



GCSE, AS and A level reform

Janet Holloway

Associate Director Standards for Design, Development and Evaluation of General Qualifications

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Reforms to GCSE, AS and A level



Responsibilities for changes:

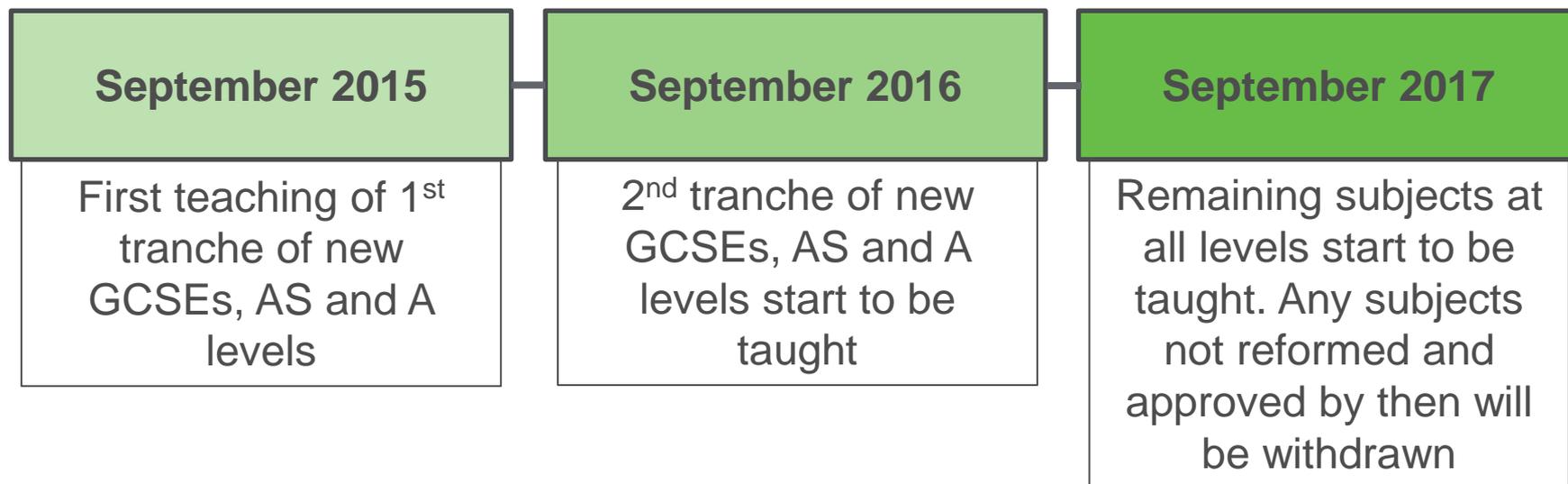
- Content (mostly decided by Government and/or universities)

- Structure and assessment (decided by Ofqual)
 - set criteria for design of qualifications (eg how they are structured, how they are assessed)
 - accredit new GCSEs and A levels against these criteria
 - set and secure standards



Reforms to GCSE, AS and A level

Timetable



Accredited qualifications are being listed on our website:

[www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/
qualification-reform/accredited-reformed-qualifications/](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-reform/accredited-reformed-qualifications/)



September 2015

GCSEs

Maths
English language
English literature

A levels and AS

English language
English literature
English language and literature
Biology
Chemistry
Physics
Psychology
Computer science
Business
History
Art and design
Economics
Sociology



September 2016

GCSEs

Geography
History
Biology
Chemistry
Physics
Double science
Ancient languages
Modern foreign languages
Music
Art and design
Physical education
Computer science
Religious studies
Design and technology
Citizenship studies
Cooking and nutrition
Dance
Drama

A levels and AS

Maths
Further maths
Geography
Modern foreign languages
Ancient languages
Religious studies
Drama and theatre
Dance
Music
Physical education



September 2017

GCSEs

A levels and AS

We have consulted on and are considering how content for any remaining subjects should be developed and on the expectations for subjects to continue as GCSEs or A levels



