

INTRODUCTION

Advanced Extension Awards (AEAs) are being introduced for 18 year olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in summer 2002 as part of the Government's response to its report "*Excellence in Cities*". AEAs supersede Special Papers.

The following information, which applies to all AEAs, should be read in conjunction with each test specification.

AIMS

AEAs should:

- ❑ challenge the most able advanced level students by providing opportunities for students to demonstrate greater depth of understanding than that required at Advanced GCE;
- ❑ ensure that the most able students are tested against standards comparable with the most demanding to be found in other countries;
- ❑ be accessible to all able students, whatever their school or college and whichever specification they are studying, so that significantly more young people have the opportunity to take them than take existing Special Papers;
- ❑ help differentiate between the most able candidates, particularly in subjects with a high proportion of A grades at Advanced GCE, in order to obviate the need for universities to develop their own entry tests.

DESIGN

AEAs have been designed and developed to have the following characteristics. The qualifications:

- ❑ are based on Advanced GCE subject criteria where they exist rather than individual specifications;
- ❑ test candidates' depth of understanding and their ability to think critically and creatively;
- ❑ test candidates' ability to demonstrate an understanding of the connections between different elements of the subject;
- ❑ require no additional teaching or resources.

ASSESSMENT

AEA test specifications provide the framework within which the assessment materials are created.

All AEAs will have an external assessment of 100%. External assessment is defined as:

'a form of independent assessment in which an awarding body sets or defines assignments, tests or examinations, specifies the conditions under which they are to be taken (including details of supervision and duration), and assesses candidates' responses.' (Arrangements for the statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE

There will be one assessment objective for all Advanced Extension Awards. This is contained in the test specification for each subject.

MARK SCHEMES

Assessment materials and mark schemes will lead to awards on a two-point scale: Distinction and Merit, with Distinction being the higher. Candidates who do not reach the minimum standard for Merit will be recorded as ungraded. Mark schemes will reward positive achievement and maximise the consistency of marking.

PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Performance level descriptors indicate the level of attainment characteristic of Merit and Distinction. They give a general indication of the required learning outcomes at each level. The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objective overall.

SELECTING CANDIDATES

Advanced Extension Awards are aimed at the top 10% of students nationally in each subject. The national profile of attainment varies quite markedly from subject to subject and centre to centre. Teachers should be confident that candidates entered for these awards are likely to attain a grade A securely. For Critical Thinking - where there is no full A level or subject criteria - centres should enter candidates who are generally expected to perform significantly above the grade A. Centres may enter as many or as few candidates as they wish for each AEA.

SUBJECTS TO BE OFFERED AS AEAs FROM SUMMER 2002

In summer 2002 candidates will be able to take AEAs in the subjects listed below. All AEAs will be accredited to the National Qualifications Framework.

Subject	Awarding Body	Subject	Awarding Body	Subject	Awarding Body
biology and biology (human)	AQA	geography	WJEC	physics	CCEA
chemistry	AQA	German	CCEA	religious studies	Edexcel
critical thinking*	OCR	history	Edexcel	Spanish	Edexcel
economics	AQA	Irish	CCEA	Welsh	WJEC
English	OCR	Latin	OCR	Welsh Second Language	WJEC
French	OCR	mathematics	Edexcel		

*will be piloted in summer 2002