

## N Ireland GCSE Design Principles

Audience: Awarding Organisations whose qualifications will be accredited by CCEA

Purpose: To detail the design principles to be used when designing GCSE qualifications. As well as adhering to these principles, GCSEs should also comply with the CCEA General Conditions of Recognition and the N Ireland GCE and GCSE Qualifications Criteria.

Principles	
<p><b>1</b></p> <p>This principle reflects the requirements of the CCEA General Condition of Recognition D.5</p>	<p><b>Compliance with Regulatory requirements</b></p> <p>Each GCSE qualification must meet all the requirements specified in the CCEA Accreditation General Conditions of Recognition, the N Ireland GCE and GCSE Qualifications Criteria, the CCEA GCSE Design Principles and any other regulatory documents which may be published by CCEA Regulation.</p>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>This principle is in line with the CCEA General Condition of Recognition B.4</p>	<p><b>Qualification Strategy</b></p> <p>A qualification strategy must be designed for each GCSE qualification. This document must be submitted to and approved by CCEA Regulation prior to the submission of a qualification for accreditation. The qualification strategy must detail the policies and procedures that the awarding organisation has in place to ensure quality in its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• specification development</li><li>• assessment design</li><li>• assessment delivery</li><li>• assessment monitoring.</li></ul>

Principles	
3	<p data-bbox="412 220 770 248"><b>Design of GCSE Qualifications</b></p> <p data-bbox="412 328 663 357">3.1 Level of Demand</p> <p data-bbox="412 363 1863 466">Each specification must specify the knowledge, understanding and skills required, giving a clear indication of coverage and depth. This must be expressed in terms of what a successful candidate will have learned or be able to do, including where there are optional components.</p> <p data-bbox="412 507 1904 609">The level of demand of an assessment for a GCSE qualification must be appropriate to the knowledge, skills and understanding to be reasonably expected of learners who have completed a course of study designed to lead to the award of a GCSE qualification in that subject.</p> <p data-bbox="412 651 846 679">3.2 Progression from KS3 Curriculum</p> <p data-bbox="412 686 1411 715">Each specification must specify, where appropriate, how the qualification supports:</p> <ul data-bbox="412 721 1890 865" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progression of the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT;</li> <li>• progression of the other skills of Managing Information, Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making, Being Creative, Working with Others and Self-Management; and</li> <li>• the development of the transferability of skills.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="412 906 658 935">3.3 Qualification size</p> <ul data-bbox="412 941 1912 1120" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each GCSE qualification must be designed to ensure that it is capable of being assigned 120-140 hours of Guided Learning.</li> <li>• A short-course GCSE qualification must be designed to ensure that it is capable of being assigned half the Guided Learning hours of a single award GCSE and include half of the content.</li> <li>• A double-award GCSE qualification must be designed to ensure that it is capable of being assigned double the Guided Learning hours of a single award GCSE and include content equivalent to two single-award GCSEs.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="412 1200 725 1228">3.4 Qualification structure</p> <p data-bbox="412 1235 887 1264">Each GCSE qualification must consist of:</p> <ul data-bbox="456 1270 1093 1343" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a maximum of 4 assessed units in a single award</li> <li>• assessed units with a minimum weighting of 20%</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="412 1350 555 1378">and permit:</p> <ul data-bbox="456 1385 1608 1458" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• only one re-sit opportunity per unit with the better result counting towards the qualification</li> <li>• results for a unit which have a 'shelf-life' limited only by that of the specification.</li> </ul>

Principles	
4	<p><b>Assessment in GCSE qualifications</b></p> <p>4.1 The specification and specimen assessment materials must make clear how the assessments for each GCSE qualification allow learners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate their ability to use higher order thinking skills</li> <li>• provide extended responses and evidence of Quality of Written Communication (where appropriate)</li> <li>• demonstrate their ability to draw together different areas of knowledge, skills and understanding from across a full range of study for that qualification.</li> </ul> <p>4.2 Tiering Assessments should only be tiered if one exam paper/task does not give all students the opportunity to show their knowledge and abilities due to the nature of the subject.</p> <p>4.3 Availability Assessments should only be available in the summer period for both first time and re-sit assessments. A November assessment opportunity should only be made available to candidates re-sitting maths and English.</p> <p>Unitised specifications must allocate a weighting of at least 40 per cent to terminal assessment. Linear specifications must ensure that all components are assessed at the end of the course.</p> <p>4.4 Examination Time</p> <p>Assessments should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consist of a maximum of 3 hours written examination time</li> </ul>

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	<p>4.5 Assessment by Examination Assessment in GCSE qualifications should normally be by examination only.</p> <p>4.6 Non-exam assessment GCSE qualifications may include non-exam assessment where an exemption for this has been granted by CCEA Regulation. The following principles must be applied when proposing non-exam assessment:</p> <p>Non exam assessment should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• only be included where it is the most valid way of assessing essential elements of the subject;</li> <li>• be designed to fit the requirements of the particular subject, including the relative weighting of written exams and other components</li> <li>• not normally exceed 50% in weighting of the full GCSE qualification</li> <li>• include controls around the setting, taking and marking of tasks – to ensure confidence in the validity and reliability of the assessment</li> <li>• strike a balance between the valid assessment of essential knowledge and skills, sound assessment practice and manageability</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Grading in GCSE qualifications</b></p> <p>Each GCSE qualification must have specified levels of attainment on a scale (from highest to lowest) of A*, A, B, C*, C, D, E, F, G. The designation 'U' or 'unclassified' may be used to indicate performance falling below the specified levels of attainment.</p>

<b>Principles</b>	
<b>6</b>	<p data-bbox="409 220 560 252"><b>Exemptions</b></p> <p data-bbox="409 292 1912 395">Prior to the submission of a GCSE qualification for accreditation, an exemption from the Design Principles may be applied for in respect of that qualification. The rationale for the exemption should be detailed in the Qualification Strategy for the subject and must:</p> <ul data-bbox="459 438 1818 654" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="459 438 907 470">• be submitted to CCEA Regulation</li><li data-bbox="459 475 1249 507">• detail why the exemption is required in relation to the subject</li><li data-bbox="459 512 1395 544">• provide evidence of support for the exemption from relevant stakeholders</li><li data-bbox="459 549 1346 580">• provide evidence of research which supports the proposed exemption</li><li data-bbox="459 585 1818 654">• detail how comparability and consistency with similar qualifications will be achieved in the assessment of that qualification.</li></ul>