

Why are the changes being made?

Education is now devolved and each jurisdiction can decide its own policy.

In 2013, Westminster announced a reform to GCSEs in England. A new numerical grading scale (9–1) was to replace the lettered scale (A*–G). As a result, the governments in Northern Ireland and Wales reviewed their policies on GCSE grading.

In June 2016, the then Education Minister, Peter Weir MLA, announced changes to the grading of GCSEs that CCEA offers.

To comply with this, CCEA will introduce a nine lettered grade scale (A*–G, including C*). This will apply to GCSE qualifications taught from September 2017 and results issued in 2019.

The Welsh government chose to keep the current eight letter grade scale (A*–G), allowing 9–1 graded qualifications where an A*–G qualification was not available.

Students and Parents/Carers

Students receiving GCSE subject grades from CCEA in summer 2018 will achieve grades based on the current A*–G structure. They may also achieve grades 9–1 from other awarding organisations. From summer 2019, grades from CCEA will contain A*–G with a new C* grade. Your school can give you more information and support.

Employers, Colleges and Universities

It is important that employers can compare the different grading scales, particularly in English Language and Mathematics. If employers currently ask for GCSEs at grades C and above, there is no reason for this to change. When comparing letter grades to number grades, the grade 4 is equivalent to the grade C.

All GCSEs, regardless of whether they are graded using letters or numbers, will continue to reflect students' achievements. Employers, colleges and universities will recognise and value them.

We have been working with colleges, universities and employers' groups to make sure that they fully understand the new GCSE grading in Northern Ireland.



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Your Guide to GCSE Grading Changes in Northern Ireland

www.ccea.org.uk/grading

GCSE grading in Northern Ireland is changing. Some of these changes have already taken place and further changes will be made by summer 2019.

What are the changes and what will they mean?

In **summer 2018**, when GCSE results are released, CCEA will continue to award students the current A*–G grades.

Students taking exams with AQA, Pearson, Eduqas and OCR, will receive GCSEs graded 9–1, where 9 is the highest grade and 1 is the lowest.

In **summer 2019**, CCEA will award new A*–G GCSE grades, which will include a C* grade. The A* grade will be aligned to the grade 9.

Students in Northern Ireland may receive both letters and numbers in their GCSE results, so it is important to understand how these grades compare.

Current CCEA Structure

Phased out by 2019

A*
A
B
C
D
E
F
G

New CCEA Structure

First award from summer 2019

A*
A
B
C*
C
D
E
F
G

9–1 Structure

Awarded from 2017

9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

Grades A* and 9 will reflect students' exceptional performance. The alignment of the new A* grade with the grade 9 will mean that the percentage of students achieving an A* grade will reduce. This means it will be more difficult to achieve an A*.

The A grade will cover grades 7 and 8.

Approximately the same percentage of students that achieved an A grade and above in the past will achieve grades A or 7 and above.

The B grade will equate to a grade 6.

The new C* grade will equate to a grade 5.

Approximately the same percentage of students that achieved a C grade and above in the past will achieve grades C or 4 and above.

Introducing the C* grade will mean that the percentage of students achieving grades B and C will reduce.

Approximately the same percentage of students achieving grades D–G will achieve grades 3–1.