GCSE PE

Draft Specification

The EverLearner

The EverLearner

Contents

Proposed GCSE PE Specification

1. Course purpose

To provide young people with the knowledge and tools to improve their own and others' health, participation and performance through physical activity and sport and to provide a basis for young people to study further within the subject domain and/or contribute positively to an active society throughout their lives.

2. Course outline

Element	Decision
Exam/NEA split	50/50
Exam components	2 exam papers
NEA components	2 activity assessments + 1 written response to a case study
Paper 1 identity	The Body: scientific content
Paper 2 identity	Mind and Society: psychological/sociocultural
Cross-paper links	Siloed for assessment, but students may self-elect to bring in relevant theories from the other paper where relevant

3. Assessment objectives

AO1: Identifying, defining, describing and explaining core scientific and sociocultural concepts that relate to health, participation and performance.

AO2: Applying core scientific and sociocultural concepts that relate to health, participation and performance with an emphasis on the impact and outcome of these applications.

AO3: Analysing, justifying, discussing and evaluating core scientific and sociocultural concepts and their application to health, participation and performance.

AO4: Improving the health, participation and performance of oneself and others in the real world.

4. Weightings

Component	% of qualification	Raw marks
Exam Paper 1	25%	70
Exam Paper 2	25%	70
NEA 1	20%	40
NEA 2	20%	40
NEA 3	10%	40

5. AO Weighting by component

Assessment	Raw marks	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4
Exam 1	70	30%	40%	30%	0%
Exam 2	70	30%	40%	30%	0%
NEA 1	40	0%	0%	0%	100%
NEA 2	40	0%	0%	0%	100%
NEA 3	40	25%	25%	25%	25%

Overall AO balance (weighted): AO1 ~19.6% · AO2 ~25.4% · AO3 ~19.6% · AO4 ~35.4%

6. Paper structure

Each exam paper:

- Lasts 75 minutes, and adds up to 70 raw marks.
- 60 marks are gained from non-extended writing (1–6 mark questions).
- 10 marks are gained from one extended-writing question, including the possibility of a candidate self-electing to incorporate theories from across the programme of study.

- Rate: 1 mark per minute, plus 5 minutes planning for the extended piece
- Extended writing total across both papers: 20/140 (14.3%)

7. Content areas

Paper 1: The Body

1.1 Biomechanics and Movement Analysis

Scope: Planes, axes, levers, musculoskeletal system, including the spine. Fundamental introduction to linear and angular motion and the role of the centre of mass. The musculoskeletal system sits within this topic. Movement analysis and biomechanics are taught together, not separated.

Likely command words: *Commonly featuring (but not limited to) "Identify", "Describe", "Explain", "Compare", "Illustrate", "Calculate" and "Analyse".*

Content detail:

Musculoskeletal system – limited to actions at the spine (including neck), shoulder, elbow, hip, knee and ankle	
Bones articulating at joints	Spine: Cranium (articulates with second cervical vertebra), cervical vertebrae, thoracic vertebrae, lumbar vertebrae, sacrum, coccyx Shoulder: Humerus, scapula Elbow: Humerus, radius, ulna Hip: Femur, pelvis Knee: Femur, tibia Ankle: Tibia, fibula, talus
Joint features with the capacity to describe the features at different joints	Synovial capsule Synovial membrane Synovial fluid Ligaments Cartilage
Muscles causing and allowing movement at joints	Spine: Abdominals, erector spinae, external obliques Shoulder: Deltoid, latissimus dorsi, rotator cuff Elbow: Biceps, triceps Hip: Gluteals, hip flexors, abductors, adductors Knee: Quadriceps, hamstrings

	Ankle: Gastrocnemius, tibialis anterior
Types of muscle contractions	Isotonic concentric, isotonic eccentric, isometric
Movement patterns at the spine	Flexion Extension Lateral flexion Rotation
Movement patterns at the shoulder and hip	Flexion Extension Abduction Adduction Rotation Circumduction
Movement patterns at the elbow and knee	Flexion Extension
Movement patterns at the ankle	Plantar flexion Dorsiflexion

Biomechanics

Describing movement: Primary axes	Sagittal - such as when cartwheeling Transverse - such as when somersaulting Longitudinal - such as when pivoting
Describing movement: Planes	Frontal - such as when cartwheeling Sagittal - such as when somersaulting Transverse - such as when pivoting
Describing movement: Levers	Including but not limited to: First class: Neck and elbow (triceps action) Second class: Ankle Third class: Elbow (biceps action) and knee
Motion	Linear motion: Definition and examples Angular motion: Definition and examples Identifying the types of motion occurring across different movement examples

Centre of mass	Relative location Factors affecting stability: Mass Height Line of gravity Base of support

Movement analysis

Analyse movements at joints from common exercise and sport scenarios.	Featuring, but not limited to: Running Swimming Throwing Jumping Kicking Squatting Press-up

1.2 Cardiovascular and Respiratory Systems

Scope: Well-established content. Short and long-term effects of exercise must be integrated throughout, not siloed into a separate topic.

