



CHANGES TO CCEA GCSEs IN NORTHERN IRELAND

From September 2017 first teaching, CCEA introduced

a new nine letter GCSE grading scale (A* – G).

This **new system** introduces the C* grade and aligns to the numeric system at various points.

The new system was introduced following a ministerial decision to change GCSE grading in Northern Ireland to a new alphabetical scale. Below is the CCEA grade comparison table – we've expanded on the information provided to help inform your decisions on setting entry requirements.

Whilst it's natural for providers to set their entry requirements at different points on the scale based on the competitiveness of a course, e.g. at grades B or C*, it may be useful to explain these decisions. This could be in the entry requirements, or qualification reform statements.

The new letter and numeric scales introduce more grades at the higher end of the scale, and allow for greater differentiation among high achieving students.

	New A* – G structure (summer 2019)	9 – 1 structure (awarding phased in from 2017)	Old A* – G structure (phased out from 2019)
The A* has been readjusted to align with grade 9, therefore proportionally fewer students will achieve an A* from 2019. Grade 8 will fall between grade A and A*.	A*	9	A*
	A	8	A
The new grade B aligns to grade 6.	B	6	B
The new C* grade aligns to grade 5.	C*	5	
The introduction of the C* between grade C and grade B, means the number of students achieving a grade B will be reduced. Providers that currently ask for a grade B in their entry requirements should note, this will reduce the number of applicants from Northern Ireland who would have previously met a grade B requirement.	C	4	C
	D	3	D
	E	2	E
	F		F
	G	1	G

Grade 9 will be awarded to approximately 20% of students who achieve a grade 7 or above. Highly selective providers that currently require an A* should note, this will reduce the number of applicants from Northern Ireland who would have previously achieved this.

There will be no direct equivalent between the new letter scale and the grade 8. Therefore, providers that set entry requirements at grades 8 and 9 under the numeric system, would require grades A* and A for students taking CCEA GCSEs, to attract those with similar ability.

It should also be noted, GCSEs offered by WJEC in Wales will continue to follow the eight grade A* – G structure. Therefore, care should be taken when listing alphabetical entry requirements above a grade C. The C* aligns to the grade 5, which accounts for the top third of students who would have previously achieved a grade C, and the bottom third of students who would have achieved a grade B in the alphabetical system. A grade B in the eight grade A* – G structure covers both part of the C* and the B in the nine point scale.

More information about the changes to CCEA GCSEs in Northern Ireland, along with resources to advise students, can be found on [CCEA's website](#).

You may also find our flyer [Changes to GCSE grading for England](#) useful when setting entry requirements.