

Cross board messaging on the Practical Endorsement for GCE Biology, Chemistry, Geology and Physics

The 2021 to 2023 Practical Endorsement Monitoring Process

The fourth cycle of monitoring for the practical endorsement commences in autumn 2021 and runs until the summer term of 2023. Due to the impact of the pandemic, monitoring will not start until January 2022.

In this cycle, your centre will be monitored for a single science subject. There will be some exceptions to this:

- (a) Large centres (with more than 140 entries at A level for biology **or** chemistry **or** physics) will continue to be monitored for all three subjects. We will identify large centres based on centre entries in summer 2021.
- (b) Centres where there have been concerns about the delivery or assessment of the practical endorsement, or are in maladministration, will also be monitored for each science.
- (c) We continue to monitor A Level Geology separately from the other A Level sciences. If you offer both A Level Geology and A Level sciences, you will receive separate monitoring for each.

It is key that all centres have been monitored in one subject by the appropriate AO before the end of Cycle 4 in summer 2023.

We plan monitoring for Cycle 4 using information about centre entries for A levels in biology, chemistry, geology and physics from the summer 2021 series. **If your centre is new / switching awarding organisations (AOs) / only offering one or two science A levels, it is your responsibility to let the relevant AO(s) know, so that we can schedule appropriate monitoring.**

The first contact with your centre will be from the AO which your centre uses for the science subject selected for monitoring. This will be the AO which your centre used for A level entries in summer 2021. Contact will typically be made with your Exams Officer (or other nominated school contact). **If your centre no longer offers the subject, or you are in the process of switching AO in the subject, or you offer the subject for an exam route for which the practical endorsement does not apply (e.g. International A level), you must inform the AO that has contacted you as soon as possible. This will allow time for us to communicate this to your new AO or, if necessary, to change the subject for which you are being monitored, without running the risk of late monitoring taking place.**

New Centres

If your centre is starting to deliver any of the sciences (including geology) at GCE A level and will enter candidates for the first time in June 2022 or June 2023, you must notify the AO with whom you intend to make entries as soon as you start teaching. This allows us to schedule monitoring before your first cohort of students sit their exams. AO contact details are as follows:

AQA	MonitoringReports@aqg.org.uk
Pearson Edexcel	GCE.Sciences@pearson.com
Eduqas	science@eduqas.co.uk
OCR	Science@OCR.org.uk

Although AOs work hard try to ensure that new centres receive the appropriate monitoring, **centres who present late for monitoring may not be monitored in time to award the endorsement.**

Switching exam boards

We have used information from entry data from summer 2021 to allocate centres to a Monitor from the appropriate AO. If your centre has switched AO in a science subject, you should notify your old and new AOs when the switch to teaching the new specification takes place. Do check, when your Monitor makes contact, that they are for the correct AO for the specification you are now following. If you are in the process of switching AOs and teach different AO specifications in Year 12 and Year 13, your monitoring will involve your outgoing AO and your final Year 13 cohort with them.

Training

It is still a requirement that Lead Teachers for each subject should have undertaken the training provided by their AO. This training is free of charge and may be accessed as follows:

AQA	Practical endorsement - mandatory training for all Lead teachers
Pearson (Edexcel)	Send your name and centre number to alevelscienceupdates@pearson.com Instructions are sent by auto-reply (NB this mail box is not monitored)
Eduqas	https://varndean.adobeconnect.com/pr3ueleeqis5/?pro to=true
OCR	http://practicalendorsement.ocr.org.uk/

Lead Teachers have overall responsibility for A Level Science/Geology practical work at the centre. Lead teachers are expected to cascade this training throughout each department if all science teachers do not complete it individually. Many of the online resources detailed above are accessible to all teachers, so may also be used as departmental CPD.

Lead Teachers continuing in post do not have to repeat the training but will want to ensure that any staff who are new to their centre are fully aware of the assessment requirements of the practical endorsement. If your centre is switching AOs for a subject, you will need to complete the Lead Teacher training from the AO to which you are switching.

Standardisation within Centres

There should be communication and training within your centre so that the outcomes for learners are consistent across teaching sets. This is in line with the Centre Declaration Form that your Head Teacher will sign and submit at the end of the course.

While the opportunity for standardisation is not the same as with internally-marked non-examined assessments, there should be dialogue and the possibility for observations of other staff to ensure the comparability of outcomes. The standardisation methods you adopt will be captured on the Monitoring Report Form at the time of your monitoring.

The common requirements of the practical endorsement allow centres to ensure that the criteria for the Common Practical Assessment Criteria (CPAC) are being implemented and recorded in all situations, including those where A levels from different AOs are being delivered by one centre.

Candidate and Centre records

Aside from providing evidence of candidate work as part of the monitoring process, there is no further requirement for you to retain candidate work, especially as candidates may wish to have access to it for revision. Similarly, you do not need to retain your centre records of CPAC assessment once decisions have been communicated to AOs in May each year.

