

EDEXCEL - DEvised INTERNAL ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES (IAAs)

Frequently Asked Questions (relating to the revised IAAs)

(i) Administration

1. Security - After downloading the IAAs and related guidance for each individual IAA what are the security and confidentiality requirements required by Edexcel?

Answer - All materials should be stored securely as set out in the guidance booklet published May 2006 and in the letter sent to centres in November 2007. Copies of these documents are published on the secure website for reference.

2. Timescale for the use of IAAs - Will Edexcel set a fixed timescale for the use of IAAs?

Answer - Yes. There will be a two year life cycle and on an annual basis a new set of IAAs will be published. Edexcel will publish the dates for which each IAA will be valid on the front cover of the IAA.

3. How many IAAs will Edexcel produce for GCSE Science and GCSE Additional Science?

Answer - There will be six for GCSE Science - two biology, two chemistry and two physics. There will be a similar pattern (another 6) for GCSE Additional Science. There will be one IAA for each of B1a, B1b, C1a, etc

4. How many IAAs do students have to carry out?

Answer - GCSE Science - The minimum is one IAA for each of Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

GCSE Additional Science - one for each of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Students may not repeat an IAA.

5. Will students have to sign an authentication sheet in addition to signing the front cover?

Answer - No, the student must sign the front cover to signify their own work.

6. Practical Work - Will students be given any guidance notes prior to undertaking the practical work for the IAA?

Answer - Yes, each IAA will provide guidance notes for students which should be made available to all students about 7-14 days before the practical work is undertaken by the students.

7. Why has the number of IAAs been reduced?

Answer - Following consultation with teachers it was felt that there was a need to reduce the burden on teachers and centres. Also each IAA assesses a similar set of skills, so multiple opportunities are not required.

8. When will new IAAs be published?

Answer - New set of IAAs will be published annually and these will be available on the website as secure documents. An email alert message will be sent to all users of Edexcel online who have signed up to the email alert service when the IAAs are published. In addition a notice will be issued on the website.

9. What is a modified paper?

Answer - Modified papers are provided for candidates whose vision is impaired or have difficulties.

10. How do I get modified IAAs for my candidates?

Answer - These are available on the website on the assessment activities page as secure documents

(ii) Operation

11. Will teachers/technicians receive any guidance relating to the IAAs?

Answer - Yes, but these guidance notes are for the teacher/technician only and should be kept securely.

12. Will the practical work involve a lot of work for technicians or require new equipment to be bought?

Answer - No, the practical activities have been carefully chosen to be standard activities that most centres will already do, although some adaptation may be needed to existing equipment.

13. Are the new IAAs really content free?

Answer - Yes. The new IAAs have been designed to focus only on process skills, in the context of the topic being tested, and are not designed to test knowledge of the specification statements.

Each IAA will have questions testing;

- Planning
- Extracting information and using data
- Interpretation, Judgement and opinion.

14. Can all science staff see these IAAs before the students take them?

Answer - Yes. Provided you have your centre's password, any science teacher can access these new IAAs via the secure website .

It is important that teachers have the chance to look at the 'information for teachers' and the IAAs itself so that they can incorporate ideas into their planning and teaching. Any downloaded IAA or 'information for teachers' must be kept under secure conditions and must not be seen by students.

15. Should the centre carry out a risk assessment before doing the practical work?

Answer - Yes. The centre is required to carry out all relevant risk assessments prior to the practical being undertaken.

16. May students work in groups when carrying out the practical work?

Answer - Yes, students may work in groups *or* independently at the direction of the teacher. At the end of the experiment students must have compiled a data set (which may include graphical work) to use in the written part of the task. This data should be then retained by the teacher and then distributed to the student at the time of the IAA being taken if instructed to be issued on the 'information for teachers'.

17. Will Edexcel require centres to retain and submit the students' data records with the moderation sample?

Answer - This work **should** be stapled to the back of the student's IAA. It could give credibility/importance as far as the student is concerned.

18. What happens if a student is absent when the practical work takes place?

Answer - The student is still allowed to sit the IAA. The teacher may decide to provide the student with data to use in the written task; however the student may be at a disadvantage by not having undertaken the practical work themselves.

19. Other than a table of results, will students be able to take any other notes from their practical work in with them when they complete or write up their assessment activity?

Answer - Students are permitted to take data sets and graphs in for some IAAs. This is made clear in the "Information for teachers sheet" provided with each IAA. At the end of the experiments concerned students must have compiled a data set (which may include graphical work) to use in the written part of the tasks. The data set (results table) and graph should be collected at the end of the practical and re-issued by the teacher at the start of the IAA session. Students should be asked to staple this to their IAA script. A teacher may provide a data set and graph where a student has been absent but the student will be at a disadvantage if they have not carried out the practical work.

