

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION ON GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION (GCSE) GRADING

Introduction

- The Department of Education (DE) undertook a twelve-week consultation on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grading over the period 23 March 2015 to 19 June 2015.

Arrangements for Consultation

- The launch of the consultation received some media coverage. Press Office highlighted the impending close of the consultation, one month and one week before the 19 June, in twitter updates from the Executive twitter account.
- All schools received an email informing them of the consultation and a notice was placed on the C2k exchange schools' notice board.
- All teaching unions were informed.
- All those on the DE Section 75 list were notified of the consultation. All organisations from the OFMDFM consultation list were also notified of the consultation.
- The consultation documents were made available online and those who wanted a hard-copy version of the consultation documents were free to request them from the Department; a websurvey version of the consultation booklet was available online. A copy of the consultation booklet is at **Appendix A** and a copy of the response booklet is at **Appendix B**.
- The majority of consultation responses came from respondents completing the websurvey. Alongside the main consultation document the Department produced a 'child friendly' version of the consultation document which was issued to all schools. A copy of this document is at **Appendix C**.
- Advertisements regarding the launch of the consultation were placed in the regional press.
- To ensure that all stakeholders' views were taken into account, DE engaged ParentingNI to undertake focus groups and surveys with parents.

DE Consultation with Stakeholders

- As part of consultation, the Department engaged with GCSE and A level pupils in four schools chosen to represent a range of post-primary schools.

These schools were Antrim Grammar, Sullivan Upper, St Patrick’s Academy and Malone College.

- The Department engaged Parenting NI to undertake focus groups with parents. It carried out its own online survey and held two focus groups with parents.

Level of Response

- The Department received a total of 303 (on-line and hard copy) responses. The majority of responses (90%/273) were completed online as part of a web survey. The remainder (10%/30) were received by email or by post.

Key Findings Online and Hard Copy Responses

- Those responding to the consultation were asked to indicate which category best described them as respondents. The table below summarises the responses received by respondent type:

Respondent Type	Number	%
Pupil	115	38%
Teacher	143	47%
Organisation	14	4.5%
Other	13	4%
Member of the Public	4	1.5%
Parent	10	3.5%
Trade Union Representative	4	1.5%
Total	303	100

- At **Question 1** we asked ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A* to G’.
 - **62%** strongly agreed or agreed.
 - **33%** strongly disagreed or disagreed.
 - **5%** neither agreed nor disagreed / don’t know.
- At **Question 2** we asked ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should use grades 9 to 1?’
 - **34%** strongly agreed or agreed.
 - **59%** disagreed or strong disagreed.
 - **7%** neither agreed nor disagreed / don’t know.

- At **Question 3** we asked if ‘there are any particular groups/ people that you believe are likely to be affected by proposals outlined in this consultation document?’
- The table below summarises responses by respondent type:

Pupil – 115 Responses received			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A*-G?	Strongly Agree/Agree	101	88%
	Neither agree nor disagree	4	3%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	10	9%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should use grades 9 to 1?	Strongly Agree/Agree	8	7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	7	6%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	100	87%

Teacher – 143 responses received			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A*-G?	Strongly Agree/Agree	62	43%
	Neither agree nor disagree	6	4%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	75	52%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should use grades 9 to 1?	Strongly Agree/Agree	79	55%
	Neither agree nor disagree	9	6%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	55	38%

Organisation – 14 responses received			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A*-G?	Strongly Agree/Agree	5	36%
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	14%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	7	50%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should use grades 9 to 1?	Strongly Agree/Agree	7	50%
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	14%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	5	36%

Others – 13 responses received			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A*-G?	Strongly Agree/Agree	8	62%
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	15%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	3	23%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should use grades 9 to 1?	Strongly Agree/Agree	3	23%
	Neither agree nor disagree	1	8%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	9	69%

Parents – 10 responses received			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A*-G?	Strongly Agree/Agree	8	80%
	Neither agree nor disagree	0	0%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	2	20%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should use grades 9 to 1?	Strongly Agree/Agree	2	20%
	Neither agree nor disagree	1	10%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	7	70%

Member of the Public – 4 responses received			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A*-G?	Strongly Agree/Agree	2	50%
	Neither agree nor disagree	0	0%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	2	50%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should use grades 9 to 1?	Strongly Agree/Agree	2	50%
	Neither agree nor disagree	0	0%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	2	50%

Trade Union Representative – 4 responses received			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A*-G?	Strongly Agree/Agree	1	25%
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	50%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	1	25%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should use grades 9 to 1?	Strongly Agree/Agree	1	25%
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	50%
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	1	25%

- The proposals in this consultation were considered in the context of Section 75(1) and Section 75(2) of the NI Act 1998 and have been screened out. However, respondents identified Category D – Different Age as the main group likely to be affected by the proposals (134 responses (44.2%). The comments do however suggest that the proposals themselves will not affect any particular age group but may be difficult for older people to understand.
- It was evident from the comments and wide variations in responses to this question that many respondents were unsure, despite the information provided in the consultation document itself, what is meant by Section 75, the legal duties to promote equality and good relations which it imposes on Government and what the recognised Section 75 categories are.
- Accordingly, the Department will consider these views but will not place a high weight on the responses given to this question.

Workshops with GCSE and A-level students

- As previously mentioned, DE also engaged with GCSE and A level pupils in four schools to represent each sector of post-primary schools. Officials delivered a short presentation on the proposed policy; discussed the policy in small groups with the students. Comments from the group discussion and statistics and comments from the questionnaire were then analysed in DE.
- A total of 60 pupils attended the four workshops. A significant majority, 46 (77%) were in favour of retaining the current grading system. A summary of the comments from pupils is attached at **Appendix D**.

Main Views Expressed by Students

- The main points made by those in favour of retaining the current alphabetic grading system were that:
 - the introduction of a grade 9 would place more stress and pressure on high achievers;
 - the current system is familiar to users;
 - the A* grade would be devalued with the introduction of a grade 9; and
 - the numeric system has too few grades below level 2 (i.e. grades 3 to 1)
- The main points made by those in favour of moving to a numeric grading system were that:
 - retaining the current system could lead to confusion, because both numeric and alphabetic grades will be used by awarding organisations offering GCSEs here;
 - if CCEA retains an alphabetic grading system, candidates from here could potentially be disadvantaged in relation to university entrance and employment opportunities ; and
 - if CCEA retains an alphabetic grading system, candidates from here who take CCEA GCSEs would not have access to the new top grade (i.e. grade 9).

ParentingNI Consultation

- As previously detailed, DE engaged Parenting NI to undertake focus groups with parents and an online questionnaire (ParentingNI report is attached at **Appendix E**). In total, 305 parents took part in the consultation. Two focus groups were attended by 32 participants and there were 273 responses to the online survey.
- A total of 289 people responded to the question about whether the Northern Ireland grading system should change from the current A*-G to 9-1. Overall 42% felt we should change to a numeric system, 39% felt we should not change and 19% were unsure.

- An overwhelming 93.75% of focus group respondents said they did not feel a change to a numeric grading system should take place in Northern Ireland. Interestingly the remaining 6.25% said that they were reluctant to vote yes but did so because they felt that we would inevitably have to change to align our system with England.
- There was not such a clear view on change from online respondents with 41.25% saying they felt Northern Ireland should change to a numeric system and 40.08% felt we should not change. 18.68% remained unsure.

Conclusions

- From the evidence collected throughout the consultation period we can make a number of deductions:
 - There is a clear majority for retaining the current alphabetic system for GCSEs developed by CCEA;
 - There appear to be no arguments in support of or against either grading system that would support improvement in educational outcomes;
 - Whilst familiarity with the current grading system is seen as an important factor for not changing, concerns were expressed about the risk of confusion if CCEA were to retain the current alphabetic grading system while other Awarding Organisations operating here were using a numerical system as this would mean two grading systems would be used here;
 - Comparability and portability of qualifications offered here remain key issues. The role of the regulators in ensuring comparability of grade outcomes in GCSEs offered by all awarding organisations here will be more challenging if two different grading systems were to be used; and
 - The introduction of the grade 9 in England could prove challenging. Some respondents to the consultation felt that it could be seen as placing even more pressure on high achievers, whilst others felt that some candidates from here taking CCEA qualifications (if they retain alphabetic grades) could be disadvantaged if they did not have access to this grade.
- The Department would like to thank those individuals and organisations that took time to respond to the consultation.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Consultation Booklet

Appendix B – Response Booklet

Appendix C – Child friendly version of the Consultation Booklet

Appendix D – Summary of responses from the four workshops in post-primary schools

Appendix E – Report from ParentingNI consultation with parents

Appendix F – Additional information provided by consultees

Appendix G – List of organisations that responded to the consultation

Consultation Document – GCSE Grading

Introduction

1. This consultation is intended to seek your views on the potential change of grading from the current alphabetic grades A* to G to numeric grades 9 to 1 for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) specifications produced by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

Background

2. The GCSE is a qualification awarded in a specified subject, generally taken in a number of subjects by students aged 14-16 in secondary education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It was introduced in 1986 (with the first examinations taking place in 1988), replacing the former General Certificate of Education GCE O Level / CSE qualifications.

3. The qualification was graded A to G until the A* was introduced in 1994 to reward performance at the highest level. Grades D to G constitute a level 1 qualification and grades A* to C constitute a level 2 qualification as defined by the National Qualifications Framework.

4. Qualifications reform in England means that with effect from September 2015 (first teaching), new GCSEs provided by Awarding Organisations to schools in England must be graded 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest and 1 the lowest. The regulator of qualifications in England (Ofqual) is proposing that outcomes at grade 4 and above should equate to current outcomes at grade C and above.

5. In England, new GCSEs in English language, English literature and maths will be introduced from September 2015 (first teaching), with further GCSE titles to follow from September 2016. The first new GCSE qualifications will be awarded in summer 2017 (2018 for those subjects taught from 2016).

6. In its support for the new grading arrangements, Ofqual states that currently there is bunching of candidates in the middle of the range. The new grade range can provide for greater differentiation at level 2, as there will be six grades (from 4 to 9) compared with four as at present (C to A*).

7. Ofqual is setting the threshold for a Level 2 qualification at GCSE at the bottom of the new grade 4 (i.e. where it is currently, at the bottom of the Grade C). In the longer term, however, consideration may be given to setting the expected level for performance at age 16 at grade 5 in order to stretch the performance of learners. However the distinction between a level 1 and a level 2 qualification will remain unchanged.

8. We consulted widely with schools and there was very strong support for retaining an open qualifications market here. This means that qualifications designed by Awarding Organisations based in England should be available for use in schools here. **These GCSEs will use the 9-1 grading system when they are first awarded in 2017.**

9. CCEA will be revising its GCSE specifications and they will be available for first teaching from September 2017. Regardless of whether CCEA changes its grading from alphabetic to numeric, there will be a mixture of the two grading systems in place in 2017 and 2018. We will need to manage this period of transition.

Interim Arrangements

10. From September 2015 to August 2017, schools here will continue to be able to offer examinations from a range of awarding organisations which means that GCSEs awarded here will have different grading systems. We have set out below a matrix which explains how the alphabetic grade maps to the numeric grading for use by pupils, parents, employers, universities FE colleges etc.

Table showing how 9-1 grades will be anchored to A* - G

A	7 (20% of candidates who get a grade 7 or above will get a grade 9)
C	4
G	1

Ofqual has stated that statistics will be used to predict outcomes and – if the statistics show that there has not been a major change in the cohort – the % of the

cohort getting a grade 4 or above will be roughly the same as those who would have achieved a grade C or above the previous year. Grades 7 and 1 will be anchored to grades A and G in a similar fashion.

Longer term policy position here

11. It is for us to consider whether there is merit in adopting a 9 to 1 grading system here. Or whether there is merit in retaining the existing grading system.

Potential benefits of changing

12. These include:

- a. One common grading system for 99.4%¹ of GCSEs taken here will mean a reduced risk of confusion and misunderstanding for all stakeholders, including pupils, parents, employers etc;
- b. It will make the process of comparability simpler and easier;
- c. It will enable pupils who currently achieve a grade C and above to be more clearly differentiated in terms of their abilities since they will be assessed against 6 grades (9 to 4) compared with 4 (A* to C) as at present;

Potential risks of changing

13. These include:

- a. There remains the potential for confusion amongst stakeholders who have been used to alphabetic grades for over 25 years;
- b. There would be numeric grades at GCSE and alphabetic grades at A level and the two do not necessarily sit comfortably together;
- c. There is reduced opportunity for those at the lowest grades to demonstrate what they have achieved since there are fewer grades (3 to 1) below a Grade 4 / C compared with 4 grades / D to G as at present.

¹ Based on figures from RM Data for 2012/13 – the awarding organisation WJEC had 0.6% of the GCSE market share in the north of Ireland. It will be retaining an alphabetic grading structure.

- d. There is a potential risk of confusion for parents and other stakeholders about the numbers used in Levels of Progression at Key Stage 3 and 4 and numbers to grade GCSEs.

Potential benefits of not changing

14. These include:

- a. We would continue to use an alphabetic grading system with which all stakeholders have become familiar;
- b. It would more clearly distinguish GCSEs produced by CCEA from those produced by other (English) Awarding Organisations (WJEC will provide GCSEs using alphabetic grades for the Welsh market and other markets).

Potential risks of not changing

15. These include:

- a. Increases the perception of difference between CCEA qualifications and those awarded by English Awarding organisations;
- b. Confusion for pupils and parents who will have to interpret two different grading systems on an on-going basis;

Your views

16. We would welcome your views on these issues by completing the questions as outlined at Annex A – preferably on-line but, if you prefer, a return can be made in hard-copy.

Section 75 Considerations

17. Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires all public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to the north of Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between –

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

18. In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, public authorities must also, in carrying out their functions relating to the north of Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

19. The proposals in this consultation have been considered in the context of Section 75(1) and Section 75(2) of the NI Act 1998 and have been screened out. A copy of the screening document can be found at www.deni.gov.uk. The Department will monitor the impact of these proposed changes on an on-going basis.

Timescales

20. This consultation will take place between 23 March 2015 and 19 June 2015. Taking into account the analysis process and the need to update the Minister and Education Committee in Stormont, we estimate that final decisions are likely to follow in summer 2015.

21. If a decision was taken to change the GCSE grading from alphabetic to numeric, the effective date of change would be September 2017 for GCSEs produced by CCEA. . The Awarding Organisations based in England - AQA, Eduqas, OCR and Pearson - will be implementing a numeric grading system from September 2015 onwards. WJEC which is based in Wales will continue to use the A*-G grading system.

Consultation on GCSE Grading

Response Booklet

Name:	(optional)		
Please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent:			
Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of the public	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade Union rep	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		
If Other please specify:			
Name of School (if applicable):			
School Reference Number (if applicable):			

The Department may make responses available on the website www.deni.gov.uk, although contact names and addresses would be removed.

Please note that under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) (Annex A) your response may be made available, on request, to the public.

If you would prefer your response to remain confidential, please tick this box

Comments and responses should be submitted by **19 June 2015** to:

aqt@deni.gov.uk

or

Assessment & Qualifications Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Q1a: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A* to G?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know

Q1b: Please provide more information about why you agree / disagree in support of your answer.

Q2a: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs developed by CCEA should use grades 9 to 1?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know

Q2b: Please provide more information about why you agree / disagree in support of your answer.

Q3a: Are there any particular groups/ people that you believe are likely to be affected by proposals outlined in this consultation document? (please tick as appropriate)

Category	(Y/N)
1. persons of different religious belief	
2. persons of different political opinion	
3. persons of different racial group	
4. persons of different age	
5. persons of different marital status	
6. persons of different sexual orientation	
7. men and women generally	
8. persons with a disability and persons without	
9. persons with dependants and persons without	

Q3b: Please provide more information in support of your answer

Q4: Overall - Any other comments?

