

*International GCSEs,
AS and A-levels from OxfordAQA*

A guide for parents



At OxfordAQA
we put fairness first

Part of **Oxford** International Programme



Globally recognised qualifications *designed specifically for international students*

Hello. We are OxfordAQA – a partnership between Oxford University Press, a department of the University of Oxford, and AQA, the UK’s largest provider of GCSEs and A-levels.

We’re proud that every year, more and more schools around the world are choosing OxfordAQA as their qualification provider, making us the fastest growing international exam board.

Our unique partnership brings together extensive educational expertise and decades of experience working with international schools. We create globally recognised qualifications designed specifically for international students.

We’ve put together this guide to show parents why you should consider OxfordAQA qualifications for your child.

“

**At OxfordAQA, we want students
to achieve success in their exams,
and then go on to fulfil their dreams.** ”

*Andrew Coombe,
Managing Director, OxfordAQA*



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An introduction to the **British education system**

From the age of 14 in England, students study a broad range of subjects including English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Languages.

What are GCSEs?

GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) are typically taken by students aged 14–16. In England, students usually take 8–10 subjects at GCSE level.

GCSEs are mostly exam-based, with some coursework depending on the subject. Final exams are usually taken at age 16.

GCSEs in England are graded on a scale of 9 (highest) to 1 (lowest). Please see page 7 for more information about the grading scale for GCSE.

What are A-levels?

A-levels are typically taken by students aged 16–18. Students in England usually study 3–4 A-level subjects over two years.

A-levels prepare students for higher education, or specific career paths. They are important for university admissions.

A-levels are graded from A* (highest) to E (lowest).

AS levels (Advanced Subsidiary) are usually taken over the course of one year as standalone qualifications, or as the first half of a full A-level course. AS levels are recognised by universities.

OxfordAQA AS and A-levels are 'modular', meaning the final AS and A-level grade is made up of several sections, or modules, that can be taken throughout the course. This means that students can re-sit exams for individual modules if they wish to. Modular A-levels are a more flexible option than a 'linear' approach where all exams are taken at the end of the course. You can read more about linear and modular on page 9.

International GCSEs and A-levels

International GCSEs and A-levels are globally recognised qualifications, equivalent to the GCSEs and A-levels taken by students in the UK, but with an international perspective.

The subjects and content offered for International GCSE and A-level can be more relevant to students studying in international schools.

International GCSEs and A-levels offer an excellent foundation for further study, including at universities worldwide.



An introduction to the different exam boards

If your child's school is in the Middle East, the Gulf, Asia, Europe or Africa, there are three International GCSE, AS and A-level providers to choose from for the popular subjects. These are OxfordAQA, Cambridge and Pearson Edexcel.

There are also other exam boards providing GCSEs and A-levels for schools in the UK, which are sometimes offered by international schools. These include AQA and Pearson Edexcel.

Ofqual, the exams regulator in England and Wales, does not regulate International GCSEs or A-levels from *any* exam board.

About OxfordAQA

AQA is the awarding body for OxfordAQA's international qualifications, which means our assessments are designed, marked and processed using the same systems that AQA uses for its UK exams.

OxfordAQA's international qualifications are based on the reformed GCSEs and A-levels taught in the UK. They have been adapted to meet the needs of international students.

OxfordAQA qualifications help students to develop important critical thinking skills, such as analysis and evaluation – essential for ensuring a smooth progression to undergraduate study, and beyond.

“

Benchmarked to UK standards, our exams only ever test subject ability, not language skills or cultural knowledge. This gives every student the best possible chance to show what they can do and get the results they deserve”

*Jamie Kirkaldy,
Head of Teaching and Learning Support, OxfordAQA*



Celebrating excellence with the Go Further Awards

Every year, our prestigious Go Further Awards celebrate the successes of the top performing OxfordAQA students from around the world. Awards for Top in Country, Top in Region and Top in World are given to students achieving the highest marks for their subject.

Congratulations to all our winners!

*Find out more
about the
Go Further Awards*



International education that goes *further*

OxfordAQA is part of the Oxford International Programme – combining the Oxford International Curriculum with OxfordAQA qualifications, creating a whole-school approach for international schools, from Early Years to A-level.

The world is changing, and education must evolve to ensure your children are prepared for whatever the future holds.

The Oxford International Programme offers a flexible approach to learning, guiding students from age 2 to 19 through the Oxford International Curriculum and OxfordAQA – empowering students to make a meaningful impact, and equipping them with the skills and attitudes needed for academic, career, and personal success.

The Oxford International Programme develops learners who are:



Empowered & independent

Our students are independent, critical thinkers who are adaptable and look to develop strategies to be lifelong learners. They are confident leading on projects but also work well in a collaborative environment.

Inventive & curious

Our students are inventive, resourceful, and creative. They question the world around them with a sense of wonder, and aspire to shape a better future for themselves and their community.

