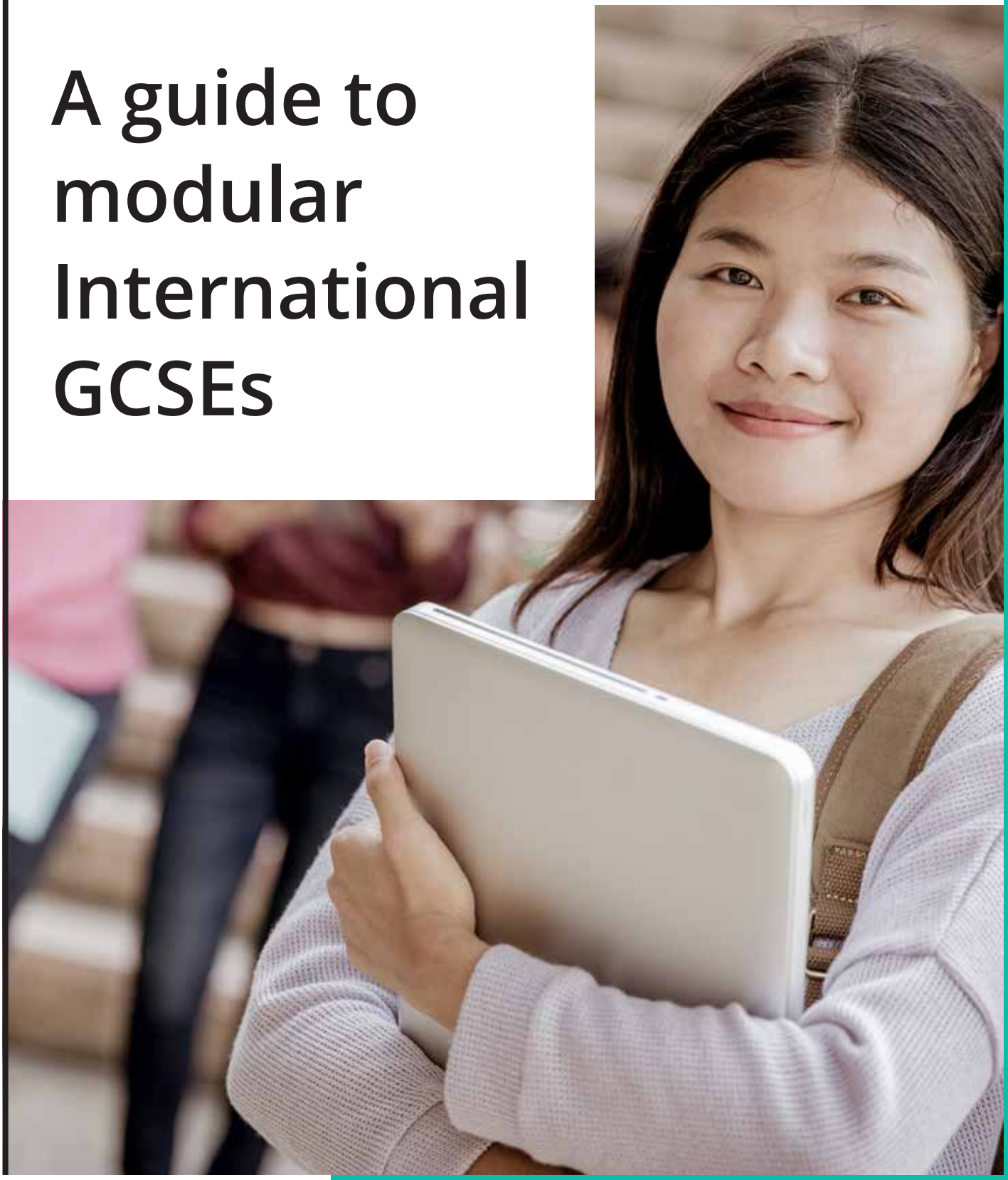
Pearson

A guide to modular International GCSEs



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Introduction

International GCSEs are offered by thousands of schools around the world to millions of students. They are widely recognised and accepted as modern, progressive qualifications by universities and employers.

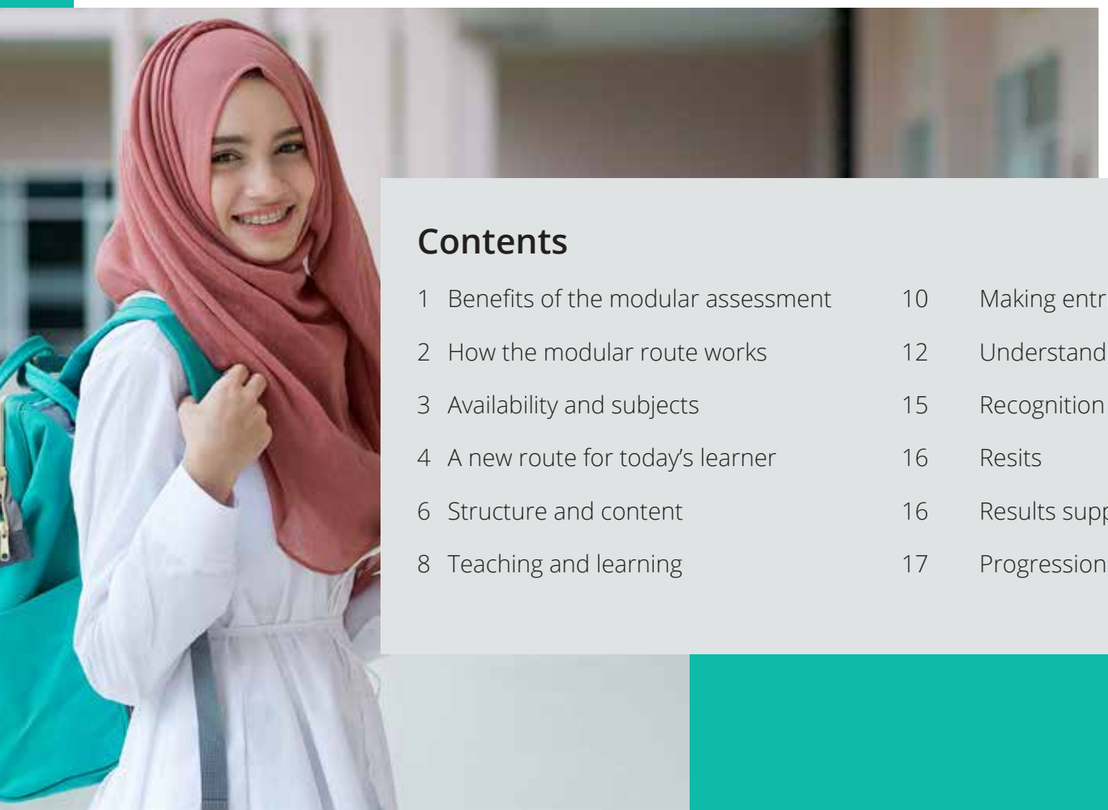
Meeting the needs of more students

To meet the changing demands of world economies, International GCSE qualifications must evolve to meet the requirements of university and employment. One key recommendation from The Future of Qualifications and Assessment Report (Pearson 2022) was to:

"Make GCSEs work better for all learners. They are versatile and valued qualifications, but there is room for innovation."

