

► Subject Information

Two copies of a poster giving details of subject contributions for display in staff room areas are **enclosed with this issue of AQA Examinations Update**.

► GCSE Examinations

Grading of GCSEs in vocational subjects

As announced in a JCQ Notice to Centres in September 2006, Double Award GCSEs in vocational subjects will be graded on a fifteen-point scale starting in summer 2008.

This scale is:

A*A*, A*A, AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE, EF, FF, FG, GG (and U).

This will replace the previous eight-point scale:

A*A*, AA, BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, GG (and U).

For example, candidates whose uniform mark is in the range corresponding to Grade BB in the previous scale will receive Grade AB (if their uniform mark is in the upper half of the range) or Grade BB (if their uniform mark is in the lower half of the range). Therefore, candidates who just fail to gain two A grades will gain one A grade and one B grade instead of the previous two B grades.

New GCSEs – register now for updates

GCSEs are being revised for first teaching in September 2009. This includes all subjects except English, Maths and ICT (which will be revised for first teaching September 2010) and GCSE Science (which has recently been revised). We are currently preparing draft specifications to submit to QCA at the end of March 2008 and we will publish these drafts on our website in April 2008.

We would like to keep you up-to-date with developments in these new GCSEs. To receive e-mail updates, a copy of the final printed specification, specimen materials, Teacher Resource Bank material and a binder to keep it in, simply register with Ask AQA.

GCSE French B (Modular) (4652)

GCSE German B (Modular) (4662)

GCSE Spanish B (Modular) (4692)

Please remember that, with effect from summer 2008, the Listening Tests for this specification will be provided on CDs. Although CDs will be the default medium, you will be given the opportunity, until further notice, to request the Listening Tests on cassette tapes. Where CDs are used, the Foundation and Higher Tier tests will be provided on separate disks. Where a tape is requested, the Foundation Tier test will be recorded on side A and the Higher Tier test recorded on side B.

In April 2007 we wrote to Exams Officers inviting you to request cassettes if your centre requires them. Centres which have not already responded to this invitation but who would prefer to receive cassettes for summer 2008 should telephone the Modern Foreign Languages Department on 01423 534381.

Science A (4461)
Science B (4462)
Additional Science (4463)
Biology (4411)
Chemistry (4421)
Physics (4451)

Changes to the entry and aggregation rules for GCSE Sciences

Following comments from centres, we are making changes to the entry and aggregation rules for GCSE Sciences.

- Change 1: only one result is used up on aggregation where a candidate has two or more results for a unit
- Change 2: certification of subject awards with common units is allowed in the same series.

Change 1: Using up one result only on aggregation

When a candidate has two or more results for a unit, aggregation of a subject award uses up only one of the results (the best one) for that unit. This is different from information given previously which stated that all unit results are used up by aggregation. This change is being introduced retrospectively so that it applies to candidates certificating any of the GCSE Sciences from June 2007 onwards.

Change 2: Allowing certification of subject awards with common units in the same series

Certification of the following combinations of subject awards in the same series is now allowed:

- Science A (4461) **or** Science B (4462) with any of
Biology (4411)
Chemistry (4421)
Physics (4451)
- Additional Science (4463) with any of
Biology (4411)
Chemistry (4421)
Physics (4451)

This change applies from June 2008 onwards. This is the first exam series in which subject awards in Additional Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics awards are available.

Candidates are allowed to claim combinations of these awards on the following basis

- candidates must have at least two separate results for the common unit required in both of the two awards (eg Biology 1 for GCSE Science and GCSE Biology)
- the Science award (and/or the Additional Science award) will be graded first
- separate science awards (Biology, Chemistry, Physics) will be graded using the remaining units.

The rules for GCSE Sciences are explained in a document Entry, *aggregation and certification rules for the new GCSE Sciences – Guidance for AQA centres*. The document is being updated to include these changes, and the changes are being sidelined. The document is on the AQA Website at <http://www.aqa.org.uk/qual/gcse/newscience/examination.php>

For further information telephone: 01483 477736 or use our on-line enquiry service Ask AQA.

► GCE Examinations

Nine-unit award in Applied GCE

Some candidates who embark on an Advanced Double Award qualification (twelve units) may complete only nine units, sufficient for Advanced Subsidiary Double Award and for Advanced Single Award but not for Advanced Double Award. For example, a candidate might take AS Double Award in the first year of a two-year course but then drop down to Advanced Single Award in the second year. Although this candidate is able to certificate both of these six-unit qualifications, they contain common units, and there is no award which recognises the candidate's overall achievement.

