

Planning to teach GCSE Sciences over three years?

A guide to help you prepare for September 2010

'I am aware that many schools and colleges teaching GCSE Sciences over three years are planning to change to the new specifications, which have now been published online. We have developed this leaflet to help you prepare and make informed choices on the options available, enabling you to choose what is best for you and your students. I also want to assure you that we will do our best to provide the support and resources you need for a smooth transition to these new courses.'

Gerard Ducker, Head of GCSE Science

**REAL
SCIENCE
READY**



GCSE Sciences: evolution not revolution

GCSE Sciences are changing, but not to the extent that they did in 2006. Our new specifications, due to be published online in draft in late spring and accredited in September 2010, have been reinvigorated based on what you've told us. You will still be familiar with much of the content of these new specifications; however, there are some changes that may affect the way you plan, teach and assess.

Why are GCSE Sciences changing?

After 5 years, the current specifications are reaching the end of their natural lifetime. QCDA has therefore initiated a revision process.

Science is also changing, with respect to its application in society, and we're reflecting this change by making our specifications fresh and current. We're also incorporating suggestions and feedback from teachers and other educational professionals so that we can keep on making them better.

A flexible science suite

One GCSE

New
Science A

New Science B
Science in Context

Two GCSEs

Additional
Science

Additional Applied
Science

Three GCSEs

Biology

Chemistry

Physics

For two GCSEs

New Science A and Additional Science
or
New Science A and Additional Applied Science
or
New Science B and Additional Applied Science
or
New Science B and Additional Science

For three GCSEs

**Biology, Chemistry
and Physics**
**This will also incorporate all the units from
New Science A and Additional Science**

Changes to GCSE Science

Staying the same

KS4 Programme of Study

Unlike some GCSE courses, much of the content of our GCSE Sciences will still be very familiar.

The majority of the content of the individual GCSE Sciences, particularly at Unit 1, will remain the same.

What's new?

Assessment rules are changing, with Controlled Assessment replacing coursework and new rules about certification.

We've been using a version of controlled assessment already, so you won't notice much change if you have been with us for a while.

The Applied Science Double Award will be phased out.

Our content will be refreshed, including a new GCSE Science in Context specification and clearly marked practicals with support.

The new GCSE Sciences specifications

Our new draft specifications will be published online in late spring and the accredited specifications will be available in September 2010.

For schools offering GCSE Sciences over two years, the current specifications will continue for students in Year 10 beginning their courses in September 2010, with final certification in June 2012. The new specifications will then be used for students entering Year 10 in September 2011, with final certification in June 2013.



Don't miss out: Sign up for e-mail updates at sciencelab.org.uk to be kept informed

Options for adopting the new GCSE Sciences specifications if teaching over three years

If you teach GCSE Sciences over three years, you will need to make a decision soon as to when to start to teach the new specifications.

