

## Changes to GCSEs from September 2015

### From September 2015, students in Year 10 will begin to take new reformed GCSEs.

The first new GCSEs to be taught from September 2015 will be in English language, English literature and maths. New GCSEs in other subjects will follow in September 2016 and 2017. The first assessment of the new GCSE courses that start in September 2015 will be in June 2017.

### What are the key features of the new GCSEs?

The Department for Education (DfE) has made a number of changes to the characteristics of the new GCSEs.

#### Key features include:

- A new grading scale that uses the numbers 1 - 9 to replace the A\* - G scale for identifying levels of performance
- 'Untiered' test papers in most subjects, where students will sit the same test papers at the same level regardless of ability. Some subjects, such as maths, will be tiered where untiered papers do not allow lower ability students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills or do not stretch the most able
- Students will be assessed at the end of the course and subject content will not be divided into modules
- Assessment will be made by external exam, except where non-exam assessment is the only way to assess certain skills
- Students will only sit exams in the summer.

### How is the new grading scale different?

The new GCSEs will be graded using the numbers 1 - 9, with 9 being the highest and 1 the lowest.

Where performance is below the minimum required to pass a GCSE, students will receive a U.

The new grading scale will be used for the first time at the end of the new GCSE courses in English language, English literature and Maths in 2017.

The chart compares the new GCSE grading structure to the one currently used for the old 'legacy' GCSEs. For example, a C sits between a 4 and 5 in the new grading structure:

NEW GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE	CURRENT GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE
9	
8	A*
7	A
6	
5	B
4	C
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

**GOOD PASS (DfE)**  
5 and above = top of C and above

**AWARDING**  
4 and above = bottom of C and above

## FAQs

**My child is in year 10. How will he be assessed in his GCSE subjects?**

In English language, English literature and maths, your child will be graded using the new 1 - 9 grading structure in 2017.

In subjects other than English language, English literature and maths, your child will be graded using the A\* - G grading structure in 2017.

**My child is in year 11. How will he be assessed in her GCSE subjects?**

Your child will have started the GCSEs in September 2014 and therefore will be sitting the old 'legacy' GCSEs. He will be graded using the A\* - G grading structure in 2016.

**Are the new GCSEs going to be more challenging?**

Yes, the government explained that one of the main reasons why GCSEs are being reformed is to make them more challenging.

For example, the new English language GCSE will require better reading skills and good written English.

**When will all of the new GCSEs be introduced?**

The last batch of new GCSEs will be introduced in September 2017.

Therefore if your child is in year 7 or year 8 in September 2015, he will sit all new GCSEs.

## Changes at St Columba's

In light of these developments, we have changed how we assess our students. Each term students will be set an assessment in each of their subjects.

Their assessments will be graded 1-9. There are exceptions to this:

- Year 11 will continue to be assessed using the A\*-G grading system as this will be in line with the GCSE examinations that they will sit in the summer.

- Year 10 will be assessed using 1-9 grades in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics. The other subjects will continue to be graded A\*-G

The 1-9 grades students achieve in their assessment will indicate that they are on track for those grades in their GCSEs. Therefore if a student at Key Stage 3 achieves a 5, he is on track for a GCSE grade 5. Please note that a Year 9 grade 5 would represent a more challenging standard than a Year 8 grade 5, which would be more challenging than a Year 7 grade 5.