GCSE

WJEC GCSE
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Overview of Qualification Changes

Structural Changes Between Current & New Specifications

Q: What are the main structural differences between the previous (2021–2023) and new (2026–2028) specifications?

A: The previous specification was linear, with all assessments taken at the end of the course, and NEA durations of 45 hours (Unit 2) and 15 hours (Unit 3).

The new specification is unitised, with first submissions for Units 2 and 3 in 2027 and Unit 1 first examined in 2028. You must complete one of the 40% units (unit 1 or 2) of the qualification in the final assessment year.

NEA durations have been significantly reduced to 20 hours (Unit 2) and 10 hours (Unit 3) to improve manageability.

Q: Has the overall guided learning time changed?

A: No. Both the current and updated specifications indicate 120–140 GLH over two years. The new specification redistributes teaching time more proportionally: Unit 1 (52 GLH), Unit 2 (52 GLH), Unit 3 (26 GLH).

Key Differences Summary Table

Area	Current Spec (2021–2023)	New Spec (2026–2028)
Structure	Linear	Unitised
NEA Hours	45h + 15h	20h + 10h
Software	Adobe / GameMaker required	Centre-chosen, guided by skills matrices
Content	Less AI, more historical content	Expanded AI, emerging tech; removed historical content
Stems	“Should be aware of”	“Should know / understand”
Manageability	Concerns raised	Streamlined content and evidence

Content Expectations

New or Emphasised Content Areas

For this refer to the specification on the subject home page under the Key Documents tab

Q: What new content has been added?

A: More explicit coverage of: AI models, machine learning, cybersecurity threats, digital footprints, emerging technologies (IoT, blockchain, quantum computing), digital marketing practices, and strengthened data analytics content.

Q: Why does the new specification place a stronger emphasis on AI?

A: AI has become central to digital practice, and this allows for the qualification to be more relevant in the future.

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Q: Are historical figures still included?
A: No. Content relating to computing pioneers was removed to improve manageability and focus on contemporary developments.

Q: Is there more clarity on depth of teaching?
A: Yes. The stem *"Learners should be aware of"* has been removed and replaced with more precise stems: "Learners should know" and "Learners should understand", to prevent over-teaching and improve reliability.

Assessment Structure and Time Allocation

Exam and NEA Arrangements

Q: What is the time allocation for each assessment unit?
A:
- Unit 1: 1 hr 30 min digital exam (40%)
- Unit 2: 20 hours NEA (40%)
- Unit 3: 10 hours NEA (20%)

NOTE: Research time does *not* count toward NEA hours

Q: Why were NEA hours reduced from 45/15 to 20/10?
A: Teacher consultations highlighted that the previous NEAs created significant workload, administrative burden (e.g., logs, screenshot evidence) and manageability challenges. The reduction supports realistic classroom delivery while maintaining validity and skill coverage.

Q: Are NEA requirements less administrative than before?
A: Yes. Evidence requirements were streamlined; certain 'documentation-heavy' requirements were removed (e.g., development logs). Only essential evidence is required for assessment.

Software and Resources

Software Flexibility

Q: Do centres still have to use Adobe and GameMaker?
A: No. These software requirements were removed due to cost, hardware demands, and misalignment with industry practices. Centres now select suitable software guided by detailed skills matrices and decision charts.

Q: Is this change mandatory?
A: Centres have full flexibility but must ensure chosen software allows learners to meet the defined basic/medium/complex skill descriptors in Appendices A & B.

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Rationale for Changes (Justification)

Why has the Specification Changed

Q: What were the main drivers for revising the qualification?

A:
- Improve manageability for centres and learners
- Enhance engagement with contemporary technologies
- Increase reliability and reduce ambiguity
- Strengthen validity through alignment with real-world digital practice
- Ensure compliance with Equalities Law and accessibility standards
- Align with Curriculum for Wales (four purposes, cross-cutting themes, integral skills)

Q: Why does Unit 1 first award later (2028)?

A:
- To avoid rationale mixed-cohort complexities, maintain reliability in standard-setting, and ensure fair comparability across the qualification.

Expectations for Teachers and Learners

Practical and Theoretical Expectations

For this refer to the specification on the subject home page under the **Key Documents tab** and the Guidance for **Teaching dropdown.**

Q: What practical skills must learners demonstrate?

A: Creation of digital products: websites, games or 2D animations, and marketing videos, plus data cleansing/analysis using spreadsheet software.

Skills span basic to complex levels (e.g., CSS Grid, scripting, pivot tables, animation rigging).

