

GCE A level Biology / Chemistry / Physics

Practical Endorsement

Frequently Asked Questions

Part A: Assessing CPAC

Question 1 What is the practical endorsement?

Answer It is the direct assessment of the practical skills of a learner. It is a compulsory part of study for A level qualifications in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. It will be recorded on learners' certificates as a separately reported result, alongside the overall grade for the qualification. There is no practical endorsement in the AS qualifications.

Question 2 What is CPAC?

Answer CPAC - Common Practical Assessment Criteria. These are the competencies which a learner must **consistently** and **routinely** meet in order to be awarded a **Pass** for the practical endorsement.

Question 3 Where do I find CPAC?

Answer The CPAC statements can be found in section 3.2 of the A level specifications for Biology, Chemistry and Physics

Question 4 What is specified practical work?

Answer Specified practical work is practical work that must be undertaken by learners to ensure that they are suitably prepared for the written examinations.

The specified practical work **also** enables learners to demonstrate the skills and techniques that need to be directly assessed (see Appendix A of each A level specification) and give opportunity to meet the CPAC statements.

Question 5 How many specified practicals need to be carried out for the Practical Endorsement?

Answer A learner must carry out a **minimum** of 12 practical activities which meet the requirements of Appendix A part (c) for each specification. Please note that Appendix A parts (a) and (b) are common between the A level science specifications. However part (c) of the appendix is unique to each science.

Question 6 **Eduqas publishes a lab book for the specified practicals. Where can I find this book and must I use this book?**

Answer The lab books in pdf format can be found on the 'all course material' tab of each qualification. Short cuts to the laboratory books are given below:

[Biology](#)

[Chemistry](#)

[Physics](#)

You do **not** have to use the Eduqas lab book. However, learners must keep a record of their practical work. You are free to use your own practical activities. It is important that the substituted practical activities must meet the requirements of Appendix A parts (b) and (c) and clearly exemplify each of the skills and techniques listed in part (c).

You will need to map your practical activities to CPAC. You may find that you use different specified practical activities to assess CPAC compared to the Eduqas lab book. This is fine but make sure that sufficient opportunities have been mapped to allow a learner to **consistently** and **routinely** meet each competency.

Question 7 **Is there teacher/technician guidance for each of the specified practicals?**

Answer Yes. Again navigate to the 'all course material' tab of the relevant A level. Short cuts to the teacher/technician guidance are also given below:

[Biology](#)

[Chemistry](#)

[Physics](#)

Question 8 Where do I find recording documentation for CPAC?

Answer These are also available on the qualification webpage. Recording documentation is available for the teacher and learner. Shortcuts are given below.

Biology [Learner](#) [Teacher](#)

Chemistry [Learner](#) [Teacher](#)

Physics [Learner](#) [Teacher](#)

Question 9 Must I use Eduqas recording documentation for CPAC?

Answer No, but you must ensure that records are kept.

Your recording documentation must show:

- the practical work undertaken and the date each activity was completed;
- the competency assessed in each practical activity;
- the learners which met the competency (and those who did not).

Question 10 What other documentation must I keep?

You must also keep a record of learner attendance. In addition, you must keep learner work showing the evidence required for a particular task with the date and any associated materials provided for the practical activity (e.g. written instructions).

Question 11 Where can I find a map of the competencies against the specified practicals?

Answer A map of the specified practical work against the competencies that a centre may wish to access through a particular practical and the practical techniques involved in the work (Appendix A part (c)) can be found on the qualification webpage.

Short cuts to the mapped practical work are given below:

[Biology](#)

[Chemistry](#)

[Physics](#)

Question 12 Do I need to assess all the competencies when I complete a practical?

Answer No. You may need to be selective particularly when you are directly observing learner performance. Early on you may want to concentrate on no more than two competencies which depend on direct assessment of learner performance in the laboratory (e.g. CPAC 1 and 3). Since CPAC 5 relies on a learner's report, this could also be assessed.

Only a few opportunities have been mapped in the lab book for CPAC 2 in Biology and Chemistry. You will need to ensure that you use all of these opportunities where a practical is mapped against CPAC 2 in these subjects to give sufficient opportunity for learners to demonstrate this particular competency.

