

Press release: New gold-standard GCSEs prepare pupils for careers Britain needs

Updated: Now with comments from the CBI

- This week marks the start of exam season, where a further 20 new GCSEs will be sat for the first time

Hundreds of thousands of pupils are preparing to take new, more rigorous GCSE exams this week, which are on a par with the best performing education systems in the world, the School Standards Minister announced today.

The gold-standard qualifications for 20 new GCSEs – including the sciences, French, German, Spanish, history and geography – have been designed with employers in mind. These qualifications are underpinned by more rigorous content, preparing pupils for future careers in the industries that Britain needs. The new science GCSEs now include space physics and the human genome and the new Computer Science GCSE now includes a greater focus on programming.

Schools Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

These more rigorous, gold-standard GCSEs are helping to nurture the next generation of scientists, linguists and historians. Whatever pupils want to do with their lives, these qualifications will prepare them for future success and help deliver the skills Britain needs to be fit for the future.

Thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers, education standards are rising in our schools and last year, teachers and pupils responded well to the new English and maths exams. I wish pupils all the very best as they prepare to sit these exams and I look forward to celebrating their success in the summer.

CBI Managing Director for People and Skills policy Neil Carberry said:

A world-class education has the power to give young people the knowledge and character needed to navigate a rapidly changing world. CBI members welcome the Government's commitment to high educational standards in schools, of which the new GCSEs are part.

Just doing well in exams isn't enough though – firms want to see all young people leave education as well-rounded individuals. They appreciate what teachers and leaders are doing in schools to

develop great people – and are ready to step up and do more themselves. As part of today's important focus on knowledge, this partnership must also ensure we are prioritising teaching that encourages critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork.

The start of these exams follows the recent news of funding to train up to 8000 existing computing teachers to teach the new GCSE – that is enough to ensure every secondary school in England has a teacher who can support pupils to succeed.

The new GCSEs will be graded 9 to 1, with 9 being the top grade to allow more differentiation between the highest performing pupils and so that employers can identify the new, more rigorous qualifications.

It builds on the success of last year's changes to GCSE maths and English which saw 59.1 per cent of pupils achieving a grade 4 or above.

Standards are rising in schools thanks to these reforms and the hard work of teachers, which has resulted in 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than 2010.

The government's Industrial Strategy highlighted a shortage of STEM skills. There is a need to increase number of people able to study for STEM degrees to support the current economy and its growth. The reforms to GCSEs and A levels, as well as these teaching programmes are just two of the ways this is being achieved.