

AQA

Examination of Long Answers

Guide for teachers and students about
our new question paper style and
answer book

V1.4

Executive summary

What's this booklet about?

This booklet provides you and your students with all the information you need to know about changes to examinations with separate question papers and unconstrained answer books. There is a new:

- simplified, two-digit question numbering system
- style of answer book with spaces for students to write the two-digit question numbers.

What's this booklet for?

This booklet is designed to enable teachers to fully prepare students for the changes and ensure they are confident about what is required of them in their examinations.

Who's this booklet for?

This booklet is for teachers and students.

What other support is available on the Examination of Long Answers?

- Guides for:
 - Exams Officers and Invigilators
 - Students
- Question papers showing the new numbering system:
 - summer 2011 question papers can be accessed in Secure Key Materials (until April 2012)
 - specimen question papers can be accessed from the subject pages of aqa.org.uk
- AQA Research papers on the impact and reliability of marking long answers on screen and the new numbering system.

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For more information on these changes, please contact your subject team (see contact details at aqa.org.uk).



New examination technology for marking long answers on screen

The pilots, results and benefits for you and your students

Introduction

We use technology only where we are certain that it:

- provides improvements
- does not adversely affect the quality of our assessments or students' attainments.

We take a great deal of care to ensure that our developments are supported by rigorous research and deliver what you and your students want and need.

This update tells you all that you need to know about the marking of long answers on screen and how our work in this area may affect you and your students.

Background

In June 2009, our examiners marked 2.6 million scripts on screen. We have generally restricted our use of scanned electronic images to the assessment of short or structured answers. Until June 2009, we did not ask our examiners to mark long answers, such as essays, using new software technology.

Pilots

In June 2009, however, we piloted new software which was designed to enable examiners to mark longer answers on screen. Two subjects were involved in this pilot: GCE Classical Civilisation and GCSE History. Both subjects also piloted the use of a new style answer book.

The pilots were successful and demonstrated that the new technology developed for us:

- can accommodate question choice and the variable length of written responses from students
- does not disadvantage students.

In November 2009, we conducted further pilots of the new numbering system and new style answer books in GCSE English A Papers 1F and 1H. We looked carefully at students' experiences in these examinations and have ensured that any necessary adjustments have been made to our assessments in order to fully support students.



The pilots have highlighted the following benefits of using this new technology in examinations:

The new technology....

- supports greater accuracy of marking and quality control, enabling us to:
 - monitor the accuracy and consistency of our examiners' assessments throughout the whole of the marking period, rather than at strategic stages in the process
 - give our examiners regular feedback on their assessments, thereby leading to even more accurate and consistent marking
- helps us to publish results on time
- enables us to collect students' marks for individual questions and offer schools/colleges instant Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA), providing detailed analyses of both students' and schools'/colleges' performance in examinations. (See **Appendix A** for further information on ERA and how to make use of this free service.)
- enables schools/colleges to access annotated scripts (via the Access to Scripts service), so that teachers can see how and where marks have been allocated, and feed this knowledge and information into their delivery of the specification
- enables us to process scripts more quickly and efficiently as a result of a reduction in the number of times that each script is posted. Traditionally, scripts were sent between school/college and examiner, between examiner and senior examiner and between the senior examiner and AQA. Now, schools/colleges send scripts direct to our scanning bureau, who release electronic images to examiners. This reduces further the risk of scripts being delayed or going missing
- strengthens the standardising process by enabling examiners to focus on marking a single question at a time, applying the mark scheme to their allocation of this question with even greater accuracy and consistency, rather than digesting the full mark scheme and applying it to whole scripts
- enables us to total marks awarded automatically, thereby removing any potential for errors in addition
- helps us to ensure that important decisions about grade boundaries are supported by the maximum amount of statistical information available
- enables us to receive improved post examination data analysis. For senior examiners this means that they can see, at a glance, exactly how individual questions have scored so that they can evaluate: how each question type has worked, where students have had problems, vocabulary that may have caused difficulty, etc.