Re-sit candidates will often carry forward a result. However, you may want to retain a record of the CPAC tracking spreadsheet in cases of students completing practical work but ultimately not entering for the exams, in case they want to use this work as evidence for a future entry.

Consortium arrangements

Consortium arrangements only apply where teaching and assessment for the practical endorsement is shared between centres for a subject; that is, students from more than one centre are taught together and assessed together by staff at only one centre in the group.

A consortium arrangement does not exist if centres simply share common resources but teaching and assessment takes place at each site. For example, federations or academy trusts frequently have shared resources and training, but students are taught and assessed separately at each school in the group.

If you have a consortium arrangement with another centre, your Monitor will ask you to provide evidence of the arrangement when they first contact you. You will need to state clearly how the consortium works, for example, in all subjects or just one. This detail will be captured on your monitoring report.

Where a consortium arrangement exists, monitoring will routinely be scheduled for the centre where the teaching and assessment of practical work takes place, in order to quality assure the assessment decisions made by teachers. Only one centre in the consortium will be monitored per subject.

Consortium arrangements need to be active. A consortium arrangement does not exist if, for example, a private tuition college has an arrangement on paper, but students do not actually engage in practical work at the host centre.

Informal consortium arrangements

Consortium arrangements tend to cover centres in the same locality. However, there are some examples where students registered at one centre are sent to a different host centre, often some distance away, to undertake practical work through an intensive course. Such arrangements form a type of consortium and the guidance given in the previous paragraph applies.

Centres who wish to take advantage of this sort of consortium are advised that AOs will require these arrangements to be actively in use, and not simply of a theoretical nature.

Tutorial colleges, private entries and home schooling

Provision of the practical endorsement and associated practical activities is a regulatory requirement. Any centre which offers A level science tuition must provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate their practical competency through a minimum number of practical activities (to fulfil the requirements of the practical endorsement). This will be confirmed through monitoring, which will also confirm that the centre is assessing learners correctly against the CPAC.

Centres who do not make this provision are in breach of the regulations for the reformed GCE A level science qualifications. This breach is subject to a series of sanctions from the regulator such as those for malpractice or maladministration, which will be instigated by the AO conducting monitoring of the centre, and communicated with all other AOs.

The exception to the situation above is that a tutorial college may accept candidates who are re-sitting the A level, as long as these candidates already have a certificated result for the practical endorsement from an earlier attempt. See the later section on resit candidates.

Private candidates (home schooled, self-taught, or receiving private tuition) can be entered for examinations at a centre even if they are not enrolled as a learner there. As the practical endorsement is an essential part of the course, a centre accepting a private candidate should be in a position to offer private candidates the opportunity to complete the practical endorsement, even if the candidate

may not accept this offer. The centre must have practical provision available and must have passed monitoring. Private candidates should note that host centres may levy an additional charge for access to the practical endorsement.

Re-sit candidates

Re-sit candidates who have previously met the requirements for the practical endorsement and have a certificated result for this component may carry this result forward. Note that there is a separate entry code for candidates who are carrying forward a practical endorsement result from a previous series.

Re-sit candidates do not need to repeat practical activities (even if they did not gain a Pass originally) but may choose to do so to increase their knowledge and understanding for the written examinations. However, if a re-sit candidate wishes to convert a Not Classified result for the practical endorsement into a Pass, you will need to enter them under the usual entry code, and they will need to meet the full requirements of the practical endorsement.

Some students who completed and were assessed on the practical components of the specification may have subsequently not been entered for the qualification. These candidates will consequently not have a certificated result for the practical endorsement to carry forward. If they wish to complete the specification at a later date, they would need to be entered as a first-time candidate for the endorsement. Further practical work and assessment of CPAC competency may be necessary to ensure that these candidates demonstrate a routine and consistent pass standard in all areas of Appendix 5c.

JCQ maintain a national record of candidates who have been certificated for the practical endorsement, which may be accessed by an AO to assure that a candidate is eligible for the carry forward of their practical endorsement result. This will include candidates who achieve an unclassified U grade in the exam and who will not have the outcome of the practical endorsement certificated.

Geology

All centres offering geology will be monitored for the Geology practical endorsement by the AO whose specification they follow. It is key that all centres offering Geology have been monitored prior to Summer 2023 to satisfy Cycle 4 (2021-23) monitoring requirements.

Monitoring will follow the same process as that for biology, chemistry and physics. You will receive monitoring from the AO with which you made entries in summer 2021.

If you have already changed AO, or are in the process doing so, then please let both your current and new AO know, so that we can plan appropriate monitoring. Details are:

Eduqas	geology@eduqas.co.uk
OCR	Science@OCR.org.uk

Should a centre fail monitoring for geology, the monitoring AO will notify the other AOs for information, but this will not result in any additional monitoring for biology, chemistry or physics.