



SUMMER SERIES 2017



Spotlight on English

This summer sees the first award of the new GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature qualifications. This is also the final resit opportunity for the old GCSE English Language qualification.

What's new?

The new GCSE English Language qualification has changed significantly from the old one, both in content and structure. Content changes include a greater focus on functional literacy.

The key structural change is that the controlled assessment (sometimes called coursework) which previously contributed 20% towards the final grade has been removed. 80% of the qualification is now based on two exam papers that focus on reading and writing.

One of the exams includes an editing task that focuses on candidates' ability to write accurately. The range of texts included in the exams has changed to include a mixture of different lengths and styles of writing. The speaking and listening assessment still remains part of the qualification and contributes 20% towards the final grade.

A noticeable difference in the new GCSE English Language qualification is that the assessments are no longer tiered. Previously candidates sat a foundation or higher tier paper, but in the new qualifications all candidates will sit the same exam paper, regardless of the grade they are aiming for.

The new qualification is linear; that means that all the exams need to be taken at the end of the course. The old qualification was unitised and therefore learners could take units and resit units during the course.

The new GCSE English Literature qualification is similar to the old one. It remains a unitised qualification which means that learners can take units and resit units during the course.



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Who's taking these qualifications this summer?

The entry data for the two qualifications shows a marked change in the entry pattern.

For GCSE English Language, the entry data shows that a very substantial number of students will be taking the qualification this summer who are still in year 10. There are just over 21,000 year 10 entries, which represents approximately 65% of all year 10 students in Wales.

Around 31,000 students in year 11 will also be taking their GCSE English Language exams this summer. There are around 4,000 post-16 students who are resitting the old GCSE English Language qualification; this is their final resit opportunity.

For GCSE English Literature, the picture is more complicated. Less than 50% of the year 11 learners

in Wales have been entered for the qualification this summer. However, some of those students who have not been entered this summer were entered for the qualification in year 10.

In total, around 70% of all year 11 students in Wales will have sat the GCSE English Literature qualification (either in year 10 or year 11). This is a fall from 2016 when around 77% of all year 11 students sat the GCSE English Literature qualification (either in year 10 or year 11).

Schools can decide when to enter students for exams and there is no 'right' entry strategy for all students. However it is important that students have covered the content of the qualification to give them 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 GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature results this summer.

For GCSE English Language, 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.

To help explain how this year's results compare to previous years, our overview of the summer results will focus on 16-year-olds, that is, year 11 students. With all these changes, it will be difficult to make meaningful year-on-year comparisons this summer and schools are likely to see more variation in their year-on-year results.

In GCSE English Literature, many students will have achieved their grades in summer 2016 and won't be entered this summer; the nature of the cohort has changed which may mean that the summer results are different this year compared to previous years. Again, 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.

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