



Making the grade?

A major overhaul of the GCSE marking system could lead to fewer grades being available, a new report suggests. **NICOLA WEATHERALL** takes a look at the issue.

FOR many, they are the first major milestone in life. They cause stress-induced sleepless nights, fall-outs with parents and they could determine your future career path.

But a new report out this week says GCSEs should be given a major shake-up so they are fit for purpose for today's students.

The exams regulator Ofqual has indicated it wants to look at whether GCSE

grades should still range from A* to G.

Education expert Professor Dylan Wiliam, who started his career at Durham University, believes the current system is flawed, because it is based on the old O-level and CSE system, introduced 50 years ago.

Under that system O-levels were graded A to C, and CSEs were grades one to five. A grade one was equivalent to an O-level grade C, with the others equal to grades D to G.

Prof Wiliam said: "In those days a grade F was the national average in the CSEs. What would be more appropriate to have is a percentage score with a measurement error. The public would understand that."

Under this system, students would get a mark between nought and 100, along with a given margin of error. For example, a candidate could score 60% plus or minus 15%.

Prof Wiliam argues that the grading

system as it stands now is worth less than before.

He even breaks the big education taboo by admitting he thinks exams have become "slightly easier", though also conceding pupils could be "getting brighter".

"GCSEs are becoming increasingly irrelevant in a three to 19 education system," he added. "Schools spend more on examining kids than