


A guide to modular International GCSEs

Meeting the needs of more students

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Introduction

International GCSEs are offered by thousands of schools around the world to millions of students. They are widely recognised and accepted as modern, progressive qualifications by universities and employers.

Meeting the needs of more students

To meet the changing demands of world economies, International GCSE qualifications must evolve to meet the requirements of university and employment. One key recommendation from The Future of Qualifications and Assessment Report (Pearson 2022) was to:

“Make GCSEs work better for all learners. They are versatile and valued qualifications, but there is room for innovation.”

Until now, International GCSEs that are offered by all awarding organisations, including Pearson Edexcel, are linear in their approach - this means all the exams are taken altogether at the end of the 2-year programme of study. In 2023, we introduced a modular approach which means the exams can be taken throughout the 2-year programme of study.

Pearson Edexcel is the only awarding organisation to offer the choice of linear or modular assessment, so you can meet the needs of more students.



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The benefits of modular assessment

Students

The modular International GCSE route provides learners with an authentic form of assessment that reflects how today's students take other assessments in their lives.

- Reduces mental load and stress by allowing students to focus on one year of curriculum at a time and spreads out their exams over two years.
- Provides more opportunities to demonstrate skills and abilities and optimise feedback to improve students' performance.
- Allows students to take exams when they're ready, like they do with other tests, and take advantage of multiple resit opportunities.

Educators and Parents

Choosing a modular route can support teachers, exam officers, and parents.

- Provides teachers with rich mid-cycle data on learner performance from post-exam analysis support tools, such as ResultsPlus.
- Offers greater flexibility for exam administration across the school year.
- Where parents pay exam fees, it helps with budgeting by enabling families to spread their child's exam fees over two years.





How the modular route works

Units can be assessed in any exam series

With the modular route, there are no restrictions on students taking units together; all units can be treated separately, and they can be taken in any International GCSE exam series (May/June and/or November).

No time limits to the qualification

Students can take and resit individual unit assessments in any series. This means students have more opportunities to get feedback to improve their performance and get the grades they need to progress.

Students 'cash in' unit results when ready

Once a student has all their unit results for the qualification they are taking, they 'swap' those for a grade – this is called 'cashing in'. To cash-in, all units must have been entered. Learn more about cash-ins on page 11.

Modular units can be taken in any exam series available in November and May/June



Scan the QR code to watch our latest webinar on modular International GCSEs. Find out about the qualification, the differences to a linear route and the virtues of each approach.



Modular International GCSE availability

Subjects

All course materials including Specifications, Getting Started Guides, Course Planners, Schemes of Work, Sample Assessment Materials and Exemplars are available for all of the following subjects:

- International GCSE (9–1) Accounting
- International GCSE (9–1) Biology
- International GCSE (9–1) Chemistry
- International GCSE (9–1) Commerce
- International GCSE (9–1) Economics
- International GCSE (9–1) English as a Second Language
- International GCSE (9–1) English Language A
- International GCSE (9–1) English Literature
- International GCSE (9–1) Geography
- International GCSE (9–1) History
- International GCSE (9–1) Mathematics A
- International GCSE (9–1) Physics
- International GCSE (9–1) Religious Studies
- International GCSE (9–1) Science (Double Award).

The modular assessment route is only available to schools outside of the UK.



A new modular approach for today's learner

Time for a new modular approach

GCSE examinations predominantly modular in structure

2007

Modular International A level introduced

2013

All GCSE examinations become linear

2014

Time for schools to choose the right approach for their students

2023

Historically, government reforms have moved between a linear and modular assessment approach. So why not have the choice of both?!

A simple approach with more flexibility!

Traditional Modular

- Too many units
- Too many exams and resits
- Disrupted teaching and learning

Linear

- Current assessment model
- Terminal assessment
- Less flexible than modular

New modular International GCSE strikes the right balance

Flexibility to meet the needs of more students

Example ways to use modular in your school to meet the needs of more students and cohorts.

	Year 1		Year 2		November
	November exam series	June exam series	November exam series	June exam series	
Route 1 Linear approach + resit				Unit 1 Unit 2	Unit 1 resit
Route 2 Y10 + 11 modular		Unit 1	Unit 1 resit	Unit 2	
Route 3 Y11 modular + Resit				Unit 2	Unit 1/2 resit
Route 4 Unit order flipped		Unit 2		Unit 1	

Here are just some of the routes and examples which demonstrate how modular is being used.

