

Year 11 GCSE Physics, Chemistry and Biology Guidance

We look forward to meeting you at Year 11 parents evening next week. This is a very important time for you and your child and we want to provide you with as much information as possible to help you support them at home. As there is limited time to talk face-to-face with at Year 11 parents evening, we have prepared this information for you to read beforehand.

Please be aware that most of our Year 11 Science teachers have more than one class and cannot therefore meet with all their students and parents. I have allocated each teacher to specific students and they will confirm appointment times with students during lessons this week.

Specification details:

AQA GCSE Biology (8461):

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/biology/specifications/AQA-8461-SP-2016.PDF>

AQA GCSE Physics (8463):

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/physics/specifications/AQA-8463-SP-2016.PDF>

AQA GCSE Chemistry (8462):

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/chemistry/specifications/AQA-8462-SP-2016.PDF>

GCSE assessment format:

Each student will sit six papers: two biology, two chemistry and two physics. Each of the papers will assess knowledge and understanding from distinct topic areas and lasts 1 hour and 45 minutes. Each discipline is a separate GCSE and the results for one GCSE do not affect the results for any other.

Higher vs. Foundation tier:

This is the second year of the new specification which is assessed against the new grade 9-1 scale. In order to allow for students to achieve a grade 9, a significant amount of new, higher level content is now included in each paper.

This means the Higher tier papers are significantly more challenging than they used to be in terms of the language used, the complexity of the questions and the requirement to apply knowledge to unfamiliar contexts. As a result, and based on the advice of our exam board, AQA, we are expecting to enter more students for the Foundation tier papers than in previous years. It is possible for students to sit a different entry tier for each GCSE, so a student could sit the Higher tier papers in Chemistry and the Foundation tier papers in Physics, for example. **The entry tier does not appear on the GCSE exam results slips or certificates.**

Students can achieve up to a maximum of Grade 5 on the Foundation tier paper; students taking the Higher tier paper can achieve Grades from 4 - 9. Due to the complexity of the new content being examined and the introduction of the higher grading scale, the exam board has advised that students who are not currently on track to achieve a grade 6 should be entered for the Foundation tier papers. Ofqual have also contacted all schools this week to advise that students who are predicted to achieve no higher than a low grade 5 should be entered for the Foundation tier papers.

We will therefore be applying the exam board guidance to decide on the correct entry tier for each student as follows:

Students who achieved **Grade 5U and above** in their November mock will be entered for the Higher tier papers.

Students who achieved **no higher than a Grade 4** in their November mock exam will be entered for the Foundation tier papers. Foundation papers include both low and standard demand questions which many students at this level will find easier to access and answer correctly. Higher papers include only standard and higher demand questions with considerably less support given in the questions themselves.

For those students who achieved a **Grade 5L or Grade 5M** (or below) in their November mock exam we will make the decision on a case-by-case basis, in discussion with parents and students, taking in consideration both their minimum expected grade. **If your child is in this category then we will discuss this with you and make a decision at parents evening as the AQA deadline for entry tiers is in February.**

How were the grade boundaries for the November mocks developed?

The grade boundaries that we developed for these were based on a number of factors:

- The actual 2018 grade boundaries, bearing in mind that these are always low in the first year of a new specification and will be higher in 2019;
- Our experience of the AQA grade boundaries in previous years;
- Benchmarking with other schools;
- Using guidance from Pixl, (Partners in Excellence), a not-for-profit partnership of over 1,700 secondary schools, 600 sixth forms, 500 primary schools, and 75 providers of alternative education.

There will be a further set of mocks after the February half term so that students have the opportunity to be assessed on the Paper 2 content. All of the content will have been taught by this point. We expect all students to improve on their mock exam results in their actual GCSEs, as a result of the work they will be completing both in school and at home between now and the GCSE examinations. However, the deadline for confirming entry tiers with the exam board is before these additional mocks so we cannot wait for their outcome to make the decision.

Departmental staff are currently producing a checklist outlining all the topics that students need to revise for Biology, Physics and Chemistry, broken down into 30 minute chunks, and this will be made available to all Year 11 students shortly, via Show My Homework.

Revision guides and exam practice workbooks:

The CGP revision guides following the AQA specification can be purchased from their website (or on Amazon). They also produce exam practice workbooks for Higher and Foundation tier which contain graded questions, a separate answer booklet, as well as revision cards. All these resources are invaluable as there has only been one set of papers so far with actual exam questions based on the new specification which are not yet available for student use.

You can find these here:

<https://www.cgpbooks.co.uk/secondary-books/gcse/science>

If you need advice on the right book for your child then please ask them to check with their teacher.

Useful revision websites:

Seneca: <https://www.senecalearning.com/>

<https://www.doddlelearn.co.uk/science>: This is a paid-for resource, funded by Teddington School for all students. There are revision resources here which students can work through independently, testing their knowledge. All students have a login. The username is in the format: **initial.surname** (e.g. j.smith) and the password is: **teddington**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/zrkw2hv>

www.chemrevise.org

www.physicsclassroom.com/

<https://phet.colorado.edu/en/simulations/category/new>

If you require any further information or advice, then please do not hesitate to contact me on rfoley@teddingtonschool.org.

Yours faithfully

Mrs R Foley
Curriculum Leader, Science