The regulators have agreed to the creation of a nine-unit award to meet the needs of candidates in this situation. The title of the qualification will be 'Advanced GCE with Advanced Subsidiary GCE (Additional)'. It will be available in the June 2008 and subsequent series.

The qualification will be graded on a nine-grade scale: AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE. From 2010 there will also be a grade A*A, awarded to candidates who achieve a grade AA on the full qualification and at least 90% of the maximum uniform mark on the aggregate of the three A2 units.

For a candidate to be awarded this qualification, an entry must be made in the same way as for any other qualification. There is no charge for entries made in the entry period or in the four-week period following the publication of results. It is expected that the qualification will be claimed only in exceptional circumstances as a fall-back where candidates have been unable to complete the Advanced Double Award.

Full details will be in the 2010 specifications which will be published on the AQA Website in April 2008.

Grade A* in GCE and Applied GCE

The rules for the award of A* (and the corresponding double grades in Applied GCE) in the June 2010 and subsequent series have now been clarified.

GCE A-level qualifications will be graded on a six-point scale: A*, A, B, C, D, E. To be awarded an A* (except in Mathematics and Further Mathematics), candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A-level qualification and at least 90% of the maximum uniform mark on the aggregate of the A2 units.

To be awarded an A* in Mathematics, candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A-level qualification and at least 90% of the maximum uniform mark on the aggregate of MPC3 and MPC4. To be awarded an A* in Further Mathematics, candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A-level qualification and at least 90% of the maximum uniform mark on the aggregate of the three best A2 units. The award of A* in Pure Mathematics follows the same rule as in non-mathematics subjects.

Applied GCE Double Award A-level qualifications will be graded on an eleven-point scale: A*A*, A*A, AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE. To be awarded an A*A*, candidates will need to achieve a grade AA on the full Double Award A-level qualification and at least 90% of the maximum uniform mark on the aggregate of the A2 units. To be awarded an A*A, candidates will need to achieve a grade AA on the full Double Award A-level qualification and at least 90% of the maximum uniform mark on the aggregate of the three best A2 units.

Applied GCE A-level with AS (additional) qualifications ('nine-unit' qualifications) will be graded on a ten-point scale: A*A, AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE. To be awarded an A*A, candidates will need to achieve a grade AA on the full nine-unit qualification and at least 90% of the maximum uniform mark on the aggregate of the three A2 units.

Full details will be in the 2010 specifications which will be published on the AQA Website in April 2008.

New GCEs – Free Teacher Resource Bank items now available

The first items in the Teacher Resource Banks for our new A-levels are now published on our website. Printed copies have been sent to all centres that currently enter the specifications and to all teachers who have registered on Ask AQA.

The Teacher Resource Bank is a flexible set of resources designed to help teach our A-levels. It starts with a number of key documents and builds into a comprehensive support pack that fits conveniently into the specification binder.

A copy of the Teacher Resource Bank poster and a reply card to request copies are **enclosed with this issue of AQA Examinations Update**. However we would encourage teachers to register with Ask AQA to receive both printed and electronic copies plus automatic subject updates.

Mathematics (5361) Advanced Subsidiary

Mathematics (6361) Advanced

Pure Mathematics (5366) Advanced Subsidiary

Pure Mathematics (6366) Advanced

Further Mathematics (5371) Advanced Subsidiary

Further Mathematics (6371) Advanced

Aggregating GCE Mathematics and GCE Further Mathematics

Various technical adjustments for aggregating GCE Mathematics and GCE Further Mathematics will come in to effect from summer 2008. These will apply to all candidates taking both AS or A-level Further Mathematics and AS or A-level Mathematics. Details of these changes can be found on the GCE Mathematics Noticeboard page in the *Qualifications* section of the AQA Website.

Please note that, as a result of these changes, it will no longer be necessary for such candidates to wait until the end of the course before certificating. However, it will be necessary for candidates to re-enter previously certificated qualifications at the end of the course to ensure they receive their optimal grades.

Specification changes

Please note that there are no plans to change the specifications for GCE Mathematics, Pure Mathematics or Further Mathematics until 2011. New specifications for these qualifications are expected to be available for first teaching from September 2011. Information on the qualifications currently being piloted as part of the 14 – 19 Curriculum Pathways Project in Mathematics is available in the *Developments/Maths pathways* section of the AQA Website.

Formulae and statistical tables

Please remember that the formulae and statistical tables to be used in the above examinations are **not** issued automatically. The **blue Formulae Booklet**, first issued in September 2004, is required for these examinations. If you need copies of the booklet, you should contact AQA Logistics Centre (Guildford), Deacon Field Office, Stag Hill House, Guildford, GU2 7XJ, **tel:** 0870 410 1036, **fax:** 01483 452819, by **Monday 28 April** for examinations in the May/June 2008 series. The order form for 2008 copies accompanies this despatch as stated in section 5.3 or can be downloaded using the *order form* link from the *Publications/Order by post* section of the AQA Website.

