



# Criteria for GCSE Qualifications



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## The criteria

### Introduction

1. The following criteria will be used as the basis for the development and accreditation of all GCSEs.
2. GCSE criteria were previously published within *The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004).

### Content

#### Titling

3. The titles of GCSEs must:
  - 3.1 where relevant subject criteria exist, correspond to the titles used in the relevant subject criteria published by the regulators;
  - 3.2 where relevant subject criteria do not exist, be sufficiently broad to cover different specifications in the same subject area;
  - 3.3 use the words 'GCSE (short course)', if based on a short-course specification;
  - 3.4 use the words 'GCSE (double award)', if equivalent to two separate GCSEs.

#### Subject matter

4. The subject matter of GCSEs must:
  - 4.1 state which aspects/options need to be taken by candidates to meet the requirements of their respective countries, where statutory requirements differ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
  - 4.2 for short-course specifications, include half of the content of a single-award GCSE and cover the full range of grades;
  - 4.3 for double-award specifications, include content equivalent to two separate GCSEs;
  - 4.4 reflect the learning outcomes for each subject area;
  - 4.5 build upon the relevant programmes of study at Key Stage 4;

- 4.6 require the learner to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding specified in the subject criteria;
- 4.7 ensure that the content is comparable in content and range with other qualifications at the same level.

## **Assessment**

- 5. The assessment arrangements for GCSEs must:
  - 5.1 set out the relationship between the assessment objectives and the assessment components/units;
  - 5.2 show the proportion of marks allocated to each assessment objective (or group of assessment objectives) and to each assessment component;
  - 5.3 include question papers targeted at either a single tier, covering grades A\* to G, or two tiers of grades: A\* to D with an allowed grade E, and C to G;
  - 5.4 require, across both controlled and external assessment components/units, a variety of question types and tasks, including extended writing;
  - 5.5 assess the candidates' quality of written communication in accordance with the guidance documentation produced by the regulators;
  - 5.6 comply with relevant subject criteria relating to the balance between external and controlled assessment.
- 6. Where controlled assessment is required, specifications must be developed in accordance with the controlled assessment regulations.
- 7. Unitised specifications must:
  - 7.1 contain a maximum of four assessment units in a single award;
  - 7.2 allocate a weighting of at least 20 per cent to each assessment unit;
  - 7.3 allow only one resit of an assessment unit with the better result counting towards the qualification;
  - 7.4 allocate a weighting of at least 40 per cent to terminal assessment;

- 7.5 ensure that results for a unit have a 'shelf life' limited only by that of the specification.

## **Reporting**

8. There must be arrangements for grading and reporting of GCSEs so that:
- 8.1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported on an eight-grade scale from A\* to G, where A\* is the highest grade;
  - 8.2 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as Unclassified or U;
  - 8.3 the grades awarded match the grade descriptions in the subject criteria or the descriptions for grades A, C and F submitted by the awarding organisation and approved by the regulators where subject criteria do not exist;
  - 8.4 the grade for double award GCSEs is reported in the format A\*A\*, A\*A, AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE, EF, FF, FG, GG;
  - 8.5 the grades on short-course and double-award GCSE certificates are accompanied by explanatory notes on the nature of these types of GCSE.

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