

# 9 things you need to know about GCSE 9-1 grades

## 1. The 9-1 GCSE grades replace the A\*-G grades in England.

- First awards in 2017 for: English Literature, English Language and Mathematics
- First awards in 2018 for: 18 more GCSE subjects, including the sciences
- First awards in 2019 for: 15 more GCSE subjects

## 2. The addition of an extra grade allows for greater differentiation between more able students.

- Grades 4, 5, 6 span old grades C and B
- Grades 7, 8, 9 span old grades A and A\*

## 3. The Standards between the old and new grades are equated 7(A), 4(C) and 1(G).

Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as used to achieve a grade C and above; and achieve a grade 7 and above as used to achieve a grade A and above.

## 4. Grade 9 recognises the very best students.

Grade 9 is awarded to the very highest performers and is above the standard required for grade A\*. In the UK in 2016, 5.7% of GCSE Maths students gained an A\*. Whereas in 2017, only 3.5% of GCSE Maths students gained a grade 9.

## 5. The grade for a 'strong pass' has changed.

A grade C used to be considered a good pass. Under the 9-1 grade scale a grade 5 is a 'strong pass' and a grade 4 is a 'standard pass'.

## 6. The new grades were announced as part of measures to raise attainment standards.

Grade 5 is "broadly in line with what the best evidence tells us is the average PISA performance in countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland." (Ofqual)

## 7. Maths and Science students who enter Core tier papers can achieve a better grade.

The Oxford AQA International GCSE Mathematics and Combined Science Double Award Core papers allow students to achieve a grade 5 (in previous foundation tiers, students could only achieve a grade C).

## 8. Extension tier papers (targeted at grades 9-4) have an 'allowed' grade 3 as a backup grade.

Extension tier papers in Oxford AQA International GCSE Mathematics and Combined Science Double Award allow students to achieve grades 9 to 4 or, for those who just fail to achieve grade 4, an 'allowed' grade 3. Students who do not reach the minimum standard for the allowed grade 3 will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate.

## 9. Students who achieve grade 9 may have an advantage over those with A\*.

"The day may come when universities start looking at the grade 9 and you would be disadvantaged if you haven't taken the exam that at least allows you access to the grade that is higher than the A\*."

*Barnaby Lennon, Chairman of the Independent Schools Council, speaking to The Times.*

### NEW GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE

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

### OLD GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE

Find out more at [oxfordaqaexams.org.uk/gcse-grades](https://oxfordaqaexams.org.uk/gcse-grades)

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