Consulting on completing reform

- We consulted on what needs to happen to complete reform:
 - Options for regulating reform of those subjects not addressed for first teaching in 2015 or 2016
 - We need to bring these subjects in line with the changes already being made to the other subjects just listed

- There shouldn't be any significant overlap between subjects
- Individual subjects should also be similar in overall demand
- Reformed GCSE, AS and/or A level qualifications should not run alongside unreformed versions for any longer than necessary
 - We can require a subject to be discontinued, or an exam board may choose to withdraw it (and not develop a 'new/reformed' version)

- First decisions on completing reform to be announced soon



Ofqual's reform decisions



- We are driving improvements to assessments and increasing inter-board comparability so that we can better meet the described purposes of GCSEs and A levels
- We are doing this by:
 - **Requiring core content**
 - each exam board specification should cover the same core of content
 - tackles potential to compete over content, but should still allow innovation
 - **Tightening assessment objectives**
 - assessment objectives are being more carefully and precisely expressed and proportioned
 - reduce the potential for objectives to be ‘variably interpreted’

Continues...



Ofqual's reform decisions



...Continued

■ Agreeing industry standards

- a common approach to working towards quality qualifications
- Help to develop agreed aspects of good assessment and avoid adverse impact of competition

■ Requiring assessment strategies

- exam boards have to produce strategies explaining how they will develop good assessments
- used in accreditation process, to ensure strategy is being followed in the development of assessment materials



Accreditation



- **Qualifications are being approved – aka accredited – by Ofqual**
 - Exam boards submit their specifications and we check they meet the set criteria

- There is no absolute timetable – we will only approve the qualifications when they meet our conditions

- Find out which qualifications have been accredited so far here:
www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-reform/accredited-reformed-qualifications/



What do reformed A levels look like?

- Research showed us that A levels are broadly fit for purpose, but that there are areas for improvement
 - Unlike with GCSE, wholesale change not needed

- **Structure** – all exams in the summer at the end of the course

- **Assessment** – exam where possible, other forms of assessment only where necessary to assess essential subjects skills

- **Grading** – staying the same as now, A*- E (& U)

- **Demand** – same level of challenge as current A levels



What do reformed AS qualifications look like?

- **New AS qualifications will be introduced at the same time as each reformed A level is introduced**
- **Standalone** – new AS will not count towards an A level grade
- **Assessment** – by exam only at the end of the course, using other forms of assessment only where necessary to assess essential subjects skills
- **Co-teachable** – exam boards can design the standalone AS to be taught alongside first year of A level where possible
- **Grading** – staying the same as now, A - E (& U)
- **Demand** – new AS will have same level of challenge as current AS



What do the changes look like for reformed A levels in 2015? (with first A level exams in 2017)

- **No significant changes to subject content**
- **English language, English literature, English language and literature** – exams count towards 80% of overall grade, 20% non-exam assessment
- **Biology, chemistry, physics** – exam only. Students must complete a separately reported assessment of their practical skills
- **Psychology** – exam only
- **Computer science** (formerly computing) – 80% exams, 20% non-exam assessment

Continues...



What do the changes look like for reformed A levels in 2015? (with first A level exams in 2017)

...Continued

- **Business** – exam only
- **History** – 80% exams, 20% non-exam assessment
- **Art and design** – 100% non-exam assessment (40% allocated to tasks set by exam boards and completed in a specific time)
- **Economics** – exam only
- **Sociology** – exam only

