Switching to OCR A from Pearson (Edexcel) B

Introduction

We are really excited about our GCE Biology A qualification. Whether taking on the AS or the full A Level, this fantastic course is a great qualification for those with an interest in the subject. Why choose Biology A?

- The 'Big Ideas' of Biology are covered
- The topics are selected and structured to underpin the knowledge and understanding needed for the next generation of biologists
- Biology A is enjoyable to teach and learn, giving students the essentials for biology-related higher education courses as well as many transferable, marketable skills
- There are many opportunities for 'hands-on' practical, linking to our flexible practical assessment model
- The biological topics are presented in a clear and logical linear order with practical and maths opportunities highlighted.

Our offer

- Our A Level Biology team, Richard and Katherine, are passionate about biology and education. With biological research and teaching experience, they are fully committed to supporting centres' delivery of Biology A.
- We have produced a wide range of support materials, from our handbooks (covering practical, maths and drawing skills) to delivery guides, lesson elements, practical activities, candidate exemplars and more.
- Join our conversation on the OCR Community and @ocr_science to talk about and share good practice.

#PositiveAboutPractical

Key differences

OCR Biology A	Pearson (Edexcel) B
Flexible practical assessment allows you to use your own practical activities or select from our suggested activities	Fixed set of 16 practical activities you have to deliver
Practical skills take centre stage, detailed in full at the start of the specification in a separate module for **clarity** and prominence	Required practical activities listed in the specification
All **28 maths skills** covered in our free maths skills handbook and further supported with online resources	Subset of skills covered by student and teacher guides

Content

The content within the OCR Biology A specification covers the 'Big Ideas' of biology and will be very familiar. We've laid it out in a logical progression to support co-teaching the AS level and teaching the A level in a linear way.

OCR Biology A	Pearson (Edexcel) B
Module 1: Practical skills Planning, implementing, analysis and evaluation Plus all the skills to be covered in the Practical Endorsement	The same practical skills, as mandated by the DfE, are listed in appendix 5 of the Edexcel B specification
Module 2: Foundations in Biology • Cell structure • Biological molecules • Nucleotides and nucleic acids • Enzymes • Biological membranes • Cell division, diversity and organisation	**1. Biological Molecules** **2. Cells, Viruses and Reproduction of Living Things**: 2.1 cell structure, 2.3 cell cycle
Module 3: Exchange and Transport • Exchange surfaces • Transport in animals • Transport in plants	**4. Exchange and Transport**
Module 4: Biodiversity, evolution and disease • Communicable diseases, disease prevention and the immune system • Biodiversity • Classification and evolution	**3. Classification and Biodiversity** **6. Microbiology and Pathogens**

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Module 5: Communication, homeostasis and energy • Communication and homeostasis • Excretion • Neuronal communication • Hormonal communication • Plant and animal responses • Photosynthesis • Respiration	**9. Control Systems** **5. Energy for Biological Processes**
Module 6: Genetics, evolution and ecosystems • Cellular control • Patterns of inheritance • Manipulating genomes • Cloning and biotechnology • Ecosystems • Populations and sustainability	**7. Modern Genetics** **8. Origins of Genetic Variation** **10. Ecosystems**
Appendix 5d: Mathematical requirements • Arithmetic and numerical computation • Handling data • Algebra • Graphs • Geometry and trigonometry	**Appendix 6: Mathematical skills and exemplifications** • Arithmetic and numerical computation • Handling data • Algebra • Graphs • Geometry and trigonometry

