

INTERNATIONAL GCSE BIOLOGY

1 The nature and variety of living organisms

The following sub-topics are covered in this section.

- (a) Characteristics of living organisms
- (b) Variety of living organisms

(a) Characteristics of living organisms	2011 specification reference
1.1 understand how living organisms share the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they require nutrition • they respire • they excrete their waste • they respond to their surroundings • they move • they control their internal conditions • they reproduce • they grow and develop. 	1.1
(b) Variety of living organisms	
1.2 describe the common features shown by eukaryotic organisms: plants, animals, fungi and protoctists Plants: these are multicellular organisms; their cells contain chloroplasts and are able to carry out photosynthesis; their cells have cellulose cell walls; they store carbohydrates as starch or sucrose. Examples include flowering plants, such as a cereal (for example, maize), and a herbaceous legume (for example, peas or beans). Animals: these are multicellular organisms; their cells do not contain chloroplasts and are not able to carry out photosynthesis; they have no cell walls; they usually have nervous co-ordination and are able to move from one place to another; they often store carbohydrate as glycogen. Examples include mammals (for example, humans) and insects (for example, housefly and mosquito).	1.2: a single specification statement covering all organisms i.e. new specification 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4; rather than splitting into eukaryotes, prokaryotes and viruses

	<p>Fungi: these are organisms that are not able to carry out photosynthesis; their body is usually organised into a mycelium made from thread-like structures called hyphae, which contain many nuclei; some examples are single-celled; their cells have walls made of chitin; they feed by extracellular secretion of digestive enzymes onto food material and absorption of the organic products; this is known as saprotrophic nutrition; they may store carbohydrate as glycogen. Examples include <i>Mucor</i>, which has the typical fungal hyphal structure, and yeast, which is single-celled.</p> <p>Protoctists: these are microscopic single-celled organisms. Some, like <i>Amoeba</i>, that live in pond water, have features like an animal cell, while others, like <i>Chlorella</i>, have chloroplasts and are more like plants. A pathogenic example is <i>Plasmodium</i>, responsible for causing malaria.</p>	
1.3	<p>describe the common features shown by prokaryotic organisms such as bacteria</p> <p>Bacteria: these are microscopic single-celled organisms; they have a cell wall, cell membrane, cytoplasm and plasmids; they lack a nucleus but contain a circular chromosome of DNA; some bacteria can carry out photosynthesis but most feed off other living or dead organisms. Examples include <i>Lactobacillus bulgaricus</i>, a rod-shaped bacterium used in the production of yoghurt from milk, and <i>Pneumococcus</i>, a spherical bacterium that acts as the pathogen causing pneumonia.</p>	
1.4	<p>understand the term pathogen and know that pathogens may include fungi, bacteria, protoctists or viruses</p> <p>Viruses: these are not living organisms. They are small particles, smaller than bacteria; they are parasitic and can reproduce only inside living cells; they infect every type of living organism. They have a wide variety of shapes and sizes; they have no cellular structure but have a protein coat and contain one type of nucleic acid, either DNA or RNA. Examples include the tobacco mosaic virus that causes discolouring of the leaves of tobacco plants by preventing the formation of chloroplasts, the influenza virus that causes 'flu' and the HIV virus that causes AIDS.</p>	1.3: "recall the term pathogen..."

2 Structure and functions in living organisms

The following sub-topics are covered in this section.

- (a) Level of organisation
- (b) Cell structure
- (c) Biological molecules
- (d) Movement of substances into and out of cells
- (e) Nutrition
- (f) Respiration
- (g) Gas exchange
- (h) Transport
- (i) Excretion
- (j) Co-ordination and response

(a) Level of organisation		2011 specification reference
2.1	describe the levels of organisation in organisms: organelles, cells, tissues, organs and systems	2.1
(b) Cell structure		
2.2	describe cell structures, including the nucleus, cytoplasm, cell membrane, cell wall, mitochondria, chloroplasts, ribosomes and vacuole	2.2
2.3	describe the functions of the nucleus, cytoplasm, cell membrane, cell wall, mitochondria, chloroplasts, ribosomes and vacuole	2.3
2.4	know the similarities and differences in the structure of plant and animal cells	2.4: reworded as "similarities and differences"
2.5B	explain the importance of cell differentiation in the development of specialised cells	New statement
2.6B	understand the advantages and disadvantages of using stem cells in medicine	New statement
(c) Biological molecules		
2.7	identify the chemical elements present in carbohydrates, proteins and lipids (fats and oils)	2.5