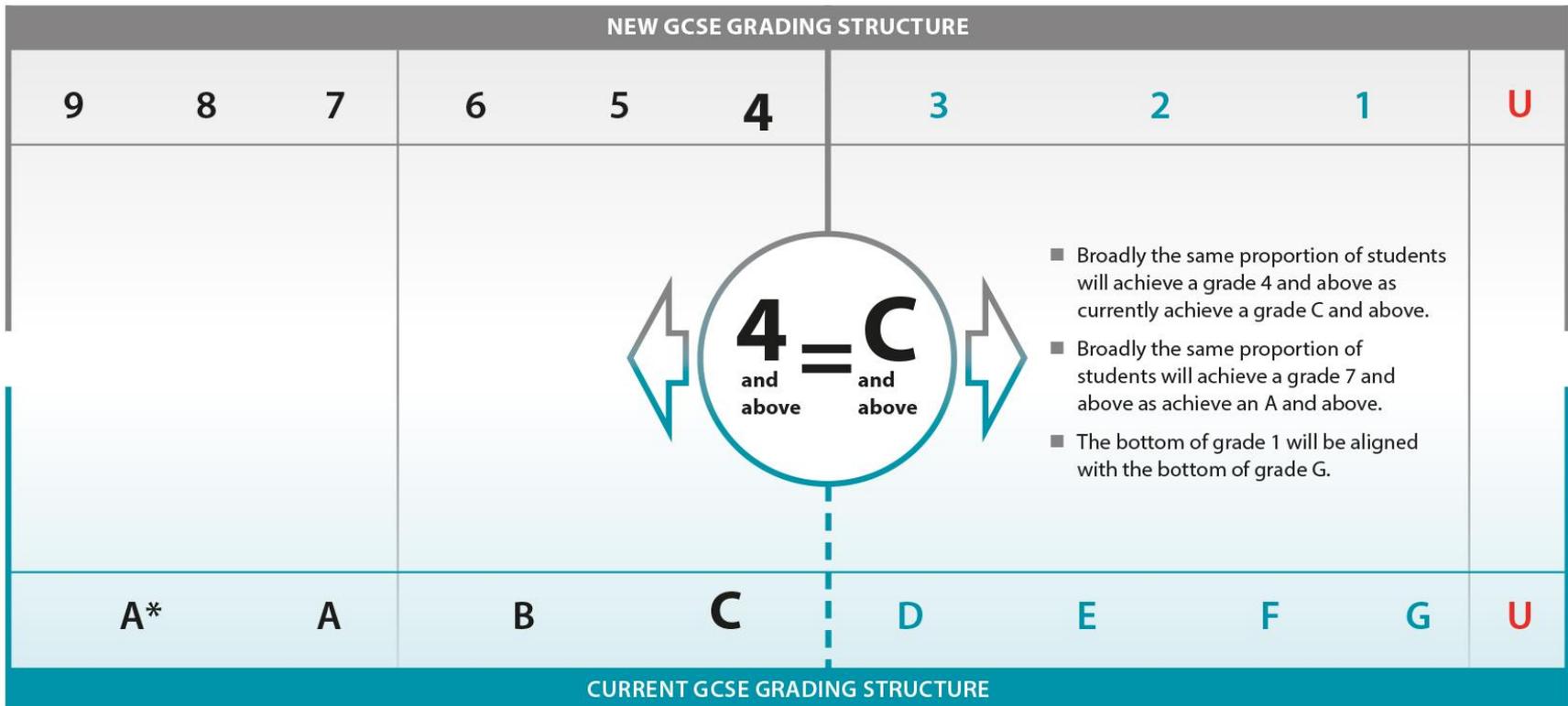


What do new GCSEs look like?

- **Structure** – linear (not broken into separately assessed units), with all exams in the summer at the end of the course
(Resits of the whole qualification available in November for GCSEs in maths and English language only, for those aged 16+)
- **Assessment** – exam where possible, other forms of assessment only where necessary to assess essential subject skills
- **Tiered assessments** – only where necessary
- **Standard** – accessible to the same proportion of Key Stage 4 students as at present
- **Grading** – new numbered scale from 9 to 1 (plus U), 9 is the highest



Grading the New GCSEs in 2017



New GCSE grading system

- New grading system reflects the step change in expectations of students
- Ofqual will use the established comparable outcomes approach to manage risk of unfair disadvantage or advantage to cohorts in first few years of new GCSEs
- Awarding will be done using judgements informed by data, rather than a criterion or norm referencing approach
- National reference test will be used to help identify changes in performance between cohorts



What do the changes look like for new GCSEs in 2015 (with first exams in 2017)?

