

A levels

Equipping students to progress to success at university and in their careers.

- More involvement from universities in the development of A levels to make sure that students are well prepared for higher education.
- No change to level of demand or grading structure.
- The AS will be separate from the A level, so that the AS marks do not count towards the A level grade.



AS qualifications

- Students taking an AS can be taught in the same lessons as students who are working towards the A level in the same subject but not doing the AS.
- Students can take an AS in an extra subject for breadth, alongside A levels in their main subject choices.
- Students can still complete the AS and use their results to help decide which subjects to continue to A level.
- Universities publish their own admissions statements.



A level reform timetable

September 2015 (first exams 2017)

- English language, English literature, English language and literature, history, biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, art and design, economics, sociology, business, computer science.

September 2016 (first exams 2018)

- Modern foreign languages (French, German and Spanish), ancient languages, geography, dance, drama, music, physical education and religious studies.

September 2017 (first exams 2019)

- Mathematics, further mathematics, design and technology, and other remaining A level subjects.



2015 A levels – key features

- **Mathematical and quantitative content** – strengthened in relevant subjects : science, computing, economics and business.
- **Science** - increased emphasis on practical skills and experiences, including the use of key techniques and apparatus.
- **English literature** - an ‘unseen text’ in the exam, and more in-depth study of a fewer number of texts overall, with three pre-1900 works.
- **English language** – only minor changes.



2016 A levels – key features

- **Modern Foreign Languages** – more critical and analytical thinking, engagement with the culture and literature of foreign countries, and more accurate use of the language in speech and writing.
- **Ancient Languages** – the current A level is fit for purpose, and only very minor changes have been made.
- **Geography** – more emphasis on the knowledge and skills needed for degree-level study, with a better balance between physical and human geography, and fieldwork built-in to the core content.
- **History** - increased breadth, with a new requirement to study topics across a range of 200 years.



2015 A levels – key features

- **Computer science** – a thorough overhaul and updating of content, with more programming and algorithms, and clearer links from key stages 1 to 4.
- **Art and design** – a new emphasis on drawing skills.
- **Economics** - more real world and financial economics.
- **Dance** - more critical evaluation and reflective analysis, with a wider range of styles and contexts.



2016 A levels – key features

- **Drama and theatre:** study of two influential practitioners or companies (increase from one), and more detail on practical skills
- **Music:** builds on GCSE and allows students to specialise in either performing or composing.
- **Physical Education:** includes requirement for theoretical understanding.
- **Religious Studies:** study at least one religion in depth, through three of: the systematic study of religion; textual studies; philosophy of religion; religious ethics.



Web links for more information

- A timetable of the main changes:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/timeline-of-changes-to-gcses-as-and-a-levels>
- Information on the new grading structure:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/grade-descriptors-for-gcses-graded-9-to-1>
- Detail on reformed GCSE subject content :
<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/reforming-qualifications-and-the-curriculum-to-better-prepare-pupils-for-life-after-school/supporting-pages/gcse-reform>



Web links for more information

- The Association of Colleges guidance document on the new A levels and AS qualifications:
<https://www.aoc.co.uk/teaching-and-learning/study-programmes-central/qualifications/and-levels>
- Detail on reformed A level subject content:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/reforming-qualifications-and-the-curriculum-to-better-prepare-pupils-for-life-after-school/supporting-pages/a-and-as-level-reform>
- A list of accredited specifications:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-gcses-as-and-a-levels-accredited-to-be-taught-from-2015>



Feedback

- **DfE are very interested to hear about teachers' experience of using these slides, and whether they were helpful when explaining the reforms to parents.**
- **Please send your feedback to Andy Fisher on this email address:**

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