2.8	describe the structure of carbohydrates, proteins and lipids as large molecules made up from smaller basic units: starch and glycogen from simple sugars, protein from amino acids, and lipid from fatty acids and glycerol	2.6
2.9	<i>Practical: investigate food samples for the presence of glucose, starch, protein and fat</i>	2.7: becomes a practical statement
2.10	understand the role of enzymes as biological catalysts in metabolic reactions	2.8
2.11	understand how temperature changes can affect enzyme function, including changes to the shape of active site	2.9: slightly re-worded
2.12	<i>Practical: investigate how enzyme activity can be affected by changes in temperature</i>	2.11: becomes a practical statement
2.13	understand how enzyme function can be affected by changes in pH altering the active site	2.10: was bold statement
2.14B	<i>Practical: investigate how enzyme activity can be affected by changes in pH</i>	New statement
(d) Movement of substances into and out of cells		
2.15	understand the processes of diffusion, osmosis and active transport by which substances move into and out of cells	2.12 & 2.13 combined and slightly re-worded
		2.14: statement deleted
2.16	understand how factors affect the rate of movement of substances into and out of cells, including the effects of surface area to volume ratio, distance, temperature and concentration gradient	2.15
2.17	<i>Practical: investigate diffusion and osmosis using living and non-living systems</i>	2.16: becomes a practical statement
(e) Nutrition		
<i>Flowering plants</i>		
2.18	understand the process of photosynthesis and its importance in the conversion of light energy to chemical energy	2.17
2.19	know the word equation and the balanced chemical symbol equation for photosynthesis	2.18
2.20	understand how varying carbon dioxide concentration, light intensity and temperature affect the rate of photosynthesis	2.19
2.21	describe the structure of the leaf and explain how it is adapted for photosynthesis	2.20
2.22	understand that plants require mineral ions for growth, and that magnesium ions are needed for chlorophyll and nitrate ions are needed for amino acids	2.21
2.23	<i>Practical: investigate photosynthesis, showing the evolution of oxygen from a water plant, the production of starch and the requirements of light, carbon dioxide and chlorophyll</i>	2.22: becomes a practical statement

Humans		
2.24	understand that a balanced diet should include appropriate proportions of carbohydrate, protein, lipid, vitamins, minerals, water and dietary fibre	2.23: was a bold statement
2.25	identify the sources and describe the functions of carbohydrate, protein, lipid (fats and oils), vitamins A, C and D, the mineral ions calcium and iron, water and dietary fibre as components of the diet	2.24
2.26	understand how energy requirements vary with activity levels, age and pregnancy	2.25: was a bold statement
2.27	describe the structure and function of the human alimentary canal, including the mouth, oesophagus, stomach, small intestine (duodenum and ileum), large intestine (colon and rectum) and pancreas	2.26
		2.27: deleted
2.28	understand how food is moved through the gut by peristalsis	2.28
2.29	understand the role of digestive enzymes, including the digestion of starch to glucose by amylase and maltase, the digestion of proteins to amino acids by proteases and the digestion of lipids to fatty acids and glycerol by lipases	2.29
2.30	understand that bile is produced by the liver and stored in the gall bladder	2.30: now split into two statements
2.31	understand the role of bile in neutralising stomach acid and emulsifying lipids	2.30: now split into two statements
2.32	understand how the small intestine is adapted for absorption, including the structure of a villus	2.31: statement re-worded
2.33B Practical: investigate the energy content in a food sample		2.32: becomes a practical statement
(f) Respiration		
2.34	understand how the process of respiration produces ATP in living organisms	2.33
2.35	know that ATP provides energy for cells	New statement
2.36	describe the differences between aerobic and anaerobic respiration	2.34
2.37	know the word equation and the balanced chemical symbol equation for aerobic respiration in living organisms	2.35
2.38	know the word equation for anaerobic respiration in plants and in animals	2.36
2.39	Practical: investigate the evolution of carbon dioxide and heat from respiring seeds or other suitable living organisms	2.37: was a bold statement; also becomes a practical statement

