



HR Broadcast – Recruitment and the new grading system for GCSEs

Some of you may remember the old GCE O Level examinations which worked alongside CSE examinations. It was widely accepted that a Grade 1 in CSE was the equivalent to an O level. We then had the introduction in 1988 of GCSEs with an A to G grading system. There was also a “U” classification which meant that the examination was ungraded.

From August 2017 there is a new grading system and those of you involved in recruitment will need to be aware of and understand the changes.

The change is that GCSEs will be graded on a scale from 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade and 1 being the lowest. This will apply to English language, English literature and mathematics in 2017, and will be followed in 2018 by 20 other subjects including all sciences, French, German, Spanish, geography, history, religious studies, art and design, drama and PE. Most other subjects will follow in 2019 so that by 2020, all GCSEs will be graded under the new system.

So, from a recruitment position, during this three-year transition period you will come across students who will have a mixture of letters and numbers in their GCSE grades. The good news is that from 2020, all grades will be in numbers.

I am told that the top grade available under the new numbered system, which is a “9”, will be a higher level grade than the current A*. The U classification is to be retained. Ofqual has said

this has been done to recognise the fact that the new style GCSEs are more challenging.

I am also advised that the new grade 4 is considered to be a standard pass and is broadly equivalent to a grade C. So if you currently look for GCSEs grades A to C this will change to grades 9 to 4.

Living in Lincolnshire we have a good number of students who move around the country (for example, students of parents who are in the RAF) and you need to be aware of some geographical issues. These GCSE changes only apply to England. Wales and Northern Ireland are not introducing the new 9 to 1 grading system; their GCSE grading systems will retain grades A* to G. Scotland is not affected as its students sit Nationals, not GCSEs, so please remember that when you advertise for GCSEs of a certain grade you need to make it clear that you will accept an equivalent level of qualification.