

Changes to A levels

The new A level route will test a broader range of understanding and encourage more independent working, helping students to develop the skills that employers are looking for.

What are the new A levels?

The new revised A levels, introduced in September 2008, include changes to content and grades designed to test young people on a wide range of skills with more focus on thinking and problem-solving. The changes also include a new Extended Project qualification, enabling young people to work independently to produce a substantial piece of work under their own steam.

The new A levels are taken in two parts: AS and A2. After completing an AS qualification, the second half, the A2, includes more challenge to improve students' motivation to help prepare them for employment or university.

The new A level exams will include:

- extended writing with marks given for written communications
- a greater variety of questions to cover a wider range of skills
- questions to test students' ability to make links between different areas of the subject.



The first students taking the new A level will receive their results in summer 2010. Also, a new A* grade will be awarded to students from summer 2010 to recognise exceptional performance. The A* grade will only be achieved by students who get more than the equivalent of 90 per cent of the available marks across their A2 units.

Extended Project

A new qualification called the Extended Project was introduced from September 2008. This requires students to produce a single piece of work of their own choosing, showing evidence of planning, research and independent working. The Extended Project can be taken by students alongside A levels, or as part of the Advanced Diploma. These new qualifications will develop and test skills needed in employment, such as analysis, decision-making and presentation. It is the same standard as an A level, equivalent in size to half an A level.

Benefits for young people

The new A levels have been developed to ensure that young people have the skills, knowledge, attitudes and understanding that employers want. Young people will also benefit because employers and universities will have more confidence in the new A levels.

Benefits for employers

The new A level qualifications have been developed in consultation with employers to help young people gain a range of skills and attributes to help them succeed in employment and adult life. The new strengthened A levels will be a better and more reliable measure of young people's capabilities and talents as they enter the jobs market.

Where can I find out more?

More information on revised A levels can be found at www.qca.org.uk/14-19