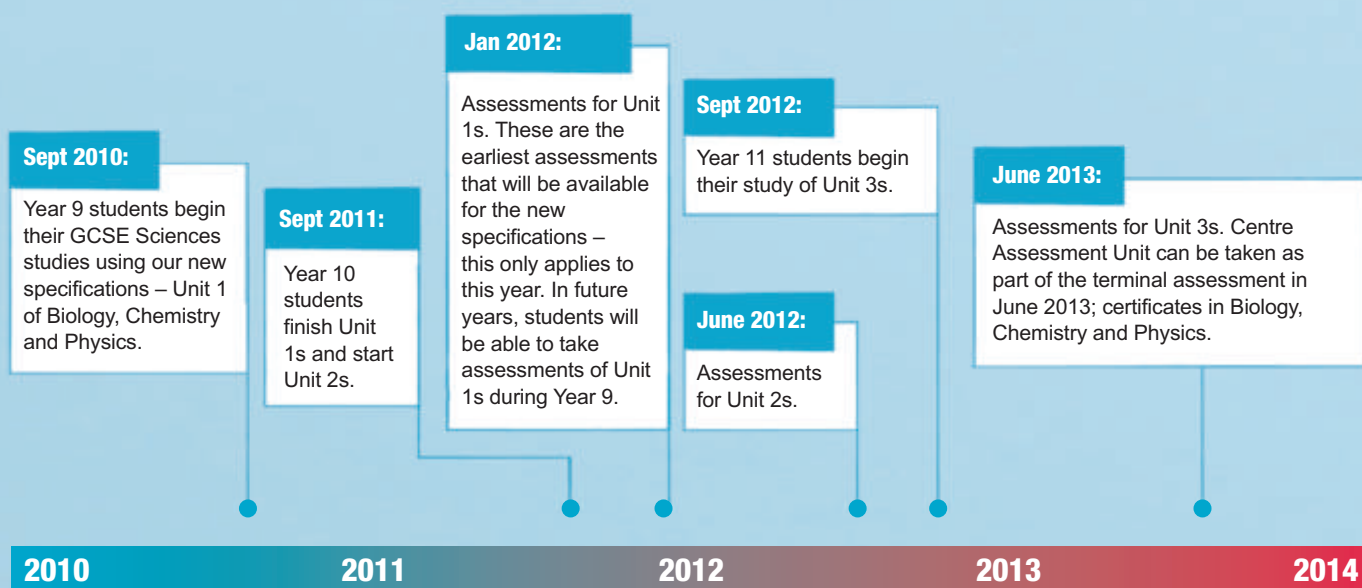
Under our new specifications, teaching GCSE Sciences will remain flexible. We've looked at what's possible during this transition period and have come up with two possible options.

These are merely suggested routes – you may prefer one to the other, or you may think of other options.

If you do prefer one to the other, or if you think of other options, please tell us so that we can inform other teachers via our website or through our e-mail updates.

Option 1: Teaching the new GCSE Sciences specifications from September 2010

This first option is for those who would like to get a head start teaching our new specifications. You would need to start your 3-year GCSE courses in September 2010, using our **new specifications** for your Year 9 students.



Pros

The new specifications are studied throughout, enabling your students to benefit from consistency.

You won't need to implement changes in September 2011. You can just carry on teaching the same specifications.

Cons

Unusual assessment for Unit 1s in this first year as assessments won't be available until students are in Year 10.

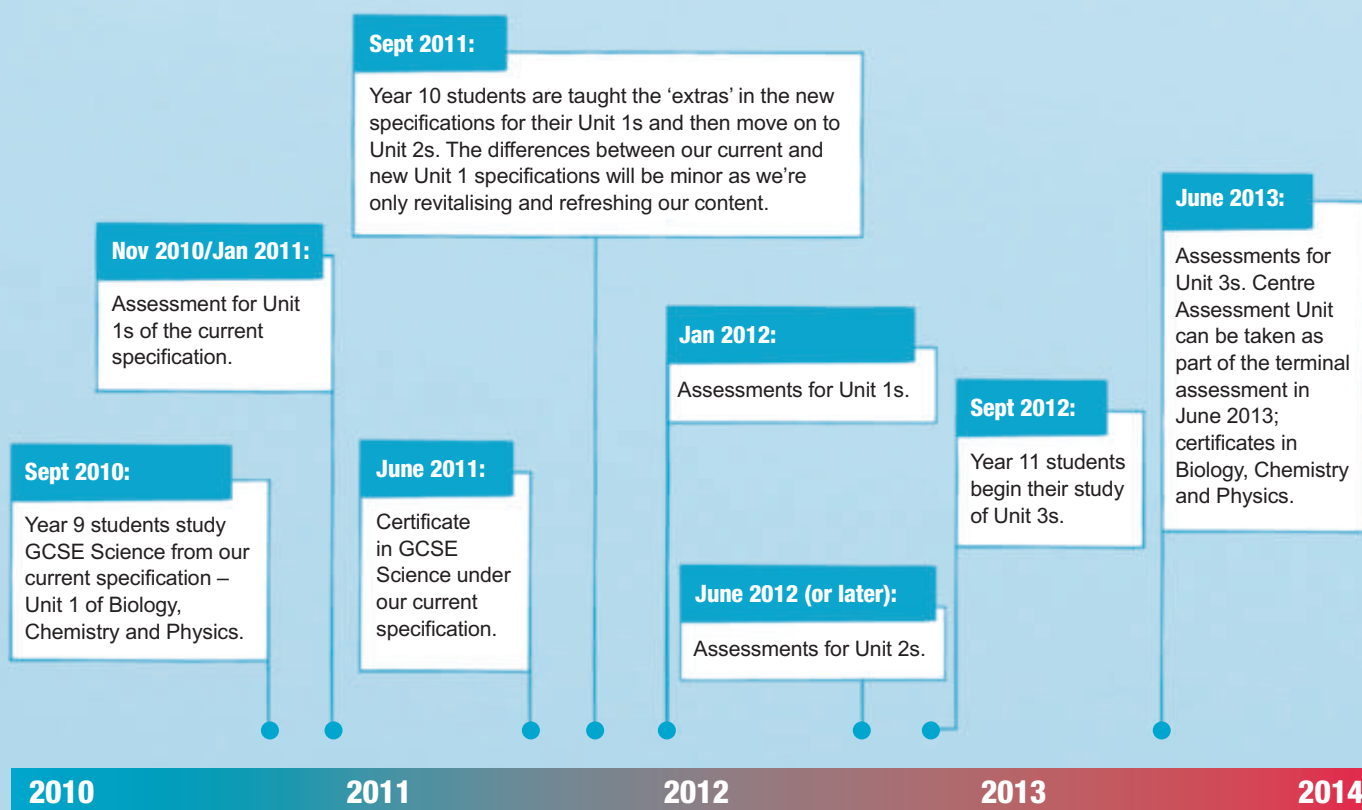
Teaching begins within one month of accredited specifications becoming available.