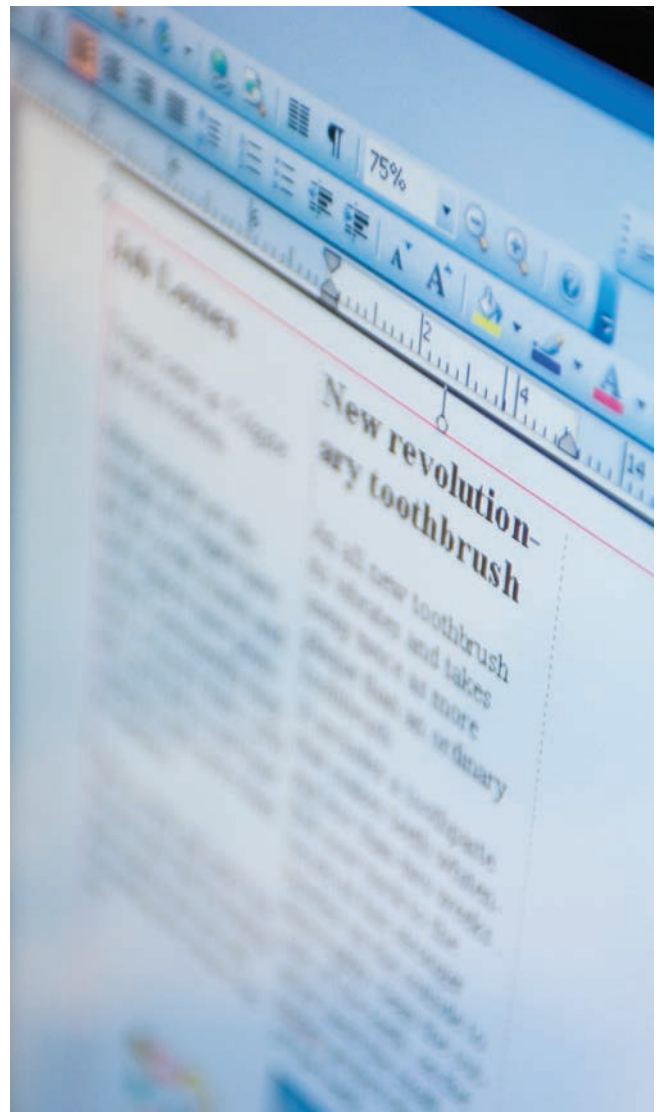
How have our question papers changed?

All of our question papers:

- are typeset in Arial font*, thereby improving accessibility to all students
- require students to write in black ink or black ball point pen. Blue pens are not acceptable. This is to ensure that scanning is as good as it can be, so that all examiners can access and reward appropriately students' answers.

For examinations with separate question papers and answer books, there is a new:

- simplified, two-digit question numbering system
- style of answer book with spaces for students to write the two-digit question numbers.



*Mathematics papers will be typeset largely in Times New Roman font. Formulae, equations and expressions are considered to be more accessible in this font.

The new numbering system can be seen in the specimen question paper in **Appendix B**. The new answer book is shown in **Appendix C**.

The approach taken by components / units in your subject is confirmed on the subject notice boards and on an Excel spreadsheet (which can be organised by component code) published on the Exams Officers pages of aqa.org.uk

Whilst we are improving the style of our question papers, schools/colleges are reassured that the questions themselves will **not** change as a result of our using new technology. They will test the same skills, knowledge and understanding.

The future

Components / units which are already using combined question paper answer books will not, in the vast majority of cases, change format. In general, they are already marked on screen and already enjoy the benefits outlined previously. A small number of our papers are unsuitable for marking using technology and they will, therefore, continue to be marked by our examiners in the traditional manner. Components / units that will experience no changes to their format are confirmed on the subject notice boards and on an Excel spreadsheet (which can be organised by component code) published on the Exams Officers pages of aqa.org.uk

We are aiming to mark the majority of examination components / units on screen, meaning that around 7 million scripts will be marked by examiners using technology. This move will help us to meet the call to modernise examinations.

Next steps

We need you to explain the changes outlined in this booklet to your:

- students
- Examinations Officers
- Invigilators.

These stakeholders must be aware of the changes to our assessment materials so that any queries can be dealt with before the exam. Subject teams will be pleased to offer further advice on the changes outlined.

Thank you for supporting these changes.



Frequently Asked Questions and Answers:

Information for teachers and students working with the new question numbering system and new answer book

Which components / units will be working with the new question numbering system and new answer book?

See the subject notice boards for specification-specific information or the Excel spreadsheet (which can be organised by component code) published on the Exams Officers pages of aqa.org.uk

How can I better understand the changes being made?

New-style question papers can be located on:

- Secure Key Materials (summer 2011 papers are available until April 2012)
- the subject pages of aqa.org.uk (specimen question papers).

