

For:

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Qualifications
and Curriculum
Development
Agency

2010 GCSEs

Changes to GCSEs in 2010

English, English language,
English literature, ICT and
mathematics

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Introduction



GCSEs continue to be the most widely taken qualification in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Most GCSEs are taken at key stage 4. Some GCSEs, particularly in English and mathematics, are taken in large numbers by post-16 and adult learners. GCSE specifications in English subjects, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) have been revised for first teaching in September 2010.

Why are the changes happening?

GCSEs are being redeveloped as part of the government's reform of learning for 14- to 19-year-olds. They will be part of a wider range of learning options that also includes the new Diplomas. GCSEs in core subjects have been reviewed to align with the government's skills agenda and to incorporate functional skills requirements.

The new GCSEs will provide a smooth transition from key stage 3, helping to achieve the aims of the new secondary curriculum and complement other learning options for 14- to 19-year-olds. The new GCSEs will equip students to move onto different qualifications and encourage progression to higher levels of learning.

What are the main changes?

Identification of learning outcomes

Students and teachers will be clear about what students need to do to achieve a qualification. Students will be more actively engaged in the learning process.

Content

The new GCSEs have updated content to reflect changes to the key stage 4 programmes of study and cultural, economic, environmental, technological and social changes since GCSEs were last revised in 2000. GCSEs in English, English language, ICT and mathematics include teaching, learning and assessment of the functional elements of the subjects.

Structure

Awarding bodies have taken the opportunity to develop unitised specifications. This means that students can take assessments during the course or at the end. New specifications have a maximum of four units. Linear specifications in mathematics are available from a number of awarding bodies.

Assessment

Changes to assessment may include a change to the weightings of external and internal assessment, for example in English the weighting for internal assessment increases to 60 per cent.

Stretch and challenge

The new GCSEs provide more opportunities to stretch and challenge all students. Students need to answer a range of question types including questions requiring extended writing. They are also assessed on their quality of written communication.

Controlled assessment

Controlled assessment is a new form of internal assessment that is replacing coursework. It's intended to encourage a more integrated approach to teaching, learning and assessment. It also allows teachers to confirm that students have carried out their own work.

Controlled assessment engages students in their learning and gives them the freedom to conduct their own research, for example using the internet. It also provides a clear and secure system for teachers to assess work.

Contribution of controlled assessment to a student's overall result:

	Controlled assessment	External assessment
English	60%	40%
English language	60%	40%
English literature	25%	75%
ICT	60%	40%
Mathematics	0%	100%

Functional skills

Functional skills are central to the government's reform of 14–19 and adult education. They are fundamental skills in English, mathematics and ICT that provide students with essential knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life, education and work.

The new GCSEs in English, English language, ICT and mathematics include the teaching, learning and assessment of functional elements. Students will not have to pass a separate functional skills qualification to pass the GCSE. However, the competence-based functional skills qualifications allow students to demonstrate they are functional in these subjects. We therefore recommend that all students take these qualifications as well as GCSEs.

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GCSEs in English subjects

From September 2010 students will either take a single GCSE in English (containing language and literature requirements) or two GCSEs – one GCSE in English language and one GCSE in English literature. Both options encourage students to use English in real life contexts and to use their language skills more creatively. They both also ensure full coverage of the revised English programme of study for key stage 4. For the purposes of the five GCSEs at grades A*–C measure, an A*–C grade in English will count if the student has taken the single GCSE. For students taking both English language and English literature, an A*–C grade in English language will count.

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English

The single GCSE in English releases time in the curriculum for students to choose other subjects to suit their individual aptitudes. The new GCSE in English retains the current weightings of 20 per cent speaking and listening, 40 per cent reading and 40 per cent writing.

The GCSE in English course is split into two strands of study:

- 1. English in the daily world (55 per cent)** – this section will cover the functional elements
- 2. English in the world of the imagination (45 per cent)**

Both strands will cover speaking, listening, reading and writing, but will treat them in different ways. For instance, speaking and listening may be taught and assessed through individual and group activities in the first strand, and through drama and role play in the second.

GCSEs in English may share units with GCSEs in English language, meaning that students can choose which option to take at a later stage and teachers can co-teach different groups.