ANNEX A - FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – CONFIDENTIALITY OF CONSULTATIONS

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

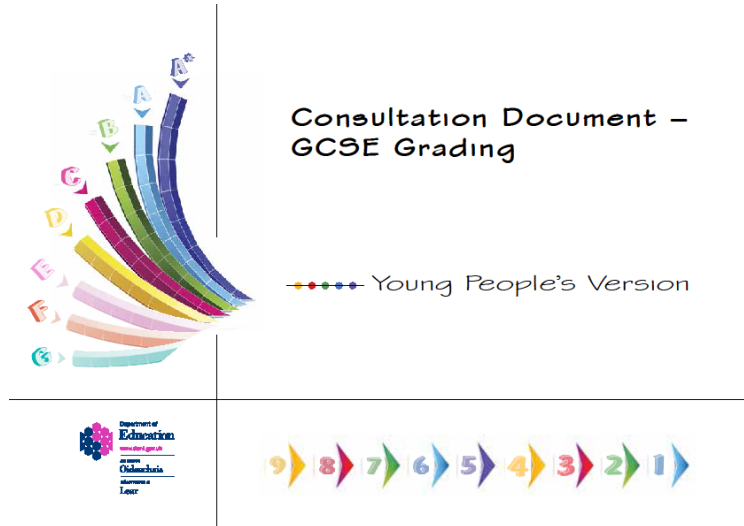
The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity should be made public or be treated as confidential.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature;
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see web site at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/>).

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VERSION OF CONSULTATION DOCUMENT



**CONSULTATION ON GCSE GRADING - YOUNG PEOPLES' FOCUS GROUP
MEETING – ANTRIM GRAMMAR SCHOOL – 29 APRIL 2015**

Attendees: Year 12 – 5

Year 13 – 6

Year 14 – 5

Question: - Why do CCEA go through grading process?

Response:

- easier to compare, standardising across the country and subjects
- takes into account different degrees of difficulty year on year

General

- Can see the reasoning for changing to numbers – easier to distinguish between the grades
- Could moving to numbers also mean moving to linear specifications?
- When on borderline – better to have more distinction
- If other places are changing to numbers then we should change – Don't like different grades e.g. BTECs, GCSEs – adding to this is not good
- Grade boundaries too broad – may be better to move to numbers
- Increased degree of separation would be better than making exams harder
- If 9 is a super A* does that devalue the A*?
- The A* grade should be deemed equivalent to a grade 9
- If changing would improve competitiveness of higher pupils then we have to take this seriously
- Changing reduces the risk of qualifications being devalued
- Lots of A grades – people forget that a C is a good grade

Confusion

- Hard to translate numbers into the grades already held
- Undermine the grades of those who have already achieved their qualifications
- All GCSEs using the same grading system would be more transparent
- Easier to get the confusion out of the way over a few years
- Inconsistencies between letters and numbers
- What will be acceptable to universities – confusion around what they will be asking for?
- Concern that employers would not consider the A* the same as the 9

- If employers start to ask for core marks then we may as well move to numbers
- Confuse employers – therefore don't change
- Need to make employers aware of the change – in future they may ask for specific grades
- Confusing to stay with A*-G as England has already changed

Pressure/stress

- More pressure at the top end as more top grades
- Pressure is a fair point but at the same time need to be competitive
- Too much pressure too soon – more to a person than grades

Section 75

- Not a major issue irrespective of the grades

Vote

Change	4
Stay	12
No view	0

CONSULTATION ON GCSE GRADING - YOUNG PEOPLES' FOCUS GROUP MEETING – SULLIVAN UPPER SCHOOL – 1 MAY 2015

Attendees:

Year 11 - 4

Year 12 - 5

Year 13 - 10

- Purpose of grading –to ensure consistency year on year, easier to compare, grades have more meaning.

Grade 9 issue

- A* not be valued as much because grade 9 could be perceived as higher in England
- If we change there would be an opportunity to get a 9 – but pupils would put too much pressure on themselves
- Creating more problems – under enough pressure as it is
- CCEA is perceived to be a harder exam board therefore it would be even harder to get a 9 in CCEA exam
- 8 would not be seen as the top grade as an A/A* is now
- Easier to compare the grades and distinguish if grades 8 & 9 were available
- Maybe harder to get into university if didn't have the 9 – leading to extra pressure
- Feel A/A* is enough of a distinction at the top
- CCEA is highly regarded and therefore an A* from CCEA may be seen as better
- Impression some of the other boards are easier – would universities appreciate there is a distinction?
- Confidence in performance in GCSE helps you to decide what you want to do at AS
- Already achieving the marks that are top grade therefore why not change to get the grade
- Modularity perceived as easier
- Concern that my A* would be considered less than the 9. Diminished because of policy not because they are smarter

Employers

- May cause problems with employers if we don't change

- Scotland and Wales have a different system anyway – therefore not a big problem if we are different
- The timing of the change – it doesn't matter when
- Employers might ask for a higher grade than the 4 (may start to ask for the 5)
- GCSEs are more important for employers than for universities
- Going for job should not be based on grades alone – it could cost someone an interview when short-listing if someone has a C and someone else has a 5 - on paper they may be seen as better

3 Grades at lower level issue

- Extra grades available at level 2 make people feel safer
- One less grade in level 1 – less to distinguish them
- If more distinction at the higher level why not at the lower level
- Still same % getting C and above
- Level 1 grades are important as well – less distinction – unfair.
- Results at GCSE are more important if you are not going onto university therefore if there are less boundaries at level 1 this is unfair

Confusion

- Easy to adapt to change – for example transfer test
- Once you know the grades you are aiming for you will aim for that no matter what it is
- Confusion in the gaps when applying to university
- Difficulty when doing exams from different boards and can't compare across
- When universities count grades at GCSEs would they give different points to grade 9
- QUB count GCSEs so it is important
- Sometimes to get an interview for university they could use GCSE grades
- If we don't bring in numerical grading we could be disadvantaging young people
- Just because something is confusing shouldn't be a reason not to change – we will get used to it.
- If a job or a place at university is at stake then they would have to make it fair
- Candidates close to grade boundaries could be disadvantaged as there will be extra distinction with the 9-1 grading system
- If there is a chance that England would change back we would be better to stay as we are

Pressure/stress

- Emotional stability and welfare is very important
- Linear more stressful – then add in extra grades – may feel down if get a B and not an 8

- Adding another number grade – under pressure anyway to get top grade
- Would be annoyed if had to put in more effort to get the 9
- People who want to aim for the top grade put extra stress on themselves and it would be more disheartening if they did not have a straight comparison

Section 75

- No issues identified

Vote

Change	9
Stay	10
No view	0

CONSULTATION ON GCSE GRADING - YOUNG PEOPLES' FOCUS GROUP MEETING – ST PATRICK'S ACADEMY – 8 MAY 2015

Attendees: Year 12 – 11

Year 13 – 4

General

- Don't see the point – nothing wrong with current grading

Confusion

- Confusing for students, teachers
- Confusing for examiners
- Confusing for employers
- Confusing to have a mix of grades

Grade 9 issue

- Instead of getting the top A* grade you could drop a grade to next down in the number system
- Confusion over whether an A* is = 9
- More opportunity to get what is considered a pass – more grades at level 2
- Grade boundaries are narrower in number grades
- Harder to get a 9 than to get a A*
- More opportunity to pass – if have more grades
- 'C' count for less

Employers

- Europe use numbers – more interchangeable – better to go abroad for a job
- Move unified system – easier to go abroad
- Harder to get a job – employers understand letters
- Numbers may force employers to ask for higher grades
- Concerned if employers ask for higher grades
- May make it harder to get into university if they start looking for higher grades – if there are numbers
- Already done GCSE – my A's would only be a 7 what if they were higher As – don't get recognition for this
- Query over who would provide the information on the transfer of grades over to the new system when applying for jobs/FE/HE

Section 75

- Everybody treated the same

Vote

Change	1
Stay	14
No view	0

CONSULTATION ON GCSE GRADING - YOUNG PEOPLES' FOCUS GROUP MEETING – MALONE COLLEGE – 11 MAY 2015

Attendees: Year 11 – 7

Year 13 – 3

Why not marks?

- Comparison – can't really tell who has done better

Who should we talk to about the grading?

- Grammar schools – other schools
 - Teachers
 - Parents
 - Universities
 - Businesses / employers
- } Interested to know grades

General

- Having numbers may devalue the grades we have already got – may make it look worse
- Numbers may look better
- More opportunity to get a pass grade if numbers are used
- More distinction with numerical grades could potentially devalue alphabetic grades
- Perception that the numbers would be better for those who have not done exams yet – easier to pass.
- Better to have one universal grading system
- If the majority is using numbers then why not just make it all the same
- Suggestion that we could have both systems together to reduce confusion – especially for parents
- For a couple of years have both sets of grades to allow it to bed in – trial it

Confusion

- Confused as it is – this will lead to further confusion
- Better grades – confused by numbers
- Used to the alphabetic system – recognise that an 'A' is good
- Problem of doing both – get both grades – not self explanatory
- Confusion with '9' being the top grade – query should the '1' be at top

- Could add in extra grade '10' – then this could help balance up the comparison
- '5' grade – confusing – this can still be a 'C' or it could be a 'B'
- If GCSEs are changing to numbers then confusing to have letters for AS/A2
- Grading in GCSE and AS/A2 Levels – should be the same
- We will to have a system in place to compare alphabetic and numerical grades

Employers

- Employers are looking for pass grade – changing just messing up the system if change to numbers
- Employers will want GCSEs at grade C or above and/or grade 4 or above, so it doesn't matter whether letters or numbers are used
- If someone gets a 'D' it reduces the number of grades to aim to improve target
- Decreases chance of getting employed – if didn't have the chance to get one of 4 grades (D to G) at level 1 instead of one of 3 grades (3 to 1)
- Employers will find it hard to understand the difference if we have both numbers and letters
- Letter grades irrelevant if go to England for employment – they won't know what they mean.
- If had good translation over, then this could be a good chance to explain to employers/universities

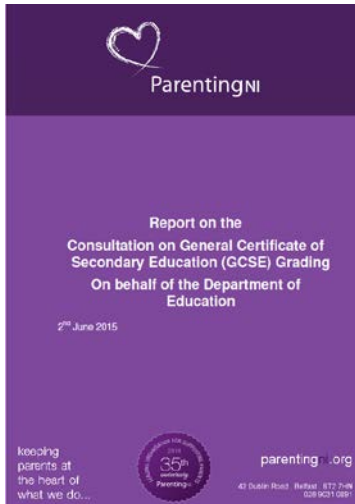
Section 75

No issues identified.

Vote

Change	0
Stay	10
No view	0

PARENTINGNI REPORT



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CONSULTEES

(N.B. this sets-out the text as provided and has not been spell-checked)

Format of response	Type	Other	Responses to q1b	Responses to q2b
David Cunningham	Teacher		It is about time teachers were allowed to continue to teach without the regular unnecessary changes that continue to happen.	It is about time teachers were allowed to continue to teach without the regular unnecessary changes that continue to happen.
	Teacher		Divergence between grading for CCEA and non-CCEA GCSEs would not be helpful.	Consistency across all GCSEs regardless of exam boards.
	Teacher		Widespread understanding of what the grades mean.	
Shane McNeill	Teacher		Having taught in England until recently, I am well aware of the 9 to 1 grading system. Given that many of our students will be attending English Universities and undertaking English Exam Board GCSEs, it makes sense for us to adopt the same system. If not, teachers, parents and employers will struggle to make comparisons	Consistency with England, portability of qualifications, reasons in 1b above etc
	Teacher			i beleive that, by altering to numeric and reversed grades, long-term confusion will result fro pupils, parents and employers.
	Other			
denis nightingale	Other	school governor	The grading system has been in place for some time - everyone understands it - why change just for changes sake? If it puts CCEA out of step with other awarding bodies it will only lead to confusion	I am old enough to have had my O levels graded numerically and 1 was the top grade - not the bottom. If using numbers it should be 1 =A*, 2 + A etc
	Teacher		It is a universally understandable way of communicating ability and achievement to both pupils and parents	There are already a suitable range of grades

	Other	Examiner	1. Employers understand alphabetic grades 2. Comparative statistical calculations year on year will not be possible with a change to numbers.	Having marked A level papers since 2002 a wider grade range at A level is actually more appropriate than at GCSE. Setting enough meaningful questions to allow a 9 point grading on a GCSE specification, given the limited skills and knowledge required for GCSE subjects will be difficult. There may not be enough time or material available on a paper to allow marks to differentiate appropriately between say grades 6 and 7.
	Teacher		Alphabetic grades are acceptable and moving from 1-9 grade is just a renaming.	It's just a renaming
	Parent		What is the point in changing to numbers from a well established system? Stop wasting time and money on things that ultimately DO NOT MATTER....	What is the point in changing to numbers from a well established system? Stop wasting time and money on things that ultimately DO NOT MATTER....
	Teacher		"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet..."	
	Parent		I feel as this system has been used for a long period of time i am more comfortable with it.	I am not sure if this would show greater clarity to results or if it would cause confusion.
	Teacher			
	Teacher		Alphabetical grades are recognised by all the relevant bodies.	Numerical grades do not make any sense to pupils and parents.
Peter Dennis	Teacher			
Des McLaughlin	Member of the Public			
Nigel Pell-Ilderton	Teacher		I believe that one system of grading should be in operation across NI, England and Wales. A consistent approach will benefit our Young People when they apply for jobs or entry to HE in the other countries.	I believe that one system of grading should be in operation across NI, England and Wales. A consistent approach will benefit our Young People when they apply for jobs or entry to HE in the other countries.
	Teacher		To be comparable with England and numerical grading offers two more levels.	
	Teacher		The historical success of the alphabetical grading system, it's familiarity coupled with the fact that A Levels will continue with this grading system means that homogeneity will exist if we do nothing and continue as it is.	We are our own people we don't need to follow the English system, Scotland uses it's own examinations, Wales are continuing with alphabetical so we can do the same
HC1	Teacher		Understood by parents, pupils, employers etc	Not understood by parents, pupils, employers etc.