(g) Gas exchange	
2.40B understand the role of diffusion in gas exchange	2.38: becomes a bold statement
<i>Flowering plants</i>	
2.41B understand gas exchange (of carbon dioxide and oxygen) in relation to respiration and photosynthesis	2.39: becomes a bold statement
2.42B understand how the structure of the leaf is adapted for gas exchange	2.41: becomes a bold statement
2.43B describe the role of stomata in gas exchange	2.42: becomes a bold statement
2.44B understand how respiration continues during the day and night, but that the net exchange of carbon dioxide and oxygen depends on the intensity of light	2.40
2.45B <i>Practical: investigate the effect of light on net gas exchange from a leaf, using hydrogen-carbonate indicator</i>	2.43: becomes a practical statement
<i>Humans</i>	
2.46 describe the structure of the thorax, including the ribs, intercostal muscles, diaphragm, trachea, bronchi, bronchioles, alveoli and pleural membranes	2.44
2.47 understand the role of the intercostal muscles and the diaphragm in ventilation	2.45
2.48 explain how alveoli are adapted for gas exchange by diffusion between air in the lungs and blood in capillaries	2.46
2.49 understand the biological consequences of smoking in relation to the lungs and the circulatory system, including coronary heart disease	2.47
2.50 <i>Practical: investigate breathing in humans, including the release of carbon dioxide and the effect of exercise</i>	2.48: becomes a practical statement
(h) Transport	
2.51 understand why simple, unicellular organisms can rely on diffusion for movement of substances in and out of the cell	2.49
2.52 understand the need for a transport system in multicellular organisms	2.50
<i>Flowering plants</i>	
2.53 describe the role of phloem in transporting sucrose and amino acids between the leaves and other parts of the plant	2.51: was a bold statement
2.54 describe the role of xylem in transporting water and mineral ions from the roots to other parts of the plant	2.52
2.55B understand how water is absorbed by root hair cells	2.53: becomes a bold statement

2.56B understand that transpiration is the evaporation of water from the surface of a plant	2.54: becomes a bold statement
2.57B understand how the rate of transpiration is affected by changes in humidity, wind speed, temperature and light intensity	2.55: becomes a bold statement
2.58B <i>Practical: investigate the role of environmental factors in determining the rate of transpiration from a leafy shoot</i>	2.56: becomes a bold statement; also becomes a practical statement
Humans	
2.59 describe the composition of the blood: red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets and plasma	2.57
2.60 understand the role of plasma in the transport of carbon dioxide, digested food, urea, hormones and heat energy	2.58
2.61 understand how adaptations of red blood cells make them suitable for the transport of oxygen, including shape, the absence of a nucleus and the presence of haemoglobin	2.59: slightly re-worded
2.62 understand how the immune system responds to disease using white blood cells, illustrated by phagocytes ingesting pathogens and lymphocytes releasing antibodies specific to the pathogen	2.60
2.63B understand how vaccination results in the manufacture of memory cells, which enable future antibody production to the pathogen to occur sooner, faster and in greater quantity	2.61
2.64B understand how platelets are involved in blood clotting, which prevents blood loss and the entry of micro-organisms	2.62
2.65 describe the structure of the heart and how it functions	2.63
2.66 explain how the heart rate changes during exercise and under the influence of adrenaline	2.64
2.67 understand how factors may increase the risk of developing coronary heart disease	New statement
2.68 understand how the structure of arteries, veins and capillaries relate to their function	2.65: slightly re-worded
2.69 understand the general structure of the circulation system, including the blood vessels to and from the heart and lungs, liver and kidneys	2.66
(i) Excretion	
Flowering plants	
2.70 understand the origin of carbon dioxide and oxygen as waste products of metabolism and their loss from the stomata of a leaf	2.67
Humans	
2.71 know the excretory products of the lungs, kidneys and skin (organs of excretion)	2.68: slightly re-worded
2.72B understand how the kidney carries out its roles of excretion and osmoregulation	2.69: becomes a bold statement

