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Edexcel

What to expect · Exam Board Factsheet

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Exam Board Factsheet

18 entries

Edexcel (Pearson) is used by many schools, including for Maths, Psychology and Economics. Here is how Edexcel assesses you and where the marks are won and lost.

About the board

Who Edexcel are

Edexcel is the exam board run by Pearson, the only large UK board owned by a commercial company rather than a charity. You will see both names on your papers, so Edexcel and Pearson mean the same thing.

Popular subjects

Schools choose Edexcel heavily for Maths, Psychology and Economics, and it is common for Sciences and English too. Always check the board on your timetable, because two students in the same building can sit different boards.

Linear, not modular

At GCSE and A Level everything is examined at the end of the course in one block of papers. There are no module exams banked along the way, so the whole specification can come up in the summer.

Find your exact spec

Each subject has a code, for example the A Level Maths spec is 9MA0. Type that code into the Pearson Qualifications site and you reach the real specification, past papers and mark schemes for free.

How the papers work

Maths is split across papers

A Level Maths is three two-hour papers, two on pure maths and one split between statistics and mechanics. There is no coursework, so every mark comes from those written papers and a calculator is allowed throughout.

Science core practicals

Edexcel Sciences name a fixed list of core practicals you must carry out, such as the required experiments in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Exam questions then test the method, variables and results from those exact practicals, so revise them by name.

Economics has four themes

A Level Economics covers Themes 1 to 4, with microeconomics in Themes 1 and 3 and macroeconomics in Themes 2 and 4. The final exams pull from across all four, so you cannot drop a theme once it is taught.

Psychology Paper 3 is synoptic

The third Psychology paper draws together material from the whole course, including issues and debates and a clinical application. It rewards students who can link topics rather than treat each one as a separate box.

Command words and style

The command word sets the job

Edexcel questions start with a word that tells you exactly what to do. State or give wants a quick fact, explain wants reasons, and discuss or evaluate wants both sides weighed up. Match your answer length to the word.

Calculate means show working

When a question says calculate, the method earns marks even if the final number is wrong. Write each step out in full, because a slip at the end still scores most of the marks if the working is there to see.

Marks signal depth	A two mark question wants two clear points, while a six or eight mark question wants a developed answer with linked reasoning. Glance at the mark total before writing so you give neither too little nor too much.
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Where students lose marks

The Economics 25 mark essay	These long essays need a clear argument, known as KAA, followed by genuine evaluation. Students who explain points well but never evaluate cap their marks low, because roughly half the marks sit in the evaluation and judgement.
Evaluation that just lists	Writing however or on the other hand is not evaluation on its own. Edexcel wants you to weigh the points, say which matters most and why, and reach a supported conclusion rather than leaving both sides hanging.
Vague practical answers	In Science, answers like measure the temperature lose marks. You need the named equipment, the controlled variables and the precise method from the core practical. Specific detail is what separates a top answer from an average one.
Dropped units and rounding	In Maths and Science a correct number with no unit, or rounded too early, throws away marks that were already earned. Carry full figures through your working and add the unit every single time.

Nile tips

Drill past papers by board	Only practise on Edexcel past papers, never another board, because the style and command words differ. Mark your own work against the Edexcel mark scheme so you learn the exact phrasing the examiner rewards.
Learn the mark scheme language	Read several mark schemes for the same topic and notice the words that keep earning marks. Build those into your answers so you are writing in the language Edexcel pays out for.
Practise timing under pressure	Work out how many minutes each mark is worth and rehearse to that pace. Many students lose marks at the end simply because they ran out of time on the long questions, not because they did not know the content.