Route 1 – This is the first step into modular assessment. Schools continue to teach in a linear way across 2–years, Year 10 to Year 11, and enter students for both unit papers in the 2nd year (May/June exam series). This is like the linear route, but the big benefit is it means that the students can resit individual unit exams. The student can pick the unit exam to focus on and resit it in November, or the following June. It allows focus on the areas that need to be improved.

Route 2 – In this route the student would sit one unit exam at the end of Year 10. They would benefit from feedback on their performance and have the option to resit in November, before sitting the second unit exam at the end of Year 11.

Route 3 – This route allows students to split the assessment across two exam series in Year 11 (2nd year of study). It still spreads the exams out but means students have more time to prepare, and they are older.

Route 4 – For some subjects, such as geography and history, there is the option of taking Unit 2 before Unit 1. This works well where there are clear splits, for example in geography where there is a physical and human split and it meets a schools individual scheme of work.

4

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Modular International GCSE structure

Regardless of the assessment route, the specification content, units, papers, total marks, and exam time remain the same. Both linear and modular assessments adhere to the same design principles.

This means all linear past papers and exam support is perfect preparation for modular exams.



What this looks like by subject

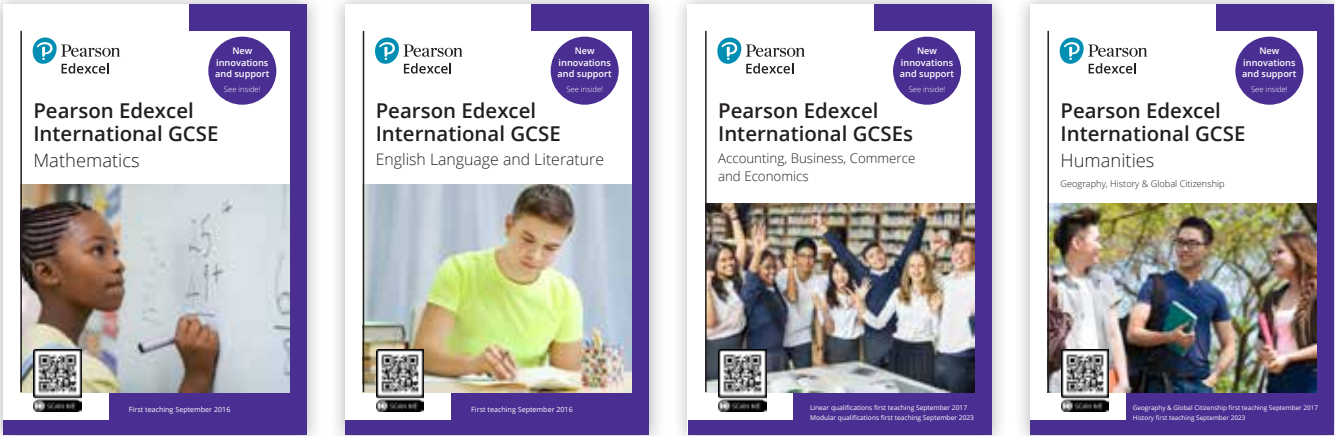
Subject	Structure
Accounting Commerce Economics English Language A English Literature Geography History Religious Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">These subjects use exactly the same specification content and assessment model as linear.

Subject	Structure
Mathematics A Biology Chemistry Physics Science (Double)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Modular Maths and Science specifications and assessments have been divided into discrete content areas.The content between linear and modular will be the same, it may simply appear in different assessments e.g. paper 2 instead of paper 1.

Subject	Structure
New English as a Second Language 2023 (first assessment 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This qualification has four equally weighted units and is structured so students can sit each unit either all together at the end of the course, or individually in any exam series.As it is a skills-based qualification, we would recommend that learners cover all four skill areas before sitting exams, but there are no restrictions on entering any units in any order.

Subject Guides

To help you make the right choice between linear or modular, take a look at our subject guides which contain more detail about the structure and content for both approaches.