Until now, International GCSEs that are offered by all awarding organisations, including Pearson Edexcel, are linear in their approach - this means all the exams are sat in one go at the end of the 2-year programme of study. In 2023, we introduced a modular approach which means the exams can be taken throughout the 2-year programme of study.

Pearson Edexcel is the only awarding organisation to offer the choice of linear or modular assessment, so you can meet the needs of more students.



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The benefits of modular assessment

Students

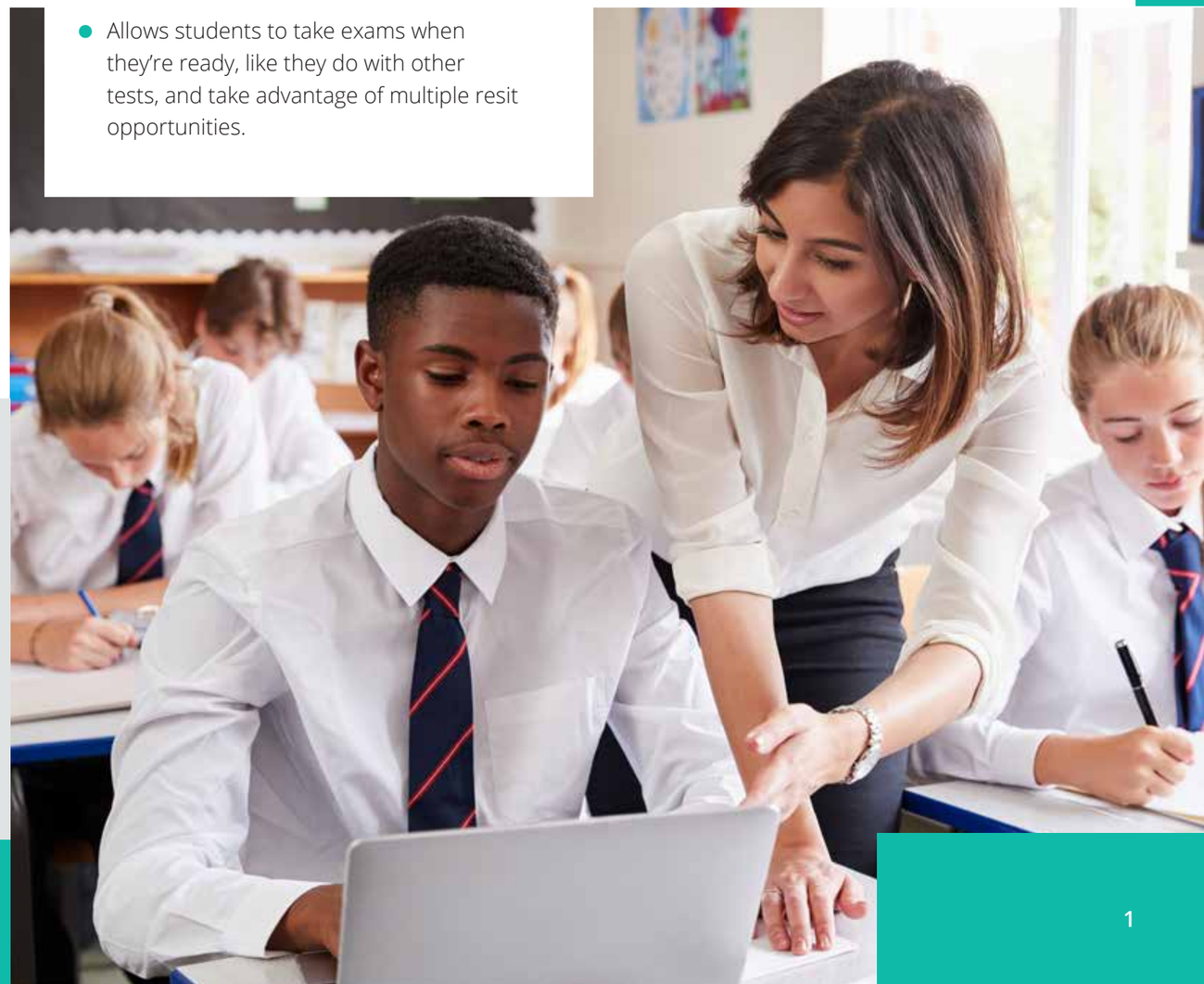
The modular International GCSE route provides learners with an authentic form of assessment that reflects how today's students take other assessments in their lives.

- Reduces mental load and stress by allowing students to focus on one year of curriculum at a time and spreads out their exams over two years.
- Provides more opportunities to demonstrate skills and abilities and optimise feedback to improve students' performance.
- Allows students to take exams when they're ready, like they do with other tests, and take advantage of multiple resit opportunities.

Educators and Parents

Choosing a modular route can support teachers, exam officers, and parents.

- Provides teachers with rich mid-cycle data on learner performance from post-exam analysis support tools, such as ResultsPlus.
- Offers greater flexibility for exam administration across the school year.
- Where parents pay exam fees, it helps with budgeting by enabling families to spread their child's exam fees over two years.



How the modular route works

Units can be assessed in any exam series

In the modular route, there are no restrictions on students taking units together; all units can be treated separately, and they can be taken in any International GCSE exam series (May/June and/or November).

No time limits to the qualification

Students can take and resit individual unit assessments in any series. This means students have more opportunities to get feedback to improve their performance and get the grades they need to progress.

Students ‘cash in’ unit results when ready

Once a student has all their unit results for the qualification they are taking, they ‘swap’ those for a grade – this is called ‘cashing in’. To cash-in, all units must have been entered. Learn more about cash-ins on page 11.

Modular units can be taken in any exam series available in November and May/June

Scan the QR code to watch our latest webinar on modular International GCSEs. Find out about the qualification, the differences to a linear route and the virtues of each approach.

Modular International GCSE availability

Subjects

All course materials including Specifications, Getting Started Guides, Course Planners, Schemes of Work, Sample Assessment Materials and Exemplars are available for all of the following subjects:

International GCSE (9–1) Accounting

International GCSE (9–1) Biology

International GCSE (9–1) Chemistry

International GCSE (9–1) Commerce

International GCSE (9–1) Economics

International GCSE (9–1) English as a Second Language

International GCSE (9–1) English Language A

International GCSE (9–1) English Literature

International GCSE (9–1) Geography

International GCSE (9–1) History

International GCSE (9–1) Mathematics A

International GCSE (9–1) Physics

International GCSE (9–1) Religious Studies

International GCSE (9–1) Science (Double Award).

The modular assessment route is only available to schools outside of the UK.

A new modular approach for today's learner

Time for a new modular approach

GCSE examinations predominantly modular in structure — **2007**

Modular International A level introduced — **2013**

All GCSE examinations become linear — **2014**

Time for schools to choose the right approach for their students — **2023**

Historically, government reforms have moved between a linear and modular assessment approach. So why not have the choice of both?!

A simple approach with more flexibility!

Traditional Modular

- Too many units
- Too many exams and resits
- Disrupted teaching and learning

Linear

- Current assessment model
- Terminal assessment
- Less flexible than modular

New modular International GCSE strikes the right balance

Modular routes

The modular approach allows you more flexibility to meet the needs of individual students and cohorts.

