

GCSE Reform – University Positions

Students whose CVs will show 9-1 'newgrades', A*-G 'oldgrades', or a combination of the two will need to be conversant with the equivalence of these metrics, however approximate.

The official position from Ofqual is as depicted in the table to the right, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The bottom of grades 7 and A aligned• The bottom of grades 4 and C aligned• The bottom of grades 1 and G aligned The DfE (May 2018) : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• recognises grade 4 and above as a 'standard pass'• recognises a grade 5 and above in English or maths as a 'strong pass'	Newgrades	Oldgrades
	9	
	8	A*
	7	A
	6	
	5	B
	4	C
	3	D
	2	E
	1	F
	G	
	U	U

The Russell Group, which represents 24 leading UK universities, has said the following (on page 24 of this document: [Full Russell Group Statement on reformed GCSE grading](#))

The old and the new grading systems are not directly comparable which means that universities are working to review their GCSE requirements under the new system. For example a C grade can be aligned with both a 4 and a 5 and equivalencies will vary from one university to another.

You should always check individual university websites for more detail on their grade requirements for GCSEs.

That advice is clearly applicable across the UK university sector and overseas. Students will need to check course requirements for a variety of reasons including requirements of specific subjects and grades at A-level, as well as any ramifications of their GCSE grades, both numeric and alphabetical.

I have spent some time researching information as to the position of a variety of universities concerning the equivalence of numeric and alphabetical GCSE grades. A great many have, for the most part, cloned or elaborated upon the above equivalence described by Ofqual. A typical example, albeit upon which we may not draw conclusions about other institutions, is the statement from the [University of York](#):

- Where Grade C at GCSE is currently required for admission we will ask for a Grade 4
- Where Grade B is currently required, we may ask for a Grade 5 or 6 depending on the course
- Where Grade A is currently required, we will ask for Grade 7

Another example is that of the [University of Bath](#):

- 7 for existing grade A
- 6 for existing grade B; and
- 4 for existing grade C.

While the [University of Leicester](#) state:

- B is equivalent to 5 (6 for Medicine)
- C is equivalent to 4 (5 for Medicine)

A number of universities have however gone further and stated a more detailed position, albeit:

- Most are at pains to point out that these policies will be kept under review; and
- There are occasional exceptions made for subject specific requirements (often, but not necessarily limited to, Medical courses)

The [University of Cambridge](#) consider the following to be equivalent:

- 8 and 9 to an A*
- 7 to an A

[Oxford](#), [Leeds](#) and [Queen's Belfast](#) consider the following to be equivalent:

- A* to 8/9
- A to 7
- B to 6
- C to 4

While [King's College London](#) take a very similar position to Oxford, Leeds and Queen's:

- A* to '8 and above'
- A to 7
- B to 6
- C to 5

[Edinburgh](#), [Manchester](#) and [Newcastle](#) consider the following to be equivalent, from which we may conclude that a Grade 9 is considered *at least* equivalent to an A*:

- A* to 8
- A to 7
- B to 6
- C to 4

While [UCL](#) take a very similar position to Edinburgh, Manchester and Newcastle, again implying that a 9 is considered *at least* equivalent to an A*:

- A* to 8
- A to 7
- B to 6
- C to 5

[Nottingham](#) are an example of Grade 8 being left in a grey area with their equivalences; however we may conclude from their statement that they do consider it to be a superior achievement to a Grade A:

- A* to 9
- A to 7
- B to 5/6 adding '*check individual course pages for details*'
- C to 4

As well as those Universities listed here I consulted around a further twenty admissions pages, of which all either gave statements falling into the first category of equating only certain grades (as seen with York and Bath) or did not seem to have an easily accessible statement available. I found only one University which explicitly equated 8 with any grade other than A*.

[Cardiff](#) are an example of a University that only considers 9 at par with A*.

- A* to 9
- A to 8 and 7
- B to 6
- C to 5 and 4

Cardiff's position is understandable. Qualifications Wales have elected to retain the Oldgrades A*-G for their reformed specifications. Universities in the Principality are then, quite reasonably, perhaps likely to calibrate their entrance requirements accordingly.

It is also of note that the precise position of A in relation to 7 and 8 is subtly different on this diagram from [Qualifications Wales](#) than it is on [this diagram from their English equivalent Ofqual](#). This may indicate that the award of a Grade A on a reformed qualification in Wales to be slightly more demanding than the historic A* had been in England, in keeping with Cardiff's chosen metric.*

I share the information I have gathered not as a reliable source of reference for prospective University admission, as students must always take the responsibility of researching careers paths and course requirements themselves. It might serve, however, as a means of gathering external validation for the relative esteem in which GCSE newgrades should be held. My inference from these various University statements is that both Grades 8 and 9 seem, in far more cases than not, to be considered at par with Grade A*.

As a consequence a student should hopefully have no concern over their achievement if either a Grade 8 or a Grade 9 has been attained, since:

- either is an exceptional achievement in its own right that is worthy of congratulations; and
- it is clear within the industry that in many contexts both are considered equivalent to A*

I have taken every precaution to ensure the contents of this document are correct but can accept no responsibility for error. The information I obtained from the internet was done so on 11th July 2018. I hope that the information is of some use.

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