- **Maths** – tiered (with grades 4 and 5 available through both tiers), exam only
- **English literature** – not tiered, exam only
- **English language** – not tiered, exam only, except speaking assessment which will be reported separately



Current consultations

Assessment arrangements for a range of subjects for first teaching in 2016

- GCSE citizenship studies
- GCSE cooking and nutrition
- GCSE design and technology
- GCSE drama
- A level and AS drama and theatre



Current consultations

■ Proposals

- Improved current assessment objectives
- Do not tier the assessments
- Weightings for non-exam assessment:

GCSE

citizenship studies	0%
cooking and nutrition	50%
design and technology	50%
drama	60%
religious studies	0%

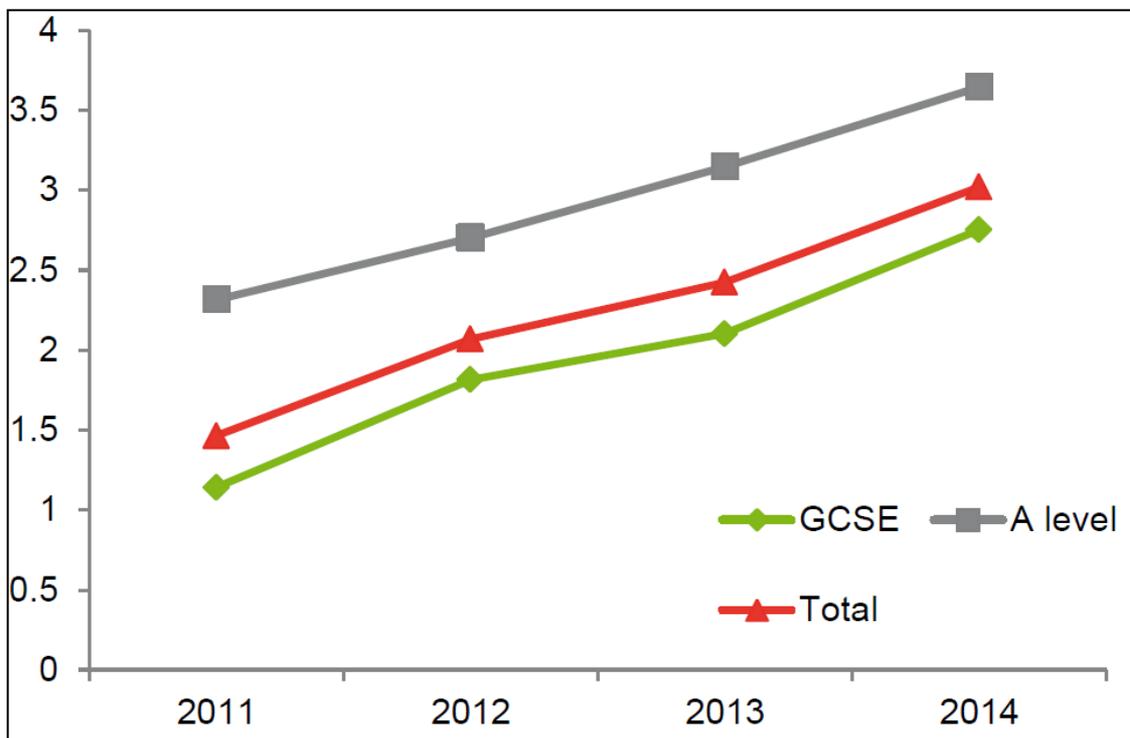
A level and AS

drama and theatre	60%
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Quality of marking

