

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL

GCSE Plus

Teaching guidance

For teaching from September 2018 onwards

Our specification is published on our website oxfordaqaexams.org.uk. We will let centres know in writing about any changes to the specification. We will also publish changes on our website. The definitive version of our specification will always be the one on our website; this may differ from printed versions.

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Introduction

This teacher guide complements the specification for the OxfordAQA GCSE Plus and should be read alongside it and the scheme of work. This guide will provide the following for teachers and prospective teachers of this course:

- an overview of this specification's aims and learning outcomes
- a definition of the roles of coordinator and supervisor
- guidance on how to administer and deliver the required elements
- guidance on how to assess the completed work
- example GCSE Plus titles to demonstrate the variety of options available.

Aims

GCSE Plus offers opportunities for students to:

- develop and improve their own learning and performance as inquisitive and independent students
- be inspired by new areas and/or methods of study
- plan their own learning; supporting the experiential learning process
- use their learning experiences to support their personal aspirations for further study and career development.

Assessment Objectives (AOs)

The International GCSE Plus is assessed according to four Assessment Objectives:

AO1: Organisation Use appropriate guidance and a range of methods to develop and implement a proposal by:

- i. establish appropriate aims and objectives
- ii. planning the work
- iii. managing the process, taking appropriate decisions where necessary.

AO2: Research Given the nature of the proposal, undertake appropriate research by:

- i. selecting information from a range of sources
- ii. taking a critical approach to sources
- iii. analysing information.

AO3: Realisation Produce a 2,000-word written report that achieves agreed aims and objectives by:

- i. synthesising the research by identifying relevant links and connections
- ii. drawing pertinent and well-supported conclusions
- iii. being appropriately presented and referenced.

AO4: Review Evaluate outcomes by:

- i. analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, the research and the report.

Roles for the administration and delivery

The centre coordinator

One of the key roles for GCSE Plus is that of the centre coordinator. This person is responsible for delivering the qualification within a particular school, college or consortium. Each centre needs to appoint a designated coordinator.

The key areas of responsibility are:

- Developing staff understanding of the requirements of GCSE Plus.
- Devising, timetabling and arranging delivery of the Taught skills element (delivery may be delegated to other colleagues or outsourced to other experts but it must be centrally organised to ensure consistency for all students).
- Final signing-off of all proposals – it is imperative that the coordinator refer to the checklist in section 2.4 of the specification to ensure that all students have devised effective proposals that will allow them access to the higher grades.
- Ensuring that the assessment standard is understood by all supervisors and that it is maintained within the centre. This includes accessing standardisation training, communicating the standard to the supervisors who are assessing the work and then arranging internal moderation of the grading of the assessed work.

Administrative tasks include:

- Registering the centre so that information and advice can be sought and offered.
- Submitting grades and making sure that work is sent off (on time) for verification.
- Ensuring that every supervisor and the centre coordinator has signed the *Centre declaration form* which has to be sent with the work.

The supervisor

Every student needs to have an allocated supervisor who supports them through the GCSE Plus process and grades the completed work. It is recommended that the supervisor should be either (a) the student's teacher in the relevant OxfordAQA GCSE, or (b) another teacher of the same subject.

The supervisor/student relationship can be the key to success in GCSE Plus. The supervisor performs a key role in helping students through a new and challenging programme of study.

A supervisor is required to:

- Field initial ideas from students and take them through the initial planning stage of their GCSE Plus. Comment on the suitability of the initial ideas.
- Advise them on ways in which they can improve and focus their initial ideas to ensure they can submit a suitable proposal.
- Show how the work is related to one of the student's OxfordAQA's GCSEs. It is important that dual accreditation be avoided, and how it will be avoided **must** be explained in the relevant part of the *Progress diary* if this might be considered an issue.
- Meet with the student on a regular basis to discuss progress and issues.

- Offer advice to help the student progress without directing the course the work takes. This advice is often best given in the form of appropriate questioning, and reminding the student of how GCSE Plus is assessed.
- Ensure that work is assessed to the Oxford International AQA standard for IPQ by following the system of internal standardisation that has been set up by the centre coordinator.