Which components / units will *not* be working with the new question numbering system and new answer book?

Components that work with combined question paper answer books will **not** be affected by the changes to the question numbering system. These components are confirmed on the subject notice boards and on an Excel spreadsheet (which can be organised by component code) published on the Exams Officers pages of aqa.org.uk



What is the new question numbering system?

The traditional numbering system has been replaced by a two-digit system. Questions start at 01 and run consecutively throughout the question paper. The table below illustrates how the new question numbering system works.

Traditional numbering system	New long answer numbering system
Question / Topic / Theme 1	Question / Topic / Theme 1
1(a)	01
1(b)	02
Question / Topic / Theme 2	Question / Topic / Theme 2
2(a)	03
2(b)	04
2(c)(i)	05
2(c)(ii)	06
Question / Topic / Theme 3	Question / Topic / Theme 3
3(a)	07
3(b)	08
3(c)(i)	09
3(c)(ii)	10
3(c)(iii)	11
3(d)	12
etc	etc

Why move to this two-digit numbering system?

The simplified two-digit numbering system, which is to be adopted in our examinations using separate question papers and unconstrained answer books, reflects advice received from external organisations and expert bodies such as:

- the British Association for Teachers of the Deaf
- Royal National Institute of Blind People
- the Plain English Campaign.



We draw on advice from a wide range of sources to ensure that our examination materials are accessible to, and support, all our students.

The move away from the current sophisticated numbering system also meets the call to modernise examinations so that they support students' 'real life' experiences of completing, for example, application forms for driving licences, jobs and mortgages, where similar numbering systems are used.

What will the new AQA answer books look like?

The new AQA answer books are similar to those used in subjects with traditional essay-based questions, so the format will be familiar to most students. See **Appendix C** for an example of the new format answer book. Please note: the instructions on the front cover of the new AQA answer books, and the layout of the answer pages, is standard across answer books with 8, 12 and 16 pages.

What are the benefits for students of using the new answer book?

The new answer book offers students greater flexibility in the examination. Students:

- can answer questions in any order
- are able to add further material to an answer or review / rework what has been produced with greater ease, thus avoiding the potential 'loss' of information through confused additions to the original answer
- are supported to produce answers that are appropriate to the marks allocated but which are not 'constrained' by the number of lines allocated to an answer. So, for example, the size of a student's handwriting will not be an issue and should not result in a large number of additional pages being used in the examination.

What should a student do if they wish to return to an answer later in an examination?

Students should leave two lines between each of their answers. If students wish to add more material to an answer, they should **not** try to squeeze it into these lines, extend it into the margin of the answer book, or attach numerous additional sheets to their answer book. Students should:

- go to the end of the last response they have written in the answer book
- leave at least two lines
- write again the number of the question they wish to continue to answer using the white boxes next to the start of each response
- write the additional material.

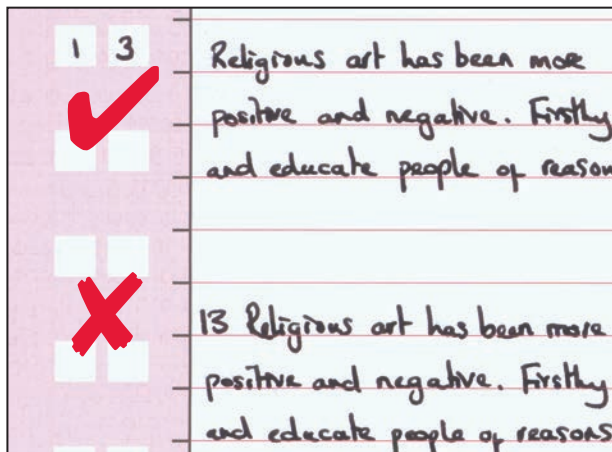
When writing the new two-digit question number, students should take care to:

- copy the number exactly as shown in the boxes on the exam paper eg

0	1
---	---

0	2
---	---

. They must



not rewrite the number of the section, topic or theme being addressed

- write the question number in the white boxes next to the start of their answer **not** in the body of their answer
- write again the number of the question they wish to continue to answer.

What if a student runs out of space in their answer book?

We have given careful consideration to the size of the answer book issued for each component / unit. Confirmation of the size of answer book for each component / unit is published at aqa.org.uk on:

- the subject notice boards
- an Excel spreadsheet (which can be sorted by component code) on the Exams Officers pages.