Likely command words: *Commonly featuring (but not limited to) "Identify"" "Define", "Describe", "Summarise", "Explain", "Compare", "Illustrate", "Calculate", "Analyse" and "Justify".*

Content detail:

Cardiovascular system
Effects of exercise learned throughout

Structure of the CV system	Heart: Atria Ventricles Valves Vessels: Arteries (including specific reference to aorta and pulmonary artery) Veins (including specific reference to vena cava and pulmonary vein)

	Capillaries
The blood	Role of cellular and non-cellular components Cellular: RBCs - role in the transportation of gases WBCs - role in the immune system and injury response Platelets - role in stopping bleeding Non-cellular: Plasma - role in transporting cellular components and other nutrients
Cardiac cycle	Systole: Atrial Ventricular Diastole: Atrial Ventricular
Distribution of cardiac output	Role of arteries: Vasodilation Vasoconstriction % cardiac output to working muscles, digestive system and other organs at rest and during exercise
CV values	At rest: Stroke volume Heart rate Cardiac output Blood pressure, including systolic and diastolic During different intensities of exercise: Stroke volume Heart rate Cardiac output Blood pressure, including systolic and diastolic

Respiratory System
Effects of exercise learned throughout

Structure of the respiratory system	Mouth/nose Trachea Bronchi Bronchioles

Respiratory System
Effects of exercise learned throughout

	Alveoli
Mechanics of breathing	Inspiration at rest: Diaphragm Intercostal muscles Expiration at rest: Passive Effect of exercise on breathing, including the role of additional muscles
Gaseous exchange at the lung	Diffusion of oxygen and carbon dioxide Rates of diffusion at different intensities of exercise Features of alveoli related to diffusion
Respiratory values	At rest: Tidal volume Frequency Minute ventilation % of oxygen and carbon dioxide in inhaled and exhaled air During different intensities of exercise: Tidal volume Frequency Minute ventilation % of oxygen and carbon dioxide in inhaled and exhaled air

1.3 Nutrition, Digestion, Energy and Recovery

Scope: Mechanical and chemical digestion (applied, not deep biology). How glucose, lipids and amino acids are derived from food and how and where they are absorbed. Scientifically accurate and supportive of GCSE Biology (and vice versa). Introduction to EPOC. Recovery nutrition. Speeding up recovery.

Note: CCEA GCSE PE in Northern Ireland already includes digestion. A selling point for GCSE PE is that triple science students will do well due to the overlap.

Likely command words: *Commonly featuring (but not limited to) "Identify", "Describe", "Suggest", "Explain", "Compare", "Calculate", "Evaluate", "Justify" and "Discuss"*

Content detail:

Nutrition, Digestion, Energy and Recovery

Role and structure of macronutrients	Carbohydrates: Non-sustained energy source (typically up to 2 hours) Polymers - Made up of chains of sugar (glucose) Fats: Sustained energy source Insulation Protective and cushioning role at organs Made up of glycerol and fatty acids Protein: Repair Adaptation process (muscle protein synthesis and structural adaptation following training) Growth Emergency energy source Made up of amino acids
Role of micronutrients	Vitamins: C A B complex Minerals: Iron Calcium Water: Preventing dehydration Importance of consuming water AND minerals to prevent cramp
Structure of the digestive system	Mouth, oesophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine
Digestion	Mechanical: Mouth Stomach Chemical: Mouth Stomach

	Small intestine Role of the liver in the breakdown of fats Role of the pancreas Absorption of micronutrients in the small and large intestines
Products of digestion	Carbohydrates → Amylase → Glucose Fats → Lipase → Glycerol and fatty acids Protein → Protease → Amino acids
Energy	Aerobic energy release: Glucose + Oxygen → Carbon dioxide + Water (and energy release) Glycerol and amino acids can enter the aerobic pathway when glucose is limited Long duration Moderate intensity Anaerobic energy release: Glucose → Lactic acid (and energy release) Impact of lactic acid (blood pH and muscle fatigue) Short duration High intensity
EPOC	Additional volume of oxygen breathed in and used at the muscle tissue AFTER exercise ends Cause of EPOC: Oxygen deficit Graphical representation of EPOC
Speeding up recovery	Role of: Warm-up Cool-down Hydration Manipulation of muscle tissue (rollers and massage, including massage guns) Cold exposures Protein supplements Sleep

Scope: Unified definitions of the components of fitness and the principles of training. Fitness testing reformed: embedded within training programmes and improvement cycles, directly linked to health, participation and performance improvements. Modern fitness tests (e.g. Y-balance test, stick flip test, hexagon test for agility) replace outdated 1980s staples.