We know that you will have lots of questions about these options; therefore, we have included some FAQ questions towards the end of this leaflet, with additional answers available at Ask AQA – our searchable bank of frequently asked questions at aqa.org.uk/askaqa. Our subject team is also available on **01483 477756** or science-gcse@aqa.org.uk to help answer your questions.

Option 2: Teaching the new GCSE Sciences specifications from September 2011

This second option enables you to start your 3-year courses in September 2010, but gives you a little more time to prepare for the new GCSE Sciences specifications.

In September 2010, you would continue to teach Unit 1s from our **current specifications**. You would then introduce Unit 2s and Unit 3s from our **new specifications** in September 2011.



Pros

There is no need to rush into teaching the new specifications as the first year is based on teaching from the current specifications.

Students can take their Unit 1 exams during the year they study the content.

Cons

Students need to do two Unit 1 assessments – one under the current specifications, and one under the new specifications.

More organisation is required to build in 'extras' from the new specifications for Unit 1s.

Don't miss out: Sign up for e-mail updates at sciencelab.org.uk to be kept informed

The timetable for change 2010-2013

Landmarks in the new specifications	Timings	AQA support
Draft specifications/assessment materials available online	April – May 2010	Communication of information to help you make informed choices Our new site, <i>The Science Lab</i> now available at sciencelab.org.uk
	June – July 2010	FREE Launch meetings begin Take part in our new science community on <i>The Science Lab</i>
Accredited specifications available online Teaching of 3-year courses to Year 9 students begin in September	August – September 2010	More FREE Launch meetings Online publication of our newly accredited specifications with clearly signposted changes from current to new, and from draft to accredited so that you can see what is different Nelson Thornes' evaluation copy for Unit 1s available New online resources available on <i>The Science Lab</i> to help you prepare and save you time
	February 2011	FREE Preparing to Teach meetings begin
First cohort of 2-year GCSE students start the accredited specifications	September 2011	FREE Preparing to Teach meetings continue
First written assessments for GCSE Sciences available	November 2011 – January 2012	FREE Preparing to Teach meetings continue
First certification of new GCSE Science A and GCSE Science B	June 2012	FREE Preparing to Teach meetings continue
All written assessments available	November 2012 – June 2013	FREE Preparing to Teach meetings continue
First certification of all other Sciences	June 2013	FREE Preparing to Teach meetings continue

By registering for our e-mail updates at sciencelab.org.uk you will be the first to hear about the latest resources, and when our FREE Preparing to Teach meetings are available.

