



# Assessment for a new generation

Modular assessment



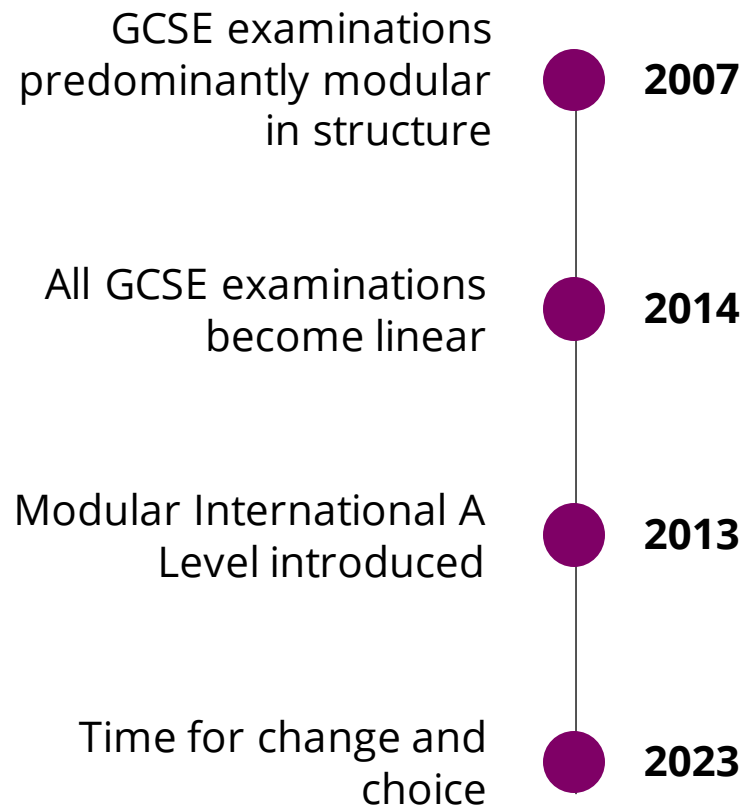
Pearson



# The history of assessment structure



# Timeline



Historically, reforms have been a pendulum from modular to linear and the impact of assessment structure has been long debated.

Mazrekaj and De-Witte (2020) discovered that the switch from modular to linear GCSEs increased the school dropout rate.



Assessment that  
reflects how today's  
learners sit high  
stakes exams

# What the research says



# Is modular easier than linear?

1

Yes

Moira et al. (2020) found no evidence to suggest that either modular or linear GCSEs led to **better educational outcomes**.

2

Yes

This was supported by Baird et al. (2019) who stated that while some teachers believed that certain groups of students would perform better in a modular system, this was **unsubstantiated by performance data**.

3

No

Many teachers reflected favourably that student performance could be assessed with **greater fairness and validity** through linear GCSEs (Baird et al., 2019).

4

Yes

However, concern was communicated about the potential consequence of linearity on the **wellbeing of students** who require additional support

5

No

While others noted that the elimination of continual testing associated with modularisation **reduces stress and increases confidence** (Baird et al., 2019).

# Assessment structure and dropout rate

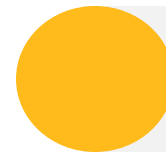
- Mazrekaj & De-Witte (2020) assert that students enrolled in modular education have a **lower probability of dropping** out than students enrolled in linear education.
- The research acknowledged that the second certification may lead to a regular feeling of success resulting in an **increase in self-confidence** and the frequent feedback may result in an extrinsic drive for students to continue pursuing further education.
- Consequently, modular education may be an important tool to enable students of foreign origin who are vulnerable to school as they typically face a difficult socio-economic home and school environment (Baert & Cockx, 2013; Mazrekaj & De-Witte, 2020).

# Resit culture



## In favour of modular

- ✓ Common perception is that the modular system perpetuates resit culture. Others say it enables students to develop intellectual maturity and a sophisticated skillset to progress.
- ✓ Rodeiro and Nadas (2012) highlight the significant improvement in marks/grades between the first and second attempt of sitting a module\*



## In favour of linear

- ✓ Taverner and Wright (1997) identified that students cannot be expected to excel in earlier sittings in comparison to later sittings.
- ✓ This reveals that students may be disadvantaged if they enter for an examination before being intellectually ready and therefore the linear structure is better suited for success.



