

► Subject Information

Have your say on the proposed revisions for GCSEs in English, Mathematics and ICT!

The revised draft criteria and associated documents for the new GCSE specifications in English, Mathematics and ICT, for first teaching from September 2010, are now available on the QCA Website qca.org.uk/qca_18259.aspx. QCA is carrying out an online consultation on these subject criteria between **Thursday 26 June** and **Tuesday 30 September 2008**.

AQA will be formulating its own response, based on feedback from practising teachers and senior examiners. We would, however, encourage all teachers to study these documents carefully and to participate in this consultation so that those who will be responsible for delivering these revised qualifications have had an input in shaping the criteria on which they are based.

The draft GCSE criteria should be studied in conjunction with the relevant Functional Skills Standards (qca.org.uk/qca_15565.aspx) as 'in order to qualify for the award of grades A*–C in England, candidates must achieve a functional skills qualification at level 2 in that subject'.

AQA would be more than happy to receive a copy of the feedback you provide to QCA or any comments you may have about the criteria via the following e-mail addresses:

fbenglish-2010@qca.org.uk

fbmaths-2010@qca.org.uk

fbict-2010@qca.org.uk

AQA's specifications for these new GCSEs will be available at least twelve months in advance of teaching for the specifications.

Subject Information poster

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

Media Studies (3571)

Further guidance for the Controlled Test topic 2009 (Quiz Shows) is now available to view and/or download from the *Qualifications/GCSEs/Media Studies* section of the AQA Website.

French B (4652)

German B (4662)

Spanish B (4692)

Module 3 Coursework

Please note that the specification and *Candidate Record Form* were revised in 2007 to provide clarification of when to round up half marks when totalling the marks for the two Module 3 Writing assignments.

Half marks are rounded up in the final total only and **not** after each assignment.

The revised version of the specification is available to read/download from the *Qualifications/Languages/GCSE* section of the AQA Website.

The revised *Candidate Record Form* may be accessed from the *Administration/Procedures/Coursework administration/2009* section of the AQA Website.

All centres must use this version of the form and not the version which appears in the hard copy of the specification, issued in 2005.

Psychology (3181)

Teachers' Guide

Page 18, section 5.4 – Evidence and group work

AQA would like to advise teachers of this specification that candidates working in groups to produce their coursework will not be able to access maximum marks in some areas of the assessment criteria. Please ensure that colleagues responsible for this part of the work are aware of this. Candidates may also need to be aware of the assessment regulations.

Science A (4461)

Biology (4411)

Chemistry (4421)

Physics (4451)

Structure of objective tests from November 2008 (Reminder from December Issue 33 of AQA Examinations Update)

From November 2008, a change will be made to the structure of the objective tests which can contribute towards GCSE Science A, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The change affects only Foundation Tier tests.

In future, tests will have one fewer matching question but one more multiple choice question to compensate. This will result in a structure where there are five matching questions followed by four multiple choice questions. The total raw mark will remain at 36.

For further information please **telephone** 01483 477756 or use our online enquiry service *Ask AQA*.

► GCE Examinations

Communication Studies (5626) Advanced Subsidiary (Legacy Specification)

Communication Studies (6626) Advanced

Please note that you can post exchanges of ideas and resources about AQA specifications on our web forum: aqa.org.uk/media_studies_forum/index.php

Media Studies (5571) Advanced Subsidiary (Legacy Specification)
Media Studies (6571) Advanced

The stimulus material for Unit One: Reading the Media (MED1) in January 2009 will be in **moving image** format.

The stimulus material for Unit Six: Comparative Critical Analysis (MED6) in January 2009 will be in **print** format.

Please note that you can post exchanges of ideas and resources about AQA specifications on our web forum:
aqa.org.uk/media_studies_forum/index.php

Media Studies (1571) Advanced Subsidiary (New Specification)

An updated list of *Teacher Resource Bank* materials is available to download from the *Qualifications* section of the AQA Website. Please note: Centres who have chosen AQA as their awarding body for GCE Media Studies in September will automatically be entered on the despatch list for a hard copy of *Teacher Resource Bank* materials. If you would like to register your interest, please contact us at aqa.org.uk/askaqa

Unit 2

Details of the MEST2 brief will be available on the website at the beginning of September. Hard copies will be sent out based on Estimated Entries. Guidance documents are available on our *Teacher Resource Bank* web page.

Please note that you can post exchanges of ideas and resources about AQA specifications on our web forum:
aqa.org.uk/media_studies_forum/index.php

Physics A (2450) (New Specification)
Physics B (2455) (New Specification)**Unit 3****Investigative & Practical Skills – Route X****PHA/B/3/X**

The specifications indicate that the practical and investigative skills in this route will be assessed through:

- Practical Skills Verification (PSV)
- Externally Marked Practical Assignment (EMPA).

The PSV requires teachers to verify candidates' ability to demonstrate safe and skilful practical techniques and make valid and reliable observations.

Candidates following this route must undertake specific practical exercises. They will be required to work individually and carry out five short practical exercises under supervision in the laboratory during normal class time. The exercises will be set by AQA and may be undertaken at any stage during the course at the centre's discretion, either as individual exercises or by organising more than one exercise to be taken at a given time. The candidates must be supervised during the practical work.

