

New GCSEs: Terminal rules, re-sits and certification

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The rules for the new GCSEs are similar to the legacy GCSEs and the GCE AS and A Level rules but differ in some important respects. This guidance is designed to help exams officers and teachers ensure that their students make the correct entries for the following OCR qualifications:

- GCSEs for first teaching from 2009
- GCSE English, Mathematics and ICT for first teaching from 2010
- GCSE Science for first teaching from 2011.

This guidance does not apply to legacy GCSE specifications or to other qualifications (GCE AS, A Level, iGCSE, etc).

Click on each of the links on the left for further information.



1: Key features

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- All of OCR's new specifications are unitised, ie made up of individual units. Information about the units which make up each qualification can be found in the *OCR Admin Guide and Entry Codes: 14–19 Qualifications*. [Download](#)
- Each unit is assessed by either a written paper or controlled assessment.
- The units contribute to an overall subject award.
- Candidates must be entered for all the units which contribute to the award.
- Candidates must be entered for each unit.
- Certification entries must be made in the terminal examination series.
- Certification entries lead to a subject award with a grade.
- Uniform mark scales (UMS) will be used to aggregate marks from individual assessment units. (See the *OCR Admin Guide: 14–19 Qualifications* for an explanation of UMS.) [Download](#)



2: Terminal rules

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- At least 40% of the assessment must be taken in the examination series in which the qualification is certificated. This can be any assessment unit.
- The final grade will include the unit results which satisfy this terminal requirement. If there is more than one way of satisfying the terminal requirement, we will generate the best grade.

This means that the results for the units that satisfy this terminal requirement will count (i.e. they will be used to calculate the grade), even if there is a better score for an earlier attempt at one or more of these units.

Example

A candidate is taking a four-unit GCSE. He re-sits Unit 1 and scores more highly. He re-sits Unit 2 but doesn't score as well. However, as at least 40% (in this case, two units) must be taken in the series of certification, Unit 2 forms part of the terminal requirement and the mark must be used in the final certification award.

Series	Unit 1 (25%)	Unit 2 (25%)	Unit 3 (25%)	Unit 4 (25%)	Certification (100%)
January 2010	50				
June 2010		60			
January 2011			70	80	
June 2011	55	50			255

Although this unit mark is less than the June 2010 mark, it must be used to fulfil the terminal requirement.



3: Re-sit rules

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- Candidates may re-sit each unit once before certification.
- Options within a unit and optional units are treated as separate units; therefore, you can have two attempts at each of these units before certification.
- A tiered unit or tiered option may be re-sat only once, even if the re-sit is at a different tier.
- The better result counts towards the final grade; however, if a unit forms part of the terminal requirement then the last result must be used.

Example

A candidate is taking a four-unit GCSE with six units to choose from (including two mandatory units). At least 40% (in this case two units), must be completed in the series of certification. To give more options, the candidate decides to take all four of the optional units (rather than just two) and is permitted to re-sit each unit once.

Series	Mandatory units		Optional units (two units required)				Certification (100%)
	Unit 1 (25%)	Unit 2 (25%)	Unit 3 (25%)	Unit 4 (25%)	Unit 5 (25%)	Unit 6 (25%)	
January 2010	50					40	
June 2010		90	40				
January 2011	55			40	40		
June 2011		45	40	40	70	70	285

Each unit may be re-sat once before certification (even though only four units are required).

The candidate is only required to complete four units so does not need to use the marks from these units.

Two units must be completed in the series of certification. These can be **any** units.

4: Rules for re-taking a qualification

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- A qualification may be taken more than once – either by re-sitting all the units, or by re-sitting some units and reusing previous results for others, subject to the terminal requirement being satisfied.
- When a qualification is re-taken (ie after certification), a candidate may have up to two further attempts at each unit. However, only the better of the last two results will count towards the final grade, or the last if it is used to satisfy the terminal requirement.

Example

A candidate is taking a four-unit GCSE. He re-sits some units and certificates in June 2011 to fulfil the terminal requirements. However, he decides to retake the qualification and re-sit a further three units.

Series	Unit 1 (25%)	Unit 2 (25%)	Unit 3 (25%)	Unit 4 (25%)	Certification (100%)
January 2010	60				
June 2010		55	65	80	
January 2011					
June 2011	55	60			260
January 2012	58	61	63		264

Only the better of the last two results will count towards the final grade.

These units can be reused the second time this qualification is certificated.

5: Foundation and Higher tier rules

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In a Foundation tier unit targeted at grades C–G, the maximum uniform mark available will be equivalent to a top grade C. In tiered subjects with unit results from different tiers, we will generate the best grade for the candidate using the optimum combination. So, candidates may:

- Take different units at different tiers
- Re-sit a unit at a different tier (once only).

We will calculate the best grade (subject to the terminal requirement and re-sit rules).