Future-ready

Our students are more prepared to succeed in the world that lies ahead and have the knowledge, skills, and drive to achieve any objective they may set themselves. They are comfortable being challenged, acquiring new skills quickly, and seeking new adventures.

Ambitious & self-motivated

Our students are ambitious and want to strive for success in every aspect of their lives. They take the initiative, approaching every task with an eagerness to learn and take ownership of their own learning with the utmost integrity.

The Oxford International Programme Learner Attributes

Join us in nurturing a brighter future where your children can strive, thrive, and find joy in their educational journey.



Reasons to choose *OxfordAQA*

International schools will have many reasons for selecting an exam board. They will consider the content of the specifications, the approach to assessment, along with the support provided for teachers.

Schools don't have to use just one exam board, they can choose different exam boards for different subjects. Universities worldwide recognise and accept students with results from multiple exam boards.

As a parent, we know that your focus will be on ensuring your child achieves the best possible outcomes to prepare them for further study, and the world beyond.

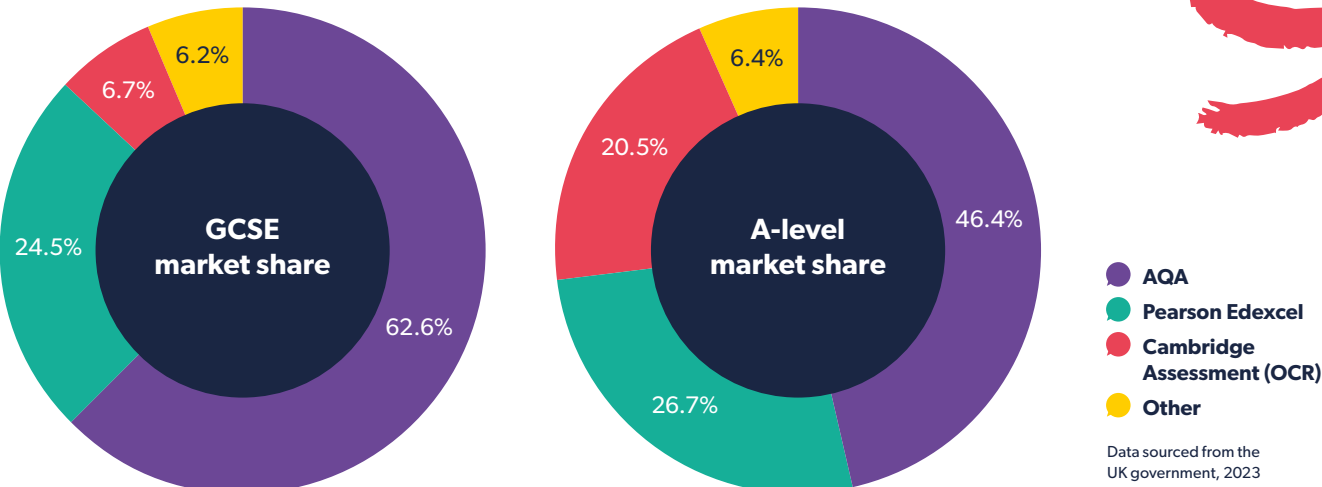
Here are some of the reasons why international schools choose OxfordAQA as their exam board.



We bring leading UK assessment expertise to international schools

Founded in 1903, AQA brings over 120 years of experience to every OxfordAQA qualification. This means that our assessments are designed, marked and processed using the same systems that AQA uses for its UK exams. AQA’s qualifications are taught in 92% of schools in England, and AQA marks over 10 million exam papers every year.

AQA’s market share in England



How are International GCSEs graded?

OxfordAQA International GCSEs are based on the latest version of GCSEs taught in England, which are graded from 9 to 1. Some exam boards still offer International GCSEs based on the old system, graded from A* to G, which was phased out in England in 2015 as part of a nationwide educational reform.

The 9 to 1 grading system was designed to raise the standard of UK education, with Grade 9 set above the level of the outgoing A*, meaning truly exceptional students can stand out when applying to competitive universities.

At OxfordAQA, we felt it was important that our International GCSEs matched this updated approach so that overseas students are not disadvantaged.

Universities and employers around the world recognise 9 to 1 as the primary approach to GCSE grading and have aligned their expectations accordingly. The transition has been smooth and is well understood by all stakeholders.

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									

Our student-focused approach *to assessment design*



Our Fair Assessment approach

Our assessments draw on the knowledge and experience that AQA has developed over more than 120 years, and the global perspective of Oxford University Press and its long history of working with international schools. This gives us a deep understanding of the unique needs of international teachers and students.

The Oxford 3000™

To ensure students who speak English as a second language have the same opportunity to achieve as native English speakers, our exam questions use the Oxford3000™. This is a list of the 3000 most frequently used words in English – to guarantee clear, accessible language in all our exams.

Positive marking

Our mark schemes are designed to be used positively, rewarding students for the knowledge and skills they *have* demonstrated, rather than punishing errors or omissions. This means students go into exams not fearing they are going to be ‘caught out’ by the questions they encounter.