Taught skills guidance

The success of students relies heavily on the skills demonstrated in the process of planning, completing and reviewing a GCSE Plus. The centre is responsible for teaching these and the *Progress diary* has a section for describing how this has been done. The scheme of work contains suggestions for a taught skills programme which could be used by centres.

Key components

The Candidate record form, Assessment record and Progress diary

Each completed GCSE Plus must include a completed *Candidate record form*, *Assessment record* and *Progress diary*. These are all contained in a single document, available on the OxfordAQA website. At the start of each section are instructions indicating who should complete that section.

The *Progress diary* section consists of three parts: The proposal section, the log section and the review section. The log section is completed by the student and should contain evidence of the whole process from initial ideas and planning to completion of the report. It is important that this be completed chronologically. Students should be encouraged to briefly record all relevant activity in the *Progress diary log* as it will form a key part of the assessment evidence. It should include: planning, decision-making, understanding of supervisor comments and the responses to such comments. The proposal section is completed when sufficient work has been done to formally propose a course of action. The review section is completed once the report is completed.

Note: there should be no retrospective completion of the *Progress diary log*; attempts to “improve” it late in the process will be regarded as malpractice.

The written report

The report should be 2,000 words. This does not include the bibliography or any description of validation of sources or reasons for selection of material. The planning should set out to produce a report of this length.

The title might pose a question or a hypothesis but all titles should provide scope for students to examine opposing arguments and critically analyse the sources providing the evidence for these. Students are expected to access a variety of sources and select appropriate material to synthesise into the report. Sources can be primary or secondary. The use of secondary sources should be indicated by referencing using an approved method (eg Harvard, Chicago or American Psychological Association). Students are encouraged to use academic and professional sources and not rely too much on superficial media or internet sites whose authority cannot be validated.

Primary data could involve interviewing experts, conducting surveys or making practical observations for scientific topics. The *Progress diary* should contain the evidence of these procedures where appropriate. Primary sources should also be acknowledged and referenced appropriately.

Once the research has been completed, the student should choose an appropriate writing style and report structure, preferably formal and academic. Centres should not direct students to structure their reports to a given format or template. The structure of the report is the responsibility of the student.

The report should not be presented for any other qualification. Dual accreditation is not permitted.

The report should result in a conclusion based on the evidence presented.

Assessment

Internal standardisation

Internal standardisation for GCSE Plus is the process by which the centre coordinator ensures that all supervisors are assessing the work to the same standard. It should not be confused with internal moderation. Internal standardisation takes place before grading is undertaken by supervisors, whereas internal moderation is organised by the centre coordinator and comes after work has been graded by supervisors.

Standardisation helps to ensure that assessment is accurate and consistent. Consistent assessment, where every supervisor applies the grading process in the same way, is very important.

The centre coordinator is responsible for internal standardisation. New coordinators should avail themselves of online training. Exemplar material is available on the board's website to help with this process.

One way to deliver internal standardisation is for supervisors to:

- review the assessment objectives and performance descriptor tables in section 2.7 of the specification
- assess a number of exemplar reports that have been provided during online standardisation. Exemplar reports can be found on the website
- make notes that refer to the assessment objectives/performance descriptor tables and underpin the reasoning behind the grades awarded
- discuss the grades they have awarded, identify any differences and discuss them to achieve a common understanding and application of the grading criteria.

Assessing the work

When both components are completed by a student the supervisor can assess the work. There should be no assessment done until the very end. Supervisors can read drafts and offer appropriate guidance but they should not allocate grades to anything except the final, submitted work. This cannot be returned to the student for improvement.

Evidence for assessment can be collected from any part of the process.

Allocation of grade

GCSE Plus is assessed by the supervisor who should receive sufficient training and guidance from the centre coordinator to enable him/her to do this to the correct standard.

GCSE Plus is assessed once and only when all work has been submitted by the student. No drafts should be graded and returned to the student.

When grading GCSE Plus a supervisor must consider all available evidence, including the *Progress diary* and the 2,000-word written report.

To determine an overall grade for GCSE Plus a supervisor should take the following two steps:

1. For each strand of each Assessment Objective (AO) (labelled with i, ii or iii below) rate the work on a scale of 0-3 by selecting the appropriate performance descriptor (in section 2.7.3 of the specification). Then, add together the scores for all ten strands. This will give you an overall score out of 30.
2. Using the overall score determined in step 1 and the table below, calculate the overall grade.

