

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EDEXCEL INTERNATIONAL ADVANCED LEVELS SCIENCE (BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS)

I What is the difference between: Edexcel GCE A Level and Edexcel International Advanced Level Biology, Chemistry and Physics qualifications?

GCE A Level Biology, Chemistry and Physics overview

All GCE A Level science specifications to be offered in England have to ensure they comply with the [GCE A Level subject criteria for science](#) issued by Ofqual (the regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England).

The subject criteria for GCE A Level science state that:

“In the six-unit GCE A Level science subjects, one of the assessment units at AS and one of the assessment units at A2 must be internally assessed. Each of the internally assessed units at AS and A2 must include the assessment of practical skills.”

Edexcel GCE A Level Biology, Chemistry and Physics

Therefore, Edexcel GCE A Level qualifications in Biology, Chemistry and Physics have been developed in accordance with these criteria and were approved by Ofqual. These qualifications are available in the UK and internationally.

International alternative Edexcel GCE A Level Biology, Chemistry and Physics (with 100% written exam)

As GCE A Level science assessment involving internal assessment of practical tasks and external moderation was not suitable for some of our international customers, particularly private candidates and those entering exams through the British Council, Edexcel has for several years offered an alternative.

Our 100% exam version of the specifications ensured that international students had access to an alternative specification for each of the sciences, testing the same content, but assessing students' knowledge and understanding of experimental techniques through a written examination at both AS and A2.

This alternative version of the GCE A Level science qualification for international customers does not fully comply with the Ofqual subject criteria (i.e. internal assessment of practical skills) and therefore it cannot be offered in England. However, it has been accepted by universities throughout the world for several years as part of students' applications for higher education study.

As our Edexcel GCE A Level science specifications with no internally assessed coursework are available outside of the UK only, they are now part of our **Edexcel International Advanced Level** suite of qualifications.

Please note that only the name of the qualification has changed. The content and assessment methodology are the same as the current international version of the Edexcel GCE A Level (100% written exam version).

Edexcel International Advanced Levels

The UK government and Ofqual have recently confirmed that there will be important changes to GCE A Levels in England over the next few years. Some of these changes came into effect from September 2013, such as the removal of the January examination series. We will ensure that our Edexcel GCE A Level qualifications are revised in accordance with these new requirements and they will continue to be offered around the world.

However, we recognise that requirements applied to GCE A Level qualifications delivered in England may not suit the needs of all students around the world. Therefore we have developed a new suite of Edexcel International Advanced Levels (IAL) qualifications in some subjects that will be of a comparable standard to the Edexcel GCE A Level. These qualifications are only offered outside of the UK and provide our international customers with the choice of taking exams in both January and June. We launched these qualifications globally in September 2013. First examinations will take place in January 2014.

2 Can a student still take exams in January for GCE A Level Science?

No, they cannot. International alternative written papers can only contribute to awards for the International Advanced Level qualifications. The Edexcel GCE A Level qualifications require the completion of a coursework unit for AS and A2 and exams can only be taken annually in June.

3 Can you please confirm that international private candidates and those making entries via the British Council can only sit the new Edexcel International Advanced Level qualifications?

Yes, that is correct. For logistical reasons international private candidates, including all centres entering candidates via the British Council, are not permitted to enter candidates for internal assessment and therefore must take the alternative written papers. They will be awarded an IAL award at the end of their course.

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4 Do universities recognise Edexcel International Advanced Level qualifications?

We have been actively contacting universities worldwide to make them aware of our new Edexcel International Advanced Level qualifications and to seek confirmation that they will accept these qualifications as comparable to GCE A Level for admissions purposes. Edexcel International Advanced Levels are already recognised by many leading universities in the UK and internationally. You can view the growing list of universities accepting these qualifications on the [Degree Course Finder](#) website. Click on the 'International Advanced Levels – find out where they can take you' banner on the right hand side of the screen to access the latest document.

The universities on this list have confirmed that they will accept the full suite of 8 IAL qualifications including Science. Universities that have accepted the international version of our science GCEs in the past should have no reason to change their policy now, as the qualification remains unchanged. It is advised that centres or students contact any university that does not appear on this list if they wish to confirm that they will continue to accept the international version of the Edexcel GCE A Levels science qualifications.

5 What happens to students who have started an Edexcel international alternative GCE A Level in science but wish to complete an Edexcel GCE A Level?

The content of the Edexcel International Advanced Level and Edexcel GCE A Levels in science are identical. The international version of the GCE A Level has always expected students to develop experimental skills, and a knowledge and understanding of experimental techniques, by carrying out a range of practical experiments and investigations before sitting the written exams. The only difference is how these aspects are assessed for the qualification.

Students who have completed the assessment for units 1, 2, 4 or 5 of the GCE A Level science specifications can have these results contribute to the Edexcel IAL or GCE A Level. However, in order to be awarded a GCE A Level science qualification, students will have to complete the coursework requirements for both AS and A2 (units 3 and 6) of the GCE A Level science specifications. Students will need to be registered for these coursework units so that external moderation can be arranged.

Results achieved for the written alternative papers in 2013 or before - 6BI07 and 6BI08 (Biology), 6CH07 and 6CH08 (Chemistry), 6PH07 and 6PH08 (Physics) - can from 2014 only contribute towards an IAL award. Results for these papers cannot now contribute to a GCE A level qualification award.

6 What happens if we (accidentally) enter for some units from Edexcel GCE A Level and some units from Edexcel International Advanced Level?

Contact the science subject advisor team as soon as possible and we can try to resolve this for you (+44 (0) 207 010 2190 / TeachingScience@pearson.com).

Candidates with a mixture of IAL and GCE units will only be awarded a GCE if (a) all of the units were taken in a June sitting AND (b) the units include coursework and not written alternative papers. If both (a) and (b) conditions are not met, the only award that can be given is the IAL.