

Collins AQA GCSE Biology: ASE Green Tick Review 2016

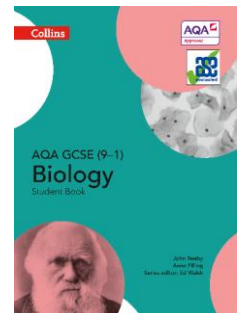
The new GCSE science courses for first examination in 2018 represent a significant shift in emphasis. This review explores the new AQA GCSE Biology Student Book from Collins to see how it measures up.

A lot of thought has clearly gone in to this publication. It takes us on a journey through the biology content and flows nicely. The useful “How to use this book” section at the start draws the reader’s attention to all of its key features. Broken down into chapters and subdivided into double page spreads, you could suggest that the format is unadventurous. However, there are additional spreads covering key concepts, required practicals and mathematical skills. End of chapter questions, differentiated checklists and a glossary of the key words complete the package. It might sound quite elaborate but, in reality, it is clear, well differentiated and should prove easy to use.

A nice touch is provided by the worked examples of exam-style questions using student-speak answers with annotations. The tone is positive and friendly without being patronising. Additional end of chapter questions are linked to the assessment objectives (A01 to A03) to expose students to different question styles.

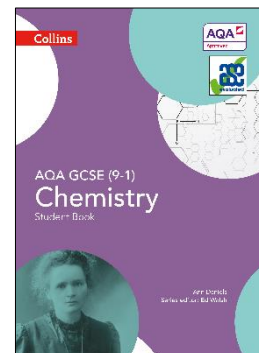
It is commendable that the mathematical skills have their own spreads. Hopefully this will help ensure that they are not forgotten!

This is an engaging and useful resource to help teachers and to support students’ learning. Whether being used at home by a student or supporting the work of the teacher, this book has a lot to offer.



Collins AQA GCSE Chemistry: ASE Green Tick Review 2016

It is refreshing to see that Collins has responded appropriately to the GCSE specification changes by completely rewriting their textbooks. The AQA GCSE Chemistry textbook is quite lengthy at around 360 pages, but it uses these well to cover the specification content and to give support for assessment, mathematics demand and required practicals.



The book is structured as ten chapters, which match the ten areas of the AQA specification. To start each chapter, there is a useful spread that summarises prior learning and relates this to ideas in the coming chapter. To end each chapter, there is a useful self-assessment task for students as well as questions, differentiated into four levels. Spreads within each chapter cover the required content along with one or more 'key concept' spreads. Each chapter has a relevant maths spread which is a welcome addition and there is good support for required practicals within the relevant chapters, treating them as learning experiences for students and developing their 'working scientifically' skills.

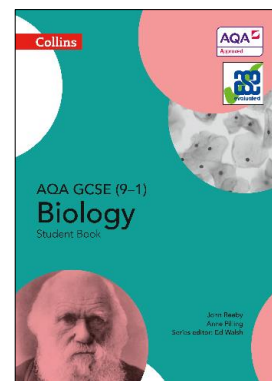
All content spreads are split into three differentiated levels and have a good amount of white space. The text is readable with relatively short sentences that avoid unnecessarily complex structures.

In conclusion, the textbook has much to offer students of all abilities. In particular, the most able students are well catered for, but the differentiation of content and assessment tasks will work well for lower ability students. It consists of a good balance of information and assessment, and nicely supports key ideas in chemistry and in the maths that supports them.

Teach Secondary Product Review: Collins AQA GCSE (9-1) Biology

Biology is a complex science and helping students understand the vast array of ideas, theories and principles involved is no easy task. Great resources obviously have a major part to play – and for me, [Collins AQA GCSE \(9-1\) Biology](#) shows what 'great resources' are really all about.

After a while so many biology textbooks and digital resources can start to look the same. Not these. [Written by a team of expert authors, these resources develop and embed the skills students need to succeed in all three assessment objectives](#), while providing a strong and reassuring route through the new, more challenging GCSE content.



By the books

In the teaching and learning process the student textbook occupies an important place. There is a saying, “As is the text book, so is the teaching and learning”. Arguably a good student book can even replace classroom teaching. Well [this student book breathes quality through and through and rates highly because it provides a clear sense of purpose and structure](#), it promotes thinking about phenomena, experiences and knowledge, it develops and uses scientific ideas, addresses misconceptions, assesses progress and enhances learning. The mechanical features of the book are what you would expect from a respected publisher. The book is durable, the text is clear and uncluttered and [it is very well illustrated with diagrams, photographs and pictures](#). The content is spread over 8 chapters and has been written for the demands of the new specification with a whole host of features. Each topic area is divided into three sections with each section increasing the level of challenge and level-appropriate questions included. Important scientific words are highlighted, there is some additional background information in a ‘Did you know?’ box, key information is summarised and areas of confusion flagged up. At the bottom of each page there is a google search for further research.

[The student books go further by including a dedicated page for every Required Practical in the AQA specification to help students analyse the practical and to answer questions about it. These challenge students to apply their science skills and knowledge.](#) There is also a fabulous and much needed maths skills page, which explains concepts and opportunities to practice. Students can monitor their progress against checklists, there are worked examples of questions, and end of chapter questions for testing what they have learnt with every question linked to an assessment objective. [All in all the student books can crow a mighty and invincible structure that seems almost water-tight and for £18.99 I think that’s a very fair price.](#) In my mind a biology textbook should be aimed at shaping the integrated modern scientific outlook through simple, brief, exact, definite and accessible content. These books do just that but push boundaries too by [including plenty of challenge and skills building opportunities](#).

Packing a punch

The teacher packs make planning easy with 2, 3 and 5 year schemes of work and an all-inclusive set of plans and worksheets that are joyously editable. **The teacher materials are your route to success** and they are as every bit as sparkly as the student books. **The lesson plans are clear and follow the same structure using the same learning sequence, which pinpoints learning stages and cycles, and they have three levels of differentiation.** Every lesson has an associated differentiated worksheet to support written work. Each chapter has an overview, details obstacles to learning, and tells you what practicals to expect. **The teacher notes make a great job of describing tips and pointers for engaging students, challenging and developing them and how to extend learning.** Answers to worksheets are provided as well. There is more than enough professional guidance for equipping students with the skills they need for working scientifically, using maths and carrying out practical work.

The package is impressive enough at a text level but add into the mix an innovative online learning tool and everything links together seamlessly. Collins Connect contains a full suite of digital resources and provides the ultimate back-up for bringing the learning content alive - it's tailor-made for front-of-class teaching, homework and tests. There is an interactive digital version of the student book which makes the content even more vivid, real and exciting. You can use the platform to further engage students with excellent videos and interactives of key concepts, theories and practicals. **One of the best features is the super time-saving auto-marked test questions with instant feedback so you can quickly check understanding. Tracking progress is no longer the headache it used to be either as diagnostic reporting is available broken down by topic and assessment.** You can also download exam-style questions to help prepare for the linear exam. It delivers precisely what you need, it is very instinctive and joins up all the dots. **The price for 1 year's subscription is £750 and that's cracking value for a resource of this stature.**

Verdict: All you need

Collins has produced a superb collection of text and online materials for the new GCSE Biology curriculum – the expertise that has gone into its development is clear, and I would be very confident using them.