2.73B describe the structure of the urinary system, including the kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra	2.70: becomes a bold statement
2.74B describe the structure of a nephron, including the Bowman's capsule and glomerulus, convoluted tubules, loop of Henle and collecting duct	2.71: becomes a bold statement
2.75B describe ultrafiltration in the Bowman's capsule and the composition of the glomerular filtrate	2.72: becomes a bold statement
2.76B understand how water is reabsorbed into the blood from the collecting duct	2.73: becomes a bold statement
2.77B understand why selective reabsorption of glucose occurs at the proximal convoluted tubule	2.74: becomes a bold statement
2.78B describe the role of ADH in regulating the water content of the blood	2.75: becomes a bold statement
2.79B understand that urine contains water, urea and ions	2.76: becomes a bold statement
(j) Co-ordination and response	
2.80 understand how organisms are able to respond to changes in their environment	2.77
2.81 understand that homeostasis is the maintenance of a constant internal environment, and that body water content and body temperature are both examples of homeostasis	2.78
2.82 understand that a co-ordinated response requires a stimulus, a receptor and an effector	2.79
Flowering plants	
2.83 understand that plants respond to stimuli	2.80
2.84 describe the geotropic and phototropic responses of roots and stems	2.18 & 2.82: combined and re-worded
2.85 understand the role of auxin in the phototropic response of stems	New statement
Humans	
2.86 describe how nervous and hormonal communication control responses and understand the differences between the two systems	2.83: slightly reworded
2.87 understand that the central nervous system consists of the brain and spinal cord and is linked to sense organs by nerves	2.84
2.88 understand that stimulation of receptors in the sense organs sends electrical impulses along nerves into and out of the central nervous system, resulting in rapid responses	2.85
2.89 understand the role of neurotransmitters at synapses	New statement
2.90 describe the structure and functioning of a simple reflex arc illustrated by the withdrawal of a finger from a hot object	2.86

2.91	describe the structure and function of the eye as a receptor	2.87
2.92	understand the function of the eye in focusing on near and distant objects, and in responding to changes in light intensity	2.88: was a bold statement
2.93	describe the role of the skin in temperature regulation, with reference to sweating, vasoconstriction and vasodilation	2.89: was a bold statement
2.94	understand the sources, roles and effects of the following hormones: adrenaline, insulin, testosterone, progesterone and oestrogen	2.90: ADH removed from Double Award
2.95B	understand the sources, roles and effects of the following hormones: ADH, FSH and LH	2.90: becomes a bold statement with additional hormones

3 Reproduction and inheritance

The following sub-topics are covered in this section.

- (a) Reproduction
- (b) Inheritance

(a) Reproduction	2011 specification reference
3.1 understand the differences between sexual and asexual reproduction	3.1
3.2 understand that fertilisation involves the fusion of a male and female gamete to produce a zygote that undergoes cell division and develops into an embryo	3.2
Flowering plants	
3.3 describe the structures of an insect-pollinated and a wind-pollinated flower and explain how each is adapted for pollination	3.3
3.4 understand that the growth of the pollen tube followed by fertilisation leads to seed and fruit formation	3.4
3.5 <i>Practical: investigate the conditions needed for seed germination</i>	3.5: becomes a practical statement
3.6 understand how germinating seeds utilise food reserves until the seedling can carry out photosynthesis	3.6: was a bold statement
3.7 understand that plants can reproduce asexually by natural methods (illustrated by runners) and by artificial methods (illustrated by cuttings)	3.7
Humans	
3.8 understand how the structure of the male and female reproductive systems are adapted for their functions	3.8: re-worded
3.9 understand the roles of oestrogen and progesterone in the menstrual cycle	3.9
3.10B understand the roles of FSH and LH in the menstrual cycle	New statement
3.11 describe the role of the placenta in the nutrition of the developing embryo	3.10: was a bold statement
3.12 understand how the developing embryo is protected by amniotic fluid	3.11: was a bold statement
3.13 understand the roles of oestrogen and testosterone in the development of secondary sexual characteristics	3.12

