

GCSE Mathematics Linked Pair pilot: frequently asked questions and answers

- **Who can participate?**

AQA is restricted by QCDA to piloting the Linked Pair with 100 centres, but any centre in England or Wales can apply to be one of our 100 centres.

- **Why should we consider joining the pilot?**

There are several reasons including:

- learners' achievement in mathematics is recognised through two GCSEs, as with English and Science subjects
- each GCSE is distinctive and contains some additional content to the single GCSE
 - i. much content is common across both of the pair and with the single GCSE
 - ii. some content is in only one of the pair and common with the single GCSE
 - iii. there is some content in each of the pair that does not feature in the single GCSE
- it is more enriching for learners as it gives opportunities to use and interpret maths in context and develop skills in mathematical reasoning and analysis. These key processes can be assessed to a greater depth in the Linked Pair
- it better prepares learners for studying maths at level 3
- it is aimed at fostering more positive attitudes towards maths and encouraging more learners to progress to studying at level 3.

- **How long is the pilot?**

First teaching of the pilot commences in September 2010 and will continue until summer 2013. If successful, the pilot should then extend seamlessly into a nationally available specification for first teaching from September 2015.

- **What is the choice for learners and centres?**

Centres participating in the pilot would need to offer both the GCSE Methods in Mathematics and the GCSE Applications of Mathematics in order to meet the Key Stage 4 programme of study. Foundation or Higher tiers are available to learners for both GCSEs. Each of the pair of GCSEs consists of two equally weighted units. These can be sat in January and/or June each year, commencing in January 2011.

- **Do learners need to be entered for both GCSEs?**

Yes, in order to meet the requirements of the programme of study.

- **Do the Linked Pair of GCSEs count as two full separate GCSEs?**

Yes. Each GCSE will be awarded a grade in its own right. Success in one does not depend on success in the other. The Linked Pair pilot qualifications are fully accredited by Ofqual.

- **Can the Linked Pair count towards the five A*–C school performance indicators?**

Yes. The two Maths GCSEs can count as two of the five A*–C performance indicators. If the learner does better in one GCSE than in the other, the better grade will count as the Maths grade for the five A*–C performance indicators. Learners must be entered for both GCSEs for either of the grades to count towards the five A*–C in the performance indicators and to meet the programme of study.

- **If I join the pilot, how many entries would my centre need to make?**

The pilot can be run with as large a cohort as you wish. Centres are required, however, to make some entries for each subject award by June 2012 in order to remain on the pilot.

- **Do both GCSEs need to be taken in the same series by a learner?**

No. Each GCSE could be taken in a different series. In addition, the units of each GCSE can be taken over different series.

- **Do learners have to enter for the same tier in both GCSEs?**

No. Learners can be entered for different tiers in each GCSE and can mix tiers across units of each GCSE.

- **Are the Linked Pair of GCSEs more difficult than the mainstream single GCSE?**

No. The pair of GCSEs covers the programme of study between them, as does the new GCSE Maths. However, the pair of GCSEs does cover more content than the single GCSE.

- Are there re-sit opportunities?

Yes. Each unit within a GCSE can be re-sat once before certification. Learners can re-sit the whole GCSE as many times as they like.

- How much teaching time is needed for the Linked Pair?

The current single GCSE is widely acknowledged as needing significantly more curriculum time than most single GCSEs. The Linked Pair will need the time of a single GCSE for each. Therefore there may be a slight increase in the time needed for the Linked Pair compared to the single GCSE, but this will be decided by individual centres.

- What support will be made available to pilot centres?

The usual high level of AQA support will be available to all pilot centres throughout the pilot. This support will include:

- free launch meetings in spring 2010
- free annual support meetings
- access to dedicated AQA Linked Pair pilot support staff through a direct telephone line and e-mail address:
 - e-mail: mathematicsgcse@aqa.org.uk
 - Tel: 0161 957 3852
- updates on the pilot at regular intervals
- free resources and support materials.

Copies of the **specifications** and specimen papers will be sent out to all centres that register to join the pilot. They can also be found on the AQA website at aqa.org.uk/mathszone

- Can learners take both the Linked Pair pilot and the new single GCSE Maths?

Yes, but this is not advisable. It would entail learners taking three GCSEs in mathematics and the pilot GCSE Applications of Maths will also discount the single GCSE Maths. This means that only one of them would contribute towards the five A*–C performance indicators.

- How can we find out more about the Linked Pair pilot, even if we don't join it?

We will keep all centres up-to-date with developments, assessment materials and other resources through the AQA website at aqa.org.uk/mathszone

- Where should I send questions I may have about the pilot?

We have a dedicated support team for the Linked Pair pilot who can be contacted directly:

e-mail: mathematicsgcse@aqa.org.uk

Tel: 0161 957 3852

