

GCE Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements

June 2016

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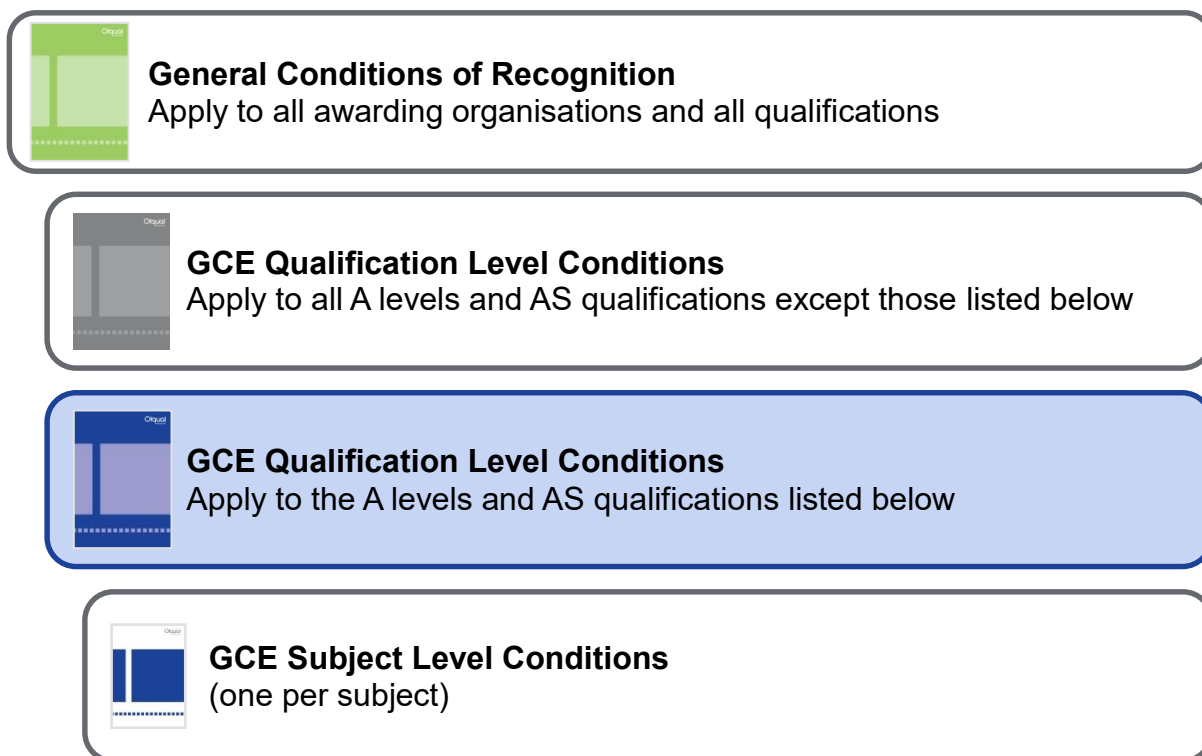
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Introduction

About this document

This document (highlighted in the figure below) is part of a suite of documents which sets out the regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering GCE qualifications.



We have developed all our requirements for GCE qualifications with the intention that AS and A level qualifications should fulfil the purposes set out in the table below:

A levels	AS qualifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ define and assess achievement of the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be needed by students planning to progress to undergraduate study at a UK higher education establishment, particularly (although not only) in the same subject area; ■ set out a robust and internationally comparable post-16 academic course of study to develop that knowledge, skills and understanding; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ provide evidence of students' achievements in a robust and internationally comparable post-16 course of study that is a sub-set of A level content; ■ enable students to broaden the range of subjects they study.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ permit UK universities to accurately identify the level of attainment of students;■ provide a basis for school and college accountability measures at age 18; and■ provide a benchmark of academic ability for employers.	
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Requirements set out in this document

This document sets out the GCE Qualification Level Conditions. These conditions apply to the following qualifications:

- all GCE A levels awarded on or after 1 April 2017, and all standalone GCE AS qualifications awarded on or after 1 April 2016 in:
 - Art and Design
 - Biology
 - Business
 - Chemistry
 - Computer Science
 - Economics
 - English Language
 - English Literature
 - English Literature and Language
 - History
 - Physics
 - Psychology
 - Sociology
- all GCE A levels awarded on or after 1 April 2018, and all standalone GCE AS qualifications awarded on or after 1 April 2017 in:
 - Classical Greek
 - Dance
 - Drama and Theatre
 - French
 - Geography

- German
- Latin
- Music
- Physical Education
- Religious Studies
- Spanish
- all GCE A levels in Mathematics which are both –
 - awarded on or after 1 April 2018; and
 - accredited on or after 12.01am on Saturday 9 April 2016;
- all other GCE A levels awarded on or after 1 April 2019; and
- all other standalone GCE AS qualifications awarded on or after 1 April 2018.