HC2 - Hilary Cunningham	Teacher		The grades currently used are familiar to all. To change these would be confusing.	As I work in a school where 60% of the children are newcomer I believe that this would be difficult for them to understand, especially as many of them are just getting used to current grading.
Michael Carville	Teacher		It will create too much confusion for employers and university when students presented a mixture of numbers and grades.	
	Teacher		The current format does not give any problems so why alter what already works? Why should we in NI change what we are used to? Everyone from all generations understanding what GRADES signify and represent.	These are a random choice that aim to replace what is already established and working. It represents a large expense for no gain.
	Teacher		It is the established format and understood by all stakeholders.	It will lead to confusion and put more stress on students.
	Teacher			
	Teacher			
	Teacher			
	Teacher		I feel that this consultation has come too late. If a change was to be made it should have been done at the same time as the changes in England. I teach Maths and will be changing to CCEA so pupils will receive an alphabetical grade.	
Bernadette Devlin	Parent		The idea to move to the system which the new English GCSEs will use is an underhand attempt to pretend that CCEA's qualifications will be of the same academic standard. They will not be as CCEA's qualifications will continue to use coursework elements and units rather than one final examination - which is the best way to assess academic quality of candidates. There would also be a problem in comparing CCEA qualifications in English and Mathematics, say, from before the change and after the change. CCEA should get rid of A* grades though as their only effect is to make an A grade really a B grade. If too many candidates are achieving A grades, makes the exams or the marking harder.	A system that runs from 1-9 but which has 9 as the top grade is counterintuitive: most people would expect 1 to be the top grade. For the reasons outlined above the less-academically challenging CCEA examinations must be clearly differentiated from the harder English GCSEs using the 1-9 grading system. Clear differentiation will aid candidates, parents, employers and universities.
	Teacher			
Maurice Fitzpatrick	Teacher		Remaining with the current system avoids confusion with the KS3 Levels of Progression, the current	The new system will create great confusion among all stakeholders who currently understand the GCSE and GCE

			<p>system is very well established and clearly understood by parents, pupils universities and employers. The propose new grading system does not sit inline with the current system which will cause major confusion from stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposed new system in not inclusive, failing to give weaker pupils the opportunity to gain one of 4 GCSE grade below the current C threshold.</p>	grading system.
Margo Cosgrove	Other	Principal	<p>The propose new grading system does not sit inline with the current system which will cause major confusion from stakeholders.</p> <p>The current system avoids confusion with the KS3 Levels of Progression, the current system is very well established and clearly understood by parents, pupils universities and employers.</p> <p>The proposed new system in not inclusive, failing to give weaker pupils the opportunity to gain one of 4 GCSE grade below the current C threshold.</p>	Due to the many changes within the assessment structure of GCSE subjects, I full appreciate that it takes a long time for stakeholders to comprehend changes therefore I strong feel the proposed changes will create great confusion among all stakeholders who currently understand the GCSE and GCE grading system.
	Teacher		<p>Remaining with the current system avoids confusion with the KS3 Levels of Progression, the current system is very well established and clearly understood by parents, pupils, universities and employers. The proposed new grading system does not sit in line with the current system which will cause major confusion for stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposed new system in not inclusive, failing to give weaker pupils the opportunity to gain one of 4 GCSE grades below the current C threshold.</p>	The new system will create great confusion among all stakeholders who currently understand the GCSE and GCE grading system.
	Teacher			
	Teacher		<p>Remaining with the current system avoids confusion with the KS3 Levels of Progression, the current system is very well established and clearly understood by parents, pupils, universities and employers. The proposed new grading system does not sit in line with the current system which will cause major confusion for stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposed new system in not inclusive, failing to give weaker pupils the opportunity to gain one of 4</p>	The new system will create great confusion among all stakeholders who currently understand the GCSE and GCE grading system. It also involves changes in many departmental forms of documentation e.g. department files, website information, school prospectus, SIMS assessment systems, revision notes/guidelines etc.

			GCSE grades below the current C threshold.	
	Teacher		The grading system is currently well understood by Parents, pupils, teachers and employers.	If it ain't broke, don't fix it!
	Teacher		It is a common known system which is recognised by all stakeholders and is accepted and workable at present.	I can not see that there are strong arguments for this change. The numerical system is used in other ways eg. levels on the mainland, various point scoring systems for identifying need etc etc. A change to this system will be confusing to teh school community and more particulaly to pupils as they confuse this with other systems.
Dr D Burnett	Teacher			
wendy chambers	Teacher		<p>In the DENI document it is acknowledged that a 4 will equate with the current C grade but that the direction of travel for the new 9-1 GCSE scores will be for a 5 to become the accepted pass grade. This is important as it could mean that within a few years pupils in NI with a C grade at GCSE are seen as having a GCSE of lesser value which is not quite a pass grade any longer.</p> <p>7. Ofqual is setting the threshold for a Level 2 qualification at GCSE at the bottom of the new grade 4 (i.e. where it is currently, at the bottom of the Grade C). In the longer term, however, consideration may be given to setting the expected level for performance at age 16 at grade 5 in order to stretch the performance of learners. However the distinction between a level 1 and a level 2 qualification will remain unchanged.</p> <p>The same problem could arise with A* and the top scores of 9 and 8. An A* currently accounts for around the top 6% of all GCSE scores but the 9 will be awarded for the top 3% of GCSEs and an 8 for the next 3%. A pupil in NI would have no way of showing his/her A* to be equivalent to a 9 and in the competitive world of university applications that</p>	As above

			could place the NI pupil at a disadvantage. Overall, therefore, it seems prudent to move to the 9-1 scoring system for NI GCSEs so that we avoid confusion for parents, pupils and employers and also to guard against a potential de-valuing of the GCSE for NI pupils.	
	Teacher		In the DENI document it is acknowledged that a 4 will equate with the current C grade but that the direction of travel for the new 9-1 GCSE scores will be for a 5 to become the accepted pass grade. This is could mean that within a few years pupils in NI with a C grade at GCSE are seen as having a GCSE of lesser value which is not quite a pass grade any longer. The same problem could arise with A* and the top scores of 9 and 8. An A* currently accounts for around the top 6% of all GCSE scores but the 9 will be awarded for the top 3% of GCSEs and an 8 for the next 3%. A pupil in NI would have no way of showing his/her A* to be equivalent to a 9 and in the competitive world of university applications that could place the NI pupil at a disadvantage.	It is important that our pupils can compete for mainland UK university places on an equal footing with English and Welsh pupils. It is essential that the top 3% are awarded a "9" rather than an A* so that they can compete with the top scoring English students.
	Teacher		Pupils in N Ireland would be disadvantaged if alphabetic grades were continued as it is likely that a C grade will be equivalent to a grade 4 and of less value than a grade 5 which will become the new pass standard. Pupils in N Ireland would have no way of reaching the equivalent of a grade 9, which will be available to the top 3% of pupils in England. This will disadvantage N Ireland pupils, for example, in university applications. The Northern Ireland CCEA GCSE qualification will be devalued. The continuation of an alphabetic grading system when England will use a numbered system will create confusion for parents, pupils and employers.	Pupils in N Ireland will have the opportunity to access the highest grade 9 and will also have a comparable pass standard if the numerical grading system is introduced. The NI CCEA GCSE will not be devalued. By adopting the same grading system as England will avoid confusion in the long term for parents, pupils and employers.
	Teacher		If the same large percentage of pupils continue to	The pupils in Northern ireland should not be disadvantaged by

			apply to Universities in Scotland, Wales and England over the next few years as has been the case, then they will be classed as second class citizens by the university entrance systems.	any grey areas of comparison between the numerical system (5 as a pass) and the alphabetic system (C as a pass).
	Parent			
Robyn Hampton	Teacher		In the DENI document it is acknowledged that a 4 will equate with the current C grade but that the direction of travel for the new 9-1 GCSE scores will be for a 5 to become the accepted pass grade. This is important as it could mean that within a few years pupils in NI with a C grade at GCSE are seen as having a GCSE of lesser value which is not quite a pass grade any longer. I feel we should therefore adopt the same system as in England to give comparative results	See response given above
	Teacher			
Jonathan Willis	Teacher		I feel we should have a clear connection to what is going on with the UK system to avoid misunderstanding by pupils/parents or employers regarding our students results.	This will make it easier for pupils, parents, employers and University/Colleges
	Member of the Public			
Lurgan College	Organisation		To guarantee parity with English qualifications	To guarantee parity with English qualifications
	Teacher		Professionals and the general public have got used to this system and understand it so I don't see what can be achieved by changing the nomenclature.	A rose by any other name????
	Teacher		Standardised and universities/companies/parents understand their meaning.	I don't see the need. There is a model that works.
	Teacher		As a teacher we are used as are pupils & parents to a grading system that uses A*-G. I think it would be ludicrous to change to a numerical grading system. And just because England is doing so does not mean we have to.	As a teacher we are used as are pupils & parents to a grading system that uses A*-G. I think it would be ludicrous to change to a numerical grading system. And just because England is doing so does not mean we have to.
Rachel Wilmont	Pupil		I think the use of alphabetic grades is better than using numbers because people are used to the system we already have and there is no need to change it.	Changing to numbers will only cause confusion and there is no need for it.
	Teacher		straight forward.	Very confusing. 1 - 9 will always cause confusion. Is 9

			No ambiguity	highest? 1 highest? Stakeholders outside the education loop may find it difficult to comprehend
Hannah	Pupil		It is just going to cause confusion and there is no need for it to be changed. The grades make more sense as it clearly outlines an individuals academic ability.	It doesnt clearly justify that persons academic ability of it is graded by a number. For some people it may be hard for them to get their head around the idea of it.
	Pupil			
Lauren West	Pupil			
	Pupil		Everybody is used to the marking system of using grades by letters, not numbers. I believe this would confuse many people, i'm not very fond of this idea as I have always completed exams and then be marked using letter form. I understand why you suggest this change but I think it just messes with everybodys way of what they're working to achieve.	Everybody is used to the marking system of using grades by letters, not numbers. I believe this would confuse many people, i'm not very fond of this idea as I have always completed exams and then be marked using letter form. I understand why you suggest this change but I think it just messes with everybodys way of what they're working to achieve.
Olivia Burn	Pupil		keeps uniform grading system, doesn't degrade old style grades	hard to understand, degrades letter grading system
Laoise Toner	Pupil		Personally, I don't see the need to change existing grade formats to a numeric format as it will just arouse unneeded confusion. The existing format is identifiable on an international basis and our grades can come with us to pretty much any country, however, if for example applying to a job in another country with numeric grades, unnecessary confusion may be caused.	Grades 9-1 are not internationally identifiable as grades A*-G are. Furthermore, just as 'O Levels' were changed to 'GCSE' it separates our population into age bands; if the numeric grades come into operation, a divide will be created. For example, if a person is filling out a CV and they put numeric grades where as someone else writes their alphabetic grades, it may not be as easy to compare candidates. Personally, I believe that the existing grading system has worked perfectly for long enough and a change is absolutely unnecessary.
Katie Quinn	Pupil		I believe that the alphabetic grades A* to G have been proven to work effectively for the past number of years and to change the structure of the grade to be in a numerical form from 9 to 1 would simply cause unnecessary confusion. Personally, I feel that the grading system should stay using alphabetical grades.	The numerical system causes confusion and requires the individual to work out the relevant grade achieved in relation to the highest and lowest possible marks achieved. To figure out you achieved a Grade C in Biology GCSE for example you would have to calculate out the numerical grade of 6, this causes unnecessary effort and time.
Chloe	Pupil		A*-G has been the prevalent grading system for many years and it would be confusing to change it now because people wouldn't be able to get used to it. Many people would be unwilling to accept the	It would only serve to complicate the grading system, as people are used to the alphabetical grading system.

			change and would still refer to the grades as A*use, A, B etc. Therefore, I think it would be a misplaced choice to change the grading system.	
	Pupil		There is absolutely no reason for the change, we've been doing fine with our current system and this seems like it would provide no benefit whatsoever.	see my 'more information provided' for the previous question
	Pupil		Familiar Makes sense Still easy to compare grades Less confusing for potential employers	Too confusing Should wait and see if it works in England first before here. Too many different grades- what is a 5 worth in comparison to a 6?
	Pupil			
	Pupil		We are all used to this grading system and it makes more sense to use letters rather than numbers which may be confusing and hard to understand. Its normality and makes sense to continue using letters for grading.	
	Pupil			
	Pupil		I see no benefit to changing the grading system and I feel that it would cost a lot of money to change and implement and spread awareness but would ultimately be pointless. All this does is waste money that could be better spent on literally anything.	This change is unnecessary and, quite frankly, stupid. It changes nothing but wastes everyone's time
Shannon Massey	Pupil		Its more clear how well you are doing as numbers wouldnt be as clear	You dont know where you are and how you are doing
	Pupil		Easy to use system	Not as satisfying describing getting a 1 rather than an A
	Pupil		This is a clear, self explanatory grading system with A* clearly the highest overall.	This is too complicated a method for grading examinations. Everyone refers to a grade being that of alphabetical type i.e. A* to G and in my opinion this should be the way it is kept.
	Pupil		Everyone in the country can clearly establish what level we are at and what grades are considered good and what are bad.	It would be confusing as people would not know which way the numbering works for example; is 1 a representative of a top (first) grade or a bad grade.
	Pupil			
Deirdre	Teacher		It is a well known, easy to understand format for both parents and pupils.	It will only cause confusion and panic with staff, students and guardians.
	Pupil		Clear understanding of achievement	A* - G are easier to understand
	Pupil			
	Pupil		It's a simpler way to recognise grades	Easier to work out with point system than by grades
	Pupil		It's a better system than the number system and makes more sense	It's a strange system and the A*-G system makes more sense

	Pupil			
Timothy Hancock	Pupil		I believe that some people can find the current system confusing at the start especially if they are doing their first exams (ie. GCSEs or equivalent). I believe changing the system would only cause further confusion as people are only getting used to the current system. I personally found the current system a bit complicated to start with. From reading the consultation, I believe that AS Level and A Level would not be changed. If GCSE is different from A Level this would extremely confusing. I believe that exams in Northern Ireland should be on the same system.	As I have outlined above, I think keeping GCSE, AS and A Level in Northern Ireland consistent would be much better and much more effective. I also believe that getting an A* has a much better reputation than what a Level 9 would be. I think people would feel they have underachieved through the new system cause I know I would feel that way.
	Pupil			
	Pupil		It's a system that everyone knows and is used to!	That would confuse too many people, its similar to the AQE system which confused many people! This form of grading SHOULD NOT BE USED!
James David Alexander Wallis	Pupil		These boundaries give a general understanding of how well you performed and may also save embarrassment when comparing with friends. However, it may leave people in the dark as to how close or far they were from the next grade.	The traditional system is fine as it gives a sense of achievement rather than a cold, hard number.
	Pupil			
	Teacher		I think it would be best to stay in line with England to make it easier for people to understand the qualifications and what they mean. However changing to a number system will have a lot of administrative burden for schools and this would need to be considered when allocating budgets to schools. Teachers would need to be given more non teaching time to deal with a change over.	I think it would be best to stay in line with England to make it easier for people to understand the qualifications and what they mean. However changing to a number system will have a lot of administrative burden for schools and this would need to be considered when allocating budgets to schools. Teachers would need to be given more non teaching time to deal with a change over.
	Pupil		Grades are easy to understand; everyone knows that A*/A is a very good grade etc	I wouldn't understand if 9 was good or bad, and it would be harder maybe for elder generations if they had been used to another system
	Pupil		It gives pupils an easy understanding of where they are in the class and how they can improve. However, B+s and C-s would be a good idea	There's no point in fixing something that isn't broken

	Pupil			
	Pupil			
	Pupil		It is recognised by both employers and places of education on what you have achieved by what grade you got at GCSE level. For example if I said to my employer that I got three 1's, 5 2's and 4 3's it would not sound right.	See above
	Pupil		tradition	make A* - G obsolete
Kelsie McConaghie	Pupil		I agree because I believe that most people understand the alphabetical grades and have been used to seeing them for a long time now and so it would be confusing and irritating to see the grading system being changed in that way. Also, parents of children would most likely find the number grading system confusing as they may be so used to seeing the letters in their time at school and with other children, so therefore it would make it difficult for them to even explain to their child about how it works.	I think that the use of numbers for grading is not needed and will not change anything, but instead make the grading system a lot more harder to understand and come to terms with. This is because most people are known and are used to seeing the letter grades, so changing the letters to numbers may throw them off and cause them to misunderstand grades.
	Pupil		I think it would be useful for candidates to know their percentage or marks out of 100, 180, etc. It would mean if grade boundaries were very high, and they got a B but it was equivalent to 79%, it may make candidates feel better to know that it was just high boundaries.	This is a completely different system and would have to be introduced from first year up so that pupils were not getting confused.
	Pupil			
HC3 - Brenda Cunningham	Teacher		I strongly agree that CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades as this is the 'currency'; that I as a teacher 'think in' for GCSE marking, grading etc. It is also the way that parents, teachers and pupils have been used to understanding attainment for years.	I disagree as this is an unnecessary change which will seem meaningless to parents especially.
HC4	Teacher		N/A	N/A
HC5	Teacher		it is the easiest way for pupils and teachers to continue assessment in school with relevance to actual grade marking criteria, it is simpler for pupils to understand on results day	no need to change what works already
HC6	Teacher		My only concern is how this will be used by other stakeholders if some exam boards are using numbers	As above. Why change to numbers when letters have served us well. However, pre mid 70s numbers were used!!

