

Planned updates to International GCSEs for 2016 and 2017

Frequently Asked Questions

These FAQs are for International Schools delivering Edexcel International GCSEs only

1. Why are we moving to a 9-1 grading scale for updated International GCSE qualifications, available for first teaching in September 2016 and 2017?

In autumn 2013, Ofqual (The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in England) set out its plans for GCSE and GCE A level reform in England. GCSE reform included significant updates to subject criteria, to increase the level of demand and a new 9-1 grading scale, with 9 as the top grade.

It is important that International GCSEs are comparable to reformed GCSEs in England, in terms of the level of demand and assessment standards, so that they continue to support progression to further study, including A levels and beyond. As such, we will update International GCSE qualifications so that they reflect the latest thinking in each subject and will also introduce a new 9-1 grading scale.

With the introduction of a new 9-1 grading scale for GCSEs in England, the A* grade available for the current International GCSEs does not neatly align with the top grade 9. Grade 9 represents a higher level of attainment than the current A* grade. After extensive consultation with schools and wider stakeholders, we have taken the decision to introduce the 9-1 grading scale for the updated suite of International GCSEs. This is to give the very highest performers the opportunity to achieve a grade 9, rewarding outstanding academic achievement.

2. What is the benefit of a new International GCSE 9-1 grading scale over the current A*-G grading scale for learners?

With 9 levels of performance rather than 8, there is greater differentiation of the most able at the top end of the grading scale, which better identifies students' potential, putting teachers in a stronger position to help students make informed decisions about their A level and university choices. The new numerical grading scale links grade 5 with what the best available evidence indicates is the average PISA performance in high performing countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland, providing international performance benchmarking.

In the meantime, the diagram below is a good starting point in terms of understanding how the new scale maps to the existing A*-G grading structure. (↓)

CURRENT	NEW INTERNATIONAL GCSE
A*	9
	8
	7
A	6
B	5
	4
C	3
	2
D	1
E	U
F	
G	
U	

GOOD PASS
5 and above = top of C and above
AWARDING
4 and above = bottom of C and above

3. How can I explain the benefits of the new International GCSE 9-1 grading scale to learners and their parents?

The two key benefits of the new International GCSE 9-1 grading scale are:

- International GCSEs will still be fully comparable with GCSEs in England, in terms of the level of demand and assessment standards, so that they continue to support progression to further study, including A levels and beyond.
- High performing learners have the opportunity to achieve a grade 9, a higher level of attainment than the current A* grade, rewarding outstanding academic achievement.

4. When will updated International GCSE qualifications be available for teaching?

The full updated suite of International GCSE qualifications will be available for first teaching in September 2017, with first assessment in May / June 2019. This is to provide teaching teams with a structured transition over to the refreshed specifications with more preparation time.

For schools outside of the UK that would like to begin teaching updated International GCSE qualifications as soon as possible, the following subjects will be available for first teaching in September 2016, with first assessment in May / June 2018; English Language A, English Language B, English Literature, Mathematics A and Mathematics B.

5. What changes can we expect to see from the updated International GCSE qualification suite?

In 2015, we have consulted with teachers, higher education representatives, subject expert groups and other key stakeholders to gain feedback on our suite of International GCSE qualifications. Through this process, we received excellent feedback, which highlighted that International GCSEs are highly valued by teachers and learners across the world. As a result, we will be making some updates to the qualification suite, rather than large scale changes. Changes include more internationally relevant content and full comparability with reformed GCSEs in England. (↓)

6. When will specifications and sample assessment materials (SAMs) be available for the updated International GCSE qualification suite?

We will be in touch in due course to let you know exactly when specifications and SAMs will be available to download from our website. At this stage, we can confirm that we expect to release draft specifications and SAMs at least 6 months prior to first teaching. We will also provide online and face to face training events to ensure teachers feel fully confident delivering the updated qualifications. To keep up to date with all the latest information about planned updates to our International GCSE qualification suite, please **sign up here**: <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/forms/updated-international-gcse-qualifications.html>

7. When will resources for updated International GCSE qualifications be available?

We will provide you with a wider range of teaching and learning materials, resources and training to support the best possible learner outcomes, in time for first teaching. This support includes schemes of work, exemplar materials, comprehensive textbooks and interactive resources, digital services and tailored International GCSE teacher training. This will complement the wider Pearson support that exists for Edexcel qualifications, such as ResultsPlus, ResultsPlus Direct, and Exam Wizard.

We appreciate that the move from an A*-G to a 9-1 grading scale is a significant change and we will make an information pack and training on the new 9-1 grading scale for International GCSEs available to you in due course, so that you are fully confident with the new standard and assessment criteria.

8. On the new International GCSE 9-1 grading scale, is a grade C the same as a grade 5?

On the new 9-1 grading scale, a grade 5 represents a higher level of attainment than the current grade C. Grade 5 will be positioned in the top third of the marks for a current grade C and bottom third of the marks for a current grade B. This will mean it will be of greater demand 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. This diagram provides a good representation of how the current A*-G grading scale maps to the new 9-1 grading scale.

To keep up to date with the International GCSE changes please **sign up here**: <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/forms/updated-international-gcse-qualifications.html>

If you would like to get involved in the design of our refreshed qualifications, resources and training offer, please sign up to our online subject expert panels [here](#).

9. Will universities understand the new International GCSE 9-1 grading scale changes?

We will communicate the changes to the International GCSE grading scale to universities over the next two years, so they are fully aware of the updates being made to the qualifications. This will ensure that students can continue to seamlessly progress onto undergraduate programmes with 9-1 graded International GCSEs. (↓)

10. What are other Awarding Organisations in England doing, with regard to GCSE and International GCSE grading scales?

GCSE

Over the past couple of years, the UK Department for Education and Ofqual (the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in England) has introduced a number of reforms to GCSE and GCE A level qualifications in England. Reforms to GCSEs, offered by both UK and international schools, include the introduction of a new 9-1 grading scale. 9-1 GCSEs in English and Maths are available for first teaching in September 2015. All other 9-1 GCSE subjects will be introduced from 2016 and 2017.

All Awarding Organisations in England are now offering 9-1 GCSEs

Pearson
AQA
OCR

International GCSE

We are introducing a new 9-1 grading scale for updated Edexcel International GCSEs. This will ensure that Edexcel International GCSEs will remain comparable to the new 9-1 GCSEs in England, in terms of the level of demand and assessment standards.