

Criteria for GCSE Qualifications



January 2012

Ofqual/12/5124

Contents

The criteria.....	2
Introduction	2
Content	2
Titling.....	2
Subject matter	2
Assessment	3
Reporting	4

The criteria

Introduction

1. The following criteria will be used as the basis for the development and accreditation of all GCSEs.
2. GCSE criteria were previously published within *The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004).

Content

Titling

3. The titles of GCSEs must:
 - 3.1 where relevant subject criteria exist, correspond to the titles used in the relevant subject criteria published by the regulators;
 - 3.2 where relevant subject criteria do not exist, be sufficiently broad to cover different specifications in the same subject area;
 - 3.3 use the words 'GCSE (short course)', if based on a short-course specification;
 - 3.4 use the words 'GCSE (double award)', if equivalent to two separate GCSEs.

Subject matter

4. The subject matter of GCSEs must:
 - 4.1 state which aspects/options need to be taken by candidates to meet the requirements of their respective countries, where statutory requirements differ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
 - 4.2 for short-course specifications, include half of the content of a single-award GCSE and cover the full range of grades;
 - 4.3 for double-award specifications, include content equivalent to two separate GCSEs;
 - 4.4 reflect the learning outcomes for each subject area;
 - 4.5 build upon the relevant programmes of study at Key Stage 4;

- 4.6 require the learner to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding specified in the subject criteria;
- 4.7 ensure that the content is comparable in content and range with other qualifications at the same level.

Assessment

- 5. The assessment arrangements for GCSEs must:
 - 5.1 set out the relationship between the assessment objectives and the assessment components/units;
 - 5.2 show the proportion of marks allocated to each assessment objective (or group of assessment objectives) and to each assessment component;
 - 5.3 include question papers targeted at either a single tier, covering grades A* to G, or two tiers of grades: A* to D with an allowed grade E, and C to G;
 - 5.4 require, across both controlled and external assessment components/units, a variety of question types and tasks, including extended writing;
 - 5.5 assess the candidates' quality of written communication in accordance with the guidance documentation produced by the regulators;
 - 5.6 comply with relevant subject criteria relating to the balance between external and controlled assessment.
- 6. Where controlled assessment is required, specifications must be developed in accordance with the controlled assessment regulations.
- 7. For subject awards up to and including summer 2013, unitised specifications must:
 - 7.1 contain a maximum of four assessment units in a single award
 - 7.2 allocate a weighting of at least 20% to each assessment unit
 - 7.3 allow only one re-sit of an assessment unit with the better result counting towards the qualification
 - 7.4 allocate a weighting of at least 40% to terminal assessment

- 7.5 ensure results for a unit have a shelf-life limited only by the shelf-life of the relevant specification.

- 8. For subject awards after summer 2013, unitised specifications must:
 - 8.1 contain a maximum of four assessment units in a single award
 - 8.2 allocate a weighting of at least 20% to each assessment unit
 - 8.3 require that 100% of the assessment is terminal
 - 8.4 not permit unit results to be carried forward from one examination series to another, except in the following cases:
 - (a) where those units have already been used to aggregate to a GCSE single award and a candidate wishes to re-use the unit results to aggregate to a double award in the same subject
 - or
 - (b) where a candidate wishes to carry forward the result from one or more controlled assessment units which have already been used to aggregate to a GCSE single or double award in order to re-take a whole qualification.

Reporting

- 9. There must be arrangements for grading and reporting of GCSEs so that:
 - 9.1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported on an eight-grade scale from A* to G, where A* is the highest grade;
 - 9.2 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as Unclassified or U;
 - 9.3 the grades awarded match the grade descriptions in the subject criteria or the descriptions for grades A, C and F submitted by the awarding organisation and approved by the regulators where subject criteria do not exist;
 - 9.4 the grade for double award GCSEs is reported in the format A*A*, A*A, AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE, EF, FF, FG, GG;
 - 9.5 the grades on short-course and double-award GCSE certificates are accompanied by explanatory notes on the nature of these types of GCSE.

We wish to make our publications widely accessible. Please contact us if you have any specific accessibility requirements.

First published by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in 2012

© Crown copyright 2012

You may re-use this publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the [Open Government Licence](#). To view this licence, [visit The National Archives](#); or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU; or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is also available on our website at www.ofqual.gov.uk

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation	
Spring Place	2nd Floor
Coventry Business Park	Glendinning House
Herald Avenue	6 Murray Street
Coventry CV5 6UB	Belfast BT1 6DN

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346