			and some grades	
HC7 - Marie McMullan	Teacher		The existing grade system has worked well over the last number of years. The grades are widely recognised by pupils, parents, Universities and Businesses.	Using grades 9 to 1 while it will be the same as the English system, therefore the English universities and employers will not get an opportunity to discriminate against students from Northern Ireland, the degree of separation between 9 and 1 is much larger than A* to G, and pupils will feel that it is harder to achieve a top grade.
HC8	Teacher		Understood by pupils and parents	Same as above - unfamiliar to parents and pupils
HC9	Teacher		Keeps it consistent with AS/ A2.	Will be confusing for pupils.
HC10	Teacher		If a numerical system is used in the UK then a alphabetical system will cause confusion	
HC11 - DDunne	Teacher			I think that it would be very confusing for students, parents and employers. If a student was listing their results for example it now reads 5A, 3B and 1C but if changes this would be 59's, 32's and 13. This would make it very difficult to understand. It will also be very unclear what level the student is at. Would a 9 be equivalent to a current A* and an 8 an A etc? The current grading system works well and is very clear and understood by all. why change it?
	Pupil			The Ggrading system has been fine as it is for many years, and with the A*-C grades, children who are entering secondary/grammar schools this year or the next will still remember the importance of these letters as mesaures of correspndence in accordance to their grades, and replacing this with numnbers will mean that a new system of thought has to be implemented by the teachers and pupils in order for them to cope with the changes.
	Pupil			The Ggrading system has been fine as it is for many years, and with the A*-C grades, children who are entering secondary/grammar schools this year or the next will still remember the importance of these letters as mesaures of correspndence in accordance to their grades, and replacing this with numnbers will mean that a new system of thought has to be implemented by the teachers and pupils in order for them to cope with the changes.
Stephen Keown	Teacher			
	Pupil			
Ian Sampson	Other	School	We feel that there should be no need to change and	As stated above, we think that this would be too confusing and

		Council	that all schools throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland should maintain the same grading system. We feel that a move to numbers instead of the current letters could be confusing to parents, pupils and employers.	we don't see any real need to change the current system.
	Teacher		My preference would be that the grading continues to use A* to G but would be concerned that this would compromise our pupils if the English examination boards adopted a different grading system.	My preference would be that the grading continues to use A* to G but would be concerned that this would compromise our pupils if the English examination boards adopted a different grading system.
	Organisation		We would be the same as Britain, makes it easier to understand if it is the same. More scope for higher grade as there would be 6 grades compared to 4	Less confusing and easier to compare
	Pupil		n/a	n/a
	Pupil		Everyone understands them better	Too confusing
HC12	Other	Student Council	We believe that it is easier to track progress using the letter system, as internal school assessments are already graded from A*-G. We are concerned that the introduction of a higher grade (9) will devalue existing A*s; the northern Ireland job market is extremely competitive and candidates with '9s' may be seen as having an advantage over candidates with A*s. Teachers and pupils have been using A*-G for decades, we don't see a fault in this system, and don't think that it should change although Northern Ireland is part of the UK, the control over education has been devolved to Northern Ireland, therefore we think that CCEA should have the right to retain alphabetic grades, instead of following the actions of exam boards across the water.	Schools have internal minimum requirements for students to take on subjects at AS/A2 level; these requirements will have to be reassessed if numerical grading is introduced. At the moment, AS/A2 levels are graded in letters. So it will be complicated and confusing to have GCSEs graded in numbers; and AS/A2 levels graded in letters. Schools will have no other option but to have two grading systems within their departments, which will undoubtedly be inconvenient for teachers. We students already receive a raw mark and a uniform mark in figures on our results forms - we do not need a third number to deal with. Candidates at level one will not be able to display their achievements as much, as there are only three grades on the numerical system.
Michael Carville	Teacher			As a small country we must align our grades with England. This will ensure that our students have equal opportunities when applying to University or careers in the rest of the UK.
	Teacher		Retaining this grading system when larger organisations are moving to a different system will degrade the qualifications held by our young people.	To add or retain other systems will add to confusion for employers and disadvantage our young people.
tonia	Parent		I think it should remain the same GCSE A*-G. The problem is when I was at school they changed it from	Why try to fix something that is not broken.

			a levels to gcse it was very confusing to me and my fellow students as it was not explained why it had to change. Why try to fix something that is not broken. Everyone over the years has got to know the system on how it works.	
	Pupil		Easier to understand	Prefer the old system
	Teacher			
	Pupil		I think it would be silly to change it as everyone understands the system we have now and it is an unnecessary change to make A*-G is very appropriate and any changes would receive very bad reactions	I disagree as the school system has never worked in points and it will only confuse people leave it as it is .
Katie Megarry	Pupil		The grades from A*-G provide a simple guideline to how well we have done in our exams, by changing to numbers we will be unable to full understand what it means. Why bother changing something that works?	There is no point in changing it. If England want to use number they go ahead but we have been using the A*-G grades for years and so we understand if we get a B or A it is good. No point in changing something just for the fun of it because it will confuse us, the people who actually have to sit the exams.
shania mccann	Pupil		i think uaing letters is eaay to understand and it is what teachers and pupils are used to. i thik it makes it easier to understand if you have passed or failed.	people may get confused with key stage 3 and gcse numbers and what grades they represent, the last thing you want is confusion.
Lauren	Pupil		I think all GCSE examinations should be marked in letters because this has been going on for a very long while and our genertaion is used to this structure. Why change it now if it's the same thing only numbers, it will only cause confusion. University acceptance are based on three alevel grades, will alevel grading need to be changed?	I my opinion i think all exams should be graded in letters A* to U to stop all confusion.
	Pupil		I strongly agree with GCSES being continued using alphabetic grades. This is because I feel that everyone is used to it. Why change something that has always made sense. We are used to it as are family have got alphabetic grades, our older siblings and many people we know have. I feel like giving a alphabetic grade is more accurate than having some level that is not only confusing but is completely different from what we are used to. Grading pupils using levels mmay be confusing due to the fact that in first year, second year and third year we are given levels. Will these levels differ from GCSE levels or will they be the	I disagree with GCSE grades having levels instead of alphabetic grades because levels dont mkae sense. I feel like they are not accurate. Opening your GCSE results and seeing that amazing A* or A is such a reward. You will proud as you know you worked to the best of your ability to achieve it. Having that A* on your report being changed to a level 9 makes everything seem alot less successful as its just a number and we are used to these alphabetical letters. I strongly disagree with is.

			same. I think this change has no purpose other than to confuse many people.	
	Pupil		I agree that we should keep the letters as I have been using these grades throughout the school year and have got used to them. My teachers have also been using them when marking our work and they are easier to understand of knowing what grade you got.	I disagree with using the number grades as the seem very confusing when trying to see what grade you have achieved, to see if you have passed or failed. The other year groups below us in key stage 3 might not understand how they work and might be affected. Let's say that if they changed to numbers and we were applying for a job how would employer know what we got as they would be looking for letter grades such as A*-C.
	Pupil		I agree that the grades should stay as alphabetic grades because people are familiar with the letters and know what their grades are when they get marks back. The alphabetic grades are easier to read and easier to understand.	I strongly disagree that gcse's should not use numbers for their marking as it may confuse people and they won't understand how they are marked and what they are equivalent too. People are used to the letter grading as it has always been that way and that's how its taught.
	Pupil		I strongly agree that gcse's developed by CCEA should continue to the alphabetic grades A* to G because i feel it will affect people who are used to having their grades being given to them alphabetically. It is confusing as the numbers are not giving us a specific grade and generally people like getting grades in letters, because numbers do not represent our grade well enough. Many people are proud if they have any grades A* to C but with numbers it does not seem as rewarding.	Grades in numbers are confusing for those who are so used to being given their grades in letters; not numbers. I feel that it will affect those at key stage 3 because they will get confused with their grade boundaries as they may think they have the same meaning as GCSE levels, when really they dont. I dont feel like numbers give our grades justice as there is a something significant when you get an A* not a 9. Also parents will not understand this new grading system, because they too are so used to grades being alphabetic, so it affects both the students, parents and in some cases the teachers.
shania mccann	Pupil		I think using letters is easy to understand and it is what teachers and pupils are used to. I think it makes it easier to understand if you have passed or failed. I wouldn't like this way of finding out my gcse grade and don't think pupils after me will like it either. In my eyes A*-C is the way forward.	People may get confused with key stage 3 and gcse numbers and what grades they represent, the last thing you want is confusion while sitting these exams as they are hard enough. Things are simple the way they are.
	Pupil		I agree with the statement because people of this generation and the generation before are both familiar with letters as their grades as it is easy to understand and more useful in terms of knowing if you are in top band, etc. using letters as grades is more presentable as it is what everyone is used to and if you change it now everyone will be jumbled up. However there are	I think people of the next generation start to use numbers as their boundaries it would be very confusing for the generation who haven't used it as it would be very confusing in the future for example to own your own business and know the basic boundaries for letter grades and then people coming with letters as their grades. It would be very confusing for the business person and they may accept someone to work for

			positive aspects to the numbers such as that it would be easier to compare with others of the same boundary.	them who hasno experience of the job in which would be needed.
	Pupil		I think that grades A* to G are more suitable and easier to understand rather than being graded with numbers as it is just confusing. We are used to being graded with letters as that is what we receive now and our teachers, older friends and family members are used to letters too.	I think that changing from letters to numbers is silly and i think that it will just confuse everyone and students will starat comparing their number grades to letter grades to attempt to figure out what they would have got.
Charlotte McCusker	Pupil		The system is fully understood by teachers, pupils and parents. We are all accustomed to the rough grade boundaries and you shouldn't fix what isn't broken.	It's an unnecessary change to the regular system.
	Pupil		I think people are used to this system and a new way of grading would be very confusing for many including teachers, pupils and parents.	
	Pupil			
	Pupil		It is familiar and it would make CCEA more distinguishable from other exams boards. The current system has no problems and, considering England has a different year system (Year 8 in NI is Year 7 in England) there are already differences anyway. Current pupils in the education have grown up with the current grading system so we don't need to change anything.	Having a 9 for the top mark seems confusing as, in general, 1 means the best. It is confusing and it seems slightly pointless to change when the current system is effective and familiar.
	Pupil		It provides the pupil with a realistic understanding of their exam mark and what options are available for them following their results. It is a traditional marking system however I feel it is the best being a student myself.	Why decide to use numbers as grades when lettering grades are much more understandable. The numbers will not make sense to universities in the greater world and will make applications to further education difficult to understand.
	Pupil		As we are already familiar with the system in place, why change it and confuse everyone?	Its unusual and confusing.
	Pupil		The letter grades give a clear answer on grades. The letter grades have been used for many years and more employers will have experienced letter grades in place of number grades. The letter grade still proves to be functional: why change something that isn't broken?	The letter grades give a clearer answer and view on grades. The letter grades have been used for many years and more employers will have experienced letter grades in place of number grades. The letter grade still proves to be functional: why change something that isn't broken? The number grade may cause more confusion.

	Pupil		It is a simple and universally understood method, and there would be initial confusion, strife and worry over the new system by Pupils who would not know if they had met the grades or not.	See above
	Pupil		I think they should stay the same as older generations, employers and pupils may get confused	Most people are used to the use of the letters
Catherine	Pupil		The education system should retain the use of the alphabetical grades as everyone is use to them, everyone knows what the mean. They know what grades they need to get back into school and university. Employers are also only use to the alphabetical grading because this is what it always has been.	Changing of the grading system is of no real use to anybody and would serve as nothing but a burden to future GCSE pupils, teachers and employers.
Ruth	Pupil		It's been that way for a long time and it makes more sense to have letters than numbers.	It doesn't make sense and its not something you would really want to aspire to get a 1 rather than an A*
	Pupil		It is a good system that we have , so why change it? It has remained the same for so many years, why change it now? The English education board can still understand our grades if needs be.	This seems to be a confusing system and I do not want this type of grading for my results.
	Pupil		It's been around for ages and is a system we all understand and changing it will confuse it all and confuse everyone. It's similar to when we changed to doing the AQE and not the 11+, I was the first year to do the AQE and its was very confusing to a lot of people.	It's weird! Is 9 the top grade or is 1 the top grade? Grades are A* to G and should remain that way
HC13 - School Council	Pupil		It is worrying that the system in Northern Ireland would be different to that in England as so many of the pupils from here go to study or work in England.	There is a concern that the qualifications in Northern Ireland would be seen as different t those in England and become devalued. It is a positive to have greater distinction between the achievements of pupils at Level 2.
Alison Chestnutt	Teacher		My view is that the move to a numbered grading system for GCSE grades in England will become quickly understood and adopted by employers, parents and educational institutions at UK wide level. In a very short time this will become the accepted norm and will be reflected in future job application criteria, higher education admission requirements and education system analysis. The read across from the present eight letter based A*-G scale to a numbered	My view is that the move to a numbered grading system for GCSE grades in England will become quickly understood and adopted by employers, parents and educational institutions at UK wide level. In a very short time this will become the accepted norm and will be reflected in future job application criteria, higher education admission requirements and education system analysis. The read across from the present eight letter based A*-G scale to a numbered 1-9 scale cannot be exact and will cause confusion and potential disadvantage.