Exam Series	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3	Route 4
First year of teaching from September* (Year 10)				
November (Year 1)				
May/June (Year 1)		Unit 1		Unit 2
Second year of teaching from September* (Year 11)				
November (Year 2)		Unit 1 resit	Unit 1	
May/June (Year 2)	Unit 1 and Unit 2	Unit 2	Unit 2	Unit 1
Third year resits (Year 12)				
November (Year 3 resits)	Resit Unit 1 and/ or Unit 2		Resit Unit 1 and/ or Unit 2	

*Or your countries equivalent start of the academic year.

Here are just some of the routes and examples which demonstrate how modular is being used.

Route 1 – This is the first step into modular assessment. Schools continue to teach in a linear way across 2-years, Year 10 to Year 11, and enter students for both unit papers in the 2nd year (May/June exam series). This is like the linear route, but the big benefit is it means that the students can resit individual unit exams. The student can pick the unit exam to focus on and resit it in November, or the following June. It allows focus on the areas that need to be improved.

Route 2 – In this route the student would sit one unit exam at the end of Year 10. They would benefit from feedback on their performance and have the option to resit in November, before sitting the second unit exam at the end of Year 11.

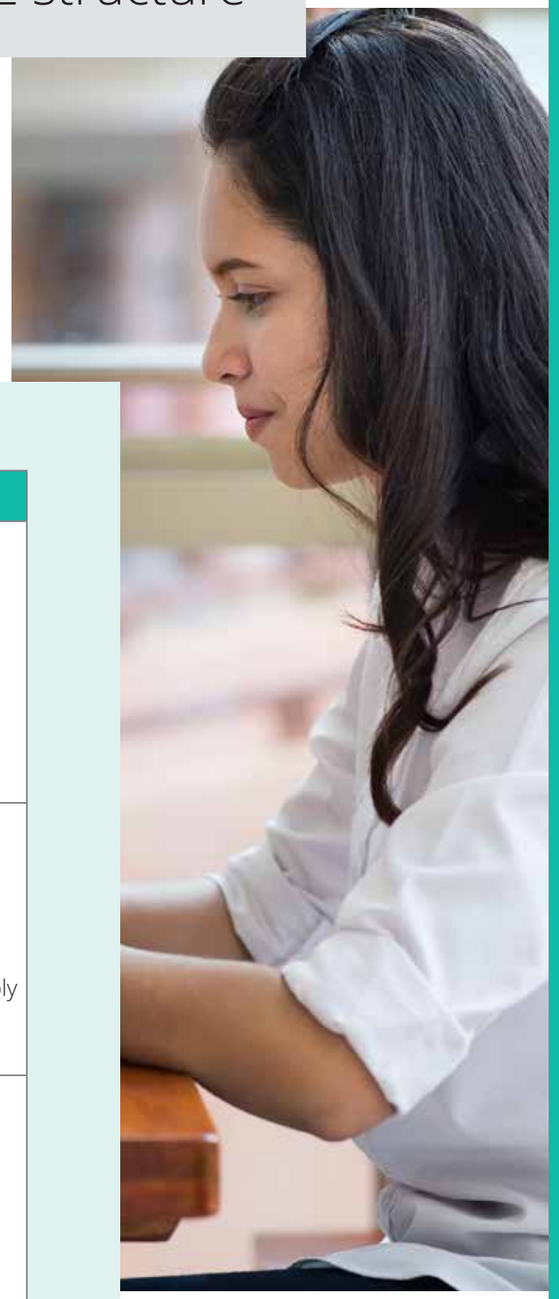
Route 3 – This route allows students to split the assessment across two exam series in Year 11 (2nd year of study). It still spreads the exams out but means students have more time to prepare, and they are older.

Route 4 – For some subjects, such as geography and history, there is the option of taking Unit 2 before Unit 1. This works well where there are clear splits, for example in geography where there is a physical and human split and it meets a schools individual scheme of work.

Modular International GCSE structure

Regardless of the assessment route, the specification content, units, papers, total marks, and exam time remain the same. Both linear and modular assessments adhere to the same design principles.

This means all linear past papers and exam support is perfect preparation for modular exams.



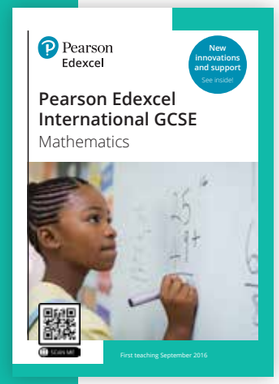
What this looks like by subject

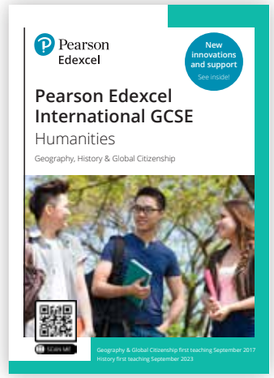
Subject	Structure
Accounting Commerce Economics English Language A English Literature Geography History Religious Studies	• These subjects use exactly the same specification content and assessment model as linear.
Mathematics A Biology Chemistry Physics Science (Double)	• Modular Maths and Science specifications and assessments have been divided into discrete content areas. • The content between linear and modular will be the same, it may simply appear in different assessments e.g. paper 2 instead of paper 1.
New English as a Second Language 2023 (first assessment 2025)	• This qualification has four equally weighted units and is structured so students can sit each unit either all together at the end of the course, or individually in any exam series. • As it is a skills-based qualification, we would recommend that learners cover all four skill areas before sitting exams, but there are no restrictions on entering any units in any order.

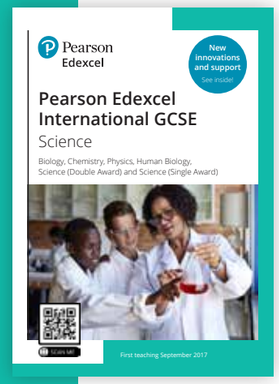
Explore Pearson Edexcel qualifications by subject at quals.pearson.com

