



Reforming A Levels: the changing landscape

A summary of what's planned for A Levels
from 2015



ocr.org.uk/alevelreform

OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Removal of January series from 2013

On 9 November 2012, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) published the findings of a consultation on A Levels. It announced the removal of January assessments for all current A Levels, with effect from September 2013.

Changes to assessment

Removal of January series from September 2013

From September 2013, there is now only one examination series each year for AS and A2 units. Students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will only be able to sit OCR AS and A2 exams in the June examination series. These changes apply to all OCR A Level qualifications, including Applied A Levels.

As well as applying to all students starting AS or A Level courses from September 2013, please note that this also affects those who started AS or A Level courses in September 2012, for whom there will be no opportunity for re-sits or assessments in January 2014.

Coursework

Schools and colleges are still able to complete coursework at any time during the academic year to the requirements of the specification; however, from September 2013, coursework can only be submitted for moderation in the June examination series.

Northern Ireland and Wales

While the Northern Ireland and Welsh governments are still to provide information on their plans, OCR's current position is that from September 2013, there will be only one examination series each year for both AS and A2 units. Students in Wales and Northern Ireland will only be able to sit OCR current AS and A2 Level exams in the June examination series.

For more detail about changes to current A Levels, read our FAQs opposite.

Supporting you through the changes

We have now removed all references to the January assessment window from all our current A Level specifications. These are now available to download at ocr.org.uk/alevelreform

You'll also find a range of support materials and resources designed to save you time while you teach our current specifications. You can download FREE resources online from our website by selecting the subject you require.

FAQs

How will the removal of the January series from September 2013 affect you and your students?

- Students who started a two-year course in September 2011 and who expected to complete in June 2013 will have been able to sit AS and A2 exams in January or June throughout their course. If they wish to retake AS or A Level units or qualifications after September 2013, the first opportunity for them to do so will be in June 2014.
- Students who started a two-year course in September 2012 and who expect to complete in June 2014 will have been able to take AS units in January 2013 and June 2013. However, they can now only take units in June 2014. If they wish to retake AS or A Level units or qualifications after June 2014, the first opportunity for them to do so will be in June 2015.
- Students who started a two-year course in September 2013 will only be able to take AS or A Level units or qualifications in June 2014 and in June 2015. If they wish to retake AS or A Level units or qualifications after June 2015, the first opportunity for them to do so will be in June 2016.

Does the removal of the January series affect Applied A Levels?

Yes. The removal of January assessments, which came into effect from September 2013, will also affect Applied A Levels, with all examinations taking place in June.

Accreditation for OCR's Applied AS and A Levels has been extended and there is now a further opportunity to start teaching a two-year course in September 2014 in all the subjects in which we offer these qualifications:

- Applied Art and Design
- Applied Business
- Health and Social Care
- Applied ICT
- Leisure Studies
- Performing Arts
- Applied Science
- Travel and Tourism

For more frequently asked questions go to ocr.org.uk/alevelreform

A Levels from 2015

In 2012, Education Secretary Michael Gove announced his intention to reform A Levels, with a more influential role for higher education in particular. A consultation with key stakeholders about the next generation of A Levels ran for 12 weeks from 19 June to 11 September and sought the views of higher education, employers, learned societies, colleges and schools.

OCR is an active participant in these discussions and fully committed to developing new A Levels that prepare students for university study, and engage and enthuse aspiring students and teachers alike.

What does this mean for you?

Here is a summary of current proposals for new A Levels from September 2015.

Linear assessment

New A Levels will be linear so assessment of a student's knowledge and understanding of the whole course takes place at the end of two years. The first assessment of two-year courses that start in September 2015 will be in June 2017. It is proposed that the first assessment of a new AS qualification could take place in June 2016 (see opposite).

Subjects

Current plans are now confirmed for new A Levels for first teaching in September 2015 in the following subjects:

- Art and Design
- Business Studies
- Computer Science
- Economics
- English (Language, Literature, Language and Literature)
- History
- Psychology
- Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology)
- Sociology

Teaching for A Level Maths and Further Maths which 'require more fundamental work' will begin a year later, in September 2016.