		<p>1-9 scale cannot be exact and will cause confusion and potential disadvantage.</p> <p>Given that Northern Ireland is wisely keeping an open marketplace for qualifications, failure to change to a numbered system would mean that pupils here would potentially be presenting a CV of qualifications to future employers with a mix of numbered and letter based grades. The equivalence of particular number and letter grades will be an issue, as will the willingness of employers and higher education institutions to accommodate minority qualification grading systems in the selection of candidates. Few, if any, schools here use Welsh GCSEs.</p> <p>While individual universities may recognise current Northern Ireland qualifications and grades on a case by case basis, there is no centralised standardisation process to ensure a consistent approach on future grading comparisons. This could potentially lead to disadvantage for our pupils in the future.</p>	<p>Given that Northern Ireland is wisely keeping an open marketplace for qualifications, failure to change to a numbered system would mean that pupils here would potentially be presenting a CV of qualifications to future employers with a mix of numbered and letter based grades. The equivalence of particular number and letter grades will be an issue, as will the willingness of employers and higher education institutions to accommodate minority qualification grading systems in the selection of candidates. Few, if any, schools here use Welsh GCSEs.</p> <p>While individual universities may recognise current Northern Ireland qualifications and grades on a case by case basis, there is no centralised standardisation process to ensure a consistent approach on future grading comparisons. This could potentially lead to disadvantage for our pupils in the future.</p>
	Pupil		<p>It is an easy system which everyone is accustomed to.</p>
	Pupil		<p>if its not broken dont fix it.</p>
Richard Chambers	Teacher	<p>As a number of students work or go to university in England retaining the present grading would become a disadvantage to those people as employers may not wish to keep up to date with referencing what our grades would be equivalent to in the English based system.</p>	<p>As a number of students work or go to university in England retaining the present grading would become a disadvantage to those people as employers may not wish to keep up to date with referencing what our grades would be equivalent to in the English based system.</p> <p>We need to be equivalent to what is in place in England as our work place is too small to support our graduates/workers so we need to be competitive in an English market as well as our own.</p>
	Teacher	<p>The move to a numbered grading system for GCSE grades in England will become quickly understood and adopted by employers, parents and educational institutions at UK wide level. In a very short time this will become the accepted norm and will be reflected</p>	<p>The move to a numbered grading system for GCSE grades in England will become quickly understood and adopted by employers, parents and educational institutions at UK wide level. In a very short time this will become the accepted norm and will be reflected in future job application criteria, higher</p>

		<p>in future job application criteria, higher education admission requirements and education system analysis. The read across from the present eight letter based A*-G scale to a numbered 1-9 scale cannot be exact and will cause confusion and potential disadvantage.</p> <p>Given that Northern Ireland is wisely keeping an open marketplace for qualifications, failure to change to a numbered system would mean that pupils here would potentially be presenting a CV of qualifications to future employers with a mix of numbered and letter based grades. The equivalence of particular number and letter grades will be an issue, as will the willingness of employers and higher education institutions to accommodate minority qualification grading systems in the selection of candidates. Few, if any, schools here use Welsh GCSEs.</p> <p>While individual universities may recognise current Northern Ireland qualifications and grades on a case by case basis, there is no centralised standardisation process to ensure a consistent approach on future grading comparisons. This could potentially lead to disadvantage for our pupils in the future.</p>	<p>education admission requirements and education system analysis. The read across from the present eight letter based A*-G scale to a numbered 1-9 scale cannot be exact and will cause confusion and potential disadvantage.</p> <p>Given that Northern Ireland is wisely keeping an open marketplace for qualifications, failure to change to a numbered system would mean that pupils here would potentially be presenting a CV of qualifications to future employers with a mix of numbered and letter based grades. The equivalence of particular number and letter grades will be an issue, as will the willingness of employers and higher education institutions to accommodate minority qualification grading systems in the selection of candidates. Few, if any, schools here use Welsh GCSEs.</p> <p>While individual universities may recognise current Northern Ireland qualifications and grades on a case by case basis, there is no centralised standardisation process to ensure a consistent approach on future grading comparisons. This could potentially lead to disadvantage for our pupils in the future.</p>
j graham	Teacher	We need to stay in parallel with the rest of the UK for pupils who are moving on to university	As above, GCSE grading needs to be of a commensurate value to UK grading so as not to discriminate against NI pupils going to university
	Teacher	Since students in Northern Ireland apply to universities and careers outside NI it is important there is consistency across the exam boards	As above
HC14	Pupil	Letters already work and numbers are more confusing	
HC15	Pupil	Used to this grading. Easier to understand. Alphabetical is more idiot proof eg is 1 or 9 the best?	Doesn't make sense. Unsure of what a pass is.
HC16 - Class 11JV	Pupil	It is more understood to students. It is recognised in other countries. It is understandable to employers	It is harder to understand. It will be harder for people to adapt to.
HC17 - Class 11AE	Pupil	It is easy to understand what the grades mean if they are A*-G. It is easier to keep the continuity so that	See above

			students and employers know what they mean.	
HC18 - Class 12RT	Pupil		No one will understand the number system.	It would be confusing, doesn't sound as good as grades.
HC19 - Mrs Laverne Inns	Teacher		Staff, pupils and public do have a better understanding of the A*-G system	If this is going to be the system throughout UK then it would be better for NI to follow suit
	Pupil		I feel the lettered grades are much more widely recognised and make it much easier for pupils to know how they have performed	I think this is unnecessary the current system works extremely well and the letters 1-9 could be misleading and are much harder to understand what kind of grade a pupil would be given
James	Pupil			
	Teacher		The need for portability and comparability with schools in England is considered important, especially with regard to UCAS applications. It is not considered appropriate that pupils in Northern Ireland are not disadvantaged in any way. This factor overrides our concerns that the 9-1 scale may lead to confusion amongst pupils and parents.	For the reasons outline above. Where pupils complete GCSEs using a combination of CCEA specifications and those of other awarding bodies, it is considered sensible that a common grading system is applied. The increased differentiation that comes with a 9-1 scale is also welcomed.
	Pupil		It is easier to follow	I haven't heard of this before and it sounds frickin complex
	Pupil			This would be highly confusing, and it might not be clear which number represents the highest grade!
	Teacher		Grading system must be directly comparable with GCSE grading system in England if students are not to be disadvantaged.	As above. Particularly relevant for students who wish to access universities or employment in GB
Robena Elwood	Teacher		The key issue here is less so the grade - more the parity of students' results across the UK with regard to University entrance	CCEA ought to provide qualifications which have the same currency as those produced in England - particularly since many of our students choose English Universities - a point system might be easier to understand both by pupils and employers.
	Pupil		alphabetic letters are easier to understand, we are given numeric levels in English which is confusing	would be difficult to understand nothing wrong with the current system no point changing it for no reason
	Teacher		Because it provides continuity and makes sense to teachers, pupils and parents.	I cannot understand the rationale behind the change.
	Teacher			
	Organisation			The 9 to 1 system provides a better spread of grades across the distribution curve. It allows for more precise differentiation at the top end.

				<p>It would allow for direct and accurate comparisons to be made between results from each of the boards.</p> <p>It would avoid pupils receiving certificates with a mixture of grades and numbers.</p> <p>Most importantly, would ensure the portability of our pupils' grades in the future.</p>
Queen's University Belfast	Other	Higher Education Provider	To retain the A* to G grading would be helpful only in the short term but would not reduce the confusion during the period of transition or beyond. The potential risks of changing and the potential benefits of not changing, as outlined in the accompanying paper, are not convincing.	<p>In the long term, this is a better solution and will ensure that those taking GCSE qualifications will be graded in the same way, irrespective of whether they take examinations under an English examination board or CCEA.</p> <p>Individual pupils in N. Ireland are likely to offer qualifications from a mixture of examination boards. Common grading would be beneficial to employers, Higher Education providers and others, in helping to ensure consistency and equity in their selection processes, when handling applications, not only from N. Ireland applicants but from throughout the UK. Without this change to numeric grades at GCSE, the mapping of B and A* grades to 5/6 and 8/9 might prove contentious with an inconsistent approach taken.</p>
	Teacher		Need to be in line with England	Makes sense to follow English path as many of our pupils do English board exams
	Teacher		There can be a direct comparison of standards with English boards for Uni applications.	I believe that the grade boundaries will be too close and tolerance of centre marking may lead to unfair grading. As a moderator, I think that small discrepancies in marking can make the difference to pupils getting an offer for a top course or not. Surely, this would promote pupils having their work remarked. Also, it will bring added stress. I would support grades 1-5 as sufficient.
	Teacher		We need to be consistent with the rest of the UK - v important for future university and job applications that qualifications are equal.	Again, we need to be consistent with the rest of the country.
	Teacher		Think it would be better to use the same system as England and Wales to avoid confusion.	As above, I think it would be better to use the same system as England and Wales to avoid confusion.
Maureen McVeigh	Parent		I believe that numerical grades will only confuse the issue. It has worked well till now and any further change is for change sake!	As above

	Teacher			
	Teacher			
	Teacher			
Heather Collier	Teacher		Important that GCSE grades are standard across all exam boards. Pupils with a mixture of GCSE boards could end up with a mixture of grading systems (A*-G and 1-9) which would be confusing to all. Also impossible to make direct comparison between Grades A*/A and grades 9/8	For reasons of portability and clarity as outlined above.
	Teacher		CONFUSING OTHERWISE	AS ABOVE
	Teacher		The alphabetic gades and numerical grades are equatable.	The alphabetic gades and numerical grades are equatable.
	Teacher			
Limavady Grammar School (Whole Staff Response Following Discussion At SDD Day)	Teacher		We feel it is regrettable that there has been any change to the current grading system by any of the UK exam boards but, given that the English boards are changing, we feel that CCEA would be wise to follow. A large number of pupils in N.Ireland will move to England for higher education or for employment. Having two different grading systems just does not make sense and will lead to enormous confusion with universities and employers. Furthermore, a number of schools will use specifications from English exam boards as well as CCEA examinations. This could potentially lead to pupils receiving a mixture of alphabetical and numerical grades. This again has the potential to be highly confusing and it will be difficult for parents and pupils to make comparisons between the two systems.	We feel it is regrettable that there has been any change to the current grading system by any of the UK exam boards but, given that the English boards are changing, we feel that CCEA would be wise to follow. A large number of pupils in N.Ireland will move to England for higher education or for employment. Having two different grading systems just does not make sense and will lead to enormous confusion with universities and employers. Furthermore, a number of schools will use specifications from English exam boards as well as CCEA examinations. This could potentially lead to pupils receiving a mixture of alphabetical and numerical grades. This again has the potential to be highly confusing and it will be difficult for parents and pupils to make comparisons between the two systems.
	Teacher			
	Pupil		I believe that grades should be kept the same, as this may co Amuse confusion and upset to pupil in the future.	This process is confusing.
	Teacher			
Lyndsey Vincent	Teacher			

	Teacher		This grading is familiar to pupils and parents and is easy to understand.	This grading is unfamiliar to pupils and parents.
	Teacher			
	Teacher			To be in line with the rest of the UK and Europe. Using 1 to 9 grades means more graduations.
Martin Hodge - Voice	Trade Union Reepresentative		The alphabetic grades (introduced in the 1950s) are well understood by the general public and employers and allow easy comparison between prospective employees. Although all of the grades are identified as PASS grades, in the view of many only grades C and above are considered worthy grades. This can affect students' ability to progress to further study and increases disengagement amongst young people.	We have previously commented that there is merit in a numerical grading system. We would prefer a greater number of grades to allow for greater differentiation between candidates, however we have also commented that running concurrent systems does not benefit staff, students nor employers and parents. Therefore, we would prefer to see all awarding bodies using the same grading system. It would make sense for CCEA to maintain the integrity of the GCSE brand and use the same grading system as is used in other jurisdictions encouraging the open market which has developed around examinations.
HC22 - NUS-USI	Organisation		NUS-USI somewhat disagrees with the continuation of the alphabetic grading system, because a change to a numerical system could help ensure integrity and portability of the GCSE qualification, given the change to a numeric system in England. Also qualifications from exam boards based in England are likely to be used here, therefore, for coherence it may be useful to have the numeric system in place here. If the grading system remains the same, it could mean that people seeking to work of study elsewhere in the UK, or around the world, could be disadvantaged because the system doesn't retain the same grading as some other parts of the UK. Maintaining the transferability, portability and integrity of the qualification is of paramount importance for students and people who are seeking to build a career.	Again, NUS-USI, believes that the portability, transferability and integrity of the GCSE qualification is of massive importance, therefore, we believe a transfer to a grades 9 to 1 system should happen. However, we would have some concerns about a possible lack of clarity in the immediate time after the new grading's introduction, so a high level of promotion and public information work should be carried out by the department if any change takes place. It is essential that a high profile information campaign is created if this change is implemented, and this campaign should reach parents, former and future students of GCSEs, schools, FE and HE institutions and businesses, to help ensure clarity and ease any potential worries that people may have on this issue. It is essential for students and others who are hoping to study or gain employment elsewhere that qualifications have an ease of transferability, and the numeric system could ensure that.
	Teacher		I believe we need to associate our qualification system with mainland as our economy too small and	As most schools use a variety of exam boards it would be very confusing for students receiving results in a variety of formats.

			employers would benefit from a uniform system of grading.	
Stranmillis University College	Organisation		<p>Maintaining the current alphabetic system would mean a reduced risk of confusion and misunderstanding for stakeholders including pupils, parents and employers. It does however bring conflict between grading scores achieved through CCEA and those achieved through examination boards that are based in England. This could impact negatively on those pupils applying for universities within England.</p> <p>Grades A* to C will be subdivided into 6 grades. This will highlight differentiation amongst candidates which will have associated positives and negatives.</p>	Changing to an inverse numeric labelling will make the process of comparability with examinations grades from English awarding bodies simpler and easier. However, within Northern Ireland this has the potential of bringing increased risk of confusion and misunderstanding for all stakeholders. In particular there would be confusion for parents and pupils who will have to interpret two different grading systems on result sheets.
DMullan	Teacher		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Retaining parity with other exam boards is essential for students' prospects •Avoid confusion for students, parents, employers and universities •CCEA will be seen as offering lesser qualifications •OECD/PISA mis-alignment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Provides continuity and consistency with English examination boards 2.Gives our students the same basis when under consideration for university entrance.
	Teacher		Employees and public understand current method, easier to compare candidates who've sat exams in different years.	Why chance what public understand.
David McFarland	Organisation		We have consulted widely with all staff and the view of Banbridge Academy is that the move to a numbered grading system for GCSE grades in England will become quickly understood and adopted by employers, parents and educational institutions at a UK wide level. In time this will become the accepted norm and will be reflected in future job application criteria, Higher Education admissions requirements and education system analysis. The comparison from letter based A* - G scale to a numbered 1 -9 scale cannot be exact and will cause confusion and potential disadvantage.	Given that Northern Ireland is keeping an open marketplace for qualifications, failure to change to a numbered system would mean that pupils here would potentially be presenting a CV of qualifications to future employers with a mix of numbered and letter based grades. The equivalence of particular number and letter grades will be an issue, as will the willingness of employers and Higher Education Institutions to accommodate minority qualification grading systems in selection of candidates.
	Teacher		Pupils from Northern Ireland need to have the same grading system as pupils in England to ensure that	We need to ensure there is a level playing field i.e. that pupils from Northern Ireland are regarded as having comparable

			they are not disadvantaged by having incomparable results which employers could misinterpret.	qualifications to ensure that they are not disadvantaged when applying for courses or jobs and portability of the qualifications in the future.
Ann Stott	Teacher		It could disadvantage students from NI in apply to universities in the UK, as the grading systems will be different. We may end up with s grade B the min. not a C	If in line with UK (England) we are on an even playing field.
	Teacher		The system in NI needs to be portable and comparable with the English system so as not to disadvantage our youngsters.	
	Teacher			
	Other	Classroom Assistant/Learning Support Assistant		
	Teacher			
Parick Armstrong	Teacher			Consistency with the rest of the UK to make it easier to compare and stop any confusion for employers and universities that may disadvantage students.
	Teacher		Band range too narrow.	Broader band range better to see results clearly.
	Teacher		I feel we should adapt the system the English examining bodies are implementing.	I feel we should adapt the system the English examining bodies are implementing.
	Teacher		This would allow for direct and accurate comparisons to be made between results from each of the boards, it would avoid pupils receiving certificates with a mixture of grades and numbers, and, most importantly, would ensure the portability of our pupils' grades in the future.	As Above
	Teacher		There needs to be consistency with the English boards.	There needs to be consistency with the English boards.
	Teacher		confusion between English boards and CCEA	To enable both studebts and employers to compare grades easily
T. McCrum	Teacher		If grade system kept there will be a big discrepancy between English boards and CCEA. That will put NI students at a disadvantage as far as UCAS applications are concerned.	There will be a continuity and consistency of grading across United Kingdom.
	Teacher			
	Teacher			
	Teacher		Less portable throughout UK.	As above.
	Teacher			
Paul Flanagan	Teacher		If England moves so must we.	We must follow the lead set by England.

