

## A Level Science Practical Skills Endorsement

### What do you need to know?

- All examination centres accepting entries for A Level Biology, Chemistry or Physics have to give candidates the opportunity to do the practical skills endorsement.
- It will not contribute to the A Level grade. The endorsement is reported separately.
- Candidates need to achieve an E grade, or better, or the subject will not be awarded a pass for the endorsement i.e. Grade U + Pass (practical skills endorsement) cannot be awarded. But you can still pass the A-Level even if you don't pass the endorsement.
- A minimum of 12 practicals are required.
- No marks will be assigned - it will be assessed holistically and reported as Pass or Not Classified.
- It will be assessed on a 'competency' basis using agreed Common Practical Assessment Criteria (CPAC). Candidates must consistently and routinely meet all of the criteria to be awarded a Pass at the end of the course.
- Candidates who do not pass the practical assessment will have a 'Not Classified' outcome included on their certificate unless they were exempt from the assessment because of a disability.
- Candidates that pass the endorsement but do not achieve the grade they desire for the A level can carry the endorsement over when resitting the written exams in the following exam session - even if it was awarded by a different awarding organisation. This means they won't have to complete the endorsement a second time after having already passed.
- If a candidate has two or more previous non-examination assessment marks, the most recent non-absent mark will be used, even if this is a lower mark. If a candidate re-takes, rather than carries forward, a non-examination assessment the new mark will be used even if this is a lower mark.

### Do I need to do it?

Although NEC would always advise you to complete the endorsement, it isn't essential to complete it in order to get your A Level, but will help you with your written exams. However, failing to pass the endorsement could affect your entry to university (if applicable). It is essential that you speak with them in good time to find out what they require.

Aside from the endorsement, the exams have no practical element. However, throughout the exam you will be expected to use your understanding of practical theory to answer questions. You will have gained this knowledge through the core practicals within your NEC course and the practical endorsement if you choose to do this.

If you decide not to do the endorsement and enter through one of our partnership centres you will need to sign a statement to say that you have been given the opportunity to complete the endorsement but have decided against it.

### **Can I do the endorsement through one of the NEC partnership exam centres?**

Yes! Our centres in Birmingham, Brighouse (West Yorkshire), London and Oxford can accept entries for all three sciences.

Our centres in Birmingham and London also include a **lab familiarisation day** in their offer. These sessions have been invaluable for many and give students a good head start for the official endorsement sessions. The emphasis will be on safety, equipment, mocks and expectations. The tutors will be able to advise on the best approach to collecting, analysing and presenting the data. A fantastic opportunity for those that have little or no prior lab experience and a good warm up for those that do.

### **What do I need to do to enter at Birmingham, Brighouse, London or Oxford?**

The application form and guidance is available to download on learn@nec. All you need to do is complete this application form before the advertised deadline and we will arrange the rest.

**Please note that our Birmingham centre is only available for the endorsement and you will have to pick another one of our centres for your written exams.**

### **How much will it cost?**

This depends on where you want to go. Further information can be found within the additional guidance provided online.

### **When are the sessions?**

#### **Birmingham**

Each science subject will require 4 sessions which cover the lab familiarisation and 12 practicals. These can be completed in October/November, or March/April. The 4 sessions will be held in the same week and outside of school holidays. Alternatively, bespoke packages are available upon request for an additional fee.

#### **Brighouse**

Each science subject will require 3 sessions of 4 practicals (12 in total) which are usually held in March and April. The days will be set and further information will be given to candidates in good time.

## London

The practicals will be held in Mitcham (CR4 1BP) and the written exams in Wimbledon. Each science subject will require 4 sessions which cover the lab familiarisation and 12 practicals. These will be held in February half term and both weeks of the Easter holidays. The days will be set and further information will be given to candidates in good time.

## Oxford

Sessions will be held from January - April each year. The days will be set and further information will be given to candidates in good time. Each practical will be held on different dates (12 in total).

### **If I go to one of these centres for the endorsement, do I have to sit my written exams there too?**

Although it is cheaper to complete everything at the same partnership centre, we are able to offer candidates the option of completing their endorsement at one of the named centres above and then sitting their written exams at another one of our partnership centres that may be closer to home. Just make this clear on your application form and we will arrange the rest.

### **Can I enter at a private centre?**

Yes, although centres that offer A Level Biology, Chemistry or Physics exams to private candidates are also required to make the practical skills endorsement available and the head of centre will need to sign a statement to say that they have done this. This will limit the amount of centres willing to accept private candidates as they may not have the resources. Remember to get confirmation that you can do the endorsement along with the exams and also ask for the **full** fees.

Private centres may also be holding endorsement sessions that cover a different awarding body specification. This isn't a huge issue as all specs have to cover the same criteria, but you will be completing practicals that may not be covered within the NEC Edexcel Spec A materials. Find out what practicals they do and make sure you are prepared.

### **Where can I sit my written exams if I don't want to do the endorsement?**

You can sit your written exams at **any** of our partnership exam centres. Alternatively you can go through a private centre as long as they have given you the opportunity to complete the endorsement.