Example

A candidate is taking a two-unit GCSE. At least 40% (ie one unit) must be taken in the series of certification. He decides to re-sit the units at the Higher tier.

Series	Unit 1 (50%)		Unit 2 (50%)		Certification (100%)
	Foundation	Higher	Foundation	Higher	
June 2010	×		×		
January 2011				✓	
June 2011		✓			✓

✓ = unit used towards the award
× = unit not used

Entering the same unit at another tier is considered to be a re-sit.

The candidate **must** certificate in June 2011 as there are no more opportunities to re-sit and one unit must be taken in the series of certification.

6: Rules for short/full courses and single/double awards

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There are:

- **Short courses** – worth half a single award GCSE
- **Full courses** – a single award GCSE
- **Double award GCSEs** – is equivalent to two single awards and includes a double grade.

In some subjects (e.g. in Modern Foreign Languages) there are short and full courses, with common units. Similarly, in some of the applied subjects (Applied Business, Health and Social Care, Leisure and Tourism) there are single and double awards with common units.

Candidates might:

- Complete the smaller subject after one year then 'top up' to complete the larger one, or
- Wait and enter simultaneously for a double award, a full course award and a short course award in the same subject (where they exist) when they have completed all of the necessary units.

Then these rules apply:

- The results of units used for a short course award remain available for use towards a full course award and/or a double award (and vice versa).
- A result from any unit can be counted towards only one GCSE of a given size. For example, if a unit can contribute to both Business Studies and Economics, a result from that unit cannot be used to count towards certification in both titles.
- Each unit may be re-taken once prior to certification. For example, a unit which had been taken twice prior to the certification of a short course award could then be re-taken on one or two further occasions prior to certification of a full course award and/or a double award (but remember, only the better of the last two results will count towards the final grade, or the last if it is used for the terminal requirement).
- A candidate must satisfy the terminal requirement for a short course when that short course is certificated, irrespective of any certification for a full course award and/or a double award, in that series or later.

Compensatory awards

We will not make an automatic compensatory award to a candidate who is, for example, Unclassified for a full course and/or a double award, but has unit results which would gain a grade for a short course award. However, the candidate will be allowed to make a late certification entry for the smaller award after the publication of results (up to the post-results services deadline).



7: Frequently asked questions

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When are candidates eligible for a qualification?

Candidates will be eligible for a qualification when they have been entered for a valid combination of units and for certification.

	Unit 1 (25%)	Unit 2 (25%)	Unit 3 (25%)	Unit 4 (25%)	Certification (100%)
January 2010	✓	✓			
June 2010			✓	✓	
June 2011					✓

It is not possible to certify this qualification before June 2010; therefore, for this series only, you can certify in June 2011.

What happens if a certification entry is not made in the final series?

Certification entries must be made – without a certification entry, the candidate will not receive their subject award. However, you have until the post-results series deadline to make a late certification entry.

Are there any special rules for 2010 and 2011?

Short courses can be certificated from the June 2010 series but the full and double award GCSEs cannot be certificated until June 2011. For some subjects, all the units are available before June 2011 and it is possible for candidates to complete their qualification before then. If this happens, to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged (rather than to encourage completing these courses early), in June 2011 only, you can certify the GCSE (full award or double), provided that the terminal requirement was satisfied in an earlier series.

For example, if a candidate completes all the terminal units for a qualification in June 2010, they can make a certification entry in the June 2011 series (the first time it is possible to certify the qualification). No assessment results that post-date the June 2010 examination series will be included in the calculation of the grade.

What if a candidate is absent?

It is the result of, not the entry for, an assessment unit that counts. A candidate who enters for a unit but is absent from the examination has not used up one of his/her two possible attempts. However, for award purposes, absence from an assessment unit will be treated as a result of zero marks for that unit.

Will my candidates get the best results?

Yes, we will generate the best grade for each candidate from the available results:

- If they have taken more units than they need to
- If there is more than one valid combination of results
- If there are results from different tiers.

Of course, all of the terminal requirements and the re-sit rules still apply – there must also be a certification entry in the final series.



1 Key features

How long will the individual unit results be valid?

Unit results remain valid for the shelf life of the specification.

2 Terminal rules

Can candidates wait and certificate when they have their best results?

Yes, it is possible to make late certifications until the post-results service deadline; however, a candidate must meet the terminal requirement in that examination series.

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Can we decline GCSE grades?

No. It is not possible to decline certification of GCSE awards after the results are published.

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Can we submit enquiries about results?

Enquiries about results must be made immediately following the examination series in which the relevant unit/component was taken. It is not possible to re-mark a unit taken in an earlier series. It must be re-marked immediately after the result is issued.

7 FAQs





www.ocr.org.uk

OCR customer contact centre

Vocational qualifications

Telephone 024 76 851509

Facsimile 024 76 851633

Email vocational.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

General qualifications

Telephone 01223 553998

Facsimile 01223 552627

Email general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

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