# Assessment Structure and Tier of Entry

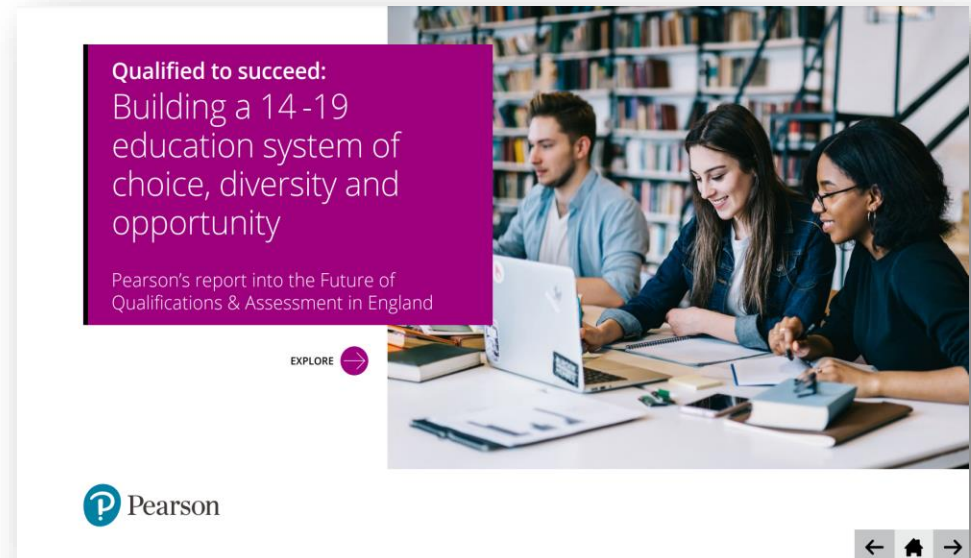
Tier decisions are driven by multiple factors in addition to linear/modular, such as subject content.

Teacher led entry decisions: it is important to be aware of bias when making tier entries, and this has been shown to have impact on entry patterns.

<b>Reasons for foundation tier entry using a linear route</b>	<b>How could this change with the introduction of modular?</b>
Reduced opportunities to resit	More opportunities to resit, and try a different tier
Increased exam load for students	Modular allows students to spread the exam burden, and therefore the cognitive load

# Pearson's report into the Future of Qualifications & Assessment

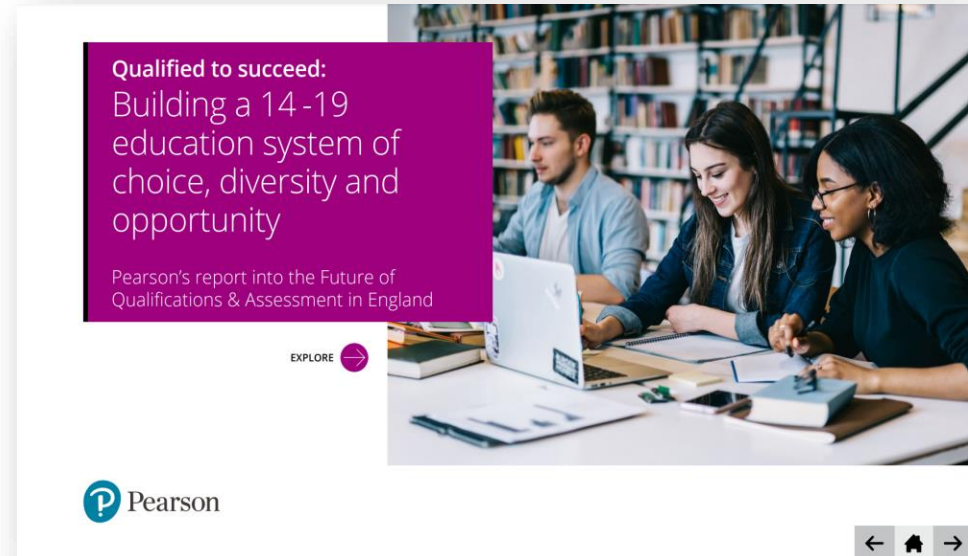
- 01** Make GCSEs work better for all learners. They are versatile and valued qualifications, but there is room for innovation.
- 02** Set out a coherent curriculum framework: One linking expected outcomes to the 'learning journey' of students.
- 03** Shift wholesale curriculum and qualification reform to a model of continuous, evidence-based improvement.
- 04** Create greater diversity and representation in curriculum that reflects young people's lives, to better engage them in learning.
- 05** Assess the right skills in the right way, enabling learners to highlight their strengths and successes.
- 06** Provide more incentives for employers to engage with educators and strengthen teachers' capacity to bring work themes into the classroom. Careers should inspire young people.
- 07** Accelerate the digital transformation programme, bringing all parts of the system together to realise the opportunities that technology can bring to the education experience.