Mathematics specifications: Linear Approach

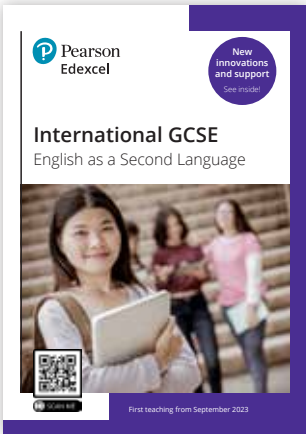
Unique features across all Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9-1) Mathematics specifications

Mathematics A (4MA1)	Mathematics B (4MB1)	Further Pure Mathematics (4FPM1)
Closest to the UK GCSE Mathematics (course 1) (MA1), adapted to include topics key to the transition to further studies.	Designed to be closer to a more traditionally structured Mathematics curriculum.	Provides an opportunity to stretch strong students, by giving them experience of key elements of the Pure GCSE A-Level and HL syllabuses.
Two tier of entry papers: Foundation and Higher, to allow students to be entered for a level appropriate to them.	Higher tier only.	Higher tier only.
2 x 2 hour equally weighted papers: Feedback from teachers indicates that this is a popular assessment model.	Alternative assessment model: Paper 1 is 1.5 hours in length with shorter questions. Paper 2 is 2.5 hours in length with more in-depth questions.	2 x 2 hour equally weighted papers.

The use of a calculator is permitted in all exams.

The differences between Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9-1) Mathematics A and B: Linear Approach

Mathematics A (4MA1)	Mathematics B (4MB1)
Foundation tier (grades 5-1) and Higher tier (grades 5-9) with an allowable grade 3.	Higher tier only (grades 5-9) with an allowable grade 3.
2 x 2 hour papers.	1 x 1 hour 30 mins paper (Paper 1) 1 x 2 hour 30 mins paper (Paper 2)
Each paper contributes 50% of the qualification. Paper 2 contributes 55% of the qualification.	Paper 1 contributes 55.0% of the qualification. Paper 2 contributes 45.0% of the qualification.
Highly higher emphasis towards A02, Handling Data, then the A01 specification.	Highly higher emphasis towards A02, Shape, Space and Measure, then the A01 specification.
Content unique to the A01 specification: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Summation of linear sequencesTransformation of graphs using function notationCumulative frequency graphs	Content unique to the A02 specification: <ul style="list-style-type: none">MatricesThe factor theoremAlgebraic division of a cubic by a linear factor



Mathematics A: Modular Approach

An alternative assessment route for Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (9-1) Mathematics A

The modular approach retains the same content as the existing linear specification, but breaks the journey into two units with an exam at the end of each unit. The current linear route will continue to be offered and remain exactly as it is, in addition to the new modular route. The expected standard of performance in exams in both linear and modular is Year 11 standard.

Our linear specification is structured in a way where all topics can be assessed in both exam papers. This means all content needs to be taught before a student is ready to sit either paper.

In the modular form, the overall content of the specification remains the same, but is split across the two units and tiers. Each unit assesses 50% of the overall content. The below table breaks down the overall modular assessment structure, which is the same structure as the linear approach. To achieve an International GCSE (9-1) Mathematics A modular qualification, students can sit either Unit 1 and Unit 2 (Higher) or Unit 1 and Unit 2 (Foundation).

Modular exam structure

Unit 1	Unit 2
Foundation Tier <ul style="list-style-type: none">Duration: 2 hoursTotal number of marks: 100Weighting: 50%Grade range: 5-1	Foundation Tier <ul style="list-style-type: none">Duration: 2 hoursTotal number of marks: 100Weighting: 50%Grade range: 5-1
Higher Tier <ul style="list-style-type: none">Duration: 2 hoursTotal number of marks: 100Weighting: 50%Grade range: 5-4 with an allowable grade 3	Higher Tier <ul style="list-style-type: none">Duration: 2 hoursTotal number of marks: 100Weighting: 50%Grade range: 5-4 with an allowable grade 3

For each unit exam, a formulae sheet will be included, and the use of a calculator is permitted. Approximately 40% of questions are the same across Foundation and Higher Tier papers.

Modular content summary

Our modular qualification splits the content in Mathematics into two even units. The table below shows the topic areas that are covered in each unit across Number, Algebra, Shape, Space & Measure and Handling Data.