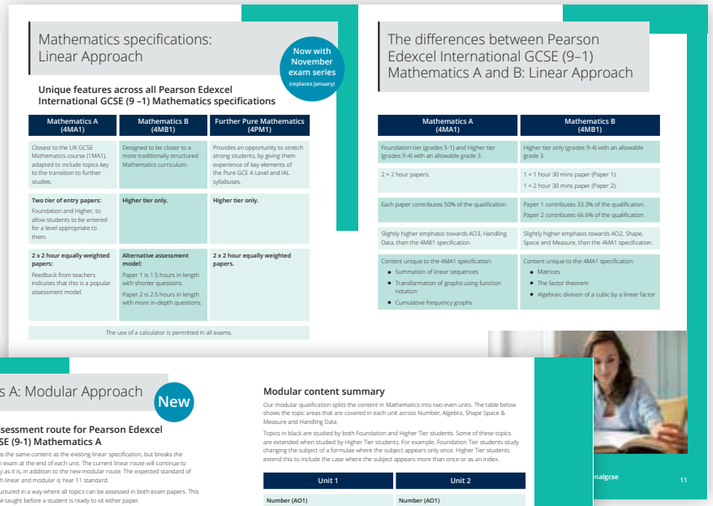
Subject Guides

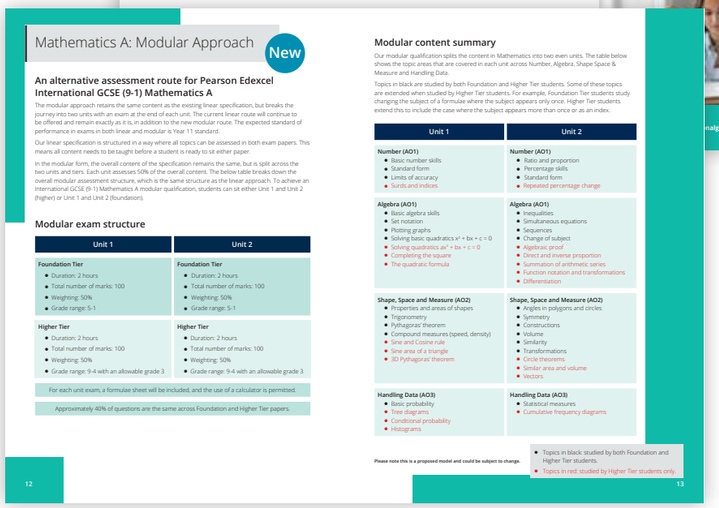
To help you make the right choice between linear or modular, take a look at our subject guides which contain more detail about the structure and content for both approaches.











View all subject guides in our marketing toolkit

Teaching and Learning Support

Approach

We use the same approach to content and assessment across both modular and linear International GCSE to ensure the same standard.

The specification content, number of units, number of papers, total marks, and total exam time are all the same. Therefore, the teaching time is the same, irrelevant of the assessment route chosen.

Teaching sequence

You can teach the units in any order, although some subjects we would recommend you teach Unit 1 content, followed by Unit 2 content (see page 6). Our specifications and schemes of work outline recommendations and suggestions for the order of teaching.

Every unit is designed to be at the same standard, so there is no change in demand between units 1 and 2. It is worth considering this when entering students in Year 10, although they have an opportunity to improve their grade in Year 11.

Support

Support for all Pearson Edexcel International GCSE modular subjects is the same as linear includes:

- Specifications
- Sample Assessment Materials
- Getting Started Guides
- Course Planners
- Schemes of Work
- Mapping Documents
- Training (and recordings of past training)
- Mark Schemes
- Past papers: ExamWizard, an exam preparation tool, allows you to access all past exam content to generate practice exam papers and mark schemes, for modular and linear. Linear past papers are also ideal for modular.

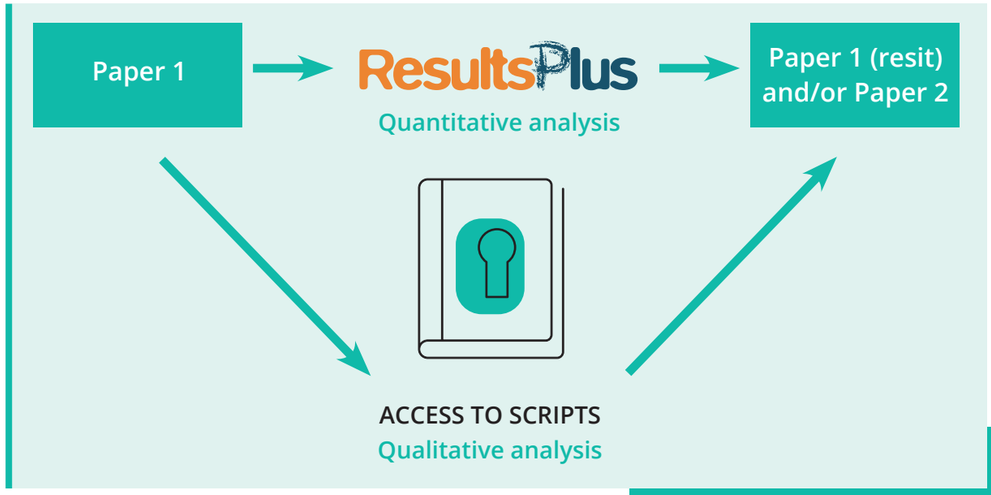
Using mid-cycle results analysis

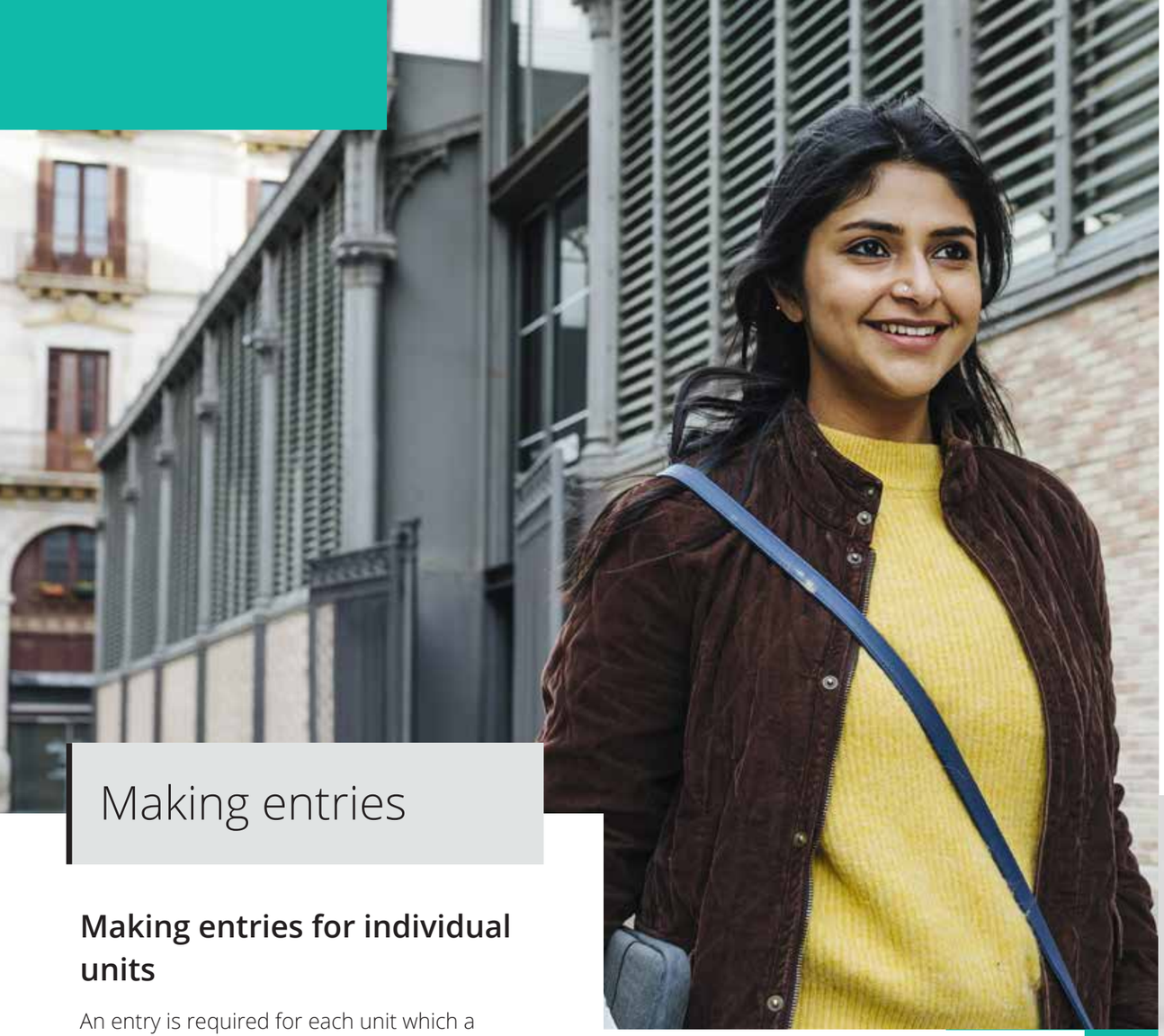
ResultsPlus, the post-exam results analysis tool, provides a detailed breakdown of students' performance. This mid-cycle data will help you identify areas where students need to improve in their resits.