(b) Inheritance		
3.14	understand that the genome is the entire DNA of an organism and that a gene is a section of a molecule of DNA that codes for a specific protein	3.14: statement re-worded
3.15	understand that the nucleus of a cell contains chromosomes on which genes are located	3.13
3.16B	describe a DNA molecule as two strands coiled to form a double helix, the strands being linked by a series of paired bases: adenine (A) with thymine (T), and cytosine (C) with guanine (G)	3.15: becomes a bold statement
3.17B	understand that an RNA molecule is single stranded and contains uracil (U) instead of thymine (T)	New statement
3.18B	describe the stages of protein synthesis including transcription and translation, including the role of mRNA, ribosomes, tRNA, codons and anticodons	New statement
3.19	understand how genes exist in alternative forms called alleles which give rise to differences in inherited characteristics	3.16
3.20	understand the meaning of the terms: dominant, recessive, homozygous, heterozygous, phenotype, and genotype	3.17
3.21B	understand the meaning of the term codominance	3.17
3.22	understand that most phenotypic features are the result of polygenic inheritance rather than single genes	New statement
3.23	describe patterns of monohybrid inheritance using a genetic diagram	3.18
3.24	understand how to interpret family pedigrees	3.19
3.25	predict probabilities of outcomes from monohybrid crosses	3.20
3.26	understand how the sex of a person is controlled by one pair of chromosomes, XX in a female and XY in a male	3.21
3.27	describe the determination of the sex of offspring at fertilisation, using a genetic diagram	3.22
3.28	understand how division of a diploid cell by mitosis produces two cells that contain identical sets of chromosomes	3.23
3.29	understand that mitosis occurs during growth, repair, cloning and asexual reproduction	3.24
3.30	understand how division of a cell by meiosis produces four cells, each with half the number of chromosomes, and that this results in the formation of genetically different haploid gametes	3.25
3.31	understand how random fertilisation produces genetic variation of offspring	3.26
3.32	know that in human cells the diploid number of chromosomes is 46 and the haploid number is 23	3.27
3.33	understand that variation within a species can be genetic, environmental, or a combination of both	3.28

3.34	understand that mutation is a rare, random change in genetic material that can be inherited	3.29
3.35B	understand how a change in DNA can affect the phenotype by altering the sequence of amino acids in a protein	New statement
3.36B	understand how most genetic mutations have no effect on the phenotype, some have a small effect and rarely do they have a significant effect	3.31: becomes a bold statement; also re-worded
3.37B	understand that the incidence of mutations can be increased by exposure to ionising radiation (for example, gamma rays, x-rays and ultraviolet rays) and some chemical mutagens (for example, chemicals in tobacco)	3.33
3.38	explain Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection	3.30: slightly re-worded
3.39	understand how resistance to antibiotics can increase in bacterial populations, and appreciate how such an increase can lead to infections being difficult to control	3.32

4 Ecology and the environment

The following sub-topics are covered in this section.

- (a) The organism in the environment
- (b) Feeding relationships
- (c) Cycles with ecosystems
- (d) Human influences on the environment

(a) The organism in the environment	2011 specification reference
4.1 understand the terms population, community, habitat and ecosystem	4.1
4.2 <i>Practical: investigate the population size of an organism in two different areas using quadrats</i>	4.2: becomes a practical statement
4.3B understand the term biodiversity	New statement
4.4B <i>Practical: investigate the distribution of organisms in their habitats and measure biodiversity using quadrats</i>	4.3: becomes a bold statement; also becomes a practical statement
4.5 understand how abiotic and biotic factors affect the population size and distribution of organisms	New statement
(b) Feeding relationships	
4.6 understand the names given to different trophic levels, including producers, primary, secondary and tertiary consumers and decomposers	4.4
4.7 understand the concepts of food chains, food webs, pyramids of number, pyramids of biomass and pyramids of energy transfer	4.5
4.8 understand the transfer of substances and energy along a food chain	4.6
4.9 understand why only about 10% of energy is transferred from one trophic level to the next	4.7
(c) Cycles within ecosystems	
	4.8: statement deleted
4.10 describe the stages in the carbon cycle, including respiration, photosynthesis, decomposition and combustion	4.9
4.11B describe the stages in the nitrogen cycle, including the roles of nitrogen fixing bacteria, decomposers, nitrifying bacteria and denitrifying bacteria (specific names of bacteria are not required)	4.10