	Teacher		At present the grading system at GCSE is fit for purpose the only reason for change would be to be in line with England. There does not seem to be a good educational argument as to why the grading system should be changed. The fact that Scottish examination system and grading has existed alongside a different examination system to the rest of the UK is evidence that as long as the examination system is rigorous then the grading of it is secondary.	
Patricia Millar	Member of the Public		As this is the system that has been used for years, I see no reason to change. Alphabetic grades are used in internal exams and I feel alphabetic grades mean more to the pupils as this is what they are accustomed to.	The reason I gave in Q1b is applicable here.
	Teacher		It would be more consistent with the proposals at a national level in the UK and allow for meaningful comparisons to be made between outcomes in different Exam boards.	It would be more consistent with the proposals at a national level in the UK and allow for meaningful comparisons to be made between outcomes in different Exam boards.
	Teacher		Comparative grading to match English boards.	As above.
Sam Sinclair	Teacher		We will be sending many of our pupils to universities on the mainland. If we do not have a comparable grade system, it undermines confidence in the grades and puts our pupils at a disadvantage.	We will be sending many of our pupils to universities on the mainland. If we do not have a comparable grade system, it undermines confidence in the grades and puts our pupils at a disadvantage.
Angela Webster	Other	Parent and Classroom Assistant	Still confusion/uncertainty re: A level grading.	
	Other	Exams Office		
Alison McAnoy	Other	Classroom Assistant (and parent of 14 year old)	grading GCSE's in line with the rest of the UK will enable an easier transition if young people are seeking work outside of Northern Ireland. However, I feel that the quality of our education system and the examinations in it are of a very high standard and risk being 'lost' in the generalisation of grades.	uniform grading in line with UK as above.
	Teacher			
	Teacher		confusion with other UK boards	
	Parent		NI should be in-line with GB for easy understanding and transference	Easier for universities and employers to understand
Pamela Yeh	Parent		It's a system that currently works and people (employers locally and internally) understand what each grade means	My concern is that changing the grading system is a form of gerrymandering, making it easier to achieve grades. Instead we should be putting more resources into helping those who need it achieve the right grades. Changing the grading system to ensure more children achieve

				the relevant grades will impact on NI's educational reputation and is a form of dumping down.
N Maltman	Teacher		Keep grading in line with other examination boards	Keep grading in line with other examination boards
F. Quinn	Teacher		Our school enters pupils for both CCEA and English board examinations. As the English boards are moving to a number system it would make grades clearer to pupils, staff, and parents if there was one grading system.	Many of our pupils apply to post GCSE courses outside Northern Ireland. It will prevent any confusion with Universities and Colleges in the rest of the UK or overseas if there is one universal grading system.
	Teacher			
	Teacher		Continuity and pupils, parents and other agencies understand them	Not understood by users and will create confusion
Paul O'Reilly	Teacher			
	Teacher		There should be no distinction between GCSE qualifications offered by different examination boards, and no different treatment of candidates. Managing 2 different grading systems is a classic example of how people in offices that are not truly engaged with classroom and school life, and its ever-changing dynamics, have lost a grip on how complex it can be to manage a school. The bureaucracy alone of managing multiple grading systems is madness. It is BAD MANAGEMENT. We are being MANAGED BADLY. Choose 1 way and stick to it. There is no room for argument of a 3rd possibility: reporting percentages or increments of 5% or 10%. All subjects have an anchored minimum (0%) and maximum (100%) so we might as well keep it flat and easy to interpret against international counterparts.	There should be no distinction between GCSE qualifications offered by different examination boards, and no different treatment of candidates by e.g. Universities or students transitioning between schools/UK provinces. CCEA qualifications should not be special/different. There is no NEED.
ROSEMARY McLAUGHLIN	Teacher		I do not have any strong views on this issue. Removing the A* may take away the pressure that some students were putting themselves under. However, if it's then then viewed by students that the only acceptable grade to get is a one it will not really change things.	
	Teacher		We will be working with 2 different systems as many departments will continue to use English board specifications and so will have A* to C and 1 to 9 and while we in education will understand parents and employers may not.	As above no point in having 2 different systems operating.
K Smith	Parent			

	Pupil			
	Teacher		I think that it is important that results are on the same scale. Many pupils in NI take some GCSEs from English examination boards and it would be important that all were reported on the same scale for ease of comparison or lack of doubt.	As above and concerned that the 9 - 1 scale does not equate exactly to the A-G scale
	Teacher			
	Teacher		To make qualification understood in UK	so that employers, colleges and universities in rest of UK, where most of our young people go for study and work, understand the value of the grade.
	Teacher		This is a tried and tested method which everyone is familiar with.	It will cause confusion for pupils and parents.
	Teacher			If we create a different system to the British one, we risk being viewed as second rate and our students will be disadvantaged when it comes to University choices. We do not want to be viewed as second rate as it may be difficult to recover from it on the global stage. E.g. When we changed the A levels the Southern (Ireland) universities required more A levels from Northern students, not a good advertisement for our education system.
	Member of the Public			
Mr J.S. Laverty	Teacher		This whole issue has come about as a result of a knee jerk reaction to what has happened under Michael Gove in England. Yes some change is perhaps necessary but the baby does not need to be thrown out with the bath water so to speak. The actual exams are causing the problem in that they are certainly easier than they used to be in my opinion and therefore more children are achieving higher grades and the grades have become devalued as a result.	The numerical system will only end up going the same way as long as examinations are not testing the pupils enough. Labels will be applied as before but only using "are you a 1 or a 6 or a 9" What do we say to pupils who are a nine? or even a Seven? It would be better to return to A-E for GCSE and to create a new VCSE A-E for vocational courses. Pupils can then follow their chosen subjects related to career choice and have the appropriate certificate to reflect their progress. Levels in English and maths should reflect the pathway chosen so that the VCSE in English and Maths is appropriate to the skills required to enable those pupils to achieve the grade they need from their chosen profession.
	Teacher		It does not make sense that pupils in different parts of the UK are graded in a different way according to exam board. Some pupils could have a mixture of	See response above. It is important that are young people aren't potentially disadvantaged by having a different grading system on university applications etc.

			alphabetic and numeric grades and there could be issues with transferability.	
	Teacher		It will cause confusion between the GB boards and CCEA	See above
	Pupil			
	Pupil			
	Pupil			
sarah gilmour	Pupil		every is used to this and makes it easy for every to understand and use	people will find this harder to use and it will be difficult for people to understand
ginger nut	Pupil		because we are so used to it ! it will be easier for teachers and students because if it became a thing it would confusing for teachers, students and parents.	because it will be really confusing
	Pupil			it would be too confusing to the parents and pupils that are used to using the a-g grading
Matthew McConnell	Pupil		i dont really mind as it wouldnt be any different in my opinion	
Sarah Boyd	Pupil		I strongly agree because it is less confusing than numbers.	I disagree because i just do.
ria emerson	Pupil		because it will confuse people if it changes	it will confuse people
	Pupil		im fabyulous	
	Pupil		Everyone understands the current grading system and it would confuse people if it was changed	it doesnt seem very fair and it would take people a while to get used to
	Pupil		letters are easier to understand and everyone is used to it.	people will get confused by numbers
	Pupil		i think that we should change to numbers because if you are going to an unniverisity to england they will know what you get more accuratelly. if we use letters it will be confusing for employers in england.	
	Teacher			
David Allen	Teacher		There is no need to change	Becomes confusing. No need
Grainne O'Neill	Parent		The system is easy to understand and there is no confusion in the grades from A* through to G	Why 9 - 1 rather than 1 - 9? It just does not make sense!
	Teacher		The current system is one which is widely recognised by parents, employers and the general publci and changing could lead to confusion and misunderstanding.	See above. Also confusion may aruise as to what constitutes the top grade. It would have appeared more logical to me for Grade 1 to be the top adn 9 the lowest.
	Teacher		The grading systeemis traditional and should be maintained as employers are used to it.	The reasoning is that all the GCSE grades should be consistant throughtout the U.K.
Michael Allen	Teacher		To ensure young people from N.I. are not	The number system allows for greater differentiation of

			disadvantaged when applying for university places or employment within the UK.	outcomes at 4 or above. It will be in line with England and Wales which is required to fully support the open qualifications market. I'm not sure if 4 is the correct equivalent for level 2 qualifications; 5 May be more appropriate.
	Teacher		Employers understand them. Understood by Universities and international employers and community.	Employers don't understand them.
Chloe plunkett	Pupil		The 1-9 system gives better recognition of those who have done very well and will allow the process of applying for universities in other countries like England to be easier if Northern Ireland uses the 1-9 grading system.	Same answer to previous question.
Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Northern Ireland	Organisation		<p>The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is Northern Ireland's largest business organisation with almost 7000 members drawn from across all sectors of industry. The FSB has over 200,000 members throughout the United Kingdom.</p> <p>The FSB lobbies decision makers to create a better business environment and welcomes this opportunity to input to the Department's consultation on GCSE Grading.</p> <p>Regulation is a time consuming burden upon many small business owners, particularly in the area of recruitment, which incorporates changes in legislation, taxation and qualifications. FSB research has revealed that the average small business owner spends at least seven hours per week filling out paperwork and getting to grasp with regulatory issues. This is time and energy that could otherwise be directed into growing and expanding their business, and consequently, increasing employment opportunities.</p> <p>The current alphabetical grade system for GCSEs has been in operation for over 25 years and due to this, is</p>	<p>Until the 1980s, the then secondary examination system of CSEs used numerical grading 1-5, with 1 representing the highest achievement level. The current recommendation is that numerical grading would replace the present alphabetical grading system used for GCSEs and prior to that for 'O' levels. Under the new system, a Grade 9 will be the highest grade, equivalent to a Grade A*.</p> <p>This could therefore be somewhat confusing to small business owners who are recruiting in the future, if they have been in operation prior to or since the 1980s, those who have completed their own education during the 1980s or before, as well of course to all employers receiving applications from a mixed age range of candidates, some of whom will have 'O' Levels or CSEs, some will have GCSEs at grades A to G, some with GCSEs at grades A* to G, and some, if this new grading scheme is introduced, with GCSEs graded 9 to 1.</p> <p>While NI employers will also receive applications from candidates who have obtained qualifications in England, or who have attended school or college here but have been entered for qualifications set by English examination boards, we believe that this presents less risk of confusion than changing the grading of NI qualifications.</p>

		<p>familiar to all employers in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>As Northern Ireland emerges from an economic recession, it is vital that Government supports small businesses in providing employment opportunities. Such support would include reducing regulation and making it easier for small businesses to negotiate the recruitment process. The FSB argues that this new grade system for GCSEs would in effect increase the amount of regulation employers would have to familiarise themselves with and could cause potential confusion.</p> <p>Furthermore, in implementing the change to the grading system, FSB Northern Ireland strongly disagrees with the proposal by the Department of Education to operate two grading systems between 2017 and 2018. This will only serve to increase the confusion that will be experienced by both students and employers.</p>	<p>The introduction of new grades would take a considerable amount of time to get used to, for the reason that they do not reflect the A equals 1, B equals 2 and so on, structure. This is not the only aspect of the new numerical grading that employers will have to familiarise themselves with.</p> <p>In addition to changing the classification of the grade itself, each grade will include further nuances essential to ascertaining the GCSE grade. For instance Grade 4 will be equivalent to a low Grade C, but whereas a low Grade C is currently considered a “good GCSE”, in 2017 it no longer will be. Now only a grade 5 or higher will be considered a respectable grade, with the new Grade 5 representing the top 33% of Grade C combined with the bottom 33% of Grade B.</p> <p>Students graded under the new numerical classification who achieve the lower grades would be less able to demonstrate what they have achieved, since the current Grades lower C to G (four and a half grades) will be replaced by Grades 3-1 (three grades), with Grade 3 representing a lower Grade C.</p>
	Teacher	Ease of comparison is essential for portability of qualifications.	The less confusion in the public domain the better - for pupils, parents, Further and Higher Education institutions, and employers the system used for reporting examination outcomes must be consistent within the UK.
	Pupil	harder to do well and there is already enough stress at the minute	Harder to do welll
	Pupil	The grading system has never caused a problem before so therefore there is no need to change. It is the grading system that peopl understand and they can set their target grade and work for it.	It will confuse people who are not used to the system. Alot of people may not understand the new system.
	Pupil	i agree that it is easier to do well with the letter grading sysem and yolo !	i disagree as the numbering system is putting stress on the young pupils shoulders and chests and they can't have fun, yolo !
	Pupil	it is an outrage. just confusing the grade even more. there is nothing wrong with the old system. you dont have to change it. it is perfectly fine to start with. stop confusing the system.	puts unnessasary stress on pupils. they should be able to enjoy childhood not spend it revising and stressing over exams.
Charlotte Boyd	Pupil	It has been around for a long time and many people	it is a confusing system and is new to everyone. It does not

			understand how this system works. It is more practical and easier than numbering papers	seem to be very practical.
	Pupil		I think that they should stay the same as everyone is used to this grading system and able to distinguish them a lot better than changing it to numbers. It would be very confusing to change it for it would take every one time to get used to it. I think it is also a lot more easier to understand and everyone is more aware of these grades.	I disagree as I think a lot of people would struggle to understand what these grades of 9 to 1. No one is familiar with these and it may take a longer period of time to get used to them. If they are just new they may confuse many new pupils who only have started there GCSE.
	Pupil		students are familiar with the current system, it is also unfair to the pupils who are achieving A-A* as they will feel more pressure to get higher than they are achieving. As with numbers there would be 3 numbers for A-A*	it is unfair to the pupils who are achieving A-A* as they will feel more pressure to get higher than they are achieving. As with numbers there would be 3 numbers for A-A*
Ellie West	Pupil			The adding of an extra number does not help the students around the D-C grade but it instead adds pressure to the students at the higher grade when it is difficult enough to obtain an A* already.
	Pupil		I think it would be a better idea to keep grading with letters as we are more familiar with the letters. The letters are easier to recognise and understand by pupils.	This would put more pressure on pupils to achieve higher marks. They aren't very easy to understand.
	Pupil		I think it would be very confusing to change the system!!!!	It will be too confusing!!!!!!
	Pupil		I think that is no problem with the way our grading system currently works. Everyone is aware of it and knows how it works so I don't see a need to change it.	I think that this system will confuse people as they would not be fully aware of how it works
	Pupil		Because if it ain't broke don't fix it! I don't understand that in this country, when a system works, it seems to be the only natural response to change it to something useless. Why?	What is the point? Give me a good reason for getting a new system. Won't it just cost money? I don't get it!
Keith Currie	Teacher		Consistency of approach across the majority of school pupils in these islands. Avoidance of confusion for employers and Higher Education providers.	Consistency of approach for the majority of school pupils in these islands. Avoidance of confusion for employers and Higher Education providers.
	Teacher		We will become isolated if CCEA do not follow what the other boards are doing.	Universities must be able to compare their applicants easily.
chloe hadden	Pupil		yes! I want them to STILL keep the grades as normal (A,B,C ETC.)	it is really confusing

			because i am used to the grades and have just got used to them. it will be confusing and now will have to count down example:9= a*	
	Pupil		We have used alphabetic grades for years. Everyone is used to them so why do we need to change them?	Number grades are harder to understand and why should we make understanding grades more difficult?
Patrick Hazelton	Pupil		I prefer these as I am used to them and they are more clear to me as to what i got. I dont necessarily want to change what im used to and think that the grading for A* to G should continue	It is more awkward as you need to get used to a different method of teaching and grades. It would be much easier if A* was 1 and G was 9 at the least
Lucy	Pupil		I disagree about having alphabetic grades because numbers are easier to understand.	I believe that we should use grades 1 to 9 because they are easier to read and to fully understand.
	Teacher		If english boards are changing then we should change also to allow parity between english and northern irish pupils when applying for university.	Again if university entrance becomes dependent on the 9-->l model then I wouldn't want our pupils to miss out because they are still being awarded grades A* - G.
Karen Quinn	Teacher			It is in the best interests of our pupils to have a common grading system with English examination boards as this gives us flexibility and comparative data.
	Other	Student Council	Student Council thought that everyone was used to having GCSEs graded by letters, it is easier to write this on CVs. There is no real benefit in having numbers rather than letters. Employers will not know what the grades mean.	See above.
Victoria College Belfast	Organisation		CCEA should absolutely adopt the same system as England.	To be in line with England and not to disadvantage NI pupils in any way.
	Teacher		System of grading is irrelevant to the quality of the qualification and rigor of assessment. Whatever system is in place must be understood by all and have parity across academic and vocational systems.	We should not change the system just because another jurisdiction has done so. What we must look at is whether re-branding will have any positive outcome for those taking the examination. How will a move from ABC to 123 do anything for the student? I do not think it will serve anyone but the Westminster Government and lead to confusion among the general public about the value of the examination their child is taking.
HC23	Organisation		Numbers do not correlate with letters Numbers at GCSE and letters at A level is confusing pupils may do a mix of exams from different exam boards and end up with a mixture of numbers and letters at GCSE	The A Grade is a broad band and could do with some further differentiation

