



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. For subject awards up to and including summer 2013, 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% to each assessment unit
 - 7.3 allow only one re-sit of an assessment unit with the better result counting towards the qualification
 - 7.4 allocate a weighting of at least 40% to terminal assessment

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

- 8. For subject awards after summer 2013, unitised specifications must:
 - 8.1 contain a maximum of four assessment units in a single award
 - 8.2 allocate a weighting of at least 20% to each assessment unit
 - 8.3 require that 100% of the assessment is terminal
 - 8.4 not permit unit results to be carried forward from one examination series to another, except in the following cases:
 - (a) where those units have already been used to aggregate to a GCSE single award and a candidate wishes to re-use the unit results to aggregate to a double award in the same subject
 - or
 - (b) where a candidate wishes to carry forward the result from one or more controlled assessment units which have already been used to aggregate to a GCSE single or double award in order to re-take a whole qualification.

Reporting

- 9. There must be arrangements for grading and reporting of GCSEs so that:
 - 9.1 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;
 - 9.2 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as Unclassified or U;
 - 9.3 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;
 - 9.4 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;
 - 9.5 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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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation	
Spring Place	2nd Floor
Coventry Business Park	Glendinning House
Herald Avenue	6 Murray Street
Coventry CV5 6UB	Belfast BT1 6DN

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346