# Pearson's view: The future of qualifications and assessment

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

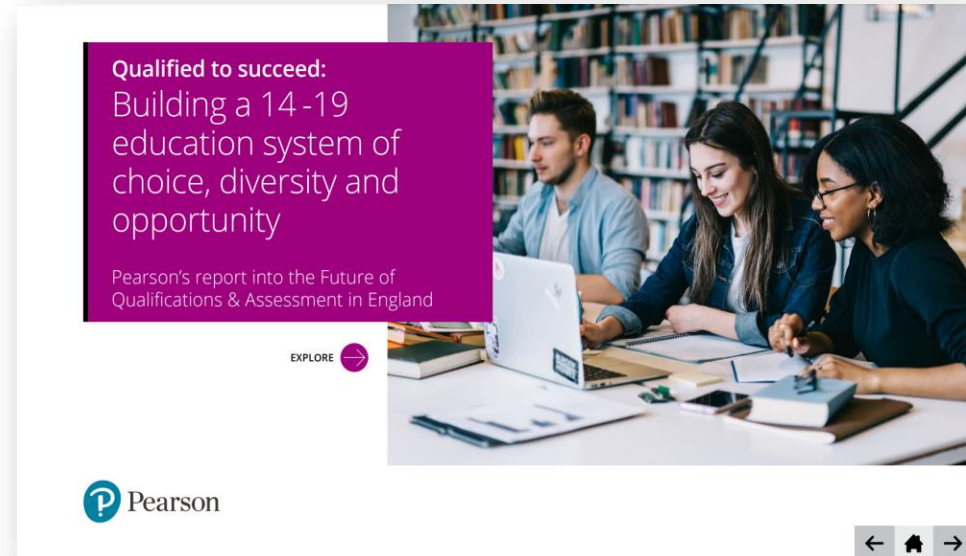
- Recommendation 1



# Pearson's view: The future of qualifications and assessment

Question for you...

Having heard about our report and our view, is there anything you really strongly agree with, or is there anything you think we should be considering that we aren't?



# Our innovation in next generation assessment: Modular qualifications

## 01

### Leading the way with choice

We are the only awarding body to offer a modular route for International GCSEs as an alternative to the linear assessment route. Our modular International A levels are already taken by students worldwide.



## 02

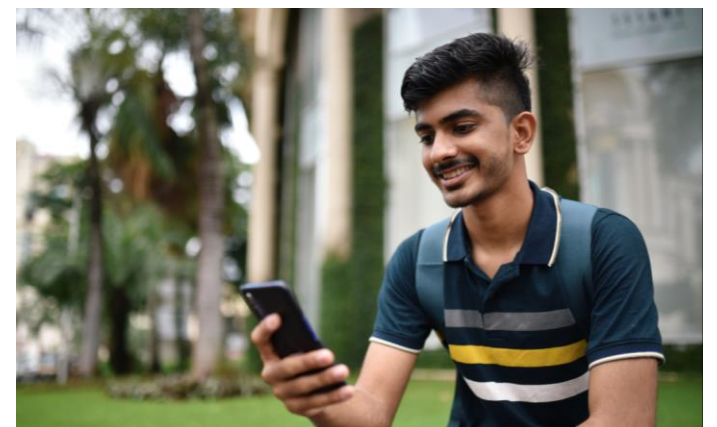
### Meeting students' needs

A modular route offers a sensible and authentic form of assessment that reflects how today's students sit other high stakes assessments in their lives, e.g., language proficiency or driving tests.

## 03

### And supporting student success

Whichever route you choose, the exams take the same amount of time, teachers spend the same amount of time teaching, and everyone has the best chance of success at international GCSE.



# Why a choice of linear or modular assessment?

The secret of International GCSE success is different for every student.

Doing all the assessment at the end works well for many (linear)

But we know that spreading the exam pressure works better for others (modular)

The linear journey remains exactly as it is, two years of study with exams at the end

The modular route breaks the journey into units, with an exam at the end of each unit

Whichever route you choose, the exams take the same amount of time, teachers spend the same amount of time teaching, and everyone has the best chance of success at international GCSE.

# Modular or linear: the **choice** is yours

If you're happy with the linear approach, there is no pressure to move to the modular route; our linear International GCSEs will continue to be offered and taken widely by students around the world.

## Modular route

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Unit assessments can be taken over multiple exam series.

Grades are calculated on raw marks which are then converted to a UMS (Uniform Mark Scale).

Students can re-sit individual units in any exam series.

Once a student has all their unit results, they can 'cash in' these results for their grade.

A modular route  
is only offered  
by Pearson  
Edexcel at  
International  
GCSE

## Linear route

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Assessments for all units are taken together in one exam series.

Grades are calculated on raw marks only.

Students can re-sit assessments for all units together in one exam series.

