



## **FAQs for AS and A level Sciences (Biology A, Biology B, Chemistry & Physics) – June 2021 series** **March 2021 Update**

In response to the changes, announced by Ofqual, to examinations taking place in summer 2021, we have altered the way in which grades for Pearson Edexcel AS and A level subjects in Science (Biology A, Biology B, Chemistry and Physics) will be awarded.

The changes that have been made only apply to the summer 2021 examination series.

Here are some frequently asked questions that should help you understand these changes.

### **Q1. What changes are taking place for AS and A level Biology A, Biology B, Chemistry & Physics in summer 2021?**

- ❖ Written examinations are replaced by Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs).
- ❖ The Practical Endorsement (A level only) will be awarded as normal, but the evidence required to support the award of a Pass grade has been modified.
- ❖ Results will now be issued on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

### **Q2. What is the new requirement for the Practical Endorsement?**

To award a Pass for the Practical Endorsement, a student must have:

- ❖ completed sufficient practical activities to have been assessed on all CPAC statements,
- ❖ shown competence, on at least one occasion, for each CPAC statement.

Note that it is **not** a requirement, this year, for competence to be demonstrated “routinely and consistently”.

As far as is possible, students should have covered all the techniques and apparatus listed in Appendix 5c of the specification. Some of these may have been encountered through demonstration or other means.

### **Q3. What about students who have not met these new requirements?**

Now that schools have returned, the best option is for students to complete further practical work to meet the requirements above. Note that, to give you the maximum time possible for practical work to take place, the date for submission of the CPAC grade has been delayed until 18<sup>th</sup> June.

For students who have undertaken practical work across both years, but have not quite reached competency in one or two areas, a Pass may still be awarded if they have been assessed on all CPAC statements and there is clear evidence of progression towards competency under normal circumstances.

Students who do not meet the requirements should be entered as Not Classified.

### **Q4. What if we cannot do practical work with our students?**

Under current guidelines, we believe that practical is possible in schools, but centres are advised to take note of expert guidance from organisations such as CLEAPSS. Where schools have their own internal policies restricting practical work, teachers may wish to highlight to Senior Managers in the school that a Pass in the Endorsement requires sufficient practical work to have been carried out.



**Q5. What is the minimum number of practicals that students must carry out to demonstrate competency in CPAC?**

There is no minimum number specified – but it needs to be sufficient to meet the requirements outlined in Q2 and Q3.

Remember that you are not limited to assessing only the CPAC statements listed on the tracking spreadsheet for each practical – you can assess more, if they are relevant to the practical activity. You can also assess CPAC on any piece of practical work, not just on the practicals that we have highlighted as Core Practical.

**Q6. Do we have to cover all the apparatus and techniques?**

As far as is possible, students should have covered all the techniques and apparatus listed in Appendix 5c of the specification.

Having said that, we would not wish to withhold a “Pass” grade from a student who had shown competency in the assessment of all the CPAC statements, but had encountered a small number of apparatus and techniques through observation rather than through direct hands-on experience.

We have mapped the apparatus and techniques to each Core Practical ([Biology A](#), [Biology B](#), [Chemistry](#), [Physics](#)) so that you can select Core Practicals that avoid duplication of apparatus and techniques that students have already encountered.

**Q7. Do we have to catch up on any Core Practicals missed last year?**

If you are undertaking more practical work to complete the evidence for the Endorsement, then you can use any practicals you wish. The Year 2 practicals probably give more opportunities for the demonstration of competency, but some Year 1 practicals may be useful. If you already have enough evidence of CPAC competency, there is no need to carry out practicals that were missed last year.

**Q8. Will we still have a Monitoring Visit in 2020/21?**

This year is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Cycle 3 of Monitoring Visits. If your centre passed a Monitoring Visit in 2019/20, then you should not expect a Visit this academic year.

If your centre did not have a Monitoring Visit in 2019/20 (or had one but did not pass), then you should expect a Visit this academic year.

Ofqual have permitted Awarding Bodies to run Monitoring Visits remotely. This will therefore be the format of all Visits, for all Awarding Bodies and all A level Science subjects, in 2020/21. Further guidance can be found in the “CPAC guidance and tracking” section of our support pages for each subject (e.g. [here](#) for Biology A)

**Q9. Do we still need to submit a Centre Declaration Form for the practical activities in summer 2021?**

Yes. The wording of the Head Teacher Declaration Form has been changed to take account of the new requirements; but the Form will still need to be completed, signed and returned to us as usual.

**Q10. Will there be any changes to the assessment of AS and A level Science subjects in summer 2021?**

Examinations in June 2021 have been replaced by Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). You are therefore required to submit a TAG for each student in your class.



**Q11. What support and guidance are you providing to support teachers in assigning a TAG for each student? When will it be available?**

Your TAG grade should be based on a range of evidence, which may include some form of 'mock' examination.

To help you put together 'mock' exams for your students, we will provide:

- Past papers and mark schemes
- Past questions arranged into topic banks

Other key support materials will also include:

- Grade descriptors for key grades
- Further advice on awarding TAGs
- Guidance on the internal Quality Assurance of TAGs

These materials will be available at the end of March 2021.

**Q12. Will these changes remain for subsequent assessment series (i.e. 2022 or beyond)?**

No. These changes are only in place for the summer 2021 series.

**Q13. How will these changes affect current Year 12 students who will be sitting A levels in 2022?**

All the amendments to the Practical Endorsement and the assessment of students relate only to students taking exams in May / June 2021.

Consideration will be given to the disruption experienced by Year 12 students at a later stage, and a consultation launched in due course.

The guidance, for now, is that Year 12 students should receive a near-as-normal experience as is possible, including the resumption of practical work.

You can keep up-to-date with further announcements at the following page:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/campaigns/pearson-covid-19.html>

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