All students embarked upon the study of their GCSEs in Science subjects at the start of Year 9. They have 4 periods in each of Biology, Chemistry and Physics per fortnight. The courses are based upon the AQA Specifications, and final assessments will be by means of a series of terminal question papers which contain a variety of question styles. As part of the course, students will perform or observe a number of ‘required practicals’ (in addition to usual practical work); some examination questions will be related to these. There is no coursework component in any Science GCSEs.

The Science sets that students are in for their Year 10 will be the same as for Year 9 for the majority of the students. However, we are creating a smaller extra set which will be comprised of those students who have found particular difficulty keeping up with the work set during the lockdown period, as discussed and nominated by their three Year 9 teachers. As they are in a smaller set, they will be afforded the extra support they need to help them to catch up. All students will cover the same basic content during Year 10.

Assessment schedule

Towards the end of their Year 9, students would normally have sat internal ‘Finals’ examinations in each of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. These would have been in addition to the shorter Assessment Tests which took place during the year. As it was not possible for students to sit their examinations we are delaying making decisions about examination routes until the end of Year 10 when results of the Year 10 ‘Finals’, together with Year 10 Assessment Tests, are known. The Science programme followed by students in Year 11 will depend upon their overall performances in these assessments.

Separate Science route

Those students who performed well in the Year 10 assessments will follow a programme leading to the award of GCSE Biology, Chemistry and Physics. They will sit two 1 hour 45 minute papers in each Science subject, each paper being worth 100 marks and consisting of multiple choice, structured, closed short answer and open-response questions.

Combined Science route

Some students’ performances in Year 10 may indicate that it will be in their interests for them to be prepared for entry into GCSE Combined Science: Trilogy instead of the separate Sciences. This is a double award qualification; it is worth two GCSEs. Students will sit two 1 hour 15 minute papers in each Science subject, each paper being worth 70 marks and consisting of multiple choice, structured, closed short answer and open-response questions. It should be noted that this route also allows students to embark upon the study of A levels in Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

NB We will also have the flexibility to shift students who have embarked upon the separate Sciences to examination entry in GCSE Combined Science in January of Year 11, after the ‘mock’ examinations, if it becomes apparent that they would benefit from this.

Support materials

Students have access to bespoke electronic textbooks for their Science courses on www.kerboodle.com, together with other resources. Students have had the opportunity to purchase ‘hard’ copies of these textbooks at a discounted rate through the school; they are also available in the shops – look for Oxford separate GCSE Biology, Chemistry and Physics books, or the GCSE Combined Science: Trilogy books. Students can view and download the specification(s) and information about the courses from the website www.aqa.org.uk Specimen and past examination papers are also available on the AQA website.