In addition, our free Access to Scripts service allows you to view your candidates' marked papers online or download as a PDF.

This provides visibility and rich insight that performance data alone cannot provide.

The following diagram shows how you can use ResultPlus and Access to Scripts to inform teaching, learning, and revision for resits or as preparation for the next modular exam.





Making entries

Making entries for individual units

An entry is required for each unit which a student intends to take in an exam series.

Units can be taken in any order but you should consult the specification to see if there is a recommended order. In most cases, students are expected to sit Unit 1 first. Students must retain one unit for assessment in the exam series in which they will enter the cash-in code to certificate.

Unique candidate identifiers

A unique candidate identifier (UCI) is a reference that's unique to a candidate and lasts for the duration of their study. It's used to aggregate unit results for modular exams. Without it, candidates may not be given their full results. If a candidate transfers to your school, you should try to obtain their UCI from their previous centre or from any results documentation they've been given.

Entries for qualification awards 'cashing-in'

Once a student has gained or has entered for the appropriate units, an entry can made for the qualification award. This is known as 'cashing in' or aggregation and is the indication to Pearson Edexcel that the student wishes to complete the qualification and receive a grade and certification.

Cashing in or aggregation is not automatic. It can only be applied for when the student has entered for or gained both units for their chosen modular International GCSE. Applying to cash in or aggregate is not an entry for a unit or combination of units. Specific entries must still be made for the remaining units.

Candidates who have sufficient unit results for an award but have not cashed in or aggregated may do so retrospectively but will be liable for late cash-in fees.

Understanding entry codes

For international GCSE, if the code beings with:

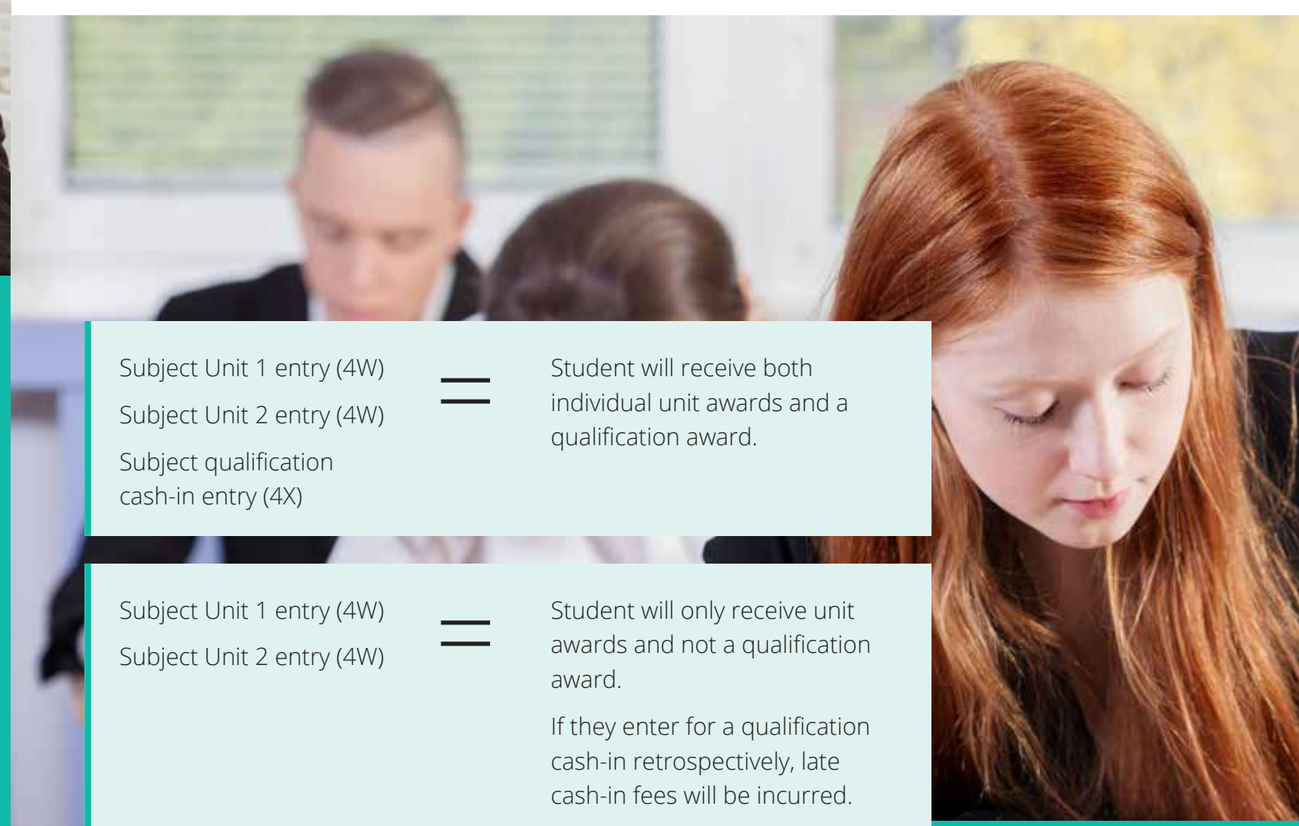
4W it is a unit code for an individual unit or Paper (e.g. Paper 1 or Paper 2)

4X it is a 'cash-in' code for a qualification award

Your entries information manual

Full details about entry codes for each qualification and subject for any given exam series can be found in the information manual. This, along with other entry support, can be accessed via the support portal.

quals.pearson.com/support



Subject Unit 1 entry (4W) Subject Unit 2 entry (4W) Subject qualification cash-in entry (4X)	=	Student will receive both individual unit awards and a qualification award.
Subject Unit 1 entry (4W) Subject Unit 2 entry (4W)	=	Student will only receive unit awards and not a qualification award. If they enter for a qualification cash-in retrospectively, late cash-in fees will be incurred.

Understanding results

Results for modular qualifications are reported as:

- **Unit results** which are reported as uniform marks (UMS) and unit grades. Unit results are cashed-in to receive the overall qualification grade.
- **Qualification results** which are reported as grades. This is the grade that will be needed by for progression to further study (e.g. International A Level and IB Diploma course) and university.

Grade boundaries

For all modular units, grade boundaries are determined at awarding meetings following each exam series in terms of the raw marks for the unit. These raw mark grade boundaries are then translated onto a uniform mark scale (UMS) which has fixed grade boundaries.