It also sets out our requirements in relation to setting specified levels of attainment for GCE Qualifications – awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCE9.1.

With respect to these qualifications, awarding organisations must also comply with:

- our *General Conditions of Recognition*,¹ which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications; and
- our *GCE Subject Level Conditions*;² and
- all relevant Regulatory Documents.³

With respect to all other GCE qualifications, awarding organisations must continue to comply with the General Conditions of Recognition, the *Legacy GCE Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements*,⁴ and the relevant Regulatory Documents.

Revisions to this document

We have revised this document since it was originally published (see Appendix 1 for details), most recently in June 2016.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-conditions-of-recognition

² www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-a-level-and-as-level-qualifications-requirements-and-guidance

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-documents-list

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-qualification-level-conditions-for-pre-reform-qualifications

The June 2016 version of this document replaces all previous versions of *GCE Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements* with effect from 5.01pm on Friday 24 June 2016. It includes the following new and amended Conditions and requirements:

- GCE9 – standard setting (new)
- GCE10 – Interpretation and Definitions (renumbered)
- Standard setting requirements (new)

Summary of requirements

Qualification Level Conditions	
GCE1	[Not used]
GCE2	Assessment strategies
GCE3	Specified levels of attainment
GCE4	Assessment by Examination
GCE5	Question types
GCE6	Timing of assessments
GCE7	Level of Demand
GCE8	Use of Calculators
GCE9	Standard Setting
GCE10	Interpretation and Definitions

Standard setting requirements
Requirements for setting specified levels of attainment for GCE Qualifications

Qualification Level Conditions

GCE Qualification Level Conditions

Condition GCE1 [not used]

Condition GCE2 Assessment strategies

- GCE 2.1 In respect of each GCE Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must –
- (a) establish and maintain an assessment strategy for that qualification,
 - (b) ensure that the assessment strategy complies with any requirements which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and
 - (c) have regard to any guidance in relation to assessment strategies which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.
- GCE 2.2 In particular, an awarding organisation must ensure that the assessment strategy for a GCE Qualification sets out how the awarding organisation intends to secure, on an ongoing basis, compliance with its Conditions of Recognition in respect of the assessments for that qualification.
- GCE 2.3 An awarding organisation must ensure that all assessments for a GCE Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, are designed, set, delivered and marked in compliance with its assessment strategy for that qualification.
- GCE 2.4 An awarding organisation must –
- (a) keep under review its assessment strategy for a GCE Qualification, and revise it where necessary, so as to satisfy itself that the assessment strategy meets at all times the requirements of Conditions GCE2.1 and GCE2.2,
 - (b) review its assessment strategy for a GCE Qualification promptly upon receiving a request from Ofqual to do so, and subsequently ensure that its assessment strategy complies with any requirements that Ofqual has communicated to it in writing, and
 - (c) promptly notify Ofqual of any revisions made by it to any assessment strategy.
- GCE 2.5 An awarding organisation must –
- (a) upon receiving a request from Ofqual to do so, demonstrate to Ofqual's satisfaction that it has complied with its assessment strategy for a GCE Qualification in respect of any particular assessment for that qualification, or provide an explanation to Ofqual as to why it has not so complied, and

- (b) give effect to any recommendation that Ofqual may make in respect of its compliance with its assessment strategy.

Condition GCE3 Specified levels of attainment

GCE 3.1 An awarding organisation must ensure that the specification for each GCE Qualification which it makes available or proposes to make available sets out specified levels of attainment which comply with any requirements which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

Condition GCE4 Assessment by Examination

GCE 4.1 An awarding organisation must ensure that every assessment for a GCE Qualification which it makes available is an Assessment by Examination.

GCE 4.2 Condition GCE4.1 does not apply in respect of a GCE Qualification where a GCE Subject Level Condition states that its application is excluded in respect of that qualification.