Topics in black are studied by both Foundation and Higher Tier students. Some of these topics are extended when studied by Higher Tier students. For example, Foundation Tier students study changing the subject of a formulae where the subject appears only once. Higher Tier students extend this to include the case where the subject appears more than once or as an index.

Unit 1	Unit 2
Number (A01) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Basic number skillsStandard formLimits of accuracySurds and indices	Number (A01) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ratio and proportionPercentage skillsStandard formRepeated percentage change
Algebra (A01) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Basic algebra skillsSet notationPlotting graphsSolving basic quadratics $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$Solving quadratics $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$Completing the squareThe quadratic formula	Algebra (A01) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Simultaneous equationsSequencesChange of subjectAlgebraic proofDirect and inverse proportionSummation of arithmetic seriesFunction notation and transformationsDifferentiation
Shape, Space and Measure (A02) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Properties and areas of shapesPythagoras theoremCompound measures (speed, density)Area and circumferenceSimilar area of a triangleSimilar area and volumeSimilar area and volumeSimilar area and volume	Shape, Space and Measure (A02) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Angles in polygons and circlesSymmetryConstructionsVolumeSimilarityTransformationsCircle theoremsSimilar area and volumeMatrices
Handling Data (A03) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Basic probabilityTree diagramsConditional probabilityHistograms	Handling Data (A03) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Statistical measuresCumulative frequency diagrams

Please note this is a proposed model and could be subject to change.

Topics in black: studied by both Foundation and Higher Tier students.
Topics in red: studied by Higher Tier students only.



Teaching and Learning Support

Approach

We use the same approach to content and assessment across both modular and linear International GCSE to ensure the same standard.

The specification content, number of units, number of papers, total marks, and total exam time are all the same. Therefore, the teaching time is the same, irrelevant of the assessment route chosen.

Teaching sequence

You can teach the units in any order, although some subjects we would recommend you teach Unit 1 content, followed by Unit 2 content (see page 6). Our specifications and schemes of work outline recommendations and suggestions for the order of teaching.

Every unit is designed to be at the same standard, so there is no change in demand between units 1 and 2. It is worth considering this when entering students in Year 10, although they have an opportunity to improve their grade in Year 11.

Support

Support for all Pearson Edexcel International GCSE modular subjects is the same as linear includes:

- Specifications
- Sample Assessment Materials
- Getting Started Guides
- Course Planners
- Schemes of Work
- Mapping Documents
- Training (and recordings of past training)
- Mark Schemes
- Past papers: ExamWizard, an exam preparation tool, allows you to access all past exam content to generate practice exam papers and mark schemes, for modular and linear. Linear past papers are also ideal for modular.