Fair, accurate grading

All OxfordAQA exam papers are marked by experienced, expert trainers, ensuring accuracy and consistency for all candidates. After marking is complete, the senior examining team for each qualification meets to assign the grade boundaries for that series. This is supported by AQA’s academic research and many years’ experience, so you can be sure your child’s grades are fair and accurate.

*Read more about our
Fair Assessment approach*



*OxfordAQA’s exam papers draw on over **100 years of assessment expertise from AQA**, the UK’s largest academic awarding body.*



Our qualifications are tailored to the *unique needs of international schools*



OxfordAQA's specifications are aligned to the latest versions of UK GCSEs and A-levels – but are designed exclusively for international students.

When considering subject content or assessment structure, we always prioritise the needs of international students.

By taking the best of the UK curriculum reforms whilst understanding the needs of students studying internationally, we have ensured our specifications are globally relevant, motivating for students and excellent preparation for onward progression.

“

OxfordAQA exams were the first time our students could just answer the science, rather than worrying about the language of the exams or the contexts they were being asked about.”

”

*Samina Rashid,
Head of Science,
Dubai, United Arab Emirates*

Modular or linear?

Linear means that all exams will be taken at the end of the course.

Modular means that the final grade is made up of several sections – or modules – with exams that can be taken throughout the course.

At OxfordAQA, our International GCSEs are linear (in line with the UK), and our International AS and A-levels are modular. We believe, and teachers agree, that the two approaches work best for students at different stages of their educational journey.

Our linear GCSEs are designed to give students time to develop their skills without the stress of multiple exam series, while giving teachers the maximum amount of classroom time. Modular A-levels, on the other hand, provide an effective balance between structure and flexibility, meaning students can compartmentalise their learning and exam preparation, while working with the safety net of knowing they can re-sit individual units.

*Read more
about modular
vs. linear
assessment
in our blog*



Our project-based learning qualifications build the skills *students need for their futures*

Schools are increasingly looking to integrate project-based learning into their curriculum to better prepare their students with skills for the future.

With OxfordAQA, your child can complete an extended project alongside their International GCSEs or A-levels, to develop important transferable skills such as research, problem solving, critical analysis and extended academic writing.

The International Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is an international version of AQA's highly successful UK EPQ. Worth half an A-level, the International EPQ is a supplementary course that requires students to produce a research project on a subject of their choice. The qualification is highly regarded by UK universities, who see it as excellent preparation for higher education. Furthermore, research has revealed that students doing an EPQ typically perform better in their other A-levels, on account of the skills they acquire through the EPQ process.

Read the blog: five reasons to choose the International EPQ



At GCSE level, International GCSE Plus gives students the option to undertake a mini project alongside the OxfordAQA International GCSEs they are studying. The process is similar to the EPQ; students complete a research-based piece of analytic work, directed by a short syllabus of academic skills.

Both the International EPQ and International GCSE Plus equip students with the skills they need when they transition to the next stage in their education, where they are expected to study independently, think critically and present their findings in a more academic format.

“

[EPQ]...provide[s] an applicant with the opportunity to develop research and academic skills relevant for study at Oxford. Candidates are encouraged to draw upon relevant EPQ experience when writing their personal statement.

”

University of Oxford





Our qualifications are *globally recognised*



One of the most important aspects of any qualification is how it is recognised by higher education institutions and employers.

International A-levels, including those from OxfordAQA, are widely recognised and valued by universities around the world for entry onto undergraduate degree programmes.

UK ENIC, the independent body responsible for benchmarking academic qualifications from across the globe, confirmed that all OxfordAQA qualifications are equivalent to the UK's domestic GCSEs and A-levels accredited by the national examinations' regulator, Ofqual.

*Our qualifications are recognised by the top 100 universities ranked by QS®, including the **British Russell Group**, the **American Ivy League** and the **Australian Group of Eight**.*

The QS® World University Rankings portfolio is the world's most popular source of comparative data about university performance.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of UK school-leavers enrol in top global universities with AQA certificates.

Since AQA is the awarding body for all OxfordAQA qualifications, your child's certificate will carry the same weight as the AQA certificates used by UK school-leavers.

In some countries, the Ministry of Education formally recognises international qualifications, providing guidance for public university admissions. OxfordAQA qualifications are officially accepted across the Middle East, South and South East Asia, China, Pakistan, Japan and Europe.

Students with OxfordAQA qualifications have progressed to leading universities worldwide, including The University of Oxford and Yale University in the US.

*Find out more about
university progression with
OxfordAQA qualifications*



At OxfordAQA *we put fairness first*

OxfordAQA is the international exam board that puts fairness first, giving every student the best possible chance to get the results they deserve.

We are a partnership between Oxford University Press, a department of the University of Oxford, and AQA, the UK's largest academic awarding body.

Ask your child's school if they're using OxfordAQA qualifications.



For more information about OxfordAQA,
visit oxfordaqa.com/parents