(d)	Human influences on the environment	
4.12	understand the biological consequences of pollution of air by sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide	4.11
4.13	understand that water vapour, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, methane and CFCs are greenhouse gases	4.12
4.14	understand how human activities contribute to greenhouse gases	4.13
4.15	understand how an increase in greenhouse gases results in an enhanced greenhouse effect and that this may lead to global warming and its consequences	4.14
4.16	understand the biological consequences of pollution of water by sewage	4.15: was a bold statement; also re-worded
4.17	understand the biological consequences of eutrophication caused by leached minerals from fertiliser	4.16: slightly re-worded
4.18B	understand the effects of deforestation, including leaching, soil erosion, disturbance of evapotranspiration and the carbon cycle, and the balance of atmospheric gases	4.17: becomes a bold statement; also slightly re-worded

5 Use of biological resources

The following sub-topics are covered in this section.

- (a) Food production
- (b) Selective breeding
- (c) Genetic modification (genetic engineering)
- (d) Cloning

(a) Food production	2011 specification reference
<i>Crop plants</i>	
5.1 describe how glasshouses and polythene tunnels can be used to increase the yield of certain crops	5.1
5.2 understand the effects on crop yield of increased carbon dioxide and increased temperature in glasshouses	5.2
5.3 understand how the use of fertiliser can increase crop yield	5.3
5.4 understand the reasons for pest control and the advantages and disadvantages of using pesticides and biological control with crop plants	5.4
<i>Micro-organisms</i>	
5.5 understand the role of yeast in the production of food including bread	5.5: slightly re-worded
5.6 <i>Practical: Investigate the role of anaerobic respiration by yeast in different conditions</i>	5.6: becomes a practical statement
5.7 understand the role of bacteria (<i>Lactobacillus</i>) in the production of yoghurt	5.7: was a bold statement
5.8 understand the use of an industrial fermenter and explain the need to provide suitable conditions in the fermenter, including aseptic precautions, nutrients, optimum temperature and pH, oxygenation and agitation, for the growth of micro-organisms	5.8: was a bold statement
<i>Fish farming</i>	
5.9B understand the methods used to farm large numbers of fish to provide a source of protein, including maintaining water quality, controlling intraspecific and interspecific predation, controlling disease, removing waste products, controlling the quality and frequency of feeding, and selective breeding	5.9: becomes a bold statement
(b) Selective breeding	
5.10 understand how selective breeding can develop plants with desired characteristics	5.10: slightly re-worded
5.11 understand how selective breeding can develop animals with desired characteristics	5.11: slightly re-worded

(c) Genetic modification (genetic engineering)	
5.12 understand how restriction enzymes are used to cut DNA at specific sites and ligase enzymes are used to join pieces of DNA together	5.12
5.13 understand how plasmids and viruses can act as vectors, which take up pieces of DNA, and then insert this recombinant DNA into other cells	5.13
5.14 understand how large amounts of human insulin can be manufactured from genetically modified bacteria that are grown in a fermenter	5.14
5.15 understand how genetically modified plants can be used to improve food production	5.15: slightly re-worded
5.16 understand that the term transgenic means the transfer of genetic material from one species to a different species	5.16: was a bold statement
(d) Cloning	
5.17B describe the process of micropropagation (tissue culture) in which explants are grown <i>in vitro</i>	5.17: becomes a bold statement; also slightly re-worded
5.18B understand how micropropagation can be used to produce commercial quantities of genetically identical plants with desirable characteristics	5.18: becomes a bold statement
5.19B describe the stages in the production of cloned mammals involving the introduction of a diploid nucleus from a mature cell into an enucleated egg cell, illustrated by Dolly the sheep	5.19: becomes a bold statement
5.20B understand how cloned transgenic animals can be used to produce human proteins	5.20: statement re-worded