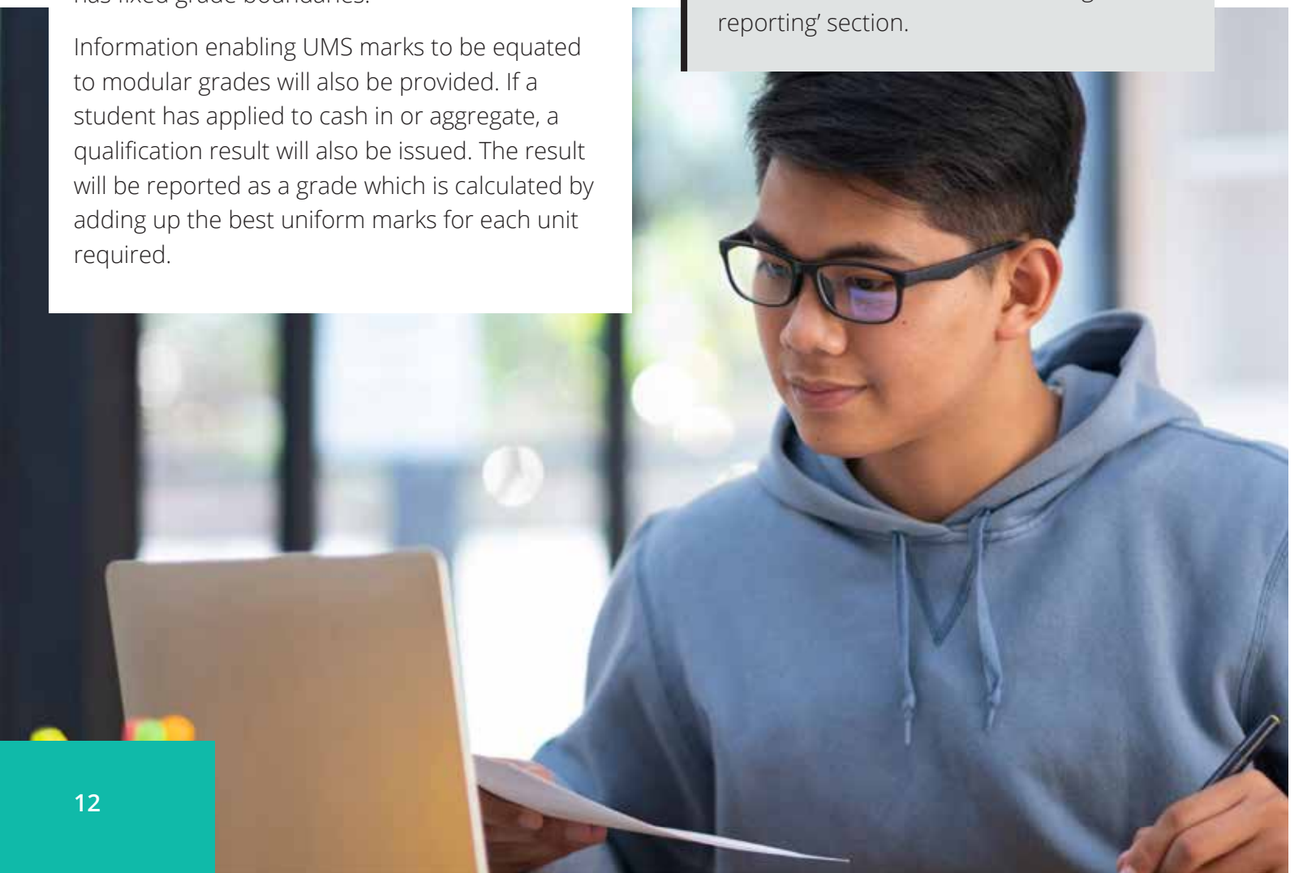
Information enabling UMS marks to be equated to modular grades will also be provided. If a student has applied to cash in or aggregate, a qualification result will also be issued. The result will be reported as a grade which is calculated by adding up the best uniform marks for each unit required.

What are 'raw marks' and 'UMS' marks'?

- The raw mark is the number of marks a learner achieved in an exam.
- The UMS mark (Uniform Mark Scale) is a conversion of the raw mark.

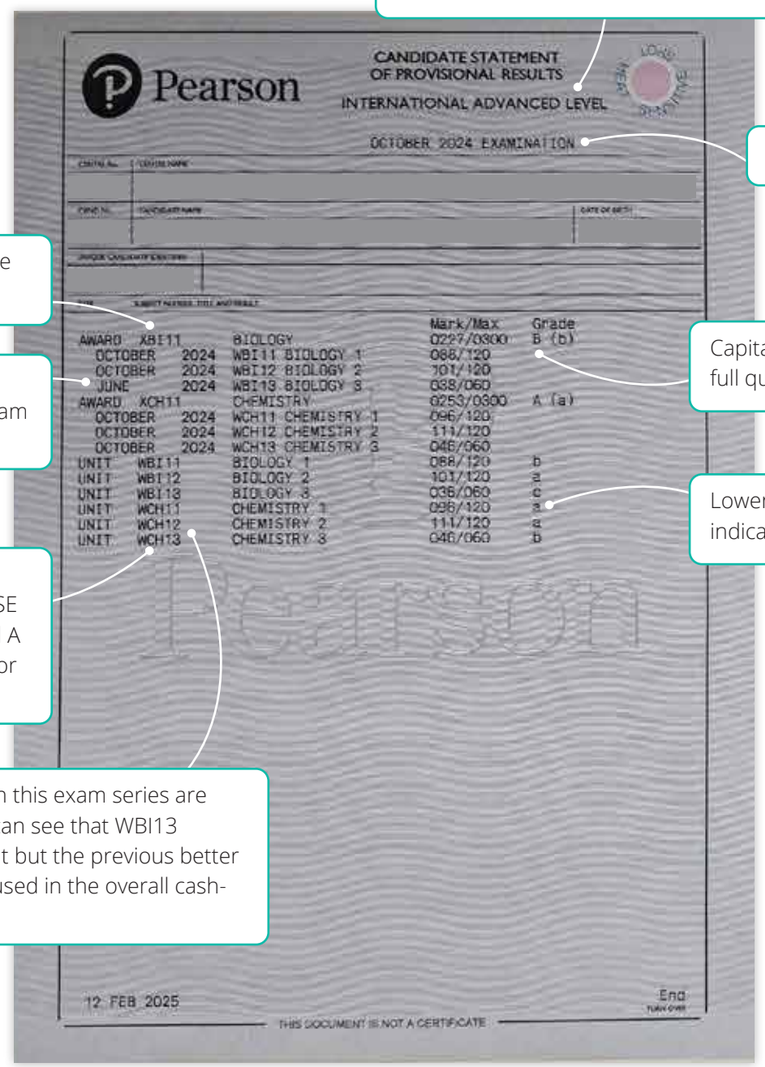
As this is a modular qualification, units can be taken in different exam series. To ensure that any differences in the difficulty of exams are considered when adding up a learner's marks to give an overall qualification grade, we convert the 'raw' or exam paper mark into a UMS mark, which is the final mark.

> The uniform mark scale at unit and qualification level are provided in the specification for each modular International GCSE in the 'Awarding and reporting' section.



