GCSE

WJEC GCSE COMPUTER SCIENCE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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General Specification Questions

Q: How does this specification align with the Curriculum for Wales principles and strands?
A: This specification has been designed to align with the Curriculum for Wales framework. It supports the statements of what matters, principles of progression, and specific considerations for Computer Science. It provides opportunities to embed cross-curricular themes, skills, and learning experiences outlined in the Curriculum. For detailed mapping, refer to Appendix A.

The specification aligns with the Curriculum for Wales by providing opportunities to develop and test models, consider the impacts of systems and technology, and foster problem-solving skills through computational thinking.

The ways teachers can integrate learning experiences are included within the specification. Suggestions include using various methods such as unplugged activities, real-world examples, design thinking, collaboration, and career awareness. Unplugged activities are also suggested to help explore concepts without computers, real-world examples demonstrate programming applications, and design thinking encourages creative problem-solving.

Numeracy skills, including arithmetic and statistics, are developed through data manipulation and representation. Literacy skills are essential for documentation and communication, while digital competencies are built through programming.

Q: How is the course structured in terms of assessment?
A: It is a unitised qualification with two units assessed through examinations. Unit 1 is a digital examination (50%) on understanding computer science concepts. Unit 2 is an on-screen examination (50%) based on a pre-released programming scenario.

Q: What are, and how are the assessment objectives weighted?
A: AO1 (30%) - Knowledge and understanding.
AO2 (40%) - Apply knowledge and understanding.
AO3 (30%) - Analyse problems and develop solutions.

Q: Can students resit units if they wish to improve their grade?
A: Yes, this is a unitised qualification where students can re-sit Unit 1 once if they wish to improve their score for that unit's uniform mark. However, for Unit 2 they would need to re-enter all units for a 'fresh start'.

Q: When will the examinations for each unit be available?
A: Unit 1 examinations will be available annually starting summer 2026. Unit 2 examinations will be available annually starting summer 2027, which is when the full GCSE qualification will first be awarded.

Q: What is the grading scale and awarding process?
A: It uses the traditional 8-point A*-G scale. Awarding follows WJEC's standard processes aligning with regulatory requirements.

Q: What is the recommended guided learning time for this course?
A: The specification recommends 120-140 guided learning hours, primarily designed as a 2-year program for learners in Years 10 and 11.

Q: What resources/equipment are needed for teaching and assessments?
A: There are no specific computer hardware requirements, software required is the Python 3 IDE with IDLE and TKINTER (the specific version of Python 3 will be indicated on the Unit 2 pre-release each year), internet access will be helpful for activities within teaching.

Q: How will the pre-release material for Unit 2 be provided?
A: The pre-release brief containing the scenario information will be made available to centres via the WJEC Portal in September of the first year of study (Year 10). Centres can decide when to distribute it to students during Year 10.

Q: What kinds of professional development or training will be available for teachers?
A: The WJEC offers professional development opportunities, guidance documents, and resources to support the delivery of new qualifications, please view the WJEC course webpage for details of upcoming events and resources available.

Unit 1

Q: What are the key content areas covered in Unit 1?
A: Key areas include computer architecture, data representation, networks, security, algorithms, programming, software development, logical operations, operating systems, and systems lifecycle.

Unit 2

Q: What programming concepts and skills are developed?
A: Programming skills with Python cover areas like data structures, control structures, file handling, user interfaces, authentication, code documentation, and testing strategies.

Q: What programming environments can be used for teaching?
A: Any Python 3 IDE can be used for teaching, but the Python IDLE and TKINTER library version specified must be used for the Unit 2 assessment.

Q: Are students allowed to take notes into the Unit 2 examination?
A: No, students are not permitted to take any notes or prompts into the Unit 2 examination. They will be provided a fresh copy of the pre-release material in the exam.

Q: How much programming experience do students need before taking this course?
A: There is no specific requirement for prior programming experience. The course builds on the conceptual understanding developed through learning from ages 3-14 and provides a solid foundation for further study or future careers.