Condition GCE5 Question types

- GCE 5.1 In designing and setting the assessments for a GCE Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must ensure that, taken together, those assessments include questions or tasks which allow Learners to –
- (a) provide extended responses, and
 - (b) demonstrate their ability to draw together different areas of knowledge and/or understanding from across a full course of study for that qualification.
- GCE 5.2 In designing and setting the assessments for a GCE Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must ensure that Learners are appropriately rewarded for providing such responses and demonstrating such an ability.
- GCE 5.3 The requirements in Condition GCE5.1 may be met within the same question or task, or different questions or tasks.
- GCE 5.4 For the purposes of Condition GCE5.1(a) an ‘extended response’ is evidence generated by a Learner which is of sufficient length to allow that Learner to demonstrate the ability to construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured.

Condition GCE6 Timing of assessments

GCE 6.1 An awarding organisation must ensure that in respect of each GCE Qualification which it makes available each Learner completes, during the months of May and June in any single year, the Assessments by Examination to be taken for that qualification.

GCE 6.2 In respect of each GCE Qualification which it makes available an awarding organisation must ensure that –

- (a) it issues a single result, or a single set of results, in respect of each Learner following completion by that Learner of the assessments to be taken for that qualification,
- (b) where confirmation of, or changes to, any mark for an assessment has been communicated to a Centre or a Learner in advance of the issue of that result or set of results, no further evidence generated by that Learner will be admissible as part of that assessment, and
- (c) where any result for a unit has been communicated to a Centre or a Learner in advance of the issue of that result or set of results, no further evidence generated by that Learner will be admissible as part of the assessments for that unit.

GCE 6.3 Condition GCE6.1 does not apply in respect of a GCE Qualification where a GCE Subject Level Condition states that its application is excluded in respect of that qualification.

Condition GCE7 Level of Demand

GCE 7.1 An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that all assessments for a GCE A level qualification which it makes available are at a consistent Level of Demand.

GCE 7.2 An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the Level of Demand of each assessment for each GCE AS qualification which it makes available is appropriate to the knowledge, skills and understanding to be reasonably expected of Learners who have completed the first half of a course of study designed to lead to the award of a GCE A level qualification in the same subject.

Condition GCE8 Use of Calculators

GCE 8.1 In respect of each GCE Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, in which an awarding organisation permits a Learner to use a Calculator while taking any Assessment by Examination it must –

- (a) publish its approach to Learners' use of Calculators in that Assessment by Examination, including any restrictions that it places on such use, and
- (b) ensure that Assessment by Examination remains fit for purpose.

Condition GCE9 Standard Setting

GCE 9.1 In respect of each GCE Qualification that it makes available, an awarding organisation must comply with any requirements, and have regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time in relation to –

- (a) the promotion of consistency between the measurement of Learners' levels of attainment in that qualification and similar qualifications made available by other awarding organisations, and
- (b) the setting of specified levels of attainment.

GCE 9.2 In setting the specified levels of attainment for a GCE Qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must have regard to an appropriate range of qualitative and quantitative evidence.

GCE 9.3 In respect of each GCE Qualification which it makes available, the range of evidence to which an awarding organisation has regard for the purposes of Condition GCE9.2 will only be appropriate if it includes evidence of –

- (a) the Level of Demand of the assessments for that qualification,
- (b) the level of attainment demonstrated in those assessments by an appropriately representative sample of Learners taking that qualification,
- (c) the level of attainment demonstrated by Learners taking that qualification in –
 - (i) a prior assessment (which was not for that qualification), whether or not that assessment was for a regulated qualification, or
 - (ii) a prior qualification, whether or not that qualification was a regulated qualification,

and

- (d) the level of attainment demonstrated by Learners who have previously been awarded the qualification.

GCE 9.4 An awarding organisation must maintain a record of –

- (a) the evidence to which it has had regard in setting the specified levels of attainment for each GCE Qualification which it makes available, and
- (b) its rationale for the selection of and weight given to that evidence.

Condition GCE10 Interpretation and Definitions

GCE 10.1 The rules of interpretation and definitions outlined in General Condition J1 shall apply to the GCE Qualification Level Conditions and GCE Subject Level Conditions.

GCE 10.2 Except in the circumstances described in Condition GCE10.3, the requirements imposed by the GCE Qualification Level Conditions and the GCE Subject Level Conditions apply in addition to each other and to the requirements imposed by the General Conditions of Recognition.

