

## Standing Agreement Number 8

### Construction of the Common Timetable

#### Introduction

The GCE, FSMQ, GCSE and ELC awarding bodies produce common timetables, covering all subjects, for the benefit of both candidates and centres.

Common timetables are constructed for the **January and June series of GCE, FSMQ, GCSE, Principal Learning, Functional Skills and ELC examinations**. Common timetables are also constructed for the **November and March series of GCSE, Functional Skills and ELC examinations**.

An exam component may be scheduled at any point within the agreed timetable period. It should not be assumed that an individual subject or component will be timetabled on the basis of historical arrangements.

Details of when each series will begin and end, and when results are published are shown in the table below.

	Series			
	January	March GCSE	June	November GCSE
<b>When does the series begin?</b>	Second Wednesday or Thursday in January or 10 January, whichever is the earliest	First Monday in March (CCEA exams start end of February)	Second Monday or Tuesday in May (depending on the timing of public holidays)	Second Monday in November
<b>When does the series end?</b>	The January series will normally last for four weeks	The March series will normally last for two weeks	The June series will normally last for seven weeks including the Spring Bank Holiday half term	The November series will normally last for two weeks
<b>When are the results released to candidates</b>	Thursday in mid-March, eight weeks after the start of the series	Third Thursday in April	<p><i>Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications:</i> One week after the publication of Level 3 qualification results</p> <p><i>Level 3 and FSMQ qualifications:</i> Seven weeks after the last Thursday in the timetable</p>	Thursday in mid-January

\*For the release of results for Functional Skills qualifications, centres should refer to the online Key Dates Calendar: <http://testsandexams.qcda.gov.uk/16402.aspx>

Information on how the common timetable is produced can be found on page 3.

## **Schedule for publishing exam timetables**

The final timetable for the forthcoming June exam series will be published at the start of each academic year, no later than 30 September.

The awarding bodies will issue provisional timetables for the next series of exams in November and January each year in January, no later than 31 January.

Centres are then given the opportunity to comment on these provisional November and January timetables. Comments, observations or suggested amendments to the timetable(s) must reach the JCQ Office no later than 31 March, for consideration by the JCQ Common Timetable Working Group. The timetables will be finalised by 30 June.

The awarding bodies issue provisional timetables for the following year's June series in March each year, no later than 31 March.

Centres are given the opportunity to comment on the provisional June timetable and are invited to send any observations or suggested amendments to the JCQ Office by 31 May. The JCQ Common Timetable Working Group will carefully consider comments received from centres. The timetable will be finalised by 30 September.

All timetables will be shared with DCSF (England), DCELLS (Wales), DENI (Northern Ireland), and the regulators for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Provisional and final versions of timetables will also be shared with members of the JCQ Teacher Association Liaison Group prior to publication to centres.

## **Where are the timetables published?**

QCDA, in collaboration with the JCQ awarding bodies, has developed an online examinations timetable. This is a searchable database of general qualifications exam dates from AQA, CCEA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC. The timetable makes it quick and easy for centres to create a complete individual timetable for their own centre several months before the information is available in MIS systems. It enables advance planning for rooms, invigilators and managing timetable clashes.

Further information may be obtained from <http://testsandexams.qcda.gov.uk/16405.aspx>

Each awarding body will also publish exam timetables on their website:

[www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)

[www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk)

[www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com)

[www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)

[www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)

## Criteria used when producing the common timetable

1. The awarding bodies will collectively agree subject slots within the common timetable for each subject specification. These common slots will determine the date and session to be used for each exam component. In some instances, an awarding body may require additional slots for its papers for a given specification.
2. When deciding these subject slots the awarding bodies consider subject combinations using statistical data from previous series and feedback from centres. The common timetable will take note of the timetabling arrangements for all qualifications (GCE, FSMQ, GCSE, Principal Learning, Functional Skills and ELC examinations) in order to reduce potential timetable clashes.
3. The awarding bodies will try to minimize timetable clashes and accommodation problems for centres. However, given the size and complexity of the common timetable, some timetable clashes will be inevitable. Guidance on managing timetable clashes within centres can be found in **Section 2 of the JCQ publication *Instructions for conducting examinations***.
4. Exams will be scheduled during standard term times and cannot take account of individual school or college closures. The awarding bodies will not schedule exams for a weekend or a Bank Holiday.
5. The common timetables will try to take account of religious festivals, where appropriate. (This is where it is not possible for candidates to attend their school or college to sit examinations.) The awarding bodies will be unable to avoid timetabling exams on such days. However, the subjects will be carefully considered to minimize the impact. Similarly, the common timetable will take account of Remembrance Sunday in November.
6. Wherever possible, large entry subjects will be scheduled for a morning session and as early as possible in the timetable.
7. Wherever possible, subject specifications requiring papers of a longer duration will be scheduled for a morning session.
8. The Friday afternoon session before half term will normally be reserved for smaller entry subjects. This is to ensure that as many scripts as possible are collected by ParcelForce prior to the break.
9. The Monday morning session after half term will be reserved for smaller entry subjects to minimize the impact on centres re-opening after the break.
10. A subject specification may require two or more sessions. When two or more sessions are needed, wherever possible, there will be a balance between the number of morning and afternoon sessions.
11. Wherever possible, the gap between consecutive sessions used for the same subject specification should be no more than 7 working days.
12. An awarding body may timetable more than one paper within a specification in the same morning or afternoon session. However, the total duration of these papers will not be more than 3 hours.
13. GCE AS papers will be timetabled before GCE A2 papers.
14. GCSE English, Mathematics and Science examinations will be timetabled on separate days.
15. Candidates do not normally take Biology, Chemistry or Physics (commonly known as separate Sciences) and Science together in the same sitting. These subjects will therefore be timetabled together.
16. Wherever possible, the timetables will avoid the concentration of related subjects, such as French and German; English and English Literature in any part of the timetable.
17. Modern Foreign Language Speaking Tests must be completed by no later than 15 May.
18. The awarding bodies will try to ensure discrete sessions for GCSE and GCE Modern Foreign Language Listening exams.
19. Wherever possible, GCSE Modern Foreign Language written and listening papers should be timetabled no later than the end of Week 3 of the June examination timetable.
20. Functional Skills examinations will be timetabled during Week 3 of the January examination timetable and Week 1 of the June examination timetable.