



Rewarding Learning

AS 3A / A2 3A Physics

Practical Assessment

Instructions to Teachers
Summer 2025

Publication Date: November 2024

CONTENTS

1. Apparatus and Materials List	1
2. Confidential Instruction	1
3. Final Apparatus Testing	1
4. Sitting the AS 3A Practical Techniques Assessment	2
5. Sitting the A2 3A Practical Techniques Assessment	2
6. After the Practical Techniques Assessments	3
7. Protractors	3
<i>Appendices</i>	
1. (a) Contact Details	4
(b) Useful Links	5

1. Apparatus and Materials List

Prior to carrying out the Practical Techniques Assessment units, centres will receive a copy of the *Apparatus and Materials List* with information on the apparatus and materials required for the Practical Assessments. **This information must not be communicated to candidates.** If apparatus/materials have serial codes and/or manufacturer specified centres should use these exact apparatus/materials. On receipt of the *Apparatus and Materials list*, if centres have difficulty sourcing the apparatus or materials they should immediately contact the CCEA Subject Officer, Dr Alan McMurray by email amcmurray@ccea.org.uk. The email should provide the Centre's name, Centre Number, a contact name, phone number and details re: issues.

The *Apparatus and Materials List* also provides information about the timing of sessions that can be used for practical assessments. To maintain confidentiality, candidates entered for any of the alternative practical sessions must be segregated within the centre. This helps to ensure that there is no contact between candidates in earlier sessions in **any** centre.

2. Confidential Instructions

In April, centres will receive a copy of the Confidential Instructions for both the AS 3A and A2 3A Units. These instructions give detailed guidance on setting up and testing the apparatus and materials to be used. **The information in the Confidential Instructions must not be shared with candidates under any circumstances.** If at this point, centres find the testing process stated produces results different to those specified in the document, they must immediately contact the Physics Subject Officer, Dr Alan McMurray, (amcmurray@ccea.org.uk)

3. Final Apparatus Testing

The practical assessment question paper (teacher copy) will be made available to the Head of Department two working days before the timetabled starting date so that teachers and technicians can carry out a final test on the experiments. If testing gives unexpected results the centre should immediately email the Physics Subject Officer, Dr Alan McMurray (amcmurray@ccea.org.uk) and the Specification Support Officer Louise Millar (lmillar@ccea.org.uk). The email should state the Centre name, Centre number, the specific nature of the problem and the range of anomalous results produced. CCEA will respond by acknowledging receipt of the e-mail. If you do not receive a response within 24 hours, please contact Dr Alan McMurray by telephone 028 95906548 to confirm that CCEA has received your e-mail.

4. Sitting the AS 3A Practical Techniques Assessment

The AS 3A Practical Techniques Assessment is a test of practical skills. This is comprised of **four** short experimental tests. The duration of the assessment is 1 hour. Some of this time will be set aside for supervisors to re-set the apparatus so that it is ready for the next candidates. The assessment should be run as a circus of experiments with candidates moving to the next experiment at the designated time. **Candidates should work individually** and there should be **no communication or sharing of information between candidates** at any point during the assessment. If candidates are unable to obtain their own results they **should not** be provided with sample results.

The assessment should be timed as follows:

	Time
<i>Q1 (Short practical test)</i>	<i>12 minutes</i>
Changeover and practical write-up	2 minutes
<i>Q2 (Short practical test)</i>	<i>12 minutes</i>
Changeover and practical write-up	2 minutes
<i>Q3 (Short practical test)</i>	<i>12 minutes</i>
Changeover and practical write-up	2 minutes
<i>Q4 (Short practical test)</i>	<i>12 minutes</i>
Changeover and practical write-up	2 minutes
End of test write-up	4 minutes

At the end of each 12 minute period, candidates must stop using the apparatus. During each 2 minute changeover candidates may write up anything they have not completed but **will not** have access to the apparatus. At the end of the practical, candidates will be allowed 4 minutes to complete their write-up, e.g. calculations, answers to any questions but **will not** have access to any apparatus.

5. Sitting the A2 3A Practical Techniques Assessment

The A2 3A Practical Techniques Assessment is a test of practical skills which contains two practical exercises that are longer and more complex than those in AS 3A. They test skills of implementing, graph work and analysis. **Candidates should work individually** and there should be **no communication or sharing of information between candidates** at any point during the assessment. If candidates are unable to obtain their own results they **should not** be provided with sample results.

The duration of the assessment is 1 hour. After the first 26 minutes of the practical assessment the supervisors will take 2 minutes to reset apparatus for the next candidates. Candidates may use

these 2 minutes to complete their write-up but **will not** have access to the apparatus. After 28 minutes, candidates will move on to the next question. Supervisors can decide the order in which candidates attempt the questions. At the end of the practical, candidates will be allowed 4 minutes to complete their write-up, e.g. calculations, answers to any questions but **will not** have access to any apparatus.

6. After the Practical Techniques Assessments

As soon as the individual exam sessions have finished, supervisors should return the AS 3 and A2 3 Practical scripts together with the corresponding advice notes to the Examinations Officer. These will be collected from your centre by CCEA the day after the timetabled exam. If the collection scheduled for the day after the practical exam does not take place, please contact CCEA immediately so another pick-up can be arranged.

If the supervisor/teacher finds a candidate may have been disadvantaged because of malfunctioning apparatus they should make a confidential report to the school Examinations Officer. The report should provide details of the issue(s) and the candidate(s) affected, citing their candidate examination number(s). The centre Examinations Officer should forward the report, for special consideration to the CCEA Centre Support Team.

In addition, the Head of Department should e-mail the CCEA Subject Officer (Dr Alan McMurray amcmurray@ccea.org.uk) with the details of the issue. This information will be forwarded to and discussed with the GCE Physics Chair of Examiners and Chief Examiner to consider how the affected candidates may be given credit, if appropriate, when the scripts are marked.

Both practical papers will now be marked on-line. Consequently, there will be no centre specific variation possible in the marking. Therefore, it is even more important that the items used are exactly as stated in the Apparatus and Materials List, and the instructions given in the Confidential Instructions are followed by all centres.

7. Protractors

Please note, protractors are basic pieces of physics equipment. Candidates should bring their own to use in all physics papers (practical and theory).

Appendix 1(a) – Contact Details

CONTACT	REASON
<p>Subject Officer for Physics <i>Dr Alan McMurray</i> amcmurray@ccea.org.uk (028) 95906548</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For clarification about AS and A2 Physics specification, content and processes
<p>Specification Support Officer <i>Louise Millar</i> lmillar@ccea.org.uk (028) 9026 1410</p>	
<p>CCEA Centre Support Team centresupport@ccea.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For any special consideration queries
<p>CCEA (General Queries) CCEA, Clarendon Dock, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast, BT1 3BG (028) 9026 1200 info@ccea.org.uk http://www.ccea.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All other queries

Appendix 1(b) – Useful Links

WEBPAGE	REASON
<p>AS & A2 Physics CCEA Webpage: https://ccea.org.uk/post-16/gce/subjects/gce-physics-2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specification/assessment materials
JCQ GUIDANCE	
<p>JCQ Exams Office 'ICE' – Instructions for Conducting Examinations https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• JCQ instructions for conducting examinations

This booklet has been drawn up to comply with the relevant regulatory requirements.

Teachers, centres and candidates should note that CCEA may use extracts from examination scripts/internally assessed material on an anonymous basis in educational presentations, materials and products.

