Joint Council for Qualifications CIC

Notice to Centres

Guidance for centres on the decoding of symbols and unit abbreviations in Mathematics and Science examinations

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Produced on behalf of:

AQA Questions matter | cea Rewarding Learning | OCR Oxford Cambridge and RSA | Pearson | wjec cbac

A reader may decode symbols and unit abbreviations in Mathematics and Science examinations where it reflects the candidate's current and normal way of working within the centre.

This would occur when a candidate with significant reading difficulties cannot independently access any of the text or symbols in questions. For example, a candidate with a significant visual impairment who cannot read Braille, cannot access tactile diagrams or, due to the severity of their impairment, cannot access the standard modified enlarged papers.

'Decoding' means naming the symbol. It does not involve explaining when or how the symbol is to be used or describing the symbol.

Examples of decoding:

356	the reader says 'three hundred and fifty-six'
CO_2	the reader says 'C O two' (reading each individual letter and number)
2^2	the reader says 'two squared'
≤	the reader says 'less than or equal to'
∈	the reader says 'is an element of'
∞	the reader says 'infinity'
∛	the reader says 'cube root'
θ	the reader says 'Theta'
∫	the reader says 'Integral'

Centres **must** ensure that readers are thoroughly trained and can decode symbols and unit abbreviations accurately.