Likely command words: *Commonly featuring but not limited to "Identify", "Describe", "Summarise", "Explain", "Calculate", "Evaluate", "Justify", "Discuss" and "Analyse".*

Content detail:

Fitness and Training	
What is fitness?	Capacity to perform the physical roles required in one's life Relative to the demands placed on the body
Components of fitness	Aerobic endurance: Efficiency of the body to take in and use oxygen to release energy aerobically over a sustained period. Agility: Ability to change direction quickly with control. Balance: Ability to maintain the centre of mass above the base of support. Body composition: Proportion of the body that is made up of lean and non-lean tissue. Coordination: Ability to move different body parts simultaneously AND efficiently. Flexibility: Range of motion at synovial joints. Static and dynamic. Muscular endurance: Ability to repeatedly apply force against a resistance. Power: Ability to apply a large force to a resistance quickly. Reaction time: Ability to initiate a response to a stimulus quickly. Speed: Ability to cover distance quickly. Whole body or body part. Strength: Ability to apply maximal force to a resistance.
Principles of training	Specificity: To an area of the body To a component of fitness To an energy system To a role within an activity Progression:

	Gradual increases Steady increases Overload: Placing stress on body systems Causing adaptations FITT: Frequency: training sessions per unit of time Intensity: %maxHR; %1RM; %15RM; %FTP; %RoM Time: training time; Number of sets; Number of reps; Recovery time between sets. Type: Range of training methods; Variety within a training method Reversibility: Deadaptation occurs if FITT decreases over time. Injury and burnout are major risk factors
Training: Role of fitness testing	Baseline measurement Increased specificity Higher-quality goals Objective assessment Pre-, mid- and post-programme testing Increased concentration Increased motivation
Training: Goal setting	Setting SMART targets for fitness training: Specific: To the role in the activity To the fitness testing aim Measurable: % improvement in fitness test score or equivalent Objective success measure Agreed: Coach/trainer and performer in unison Realistic: Challenging but achievable within the timescale. Required resources available to the performer. Timed: Specific time period for the training to occur. Often between 6 and 12 weeks.
Training: Aerobic endurance	Testing: Yo-Yo IR1 test FTP test

	Methods: Continuous training HIIT Fartlek training Students are expected to be able to explain the likely adaptations to the musculoskeletal, CV and respiratory systems to long-term aerobic endurance training.
Training: Power, speed and agility	Testing: Vertical jump test/Standing broad jump test 10m sprint test and 30m flying sprint test Hexagon test Methods: Plyometric training SAQ training Interval training Students are expected to be able to explain the likely adaptations to musculoskeletal systems to long-term power and agility training.
Training: Strength and muscular endurance	Testing: 1RM 15RM Training: Resistance training Interval training Students are expected to be able to explain the likely adaptations to musculoskeletal systems to long-term strength and muscular endurance training.
Training: Flexibility	Testing: Traditional sit-and-reach or safer variants (e.g. back-saver or modified back-saver sit-and-reach) Training: Static stretching Dynamic stretching PNF

	Students are expected to be able to explain the likely adaptations to musculoskeletal systems to long-term flexibility training.
Training: Body composition	Testing: BIA BMI Training: All training methods can be considered, but must be followed in relation to energy balance.
Training: Other components	Testing: Y-balance for balance Stick flip test for coordination Ruler drop test for reactions Training: No specific training is required for these components at this level.

Paper 2: Mind and Society

2.1 Skill Acquisition

Scope: Classification of skills and their relevance to health, participation and performance. Types of practice and how they support improvement for different participants. Learning theories (operant conditioning and observational learning) applied to real-world activity settings. Guidance and feedback choices that help young people and others learn, stay involved and perform better.

- Classification
- Types of practice (relates to improvement)
- Learning theories (operant conditioning and observational learning)
- Guidance
- Feedback

Likely command words: *Commonly featuring (but not limited to) "Identify", "Describe", "Explain", "Compare", "Analyse", "Justify", "Evaluate" and "Discuss".*

Content detail:

Skill Acquisition

What is skill?	A learned ability to bring about predetermined results with maximum certainty and minimum outlay of time, energy or both. Can relate to improving everyday physical literacy, regular participation or competitive performance.
Skill continua	Open-Closed Gross-Fine Simple-Complex Self-paced-Externally paced Students are expected to be able to apply and justify their importance for health, participation and performance.
Types of practice	Massed and distributed Fixed and varied Whole, part, whole-part-whole Students are expected to be able to link types of practice to different learners and contexts, for example suitable types of practice dependent on skill classification.
Stages of learning	Cognitive Associative Autonomous Students are expected to be able to describe the characteristics of each stage and apply these to examples in performance and participation. Students are expected to be able to link these to practice types, guidance and feedback.
Learning theories	Operant conditioning Observational learning Students are expected to be able to apply this knowledge to real-life contexts, for example how reinforcement and modelling can impact on the learning of a skill.
Guidance	Visual

	Verbal Manual Mechanical Students are expected to be able to link appropriate methods of guidance with the appropriate health, participation or performance context.
Feedback	Intrinsic Extrinsic Knowledge of performance Knowledge of results Concurrent Terminal Students are expected to be able to select appropriate feedback methods dependent on the performer.

2.2 Sport and Health Psychology

Scope: Each topic can be applied to sport, health or participation.