Q: What theoretical knowledge is essential?

A: Data representation, digital devices, networks, cybersecurity, digital communication, marketplace models, legal/ethical issues, SDLC, and emerging technologies.

Q: How much autonomy is expected in NEA work?

A: NEAs must be fully independently produced under direct supervision. No collaboration or external guidance permitted. No AI use allowed during NEA sessions.

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Supporting New Teachers

Common Questions for Teachers New to Digital Technology

Q: How accessible is the new specification for teachers new to the subject?
A: Improved clarity in content (new stems), reduced administrative burden, software flexibility, and expanded teaching guidance make it more accessible.

Professional learning resources will support delivery.

Q: Is specialist technical knowledge (e.g., programming, video editing) essential?
A: No. Skills are structured progressively (basic → medium → complex).
Teachers can choose software that matches their departmental expertise and learners' needs.

Q: What support documents will be provided?

A: WJEC will supply:

- Guidance for Teaching
- Assessment Packs
- Decision guides for software selection
- Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs)

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Q: Does the highlighting of evidence count as NEA time?
A: Yes, highlighting evidence **does** count as NEA time. Any activity where a learner is reviewing, annotating, or identifying evidence within their work must take place within the controlled NEA window. This ensures that all work contributing to the final submission is completed under the required supervision and within the correct control measures.

Q: Can learners take Unit 1 in Year 10 and then resit it in Year 11?
A: The examination for Unit 1 will be first available in 2028 and every year thereafter.

However, **from the second year onwards**, it *is* possible for learners to take Unit 1 in Year 10 and then resit in Year 11, provided normal entry rules and resit arrangements are followed.

Q: What can the resource folder contain in Unit 2 and 3?
A: For **Unit 2** and **Unit 3**, the resource folder must be tightly controlled to maintain the required NEA conditions. The folder **must not** include:

- Finished or partially finished **code**
- Completed **user guides**, templates, or exemplars
- Any form of **help videos**, tutorials, walkthroughs, or step-by-step instructions
- Screenshots or examples that resemble a completed solution

However, the following **is allowed**:

- **High-level pseudocode** (general structure, not solution-specific)
- **Graphics or assets** for the **game**, **animation**, or **website** (as long as they are not pre-built functional components)
- **Still and Moving video clips** required for **Unit 3**
- **Research materials** for Unit 3 (e.g., analysis of existing platforms, audience research)

Q: Are the NEA scenarios live for two years?
A: No. As the qualification is **unitised**, the NEA scenarios are **released annually**. Each year's scenario must be completed and submitted **within that same examination year**. They are **not** live for two years and cannot be reused or carried over.

Q: How do candidates check that external sources in their websites work when they have no access to the internet during NEA time?
A: Students may, outside NEA time, research video embed code and may produce high-level pseudocode for this. A student can provide a direct link to the video URL, but not iFrame code. Teachers are permitted to open the webpage to verify that the video displays and plays correctly

Q: Does the game or animation in Unit 2 need to be embedded into the website?
A: Embedding the game or animation directly into the website is **not a requirement**, but it can strengthen the evidence. If a candidate is able to embed it successfully, this would demonstrate strong technical understanding and integration skills and would therefore support higher-level evidence.

However, if embedding is not possible, a **link to a downloadable executable file** (or playable file) is **perfectly acceptable**. The key requirement is that the final product is accessible and can be evaluated by the moderator.

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Q: In Unit 2, can the time-planning document include tasks completed outside NEA time (e.g., creating assets)?

A: **Yes, the time-planning document *may* include tasks** that take place outside the formal NEA sessions, such as creating or sourcing assets. **There is no requirement in the specification for the plan to show only NEA-session work**. The planning document is assessed on the quality of planning, the level of detail, and how well the learner demonstrates an understanding of the tasks involved in producing the final product.

While it is not mandatory to include out-of-session tasks, doing so can strengthen the learner's evidence. For example, including additional research activities, asset creation, or preparatory actions can demonstrate a fuller understanding of the project requirements and a more comprehensive planning process. This level of detail can help differentiate between higher and lower mark bands, as it shows proactive organisation and awareness of all necessary stages of production.

Q: Does Unit 3 require candidates to include moving images, even at the lower mark bands?

A: Yes. Unit 3 explicitly focuses on **creating and editing moving images**, so all candidates – including those working in the lower mark bands – must include **actual moving image content** in their final product. Without moving images, they cannot meet the fundamental requirements of the unit, and marks cannot be awarded appropriately.

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