Use of Mathematics (5351) Advanced Subsidiary

(See Other Qualifications)

Statistics (5381) Advanced Subsidiary Statistics (6381) Advanced

Specification changes

Please note that there are no plans to change the specification for GCE Statistics until 2011. New specifications for these qualifications are expected to be available for first teaching from September 2011.

Formulae and statistical tables

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► Key Skills Examinations

Basic Skills (8990) Key Skills (9900) (KS2004) Wider Key Skills (9970) (KS2004)

Cancellation of on-screen tests of Key and Basic Skills: Levels 1 and 2

You may be aware that, as from the March 2008 series, AQA was intending to offer Key and Basic Skills tests on-screen as well as the traditional paper-based test.

We are sorry to inform you that we will not now be offering on-screen tests in the Key and Basic Skills in the foreseeable future. We have informed centres of this by letter. We apologise for any inconvenience caused as a result of this change of policy.

Please note that paper-based tests will go ahead as usual. Should you wish to make entries for these tests, this may be done in the usual way via the Entries Department at AQA.

Administration Handbook for Key Skills

The new *Administration Handbook* for Key Skills 2008, version 1.1, is now available from the *Qualifications/Other exams/Key Skills* section of the AQA Website. It includes a minor amendment to the Proxy Qualifications for Key Skills which QCA has made and these are listed in Appendix A of the *Handbook*. The qualification which has been added to the proxy list is:

GCSE Use of Mathematics

This qualification exempts a candidate from Application of Number as follows:

Grades A* - C: Levels 1 and 2 of the test

Grades D – G: Level 1 of the test.

Administration Handbook for the Wider Key Skills

The *Administration Handbook* for Wider Key Skills 2008, version 1.0, has also been updated and is available from the *Qualifications/Other exams/Key Skills* section of the AQA Website.

► Entry Level Certificate

Design and Technology (4941-4945), (4947)

Clarification of the wording in the specification for 2008 and 2009 and *Instructions and Guidance for Teachers* document

Please note that there have been clarifications to the specification and *Instructions and Guidance for Teachers* document.

The amendments have been made to the website version of the specification and *Instructions and Guidance for Teachers* document for 2008 and 2009.

Removal of Grade Boundaries

Please note the change to Section 31.1 'Assessment Criteria'. From 2008 onwards, the Entry Level Certificate: Design and Technology specification will not include specified grade boundary information giving a 'marks to level' ratio.

The grade boundaries for this subject will be set by AQA in an annual Awarding Meeting.

You may already have received *Candidate Record Forms* for the 2008 series, which, due to this change, will contain out-of-date information. Please ensure you use the updated version of the *Candidate Record Forms* which are available from the *Administration/Procedures/Coursework administration* section of the AQA Website.

Removal of the 4 Unit Requirement

Please note the change to Section 37.4 'Minimum Requirements'. From 2008 onwards, candidates who fail to submit the required 4 units (2 Compulsory and 2 Optional) for the Entry Level Certificate: Design and Technology specification **will still be eligible for an award**.

Candidates will now be able to submit a fewer number of units for award, though the Level of Award will be consequently lower.

All the above changes have been made to the 2008 and 2009 versions of the Entry Level Certificate: Design and Technology specification on the AQA Website.

► Other Qualifications

Use of Mathematics (5351) Advanced Subsidiary Free-Standing Mathematics Qualifications (FSMQ)

A revised AS qualification and **new A-level in Use of Mathematics**, using Advanced Level FSMQs, will be **piloted** from September 2008, alongside the existing AS Use of Mathematics. Centres interested in joining this pilot are invited to contact the subject department by **e-mail**: mathspathways@aqa.org.uk or by telephone **on** 01483 477752. Information on the qualifications being piloted as part of the 14–19 Curriculum Pathways Project in Mathematics is available in the *Developments/Maths pathways* section of the AQA Website. The existing AS Use of Mathematics (5351) will continue, unchanged, until 2011 for those not involved in the pilot scheme.

Preparation for Working Life (4800)

Please note that the use of a calculator is permitted for the 2008 examination paper.

Enterprise and Employability (4805)

The examination in the May/June 2008 examination series is timetabled on **Wednesday 14 May 2008 am** session.

Please note that the use of a calculator is permitted for the examination paper. Any calculation(s) will be of a similar standard to Question 13 in the specimen paper (2008).