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HRUC and Pearson to trial new approach to post-16 GCSE maths resits

A year-long trial aims to improve confidence, reduce exam pressure and better support outcomes and experiences for thousands of students trapped in the repeated resit cycle.

HRUC (Harrow, Richmond and Uxbridge Colleges), a major further education provider, has announced a collaboration with Pearson, the world's lifelong learning company, to trial an alternative assessment model for post-16 GCSE maths resits.

The innovative trial will explore a unitised format in which GCSE maths content is delivered and assessed in three distinct stages throughout the year. Students at HRUC will sit these assessments during mock periods in December 2025, January and March 2026, before taking the full linear GCSE qualification in the summer.

Response to a critical challenge

The collaboration is a direct response to the critical challenge in post-16 maths resits, where just 17% of students in England achieve a grade 4, leaving many in a demoralising cycle of repeated failures. Data from Pearson's 2025 School Report, which gathered insights from over 14,000 tutors, teachers and students, revealed the stark reality:

- 62% of students feel like they are going backwards when resitting the same content,
- While only 31% of tutors believe current resits offer a genuine second chance to succeed.

The trial aims to give students the opportunity to demonstrate progress and mastery in stages, recognising achievement along the way and building self-belief through more focused, less overwhelming assessments. The approach also seeks to reduce the emotional and logistical pressures associated with traditional resits, and ultimately, shorten the time students spend in these cycles.

Groundbreaking trial

Alastair Mullins, Assistant Principal at HRUC, shared his view on a potential unitised approach in future: “At HRUC, we are hugely excited to be working with Pearson on this groundbreaking trial - one that has huge potential to shape the future of GCSE maths resits.

“By allowing learners to make steady progress towards a grade 4, we can help them build motivation and self-assurance along the way. Crucially, this can be done without lowering standards. In fact, by giving students more achievable milestones, we believe it will encourage them to work harder, deepen their understanding, and reach the same level of competence as they would through the current linear system.”

Exploring a more effective future

Speaking about the trial, Lucy Chowns, Head of Maths for Pearson, said: "HRUC, like many others, have recognised that current assessment methods aren't working for their GCSE resit students. We're committed to rethinking what post-16 maths should look like - prioritising what works best for the students, supporting the further education environment, and making sure we do right by the subject itself.

“By trialling an approach that is grounded in real, classroom experience, we aim to see whether it can build student confidence and lead to better outcomes. Just as importantly, we'll learn how this model affects the learning experience for students and the teaching experience for tutors. Together with HRUC, we're determined to explore a more effective future for post-16 maths: one that puts the needs of students firmly at the centre.”

Drawing inspiration from Pearson's International GCSE Mathematics, which successfully uses a similar structure to assess content across separate sittings, the trial has been tailored specifically for the unique challenges of the post-16 resit context, where motivation and anxiety often present as additional barriers to success.

Resit Rethink

With Pearson's support, HRUC tutors will adapt their teaching approaches to align with the phased assessment model while ensuring comprehensive coverage of GCSE content. The work, rooted in real classroom experience and part of Pearson's Resit Rethink campaign, represents a significant investment in understanding how assessment reform could support the thousands of young people who continue to struggle with traditional maths resits each year.

For full story: [News](#)

Note to editors: Following a merger in 2023, HRUC (Harrow, Richmond and Uxbridge Colleges) has rapidly evolved into a thriving educational hub with three colleges and a strong apprenticeship provision.

The diverse and aspiring college group now serves nearly 15,000 learners across west and south London, offering a range of courses, including A-Levels vocational programmes, T-Levels, and apprenticeships. The College group also proudly supports over 850 learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), providing tailored programmes and internships to help them thrive.