20. Can I provide students with extra paper to complete their responses to questions?

Answer - Yes, students must be prompted to request extra paper for questions where this is appropriate, as otherwise students may limit their answers to the space provided and thus not include details demonstrating their knowledge to gain full marks.

(iii) Support and Resources

21. Support - What support will Edexcel put in place to help teachers manage the transition to the revised format of IAA?

Answer - Edexcel will publish a number of assessed exemplars as guidance for teachers showing the assessment of the written tasks. These will be published on the secure website.

In addition teachers may e-mail GCSESCIENCE@edexcelexperts.co.uk for support.

There is also a consultancy service in place and details of this service are available on the website.

Teachers will be able to attend training events organised by the Professional Development and Training Division of Edexcel.

(iv) Assessment

22. Can the student(s) know their marks or see the assessed IAA?

Answer - Yes to the first point. However students should be reminded that their mark is subject to external moderation.

And to the second point, Yes. Students can view their own assessed IAA under controlled conditions. Suggested methods include one to one discussion between the teacher and the student or a 'no bags/pens/pencils look as a starter or plenary.

Alternatively the teacher may scan in some selected sections and project these to the class in order to elucidate teaching points.

Teachers should not show completed work to any student who has not taken that IAA.

23. Should teachers annotate the students' work?

Answer - It is a requirement of JCQ that teachers annotate internally assessed work. The purpose of annotation is to clarify, for moderation purposes, where teachers have given credit using their professional judgement where this is not explicit in the guidance material.

24. Can a teacher share the generic assessment grid with students?

Answer - Yes, although teachers might consider how they can use and interpret the grid so that students will understand how the assessment works. Edexcel has also published a student speak version of the generic assessment criteria on the secure website.

25. Why is no mark scheme provided?

Answer - IAAs are designed to assess process not content. Assessment is done using the generic marking grid in the same way for each IAA.

26. How do we award a mark for QWC for the new IAA's?

Answer - The new IAAs no longer have a separate mark for QWC. The QWC refers to the correct usage of scientific terms and not necessarily the correct spelling. Please see page 11 of the Internal assessment Guidance document published in May 2008

27. Would I be able to produce a mark scheme for each Internal Assessment Activities to ensure consistency across my department using your generic assessment criteria?

Answer - The IAA's must be assessed to the generic assessment grid. This is what will be used for the moderation process. We are not able to support mark schemes and the consultancy service is not able to provide support on these issues.

The requirement to use a generic assessment grid comes from QCA and will apply to all controlled assessments.

We have provided criteria indicators which will help with interpreting the grid. Please see Pages 13 and 14 of the "Exemplar Edexcel-devised Internal Assessment Activity with guidance" booklet issued in May 2008. This document is available on the GCSE 360 micro site via this link:

http://360science.edexcel.org.uk/VirtualContent/106395/3_Internal_Assessment_Guidance_2101_and_2103_May_2008.pdf

Centres that attempt to use a mark scheme may find that the moderation process will result in disagreements between the moderator and centre marks which may lead to the centre's mark being adjusted.

(v) Moderation

28. Must the centre carry out internal standardisation?

Answer - it is a requirement of JCQ that internal standardisation takes place before the submission of work for moderation. It is important that there is consistency of the assessment process carried out by any teachers involved within a centre. On the front cover of the new IAAs there is a box to show the marks of the original moderator and the marks of the person doing the internal standardisation.

29. Do we submit the best IAA mark per subject or do we select the best mark from each of the three strands regardless of which IAA they come from?

Answer - The best mark per subject must be submitted as the total of the three strands from one IAA. Combinations of marks from more than one IAA are not acceptable.

(vi) Terminology

30. What is meant by the term "reliability" and "validity" in the new Internal assessment activities "?

Answer - Validity refers to the technique and apparatus used for collecting the data. A valid experiment is one that fairly tests the hypothesis. In a valid experiment all variables are kept constant apart from those being investigated, all systematic errors have been eliminated and random errors are reduced. Reliability refers to repeatability or consistency of results. In terms of second hand sources reliability refers to how trustworthy the source is.

31. What is meant by the term "accuracy"?

Accurate refers to the correctness of a measurement. Accuracy can be determined by comparing the actual measured quantity against a "true" or accepted value (e.g. a value which has been determined by carrying out the experiment in the perfectly 'correct' way)