Geography is delayed for a year and will now be ready for first teaching in September 2016.

How you can have your say on the consultations

The Department for Education and the regulator Ofqual have launched consultations on proposals for reforming the content and structure of A levels, taken by students in England for the above listed subjects, for first teaching September 2015.

Among the key proposals are a new stand alone AS, and a reduction of non-exam assessment, or coursework, across different subjects.

Have your say and contribute to the Department for Education and Ofqual A Level reform consultations.

Department for Education Consultation –
education.gov.uk/consultations (open until 20 December 2013)

Ofqual Consultation –
comment.ofqual.gov.uk/open-consultations (open until 17 January 2014)

Proposed changes for AS Levels

AS is currently proposed to be redeveloped as a stand-alone qualification. Unlike current AS Levels, new AS Level qualifications for first teaching in September 2015 will not contribute towards an A Level grade. The new AS qualifications will remain broadly at their current standard. In some subjects, it may be appropriate for the AS to be designed to be co-taught with the first year of the A Level. The first assessment of the new AS Levels is planned for June 2016.

Our consultation with teachers has highlighted the range of concerns teachers have about the proposed changes to A Levels, including whether the AS and A Level will be co-teachable. We will continue to work with teachers and our other stakeholders to learn how best we can support you through this challenging period of reform.

How will higher education be involved in the next generation of A Levels?

The Russell Group is setting up a separate and independent company to be named the A Level Content Advisory Body (ALCAB).

ALCAB will advise on A Level content in some A Level subjects for a fixed term to inform changes to A Levels for first teaching from September 2016. It does not envisage providing advice on a full range of A Level subjects. It seems likely that ALCAB will convene a subject panel to review each subject within an agreed time period. The panels may seek views from the sector more widely - for example, through subject associations or professional bodies. It will not necessarily be aiming to reach consensus across all academics, but to provide advice that broadly reflects the needs of most leading universities.

Once ALCAB is established, its contact details will be available on the Russell Group website www.russellgroup.ac.uk



A LEVEL REFORM

What is OCR doing?

We are active participants in the ongoing discussions with all the key stakeholders about the next generation of A Levels. We are fully committed to the task of developing new A Levels that prepare students for university study, and engage and enthuse aspiring students and teachers alike.

OCR is the only major awarding body to be part of a university – the University of Cambridge – and we have worked hard to develop a very strong engagement programme with a wide range of Higher Education Institutions to inform our work.

While input from higher education is essential, the views of teachers – the professionals in the classroom – are vital to successful qualification and assessment reform.

Since 2010, we've been running a number of subject consultative forums, which were set up so that we could talk to teachers (and other stakeholders) directly. These forums have been invaluable in helping us to understand the strengths, issues and needs of a range of subjects as well as, critically, the needs of our stakeholders. As well as establishing very strong relationships with you, we've learned a lot. During this period of significant change, we want to clearly understand the new challenges that you face. We promise to continue to listen to you and to learn how best we can support you.

Our forums are busy and lively but we're always open to new members. If you would like to contribute to and influence the development of our reformed A Levels and qualification support packages, please get in touch with us for more information at partnerships@ocr.org.uk (including 'Subject Forums' in the subject of your email).

For more information on A Level Reform, sign up for updates at ocr.org.uk/updates

Supporting you through the changes

What support is available for you during the changes?

Our aim is to help you at every stage and we'll continue to work in close consultation with teachers and other experts to provide a practical package of high-quality resources and support.

We will ensure that you are kept informed of upcoming changes, support you in understanding these changes, and provide you with guidance on how to plan and deliver the new A Levels.

We are also committed to keeping you informed about the A Levels from 2015, and to help you in your preparation for teaching our new A Levels in the years ahead.

To stay up to date with all the relevant news about OCR's current A Levels and A Levels from 2015, sign up for A Level email updates at ocr.org.uk/updates

In the meantime if you have any queries, please contact us on **01223 553998** or email us at general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk



A Level Timeline

When are the changes happening?

2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
Jan	June	Sept	Jan	June	Sept	Jan	June	Sept	Jan	June	

Changes to current A Levels: removal of the January exam series



Proposals for the next generation of A Levels



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