

Secondary Education

The Department for Education will introduce a *new grading scale* which will be used for the first time for the Summer 2017 GCSE exam results—the most significant change to the current system. Whereas GCSEs used to be graded on a scale using letters, A* (highest) to G (lowest), the new system will use numbers 9-1 (9 being the highest grade achievable and 1 being the lowest). In addition, the standard for a ‘good pass’ (or average score) will be slightly higher at a Grade 5, making the qualification more challenging as a whole. It is predicted that those who currently achieve, for example, a grade A or higher will receive a grade 7 or higher. Those who achieve a grade C or higher will receive a grade 4 or higher. Different subjects will move to the new grading scale at different times, so *students may have a mixture of letter and number grades* until the entire system transitions in 2019.

Changes to Further Education (age 16+)

The Department for Education is also in the process of making changes to AS and A-Levels. Whereas AS-Level results used to count towards an A-level, this will no longer be the case; **AS and A levels will no longer be joined together**. If a student wishes to study at AS Level only, then they can take their exam at the end of Year 12 for a standalone qualification. If they change their mind and wish to take a full A-Level, they will be re-examined on the material they learned in Year 12 as well as Year 13 at the end of the course.

Moreover, the courses will no longer be divided into modules as they were previously. This means that there **will no longer be exams in January**. In addition, assessments for AS-Levels will take place after the student’s first year of study, and after two years for A-Levels. These new AS and A-Levels were first introduced in September 2015 for a range of subjects, and *will continue to be rolled out over the next two years*, in September 2016 and finally September 2017.

Useful Resources for further information

Websites

- **UK Government (Department for Education):**
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departments-for-education
- **On changes to grading in secondary:**
www.aqa.org.uk
- **The Education Website:**
www.theeducationwebsite.co.uk/index.php?page=schools
- **UCAS (Higher education information):**
www.ucas.com
- **IntoUniversity Supplementary Schools Project:** www.intouniversityssp.org

Questions?

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The U.K. EDUCATION SYSTEM



Education in the U.K.

at a glance

	Age	Assessment or Qualification
Primary		
Early Years	Nursery	3-4
	Reception	4-5
Key Stage 1	Year 1	5-6 Phonics screening check
	Year 2	6-7 SATS
Key Stage 2	Year 3	7-8
	Year 4	8-9
	Year 5	9-10
	Year 6	10-11 SATS
Secondary		
Key Stage 3	Year 7	11-12
	Year 8	12-13
	Year 9	13-14
Key Stage 4	Year 10	14-15 GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education)
	Year 11	15-16
College/Sixth Form*		
	Year 12	16-17 A-Levels, AS-Levels, NVQs foundation degrees, vocational courses, BTECs, apprenticeships
	Year 13	17-18
Higher Education		
	University	18+ Bachelor's, Master's, PhD

*Whilst some students may continue to attend their secondary school in order to complete years 12 and 13, students also have the option attend a college.

Assessments and Qualifications

SATs Also known as 'national curriculum tests', 7 and 11-year olds across England sit written exams in Maths and English. SATs are used to measure the level at which your child is learning. They also measure the success of teaching at your child's school.

Students choose 5 subjects (along with English, Maths and Science), to study for two years between ages 14 to 16. After they have passed a series of exams, students are awarded a GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in each subject.

GCSE

A-Levels & AS-Levels A-Levels are the most common qualification to pursue before university and are available in a range of subjects. Students usually study these during Year 12 and 13 at their secondary school (Sixth Form) or college. They can also receive an AS-Level qualification at the end of Year 12 if they choose to study the subject for just one year. Students must complete 3 or 4 A-Levels in order to be accepted into a university; the grades required depend on the university and the course you are applying for.

BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) qualifications are usually more relevant to a student's future work or career plans, and combines classroom learning with practical, work-related skills development. They can be studied alongside or as an alternative to GCSEs. Students can also study BTECs instead of A-Levels; they will still receive an equivalent qualification

BTEC

Apprenticeships & NVQs National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) can be pursued by those who choose to take on an apprenticeship (a paid or unpaid job which equips students with practical knowledge and work experience). NVQs are awarded based upon a person's ability to carry out their work effectively. Students who study an NVQ to the equivalent of an A-Level may apply to university.

Recent Changes

to education in the U.K.

Primary Education

In recent years, major changes have been made to the way in which children are assessed during their time at primary school. Whereas students used to be grouped into levels based on performance on exams, these levels have been removed by the government. Now, schools decide on their own ways of assessing children's progress. In particular, this change has had an impact on teacher assessments and SATs results.

Changes to Teacher Assessments (TAs)

Students will be matched against 'pupil can' statements rather than levels. These are descriptions of what children are expected to be able to do at the time of testing. It is through Teacher Assessments that schools can see if their students are able to achieve expected standards.

Changes to SATs results

SATs results used to be given as national curriculum levels. Now, however, students will be given a scaled score, in addition to a 'raw score'—the actual number of marks they've received. From July 2016 onwards, when Year 6 SATs results are published, students will be given:

- Their raw score
- A scaled score
- Confirmation of whether or not they reached the national average of 100