English language and English literature

Taking two GCSEs in English subjects enables students to expand on their English learning. This option allows students to explore language and literature in-depth alongside the required programme of study.

All students taking the 'two GCSE' option must be entered for both English language and English literature, and will therefore receive two separate grades.

English language

The new GCSE in English language course is split into two strands:

1. Studying language (55 per cent)

- Reading, understanding and evaluating written language
- Reflecting on spoken language.

2. Using language (45 per cent)

- Writing in a wide range of forms for different purposes and audiences
- Speaking and listening in different contexts.

English literature

Like the other GCSEs in English subjects, the new GCSE in English literature is split into two strands:

1. Literary heritage

- Texts from different cultures and traditions
- Contemporary texts.

2. Individual texts in context

- Comparative study
- Texts linked, for example by author, theme or genre.



More information

Further details about these qualifications can be found in the subject criteria on Ofqual's website at www.ofqual.gov.uk and in the specifications published by each awarding body.

GCSEs in mathematics

There are two options for some students from September 2010 – a single GCSE in mathematics or a ‘linked pair’ of GCSEs in mathematics. The new linked pair of GCSEs will be pilot qualifications and therefore only available to some students.

The revised key stage 4 programme of study for mathematics places increased emphasis on problem solving, functionality and mathematical thinking. The new GCSEs reflect these changes and enable new elements in the programme of study to be assessed.

The single GCSE in mathematics covers the full key stage 4 programme of study, and is available in foundation and higher tiers. The programme of study is divided between both qualifications in the linked pair pilot.

Piloting the linked pair

The linked pair is being piloted from September 2010. These two GCSEs cover the same requirements as the single qualification and there is additional content in each qualification.

The linked pair is split into:

- 1. GCSE in applications in mathematics** – using mathematical skills in real world situations
- 2. GCSE in methods in mathematics** – mathematical reasoning and analysis on a more conceptual level.

The aim of the linked pair is to:

- provide a richer, deeper and more holistic experience of mathematics
- spark a greater understanding and interest in mathematics, which will lead more students to study it post-16.

Students taking the pilot will come from a range of centre types and will include post-16 students and those on Diploma programmes.

All students taking the linked pair option must be entered for both GCSEs and will therefore receive two separate grades. During the pilot, an A*–C grade in either of the pair will count as one of the five GCSEs at A*–C.



More information

Further details about these qualifications can be found in the subject criteria on Ofqual's website at www.ofqual.gov.uk and in the specifications published by each awarding body.

GCSEs in ICT

Students taking a GCSE in ICT from September 2010 will benefit from a qualification that reflects new technology and cultural changes, broadens their understanding of the subject and prepares them for further study.

The new GCSE in ICT is suitable for students of a wide range of interests, while providing a valued route to A levels and Diplomas in many subjects.

The GCSE in ICT has been updated to match the revised key stage 4 programme of study. This qualification aims to engage and inspire young people through a broad, relevant and challenging course of study. It will help students gain an insight into how information technology is used in the real world and make informed decisions about future learning and careers.

The GCSE in ICT is based on 60 per cent controlled assessment and 40 per cent external assessment. Controlled assessment focuses on the following areas of skills and subject content:

- manipulating and processing data, developing information, modelling situations and exploring ideas
- adopting safe, secure and responsible practice
- continuously reviewing, modifying and evaluating the effectiveness of their own and others' use of ICT.



More information

Further details about these qualifications can be found in the subject criteria on Ofqual's website at www.ofqual.gov.uk and in the specifications published by each awarding body.

Further information and guidance

This leaflet complements the *Changes to GCSEs, including controlled assessment: Information for teachers* leaflet published in 2009 (QCA/09/4174).

For more information on GCSEs and functional skills, please visit the QCDA website at www.qcda.gov.uk.

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Useful websites

National Database of Accredited Qualifications

www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk

Ofqual

www.ofqual.gov.uk

14–19 reforms

www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19

GCSE awarding bodies

www.aqa.org.uk

www.edexcel.com

www.ocr.org.uk

www.wjec.co.uk

www.ccea.org.uk/spec-changes

www.icaa.com/exams



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About this publication

What is it about?

This leaflet is a brief introduction to changes to GCSE specifications in English, English language, English literature, ICT and mathematics from September 2010.

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