



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



GCSE qualification criteria

Final version

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Content

1. The titles of GCSEs must:
 - where relevant subject criteria exist, correspond to the titles used in the relevant subject criteria published by the regulators.

where relevant subject criteria do not exist, be sufficiently broad to cover different specifications in the same subject area
 - use the word GCSE (short course), if based on a short course specification
 - use the words GCSE (double award), if equivalent to two separate GCSEs.
2. GCSE specifications must state how they contribute to overarching aims for the curriculum in England, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively.
3. GCSE specifications and associated assessment and support materials must:
 - anticipate the needs of disabled learners
 - encourage the promotion of positive images and representation of disabled people.
4. The subject matter of GCSEs must:
 - where relevant subject criteria exist, meet the GCSE subject criteria published by the regulators for the subject title.

where relevant subject criteria do not exist, compare in substance and range to the GCSE subject criteria published by the regulators for other subjects
 - be consistent with the statutory programmes of study within the national curriculum where they exist
 - state which aspects/options must be taken by candidates to meet the requirements of their respective countries, when statutory requirements differ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
 - for short course specifications, include half of the content of a single award GCSE and cover the full range of grades
 - for double award specifications, include content equivalent to two separate GCSEs

- require candidates to make effective use of technology as appropriate to the subject.

Assessment in GCSEs

5. The assessment arrangements for GCSE must:

- set out the relationship between the assessment objectives and the assessment components
- show the proportion of marks allocated to each assessment objective (or group of assessment objectives) and to each assessment component
- 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
- require, across both controlled and external assessment components/units, a variety of question types and tasks, including extended writing
- assess the candidates' quality of written communication in accordance with the guidance documentation produced by the regulators
- where relevant criteria exist, comply with subject criteria relating to the balance between external and controlled assessment
- where relevant subject criteria do not exist, be agreed individually with the regulators as to the balance between external and controlled assessment

6. Where controlled assessment is required, specifications must be developed in accordance with the guidance documentation produced by the regulators. Specifications must make clear how reliability and fairness are secured, by setting out requirements that ensure the robustness of each stage of the controlled assessment. They must cover:

- the specific skills to be assessed
- the setting of tasks
- the extent of supervision in carrying out of tasks
- the conditions under which assessment takes place
- the marking of the assessment and internal standardising procedures

- any moderation process.
7. Unitised specifications must:
- i. contain a maximum of four assessment units in a single award
 - ii. allocate a weighting of at least 20% to each assessment unit
 - iii. allow only one re-sit of an assessment unit with the better result counting towards the qualification
 - iv. allocate a weighting of at least 40% to terminal assessment
 - v. ensure results for a unit have a shelf-life limited only by the shelf-life of the relevant specification

Reporting of GCSEs

8. There must be arrangements for grading and reporting of GCSEs so that:
- 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
 - attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as Unclassified or U
 - where relevant subject criteria exist, the grades awarded match the grade descriptions in the subject criteria published by the regulators
where relevant subject criteria do not exist, the grades awarded match descriptions for grades A, C and F submitted by the awarding body and approved by the regulators
 - 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
 - the grade/s on short course and double award GCSE certificates are accompanied by explanatory notes on the nature of these types of GCSE.