- Arousal
- Motivation
- Concentration
- Confidence
- Approach and avoidance behaviours
- Psychological techniques

Likely command words: *Commonly featuring (but not limited to) "Identify", "Describe", "Explain", "Compare", "Analyse", "Justify", "Evaluate" and "Discuss".*

Content detail:

Sport and Health Psychology	
What is arousal?	A state of physical and mental alertness or readiness. Can range from very low (sleepy, under-stimulated) to very high (anxious, over-excited).

Inverted U	Link between arousal and performance levels Optimal arousal for different activities Optimal arousal for different stages of learning Impact of arousal levels on health, participation and performance
What is motivation?	The drive or desire to start, continue or return to an activity. Can relate to health goals, enjoyment, social connection or performance success.
Types of motivation	Intrinsic Extrinsic: Tangible and intangible Short-term Long-term Students are expected to understand the impact of motivation on health, participation and performance levels.
What is concentration?	The ability to focus attention on relevant cues and tasks while ignoring distractions. Types of concentration: Internal External Broad Narrow Students are expected to understand the impact of concentration on health, participation and performance levels.
Types of distractions	Internal External Demands of different activities Students are expected to be able to link concentration and distractions with the impact on health, participation and performance.
What is confidence?	A person's belief in their ability to perform a specific task or activity successfully. Sources of confidence

	Students are expected to be able to link confidence with the impact on health, participation and performance.
Behaviours	Approach Avoidance Influence on approach and avoidance behaviours Students are expected to be able to link approach and avoidance behaviours to health, participation and performance.
Psychological techniques	Goal setting Self-talk Imagery/Mental rehearsal Relaxation and activation techniques Students are expected to be able to apply different psychological techniques with the appropriate context to achieve the desired health, participation or performance outcome.

2.3 Historical Studies

Scope: Each topic must be taught through the lens of health, participation and performance, and how historical changes shaped opportunities for different groups to be active.

- Pre-industrial sport in the UK / Popular recreation
- Industrialisation
- Influence of the public schools
- Rational recreation
- Modern Olympic movement

Likely command words: *Commonly featuring (but not limited to) "Describe", "Explain", "Compare", "Analyse", "Discuss", "Evaluate" and "Justify".*

Content detail:

Historical Studies

Pre-industrial sport in the UK and popular recreation	Key features of popular recreation Examples of popular recreation activities for the lower and upper classes Students are expected to be able to make links between the features and the impact on health, participation and performance.
Industrialisation and urbanisation	Early industrial period – negative impacts Later industrial period – improving conditions Examples of factors that impacted people's health and participation in physical activity Students are expected to be able to link each time period with opportunities for participation, as well as the impact on health and performance.
Influence of the public schools	Role of public schools Codification and spread of games The cult of athleticism Students are expected to be able to make links with the values promoted and games played, and their impact on the spread of sport. Students are expected to understand how the role of public schools has influenced modern physical activities, PE and school sport.
Rational recreation and the development of modern sport	From popular to rational recreation Linked to the emergence of the middle class Growth of national and international structures Students are expected to be able to compare popular and rational recreation, and link the contributing factors with the impact on health, participation and performance.
Modern Olympic movement	Origins, aims and values Development and change

	Influence of the public schools on the Olympic movement Relevance of the Olympic Oath to modern-day sport (links with 2.4 ethics) Students are expected to be able to link the aims and values of the Olympic Games with their influence on health, participation and performance.

2.4 Ethics

Scope: All content should be taught through health, participation and performance, and encourage critical thinking about fairness, inclusion and integrity in physical activity and sport.

- Perspectives on sport in society
- Commercialisation
- Doping
- Performer conduct
- Spectator conduct

Likely command words: *Commonly featuring (but not limited to) "Describe", "Explain", "Compare", "Analyse", "Discuss", "Evaluate" and "Justify".*

Content detail:

Ethics	
Perspectives on sport in society	Sport as a way to promote health and wellbeing Sport as a form of entertainment, identity and community Sport as a business and career pathway Sport as a potential source of inequality, exclusion or conflict Sport as political capital Sport as a reflection of society.
Key ethical questions	Who gets access to facilities, coaching and competitions? How are different groups (e.g. by gender, including transgender, disability, ethnicity, social class, sexuality) represented and treated? How far should winning and performance be prioritised over enjoyment, inclusion and health or vice versa?

