

Criteria for GCSE Qualifications (graded A* to G)



October 2014

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This document replaces all previous versions of *Criteria for GCSE Qualifications*, and comes into effect at 12.01am on 31st October 2014.

The criteria

Introduction

1. This document is a Regulatory Document under General Conditions B7 and D5. The criteria set out below are requirements which apply to all GCSEs (graded A* to G). These criteria do not apply to a GCSE (graded 9 to 1) in any subject.

Content

Titling

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

Subject matter

3. The subject matter of GCSEs must:
 - 3.1 state which aspects/options need to be taken by candidates to meet the statutory requirements in England;
 - 3.2 for short-course specifications, include half of the content of a single-award GCSE and cover the full range of grades;
 - 3.3 for double-award specifications, include content equivalent to two separate GCSEs;
 - 3.4 reflect the learning outcomes for each subject area;
 - 3.5 build upon the relevant programmes of study at Key Stage 4;
 - 3.6 require the learner to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding specified in the subject criteria;
 - 3.7 ensure that the content is comparable in content and range with other qualifications at the same level.

Assessment

4. The assessment arrangements for GCSEs must:
 - 4.1 set out the relationship between the assessment objectives and the assessment components/units;
 - 4.2 show the proportion of marks allocated to each assessment objective (or group of assessment objectives) and to each assessment component;
 - 4.3 use question papers which are 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;
 - 4.4 require, across both controlled and external assessment components/units, a variety of question types and tasks, including extended writing;
 - 4.5 assess the candidates' quality of written communication in accordance with the guidance documentation produced by Ofqual;
 - 4.6 comply with relevant subject criteria relating to the balance between external and controlled assessment.
5. Where controlled assessment is required, specifications must be developed in accordance with the controlled assessment regulations.
6. Unitised specifications must:
 - 6.1 contain a maximum of four assessment units in a single award;
 - 6.2 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;
 - (b) where a candidate wishes to carry forward the result¹ from a GCSE English speaking and listening controlled assessment which has already been reported as part of a GCSE award in order to re-take the

¹ Where the candidate has been awarded a grade for the GCSE English speaking and listening assessment on a five-grade scale from 5 to 1, only that grade may be carried forward. Where the result relates to an examination series before the five-grade scale was introduced, the mark for the GCSE English speaking and listening assessment must be carried forward and this must then be graded on the five-grade scale in accordance with the subject criteria for the qualification.

whole qualification or to take a whole GCSE English Language qualification (provided by the same awarding organisation);

- (c) where a candidate wishes to carry forward the result² from a GCSE English Language speaking and listening controlled assessment which has already been reported as part of a GCSE award in order to re-take the whole qualification or to take a whole GCSE English qualification (provided by the same awarding organisation); or
- (d) where a candidate wishes to carry forward the result from one or more other controlled assessment units which has already been used to aggregate to a GCSE single or double award in order to re-take a whole qualification.

7. Except as provided for in paragraph 8, unitised specifications must allocate a weighting of at least 20 per cent to each assessment unit.
8. Unitised specifications for GCSE English or GCSE English Language must provide that assessments in speaking and listening do not form part of the weighting toward the final GCSE mark for the qualification.
9. Unitised specifications must require that 100 per cent of the assessment is terminal.
10. Except as provided for in paragraph 11, the assessment arrangements for GCSEs must ensure that each candidate completes the external assessments to be taken for that GCSE during the months of May and/or June in any single year.
11. The assessment arrangements for a GCSE Mathematics qualification, a GCSE English qualification or a GCSE English Language qualification may permit a candidate who is a qualifying candidate (in accordance with paragraph 12) to complete the external assessments to be taken for that GCSE during the month of November in any single year.
12. For the purposes of paragraph 11, a candidate is a qualifying candidate if:
 - 12.1 the awarding organisation making the qualification available has taken all reasonable steps to verify the candidate's age and is satisfied that the

² Where the candidate has been awarded a grade for the GCSE English Language speaking and listening assessment on a five-grade scale from 5 to 1, only that grade may be carried forward. Where the result relates to an examination series before the five-grade scale was introduced, the mark for the GCSE English Language speaking and listening assessment must be carried forward and this must then be graded on the five-grade scale in accordance with the subject criteria for the qualification.

candidate has reached at least the age of 16 on or before 31st August in the same calendar year as the assessment;

