# UK exam board launches world’s first AI International GCSE and A Level to bridge digital skills gap



A UK-based exam board has made a significant leap in educational offerings by introducing the world’s first International GCSE and A Level qualifications in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Spearheaded by the Learning Resource Network (LRN), this pioneering initiative outlines a structured curriculum aimed at students aged 14 to 19, available through approved schools across the globe. With the ever-increasing relevance of AI in various industries, this qualification aims to equip learners with a substantial understanding of AI concepts, applications, and ethical dilemmas, paralleling the academic weight traditionally held by subjects like Mathematics and Physics.

Dr Muhammad Zohaib Tariq, the Chief Executive of LRN, accentuated the forward-thinking nature of this development, stating, “This is Britain taking the lead in AI education. By launching the world’s first full school qualification in Artificial Intelligence, we’re setting a global standard — and giving students everywhere the chance to build strong academic foundations for the AI-powered future.” The introduction of these qualifications underscores a growing recognition within education systems worldwide about the need to integrate AI into mainstream curricula.

The structure of the International GCSE in AI encompasses foundational topics such as machine learning, rule-based systems, robotics, and the ethics surrounding AI technologies. Building on this foundation, the International A Level offers deeper dives into advanced subjects including neural networks, natural language processing, and the legal implications of AI. Importantly, both levels require candidates to engage with both written and practical assessments, ensuring a robust understanding of both theoretical concepts and their practical applications.

This development arrives at a time when there is an alarming digital skills gap, particularly in AI-related fields. Research from UK government and industry sources indicates that the demand for professionals proficient in AI is significantly outpacing supply. Professor David B. Tann, Vice Provost (Technology) at the University of East London, noted that creating an International A Level in AI is an innovative strategy to furnish students with essential skills for a tech-driven future—a move that could enhance their employability and academic prospects. Moreover, Tann suggested that these qualifications might also serve to improve access for underrepresented student demographics, further diversifying the field of tech.

The international reception of LRN’s innovative qualifications has been encouraging, with schools in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa already expressing interest. Dr Tariq pointed out that by providing a complete qualification rather than a mere module, the initiative establishes a new precedent for school-level AI education on a global scale.

In context, the introduction of these qualifications aligns with broader trends in the educational landscape where digital assessments and AI integration are becoming increasingly pivotal. For instance, Cambridge University Press & Assessment recently began trials for digital versions of its qualifications, exploring how technology can enhance assessment processes. Furthermore, exam boards such as OCR and AQA are also proactively incorporating AI into their marking systems, signalling a transformative shift in how student performance is evaluated.

While the dialogue around AI’s role in education continues to evolve, debates have emerged surrounding the potential use of tools like ChatGPT in assessments. Some educators advocate for responsible AI usage, emphasising its potential to complement traditional learning, while others raise concerns regarding academic integrity. As such discussions unfold, it becomes increasingly vital for educational institutions to establish clear guidelines governing the integration of AI technologies within assessment frameworks.

Ultimately, LRN's groundbreaking qualifications in AI represent not only a crucial step towards preparing students for future careers but also a response to the urgent demand for digital skills in an AI-centric world. As educational institutions adapt to these changes, the balance between technological engagement and traditional learning will be fundamental in shaping the next generation of innovators.

**Reference Map**

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/), [[2]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/), [[2]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/), [[2]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/)
7. Paragraph 7: [[3]](https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/news/news-details/view/trials-of-digital-cambridge-igcse-and-international-a-levels-begin-20230203/), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/tech/gcse-england-association-of-school-and-college-leaders-fortnite-department-for-education-b1125081.html), [[5]](https://inews.co.uk/news/education/exam-regulator-ai-ofqual-mark-gcses-a-levels-383654), [[6]](https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/gcses-2024-exam-board-trial-ai-summer-exams), [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/03/03/students-could-allowed-use-chatgpt-gcses-a-levels/)
8. Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/uk-exam-board-launches-first-international-gcse-and-a-level-in-artificial-intelligence/> - The Learning Resource Network (LRN), a UK-based exam board, has introduced the world's first International GCSE and A Level qualifications in Artificial Intelligence (AI). These programs aim to provide students aged 14–19 with a comprehensive understanding of AI concepts, applications, and ethical considerations. The qualifications are equivalent in academic weight to traditional subjects like Mathematics or Physics and are available internationally. Dr. Muhammad Zohaib Tariq, Chief Executive of LRN, emphasized the initiative's role in setting a global standard for AI education and preparing students for an AI-driven future.
3. <https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/news/news-details/view/trials-of-digital-cambridge-igcse-and-international-a-levels-begin-20230203/> - Cambridge University Press & Assessment has initiated trials for digital versions of Cambridge IGCSE and International A Level exams. Starting in February 2023, thousands of students will participate in on-screen mock exams for subjects like English and History. These trials aim to explore the potential of digital assessments, offering more flexible and personalized options for students worldwide. The results from these trials will inform the future of digital examinations in the Cambridge International curriculum.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/tech/gcse-england-association-of-school-and-college-leaders-fortnite-department-for-education-b1125081.html> - In December 2023, the exam board OCR announced plans to offer a digitally assessed GCSE in Computer Science for students starting their courses in 2025. This initiative marks a significant step towards digital assessments in the UK education system. Schools will have the option to choose between paper-based and digital assessments, depending on their infrastructure and preferences. The move aims to provide a more authentic evaluation of students' programming skills and knowledge in the digital age.
5. <https://inews.co.uk/news/education/exam-regulator-ai-ofqual-mark-gcses-a-levels-383654> - In November 2024, Ofqual, the UK's exam regulator, announced plans to test the use of artificial intelligence in marking GCSEs and A Levels. The initiative involves launching an AI 'competition' to assess whether machines can grade GCSE English Language essays to the same standard as human examiners. This exploration into AI-assisted marking seeks to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of the assessment process in the UK's education system.
6. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/gcses-2024-exam-board-trial-ai-summer-exams> - In March 2024, AQA, England's largest exam board, revealed plans to trial the use of artificial intelligence in GCSE and A-Level exams. The trial aims to use AI for 'quality assurance' in marking, comparing AI-generated marks with those of senior human markers. This initiative seeks to identify and correct any inconsistencies in the marking process, potentially revolutionizing the way assessments are conducted in the UK education system.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/03/03/students-could-allowed-use-chatgpt-gcses-a-levels/> - In March 2023, discussions emerged about the potential for students to use AI tools like ChatGPT during GCSEs and A-Levels. While some academics advocated for responsible use, emphasizing the benefits of AI in education, others expressed concerns about academic integrity. The debate highlights the growing role of AI in education and the need for clear guidelines on its use during assessments.