



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.
- 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.
- You can't "add on" the endorsement to the A level at a later date. If you want to sit the exams and endorsement over two years, complete the practicals in the first year and then enter for exams in the following year. It is important to let your exam centre know that you have done this.

- 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 before making your exam entry.

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 NEC OFFER ME A PLACE TO COMPLETE THE ENDORSEMENT?

Yes! Our centres in Birmingham, Bolton, Coventry, Liverpool, Newcastle, Norwood School (London), Oxford, Sutton, Taunton and Wembley (London), can accommodate the practical endorsement.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO ALSO ENTER FOR MY WRITTEN EXAMS?

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

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

This depends on where you want to go - 25/26 prices range from £895.50 to £1,170.

WHEN ARE THE SESSIONS?

Birmingham

Each course will be delivered over five days, Monday to Friday (09:00 -16:00), the final day is usually reserved for writing up a full and contemporaneous record of all practical work completed; a requirement of the Practical Endorsement Pass outcome. The exception to this is Chemistry where the final practical is delivered on the morning of Day 5 with the write up completed thereafter. Sessions are held from January - end of April each year.

Bolton, Coventry, Newcastle, Norwood (London), Sutton and Taunton

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.

Liverpool and Wembley (London)

BioGrad Education laboratories include world-class research facilities run by experienced scientists. The programme is designed for students who want to develop real laboratory skills, particularly those that wish to improve their handling of specific apparatus and techniques listed in the examination board specifications.

Each five-day course will enable students to experience a minimum of 12 practical activities, providing numerous opportunities for them to meet the Common Practical Assessment Criteria (CPAC) routinely and consistently. The courses are designed not only for the assessment of these criteria, but also to make sure that students enjoy their practical work. The scientists will always work hard to engage students by talking about their current cutting-edge research, as it's exciting to learn new things and to be able to apply them to a number of different contexts. Sessions run during February to the end of April each year.

Oxford

Sessions will be held from January - mid 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), or in 6 with their intensive package.

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 an 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.

GET IN TOUCH

From the moment you enrol to when you receive your results, we're here to support you.

info@nec.ac.uk

0800 389 2839

www.nec.ac.uk



© THE OPEN SCHOOL TRUST, 2026

WWW.NEC.AC.UK

01223 400 200