Advanced Higher Biology (Revised)

Frequently Asked Questions

What changes have been made to the Unit structure of the Advanced Higher Biology Course?

The Advanced Higher Biology Course is now composed of three mandatory Units. There are no longer any optional Units. Two of the Units, although still focusing largely on cellular and whole organism biology are now more closely related to each other providing the potential for integration of learning across the Units. *Investigative Biology* is now an entire Unit. The investigation remains as a key component of this Unit along with developing a theoretical understanding of scientific investigation that should support candidates to be more successful in carrying out their own investigation. In addition the other two Units include a consideration of laboratory and fieldwork techniques that should also support candidates to develop ideas for their investigation.

What changes have been made to the content of the Advanced Higher Biology Course?

The Advanced Higher Biology course has been updated to reflect modern developments in Biology and to articulate it with the Revised Higher Courses in Biology and Human Biology. The Advanced Higher Unit *Cells and Proteins* explores the key roles of proteins in the structure and functioning of cells and in the physiology of whole organisms. This approach to the proteome builds on the understanding of DNA and genomics established in both Higher Courses. The Advanced Higher Unit *Organisms and Evolution* focuses on the importance of sexual reproduction and parasitism as drivers of evolution. By studying parasitism and sexual reproduction candidates will build on their understanding of genomics, inheritance, parasitism and disease developed in the Revised Higher Courses.

Does one Higher Course provide a better preparation for Advanced Higher than the other?

No. The revised Higher Courses, although based in different content and contexts, are designed to have a degree of equivalence for the purposes of progression. In addition the Advanced Higher Course takes steps to ensure that any underpinning knowledge required that is in one course and not the other is built into the Advanced Higher Course. Also research into exam performance in existing courses has shown that candidates with equivalent grades in the two Highers achieved similar levels of attainment at Advanced Higher.

What is the place of practical work in the Advanced Higher Biology Course?

Practical work in Advanced Higher Biology now has a much stronger emphasis. The inclusion of laboratory and fieldwork techniques in the Course Units should give candidates a greater degree of expertise to draw on when developing their own investigation. Also the theoretical understanding of scientific investigation developed in the investigative Unit should support candidates in having an improved understanding of experimental design. The experience of evaluating the experimental work of others should also lead to improvements in the quality of candidates' own investigative work.

What changes will there be to Course Assessment?

The Course Award will continue to be made on the marks achieved in the examination question paper of 2.5 hours (approximately 80% of the marks) and investigation report (approximately 20% of the marks). The question paper will no longer have a section C as optional Units are no longer part of the course structure. The opportunity has also been taken to reduce the overall number of marks from 100 to 90 marks recognising the reading and thinking time the question paper demands. Section A (multiple choice) remains at 25 marks and section B is now 65 marks. Both sections will sample from the entire course and follow a similar pattern to the structure of the present question paper. The investigation report will be assessed in a similar manner as before although there are some changes to the mark scheme to make some marks more accessible to candidates and to give more credit for the carrying out of the investigation.

What changes will there be to Unit Assessment?

The Units *Cells and Proteins* and *Organisms and Evolution* will be assessed in the same way as present with a test (NAB) and a report of an experimental activity (LO3). To gain a course award only one report from these two Units is required as at present. For the Unit *Investigative Biology* there will be a test (NAB) based on the theoretical part of the Unit and a checklist of observation evidence based on the carrying out of an investigation. The test will include structured test items based on information and data from scientific reports. Candidates will not be required to provide a written record (daybook) for the assessment of carrying out the investigation although they may wish to maintain such a record on which to base the investigation report for Course assessment. The evidence for the Unit assessment of the investigation will be a checklist based on teacher observation that the candidate has: used an appropriate experimental design; considered ethical considerations and potential hazards; used their initial results to develop or confirm procedures and considered collecting data with precision and accuracy. Further information on this can be found in the Unit specification.

Will there be NABS and a specimen exam paper?

Yes. These qualifications are being produced under existing design rules and so NABS for unit assessment will be produced. A specimen exam paper is being prepared and will be published in 2012.

Where does Revised Advanced Higher fit in with Curriculum for Excellence?

In revising Advanced Higher Biology cognisance has been taken of the principles and practice of Curriculum for Excellence. The Revised Advanced Higher will run in parallel with the existing qualification until the introduction of the Advanced Higher phase of CfE in session 2015/16. It is not anticipated that the content of the Advanced Higher will alter significantly other than the normal adjustments to any new qualification in the light of operational experience. When the equivalent CfE Advanced Higher is introduced the pattern of assessment may alter to come in line with CfE approaches to assessment across the curriculum. This is why only limited changes have been made to the present pattern of assessment.