Each student will be given **one** answer book at the start of the examination. If a student runs out of space, additional sheets will **not** be issued. The Invigilator will, instead, give the student an AQA four-page *Supplementary* answer book in which to continue his / her response. See **Appendix D** for an example of the four-page *Supplementary* answer book. Students must:

- complete all of the information required on the front of the four-page *Supplementary* answer book
- tag together all answer books used at the end of the examination.

What if, under the stress of examination conditions, students make a mistake when working with this new question numbering system and new answer book?

We have taken great care to adopt a very simple numbering system and to design answer books that are easy to use. To help students work with the materials successfully, it would be most helpful if they try their best to follow the guidance given here and on the front of the question papers and answer books.

Examiners will see students' scripts where it is not possible to:

- scan material and / or
- immediately identify the question(s) answered due to legibility issues.

Please note: access arrangements will continue to apply for students with special needs. Those who have permission to use a word processor should continue to do so.

Good examination practice

Good examination practice is confirmed in our Reports on the Examination. These reports are produced every year in support of each component / unit and can be downloaded from e-AQA immediately following the issue of results. Reports identify both good practice and points for improvement in future examination sessions.

The following guidelines are relevant to all students' preparation, regardless of subject, level or examination session.

1. Prepare thoroughly for the examination.

This applies not only to the material for study but also to the materials to be used during the examination. Students must write in black ink or black ball point pen in all AQA examinations. Blue pens are not acceptable.

2. Read carefully the rubrics on the front cover and at the start of each new section of the question paper.

Invigilators will remind students, at the start of each exam, how many questions must be answered, especially if there are optional questions on a paper. Students must read each page of the question paper carefully. They will penalise themselves if they fail to answer compulsory questions that are printed on the last page.

3. Take time to consider each question and where there are optional questions, read through each one before choosing which to answer.

4. Take account of the number of marks allocated to each question and write answers of an appropriate length.

Students may penalise themselves for writing material that is not relevant to the question set, or which is of a length that is not commensurate to the number of marks allocated to the question. Students should avoid wasting valuable time by rewriting each question at the beginning of their answer – this is not necessary, even when separate answer books are used.

5. Structure answers by making an answer plan, where appropriate.

6. Look back at the question to ensure that it has been answered directly.





Examiners cannot award marks for knowledge and understanding of a topic if the specific question set has not been addressed. Students can write good answers but fail to achieve marks because they have answered a pre-prepared question and not the question on the examination paper.



7. Ensure that handwriting is legible.

Although students won't be penalised for poor handwriting, they might penalise themselves if examiners cannot read what is written. If students fail to write a question number clearly, the examination process can be affected, with delays in marking the most likely outcome. Therefore, students should be encouraged to write the two-digit question number carefully and exactly as shown on the question paper, at the start of each answer. The following examples illustrate some of the difficulties that examiners can experience in trying to decipher handwriting that is not clear:

