

SCIENCE GCSEs

– THE MOVE TO LINEAR SPECIFICATIONS



All students studying courses which will certificate in June 2014 or later will be required to sit all units and submit their controlled assessment in the final June exam series.

In December 2011 Ofqual announced that all students in England studying GCSE courses that will be completed and awarded in June 2014 or later must follow linear specifications. This means that all assessment will take place in the June exam series at the end of the course. This move to linear specifications is being implemented in response to a decision made by the Secretary of State for Education. Ofqual has confirmed that, other than the move to linear specifications, there will be no other changes to the content of science GCSE specifications at this stage.

Under the current regulations students studying the new science GCSEs (developed for first teaching in 2011) can take units in any January or June exam series during their course as long as the 40% terminal rule is met in their

final exam series. Under the new regulations, however, all candidates will be required to take all science GCSE assessments in the June series at the end of the course for awards made from June 2014 onwards.

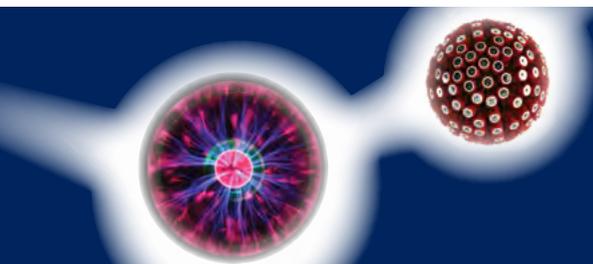
From June 2014 onwards, controlled assessment units must also be submitted in the examination series in which certification occurs.

Controlled assessment tasks may still be undertaken at any point between release of the task by OCR and the examination series in which they are submitted to OCR for moderation. Each controlled assessment task will be valid for submission in a single examination series only. Centres must ensure that candidates undertake a task that is valid for the series in which the candidate intends to certificate. The series in which each task can be submitted will be clearly marked on the front cover of each task. Tasks will not be valid for submission in any examination series other than that indicated. Every year, new tasks for the controlled assessment will be

made available on OCR Interchange from 1 June, two years ahead of the examination series in which the tasks are to be submitted. Access to the controlled assessment area of Interchange is available through your Interchange Administrator (normally the Exams Officer).