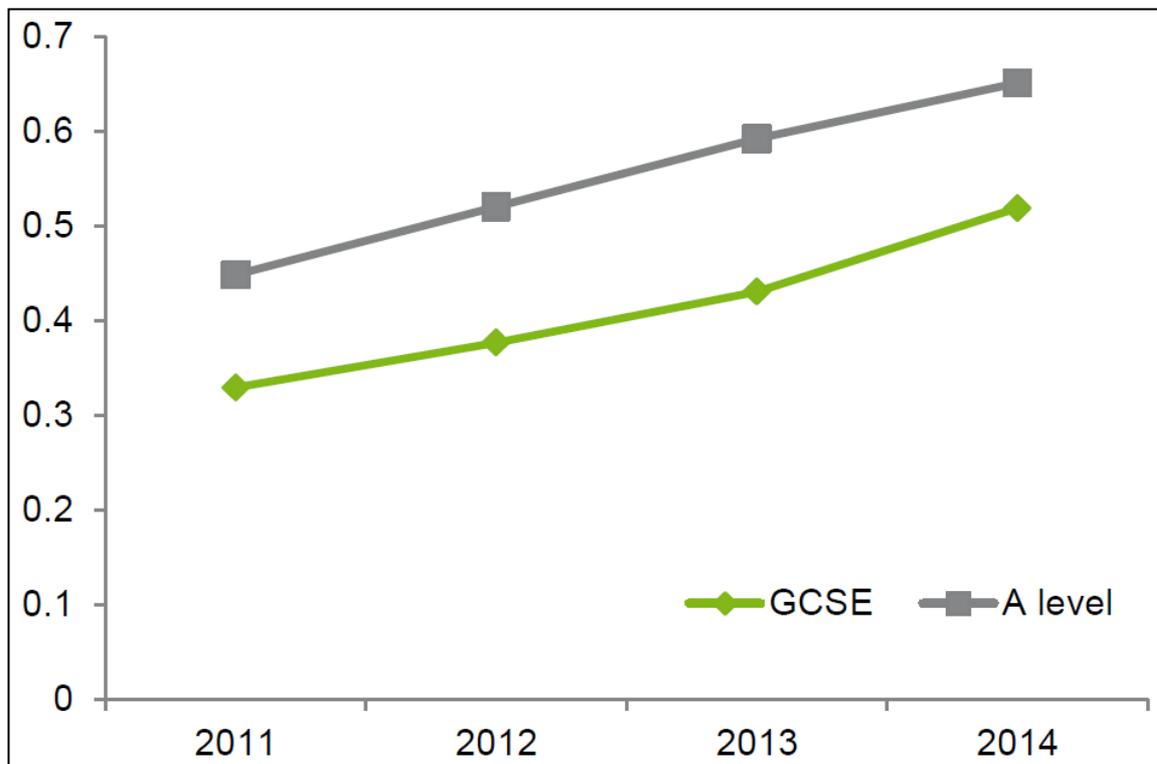
■ Provisional statistics about Enquiries about Results (EARs) - published October 2014



Percentage of scripts marked that received an enquiry



Quality of marking



Qualification grade changes resulting from an enquiry as a percentage of total qualifications awarded, summer exam series, 2011–2014



Quality of marking

■ Number of EARs ↑ Number of grades changed ↑

■ Why?

- Increasing pressure on outcomes (performance tables, first entry counts)
- More scripts being marked (extra 2.4 million this summer)
- Increasing concerns with marking quality and processes



Improving the quality of marking

We are:

1. Analysing this year's Enquiries About Results data and requiring more information from exam boards
2. Improving the Enquiries About Results (EAR) and Appeals system to make it more simple, transparent and fair
3. Developing better ways for exam boards to measure and report on quality of marking in future
4. Identifying best practice in mark scheme design
5. Requiring exam boards to upgrade quality of marking action plans
6. Requiring exam boards to improve their monitoring of markers as they mark
7. Evaluating the effectiveness of marker training



Find out more



■ Visit

www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-reform/

■ Questions?

call Ofqual's helpdesk – 0300 303 3346

email – public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk

tweet – @ofqual

■ For more information on curriculum and content, contact the Department for Education

www.gov.uk/dfe