			How could school results be compared with each other when two systems run side by side	
HC24	Organisation		Relevant stakeholders are familiar with these gradings which are used at A Level	Stakeholders will find these confusing. The GCSEs developed by CCEA already diverge from the qualifications in England; changing the grading system to keep in line with ENgland will not change that fact
Caoimhe Ni Chathail	Other	Fostaithe de chuid Fhoras na Gaeilge	S?lim go gcuirfeadh s? as do dhaoine agus nach dtuigfeadh daoine na gradanna. Chomh maith leis sin, n? bheadh s? soil?ir cad iad na himpleachta? a bheadh ann ? dheas maidir leis na hollscoileanna.	
GTCNI – HC25	Organisation		GTCNI considers that: NI needs to articulate confidence in its own educational policies NI should remain aloof from changes driven by political ideology Other devolved administrations have separate grading systems and are not disadvantaged by them No clear educational rationale has been articulated The current grading system has been in operation since 1988; it is clearly understood by learners, parents, employers and the wider community; it is replicated at A Levels; it is based on sound educational principles to enable learners to demonstrate achievement; it provides sufficient differentiation across the spectrum of achievement; it stretches sufficiently those at the highest end of the ability spectrum	GTCNI considers that The technical rationale offered (bunching in the middle) is to be expected as normal distribution; the grades proposed do not address the issue of bunching given that one of the additional grades proposed is for the top 20%; and the other may be temporary if the pass threshold from 5 to 4. A change to numerical grading may negatively impact on learner motivation and well-being; placing additional pressure on pupils to be seen to be achieving grade 9 as opposed to an 8 or 7 and providing less recognition for those achieving at the other end of the spectrum. To address bunching in the middle and to provide a similar range of alphabetic v numerical grades, consideration might be given to lowering the pass grade to D or introducing an additional C- grade/D+ Grade, which could motivate borderline learners.
INTO – HC26	Trade Union Reepresentative		It's not a case of agreeing or disagreeing it's a case of we have an outdated grading system by global standards that takes marks off for what pupils cannot do rather than crediting what they can. England moving to levels instead of grades means that if NI does not, pupils will have both levels and grades at GCSE outcomes. This will create confusion, it will create an elitist system whereby Grammar schools who largely opt for CCEA will be perceived as having a "better GCSE" simply due to perception and tradition (do not wish to go back to old O level and	Many non- selective schools opt for Eng. Board GCSEs. There will be an initial period of adjustment with a dual system of grades and levels, this will further compound confusion. Uniform system is better than an opposing one. Main concern is not with the level, it is the level descriptor and the proposed thresholds. What is the benefit of having such a vast difference between level 4-9? The current situation requires very high order thinking to hit the grade descriptors for a C in certain subjects such as English and this is becoming increasingly more complex year on year. It would therefore be imperative that further discussion on the creation of the level

			<p>CSE system). Also perception has always been that a D is not a GCSE when in fact it is all credit worthy *A –G, why would D-G be there otherwise. A concerted promotional campaign is needed to remind students and parents that all grades are valid. This has never been the case since the creation of GCSE-it would need to be the case if we were to change.</p>	<p>descriptors and boundaries takes place with those who deliver the courses, educationalists and trade unions. Regardless of whether it be an alphabetical or numerical value. Further work must be carried out to remind parents, employers etc that it is a General Certificate of Education and that is why the grades/levels range as such, so that it is generally accessible to all.</p>
	Organisation			
Dean Sloan	Teacher			
	Pupil			
Dr Robert Rolleston (on behalf of the School)	Organisation		<p>One benefit of continuing to use the alphabetic grades A*-G is that all key stakeholders (pupils, parents, schools and potential employers) understand the current system. In addition, there is a consistency with using alphabetic grades for all GCSE, AS and A2 qualifications.</p> <p>However, in the longer term there would be a need for CCEA to work closely with Ofqual in order to ensure that there isn't a greater divergence between the CCEA grading system and that of other Examination Authorities. For example, it is proposed that the bottom of the new grade 4 is anchored to the bottom of a grade C. However, if consideration is given to setting the minimum expected level of performance at age 16 at grade 5; then, retaining the current alphabetic system of grading for CCEA qualifications could lead to the perception that CCEA qualifications were inferior and/or potential employers may only consider A*-B grades as "pass" grades.</p>	<p>The use of grades 9 to 1 will reduce the opportunity for those at the lowest grades to demonstrate what they have achieved since there are fewer grades (3 to 1) below a grade 4 (or grade C) compared with 4 grades (D to G) as at present.</p> <p>The proposed change would lead to a mismatch between numeric grades at GCSE and alphabetic grades at AS/A2.</p>
Women's Forum – HC27	Organisation		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advantage in having the majority the same. 2. Equality of treatment at university entrance. Pupils here could take exams from exam boards in England without confusion over gradings. Concern over reduced opportunity for lower grades to demonstrate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To avoid confusion among employers, parents and students. 2. To avoid disadvantage for NI students at university entrance.

			achievement. This is not going to help with raising standards in schools and/or closing the performance gap, especially for protestant working class boys. The emphasis seems to be on higher ability pupils. Suggest a certificate, similar to the old CSE for others.	
Colleges NI – HC28	Organisation		If NI retains its current system, this will mean learners from NI will receive two different grading systems for GCSEs. On the other hand if NI moves towards 9 to 1 grading it will be in line with practice from countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland (that the UK wish to emulate) which might go towards improving the gaps internationally in UK PISA scores. However, it needs to be recognised that the new grading system has not been trialed in the UK and also there are questions around whether it adds more value to the current grading system. Overall the FE sector is broadly in agreement that NI, with its devolved powers over education, should retain its current grading system for GCSEs. The current system from A*-G is well known by learners, employers, parents and wider society. Raising aspirations and improving life chances is essential for building a society which values the contribution of learners. In making any changes it was reiterated that the national and international comparability of the qualifications is important, however, the need to promote the value of qualifications taken here, both GSCEs and A Levels and vocational (technical and professional) is paramount.	
NASUWT – HC29	Trade Union Reepresentative		NI has an established, respected qualification system that is understood by employers and the public. There is no evidence that there is a need to change or that the change would be worth the turbulence in the system that would inevitably result. The main spread of the new numeric grades is to distinguish grades at	

			<p>the highest level, with 7-9 covering grades A-A*. Ofqual is not allowing for more space for differentiation in the middle. It should be noted that the reasons for bunching in the middle include this as this is the expected level of achievement and the law of averages means that there will be a higher proportion awarded that grade because the accountability measures put so much pressure on the C/D borderline. This will not be altered simply by changing to a numeric grading system. The Union also notes that the consultation document acknowledges that there would be a 'reduced opportunity for those at the lowest grades to demonstrate what they have achieved'. This should be regarded as an important factor in making the decision. The lower attainers are losing out in favour of the high achievers because there would be the same numbers of new grades for A-A* equivalents as for D-G equivalents. There appears to be an assumption in the consultation document that the changed English qualifications will necessarily be an improvement on CCEA's offer. It is too early to draw this conclusion and there can be no evidence of this or that there will be a problem of comparison with 1-9. HE institutes deal with a much wider range of qualifications, as they accept international students and students that have O levels rather than GCSEs. In order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding for stakeholders, and also making accountability measures and school comparisons, at best complicated and at worst nonsensical, the NASUWT's preference is that state-funded schools should not be allowed to opt for the 1-9 GCSEs. DE may wish to note it has been disallowed in Wales.</p>	
UTU – HC30	Trade Union Organisation		<p>UTU feels very strongly that current alphabetic grades should be retained. The traditional A* to G grades are universally accepted across the secondary, Further and Higher education and employment sectors. Changes to the grade system would not</p>	<p>UTU strongly resists any steps taken towards any implementation of numeric grades for GCSE examinations produced by CCEA. UTU understands that a survey carried out by YouGov on behalf of Ofqual has revealed widespread confusion over the incoming grading system in England. 64%</p>

		<p>justify the confusion that would ensue should CCEA deviate from the current established grades. UTU agrees that stakeholders have come to understand the alphabetic grades which have continued to be in use for over 25 years in this country. There are no plans to amend the current A Level grades. This will only exacerbate further confusion among students, parents and the employment sector should numeric GCSE grades be introduced. There is no evidence to suggest that changing grades will raise standards. UTU believes that maintenance of standards ought to be the keynote in any revision of the GCSE examinations. The redesigning of grading bands to promote an 'open qualifications market' is missing the point and cannot be deemed to be anything other than pedantic and superfluous to need. In light of recent disrepute of the quality, standards and marking of English 'branded' GCSEs, UTU cannot help but query how any perceivable alignment with the English examination system could not be anything other than a major conflict of interest. Alphabetic grades will serve to distinguish the high quality of provision for teaching and learning, the standards of attainment and quality assurance of assessments in NI from that of England. This distinction is perhaps the most important "differentiation" of all to be made.</p>	<p>of students and 54% of parents stated that they do not understand the new grading proposals to be introduced. This situation would undoubtedly be replicated in NI. Moreover, credibility and confidence in the current GCSEs already provided by CCEA would come under threat. UTU concurs with the consultation in that the new numeric grading bands would inhibit lower attaining pupils to demonstrate the extent of their skills and understanding. The proposed grade thresholds focus on extending the middle to upper attainments which would be assessed by a range of four grades. This would be to the cost of the lower ability pupils who would be assessed using only three attainable grades. This is inconsistent with DE's policy on raising standards and targeting under-performance. The new numerical grades will invoke a reorganisation of grade weightings. The award of the top grade, "Grade 9" will be comparatively lower than those that obtained an A* in previous years. Ironically more children would stand to fail the GCSEs than has previously been the case as only 3 lower grades exist for Level 1 courses. UTU is surprised that CCEA appears to have overlooked the much simpler solution of simply re-allocating the thresholds of grade attainment, provided that it can make a justifiable case for the need to do so. This would avoid any re-labelling or differentiating grades. UTU believes that the over reliance on numeric indicators within GCSE examinations is exhaustive and wrongfully esoteric. There is much scope for confusion among parents and pupils, between levels of progression and GCSE numerical grades obtained. Levels attained at the end of Key Stage 3 will not be comparable with grades obtained at the end of Key Stage 4 and the grouping of courses into 'Level 1' and 'Level 2' would only culminate in muddying the waters further. UTU is both concerned and uncomfortable with a proposed grading scale without a roof limit. The awkward, inverted grading scale of 9to1 to replace the current A*to G grades provides further uncertainty that a scale of 1to9 would not. For instance the proposal already outlines the possibility of moving an acceptable pass grade from Grade 4 to 5 in the future. The consultation presents an unacceptable flexibility to its proposed grading system leaving stakeholders without</p>
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				<p>reassurance that future amendments to the grading system are unlikely; can we expect the emergence of Grade 10,11,12 in future years? There are currently no plans to amend the GCE A Level grade system which would further expand the scope for confusion among parents, pupils etc who have come to appreciate the traditional alphabetical grade. Two grading systems would therefore remain in NI anyway irrespective as to whether or not CCEA decided to introduce numeric grading at GCSE. UTU is concerned that greater differentiation within the mid-grade ranges will lead to the creation of school ratings, much like the situation caused by publication of end of key stage data. Exposing our teachers to the strain of having to perform to a league table is unacceptable and must not be allowed. Further strain of working relationships between CCEA and teaching professionals would be unprofitable. Scotland's education and assessment systems have differed from the rest of the UK for many years. There is no evidence to suggest that the different system in Scotland has prevented students from NI pursuing their chosen course of study in Scottish Universities. Neither is there a clear case that retention of an alphabetic grading system would prejudice our pupils' pursuit of study at a university in England. UTU is concerned that alignment with the GCSE grading system would also lead to further revision of the use of controlled assessments, the use of which has been discontinued in England. UTU views the consideration of such a proposal as irresponsible on various strata. The reinvention of the wheel, as the relabeling of numerical grades would require raising awareness among stakeholders and employers. The financial implications from this must not be overlooked nor can it be fully justified in light of the teaching staff reductions directed by the Department in a bid to reduce expenditure.</p>
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Respondents Name	Response Type	Question 4
David Cunningham	Teacher	It is about time teachers were allowed to continue to teach without the regular unnecessary changes that continue to happen.
	Parent	Get real this is rubbish
	Teacher	Waste of money that we don't have, simply to rebrand something that will still exist, regardless of what you call it. More Emperor's New Clothes... Just a way of justifying someone's role as a "Something Developer";
Peter Dennis	Teacher	Stay with grades
Nigel Pell-Ilderton	Teacher	While I agree with CCEA about having our own approach to examination through such areas as the use of modular courses I feel that portability of assessment grades is vital. To be portable our Young People need to have the same grading system as others in England and Wales. On a trivial point the move to alphabetic grades in the mid-1970s in England for O levels was from a numerical system; I don't believe the change was that burdensome?
	Teacher	The grading system is well established and representative.
	Teacher	This is an unnecessary change and will not lead to school improvement. It will however lead to putting more pressure and stress on young people.
Bernadette Devlin	Parent	This proposal is a didpicable attempt by CCEA to maks the fact that their qualifications will be of a lower academic standard than English GCSEs. The proposal should be thrown out. And A* grades should be abolished.
Maurice Fitzpatrick	Teacher	Current system is fully established and understood by all stakeholders especially pupils.
Margo Cosgrove	Other	I have major reservations in relation to the proposed changes (9-1) and note that it is the opposite to the old 'O Level' system and confuses with KS3 levels of progression.
	Teacher	Our grading system is well established and understood by teachers, pupils and paretns. Any changes could cause unnecessary confusion and stress
	Teacher	In the global education market British universities are highly regarded and the pupils of Northern Ireland schools must not be disadvantaged in any way by our own examination board in terms of access to these institutions.
Robyn Hampton	Teacher	Ofqual is setting the threshold for a Level 2 qualification at GCSE at the bottom of the new grade 4 (i.e. where it is currently, at the bottom of the Grade C). In the longer term, however, consideration may be given to setting the expected level for performance at age 16 at grade 5 in order to stretch the performance of learners. The same problem could arise with A* and the top scores of 9 and 8. An A* currently accounts for around the top 6% of all GCSE scores but the 9 will be awarded for the top 3% of GCSEs and an 8 for the next 3%. A pupil in NI would have no way of showing his/her A* to be equivalent to a 9 and in the competitive world of university applications that could place the NI pupil at a disadvantage.

