



FAQs for GCSE Combined Science and GCSEs Biology, Chemistry, Physics – June 2021 series

In response to the changes announced by Ofqual for examinations taking place in summer 2021, we have made changes, where required, to the suite of Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) subjects in Science (Combined Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics).

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 what this means to you.

What changes are taking place for GCSE (9-1) Combined Science / GCSE separate sciences in Biology, Chemistry and Physics for the summer 2021 exam series?

If it is not possible for students to carry out some of the mandatory Core Practical activities themselves, it is permitted for them to observe demonstrations and/or simulations of these activities.

This will ensure that students will still gain knowledge and understanding of the practical apparatus and techniques which form part of the specification content.

Does this mean we shouldn't do practical work with our students?

Each centre will experience different circumstances, and these may also change during the school year. Pearson cannot, therefore, give advice that is accurate for all centres. Teachers should therefore be following their centre's internal policies and the advice of experts, such as CLEAPSS.

However, note that the Ofqual change permits an alternative way for students to meet the specification requirements for practical work – it does not require it. Where it is possible for students to carry out practical work safely themselves, possibly with some modifications, we would encourage this to take place.

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

Yes. We are changing the wording of the Head Teacher Declaration Form to take account of the change outlined above; but the Form will still need to be completed, signed and returned to us as usual.

The revised Declaration Form will be available on the website: [here](#).

Are there any changes to the specification content for the summer 2021 assessment?

No, there are no changes to the content that you teach your students in any of our GCSE Science qualifications.

You will still need to ensure that students have encountered all Core Practical activities in the specification, either as class practicals or through observing demonstrations.



Will there be any changes to the assessment of GCSEs in Science in summer 2021?

No. Examination papers in Combined Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics for summer 2021 will have the same number of marks, the same style of questions, the same sampling of specification content, and cover the same assessment objectives as for previous examination series.

The assessment of practical skills **will be identical** to previous examination series, with **15% of marks still allocated** to questions assessing this area.

Will grading be different in summer 2021 because of these changes?

No. We will use the same process to award student grades as in a normal examination series. You should expect outcomes for students, in terms of proportions of students at each grade, to return to 2019 levels rather than following the higher proportions seen in the summer 2020 series.

What support and guidance are you providing in response to the changes to the qualification for summer 2021? When will it be available?

- Back to School online events - [link](#)
- Digital diagnostic tests including this terms partnership with ed tech provider [Tassomai](#)
- Topic tests - TBC
- Schemes of work or lesson plans - [here](#)
- Secondary Science resources- [link](#)
- Back to school catch up packs for Combined Science - [here](#)
- Online training and network events - [here](#)
- GCSE Combined Science Revise APP – due in November

Where will I be able to find any new or updated materials?

All our support materials can be found on the Course Materials tab on our GCSE qualification site - [here](#)

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.

How will these changes affect students who are starting their GCSEs in September 2020, but not sitting exams until 2022 (i.e. Year 10 students)?

These changes have been agreed by DfE and Ofqual to support your Year 11 students whose studies have been disrupted by the period of school closures in the spring and summer of 2020, when they were in Year 10.



Those who are starting their GCSE courses in September have not, so far, had these courses affected by school closures and so mitigation has not yet been considered by DfE and Ofqual.

The guidance, for now, is that these students should receive a near-as-normal experience as they embark on their GCSEs. Should there be further public health incidents which lead to disruption for these students, then it is likely that guidance would then be issued separately for this cohort of students.