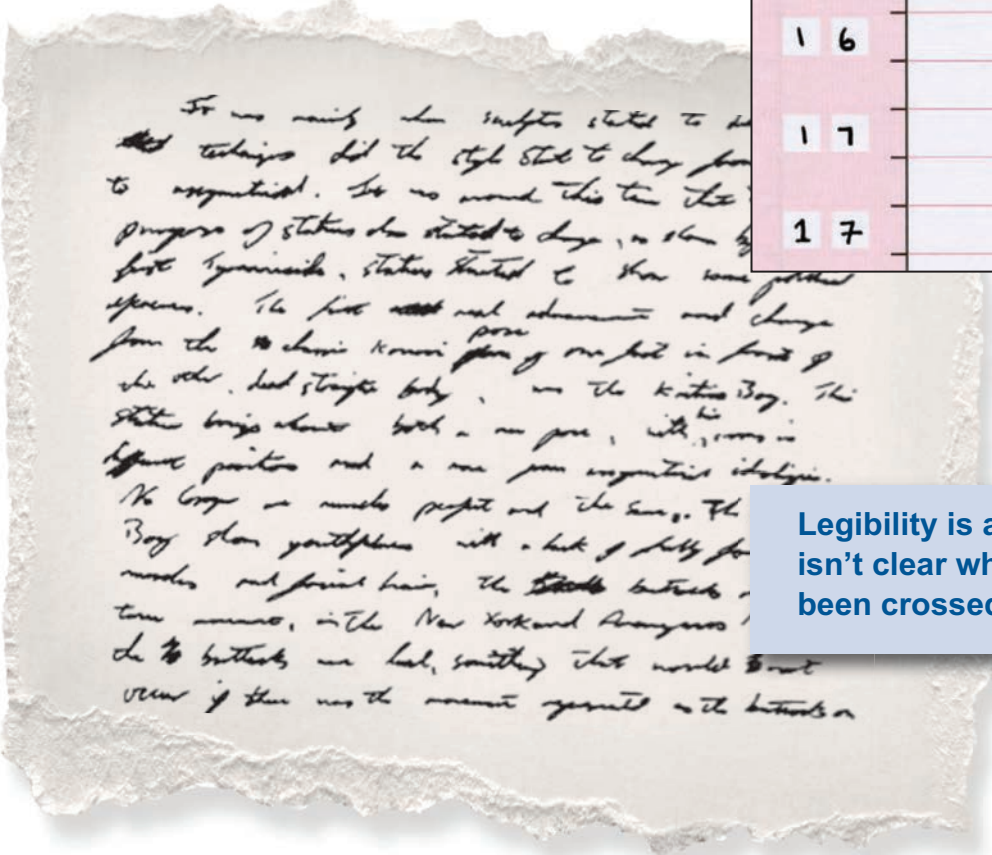
Lack of clarity

 Is it a 1, 2 or 7?
  Is it a 3 or 8?
 Is it a 6 or 8?
  Is it a 5 or 6?

Clarity for examiners

Students should write 1 without any 'tops' and 'tails', eg 1 not 1 or 1, and write 7 without a cross, eg 7 not 7.

1 0	✓
1 1	✓
1 1	✗
1 3	✓
1 3	✗
1 5	✗
1 5	✓
1 6	✓
1 7	✓
1 7	✗



Legibility is an issue here – it isn't clear which words have been crossed out.

Appendix A

What is Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)?

ERA is a free online service. As our technology enables us to collect question (item) mark data for students, ERA means we can share this data with teachers. The system provides:

- mark and grade data for students
- the tools to analyse the data, eg relative to your results last year or against national results
- for GCE Computing and GCSE English, Maths, ICT and Science, additional skills and topic analysis which summarises the question data. This gives

teachers information about how their students have performed in different assessment objectives, skills or topic areas within the paper.

The teachers who piloted Enhanced Results Analysis said how helpful it was to them in preparing students for future examinations. You too will be able to analyse individual questions to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' performance. This will help you in the revision for re-sits and in preparing teaching plans for the following year so that you can see improved results in the classroom.

How do you register to have access to ERA?

Step 1 Complete the online form at aqa.org.uk/era

Step 2 You will be sent log in details by your Examinations Office

Step 3 Log in by going to aqa.org.uk/era or type <http://extranet.aqa.org.uk> into your address bar. Now you can start analysing results.

What can enhanced results analysis show you?

There are three ways you can look at the examination results for your school/college:

1. Students' results

Allows you to look at the performance of an individual student in your school/college in all of the subjects they have taken with us.

2. Marks analysis

Allows you to identify areas of your subject where your students are performing well and areas where performance could be improved.

3. Grades overview

Allows you to see your school's or college's grades quickly and how these compare to previous years, to the average for similar schools / colleges and to the AQA national average.

Easy four-step process on analysing results

Step 1

Log in by going to aqa.org.uk/era or type <http://extranet.aqa.org.uk> into your address bar

Step 2

Select your search criteria from the drop down boxes, eg:
A-level or GCSE
Subject, eg Religious Studies
Date of examination
Subject group

Step 3

Add in additional information, eg student's name

Step 4

Click the search button

Appendix B

Example of the new question numbering system: Specimen question paper for GCSE English

SPECIMEN: NOT FOR USE IN ANY EXAMINATION



General Certificate of Secondary Education
Specimen Paper for November 2009

**English
(Specification A)**

3702/1H

H

Paper 1 Higher Tier

For this paper you must have:

- a 12-page answer book
- Items 1 and 2 which are provided as loose inserts inside this question paper.

Time allowed

- 1 hour 45 minutes

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The **Examining Body** for this paper is AQA. The **Paper Reference** is 3702/1H.
- Answer **all** the questions in Section A and **one** question from Section B.
- Write your answers in the answer book provided.
- Do all rough work in your answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.
- You must **not** use a dictionary.

Information

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 54.
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers. All questions should be answered in continuous prose.
- There are two separate inserts inside this question paper. Item 1 is an A4 booklet and Item 2 appears on the back of the insert front cover.