	Students need to understand how policies and attitudes can influence the participation of different groups. Students are expected to understand the consequences of overemphasising a win ethic.
What is commercialisation?	The influence of money, business and media on sport, performers and events Includes sponsorship, broadcasting rights, merchandise and ticket sales.
Potential benefits and drawbacks of commercialisation	Students are expected to be able to discuss whether commercial influences in sport are mainly helpful or harmful in real-life scenarios.
Doping and performance-enhancing methods	Where is the line drawn between legal and illegal methods and substances? Banned substances and methods, including but not limited to: Blood doping EPO HGH Anabolic steroid Analgesics Legal strategies such as training, nutrition or technology Students are expected to be able to distinguish methods of doping from legal performance-enhancing methods.
Reasons for doping and consequences of doping	The history of doping behaviour in elite sports performance Students are expected to be able to form arguments for and against doping, linking this with scenarios such as the Enhanced Games or future equivalents.
Performer conduct	Performer behaviours (respect, sportsmanship, gamesmanship, cheating and violence). Students are expected to be able to link conduct with appropriate examples in sporting scenarios.
Spectator conduct	Positive spectator behaviours (respect, etiquette, positive nationalism, local pride) Negative spectator behaviours (violence and hooliganism)

	Managing spectator conduct Students are expected to be able to link spectator behaviours with relevant sporting examples and how this differs across sports. Students are expected to understand how both performer and spectator behaviour can influence participation and performance.

Cross-cutting Content

- **Data literacy**: Graph and table interpretation runs across all eight content areas.
- **Applied examples**: Sporting, health and participation examples are mandatory for anything above AO1.
- **AO2 requirement**: Impact and/or outcome must be achieved to score AO2, and are the basis of AO3 thinking (simply naming an example is not enough).

8. NEA Model

NEA 1: Physical activity assessment 1

- **Weighting**: 20% of qualification
- **Raw marks**: /40
- **AO**: AO4 only
- **Structure**: 50% performance level, 50% improvement

NEA 2: Physical activity assessment 2

- **Weighting**: 20% of qualification
- **Raw marks**: /40
- **AO**: AO4 only
- **Structure**: 50% performance level, 50% improvement

Improvement evidence model - Coached targets

- At the start of the course, the teacher and the student agree on **three specific, observable improvement targets** per activity that must relate to health, participation and/or performance.
- Targets are recorded on a standardised form at the outset and timestamped.

- At the terminal assessment, the teacher judges the extent to which each target has been achieved, using a level descriptor rubric.
- Video evidence of an appropriate range of the terminal performance supports moderation.
- **Anti-gaming mechanism**: Targets are locked in early and must be genuinely challenging.
- The spec will include exemplar targets and guidance on what "specific and observable" means.

NEA 1 and NEA 2 - Performance level descriptors

Level	Performance descriptor	Marks (/20)
0	No creditable performance. The student does not demonstrate the activity in a recognisable way, or the performance is unsafe.	0
1	Techniques are very basic, with frequent errors in core skills. Movements often lack control, fluency and accuracy. Application of rules, roles and tactics is limited or incorrect. Physical capabilities restrict performance in most situations.	1–5
2	Techniques are sometimes effective but inconsistent, with noticeable errors under pressure or at higher speed. Some control, fluency and accuracy in familiar situations; performance drops when demands increase. Some understanding of rules, roles and simple tactics, but application is partial or hesitant. Physical capabilities support performance at a basic level but limit effectiveness in more challenging scenarios.	6–10
3	Techniques are generally effective and consistent in the core skills of the activity. Movements show good control, fluency and accuracy across most situations. Rules, roles and tactics are applied appropriately to contribute to performance. Physical capabilities support effective performance, including in more demanding or competitive situations.	11–15
4	Techniques are highly effective, consistent and well adapted to different situations, including under pressure. Movements are very well controlled, fluent and accurate throughout. Rules, roles and tactics are applied confidently and flexibly to maximise performance. Physical capabilities enhance performance and may influence others positively.	16–20

Level	Improvement descriptor	Marks (/20)
0	No creditable evidence of improvement. Targets are missing or entirely unrelated to the activity, or no attempt has been made to improve.	0
1	Improvement targets are vague, very easy or not clearly linked to the activity performance. Limited evidence that the student has worked towards the targets. Little or no measurable improvement by the end of the course. Records of practice or reflection are incomplete, descriptive only and not used to change performance.	1–5
2	Improvement targets have some specificity but may be partly unclear or uneven in difficulty. Evidence shows some engagement in practice or training related to the targets. Some improvement is visible in one or more targets, but progress is modest or inconsistent. Records show basic monitoring and reflection, but these are only sometimes used to adjust practice.	6–10
3	Improvement targets are specific, observable and appropriately challenging for the student. Clear evidence of regular, purposeful practice or training linked directly to the targets. Good improvement is demonstrated in most targets by the end of the course. Records show ongoing monitoring and reflection, with adjustments made to practice in response to progress.	11–15
4	Improvement targets are highly specific, observable and clearly stretch the student's health, participation and/or performance. Strong evidence of sustained, well-planned practice or training that is tightly aligned with each target. Substantial improvement is demonstrated in all or almost all targets, with clear impact on overall health, participation and/or performance. Records show thoughtful, detailed reflection and systematic adjustments to practice, demonstrating independent ownership of improvement.	16–20

