



Woodhouse Grove School

Private Candidate Extra Information: GCE A level Sciences: Biology, Chemistry, Physics

A levels in Biology, Chemistry and Physics are open to private candidates but it is not an easy or cheap option. As science is a practical subject, Ofqual agreed with all the exam boards that every student taking an A-level in one of the three sciences must have carried out at least 12 required practical activities. Most of these activities require specialised equipment (such as potometers, burettes and oscilloscopes), so are not suitable for undertaking outside a laboratory.

These practicals must also be assessed. This ensures students have covered a specified range of apparatus and techniques. The assessment criteria cover aspects such as applying investigative approaches and working safely with a range of equipment. Any student who has not completed an endorsement (or fails to meet the criteria) is likely to have 'not classified' (NC) grade recorded on their certificate. AQA reports that most universities require a 'pass' in the endorsement as part of their entry requirements for science related courses.

Within the written question papers, a minimum of 15% of marks will be on practical work and the necessary skills within them. Any candidate who has not carried out these required practicals will therefore be at a disadvantage.

Any private candidate who wishes to study for GCE A-level Biology, Chemistry or Physics has to find a school or college who are willing to provide the opportunity to carry out the required practicals and to assess them against the endorsement criteria.

There are 12 practicals for each A level each lasting about 2 -3 hours. It demands significant laboratory space and teacher time.

Resitting A level Sciences

If you are resitting an A level Science subject, and have already achieved a Pass grade on the Practical Endorsement, please indicate this on your online application form and the grade can be carried forward without the need to repeat the Practical Endorsement. Please ensure the UCI number you give on your application form matches the UCI number you used when you originally sat your A level(s).

Sitting A level Sciences for the first time

Woodhouse Grove has an established relationship with BioGrad. With the support of the awarding bodies, BioGrad is able to offer residential practical courses for A-Level science students to enable them to complete the science practical endorsements. So, the practical requirement can be completed at BioGrad labs and the written papers at Woodhouse Grove School. For more information including how to book etc, please follow the link below:

<https://www.biograd.co.uk/a-level-assessed-practical-courses-exams.php>

Please ensure you book a course that is due to finish before 5th April 2027.

Declining the Science Practical Endorsement

It is difficult for centres to accept entries from candidates without offering the science practical endorsement, but it is possible for candidates to decline the opportunity to complete this assessment. This usually involves receiving a confirmation email from your university/college choices stating that the endorsement is not part of their entry requirements for a particular course. The candidate is also required to sign a 'declaration to decline', which may be presented to the exam board.

It is a good idea to contact the universities you are interested in and describe your circumstances see if they require the practical endorsement as an entry requirement for your chosen course.

If you would like any further information, please contact us.

Email: exams@woodhousegrove.co.uk