Advice

- You are advised to spend about one hour on Section A and about 45 minutes on Section B.

Section A: Reading

Answer **all** questions in this section.

You are advised to spend about one hour on this section.

Read **Item 1**, the foreword from a leaflet called *Bringing communities together through sport and culture*.

- 0 1** What, in your own words, does the foreword by Tessa Jowell tell the reader about her views about sport and culture? (4 marks)

Now read **Item 2**, the extract from an article called *Sweeping Death Under the Carpet* by Matthew Engel.

- 0 2** How does Matthew Engel use facts and opinions to persuade the reader of his point of view? (6 marks)

Now look at **Items 1** and **2** together.

- 0 3** Compare:
- the purpose of each item
 - the ways language is used.

Look again at **Item 1**.

- 0 4** How effectively are the following features used in **Item 1** *Bringing communities together through sport and culture*:
- layout
 - pictures
 - colour?
- (9 marks)

3

Section B: Writing to Argue, Persuade or Advise

Answer **one** question from this section.

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

You may use some of the information from **Section A** if you want to, but you do not have to do so. If you use any of the information, do not simply copy it.

Remember:

- spend 5 minutes planning and sequencing your material
- about two sides of average sized handwriting should be enough
- spend 5 minutes checking:
 - your paragraphing
 - your punctuation
 - your spelling.

EITHER

0 5

Write an article in which you **argue** for **or** against the view that people should **not** be encouraged to take part in dangerous sports or activities. *(27 marks)*

OR

0 6

Write a letter to the headteacher **persuading** him/her that all students should take part in at least one hour's physical activity every day at school. *(27 marks)*

OR

0 7

Write an article **advising** teenagers on how to make the difficult decisions that face people during their teenage years. *(27 marks)*

OR

0 8

Friends of yours are unsure about whether to take a holiday abroad. Write a letter:

- **persuading** them that this country would be a good idea.
- **advising** them on which country to go to. *(27 marks)*

Appendix C

Example of our new answer book front cover and answer page.

NB The instructions and layout shown apply to 8-, 12-, 16-page AQA answer books

8 PAGE ANSWER BOOK

Examiner's Initials	For Examiner's Use
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leave blank	Paper Reference: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	Examination Date: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <small>D D / M M / Y Y</small>	For office use only		
	Centre Number: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	Candidate Number: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>			
	Surname: <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> <small>Complete in BLOCK CAPITALS</small>				
	Other Names: <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> <small>Complete in BLOCK CAPITALS</small>				
leave blank	Your Signature: <input style="width: 100%; height: 40px;" type="text"/> <small>I declare this is my own work.</small>				
	Write in the white box how many answer books you have used in total <small>Please write the Paper Reference and your Centre Number and Candidate Number on each book and tag them together if possible</small>				
leave blank	INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use black ink or black ball point pen. Do not use pencil or gel pen. Do not use correction fluid. • Write the information required in the spaces above. • Use both sides of the paper. Write only within the white areas of the book. • Write the question number in the two boxes provided in the left hand margin at the start of each answer e.g. 0 1 • If you make an error when writing the question number, fill in both boxes completely and write the question number in the space immediately below the boxes you have filled in. • Leave at least two line spaces between each answer. • Do all rough work in this answer book. Cross through any work that you do not want to be marked. Do not tear out any part of this book. All work must be handed in. • If you run out of space in the answer book, ask the Invigilator for a supplementary answer book. Complete all of the information required in the spaces on the front of the supplementary answer book. 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 30px; text-align: center;"> <input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/> </td> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">Total</td> </tr> </table>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	Total
<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	Total				
<p style="font-size: small; letter-spacing: 0.5em;">A Q A 2 0 1 1 V 3</p>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; font-size: large; font-weight: bold;">AB 8</div>			

1

8901

Appendix D

Example of our new four-page *Supplementary* answer book front cover

		4 PAGE SUPPLEMENTARY ANSWER BOOK	Examiner's Initials	For Examiner's Use
leave blank	Paper Reference: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	Examination Date: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> D D / M M / Y Y	This space is for Office Use Only	
Centre Number: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	Candidate Number: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>			
Surname: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>				
Other Names: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>				
leave blank	Write the two digit question number <i>inside</i> the boxes next to the first line of your answer	Answer	Leave blank	
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leave blank	 A Q A 2 0 0 9 V 6	SLAB 4		
	1	 0201		

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