NEA 3: Written case study assessment

- **Weighting**: 10% of qualification
- **Raw marks**: /40
- **AO**: AO1 25% · AO2 25% · AO3 25% · AO4 25%
- Exam board publishes three case studies on a set day.
- Students have **four hours** (with a break) to write a response to one case study.
- Supervised time with access to nothing but a pencil case or a limited-access computer (word processing/slides only).
- Students are expected to link **two separate theories/concepts** from the course in an attempt to improve the health, participation or performance within the selected case study.
- Crucially, the theories must be **interwoven,** and associations between them made, not just two different sections about two different theories.
- Students will be credited if they go beyond the spec, but do not have to.
- Critical behaviour is the student's capacity to **justify** the ways in which the theories they are using cause improvements.
- One single sitting (with a break)
- PE-teacher supervised
- PE-teacher marked
- Externally moderated
- Marking guidance is consistent and case-study agnostic.
- Example case studies are provided in **Section 13 (Appendix A)**.

NEA 3 marking levels

Level	Quality of written communication	Selection of theories	Application to the case study	Evidence of impact and outcome	Justification of the use of the theories
0 (0 marks)	Writing is absent or unrelated to the task. No relevant content is produced.	No relevant theories or concepts are selected or named.	No meaningful application to the case study is attempted.	No explanation of any impact or outcome.	No justification is attempted.

Level	Quality of written communication	Selection of theories	Application to the case study	Evidence of impact and outcome	Justification of the use of the theories
1 (1-10 marks)	Writing is unclear and disorganised, with frequent errors that often make meaning difficult to follow.	One or more theories/concepts are named but may be incorrect, very general or only loosely relevant to the case study.	Application is minimal or mainly repeats case study information. Links to the chosen theories are weak or inaccurate.	Little or no explanation of how the suggested actions would change health, participation or performance.	Justification is very limited or absent. Answers tend to be assertive ("this will help") without reasons.
2 (11-20 marks)	Writing is generally understandable, with some structure and connected sentences, though errors may still occur.	Theories/concepts chosen are mostly relevant to the case study, but may be described only at a basic level.	Some clear attempts to apply theories to details from the case. Application may be uneven or partially generic.	Some explanation of how health, participation or performance might improve, though impacts are often general or underdeveloped.	Some reasons are given for using the chosen theories, but the justification is brief, mainly one-sided or not fully linked to outcomes.
3 (21-30 marks)	Writing is clear, mostly well organised and uses appropriate PE terminology accurately.	Two or more appropriate theories/concepts are selected and described with reasonable depth and accuracy.	Theories are applied directly and consistently to the case study details; the response stays focused on the given context.	Likely changes to health, participation or performance are explained with clear links to the proposed actions.	The student gives clear, relevant reasons for choosing the theories, showing how they are suitable for this case and better than simpler alternatives.
4 (31-40 marks)	Writing is very clear, well structured and	Two or more highly	The theories are interwoven and applied in	The response sets out specific,	The student presents a convincing,

Level	Quality of written communication	Selection of theories	Application to the case study	Evidence of impact and outcome	Justification of the use of the theories
	coherent, with precise use of technical vocabulary and almost no errors.	appropriate theories/concepts are selected and explained in depth, possibly drawing insightful links between them.	a detailed, sustained way to the specific features of the case, showing strong contextual understanding.	realistic and well-explained impacts on health, participation or performance, often over different time frames.	well-reasoned argument for using these theories (and approaches), possibly acknowledging limitations or alternatives before justifying a clear overall position.

9. Command words

The following command words are defined in this specification. Each word carries a fixed meaning across all exam papers and NEA components.

Command word	Definition
Identify (including state, name and complete)	Give a short answer, such as a word, phrase, number or simple statement, with no extra detail.
Define	Give a precise meaning of a term or concept, using correct technical language.
Describe	Give a clear account of something by stating its main features in full sentences, without explaining why they happen.
Suggest	Offer a reasonable idea, answer or course of action based on the information given and your knowledge.
Summarise	Give the main points only, in a shorter form, without extra detail.

Command word	Definition
Explain	Make something clear by giving reasons or causes and linking points, often using words such as "because", "so that" or "this leads to".
Calculate	Use numbers to work out the answer, showing working where appropriate and including correct units when required.
Illustrate	Make something clear using a specific example, drawing, diagram, table, graph or data.
Compare	Describe similarities and/or differences between two or more things, using comparative language such as "whereas", "in contrast" and "both".
Justify	Give clear reasons or evidence to support a decision, choice or view, showing why it is appropriate in the situation.
Evaluate	Weigh up strengths and weaknesses, or different viewpoints, and reach a supported overall judgement.
Analyse	Break information into parts and examine relationships, patterns, causes or effects in a logical way.
Discuss	Present a balanced, developed answer using arguments and evidence, considering different sides where relevant, and reach a reasoned conclusion.

10. Mark-scheme philosophy - Cast-iron guarantees

1. Marks are awarded for **quality of reasoning**, not keyword spotting.
2. A02 marks require a **stated impact and/or outcome** (naming an example is not enough).
3. A03 marks require a **justified position**, not "advantages and disadvantages" lists.
4. Command words **mean what they say** (definitions are fixed in this specification).
5. No coursework marking adjustments will be made without **clear reasoning**.
6. Examiners will be **appropriately trained** in an attempt to ensure consistency.
7. Coursework units are **fit for purpose in the era of AI**.