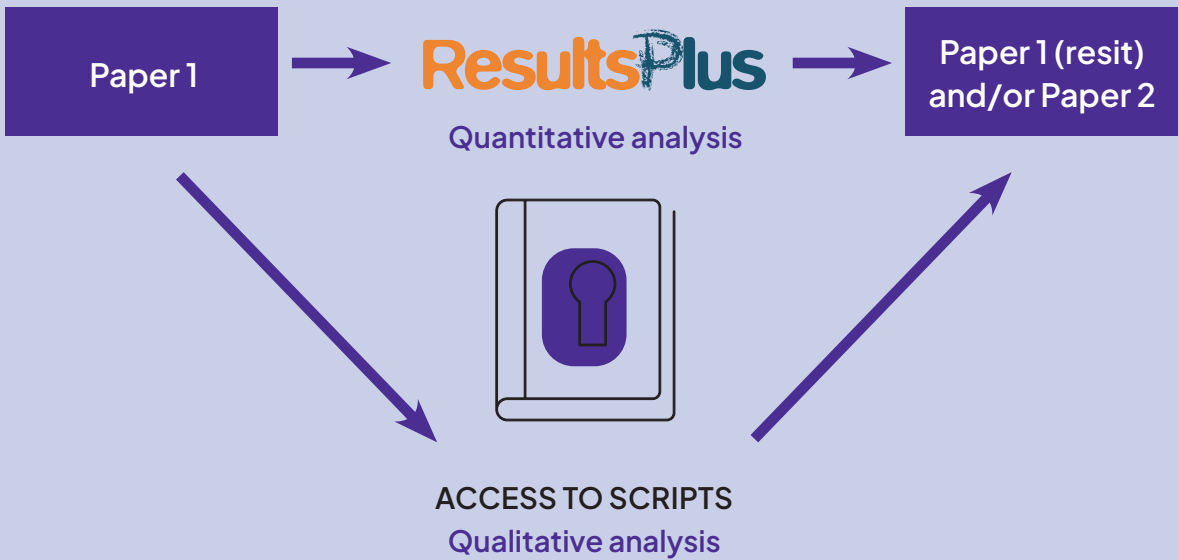
Using mid-cycle results analysis

ResultsPlus, the post-exam results analysis tool, provides a detailed breakdown of students' performance. This mid-cycle data will help you identify areas where students need to improve in their resits.

In addition, our free Access to Scripts service allows you to view your candidates' marked papers online or download as a PDF.

This provides visibility and rich insight that performance data alone cannot provide.

The following diagram shows how you can use ResultPlus and Access to Scripts to inform teaching, learning, and revision for resits or as preparation for the next modular exam.





Entries for qualification awards ‘cashing-in’

Once a student has gained or has entered for the appropriate units, an entry can be made for the qualification award. This is known as ‘cashing in’ or aggregation and is the indication to Pearson Edexcel that the student wishes to complete the qualification and receive a grade and certification.

Cashing in or aggregation is not automatic. It can only be applied for when the student has entered for or gained both units for their chosen modular International GCSE. Applying to cash in or aggregate is not an entry for a unit or combination of units. Specific entries must still be made for the remaining units.

Candidates who have sufficient unit results for an award but have not cashed in or aggregated may do so retrospectively but will be liable for late cash-in fees.

Understanding entry codes

For international GCSE, if the code begins with:

4W it is a unit code for an individual unit or Paper (e.g. Paper 1 or Paper 2)

4X it is a ‘cash-in’ code for a qualification award

Your entries information manual

Full details about entry codes for each qualification and subject for any given exam series can be found in the information manual. This, along with other entry support, can be accessed via the support portal.

quals.pearson.com/support

Making entries

Making entries for individual units

An entry is required for each unit which a student intends to take in an exam series.

Units can be taken in any order but you should consult the specification to see if there is a recommended order. In most cases, students are expected to sit Unit 1 first. Students must retain one unit for assessment in the exam series in which they will enter the cash-in code to certificate.

Unique candidate identifiers

A unique candidate identifier (UCI) is a reference that’s unique to a candidate and lasts for the duration of their study. It’s used to aggregate unit results for modular exams. Without it, candidates may not be given their full results. If a candidate transfers to your school, you should try to obtain their UCI from their previous centre or from any results documentation they’ve been given.



Understanding results

- Results for modular qualifications are reported as:
- **Unit results** which are reported as uniform marks (UMS) and unit grades. Unit results are cashed-in to receive the overall qualification grade.
 - **Qualification results** which are reported as grades. This is the grade that will be needed by for progression to further study (e.g. International A Level and IB Diploma course) and university.

Grade boundaries

For all modular units, grade boundaries are determined at awarding meetings following each exam series in terms of the raw marks for the unit. These raw mark grade boundaries are then translated onto a uniform mark scale (UMS) which has fixed grade boundaries.

Information enabling UMS marks to be equated to modular grades will also be provided. If a student has applied to cash in or aggregate, a qualification result will also be issued. The result will be reported as a grade which is calculated by adding up the best uniform marks for each unit required.

What are ‘raw marks’ and ‘UMS’ marks’?

- The raw mark is the number of marks a learner achieved in an exam.
- The UMS mark (Uniform Mark Scale) is a conversion of the raw mark.

As this is a modular qualification, units can be taken in different exam series. To ensure that any differences in the difficulty of exams are considered when adding up a learner’s marks to give an overall qualification grade, we convert the ‘raw’ or exam paper mark into a UMS mark, which is the final mark.

The uniform mark scale at unit and qualification level are provided in the specification for each modular International GCSE in the ‘Awarding and reporting’ section.



Candidate Statement of Provisional Results (CSOR)

The following is an example Candidate Statement of Results (CSOR) for a student’s International A Level results.

Qualification Title (e.g. International GCSE or International A Level)

Exam series

Award Code is the cashed-in code

Unit dates show when the unit exam was taken.

Unit codes for International GCSE and International A Level begin with or contain a ‘W’.