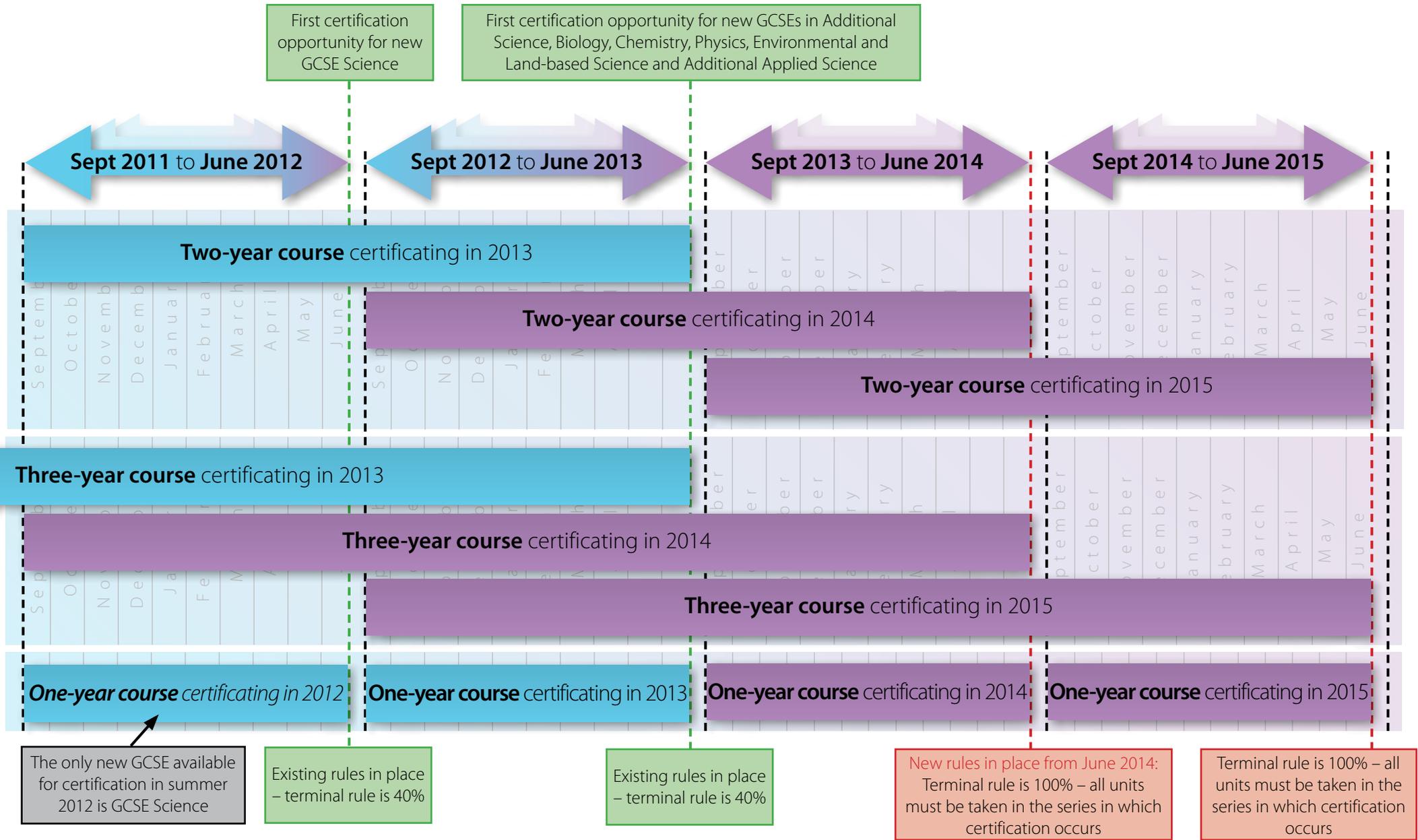
These changes will affect all candidates starting two-year courses in September 2012. This change does not affect candidates who started a two-year course in September 2011, or those starting a one-year course in September 2012. However, Year 9 students who started a three-year course in September 2011 will be affected (see diagram on next page).

These changes will only apply to the new science GCSEs developed for first teaching in 2011 as the final examination series for the legacy specifications will be January 2013.



The impact of linearisation on the new science GCSE specifications

(developed for first teaching from September 2011)



The only new GCSE available for certification in summer 2012 is GCSE Science

Existing rules in place – terminal rule is 40%

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New rules in place from June 2014: Terminal rule is 100% – all units must be taken in the series in which certification occurs

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- **Unitised or linear** options for courses (40% terminal rule)
- **Linear** courses (100% terminal rule)

Timeline of changes to exam series for the new (2011) science GCSEs:

January 2012

GCSE units are available for the new (2011) science GCSE specifications but students can't certificate in:

- GCSE **Science** until June 2012 (40% terminal rule applies);
- GCSE **Additional Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Environmental and Land-based Science** and **Additional Applied Science** until June 2013 (40% terminal rule applies).

June 2012

GCSE units are available for the new (2011) science GCSEs.

This is the first certification opportunity for the new (2011) GCSE **Science** specifications - students must meet the terminal rule of 40% to certificate in this series.

The new GCSEs in **Additional Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Environmental and Land-based Science** and **Additional Applied Science** are not available for certification until June 2013.

September 2012

All two-year GCSE courses of study for qualifications starting in September 2012 (to be certificated in June 2014) must follow a linear course (100% terminal rule).

January 2013

Students can certificate in the new (2011) GCSE **Science** specifications in this exam series (40% terminal rule applies).

