



WJEC Examined Assessments

Understanding assessment
instructions (rubric)

To support our schools and colleges, our team of Subject and Assessment specialists have developed the following guidance on examination instructions.

This guide outlines why candidates should follow these instructions, and the steps taken by our examination teams when a candidate fails to do so. Please read the document carefully and discuss the importance of following these instructions with your candidates.

To further support you, a student-friendly version is available [from our Student Support webpage](#).

What is a rubric?

A rubric is an instruction for an individual item and/or whole section of an exam assessment or NEA.

For example, at the beginning of an exam or at the start of a new section, we may include a rubric like the ones below:

Answer all questions in the spaces provided below.

Answer either question 1 or question 2 and then answer question 3.

We sometimes also provide instructions linked to individual questions like the ones below:

Tick three statements below which best describe.....

Match the statement in column A to its definition in column B.

Why is it important to follow the rubric?

The rubric helps candidates navigate the assessment. It is very important to read and follow the instructions so that time is not wasted doing the wrong thing and marks are not lost by doing something that will not be credited via the marking criteria.

What happens when the rubric isn't followed?

WJEC examiners are trained on how to respond to different types of rubric infringements. This is to ensure that we neither advantage or disadvantage the candidate and allows us to apply the marking criteria fairly across all candidates' assessments.

Rubric Principles

Below we have described our approach to marking when a candidate does something different to the instruction given.

1. Answering more than one optional question

Example rubric - Answer either question 1 or question 2.

Sometimes candidates misread the rubric and answer both question 1 and question 2. In this situation we would mark both responses and award the higher of the two marks.

2. Selecting more than the required number of responses a paper-based multiple-choice question

Example rubric - Tick the three correct statements from the list provided below.

Sometimes candidates tick more than three statements in the list. When this happens on paper based assessments we mark the correct responses as per the mark scheme but remove a mark for every additional response offered. In this example candidates can score a maximum of three marks and a minimum of zero as we would not deduct further than zero for multiple wrong answers.

Example: Tick the three correct statements from the list provided below.

Choice	Tick the correct choice
Correct response	✓
Incorrect response	
Correct response	✓
Incorrect response	
Incorrect response	✓
Incorrect response	
Incorrect response	
Correct response	✓
Incorrect response	

This candidate has ticked four boxes instead of three.

Therefore, the candidate is awarded 2 marks (1 for each correct response minus 1 mark for the additional response).

3. Providing more than the required number of responses in a free text response

Example rubric - Give three reasons why.....

Sometimes candidates provide four or more reasons.

We take a different approach to this depending on the nature of the question and the indicative content.

When there is a small finite number of possible responses, we would mark all responses offered as per the mark scheme and then deduct a mark for every response over the number required.

For example, a candidate is asked to identify three prime numbers in the range of 1-10. Possible correct answers include 2, 3, 5 and 7. Wrong answers within the given range include 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10. This is a relatively small defined range.

: the candidate has provided four responses, three of which are correct (2, 3, 4, 5). They are awarded two marks, one mark for each correct response minus one mark for offering a fourth response ($3-1=2$).

2: the candidate has provided four responses all of which are wrong. In this case we do not deduct a mark for the additional incorrect response as a candidate can never score less than zero for a question.

4. Answering with the wrong symbol

Example rubric - Tick three correct statements.

Sometimes candidates put a different symbol instead of ticks. We do not penalise candidates for this if they use the different symbol consistently. If they use a mixture of ticks and also add a different symbol(s), we will only mark the ticks as correct, as we cannot be sure of the candidate's intention in adding something different.

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Example: Tick the four correct statements from the list provided below.

Choice	Tick the correct choice
Correct response	✓
Incorrect response	
Correct response	✓
Incorrect response	
Incorrect response	
Correct response	✗
Incorrect response	
Correct response	✓
Incorrect response	

In this example the candidate has selected the four correct responses but put a cross against one of the responses instead of a tick. Therefore, we cannot be sure of the candidate's intention in crossing this out. The candidate will score 3 marks.

5. Crossing out a correct response

Example - a candidate has written a correct response and then crossed it out.

We do not mark responses which have been crossed out even if no alternative answer is offered. The only time we would mark something which has been crossed out is if the candidate clearly states in their answer book that they did not intend to cross it out.

Example - Name the two British Prime Ministers who led the government of the United Kingdom during World War II. (2 marks)

Winston Churchill ~~and Neville Chamberlain.~~

The candidate identified the two correct answers but crossed one of them out. Therefore, they score only one mark, even though they have not offered an alternative answer.

6. Incorrect labelling

Example - the candidate has answered question 5 but called it question 6 or a candidate refers to table 1 instead of table 2.

As long as it is clear that they have mislabelled the response rather than offered an incorrect response, we will mark according to the mark scheme and not penalise candidates for mislabelling. If they repeat the same points under both questions, we will only credit each correct response once.

7. Writing answers in the wrong place on a constrained paper

Example - the candidate has not answered on the lines provided for the question.

The approach we take will depend on the requirements of the question.

In many cases it is clear which question is being answered, and therefore we would not penalise the candidate for putting their answer in the wrong place, although it can be self-penalising when a candidate answers in the wrong place, as they may then write more or less than expected.

However, if the question requires a candidate to add something to a specific box, graph or diagram and they answer elsewhere, they will not be credited.