Candidate Statement of Provisional Results (CSOR)

The following is an example Candidate Statement of Results (CSOR) for a student's International A Level results.



Recognition

Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs are recognised across the world as modern, progressive qualifications. They provide learners with the skills and knowledge they need to progress to International A levels (IAL®) and onto the most prestigious universities across the world.

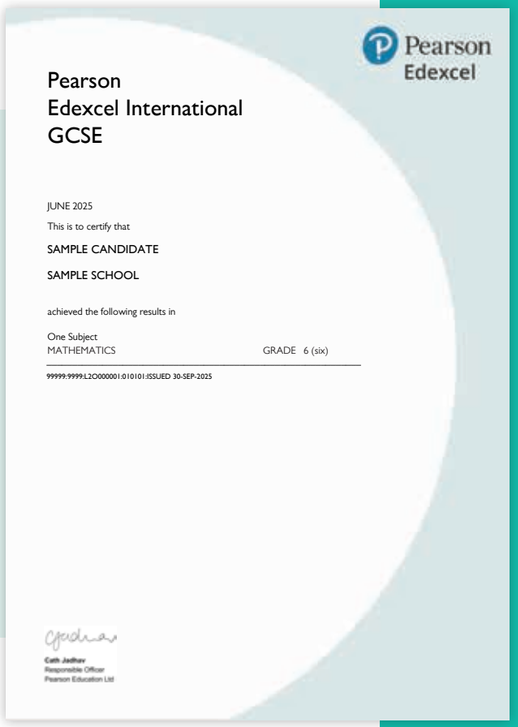
Modular International GCSEs have been benchmarked by Ecctis and the study confirmed the comparability in qualification size, content, learning outcomes, and assessment to GCSE and linear International GCSE.

No matter which route students choose, the final qualification awarded will be International GCSE as the certificate example opposite shows.

Certificates

The certificates issued for Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs are the same for modular and linear and include:

- Qualification 'International GCSE'
- Series and year
- Candidate name
- School name
- Subject (eg. Mathematics)
- Grade



Pearson Edexcel

Pearson
Edexcel International
GCSE

JUNE 2025

This is to certify that

SAMPLE CANDIDATE

SAMPLE SCHOOL

achieved the following results in

One Subject
MATHEMATICS GRADE 6 (six)

99999-9999-L2O000001-010101-ISSUED 30-SEP-2025

Cath Jadhav
Responsible Officer
Pearson Education Ltd

Benchmarking and recognition

Ecctis, the organisation that provides official UK national agency services (including the development and recognition of global qualifications) on behalf of the UK Government in qualifications, skills, and migration, has evaluated and benchmarked Pearson Edexcel's International GCSEs, both linear and modular.

The study confirms the comparability in qualification size, content, learning outcomes, and assessment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ecctis

Benchmarking the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

Ecctis has found the Linear and Modular International GCSE, awarded by Pearson Edexcel, comparable to UK GCSE standard.

Context and scope

Pearson Edexcel offer a range of qualifications for UK and international markets. Self-regulated by Pearson, International GCSEs are aimed at 14–16-year-olds and are designed to support progression onto upper secondary. Offered both in the UK and internationally, Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs are designed for students around the world and are adapted for local contexts.

Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs are currently offered in two assessment routes, Linear and Modular. The Modular International GCSE was first introduced in 2023. As such, Ecctis was commissioned by Pearson to conduct an independent evaluation and benchmarking of the Linear and Modular International GCSEs in relation to the UK GCSEs. This follows a benchmarking evaluation in 2019 which found the Linear International GCSE comparable to GCSE standard.

Five International GCSEs were evaluated and compared to their GCSE subject counterparts in terms of their aims, content, learning outcomes (aims and assessment objectives) and assessment. The sample included Chemistry, Geography, English Language A, History and Mathematics A.

Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs

International GCSEs are two-year programmes and consist of 120 guided learning hours (GLH). This sits at Years 10 and 11 in the UK education system. There is a degree of flexibility with the duration, as some students may be able to complete their studies in one year, and the delivery of International GCSEs may be adapted to the needs of various countries' secondary education systems as well as individual schools and candidates.

International GCSEs do not have specific entry requirements. However, certain subjects do have recommended guidelines for levels of prior learning. The International GCSEs help students

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Resits

One of the many benefits of the modular approach is that students can take and resit individual unit assessments in any exam series. This means students have more opportunities to get feedback to improve their performance and get the grades they need to progress.

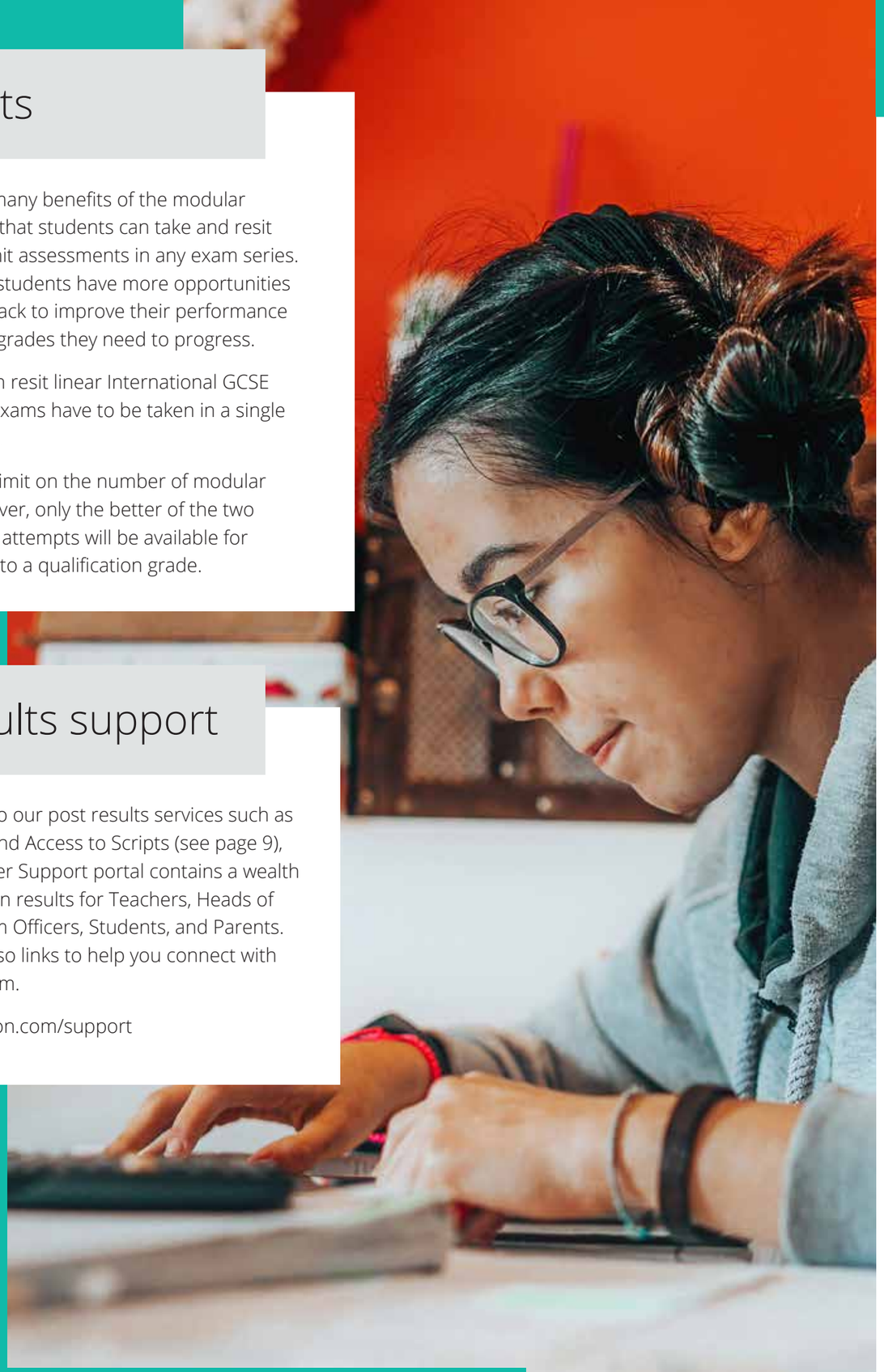
Students can resit linear International GCSE but all unit exams have to be taken in a single exam series.

