

## Topic Check Ins

Assessment for learning is a vital component of effective teaching and can be used to provide clear feedback to students as well as informing lesson planning. It is an integral part of the pedagogy of each and every lesson rather than a form of data tracking or analysis. On some occasions however, it is appropriate and desirable to administer more formal assessment for learning techniques and OCR has produced this series of *Topic Check Ins* to assist teachers in this.

The OCR GCSE (J560) specification presents the required content across three columns: initial learning (based upon the subject content of the KS3 Mathematics programme of study); what Foundation tier learners should also be able to do; and what Higher tier learners should additionally be able to do.

Each topic in the GCSE specification (J560) has been mapped to a *Check In*; these exist for each of the three levels (where content is assigned). Each *Check In* is comprised of 10 questions:

- Questions 1-5 cover basic calculations (AO1)
- Questions 6-8 assess the learner's ability to reason and communicate mathematically (AO2)
- Questions 9-10 relate to problem solving tasks (AO3).

Teachers should be aware that procedural calculations (AO1) will be included within AO2 and AO3 questions. The *Check In* questions should not be considered exemplars of GCSE assessment style questions.

Alongside each *Check In* is a RAG grid. Each grid identifies the mathematical skill covered in each of the 10 questions in student friendly language. The Red, Amber or Green tick boxes are for completion by the learner or their peers as a measure of understanding of each respective skill.

Each *Check In* also contains an open-ended extension task at the end which will allow more able students to stretch themselves once they have completed the 10 questions. This task could also serve as a possible discussion topic. Extension tasks may include links to topics not covered in the 10 questions or extend to work at a higher level.

## How to use Topic Check Ins

It is anticipated that teachers will use these *Check Ins* in a variety of ways and they have been designed to allow teachers to fit them into schemes of work as appropriate. It is not necessary to use every *Check In*, or deliver them in a particular order.

Possible ideas for administering *Check Ins* include:

- during lesson, to encourage students to peer or self-assess their work
- as a homework task prior to teaching, to inform how the topic is taught
- as a post teaching activity, to track what students have assimilated
- as a pre teaching activity, to identify key areas to focus on which may be skills related, or could be focused on communication and problem solving skills
- as a series of activities, to help students plan revision for internal or external exams
- as a group activity, to allow learners to research how to answer questions and then report back their findings to their peers or the rest of the class.

The length of time given for each *Check In* should be at the discretion of the teacher, based on professional judgement of the ability of each group of learners.

Marks have not been assigned to questions despite differences in the amount of work required to complete each one. A simple right or wrong marking structure is more user-friendly with learners and it promotes formative assessment rather than summative assessment.

After reviewing the answers, learners should complete the RAG grid based on their performance. Learners should rate their understanding of a particular question as: no understanding (Red); some understanding but improvement needed (Amber); and good understanding (Green). An Amber response would be encouraged where students have made an attempt to solve a problem resulting in some errors or where they have answered only part of the question.

The RAG grid can then be used to build a detailed record of student progress, supporting the data cycle of schools:

- The teacher could ask learners to write a response to their *Check In*, highlighting areas of strength and points for improvement;
- or the teacher could provide written feedback following the *Check In* as well as additional questions tailored to a specific area for improvement.

The preceding suggestions should not be considered an exhaustive list and teachers are encouraged to use the materials in a flexible way to best support the engagement and learning of their students.

*Check Ins* are available to download from the OCR website. Further *Check Ins* to cover the whole curriculum will be uploaded to the OCR website when complete.

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