- 12.2 having taken the steps referred to in paragraph 12.1, the awarding organisation is not satisfied that the candidate is a qualifying candidate under that paragraph but the awarding organisation is satisfied, having taken all reasonable steps to verify the position, that the candidate has taken, and it has issued the candidate with a result for, the qualification in a previous examination series (and the candidate is re-taking the qualification provided by the same awarding organisation); or
- 12.3 having taken the steps referred to in paragraphs 12.1 and 12.2, the awarding organisation is not satisfied that the candidate is a qualifying candidate under those paragraphs, but the awarding organisation is satisfied, having taken all reasonable steps to verify the position, that:
- (a) in the case of an assessment for a GCSE Mathematics qualification, the candidate has previously taken, and been issued with a result for, a GCSE Mathematics qualification provided by another awarding organisation;
 - (b) in the case of an assessment for a GCSE English qualification, the candidate has previously taken, and been issued with a result for, either a GCSE English qualification provided by another awarding organisation or a GCSE English Language qualification; or
 - (c) in the case of an assessment for a GCSE English Language qualification, the candidate has previously taken, and been issued with a result for, either a GCSE English Language qualification provided by another awarding organisation or a GCSE English qualification.

Grading and reporting

13. The arrangements for grading and reporting of GCSEs must ensure that:
- 13.1 the awarding organisation issues a single result, or a single set of results, in respect of each candidate following completion by that candidate of the assessments to be taken for that qualification;
- 13.2 where confirmation of, or a change to, any mark for an assessment has been communicated to a centre or a candidate in advance of the issue of that result or set of results, no further evidence generated by that candidate will be admissible as part of that assessment; and
- 13.3 where any result for a unit has been communicated to a centre or a candidate in advance of the issue of that result or set of results, no further

evidence generated by that candidate will be admissible as part of the assessments for that unit.

14. There must be arrangements for grading of GCSEs so that the grades awarded match the grade descriptions in the subject criteria or, where subject criteria do not exist, the descriptions for grades A, C and F submitted by the awarding organisation and approved by Ofqual.
15. Except as provided for in paragraph 16 and paragraph 17, there must be arrangements for grading and reporting of GCSEs so that:
 - 15.1 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;
 - 15.2 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as Unclassified or U;
 - 15.3 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; and
 - 15.4 the grades on short-course and double-award GCSE certificates are accompanied by explanatory notes on the nature of these types of GCSE.
16. The arrangements for grading and reporting of assessments in speaking and listening for GCSE English and GCSE English Language must provide that:
 - 16.1 the result attained does not contribute to the final GCSE mark or the final GCSE qualification grade but is graded and reported separately;
 - 16.2 attainment is graded on a five-grade scale from 5 to 1, where 5 is the highest grade;
 - 16.3 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a grade is not reported on the GCSE certificate;
 - 16.4 where a final GCSE qualification grade is attained, attainment of a speaking and listening grade is reported separately from the final GCSE qualification grade on the GCSE certificate; and
 - 16.5 where the final GCSE qualification attainment is Unclassified or U, attainment of a speaking and listening grade is reported separately from the final GCSE qualification attainment but no GCSE certificate is awarded in respect of the qualification.
17. The arrangements for grading and reporting of GCSE English and GCSE English Language must provide that:

- 17.1 a candidate may only be awarded a GCSE certificate in respect of the qualification:
- (a) where a result has been submitted on behalf of the candidate for each speaking and listening assessment which is required to be taken for the purpose of attaining a grade for speaking and listening in that qualification; or
 - (b) where a result for speaking and listening has been submitted on behalf of the candidate, having been carried forward in accordance with paragraph 6.2(b) or paragraph 6.2(c); and
- 17.2 a candidate may only be awarded a grade for speaking and listening in that qualification where a result has been submitted on behalf of the candidate for each assessment required to be taken for the purpose of attaining a final GCSE qualification grade (and such results may include results for assessments which have been carried forward in accordance with paragraph 6.2(d)).

Revisions to the criteria

18. As set out in the table below, the criteria have been revised since they were first published – most recently in October 2014.

Editions of the criteria	Date new or amended criteria in force
Republished as <i>Criteria for GCSE Qualifications (graded A* to G)</i> Amendments to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduction ■ Assessment ■ Grading and reporting 	31st October 2014
Amendments to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduction ■ Content ■ Assessment ■ Grading and reporting 	26th June 2014
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