



SUMMER SERIES 2017



Spotlight on Mathematics

This summer is the second time students are able to sit the new GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Mathematics - Numeracy qualifications. Many students will have sat in November and will be returning this summer hoping to improve their grades; others will be sitting for the first time. This is also the final resit opportunity for the old GCSE Mathematics qualification.

What's new?

These qualifications have changed quite considerably from the old GCSE Mathematics.

Aside from the obvious difference that there are now two qualifications instead of one, students have a choice of three tiers of entry: foundation, intermediate and higher.

Each tier has a different set of available grades. Foundation tier has grades D to G available, Intermediate tier has grades B to E available and higher tier has grades A* to C available.

Because these tiers overlap (for example grades B and C are available for both the intermediate and higher tier), the exam papers will contain some common questions. WJEC uses these questions to ensure that the level of difficulty to achieve, for example, a Grade C is the same whichever tier is taken.

There are some important differences between these qualifications; although much of the content is common, some of the skills assessed are different.

GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy assesses the mathematics that students will need in their everyday lives, in the world of work, and in other general curriculum areas. These requirements were identified by Welsh Government in their Review of Qualifications in 2012.

GCSE Mathematics, on the other hand, will extend to aspects of mathematics needed for progression to scientific, technical or further mathematical study. The differences mean that students should not necessarily expect to get the same grade in both qualifications.



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Who's taking these qualifications this summer?

The entry data for the two qualifications provides us with an indication of changes in entry patterns, which is useful when interpreting the summer results. Over the course of the academic year, more than 30,000 students will have been entered for each of the qualifications, representing most of the year 11 students in Wales. This summer, around 25,500 year 11 students are taking GCSE Mathematics and around 20,500 are taking GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy.

The entry data also shows us that this summer there is a substantial year 10 entry compared to previous years: 10,400 year 10 students entering GCSE

Mathematics and 11,200 year 10 students entering GCSE Mathematics - Numeracy. In the old Mathematics GCSE, year 10 entry had increased year on year with 9,300 year 10 entries in summer 2015.

There are around 5,000 post-16 students who are resitting the old GCSE Mathematics qualification; this is their final resit opportunity.

There is no 'right' entry strategy for all students, however it is important that they have covered the content of the qualification and are given the greatest chance of achieving their best possible grade.

What does this mean for the results this summer?

These different entry patterns are likely to impact on the final overall Wales mathematics results this summer. For both mathematics GCSEs, there has been a significant increase in the number of year 10 students as a proportion of the overall summer entry. We expect that this will mean that the overall results this summer will be lower than in previous years.

It will be difficult to make meaningful year on year comparisons this summer due to the cohort changes; many students will have achieved their grades in

November 2016 and won't be taking mathematics examinations this summer. Care will need to be taken in interpreting and comparing the overall summer results.


Our comparisons will be based on the best results achieved by students who are finishing year 11 this summer; this means that if a student got a better grade earlier in the course, that's the grade we'll use for comparison with year 11 results from previous years.

More information:

www.qualificationswales.org

E: enquiries@qualificationswales.org

T: 0333 077 2701

 [@quals_wales](https://twitter.com/quals_wales)