The grade students receive are calculated at the end of the exam series in which they sat their assessments.

# A choice at 14-16 GCSE / International GCSE

	GCSE	International GCSE	
Assessment structure	Linear	Linear	Modular
Guided Learning Hours	120	120	120
Grading	9 – 1	9 – 1	9 – 1
Subjects	37	37	13
Paper-based assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes
Onscreen assessment	1 subject	8 subjects	8 subjects



# A choice at 16-18 A Level / International A Level

	A Level	International AS/A Level
Assessment structure	Linear	Modular
Guided Learning Hours	360	360
Grading	A*-G	A*-G
Subjects	37	21
Paper-based assessment	Yes	Yes
Onscreen assessment	No	Yes (English)

# The benefits of a modular approach

## Students



- ✓ Reduces students' mental load and stress by allowing them to focus on one year of curriculum at a time and spreads out their exams over 2 years.
- ✓ Provides more opportunities to demonstrate their skills and abilities and optimise feedback to improve their performance.
- ✓ Allows them to take exams when they're ready, like they do with other tests, and take advantage of multiple re-sit opportunities.

## Educators & Parents



- ✓ Provides teachers with rich mid-cycle data on learner performance via post-exam analysis support tools such as Results Plus.
- ✓ Eases the pressures faced by exam officers as it allows international schools to spread the exam admin burden.
- ✓ 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

All units can be treated separately, and they can be taken in any International GCSE exam series.

All exam papers for modular International GCSEs are at the same standard as the exam papers on the linear route.

## No time limits to the qualification

Students can take and re-sit 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 'exchange' those for a grade – this is called 'cashing in'. To cash in, all units must have been entered.



# Question

If you were implementing modular assessments in your school, are there any other benefits or considerations that you think would be important to discuss?

# The feedback from educators so far

(Having this) choice would give us the opportunity to give every child access to education and create the best chance of success.

Educator, Kenya

Repeating one particular paper instead of two papers will make it easier for students to achieve better grades.

Educator, Bangladesh

(A benefit would be) banking learning in Year 1 for the transient student population.

Educator, Spain

(Providing students with the opportunity to take) earlier modules will help indicate accuracy of predictions.

Educator, Singapore

The flexibility is more suited to the type of students we have at the school.

Educator, Saudi Arabia

With increased inflation in the country, this option offers financial relief for parents.

Educator, Pakistan

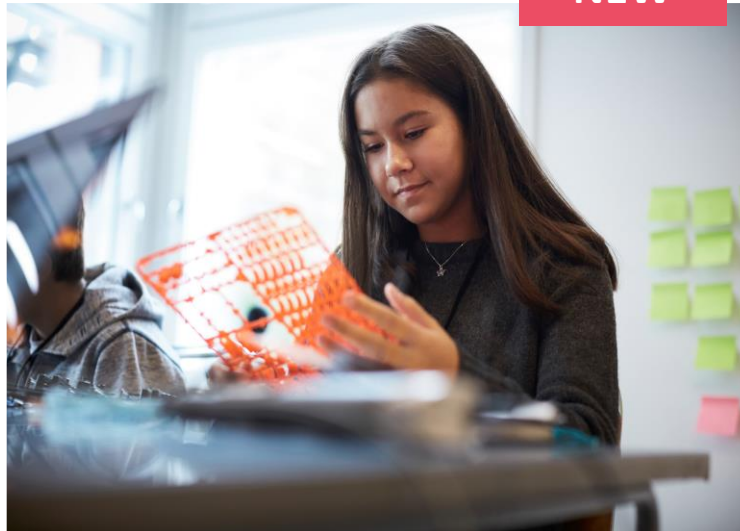
# NEW for Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

NEW



A choice of  
paper-based or  
onscreen assessment

NEW



A choice of  
linear or  
modular assessment

NEW



More choice of  
support with  
Teaching Hubs

Pearson Edexcel is the only awarding organisation to offer onscreen assessment and modular assessment for International GCSE

# I'm interested! What do I do next?



Visit our website

Want to know more about our International GCSE? [Visit our website](#) to find our specifications and sample materials to help you understand the structure and content of each of our qualifications.



Stay in touch

Interested in the modular route but not ready to move any subjects yet? That's fine! Fill in this [expression of interest form](#) and we will keep you updated until you're ready.



Contact our local team

If you are an existing Pearson Edexcel school and you would like to switch one of your subjects to the modular route, [contact your local Pearson representative](#) to help you make the move.



Start your switch

If you are not yet with Pearson Edexcel and you would like to switch one of your subjects to the modular route, complete our [expression of interest form](#) and we'll be in touch to get the process started!



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