

What types of qualification are on offer and what do they mean?

Each qualification type has very different structures and methods of assessment. When choosing subjects, we recommend that you look carefully at the type of assessment and consider which will help you secure the best possible grades. You need to think about whether you perform better under test conditions or whether you prefer to work over an extended period of time on an assessment.

GCSE (9-1)

You will take the new reformed GCSEs. These GCSEs have more rigorous academic content, increased expectations of subject knowledge and are mainly assessed by end of Year 11 exams. Coursework has been removed from many of the new GCSEs, meaning that you will need to keep your exercise books and revise the learning from across the two years of study ready for the exams.

The grading system has also been changed for the new reformed qualifications: students will receive a grading of 9 to 1 rather than a letter grade. 9 is the highest grade and will be awarded to approximately the top 2-3% of students. A grade 4 is referred to as a 'standard pass' and a grade 5 is seen as the 'good pass'.

GCSE NON-EXAMINED ASSESSMENT

Non-examined assessment is the assessed work that students do outside the exam hall which counts towards the overall exam grade. Non-examined assessment is work prepared under the guidance and supervision of the class teacher. It used to be called 'coursework' or 'controlled assessment' but has changed names and conditions during the qualification reforms. For many of the new GCSEs non-examined assessment has been removed or reduced significantly. In some subjects, especially the creative and practical subjects, non-examined assessment is essential for you to be able to show what you are capable of over a longer period of time than a normal exam will allow. In some assessments there are time limits, word counts and regulations imposed by the exam board which you will have to adhere to very carefully. Sometimes your work will be photographed, filmed or recorded so that it can be sent to the exam board for marking.

PRACTICAL NON-EXAMINED ASSESSMENT

You may be given an extended practical project to do either individually or as part of a team. Although the projects may be extended over a long period of time, the exam board does still expect the work to be done within specific time limits and specific working conditions.

EXAMINATION

All GCSEs have an examination at the end of the course. Some subjects are 100% examination; some might have 40% examination. In some subjects all students sit the same exam; in others there are exams to suit different levels of ability. The style of the examination can vary from subject to subject. Examinations may require shorter or longer answers or a mixture of both.

BTEC TECH AWARD

All vocational subjects must now include an exam of 25% or more and the grades awarded are Distinction*, Distinction, Merit, Pass and Fail. 75% of the qualification derives from a portfolio of work completed over the two years. At the time of writing some specifications for BTEC are being rewritten by the exam board.