Capital letters indicate full qualification title.

Lower case letters indicate unit grade only.

The units taken in this exam series are listed here. You can see that WBI13 Biology 3 is a resit but the previous better result has been used in the overall cash-in (aggregation).

AWARD	UNIT	DATE	UNIT CODE	UNIT TITLE	MARK/MAX	GRADE
OCTOBER 2024	WBI11	BIOLOGY 1	088/120	B		
	WBI12	BIOLOGY 2	101/120	B		
	WBI13	BIOLOGY 3	038/060	B		
OCTOBER 2024	WCH11	CHEMISTRY 1	0253/0300	A		
	WCH12	CHEMISTRY 2	096/120	A		
	WCH13	CHEMISTRY 3	111/120	A		
OCTOBER 2024	WBI11	BIOLOGY 1	088/120	B		
	WBI12	BIOLOGY 2	101/120	B		
	WBI13	BIOLOGY 3	038/060	B		
OCTOBER 2024	WCH11	CHEMISTRY 1	098/120	A		
	WCH12	CHEMISTRY 2	111/120	A		
	WCH13	CHEMISTRY 3	046/060	B		



Recognition

Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs are recognised across the world as modern, progressive qualifications. They provide learners with the skills and knowledge they need to progress to International A levels (IAL®) and onto the most prestigious universities across the world.

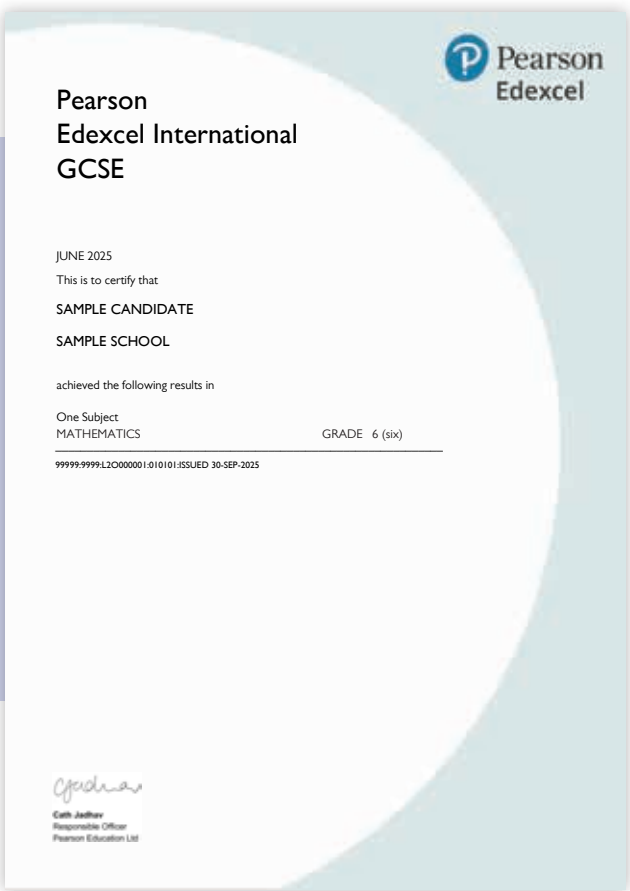
Modular International GCSEs have been benchmarked by Ecctis and the study confirmed the comparability in qualification size, content, learning outcomes, and assessment to GCSE and linear International GCSE.

No matter which route students choose, the final qualification awarded will be International GCSE as the certificate example opposite shows.

Certificates

The certificates issued for Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs are the same for modular and linear and include:

- Qualification 'International GCSE'
- Series and year
- Candidate name
- School name
- Subject (eg. Mathematics)
- Grade

