Nine things you need to know about 9 to 1

9 GCSEs in England are being reformed and will be graded with a new scale from 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade.

8 New GCSE content will be more challenging.

7 Fewer grade 9s will be awarded than A*s.

6 English language, English literature and maths will be the first to be graded from 9 to 1 in 2017.

5 Another 20 subjects will have 9 to 1 grading in 2018, with most others following in 2019. During this transition, students will receive a mixture of letter and number grades.

4 The new grades are being brought in to signal that GCSEs have been reformed and to better differentiate between students of different abilities.

3 In the first year each new GCSE subject is introduced, broadly the same proportion of students will get a grade 4 or above as would have got a grade C or above in the old system.

2 In GCSE English language, spoken language will not form part of the 9 to 1 GCSE grade; it will have its own grade (pass/merit/distinction).

1 You can see how the 9 to 1 grades compare with the A* to G scale in the infographic below.
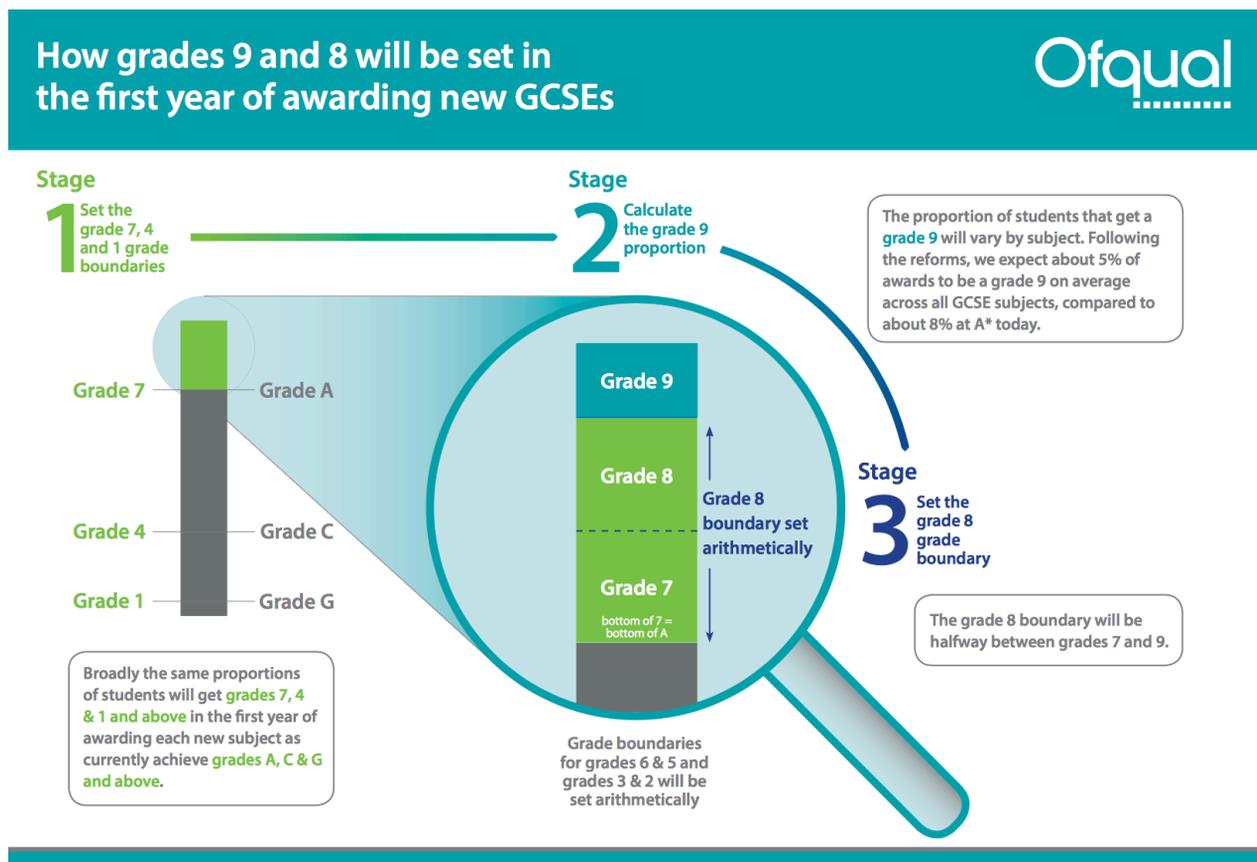
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Grading new GCSEs from 2017

New grading structure	Current grading structure
9	A*
8	
7	A
6	B
5	
4	C
	D
3	E
2	
	F
1	G
U	U

Grades 9 & 8 - what you can expect in 2017

The approach to awarding the new top grades of 9 and 8 will be the same for all GCSE subjects. Following the reforms, we expect about 5% of awards to be a grade 9 on average across all GCSE subjects, compared to about 8% at A* today.

This infographic shows a summary of how the process will work. There are some technicalities that you can explore in more depth here, but, in more simple terms, the grade boundaries will be set as follows:

How grades 9 and 8 will be set in the first year of awarding new GCSEs

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Stage 1 Set the grade 7, 4 and 1 grade boundaries

Stage 2 Calculate the grade 9 proportion

The proportion of students that get a grade 9 will vary by subject. Following the reforms, we expect about 5% of awards to be a grade 9 on average across all GCSE subjects, compared to about 8% at A* today.

Grade 7 — Grade A

Grade 4 — Grade C

Grade 1 — Grade G

Grade 9

Grade 8

Grade 8 boundary set arithmetically

Grade 7

bottom of 7 = bottom of A

Stage 3 Set the grade 8 grade boundary

The grade 8 boundary will be halfway between grades 7 and 9.

Broadly the same proportions of students will get grades 7, 4 & 1 and above in the first year of awarding each new subject as currently achieve grades A, C & G and above.

Grade boundaries for grades 6 & 5 and grades 3 & 2 will be set arithmetically

Stage 1: Grade boundaries for grades 7, 4 and 1 will be set statistically so that broadly the same proportions of students will achieve grades 7, 4 and 1 and above in the first year of awarding in each new subject as currently achieve grades A, C and G and above.

Stage 2: The grade 9 formula will then be applied in each subject to the percentage of students who get a grade 7 or better. The formula is: 7% + 0.5 x [the percentage who get a grade 7 or better]. Let's assume that exactly 20% of students in a subject get a grade 7 or above. Plugging '20' into our equation gives 17% [7+0.5x20]. That means 17% of the students who get a grade 7 or better would get a grade 9.

Stage 3: The grade 8 boundary is set half way between the grade 7 and grade 9 boundaries (to the closest whole mark). Grade boundaries for grades 6 & 5 and grades 3 & 2 will also be set arithmetically.