are transferable skills, providing students with the opportunity to gain a wider set of competencies including critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation. Interpersonal skills are also developed, including communication, relationship building and

collaboration skills as well as the intrapersonal skills of self-management, self-development and flexibility. Transferable skills development facilitates progression onto Level 3 qualifications such as GCE A Levels, International A Levels, further education and / or employment.

The quality assurance processes which underpin the development, assessment, certification and delivery of the International GCSEs have been reviewed for the purposes of UK NARIC determining comparability. The International GCSEs have been developed in close parallel to the GCSEs, with consideration also given to requirements of international stakeholders.

Marking processes are in place to ensure consistency and fairness in the allocation of grades across the subjects. The introduction of the 9-1 grading system will enable greater differentiation for performance in the International GCSEs. Its implementation and setting of grade boundaries follows the same process to that established for the GCSEs, ensuring that grades 9-1 represent comparable standards of achievement in both qualifications. It is understood from Pearson that the processes for the conduct and administration of the International GCSEs are the same as those in place for the GCSEs.

The following comparability guidelines¹ can be summarised on the basis of the key findings:

Qualification title:	International GCSE
Awarded by:	Pearson Edexcel
Comparison	
UK framework level:	RQF Levels 1-2
Comparable UK qualifications:	GCSE

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Published by:
UK NARIC
Suffolk House, 68-70 Suffolk Road
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
United Kingdom
GL50 2ED

Email: projects@naric.org.uk

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