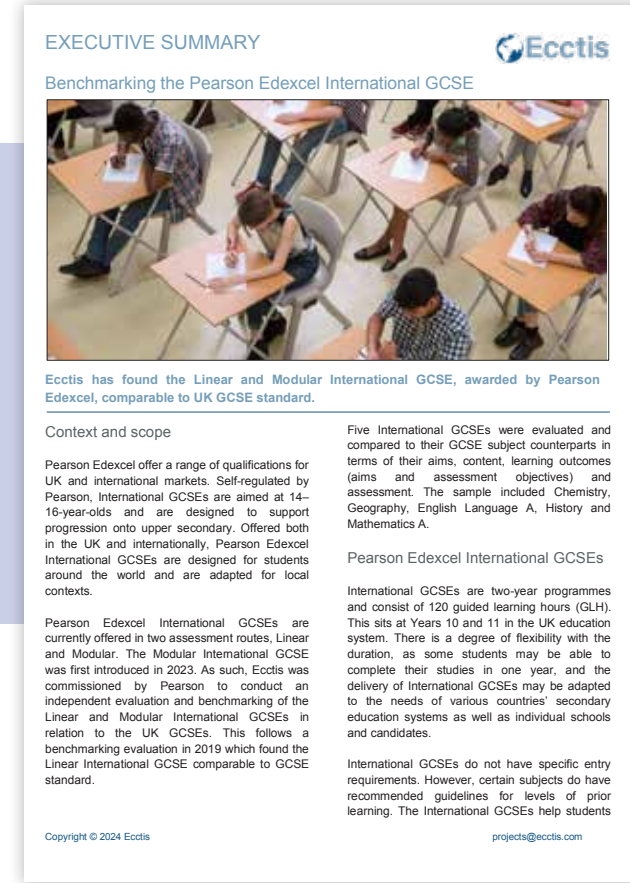


Benchmarking and recognition

Ecctis, the organisation that provides official UK national agency services (including the development and recognition of global qualifications) on behalf of the UK Government in qualifications, skills, and migration, has evaluated and benchmarked Pearson Edexcel's International GCSEs, both linear and modular.

The study confirms the comparability in qualification size, content, learning outcomes, and assessment.

IAL® = International Advanced Level.
IAL is a registered trademark of Pearson Education Ltd in the UK and other countries.





Resits

One of the many benefits of the modular approach is that students can take and resit individual unit assessments in any exam series. This means students have more opportunities to get feedback to improve their performance and get the grades they need to progress.

Students can resit linear International GCSE but all unit exams have to be taken in a single exam series.

There is no limit on the number of modular resits. However, only the better of the two most recent attempts will be available for aggregation to a qualification grade.

Results support

In addition to our post results services such as ResultPlus and Access to Scripts (see page 9), our Customer Support portal contains a wealth of support on results for Teachers, Heads of Centre, Exam Officers, Students, and Parents. There are also links to help you connect with the right team.

quals.pearson.com/support

Progression

Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs are excellent preparation for Pearson Edexcel International A Levels (IAL®), International BTECs or the IB Diploma, and progression onto the world's top universities.

Equipping learners with transferable skills and knowledge

Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs lay the groundwork for your students to progress to the universities across the world. They are designed to instill and embed the skills that help learners grow into resilient, curious and globally connected young adults. Opportunities to develop transferable skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, leadership and collaboration, are integrated throughout each of our International GCSE qualifications to ensure learners have the skills and knowledge they need to progress onto the next level of study.

From International GCSE to A levels, BTECs or the IB Diploma

As the next step up from International GCSE, International A Levels are designed for students aged 16–18 who want to progress to the best universities around the world. They use the popular and flexible modular approach which means exams are taken at the end of each unit of study or throughout the programme of study when students feel prepared and ready. We work closely with higher education institutions around the world to secure recognition for our qualifications.

Global recognition for International A Levels

Over 650 higher education institutions worldwide recognise and accept Pearson Edexcel International A level qualifications for entry onto undergraduate degree courses.

You can be confident that these qualifications equip students with the skills and knowledge that admissions teams and employers are looking for.



About Pearson qualifications

Pearson's qualifications heritage stretches back over 150 years and our qualifications are offered in more than 110 countries worldwide. We also mark over 10 million exam scripts per year on behalf of the UK Department for Education. Pearson Edexcel is regulated by Ofqual, the UK's qualifications regulator, ensuring our curricula meet the highest standards and our exams follow carefully controlled procedures at every stage of their development, delivery, marking and reporting.

Learn more about our qualifications at quals.pearson.com

Talk to us

Whether you're a teacher inspiring achievement in the classroom, a parent supporting your child's learning journey, or a school owner seeking the best outcomes for your students, we can support you with our inspiring and proven international curriculum, qualifications and published resources.

Learn more about how we support international schools and contact us at pearson.com/international-schools