There is no limit on the number of modular resits. However, only the better of the two most recent attempts will be available for aggregation to a qualification grade.

Results support

In addition to our post results services such as ResultPlus and Access to Scripts (see page 9), our Customer Support portal contains a wealth of support on results for Teachers, Heads of Centre, Exam Officers, Students, and Parents. There are also links to help you connect with the right team.

quals.pearson.com/support



Progression

Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs are excellent preparation for Pearson Edexcel International A Levels (IAL®), International BTECs or the IB Diploma, and progression onto the world's top universities.

Equipping learners with transferable skills and knowledge

Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs lay the groundwork for your students to progress to the universities across the world. They are designed to instill and embed the skills that help learners grow into resilient, curious and globally connected young adults. Opportunities to develop transferable skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, leadership and collaboration, are integrated throughout each of our International GCSE qualifications to ensure learners have the skills and knowledge they need to progress onto the next level of study.

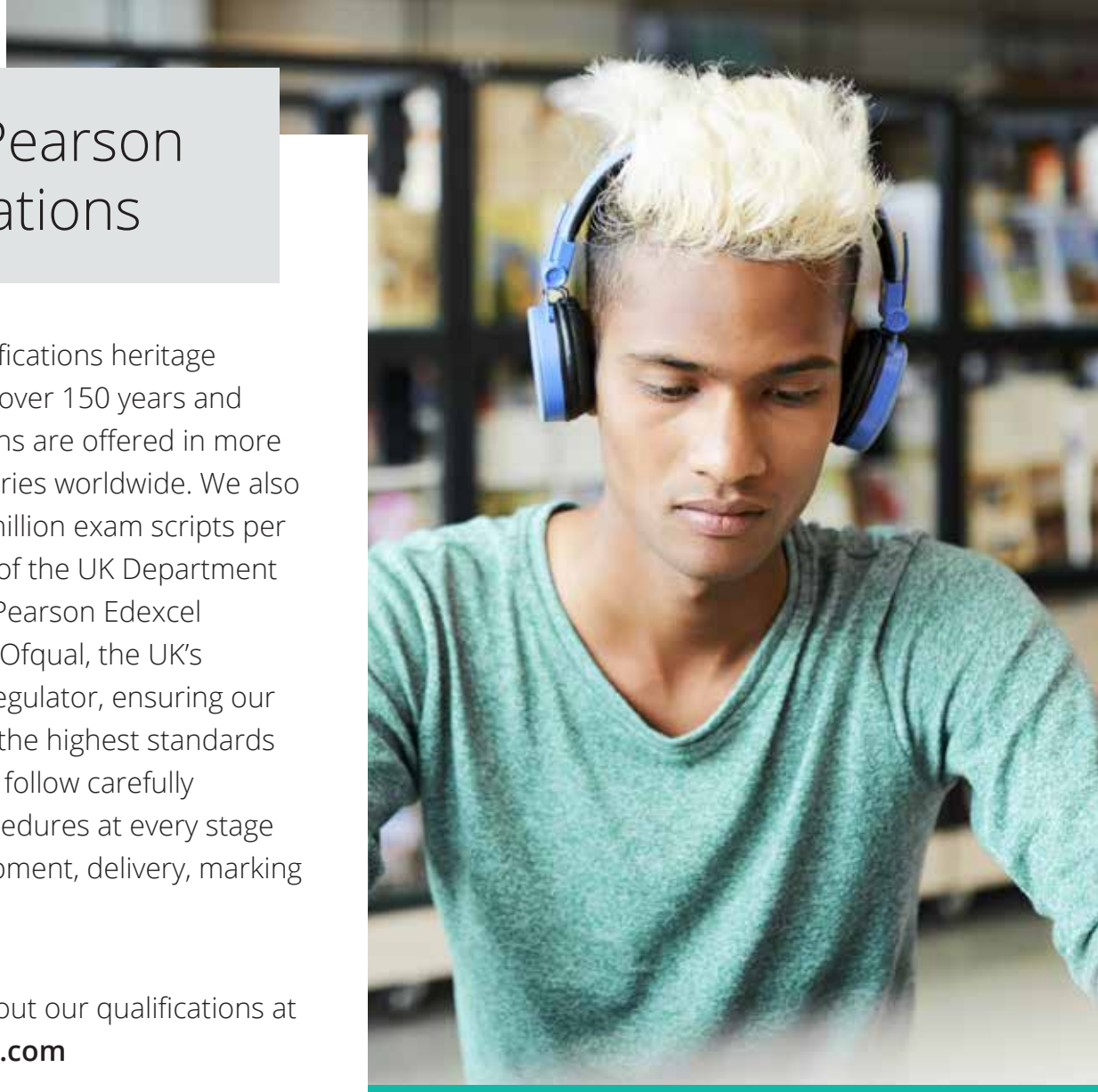
From International GCSE to A levels, BTECs or the IB Diploma

As the next step up from International GCSE, International A Levels are designed for students aged 16–18 who want to progress to the best universities around the world. They use the popular and flexible modular approach which means exams are taken at the end of each unit of study or throughout the programme of study when students feel prepared and ready. We work closely with higher education institutions around the world to secure recognition for our qualifications.

Global recognition for International A Levels

Over 650 higher education institutions worldwide recognise and accept Pearson Edexcel International A level qualifications for entry onto undergraduate degree courses. You can be confident that these qualifications equip students with the skills and knowledge that admissions teams and employers are looking for.

About Pearson qualifications



Pearson's qualifications heritage stretches back over 150 years and our qualifications are offered in more than 110 countries worldwide. We also mark over 10 million exam scripts per year on behalf of the UK Department for Education. Pearson Edexcel is regulated by Ofqual, the UK's qualifications regulator, ensuring our curricula meet the highest standards and our exams follow carefully controlled procedures at every stage of their development, delivery, marking and reporting.

Learn more about our qualifications at **quals.pearson.com**

Pearson for International Schools

Whether you're a teacher inspiring achievement in the classroom, a parent supporting your child's learning journey, or a school owner seeking the best outcomes for your students, we can support you with our inspiring and proven international curriculum, qualifications and published resources.

Learn more about how we support international schools at **pearson.com/international-schools**

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