Frequently asked questions

Q. Can centres begin teaching 3-year courses in September 2010 using the new specifications?

A. Yes, the draft specifications will be published in late spring 2010, along with specimen assessment material to help you plan ahead. We will publish the accredited specifications with clear signposting of any changes from the draft documents.

Q. Can students obtain five GCSEs in Science, ie Science, Additional Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics?

A. Technically, yes, but the rule about the percentage of the assessment taken at the end of the course makes it complicated. They would have to take most units at least twice.

Q. Will any of the new GCSE Sciences specifications share common assessment units with the current ones?

A. No. The general framework used for common units for the current specifications will be similar; however, assessments for the current units cannot count towards the new specifications.

Q. Are multiple choice tests to remain part of the mode of assessment?

A. No, there will no longer be solely multiple-choice, test-based assessments. Some unit examinations may incorporate some multiple-choice-based questions but they will also contain other questions that are more structured, in line with the new assessment rules.

Q. When will the approved specifications be available?

A. These will be available in September 2010.

Q. When are the first unit assessments available for the new specifications?

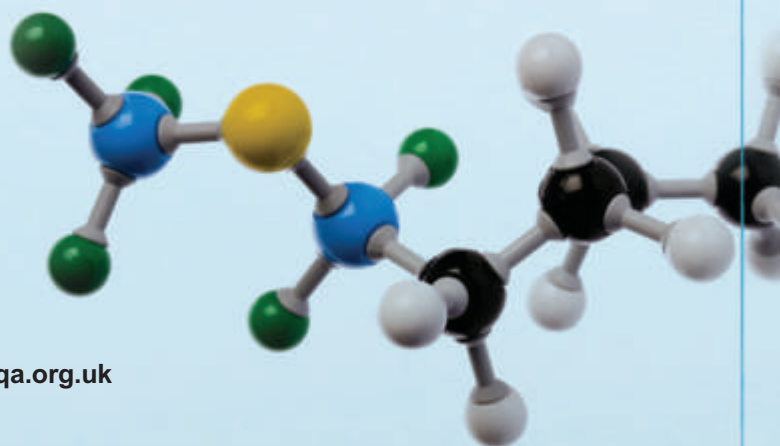
A. The Unit 1 assessments will be available for the academic year 2011/2012. All assessments will become available in or before June 2013.

Q. Is it possible to take the assessments for all units (1, 2 and 3) at the end of the course?

A. Technically, yes, but for the 'Triple Science' option, students would have to take nine external units at the end of Year 11.

Q. How can I keep up to date with what is happening with the changes and the new GCSE Sciences specifications?

A. Register for our regular e-mail updates at sciencelab.org.uk. We will update you with news, information about our Launch meetings and Preparing to Teach meetings, and when new resources become available.



More frequently asked questions can also be found at askaqa.org.uk
Our subject team is also available on **01483 477756** or
science-gcse@aqg.org.uk to help answer your questions.

Don't miss out: Sign up for e-mail updates at sciencelab.org.uk to be kept informed

All the support you need

Prepare

Understand the changes and prepare to teach

- Free meetings
- Teacher Resource Bank
- E-mail updates

Teach

Comprehensive teacher and learner resources

- AQA resources including guidance for practicals
- Blended learning resources from Nelson Thornes

Assess

Understand the assessments and help students prepare

- Practice questions with answers and commentary
- Enhanced Results Analysis

FREE Launch meetings

To help you prepare to teach our new GCSE Sciences specifications, we're hosting FREE Launch meetings from June 2010, right through until February 2011, when they will be followed by our FREE Preparing to Teach meetings.

Our FREE Launch meetings will be an informative half-day event presented by a senior examiner who will:

- provide an overview of the new specifications
- advise on what will change and what will stay the same
- provide guidance on how to transfer from our current specifications to our new specifications
- advise on how to teach GCSE Sciences over three years
- introduce our new 'Science in Context' GCSE.

To book a place at one of our Launch meetings, please go to sciencelab.org.uk or contact our Teacher Support team on **01483 477860**

