



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



*Rewarding Learning*

# GCSE subject criteria for physical education

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## Introduction

1. GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in physical education. They provide the framework within which an awarding body creates the detail of the specification.
2. Specifications must also meet the regulators' general requirements, including the common and GCSE criteria as defined in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications* (QCA/04/1293).
3. Subject criteria are intended to:
  - help ensure consistent and comparable standards in the same subject across the awarding bodies
  - ensure that the rigour of GCSE is maintained
  - ensure that specifications build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established by the national curricula for England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and facilitate progression to A level physical education and level 3 vocational and occupational qualifications
  - help higher education institutions, employers and other stakeholders such as learners and parents/guardians know what has been studied and assessed.
4. Any GCSE specification that contains significant elements of physical education must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

## Aims and learning outcomes

5. GCSE specifications in physical education should encourage learners to be inspired, moved and changed by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study and to develop an awareness and appreciation of their own and others' cultures in relation to physical education. They should encourage creativity and decision-making skills to enable them to plan effectively for performances and to respond to changing situations. They should prepare learners to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices.
6. GCSE specifications in physical education must enable learners to:

- become increasingly physically competent through being actively engaged in a range of physical activities
- become increasingly effective in their performance in different types of physical activity and roles such as player/participant, leader and official
- develop their ability to engage independently and successfully in the processes of different types of physical activity
- develop and maintain their involvement in physical activity as part of a healthy active lifestyle.

## Subject content

7. The content of GCSE specifications in physical education must reflect the learning outcomes.
8. GCSE specifications in physical education must be based on learners' involvement in physical activity and be consistent with the national curriculum key stage 4 programmes of study requirements in the orders for England and/or Northern Ireland and/or Wales. Specifications should be based on four performances in practical contexts in at least two different types of activity. At least two performances must be as a player/participant (in the full course).
9. GCSE specifications in physical education must require learners to develop their physical competence in different:
  - types of physical activity
  - contexts within a physical activity
  - roles such as player/participant, leader and official.
10. GCSE specifications in physical education must require learners to understand how to perform well and improve the effectiveness of performance by:
  - developing the skills and techniques required to perform effectively in specific activities
  - understanding how to apply and adapt a wide range of skills and techniques through the effective selection and application of tactics, strategies and compositional ideas

- developing their physical and mental capacity to respond to the demands of performance
- developing their knowledge and understanding of roles such as player/participant, leader and official, and what constitutes effective performance in these different roles
- developing their ability to analyse and evaluate performance and identify key priorities for improvement
- developing their ability to make effective plans that bring about improved performance.

11. GCSE specifications in physical education must require learners to:

- identify key influences, including cultural factors, that impact on them and others achieving sustained involvement in physical activity
- plan how they and others can develop and maintain regular involvement in healthy physical activity
- understand the way in which diet, work, rest and physical activity in combination help to contribute to a balanced healthy lifestyle.
- plan the targeted selection of physical activity to maximise its effect as part of a balanced, healthy lifestyle
- develop knowledge and understanding of the opportunities and pathways available for becoming or remaining involved in physical activities in a range of roles.

## Assessment objectives

12. All specifications must require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

Assessment objectives		% weighting
AO1	Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of physical activity	20–30
AO2	Apply skills, knowledge and understanding in physical activity	45–55
AO3	Analyse and evaluate physical activity, and identify action to bring about improvement	20–30

## Scheme of assessment

13. GCSE specifications in physical education must allocate a weighting of 40% to external assessment and a weighting of 60% to controlled assessment in the overall scheme of assessment.

14. Question papers must be targeted at the full range of GCSE grades.

## Grade descriptions

15. Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.

16. The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of candidates' performance in the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.

Grade	Description
A	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate detailed knowledge and thorough understanding of a wide range of factors affecting performance and participation, and the relationship between them. They have a thorough understanding of the principles behind, and benefits of, regular, safe exercise and its impact on performance, fitness and health.</p> <p>They explain clearly and concisely the advantages, to themselves and others, of following active and healthy lifestyles. They identify and explain potential risks related to physical activities and how to manage these effectively.</p> <p>They demonstrate their ability to select and apply an extensive range of appropriate skills, techniques and original ideas in very complex and challenging activities, with considerable refinement, precision, control and fluency. They have a wide range of solutions to these challenges and consistently make effective decisions about how they will plan and approach their performance in response to new or changing situations.</p> <p>They critically analyse and evaluate their own and others' performance, identifying clearly the strengths and weaknesses evident. They demonstrate a deep understanding of the impact of skills, tactics or composition, and fitness on the quality and effectiveness of performance. They identify priorities for improvement and plan a good range of appropriate, progressive practices. They understand how to monitor and evaluate progress towards improved quality of performance and outcomes.</p>

C	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate sound knowledge and understanding of major factors that affect performance and participation in physical activity, and show a clear understanding of the principles behind, and the benefits of, regular, safe exercise and its impact on performance, fitness and health.</p> <p>They take increasing responsibility for the planning and execution of safe exercises. They understand the principles behind planning their own activity and exercise programmes. They identify and explain many of the long-term effects of exercise and activity on physical, mental and social health. They identify potential risks involved in different activities and some of the ways to manage these effectively.</p> <p>They demonstrate their ability to select and apply a good range of appropriate skills, techniques and ideas in complex and challenging activities, with effective refinement, precision, control and fluency. They have a good range of solutions to these challenges and usually make effective decisions about how they will plan and approach their performance in response to new or changing situations.</p> <p>They analyse effectively and comment on their own and others' performances, showing an understanding of the factors that affect the quality and effectiveness of performance, and the broad strengths and weaknesses evident. They identify the most significant areas for improvement and plan effective ways to improve their own and others' performance.</p>
F	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate basic knowledge of the major factors affecting performance and participation in physical activity. They know, and can explain with some clarity, how the body reacts during different types of exercise and how this helps develop better performance, fitness and health.</p> <p>They identify some activities and exercises suitable for preparing and recovering from specific activities. They recognise some of the risks involved in different activities and demonstrate the basic skills of risk assessment and management.</p>



	<p>They demonstrate their ability to select and apply a small range of appropriate skills, techniques and ideas in moderately challenging and complex activities, with some precision, control and fluency. They have a limited range of solutions to these challenges that they can draw on, and make sound decisions about how they will plan and approach their performance. They are able to demonstrate a limited range of responses to changing situations.</p> <p>They provide a basic analysis of their own and others' performance, and can identify some major strengths and weaknesses. They make basic comments and can identify some simple modifications and refinements to skills and techniques in order to improve the effectiveness and quality of their performance.</p>
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