Question 13 How many times does each competency need to be assessed?

Answer You need to ensure that a learner **consistently** and **routinely** exhibits all five competencies in order to be awarded a **Pass** for the practical endorsement. This means that there should be multiple opportunities given to learners for them to demonstrate and achieve each competency.

Question 14 Where can I find help interpreting CPAC?

Answer Please navigate to the secure website for CPD material from the Autumn CPD events on the practical endorsement. Your attention is particularly drawn to the following documents 'The Standard' and 'CPAC Pen Portraits'.

Part B The Monitoring Visit

Question 15 What is the purpose of the monitoring visit?

Answer *The purpose of the visit is to ensure that centres are:*

- implementing the practical endorsement appropriately
- applying the assessment criteria (CPAC) correctly

*The monitoring process is **not** intended to:*

- moderate or adjust the results of individual learners

Question 16 Will all GCE A levels be monitored by a visit?

Answer All centres, unless deemed to be large, will be monitored once in each monitoring cycle, i.e. once every two years. The three sciences will be visited over three cycles of monitoring visits. If the centre is deemed to be large, then all three sciences will be visited in each cycle. A large centre is defined as one with more than 140 entries at A level for any of the sciences (biology, chemistry, or physics).

Question 17 How is a visit arranged?

Answer The awarding organisation responsible for the subject to be monitored will contact the centre and organize a visit. For example, if a centre offers AQA Physics, then AQA will be the awarding organization responsible for the visit. When the subject to be visited is with Eduqas then Eduqas will organize the visit. q

The monitor who is assigned to the centre will contact the lead teacher at the centre initially by email to arrange a date for the visit. The email will have details about the visit and the arrangements that need to be made by the centre.

If you are a new centre, or if you change awarding organisation of a specification to Eduqas from previous cycles, please let the Subject Officer for the subject at Eduqas know via email and we will ensure that records are updated to reflect the changes.

Question 18 Who will visit?

Answer The Eduqas monitor is employed and trained by Eduqas to undertake centre visits. In each case they are subject specialists for the A level they are monitoring. Occasionally the lead monitor may also attend a monitoring visit. This does not mean that we have concerns about the centre. The lead monitor will attend to ensure that the monitoring visit is carried out in keeping with the code of practice and to the standards agreed by inter-board agreement.

Question 19 What will happen in a visit?

Answer

Details about the visit will be included in the initial contact email. In summary, on the day of the visit the monitor is required to:

- meet the lead teacher for the endorsement of practical work for the subject being visited
- observe a lesson including a practical activity (which may or may not be one of the required practicals) during which learners are assessed against the competencies (this does not need to be the lead teacher's class)
- discuss the teacher's assessment of the learners in the class
- meet learners and discuss the practical work that learners have been doing
- view the work of learners from the lesson and other classes in the same subject
- view teachers' records of the assessment of practical work.

The following documentation must also be available for the monitor to view:

1. a record of each practical activity undertaken and the date when it was completed
2. a record of the competency being assessed in that practical activity
3. a record of learner attendance
4. a record of which learner met the competencies and which did not
5. learner work showing evidence required for the particular task with date
6. any associated materials provided for the practical activity e.g. written instructions given.

The monitor will always be from the awarding organization of the specification offered by the centre. The monitor should not request information for one of the A levels that is offered by a different board.

Further details will be included in the email sent to the centre by the monitor.

Question 20 When will we hear about the outcome of the monitoring visit?

Answer

The monitor will **not** give a report of the outcome of the visit on the day. The monitor will complete a report which will be sent to the centre within two weeks of the visit.

Question 21 What if we disagree with the monitor?

Answer Should there be a dispute about the outcome of the visit, please contact helen.francis@eduqas.co.uk. There is a set procedure that all awarding organisations have to adhere to.

Question 22 Where can I find further information about the practical endorsement?

Answer You can find information on the practical endorsement from our Autumn CPD events on the secure website. Firstly select the Resources PDF folder followed by the CPD materials folder.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Helen Francis – Domain leader (Maths and Science) - (helen.francis@eduqas.co.uk)