GCE 10.3 To the extent that there is any inconsistency between –

- (a) a requirement of a GCE Subject Level Condition and a requirement of either a GCE Qualification Level Condition or a General Condition of Recognition, such that an awarding organisation could not comply with both such requirements, the awarding organisation must comply with the requirement of the GCE Subject Level Condition and is not obliged to comply with the requirement of the other Condition, or
- (b) a requirement of a GCE Qualification Level Condition and a requirement of a General Condition of Recognition, such that an awarding organisation could not comply with both such requirements, the awarding organisation must comply with the requirement of the GCE Qualification Level Condition and is not obliged to comply with the requirement of the General Condition of Recognition.

GCE 10.4 In these Conditions, the following words shall have the meaning given to them below (and cognate expressions should be construed accordingly) –

Assessment by Examination

An assessment which is -

- (a) set by an awarding organisation,
- (b) designed to be taken simultaneously by all relevant Learners at a time determined by the awarding organisation, and

- (c) taken under conditions specified by the awarding organisation (including conditions relating to the supervision of Learners during the assessment and the duration of the assessment).

Calculator

Any electronic device which may be used for the performance of mathematical computations.

GCE Qualification

Either a GCE A level qualification or a GCE AS qualification.

GCE Qualification Level Condition

A Condition of Recognition that applies to all GCE qualifications, except where a GCE Subject Level Condition states that its application is excluded in respect of a specific subject, and which uses the numbering format 'GCE n . n ', where ' n ' denotes a number.

GCE Subject Level Condition

A Condition of Recognition that applies to a GCE qualification in a specific subject only and which uses the numbering format 'GCE(x) n . n ', where ' x ' denotes a particular subject and ' n ' denotes a number.

Standard setting requirements

Requirements for setting specified levels of attainment for GCE Qualifications

Condition GCE9.1(b) allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the setting of specified levels of attainment for GCE Qualifications.

We set out below our requirements for the purposes of Condition GCE9.1(b).

These requirements apply only to assessments for A level qualifications that are graded A* to E and assessments for AS qualifications that are graded A to E.

For ease of reference, the specified levels of attainment used in GCE Qualifications are referred to below as 'grades'.

Setting specified levels of attainment

1. For AS and A level the two key grade boundaries are:

(a) E/U

(b) A/B

An awarding organisation must set these key grade boundaries for each Component. In doing this, the awarding organisation must have regard to achieving suitable qualification level outcomes.

2. An awarding organisation must set the key grade boundaries for the qualification as a whole using the following method:

(a) The boundary mark for each Component is scaled as necessary to reflect the intended weighting of that Component as detailed in the specification.

(b) The resulting scaled Component boundary marks are added and the result is rounded to the nearest whole number (0.5 rounded up).

3. An awarding organisation must determine the B/C, C/D and D/E qualification grade boundaries arithmetically:

(a) The grade B/C, C/D and D/E boundary marks are calculated by dividing the mark interval between the A/B and E/U boundaries by four.

(b) Where there is a remainder of one, the extra mark is added to the A to B mark interval.

(c) Where there is a remainder of two, one extra mark is added to each of the A to B and B to C mark intervals.

- (d) Where there is a remainder of three, one extra mark is added to each of the A to B, B to C and C to D mark intervals.
4. In respect of A level qualifications, an awarding organisation must set the A*/A boundary using appropriate statistical and technical evidence.
 5. So long as the requirements in Condition E10.1 are met, an awarding organisation may permit a Learner to carry forward his or her mark/moderated mark (scaled as appropriate) for an assessment which is not an Assessment by Examination from a previous attempt at the same qualification awarded by the awarding organisation.

Appendix 1 – Revisions to this document

The table below sets out all revisions to this document since it was first published, and the dates on which those revisions came into force.

Revision	Date in force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ GCE9 – standard setting (new) ■ GCE10 – Interpretation and Definitions (renumbered) ■ Standard setting requirements (new) 	24 June 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Condition GCE8 – Use of Calculators (new) ■ Condition GCE9 – Interpretation and Definitions (amended and renumbered) ■ Updated list of qualifications to which the Conditions apply 	12 April 2016
Updated list of qualifications to which the Conditions apply	23 April 2015
First published	9 April 2014

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