

A HELPFUL GUIDE TO SIXTH FORM STUDENTS – Year 13

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1. What does a GCE examination mean?

- Advanced level exams are known as GCE (General Certification of Education) subjects and are now examined in 2 parts and in units or modules.
- Advanced Subsidiary (AS) unit exams are generally taken in Year 12 and then the remaining A2 unit exams are completed in Year 13 with a final certificate being obtained.

2. What are unit/modular examinations?

- Modular AS/A2 level examinations involve the written examinations on sections of the syllabus being taken at intervals throughout the course rather than all at the end.
- Units or Modules contribute towards a full qualification either at AS or A2 level.
- The number of units that need to be completed are subject dependent and vary from one to three at AS level, and two to six for a full A2 qualification.

Units applicable to subjects under the old Curriculum 2000 "legacy" syllabus for Year 13.

Exam Board	Subject	Units - Curriculum 2000 for A2 Qualification
Edexcel	Arabic	2 units
Edexcel	Art	4 units
Edexcel	Biology	6 units
AQA	Business Studies	6 units
Edexcel	Chemistry	6 units
Edexcel	Design & Technology Graphic & Resistant Mat.	4 units
Edexcel	Drama & Theatre	6 units
AQA	Economics	6 units
AQA	English Literature B	6 units
Edexcel	French/German	6 units
CIE	Geography – CIE have made no changes to syllabus	2 units(2 papers in 2 nd unit)
Edexcel	History	6 units
AQA	Information and Communication Technology	6 units
Edexcel	Maths & Further Maths	6 units
AQA	Media Studies	6 units
Edexcel	Music	6 units
Edexcel	Physical Education (we only do AS level at St Chris)	6 units
Edexcel	Physics	6 units
AQA	Psychology A	6 units

3. What is certification?

- Unit marks are "banked" or stored with Examination Boards until certification [cashing in] is requested by the School, normally in Year 13.
- All the completed units will then count towards the final AS or A Level grade.
- Students may drop a subject at AS level but must remember to certify or cash-in in order to obtain a certificate. Certification is NOT done automatically; you need to request this through your subject departmental head or the Examinations Officer. This will ensure that you receive a certificate at the end of Year 13 and it will also avoid penalty fees for late cash-ins. AS certification may be requested for the January or June sessions.
- Most unit sessions are in November, January and June according to the Exam Board used. At St Christopher's we currently utilise AQA, CIE and Edexcel for all of our examinations.

4. What are raw marks and ums marks?

- Exam papers are assessed out of so many marks as shown on the exam paper.
- Marks vary from subject to subject and from paper to paper which caused a problem when modular exams were first introduced. These marks are called "raw marks". Exam Boards implemented a system where "raw marks" are converted to what is called a uniform mark scheme (UMS). The common unified scale ensures that whilst, for example, the question paper for Economics unit 2 will be different each time, the value of the paper will be consistent from year to year.

Each module is out of x amount of UMS points. A scale relates the UMS score to a grade. The scale follows a standard pattern:

	GCE Max 90 UMS	GCE Max 100 UMS	GCE Max 120 UMS	GCE Max 150 UMS	GCE Max 180 UMS	GCE Max 300 UMS
A = 80% of UMS Total	72	80	96	120	144	240
B = 70% of UMS Total	63	70	84	105	126	210
C = 60% of UMS Total	54	60	72	90	108	180
D = 50% of UMS Total	45	50	60	75	90	150
E = 40% of UMS Total	36	40	48	60	72	120

From your results slip, you can see not only if you did better in some units and not so well in others, but also how close you were to an overall grade boundary.

TIP: Remember that units may not carry equal weight: a unified mark of 80 may be excellent if out of 90, but less so if out of 120.

- Totalled UMS are then converted to grades.

The following maximum uniform marks were agreed for each qualification i.e.

Qualification	Maximum uniform marks
Advanced Subsidiary GCE (3 unit AS Level)	300
Advanced Subsidiary GCE (2 unit AS Level)	200
Advanced Subsidiary GCE (1 unit AS Level)	100
Advanced GCE (6 unit A2 Level)	600
Advanced GCE (4 unit A2 Level)	400
Advanced GCE (2 unit A2 Level)	200

The uniform mark obtained for each unit of a specification is shown on the results slip, and when added up, you obtain a total number of uniform marks for that specification which determines the grade for that subject, as follows:

For AS & A2 specifications for A Levels with 4 & 6 units:

	AS Uniform marks 2 units	A Level Uniform marks 4 units	AS Uniform marks 3 units	A Level Uniform marks 6 units
Grade A*	n/a	* See info below	n/a	* See info below
Grade A	160-200	320-400	240-300	480-600
Grade B	140-159	280-319	210-239	420-479
Grade C	120-139	240-279	180-209	360-419
Grade D	100-119	200-239	150-179	300-359
Grade E	80-99	160-199	120-149	240-299

e.g. Biology AS = 3 units totalling 300 ums & Biology A2 = 3 units totalling 300 ums = total 6 units for A Level of 600 ums. If a total of 485/600 is achieved the grade = A

*** IMPORTANT:** A new A* Grade has been implemented into the GCE system, but it will only apply to the new GCE 2008 specification **and will only be awarded at A2 level** (i.e. you can NOT achieve an A* at AS Level or on individual units)

For all subjects except mathematics and further mathematics, the new A* grade will be awarded to students who achieve a grade A overall at A level and also achieve 90% or more on the UMS across their A2 units (this includes pure mathematics).

E.g. Business Studies which is a 4 unit subject = 2 units at AS level & 2 units at A2 level. To obtain an A* you will need:

Unit 1 + unit 2 + unit 3 + unit 4 = 320 ums (i.e. an A grade across all four units) **AND**

Unit 3 + Unit 4 = 180 ums (i.e. 90% of 200)

The A* grade will be awarded in A level mathematics qualifications as follows:

For mathematics, the A* grade will be awarded to students achieving a grade A overall at A level and 90% of the maximum uniform marks on the aggregate of the two A2 pure mathematics units C3 and C4.

For further mathematics, the A* grade will be awarded to students achieving a grade A overall at A level and 90% of the maximum uniform marks on the aggregate of the three best A2 units.

5. I haven't done as well as I expected, what can I do now?

- First of all talk to your subject teacher as he/she is the person who best knows what grade you are capable of achieving.
- If you think there might be something wrong with the actual result obtained the school can apply for Post Result Services e.g. a re-mark of your examination script. The original mark can be confirmed, raised or lowered as a result of a re-mark.
- Another way of dealing with this problem is to consider re-sitting one or more units and this can be done in January (if the units are offered in this session) or alternatively during the summer session. Students must be aware that this is an individual decision and should seek advice from their subject teachers or heads of departments.

5a. A few things to consider before re-sitting:

- Keep a track of how close you are to your required qualification grade. See how many UMS points you need for the next grade up. Is this higher grade within reach?
- Remember not all units carry the same percentage value towards the final subject grade – lower percentage units have less impact on the final grade than higher percentage units, so first check to see how well you have achieved on units carrying more weight.
- Students must now record on UCAS forms how many re-sits they have taken. This information is also available online to Universities.
- Remember that you will more than likely be sitting some A2 units during the same session as re-sits. This puts a huge amount of additional pressure on you when trying to prepare for exams, especially in the summer session.
- If you re-sit a module your best result is used to calculate your grade – Your grade won't go down.

6. Declining Grades

You no longer need to decline AS or A2 grades, you simply re-sit units and cash-in or certificate the subject again in an attempt to improve your overall grade.

Universities would, for obvious reasons, prefer to accept an application from a candidate that has managed to achieve high marks with the first sitting of each modular examination. It is therefore extremely important that students prepare well, especially for the "easier" AS units and achieve the highest possible UMS scores the first time round. Keep in mind that achieving a very high UMS mark in the grade to which you are working towards will also ease a little pressure when sitting A2 units later. To have a high "A" UMS mark is far safer than having a borderline "A" UMS mark.

7. Key Dates 2008/2009

GCE examinations	For entry and certification in JANUARY 2009	For entry and certification in JUNE 2009
Final date for entries	21 October 2008	21 March 2009
Date of first examination on common timetable	8 January 2009	11 May 2009
Date of final examination on common timetable	30 January 2009	23 June 2009
Publication of Results	5 March 2009	20 August 2009
Final date to apply for late cash-in	14 April 2009	20 September 2009
Final date to apply for photocopies of examination scripts	20 March 2009	28 August 2009
Final date for Priority Service 2 enquiries	N/A	28 August 2009
Final date to apply for return of original examination scripts	28 April 2009	4 October 2009
Issue of certificates	by 31 May 2009	by 31 October 2009

RESULTS:

You have been issued with a letter giving you all the information pertaining to Results Day. This information is also published on the St Christopher's website under the "Examinations" section.

LEAVERS:

When you leave St Christopher's School after either Year 12 or Year 13 please make sure you supply the Examinations Office with a forwarding address should you not be in a position to collect your certificates. Certificates are only issued once and centres are only required to keep these for a period of one year before destroying them. The Examinations Office will courier these to you should you supply the relevant address details and pay the courier fee. These fees are currently BD7.500 to the USA & Canada and BD6.000 to all other countries.

If you have any further questions please see Mrs Kruger in the Examinations Office or call 17788107.