



## **OCNSWR Policy Statement for GCSE Equivalence in English, Mathematics and Science**

### **Scope**

OCNSWR as an Access Validating Agency, is responsible for ensuring the quality of Access programmes delivered by its members. As such it has responsibility for the award of Certificates of GCSE Equivalence within approved Access programmes.

This document sets out the framework for GCSE Equivalence in English, Mathematics and Science from 1 August 2007 within the wider Common Access Framework. The contents of this document have been developed in consultation with Access tutors in member organisations and approved by the Higher Education Access Committee (HEAC) of Open College Network South West Region.

Achievement by learners of GCSE Equivalence within an Access programme may be used for entry to Initial Teacher Training programmes and other higher education programmes that require a GCSE qualification. However OCNSWR recommends that students check with receiving HEI's the acceptability of GCSE Equivalences within an Access to HE programme.

It should be noted that students who are offered a GCSE-equivalent qualification as part of their programme of study should be made aware that such qualifications have no formal status or recognised equivalence outside the context of HE admissions

### **General Principles**

The following principles underpin OCNSWR's GCSE equivalence certification:

1. The central principle is one of fitness for purpose.
2. The purpose of GCSE Equivalence certification is to provide assurance that learners have achieved at least the standard equivalent to GCSE grade C qualification in the subject concerned.
3. Learners who have achieved GCSE Equivalence certification will have the skills, conceptual understanding and appropriate knowledge to succeed on a higher education course. The nature of these skills, concepts and knowledge has been identified through consultation between HEIs and Access tutors.
4. GCSE Equivalence does not imply a direct correspondence of content with GCSE specifications or that learners will have knowledge identical to those with a conventional GCSE: such correspondence is not considered appropriate for learners on Access programmes.

5. Preparation for formal timed examinations in higher education is a function of the Access programme as a whole. Formal tests as part of GCSE Equivalence can contribute to this preparation, but are primarily to ensure specific knowledge, skills and understanding have been assimilated when other forms of evidence are inappropriate or insufficient.

### **Assessment Principles Applying to all GCSE Equivalence Subjects**

A common structure will apply to all GCSE Equivalence certifications insofar as:

1. Evidence must be provided that covers all learning outcomes and assessment criteria. When tests are used and evidence is not achieved in the test, alternative evidence must be provided.
2. GCSE Equivalence in a particular subject will be based on achievement of **NINE** ten-hour credits at level 2 from a defined list of units. The list will specify which units are compulsory, which units are optional, and any rules of combination.
3. Where corresponding GCSE Equivalent units are listed at level 2 and level 3, either the level 2 or level 3 unit can count towards the achievement of GCSE Equivalence. The unit transcript will indicate the level at which the unit has been achieved.
4. Evidence from a single piece of work can count towards more than one unit where it is educationally sound to do so. This may be within a subject or across subjects within the Access programme that are or are not part of GCSE Equivalence. This use of evidence should be distinguished from double-counting units for funding purposes.
5. Evidence of meeting assessment criteria can come from the portfolio as a whole.

### **Detailed Assessment Requirements**

The requirements below must be followed.

#### **General**

1. A range of assessment methods is expected within and across the units in GCSE Equivalence.

#### **Currency of units**

1. If a learner achieves a listed unit (or units) but not the whole certificate they may count it towards certification of GCSE Equivalence for period of three years from the end of the academic year in which it was awarded.
2. Where a unit achieved by a learner is withdrawn from the list for GCSE Equivalence before three years has elapsed, a learner may still count it towards a claim for GCSE Equivalence provided the nine (ten-hour) credits claimed by the learner together form a coherent package that satisfies OCNSWR's Higher Education Access Committee as appropriate for GCSE Equivalence. (The HEAC may delegate this decision to OCNSWR officers.)

## **GCSE Equivalence and QCA GCSE Subject Criteria**

**Learners successfully achieving OCNSWR GCSE Equivalence in the subject concerned will be able to operate at the level of a learner with GCSE Grade C or above, but will not necessarily have detailed knowledge of all aspects of GCSE specifications.**

The following are QCA's national grade descriptions for GCSE Grade C.

