



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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QUALIFIED FOR LIFE

How qualifications in Wales
are changing

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Qualifications and the curriculum in Wales are changing. From September 2015, English Language, Welsh Language, Mathematics – Numeracy and Mathematics GCSEs will assess learners on the same types of skills that the international PISA assessments test. Our new 2015 qualifications are being designed to emphasise the mastery of processes, the understanding of concepts and the ability to function in various types of situations.

This follows on from the introduction of the statutory National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) in 2013 which focuses on literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Changes are also being made to the Areas of Learning (AoLs) for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development and programmes of study (PoS) for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics so that they align with the LNF. These revised AoLs and PoS will be statutory from September 2015.

In a nutshell, our curriculum, GCSEs and the refreshed Welsh Baccalaureate, in line with PISA, will teach and test the skills that are regarded internationally, as fundamental to success in further study and employment. We want our learners to be confident in applying the knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-life problems and be able to apply what they have learned in unfamiliar settings, both in and outside of school.

Your role in making sure that learners in Wales are ready for these new qualifications is vital and we want to make sure that you are fully prepared to take on these new challenges. This leaflet is an easy guide to understand how the new English Language, Welsh Language, Mathematics – Numeracy and Mathematics GCSEs differ from the current qualifications and outlines the support that you can expect from the Welsh Government, WJEC and consortia as we move to our new qualifications system in Wales and introduce a new curriculum into schools in Wales.

Your support with these changes is vital and we welcome your feedback.



What will change in September 2015?

1. GCSEs

GCSEs will remain as the main Level 1 and Level 2 general qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales.

New GCSEs in English Language and Welsh Language are being developed for teaching from September 2015. These new GCSEs will provide a greater focus on literacy and on the functional aspects of language. Both GCSEs will have oracy, reading and writing skills contributing towards the final grade.

Revised GCSEs in English Literature and Welsh Literature are also being introduced.

There will also be **two new mathematics GCSEs** for teaching from September 2015: one will focus on numeracy and the mathematics needed for everyday life, and the other will extend to other aspects of mathematics including those needed for progression to scientific, technical or further mathematical study. The total content of the two new GCSEs will remain similar to current GCSE Mathematics but the assessment will place a greater emphasis on problem solving. It is expected that most young people in Wales will take both mathematics GCSEs.

Qualification and subject principles for the new GCSEs can be found on the new Qualifications Wales website: www.qualificationswales.org

The Welsh Government has no plans to change the grading scale for GCSEs.

2. Welsh Baccalaureate

The Welsh Baccalaureate is being revised and made more rigorous. Grading has already been introduced for the Advanced level Welsh Baccalaureate and the revised Welsh Baccalaureate will be graded at all levels. It will focus on developing the skills young people need for work and higher education and will involve clear, purposeful assessment through the new GCSEs in English Language/Welsh Language and Mathematics – Numeracy, an individual project and three challenges. The revised Welsh Baccalaureate will be taught for the first time from September 2015.

3. A levels

A levels remain as the main Level 3 general qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds in Wales.

New AS and A levels will be taught from September 2015 in a number of subjects and unless there is good reason to do otherwise the content of A levels in Wales will remain similar to that for A levels in England. Wales is maintaining the AS/A2 structure as coupled qualifications with the weighting of the AS as part of the full A level award being reduced to 40 per cent. The number of resit opportunities will be reduced to one per module.

The Welsh Government has no plans to change the grading scale for A levels.

4. Areas of Learning (AoL) and programmes of study (PoS)

The AoLs for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development and PoS for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics are being revised so that they align more clearly with the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF). The new AoLs and PoS will reflect the raised expectations in relation to standards in literacy and numeracy which have been set by the LNF. The new AoLs and PoS will also be presented as yearly expectation statements to allow greater clarity and precision in the teaching of English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics.



Timeline

Specification, training and resources timeline for the new GCSEs and curriculum.

Period	Activity
January – June 2014	GCSE specification and programme of study (PoS) consultation and development.
March – June 2014	Consultation on revised AoLs for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development and PoS for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics.
Autumn 2014	New specifications and specimen assessment materials (SAMs) in centres and non-statutory introduction of revised programmes of study for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics.
Late autumn 2014 onwards	CPD to support staff implement new GCSEs, AoLs for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development and PoS for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics.
December 2014	Professor Donaldson reports on independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements.
Spring 2015	New bilingual resources available to support teaching of new GCSEs, AoLs for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development and PoS for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics.
September 2015	Teaching of new GCSE qualifications and statutory introduction of new PoS for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics.