11. Examined-unit grade-boundary philosophy

- All questions must be rigorous enough to be challenging but clear enough that well-prepared students perform very well.
- Every question must have the capacity to **differentiate performance levels**.
- The full range of **0/70 to 70/70** must be usable. A score of 70/70 must be achievable for a brilliant student.
- Wide grade boundary spread is achieved through **question quality** (tough, rigorous questions with clear structures, commands and expectations), not through easy questions that almost all students get right. Not through structuring questions and mark schemes behind the smoke screen of "Guess what the exam writer was thinking".

12. Appendix A: Exemplar NEA three case studies

Case Study 1

Priya: 15-year-old football player managing her health and activity levels

Priya is a 15-year-old student in Year 10 who plays central midfield for her school team and a local women's football club. She has always been active, but over the last six months, her performance in training and matches has noticeably dropped. She has been arriving at training tired, struggles to complete full sessions and has started missing the odd weekend fixture, which is out of character for her.

Priya's PE teacher has noticed that she has lost weight since the start of the year and that she appears pale and low in energy during lessons. A visit to the GP identified that Priya has low iron levels, and her doctor has suggested that her diet may not be supporting the demands she is placing on her body. Priya eats relatively little at school and often skips breakfast before morning training sessions. She is also sleeping poorly, averaging around five to six hours per night due to homework pressure and phone use.

Priya is frustrated. She wants to play at a higher level and has county trials coming up in eight weeks. Her parents and coach are both keen to support her but are unsure how best to do so.

> *Choose two theories or concepts from your course. Using the information in the case study, explain how you would apply these to improve Priya's health, participation and/or performance. You must justify your choices throughout.*

Case Study 2

Liam: 14-year-old student at risk of dropping out of sport

Liam is a 14-year-old student in Year 9 who has played football since primary school. He used to attend both school training and a local club, but over the last year, his attendance has dropped. He now misses at least one training session most weeks and has stopped going to Saturday matches.

In PE, Liam often stands at the back during drills and avoids having the ball for long. When he makes a mistake, a small group of teammates laugh and he becomes visibly frustrated. Liam says he "doesn't see the point" because he is "never picked in his favourite position" and "everyone else has got better" since Year 7. His teacher has noticed that Liam gives more effort in fitness and conditioning activities than in team games.

Outside of school, Liam has started playing more video games in the evenings and spends less time outdoors. His parents would like him to continue being involved in physical activity, but are unsure how to support him. The PE department wants to help Liam stay engaged in sport and physical activity, whether in football or another activity that suits him better.

> *Choose two theories or concepts from your course. Using the information in the case study, explain how you would apply these to improve Liam's health, participation and/or performance. You must justify your choices throughout.*

Case Study 3

Jess: 16-year-old 400 m runner aiming for higher performance

Jess is a 16-year-old student in Year 11 who specialises in the 400 m event for her local athletics club. She trains three times per week and also attends school athletics practices in the summer term. Jess's personal best time improved quickly when she first joined the club, but over the last 12 months, her time has stayed around 56.5 seconds despite regular training.

Video analysis by her coach shows that Jess has a strong start, but her stride length shortens, and her posture drops in the final 120 m. She reports "heavy legs" and struggles to maintain technique when she begins to fatigue. Jess's current training mostly involves steady runs of 20–25 minutes and occasional sprint efforts without a structured work-to-rest ratio. She rarely does strength or plyometric training.

Jess has set herself the goal of running under 54.0 seconds within the next competitive season. She is motivated and prepared to change her training but is unsure which changes will have the biggest impact on her performance.

> *Choose two theories or concepts from your course. Using the information in the case study, explain how you would apply these to improve Jess's health, participation and/or performance. You must justify your choices throughout.*

13. Appendix B: Exemplar coached improvement targets

The following examples illustrate what **specific and observable** improvement targets look like in practice. Each set of three targets covers one target from each domain (performance, health and participation) to reflect the full scope of A04.

Targets that are vague or unmeasurable (such as "get better at swimming" or "be healthier") do not meet the standard. Targets that are specific (naming exactly what will improve), observable (a teacher can see and assess whether the target has been met), and appropriately challenging (requiring sustained effort across the course) do.

The target wording below is written as a student would record it, with teacher guidance, on the standardised improvement target form. The annotation column explains why each target meets the standard and is intended for teacher and reviewer reference only.

Activity 1: Swimming

Context: Student assessed in front crawl as their primary stroke.