Score out of 30	Grade
26-30	Distinction
16-25	Merit
10-15	Pass
0-9	No grade

Note:

- A report of inappropriate length (either insufficient or excessive) is unlikely to meet the criteria for the higher grades in a number of categories. Therefore, such a report is automatically limited to a maximum overall grade of Merit.
- A report that achieved a score of zero on any strand must be awarded an overall No grade.

Internal moderation

The coordinator has to moderate the work to ensure that all supervisors are working to the OxfordAQA standard.

Where the number of students entered is small the coordinator can probably see all of the work and make adjustments accordingly.

Where there is a large entry the coordinator may need to sample work from several supervisors.

There are many other different successful models that a centre might choose to employ to internally moderate the grades.

There is space in the *Progress diary* to provide comments on internal moderation and it is expected that the supervisor will provide clear comments in support of their assessment that refer directly to the Assessment Objectives and performance descriptor tables. Where a GCSE Plus has been sampled for internal moderation the centre coordinator should also provide clear annotations in support of their adjustments.

Submission of grades and reports

Entries will be made electronically by 21 February each year. The entry code, as provided in the specification, will cover both the GCSE Plus endorsement and the International GCSE that it accompanies. If the school or college decides to withdraw a student's GCSE Plus entry then they will need to be re-entered for the GCSE.

Work will be requested for verification of grades and these are to be submitted by 1 May each year.

Verifiers will scrutinise a sample from each centre and verify the grades. If a grade cannot be verified, and there are concerns as a result of monitoring, the centre will be provided with additional support in the following academic year. In the future, this may lead to enhanced monitoring arrangements which may include an earlier deadline for submission of assessments or a requirement to submit assessments for all students. In this case, OxfordAQA will reserve the right to issue amended grades for the endorsement.

Example GCSE Plus titles

The table below gives, for a range of OxfordAQA GCSEs, some possible examples of GCSE Plus titles.

Subject area	Title expands solely from specification	Title expands from specification but also incorporates another subject area(s)	Title expands from the subject but is not in the specification
Business	Was it easier to run a business before Globalisation?	A critical study of the history of marketing cars. (Business and history)	Using the factors of profitability, asset valuation and growth, which European football club has been the most successful?
Geography	A study of the relationship between global climate change and the frequency/intensity of natural hazards.	A critical analysis of Jupiter's Great Red Spot. (Geography and physics)	Is the Mid-Atlantic Ridge the greatest natural feature of the surface of the Earth?
Biology	To what extent can the behaviour and development of chimpanzees in infancy help us to understand the development of humans?	To what extent have the effects of spaceflights on the human body been resolved? (Biology with a link to physics)	To what extent can long-term memory be improved to assist in academic studies?
Chemistry	Is the periodic table complete?	Can the shrinking of the Dead Sea be halted? (Chemistry with a link to geography)	What is the likelihood of life existing on other planets?
Physics	To what extent is ours a typical solar system?	What has been the most significant development in nuclear physics? (Physics with a link to history)	Can solar PV and solar thermal be combined onto one system and is it feasible?
Mathematics	Are subjectivists or objectivists right about the fundamental nature of probability?	Are numbers real? (Maths with a link to philosophy)	What has been the greatest application of Game Theory?
Computer science	What is likely to be the greatest cyber security threat in the future?	Could a computer be programmed to think like a human? (Computer science with a link to biology/psychology)	What role should computing have in education?

English literature	In her poetry, does Sylvia Plath use colour primarily to reflect anger or sadness?	A critical comparison of how Monica Ali and Khaled Hosseini reflect the immigrant experience in <i>Brick lane</i> and <i>The kite runner</i> . (English literature and history/geography)	Do the plays <i>The taming of the shrew</i> , <i>Much ado about nothing</i> and <i>The merchant of Venice</i> suggest that Shakespeare a feminist? Or A Marxist analysis of Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i> .
English as a second language	Is English the hardest European language to learn?	Do some people have a natural ability to learn languages? (English as a second language with a link to science)	Should learning a second language be a mandatory part of secondary education?

Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at oxfordaqaexams.org.uk

You can contact the team directly:

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