### **English - GCSE Grade C Criteria**

“Candidates match their talk to the demands of different contexts. They use varied vocabulary and organise their talk to communicate clearly, engaging the interest of the listener. In discussion, candidates make significant contributions, varying how and when they participate. They show confident use of standard English in situations which require it. Candidates show understanding of the ways in which meaning and information are conveyed in a range of literary and non-literary texts. They give personal and critical responses to literary texts, referring to aspects of language, structure and themes in justifying their views. They select and summarise a range of information from different sources.

Candidates' writing engages and sustains the reader's interest. It shows adaptation of style and register to different forms, including using an impersonal style where appropriate. Candidates use a range of sentence structures and varied vocabulary to create effects. Paragraphing and correct punctuation are used to make the sequence of events or ideas coherent and clear to the reader. Spelling is accurate and handwriting is neat and legible.”

### **Mathematics**

#### **GCSE Grade C Criteria**

“Starting from problems or contexts that have been presented to them, candidates refine or extend the mathematics used to generate fuller solutions. They give a reason for their choice of mathematical presentation, explaining features they have selected. Candidates justify their generalisations, arguments or solutions, showing some insight into the mathematical structure of the problem. They appreciate the difference between mathematical explanation and experimental evidence.

In making estimates candidates round to one significant figure and multiply and divide mentally. They solve numerical problems involving multiplication and division with numbers of any size using a calculator efficiently and appropriately. They understand the effects of multiplying and dividing by numbers between 0 and 1. They understand and use the equivalences between fractions, decimals and percentages and calculate using ratios in appropriate situations. They understand and use proportional changes. Candidates find and describe in symbols the next term or the  $n$ th term of a sequence, where the rule is quadratic; they multiply two expressions of the form  $(x + n)$ ; they simplify the corresponding quadratic expressions. They solve simple polynomial equations by trial and improvement and represent inequalities using a number line. They formulate and solve linear equations with whole number coefficients. They manipulate

simple algebraic formulae, equations and expressions. Candidates use algebraic and graphical methods to solve simultaneous linear equations in two variables. Candidates solve problems using angle and symmetry properties of polygons and properties of intersecting and parallel lines. They understand and apply Pythagoras' theorem when solving problems in two-dimensions. Candidates find areas and circumferences of circles. They calculate lengths, areas and volumes in plane shapes and right prisms. Candidates enlarge shapes by a positive whole number or fractional scale factor. They appreciate the imprecision of measurement and recognise that a measurement given to the nearest whole number may be inaccurate by up to one half in either direction. They understand and use compound measures such as speed. Candidates construct and interpret frequency diagrams. They specify hypotheses and test them. They determine the modal class and estimate the mean, median and range of a set of grouped data, selecting the statistic most appropriate to their line of enquiry. They use measures of average and range with associated frequency polygons, as appropriate, to compare distributions and make inferences. They draw a line of best fit on a scatter diagram by inspection. Candidates understand relative frequency as an estimate of probability and use this to compare outcomes of experiments."

## **Science**

### **GCSE Grade C Criteria**

"Candidates recall a range of scientific information from all areas of the specification. For example, they describe how some organ systems in living things carry out life processes, recall simple chemical symbols and formulae, recall correct units for quantities.

Candidates use and apply scientific knowledge and understanding in some general contexts, for example, they describe how a cell is adapted to its functions, use simple balanced equations, use quantitative relationships between physical quantities to perform calculations. Candidates describe links between related phenomena in different contexts, use diagrams, charts and graphs to support arguments, use appropriate scientific and technical vocabulary in a range of contexts.

Candidates describe how evidence is used to test predictions made from scientific theories, and how different people may have different views on some aspects of science.

Candidates use scientific knowledge and understanding to identify an approach to a question, for example, identifying key factors to vary and control. Candidates use a range of apparatus to make careful and precise measurements and systematic observations and recognise when it is necessary to repeat measurements and observations. They present data systematically, in graphs where appropriate, and use lines of best fit. Candidates identify and explain patterns within data and draw conclusions consistent with the evidence. They explain these conclusions using scientific knowledge and understanding and evaluate how strongly their evidence supports the conclusions."

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