

GCSE Reform – Science – from modular to linear FAQs

Current cohorts

1. My students who are currently in Year 10 and started the 2011 spec in Sept '11 have been entered for units in B1, C1 and P1. They have not yet been entered for B2, C2 or P2. Are these students still allowed to complete their Additional Science with the current 2011 modular specification?

A: Yes, because there is one more academic year, starting September 2012, in which modular delivery and assessment is available until final modular sitting June 2013. On certification you should ensure that you meet the 40% rule.

2. We are probably going to get some students to resit their B1, C1 or P1 units in November 2012. Will this still be possible (will B1, C1 and P1 modular exams still run from 2012 to 2013 along side the B2, C2 and P2 modules)?

A: Yes, candidates can re-sit the B1 modular unit, plus any others, in November 2012 and cash-in for their GCSE Science then as long as they meet the 40% rule.

3. Can you please advise me about the current triple science course in Yr 10? I am struggling to understand what they can resit and when.

A: The current GCSE 2011 triple course is available as modular delivery and assessment through to first award of GCSEs Biology, Chemistry and Physics June 2013 (first sittings of B3, C3 and P3 are June 2013). Therefore, they can re-sit units from B1, C1, P1, B2, C2 and P2 during the next academic year, i.e. November 2012, March and June 2013. However, please remember that the 40% rule will still need to be met for each separate GCSE at cash-in June 2013.

4. If my students in Year 10 fail GCSE Science in 2012 on the modular course, if they have to retake in 2013 will they have to do the linear exam or can they retake the modular course during 2012 - 2013.

A: Your students can re-sit and re-certificate their GCSE Science during the next academic year, starting September 2012, because there is one more year of modular assessment available until June 2013.

5. I am still rather confused about the current 40% terminal rule situation, how does it work for resits? What happens if the re-sit mark at the terminal sitting is worse?

A: If a candidate is re-sitting one or two units as part of the 40% terminal sitting, then these scores count towards the final GCSE award regardless if each is a higher or lower score than the original score sitting.

6. With the 40% terminal rule, how does this apply to re-certification (i.e. apply for a second certification)?

A: Candidates re-sitting units to improve an overall GCSE grade will be required to meet the 40% rule when they are cashing-in to re-certificate. A re-sit within the 40% terminal rule will have the re-sit score accepted regardless if it is higher or lower than the original score achieved at first sitting.

Triple Science: Separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry & Physics

1. Would it be possible for current Yr 9 GCSE triple science students to sit units 1 and 2 in 2013 and Units 3 in 2014?

A: No. There will be no opportunity to sit individual unit examinations after June 2013. Modular external assessment is replaced by linear assessment from June 2014. Any modular result not cashed in by June 2013 will be lost.

2. What will happen to those Y9 doing triple science and have taken modules already? Do the results get carried forward?

A: No, individual unit results do not get carried forward from June 2013. These unit results can only be used if a qualification is completed by June 2013 and cashed in. In this scenario you may be interested in cashing in these results for a GCSE in Science, and following the Science/Additional Science/Further Science pathway (see below).

3. How many linear exams does a triple sciences student have to take?

A: Nine written examinations plus three controlled assessments.

GCSE Further Additional Science pathway.

1. Are there any other qualification pathways in addition to GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics for covering three separate sciences?

A: Yes, GCSE Science, GCSE Additional Science and GCSE Further Additional Science.

The structure of the GCSE Further Additional Science course is comprised of B3, C3, P3 and a Controlled Assessment. This provides a more flexible way to assess the separate sciences.

2. Are there any stipulations around GCSE Further Additional Science?

A: Yes, controlled assessments, CA, submitted for GCSE Additional Science and GCSE Further Additional Science need to be taken from different subjects, e.g. if a student submits a Biology CA, for Additional Science they must submit a Chemistry or Physics CA for Further Additional Science.

3. We have heard that this alternative pathway to cover separate Biology, Chemistry and Physics pathways has now been accredited by Ofqual. When is Further Additional Science first examined?

A: The first award of GCSE Further Additional Science is June 2014.

Retaking qualifications

1. If current Y9 do modular when in Y10 and cash-in in June 2013, can they resit all 3 core units in June 2014 and claim the better grade?

A: Yes, providing the candidates also sit a fresh valid controlled assessment to be submitted May 2014.

2. If Year 10s in 2012-13 take the legacy unitised Science, then want to retake the ENTIRE qualification in summer 2014, can they take their CA marks from the last modular sitting forward to their linear resit?

A: No, the previous moderated modular CA score cannot be carried forward to contribute to a linear GCSE retake. However, once linear is up and running, moderated CA marks can be carried forward to the next year to contribute to a retake of the qualification.

Exam sittings

1. Has the format for the linear Biology, Chemistry and Physics exams been agreed yet? Will there be 9 different 1 hour exams or are they likely to be by subject?

A: Candidates will currently sit 9 x 1 hour written examinations. The time-tabling would be that no more than two single papers are sat on one day.

The provisional timetable has not yet been set. It is likely that two exams from one subject would be on the same day and the third on another.

2. Do students have to sit all exams at the same level or can they do Foundation in Biology and Higher in Chemistry and Physics for Core Science?

A: Candidates can choose to sit different levels for each examination.

3. What happens if students miss one of the exams in the summer sitting for example sit B1 and B3 but miss B2 through illness?

A: A candidate may be considered for an aegrotat award on application.

Link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/appeal.aspx>

Controlled assessment

1. The current controlled assessment tasks have a one year shelf life. Under the new scheme, we may wish to run science and additional science in parallel and test them both at the end of Yr 11. Will the assessment tasks be changed so that they have a two year shelf life (Yr 10 and Yr 11)?

A: No, but the Controlled Assessments are released in the January when candidates are in Yr 10. This is a year ahead of the year of submission, May 15th for Yr 11, so teachers have more than a year in which to carry them out.

Resources and support

1. Will all the codes for modules and qualifications remain the same?

A: Yes

2. How do you access Exam Wizard?

A: www.examwizard.co.uk

You will need to log on using your Edexcel Online password. The new FREE resource allows you to create your own exams to help better prepare your students taking linear assessments.

Performance measures

1. If resitting the whole qualification, do they then have two GCSE grades or will the highest one be the one that is reported?

A: The highest score will get reported in the headline measures.
2. Can you please confirm that for triple science candidates to gain EBacc recognition they must achieve 2 good GCSEs. Some teachers are under the impression that students must get 3 Cs to count, if they get one D it is not counted.

A: Yes, we can confirm that if candidates are following a triple science pathway, but a candidate doesn't achieve one of them e.g. Biology grade B Chemistry grade C and Physics grade D they will still achieve two good GCSEs for the EBacc measure.

Candidates must have attempted all three GCSEs and passed (A*-C) two of them. 'Attempted' has been clarified as meaning a grade U or better. 'Absent' will not count as an attempt.

(See footnote on the Ofqual Science page: 'To count in the Science Baccalaureate all three single science AS, GCSEs or Certificates/iGCSEs - Physics, Chemistry and Biology - must be taken and grades A*-C achieved in two of them, or A*-C grades achieved in Science and Additional Science, or A*A*-CC grades achieved in Science Double Award.')

3. If triple science students sit an exam at the end of Year 10 will this count towards EBacc as this is a two year course?

A: If a GCSE is sat at the end of Yr 10 then this will count towards EBacc if the other two sciences are sat at the end of Yr 11.

Similarly, if GCSE Science is sat at the end of Yr 10 and GCSE Additional Science is sat at the end of Yr 11 then these two will also contribute to EBacc.