The new GCSEs in **Additional Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Environmental and Land-based Science** and **Additional Applied Science** are not available for certification until June 2013.

June 2013

All new GCSE units available. Students must meet the 40% terminal rule to certificate in this series.

This is the first certification opportunity for the new (2011) GCSEs in **Additional Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Environmental and Land-based Science** and **Additional Applied Science** (40% terminal rule applies).

This is the final exam series for unitised assessment (with the 40% terminal rule).

January 2014

January series no longer used for GCSE examinations.

June 2014

GCSEs are available as linear qualifications only (100% terminal rule). To certificate in 2014, all units must be taken and the controlled assessment must be submitted in this June series.

If students wish to re-sit GCSEs taken in June 2013 they must meet the new 100% terminal rule.

Controlled assessment may be carried forward from their previous certification but students must sit all other units in this exam series in order to retake the qualification.

June 2015

GCSEs available as linear qualifications only (100% terminal rule). To certificate in 2015, all units must be taken and the controlled assessment must be submitted in this June series.

If students wish to re-sit GCSEs they must meet the new 100% terminal rule.

Controlled Assessment may be carried forward from their previous certification but students must sit all other units in this exam series in order to retake the qualification.

Frequently asked questions

Once the changes take effect, if a student is awarded a GCSE in a science subject, can that student re-take the qualification?

Yes but from June 2014 candidates will only be able to re take whole GCSEs, not individual units and any earlier results from examined units will not count.

Assessment for linear science GCSEs will be available once each year in the June series.

Students will be able to carry forward the controlled assessment result from their previous certification in the same qualification.

If students sit unites science exams in June 2013 will there be a resit opportunity for them?

In science subjects, students who certificate science GCSEs in June 2013 and then want to resit will need to retake the qualification in a linear way. They will have to sit all the exams in the same June exam series. They will be able to carry forward their result(s) from any controlled assessment unit(s). The controlled assessment units will need to be re-entered using the carry forward option.

Once the changes take effect, will candidates be allowed to sit all units and apply for certification for science GCSEs in a January series?

No. The January series won't be used for GCSEs in science subjects after January 2013.

Once the changes take effect, will it still be possible for students to enter early for GCSEs in science subjects providing they sit all the units for the qualification in the same examination series?

Yes. Candidates can also still take Science in Year 10 (Linear) and Additional Science in Year 11 (Linear).

Once the changes take effect, can a student take a combination of Science/Additional Science and separate sciences?

For the Gateway Suite, yes they can. For the Twenty First Century Science Suite, students cannot enter Science A or Additional Science A in the same series as any of the separate sciences as there are shared examined units. However, students could take Science A / Additional Science A in Year 10, and the separate sciences in Year 11, for example.

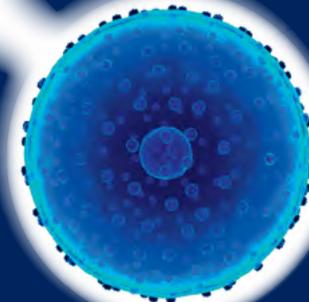
This document outlines the changes in relation to the new science GCSEs developed for first teaching in September 2011 – will the legacy specifications be affected?

These changes do not affect the legacy specifications as they will no longer be available by the June 2014 exam series. The final opportunity to certificate the legacy science GCSEs is the January 2013 series with a final re-sit opportunity in January 2013. After the June 2012 exam series only the new science GCSEs should be offered in schools.

For how long will the current science GCSE specifications remain unchanged?

The National Curriculum Review is currently making its recommendations to Government, and GCSE criteria form part of the review. It is anticipated that science GCSEs will be updated to meet the revised criteria, with new specifications available for first teaching from September 2015.

More information about Ofqual's announcement including a general subject timeline and Frequently Asked Questions can be found here: <http://bit.ly/JclBOG>



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