



AQA City & Guilds CCEA Pearson OCR SQA WJEC

Produced on behalf of AQA, CCEA, Pearson, OCR and WJEC

Rules for GCSE specifications from June 2014 Terminal requirements, re-sits and cashing in

Notes for teachers and examinations officers

These notes apply to specifications which are available to candidates in England. Different rules may apply to other specifications.

Summary

- From June 2014, all GCSE qualifications which are available in England will be assessed terminally, with students taking all their assessment units at the end of the course.
- The qualifications are designed as 2-year courses.
- Students **must** enter 100% of the assessment in the final examination series when they claim certification.
- There is no limit on the number of times that students may re-sit a qualification, so long as they enter for all the units in the assessment in the final examination series.

For GCSE qualifications that are unitised:

- the specifications are made up of individual units
- each unit is usually assessed by either a written paper or a controlled assessment, although other forms of assessment may be used (e.g. practical tests)
- the units contribute to an overall subject cash-in¹
- students **must** be entered for each unit which contributes to the cash-in
- students **must** also be entered for the subject cash-in
- the cash-in leads to certification with a grade
- students **must** enter 100% of the assessment in the final examination series when they claim certification.

UMS

Uniform Mark Scales (UMS) will be used to aggregate marks from individual assessment units. If you teach any of the current modular GCSE qualifications, you will be familiar with UMS. After the grade boundaries for a question paper or a controlled assessment are decided, the marks (also referred to as 'raw' marks) are converted to uniform marks. The same standard of performance on the papers taken at a different time always gets the same number of uniform marks, so that the awarding bodies can use and compare results from one examination series to the next. The number of uniform marks for each unit depends on its weighting and on the maximum uniform mark for the qualification as a whole.

¹ Cash-in is the term often used for the request to certificate the overall qualification.

What are the rules?

These rules are to ensure a 'level playing-field'. They include details on:

- terminal assessments
- re-sitting
- carrying forward of controlled assessment results
- cashing-in Short/Full and Single/Double Award GCSEs.

Terminal Requirement

- All of the assessment **must** be taken in the examination series in which the qualification is certificated. In other words, there is a 100% terminal requirement.
- The final grade will be based on all results for the units taken in the examination series in which the qualification is certificated (but see below regarding the carry-forward of controlled assessment marks).

This means that students must complete their course by entering for all units that make up the qualification. The results for these units will be used to calculate the overall subject grade.

Re-sit Rules

- There is no limit to the number of times that students may re-sit a qualification so long as they meet the 100% terminal rule each time.
- The only exception to the rule above is controlled assessment (including externally assessed controlled assessment for modern foreign languages Writing), for which the unit mark may be carried forward from a previous exam series (the student must have used this mark to certificate the same specification²). A controlled assessment mark remains available for carry forward throughout the shelf life of the specification. If a student chooses to re-sit the controlled assessment unit, it is this new unit result (not the original result, even if higher) that will count towards the qualification grade.

How do Foundation and Higher Tiers work?

Foundation tier units are targeted at grades C-G, whilst Higher tier units are targeted at grades A*-D. In a Foundation tier unit, the maximum uniform mark available will be equivalent to a top grade C. Candidates who take a Higher tier unit but do not achieve the standard required to gain a grade D may achieve, exceptionally, a grade E. In tiered subjects, students may take different units at different tiers, and their overall grade will be determined by the aggregate of their uniform marks on these units.

Re-taking a qualification

A qualification may be taken more than once, by re-sitting all the units. Previous results for any controlled assessment units may be re-used (carried forward).

Can we decline GCSE Grades?

Students cannot decline certification of GCSE awards after the results have been published.

² If the student has certificated on two or more previous occasions, the mark which counted towards the most recent certification is carried forward, even if it is zero.

Can we transfer controlled assessment results between awarding bodies when carrying forward?

Controlled assessment results cannot be carried forward across awarding bodies. Carry forward is possible only where the student previously certificated the same specification.

Short Course and Full Course

It is **not** permissible for students to use a result from a GCSE Short Course award to 'top up' units for a Full Course award, unless the Short Course and Full Course are certificated concurrently. This rule applies to controlled assessment units as well as to external units.

Eligibility

Students will be eligible for a qualification only when they have entered for a valid combination of units and for the cash-in in the same examination series.

What if the student is absent?

A student who enters for a unit but is absent from the examination will be given zero marks for that unit. If the student is absent with good reason, an estimated mark may be calculated. Centres should contact the relevant awarding body in this instance.

How do Short/Full Courses and Single/Double Awards work?

There are:

- **Short Courses** – broadly equivalent to half the corresponding Full Course GCSE
- **Full Courses** – the same as a Single Award GCSE
- **Double Award GCSEs** – broadly equivalent to two Full Course GCSEs

In some subjects (e.g. Modern Foreign Languages) there are Short and Full Courses, with common units. Also, in some subjects (e.g. Applied Business, Health and Social Care, Leisure and Tourism) there are Single and Double Awards with common units.

For Short/Full courses where there are common units, students who wish to certificate both may:

- certificate the Short Course after one year and the Full Course after two years (but the Short Course units cannot be carried forward - they must be re-taken in order to certificate the Full Course);
- certificate simultaneously a Short Course and Full Course award in the same series upon completion of all the necessary units. In this instance, the common Short Course units count towards both awards.

For Single Award/Double Award courses, students who wish to certificate both may:

- certificate the Single Award after one year and the Double Award after two years, carrying forward all unit results from the Single Award for use in the Double Award;
- certificate the Single Award after one year and the Double Award after two years, carrying forward only the controlled assessment unit result from the Single Award for use in the Double Award;

- certificate the Single Award after one year and the Double Award after two years, re-taking the Single Award units in the second year (note: in this instance the second set of results for the Single Award units would count towards the Double Award qualification grade, even if these results were lower than the first set of results for these units);
- certificate simultaneously a Single Award and Double Award in the same series upon completion of all the necessary units.

Units which contribute to more than one subject title:

- A result from any unit can be counted towards only one GCSE title (for example, if a unit can contribute to both Science and Physics, a result from that unit cannot be used to count towards certification in both titles). It is therefore not normally possible to certificate two specifications with a common unit in the same series.
- The above rule also applies where controlled assessment results are carried forward. The result being carried forward must have previously been used to certificate the same specification.
- There is an exception for the Speaking & Listening endorsement in GCSE English / GCSE English Language. A student may carry forward the result of the endorsement from a previous GCSE certification, even if the GCSE title was different (ie previously English Language and now English or vice-versa). If the student certificated on two or more previous occasions, the most recent Speaking & Listening result is carried forward.

Compensatory awards

- An awarding body will not make an automatic compensatory award to a student who is, for example, Unclassified for a Full Course and/or a Double Award, but has unit results which would gain a grade for a Short Course award. However, the student will be allowed to make a late entry for the Short Course award within a specified period after the publication of results.

How long will the individual unit results be valid?

The results for controlled assessment units remain valid during the shelf life of the specification. As there is a 100% terminal requirement, unit results for externally assessed units cannot be carried forward to future series.

November examinations

November GCSE examinations are available in English, English Language and Mathematics, but only to students who are re-sitting. Students may enter with a different awarding body. Students may enter for English if they previously entered for English Language (or vice-versa).

Enquiries about results

Enquiries about results **must** be submitted within the prescribed period following the publication of results. It will not be possible to re-mark a unit in a subsequent examination series when it is cashed-in (for example, when a Single Award is 'topped up' to a Double Award). A unit can only be re-marked immediately after the result has been issued.

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