#	Domain	Target	Why this meets the standard
T1	Performance	By the end of the course, I will complete a 100m front crawl using bilateral breathing (breathing on both sides) without my hips dropping or my stroke rhythm breaking down.	• Specific: Bilateral breathing, 100m, defined technical criteria. • Observable: Teacher can see whether breathing alternates sides and whether body position and rhythm are maintained • Challenging: Bilateral breathing requires sustained repatterning of an ingrained habit and cannot be achieved quickly.
T2	Health	By the end of the course, I will be able to swim 400m continuously at a steady pace without stopping, which I currently cannot do. I will track this by recording how far I can swim without stopping at the start, middle and end of the course.	• Specific: 400m continuous, steady pace, currently not achievable. • Observable: Teacher and student record the distance swum without stopping at three checkpoints. • Challenging: Building aerobic capacity to sustain 400m requires

#	Domain	Target	Why this meets the standard
			consistent training over many weeks and reflects genuine cardiovascular improvement.
T3	Participation	By the end of the course, I will have attended at least six sessions outside of timetabled PE (such as a school swim club, a local club or open lane sessions) and I will keep a brief log of each one, noting what I practised and how I felt.	• Specific: Six external sessions, log required. • Observable: Log provides verifiable evidence; teacher reviews at agreed intervals. • Challenging: Sustained independent participation requires motivation, self-organisation and access (it is not guaranteed by timetabled lessons alone and reflects genuine ownership of physical activity).

Activity 2: Field hockey

Context: Student assessed as an outfield player in a competitive match context.

#	Domain	Target	Why this meets the standard
T1	Performance	By the end of the course, I will be able to receive and control a moving ball on my reverse stick in a game situation and make a successful next pass or move in at least 7 out of 10 attempts observed by my teacher.	• Specific: Reverse stick receiving, game situation, 7/10 threshold. • Observable: Teacher observes during a match or small-sided game; 7/10 gives a clear, measurable benchmark. • Challenging: Reverse stick control under pressure is technically demanding and requires consistent practice across many sessions.
T2	Health	By the end of the course, I will be able to maintain my work rate across a full 30-minute small-sided game without needing to ask to come off due to	• Specific: Full 30-minute game, fatigue-related substitution as the measurable indicator, self-identified current limitation.

#	Domain	Target	Why this meets the standard
		fatigue, which is something that currently affects my performance in the second half of games. I will track this by asking my teacher to note when I request substitutions.	• Observable: Teacher records substitution requests across the course; reduction over time is clear evidence. • Challenging: Improving aerobic fitness sufficient to sustain work rate across a full game requires deliberate conditioning effort beyond normal lesson participation.
T3	Participation	By the end of the course, I will have taken on a coaching or leadership role (such as leading a warm-up, umpiring a junior game, or coaching a peer during a drill) on at least four separate occasions, and I will write a short reflection after each one.	• Specific: Four occasions, defined role types, written reflection. • Observable: Teacher witnesses or is informed of each occasion; reflections provide evidence. • Challenging: Taking on a leadership or officiating role requires confidence, knowledge and initiative; it broadens participation beyond playing and develops a relationship with the activity that is more likely to sustain beyond school.

Activity 3: Orienteering

Context: Student assessed in a score orienteering or line orienteering format.

#	Domain	Target	Why this meets the standard
T1	Performance	By the end of the course, I will be able to choose and use a clear attack point for at least four controls on an assessed course, and I will explain my choice to my teacher or write it on my route card before I set off to each control.	• Specific: Attack point selection, four controls, explanation or route card as evidence. • Observable: Teacher reviews explanations or route cards against the map. • Challenging: Attack point selection is a tactical navigation skill above basic

#	Domain	Target	Why this meets the standard
			map reading; it requires understanding of terrain and confident route choice, which takes the full course to develop consistently.
T2	Health	By the end of the course, I will be able to complete a 3km orienteering course at a continuous jogging pace without walking sections due to breathlessness, compared to my current baseline, where I walk approximately half of the distance. I will record my heart rate immediately after finishing using a monitor, aiming for it to be in the moderate-intensity zone (120–150bpm), rather than the high zone it currently reaches.	• Specific: 3km continuous jog, no walking due to breathlessness, heart rate target range, current baseline stated. • Observable: The teacher can observe walking, and a heart rate monitor provides objective data. • Challenging: Moving from walking half a course to jogging the full distance at moderate intensity requires a real improvement in aerobic fitness and pacing awareness over the course of the year.
T3	Participation	By the end of the course, I will have entered at least one British Orienteering local event outside of school (such as a Level C or introductory event), and I will bring back my split time printout and write a short paragraph about what I found challenging and what I would do differently.	• Specific: One external event, British Orienteering level, split printout and reflection as evidence. • Observable: Printout and reflection are verifiable. • Challenging: Entering an external competitive event independently requires self-motivation, logistical effort and a level of confidence in the activity that goes well beyond classroom participation; it represents genuine integration of the activity into a student's life.

A note on integrity: All three targets per student must be agreed and recorded on the standardised improvement target form at the start of the course. Targets may not be revised downward once set. The teacher is responsible for ensuring that each target is genuinely challenging for that individual student.

A target that would be trivially easy for a more able student but appropriately difficult for this student is acceptable; a target that requires no sustained effort from any student is not.