Assessment

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AS Paper 1: Breadth in Biology, Modules 1-4 50% of AS Written paper 1hr 30 minutes 70 marks Section A multiple choice questions, 20 marks. Section B short structured questions, covering problem solving, calculations, practical and theory, 50 marks.	**AS Paper 1: Core Cellular Biology and Microbiology, Topics 1 and 2** 50% of AS Written paper 1hr 30 minutes 80 marks Multiple-choice, short open, open-response, calculations and extended writing questions.
AS Paper 2: Depth in Biology, Modules 1-4 50% of AS Written paper 1hr 30 minutes 70 marks Short structured questions and extended response questions, problem solving, calculations, practical and theory.	**AS Paper 2: Paper 2: Core Physiology and Ecology, Topics 3 and 4** 50% of AS Written paper 1hr 30 minutes 80 marks Multiple-choice, short open, open-response, calculations and extended writing questions.
A Level Paper 1: Biological processes, Modules 1, 2, 3 & 5 37% of A level Written paper 2 hours 15 minutes 100 marks Section A multiple choice questions, 15 marks. Section B short structured questions, and extended response questions, problem solving, calculations, practical and theory 85 marks.	**A Level Paper 1: Advanced Biochemistry, Microbiology and Genetics, Topics 1-7** 30% of A level Written paper 1 hour 45 minutes 90 marks Multiple choice, short open, open-response, calculations and extended writing questions.

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A Level Paper 2: Biological diversity, Modules 1, 2, 4 & 6 37% of A level Written paper 2 hours 15 minutes 100 marks Section A multiple choice questions, 15 marks. Section B short structured questions and extended response questions, problem solving, calculations, practical and theory 85 marks.	**A Level Paper 2: Advanced Physiology, Evolution and Ecology, Topics 1-4 and 8-10** 30% of A level Written paper 1 hour 45 minutes 90 marks Multiple choice, short open, open-response, calculations and extended writing questions.
A Level Paper 3: Unified Biology, Modules 1-6 26% of A level Written paper 1 hour 30 minutes 70 marks Short structured questions and extended response questions, problem solving, calculations, practical and theory.	**A Level Paper 3: General and Practical Principles in Biology, Topics 1-10** 40% of A level Written paper 2 hours and 30 minutes 120 marks Multiple choice, short open, open-response, calculations and extended writing questions, synoptic questions.

Want to switch to OCR?

If you're an OCR-approved centre, all you need to do is download the specification and start teaching.

Your exams officer can complete an intention to teach form which enables us to provide appropriate support to them. When you're ready to enter your students, you just need to speak to your exams officer to:

1. Make estimated entries by 10 October so we can send you any early release materials, prepare the question papers and ensure we've got enough examiners.
2. Make final entries by 21 February

If you are not already an OCR-approved centre please refer your exams officer to the centre approval section of our admin guide.

Practical Endorsement Administration (A Level only)

The requirements for the practical endorsement have been set by the Department for Education and Ofqual working with all awarding bodies to ensure a common approach. Just as when following the Edexcel B A Level Biology qualification, your A Level students studying OCR Biology A will need to demonstrate to you, their teacher(s), that they are consistently and routinely competent in each of the skills and techniques defined for A Level Biologists.

You will need to:

- Keep records of carrying out practical activities as well as your assessment of competence of each of your students in each of these skills and techniques. This can be done, if you wish, using our OCR tracker spreadsheet.
- Register the name of a 'lead teacher' who will act as the contact point for arranging a monitoring visit (organised centrally through the JCQ). You will need to indicate that you are teaching the OCR Biology A qualification. Your exams officer will have received an email with details of how to do this. If and when a monitoring visit takes place it will be done by an OCR-appointed monitor applying the criteria agreed across all awarding organisations.

Students need to keep records of their practical work, which can be done in whatever format best suits you and your students, be it a lab book, a loose leaf folder or an electronic record. Help and guidance are available from our Positive about practical page.

Next steps

1. Familiarise yourself with the specification, sample assessment materials and teaching resources on the OCR Biology A qualification page of the OCR website.
2. Browse the online delivery guides for teaching ideas and use the Scheme of Work builder to create your personal scheme of work.
3. Get a login for our secure extranet, Interchange – allows you to access the latest past/practice papers and use our results analysis service, Active Results.
4. Sign up to receive subject updates by email.
5. Sign up to attend a training event or take part in webinars on specific topics running throughout the year and/or our Q&A webinar sessions every half term.
6. Attend one of our free teacher network events that are run in each region every term. These are hosted at the end of the school day in a school or college near you, with teachers sharing best practice and subject specialists on hand to lead discussion and answer questions.