		Overall, therefore, it seems prudent to move to the 9-1 scoring system for NI GCSEs so that we avoid confusion for parents, pupils and employers and also to guard against a potential de-valuing of the GCSE for NI pupils.
Jonathan Willis	Teacher	I believe this would be a positive step forward in the Education sector in Northern Ireland.
	Teacher	There is always a period of confusion when these, meaningless and irrelevant, changes occur. The same thing will happen the next time things change - probably back to grades. mark my words it will change again. The circle keeps going around.
	Teacher	Why change what we have when there is clearly nothing wrong with it?
Katie Quinn	Pupil	I feel like the grading system is effective as it stands and therefore to change it now seems pointless without a legitimate reason for the necessary change.
	Pupil	please focus on more pressing issues rather than this.
	Pupil	Keep letters don't fix what isn't broken!
	Pupil	Why are you go to the effort of this change this is a complete waste of time, money and energy. There are so many other issues you could be tackling instead.
Shannon Massey	Pupil	Keep letters as numbers would confuse pople and poeple who already have their GCSE's in letters might be affted
	Pupil	Do not change it. Will be costly and very stupid. But will not be surprised if this happens because the department of education likes to make life as difficult as possible for everyone.
	Pupil	I strongly believe that CCEA should continue to use alphabetic grades A* to G. It sounds better to say 'I got 3 A's, 4 B's and 3 C's'; rather than 'I got four 9's, an 8 and four 7's';
Deirdre	Teacher	I don't believe in making change for the sake of it. Pupils have enough to contend with doing GCSEs, without having to try to understand these proposed marks.
	Pupil	N/A
Timothy Hancock	Pupil	Although there are arguments in favour of both systems I think it would serve the best interests of all if the DoE focused on making the current system better rather than trying to implement a new system that would cause a bit of disturbance during implementation.
	Pupil	It's confusing and stupid
HC3 - Brenda Cunningham	Teacher	Why change what isn't broken? The current grading system works very well and is rigorous. In the subjects I teach: English Language, English Literature and Drama, it is very difficult to get an A* and only those who are exceptional will do so. This is ensured by CCEA's standards eg moderation / visiting moderators so that lenient marking is eradicated. An A* at A-Level is also extremely hard to achieve and again, will only be awarded to candidates performing at the highest level. If this numerical system was brought in at GCSE, does that mean GCE/A Level remains as an alphabetic grading system? If so, that is even more reason to keep GCSEs in the same system so as to ensure continuity.
HC4	Teacher	N/A
	Pupil	n/a

	Pupil	no, that is it thanks :)
HC12	Other	In order to complete this response form, the student council consulted their class mates to ask their opinions, overall pupils at the school community generally opposed to a reform on GCSE grading. It is important to note that the opinions outlined in this response form do not speak for the staff, parents and extended school community of Our Lady's Grammar school , Newry.
Michael Carville	Teacher	We must remain aligned with the English system if we are not to reduce life opportunities for our young people.
tonia	Parent	Why don't you leave things alone. What will be accomplished by changing it all over again.
Katie Megarry	Pupil	It is a massive, pointless waste of time and will confuse us (the pupils sitting the exam funny enough) who are the ones who need to understand how good or bad we have done in a subject.
shania mccann	Pupil	i think it should stay the way it has been for years so its easy to understand and parents also understand how well their children are doing.
	Pupil	I disagree strongly with this whole grade changing situation its irrelevant and a waste of peoples' time.
shania mccann	Pupil	I think it should stay the way it has been for years so its easy to understand and parents also understand how well their children are doing.
	Pupil	The NI education system is better than the english one so we shouldn't make it more like the English one.
Catherine	Pupil	It's unnecessary for this 'debate' to even take place. The education system has a lot of problems, but this isn't one.
Ruth	Pupil	Just keep it as the A* to G system. Numbers are more confusing and not something to aspire to.
	Pupil	Keep the normal letter grades.
	Pupil	Don't change it ok? Just don't.
HC13 - School Council	Pupil	Although it might be difficult at the beginning for pupils, parents, teachers and employers, we believe that it would be worth while to keep parity with England and change to the number system. This would ensure that our pupils are not disadvantaged and that the qualifications from CCEA are not devalued.
Alison Chestnutt	Teacher	<p>My view is that the move to a numbered grading system for GCSE grades in England will become quickly understood and adopted by employers, parents and educational institutions at UK wide level. In a very short time this will become the accepted norm and will be reflected in future job application criteria, higher education admission requirements and education system analysis. The read across from the present eight letter based A*-G scale to a numbered 1-9 scale cannot be exact and will cause confusion and potential disadvantage.</p> <p>Given that Northern Ireland is wisely keeping an open marketplace for qualifications, failure to change to a numbered system would mean that pupils here would potentially be presenting a CV of qualifications to future employers with a mix of numbered and letter based grades. The equivalence of particular number and letter grades will be an issue, as will the willingness of employers and higher education institutions to accommodate minority qualification grading systems in the selection of candidates. Few, if any, schools here use Welsh GCSEs.</p>

		While individual universities may recognise current Northern Ireland qualifications and grades on a case by case basis, there is no centralised standardisation process to ensure a consistent approach on future grading comparisons. This could potentially lead to disadvantage for our pupils in the future.
	Pupil	dont change the current system as it is a pointless move. in my opinion a lot of things that are changed and are educational based never works well e.g changing over from the 11+ to the GL assessment for primary 7. as much as i hugely disagree with a test that says wether or not you are good enough to go to a school or not, the old test was as fit for purpose as anything and un-nessecaryu pressure was applied to pupils and teachers trying to find ways to prepare for this new test. so changing grading systems is fit for purpose
Richard Chambers	Teacher	As mentioned we need to remain competitive on the English market for work and university places.
HC14	Pupil	Keep letters, everyone is used to it
HC15	Pupil	What about other examination boards who have...
HC17 - Class 11AE	Pupil	Everyone is happy and understands the current grading system and see no need for change. If the new numbered grading is introduced employers and students will have to learn a new system that is very confusing for no real reason.
HC18 - Class 12RT	Pupil	Keep it the way it is. Employers may not recognise the value of numbers.
HC19 - Mrs Laverne Inns	Teacher	I just forsee the child who gets different numeric grades saying this - I got 2 ones, 3 threes and 2 fours and 1 five - sounds a bit complicated
	Pupil	I think the current system is very affective and there is no need to change how exams are marked
	Pupil	None
	Teacher	NI grading system needs to be in line with England to ensure consistency for pupils when applying for further education and university courses. It ensures consistency for all stakeholders.
	Teacher	WHY NOT USE PERCENTAGES?
	Teacher	It seems like change for changes sake. Overall i think it is a waste of time and resources.
Martin Hodge - Voice	Trade Union Rep	It is important to consider all grades as "pass" grades to avoid repeating the issue with the alphabetical system. This could be done through identifying grades 1-3 as level 1 passes and grades 4-9 as level 2 passes, for example. As previously commented the grading system could be extended to avoid compressing the lower grades and further differentiating between candidates. Indeed as Bramley (The Case for Scale Scores, Cambridge. 2013) states "Using anything other than scaled scores is just throwing away information". Continued use of the alphabetical grading system as a reference point should be avoided as it merely prolongs the comparison of unlike with unlike.
	Teacher	Nature of assessment needs to be taken into consideration. Coursework orientated courses enables students to score higher with more teacher input whereas same students fall a grade in exam based subjects. This needs to be addressed as important subjects are diminishing as a result ie Business Studies.

Stranmillis University College	Organisation	No additional comments.
David McFarland	Organisation	Banbridge Academy welcomes this consultation by DE and strongly supports the move to a 9-1 grading system as we believe this is in the best interests of our young people in NI. While individual universities may recognise current Northern Ireland qualifications and grades on a case by case basis, there is no centralised standardisation process to ensure a consistent approach on future grading comparisons. This could potentially lead to disadvantage for our pupils in the future.
	Teacher	None
T. McCrum	Teacher	if high standards are to be maintained there must be consistency and uniformity of grading/markings system.
Sam Sinclair	Teacher	We will be sending many of our pupils to universities on the mainland. If we do not have a comparable grade system, it undermines confidence in the grades and puts our pupils at a disadvantage.
Pamela Yeh	Parent	See comments above. Invest in better resources, not change grades so it appears our children are achieving better.
N Maltman	Teacher	n/a
	Teacher	The grading of awards should be streamlined and consistent across all awards. At present candidates can achieve grades (letters), levels (numbers), classifications (pass/merit/distinction) so another variance will add to a confused picture. Also the creation of an additional number of awards, 9 in total, will be difficult to teach, mark and understand.
	Teacher	This whole process is a disgraceful waste.
ROSEMARY McLAUGHLIN	Teacher	NONE
	Teacher	We need to be careful in how the grades equate to the current grading system. In the English system no one is really clear what will be the current C. There is talk that a student achieving C now will either have a 4 or a 5, what we have to be careful of is that the C or number equivalent is not harder to attain than at present.
	Teacher	n/a
Mr J.S. Lavery	Teacher	The numerical system will only end up going the same way as long as examinations are not testing the pupils enough. Labels will be applied as before but only using "are you a 1 or a 6 or a 9" What do we say to pupils who are a nine? or even a Seven? It would be better to return to A-E for GCSE and to create a new VCSE A-E for vocational courses. Pupils can then follow their chosen subjects related to career choice and have the appropriate certificate to reflect their progress. Levels in English and maths should reflect the pathway chosen so that the VCSE in English and Maths is appropriate to the skills required to enable those pupils to achieve the grade they need for their chosen profession.
Matthew McConnell	Pupil	no
ria emerson	Pupil	dont change the sytem!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
	Pupil	it would be annoying and not very smart to change it

Michael Allen	Teacher	LoPs must be reconsidered to avoid the inevitable confusion for pupils and parents.
	Teacher	What is wrong with grades? There should be more alternatives for weaker students to gain a C instead of feeling like failures because they cannot achieve. Alternatively, more able students need to feel a sense of achievement. This has to do with the subject range, from academic to vocational, and not the grading system. Nothing wrong with the grading system. Instead, change the range of subjects offered and the greater possibility of weaker students gaining.
Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Northern Ireland	Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any changes that are made to the current GCSE system must be clearly communicated by the Department of Education to all small businesses in Northern Ireland, so they know what these changes will mean to them, particularly in future recruitment exercises, to ensure they obtain the correct candidates with the correct skills. This applies not only to changes made within our local education system, but also those that are being implemented in other parts of the UK, to facilitate those seeking employment that have studied elsewhere in the UK. This should include outlining the differences of GCSE grading in the rest of the UK. We notes that Wales has decided against adopting the numerical grade system that is being implemented in England, in favour of retaining their current alphabetical grade system; while Scotland's secondary education and qualification system retains its own unique format. The current alphabetical grades used in marking GCSEs is consistent with the alphabetical grades that are used in the grading of A-Levels, providing both consistency and clarity. FSB Northern Ireland believes that a review of GCSEs should not be focused on grades alone but in equipping students with wider skills, such as communication, problem solving and a good attitude to work. In 2013, FSB conducted research which revealed that half of small businesses surveyed feel that young people lack the essential skills for employment. To ensure increased investment and economic recovery, it is fundamental that this element of GCSE education be redressed. There continues to be a low level of numeracy and literacy skills amongst local young people aged 16 to 24. In 2013, Northern Ireland was highlighted by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) as falling significantly below average and coming 19th out of 24 in both numeracy and literacy. Nationally, the FSB is calling for a pass/fail graded exam for these two areas in order give employers a clearer understanding of a candidate's ability.
	Teacher	The perceived integrity of NI qualifications throughout the UK could be debilitated by inconsistency.
	Pupil	Make GCSE's easier! There is too much stress on pupils these days! These children aren't having fun with their young lives due to extreme pressure!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
	Pupil	yolo ! you only live once ! you only love oreos ! young ogres lick onions !
	Pupil	dont change them
Charlotte Boyd	Pupil	Dont change the system

	Pupil	This questionnaire has a very good layout, good job!!:)
	Pupil	DON'T DO IT !!!
chloe hadden	Pupil	please DO NOT CHANGE IT !
	Pupil	Alphabetic grades should not be changed to numbers as we don't need or have to change the grading system and the number grades are harder to understand. It is also nice for Northern Ireland to be unique in their grading system if the rest of the UK choose to change to their alphabetic grades to grades 9 to 1.
Patrick Hazelton	Pupil	I do not think that the grading should change as it is harder to get used to and difficult to understand
	Teacher	CCEANI must only make changes to examine systems that have direct and measurable benefits to all students in Northern Ireland and to the maintain/raise standards here. Any changes must be made for those who will face them and MUST NOT be as a reaction to changes elsewhere. It is time for Northern Ireland to have a model of education that matches the needs here. Scottish education has stood apart from England with no detrimental effect. It is time for the same to happen here. Changes to raise standards yes. Changes to follow others no.
	Organisation	This should have been circulated more widely to all teachers in the UK
GTCNI	Organisation	The review of GCSEs and A levels should maintain and strengthen the distinctiveness of NI qualifications and grading by: Articulating a robust education philosophy for whatever grading system is proposed; acknowledging margins of error in relation to all grades awarded (using a box plot) (see N.W. (1971) paper (Estimation of the proportion of examination candidates who are wrongly graded - British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology); and introducing a separately assessed and graded 'Common Curriculum Elements' assessment at Years 7,10,12 and 14 similar to that used in Queensland at Year 12 http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/27797.html .
INTO	Trade Union Rep	INTO is of the view that any proposed change will have to be managed very carefully with particular care taken to ensure that all parties [students, parents, teachers, further and higher education institutions and employers] have a clear understanding of what pupil outcomes actually mean at what is currently described as GCSE level. In addition whatever methodology is to be employed to record pupil success is portable across all jurisdictions in these islands. Failure to ensure portability will seriously disadvantage our young people. The knock on effect of changing the labelling and grading systems needs to also be considered in terms of the effects it will have on the vocational qualifications. Any change cannot be permitted to undermine the value vocational qualifications currently enjoy. Finally INTO is very concerned that whatever methodology is to be employed it should not be another stick to be used for applying further and increased pressure on schools. This pressure has serious negative consequences both in terms of teacher well-being and a tool for comparisons of a superficial level being drawn between schools.
Dean Sloan	Teacher	N? raibh m? ?balta m'ainm Gaelach a ?d?id leis an fhoirm seo a chomhl?n? - leagan Gaeilge den fhoirm agus gan glacadh le hainmneacha Gaelacha!
Dr Robert Rolleston (on behalf of the School)	Organisation	None

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

The following organisations/groups responded to the public consultation. The category they indicated as best describing them as respondents is shown in brackets.

Atlas Women's Centre (Organisation)

Banbridge Academy (Organisation)

Colleges NI (Organisation)

Dalriada School – Assessment Working Party (Organisation)

Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) (Organisation)

Foras na Gaeilge (Other)

Gaelscoil an Chaistil (Organisation)

General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland (GTCNI) (Organisation)

Glastry College Student Council (Other)

Grosvenor Grammar (Organisation)

INTO – (Trade Union Representative)

Limavady Student Council (Other)

Lurgan College – (Organisation)

Methodist College (Organisation)

NASUWT (Trade Union Representative)

NUS-USI (Organisation)

Our Lady's Grammar Student Council (Other)

Queens University Belfast (Other)

Stranmillis College (Organisation)

Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) (Trade Union Representative)

Victoria College (Organisation)

Voice (Trade Union Representative)

The Women's Forum (Organisation)