GCSE English Language and GCSE Welsh Language – what are the main changes?

STRUCTURES

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Current GCSE English Language and GCSE Welsh Language	GCSE English Language and GCSE Welsh Language 2015
Two-tiered examination papers (Foundation and Higher).	Untiered examination papers.
Modular assessment.	Linear assessment.
Controlled assessments in oracy, reading and writing.	No reading and writing controlled assessments – only oracy.
Two written tasks (reading and writing) in English.	English 20% controlled assessment (oracy only).
Three written tasks (reading and writing) in Welsh.	Welsh 30% controlled assessment (oracy only).
English 40% controlled assessment 60% external assessment	English 20% controlled assessment 80% external assessment
Welsh 60% controlled assessment 40% external assessment	Welsh 30% controlled assessment 70% external assessment
English Two examination papers (reading and writing).	English Two external examination papers (reading and writing).
Welsh One examination paper (reading and writing).	Welsh Two external examination papers (reading and writing).
One overall grade published to candidates.	One overall grade but also separate reporting for oracy, reading and writing for candidates and employers on final certificate.

Current GCSE English Language and GCSE Welsh Language**GCSE English Language and GCSE Welsh Language 2015**

Marked differences between GCSE English Language/Welsh Language.

Near parity between the two language GCSEs.

Emphasis on assessing understanding of stylistic features of prose and non-prose texts.

More emphasis on assessing candidates' paraphrasing, interpretations, synthesis and analytical skills.

Extended written responses, in full sentences and paragraphs, required for nearly all questions assessing reading.

Multiple choice, cloze, sequencing and short answer elements alongside extended written responses.

Emphasis on incorporating apt quotations to evidence interpretations and opinions on style, structure and content of non-fiction texts.

More emphasis on cross-curricular skills – such as understanding and using information, inference and deduction: evaluating arguments through close reading of texts.

Writing tasks not always linked to reading material.

All writing tasks will be linked to reading material.

Welsh Language GCSE has a short question on identifying and correcting errors.

New proofreading and editing section in both GCSE English Language and GCSE Welsh Language with emphasis on writing accurately in terms of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Use of terminology – 'prose and non-fiction' extracts.

Terminology changes in line with PISA definitions. 'Continuous texts' (texts organised in sentences and paragraphs and includes descriptions, narrations and argumentations) and 'non-continuous texts' (lists, maps, graphs and diagrams commonly seen in geography/science texts) is used.

English – one extended text on Unit 1, two texts on Unit 2.

A range of continuous and non-continuous texts of varying length on both examination papers.

Welsh – two texts on examination paper.

GCSE Mathematics – what are the main changes?

Current GCSE Mathematics	New GCSE Mathematics–Numeracy	New GCSE Mathematics
Linear and modular specifications.	Linear specification.	Linear specification.
Foundation and Higher tiers.	Foundation, Intermediate and Higher tiers.	Foundation, Intermediate and Higher tiers.
C grade available on the Foundation tier.	C grade available on the Foundation tier in exceptional cases .	C grade available on the Foundation tier in exceptional cases .
Examination series available in November and June.	Examination series available in November and June.	Examination series available in November and June.
All grades available A*–G.	All grades available A*–G.	All grades available A*–G.
Nearly all learners are expected to be entered for the qualification.	Nearly all learners are expected to be entered for this qualification.	Most learners are expected to be entered for this qualification.
Assessment over two papers: one calculator and one non-calculator.	Assessment over two papers: one calculator and one non-calculator.	Assessment over two papers: one calculator and one non-calculator.
Assessment of the entire mathematics PoS.	Focus on the mathematics that learners will need in their everyday lives, in the world of work, and in other general curriculum areas.	Will extend to aspects of mathematics needed for progression to scientific, technical or further mathematical study.
Some questions are given in context.	A greater emphasis on questions in context.	Some questions are given in a context. Other questions will be within purely mathematical contexts.
No controlled assessments.	No controlled assessments.	No controlled assessments.