One or more of these specified tasks may change from year to year dependent on the content of the EMPA.

The list for the year September 2008 – May 2009 is as follows:

Practical Skills Verification Exercises		
	Exercise	Measuring equipment used
1	Measurement of the I V curve of a component	ammeter, voltmeter
2	Measuring the terminal velocity of a ball falling in oil	stopwatch, metre ruler, set square
3	Measurement of the density of a regular object	vernier callipers, micrometer screw gauge, electronic balance
4	Measurement of the refractive index of a transparent block	protractor, millimetre ruler
5	Using a potential divider with a thermistor as a temperature sensor	thermometer, voltmeter

There is no formal assessment of these exercises. Teachers need to confirm on the *Candidate Record Form*, for each candidate that this requirement has been met. Failure to complete the tick box will lead to a mark of zero being awarded to the candidate for the whole of this unit. Knowledge and understanding of the skills shown in the tasks may be assessed of the EMPA written tests.

The Externally Marked Practical Assignment (EMPA) has a window of opportunity set from **1 March** until the deadline date for the coursework submission.

The details of the EMPA will be supplied well in advance of the window in order for preparations to be made.

► Key Skills Examinations

Basic Skills (8990)

Key Skills (9900) (KS2004)

Wider Key Skills (9970) (KS2004)

Key Skills Information and Communication Technology test Level 3

The QCA data files will be available for downloading by the centre from the QCA Website qca.org.uk, during September/October 2008 for use in 2009 in the Key Skills Information and Communication Technology Level 3 test. These **should** be made available to candidates throughout the year for practice. AQA encourages the use of these data files to support the teaching and learning of skills required in the test. However, candidates must not be given prior knowledge of which data files are to be used in any specific test window.

The front page of the ICT Level 3 test paper specifies the scenario name (folder) and associated data files which are to be used in the test. While all the Level 3 scenarios (folders), should be present in the test area in a read-only format, it is important to note that candidates **use only the data files associated with the specified scenario** (ie in the folder with that name) stated on the paper and should not search for other data files. During the test, candidates must not have access to files other than the test QCA data files.

Basic, Key and Wider Key Skills Newsletter

The latest edition of the newsletter for Basic, Key and Wider Key Skills is available on the AQA Website. If you currently teach in any of these skills, please send us articles, teaching tips and examples of good practice for future editions that you would like to share with other centres. We welcome your ideas and any information that you think would be useful to other teachers of AQA Basic Skills, Key Skills and Wider Key Skills.

If you wish to receive the news and updates by e-mail, please e-mail the Key Skills team **at** keyskills@aqa.org.uk with your details with 'NEWS' in the subject line. If you wish to propose an article for submission in the newsletter, please **e-mail** it to keyskills@aqa.org.uk with 'ARTICLE' in the subject line.

Portfolio Advisers

New centres planning to make entries for the first time in Key Skills or the Wider Key Skills should contact the subject team via **e-mail** keyskills@aqa.org.uk in the first instance so that a Portfolio Adviser may be allocated to the centre to advise on the interpretation of the standards (specification) and on portfolio work throughout the year. This service is free of charge.

Additionally, all the appropriate documentation for Key Skills or the Wider Key Skills may be accessed from the *Qualifications/Other exams/Key Skills* section of the AQA Website.

Centre standardising meetings

A series of centre standardising meetings to assist teachers in the assessment of portfolio work will be held in the autumn term. They will cover the Key Skills of Application of Number, Communication, Information and Communication Technology and the Wider Key Skills. All centres which have previously made entries in these subjects will be invited. A list of these meetings will be available in the *Qualifications/Other exams/Key Skills noticeboard* section of the AQA Website in October.

► Other Qualifications

Chinese (Mandarin) (9968) (FCSE)

French (9964) (FCSE)

German (9966) (FCSE)

Italian (9963) (FCSE)

Spanish (9969) (FCSE)

The assessment materials associated with the FCSE language specifications are available to order from AQA Logistics in Guildford. A copy of the order form is available from the *Publications/Order by post* section of the AQA Website at aqa.org.uk/public/FCSE_2010_ORDER.PDF.

Materials will be despatched to centres in September 2008.

Centres intending to enter students for the FCSE qualification should complete an *Intention to Enter* form by **21 July 2008**. Estimated Entries are due in by **10 October 2008**, with final entries required by **21 February 2009**. Entry codes will be available with the GCSE basedata, available from your Exams Officer.

Teachers of Chinese FCSE should note that in the first year of offering this qualification, eight units only will be available. Advice for teachers is available in the *Qualifications/Languages/FCSE* section of the AQA Website.

Use of Mathematics (5351) Advanced Subsidiary

Free-Standing Mathematics Qualifications (6981-6983) Foundation

Free-Standing Mathematics Qualifications (6984-6988) Intermediate

Free-Standing Mathematics Qualifications (6990-6994) Advanced

From the January 2009 series of examinations onwards, all candidates sitting Free-Standing Mathematics Qualifications will, where appropriate, be expected to give their final answer to three significant figures, unless otherwise stated.