

Guide to Importing and Structuring Your Basedata

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Chapter 1: Introduction

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Providing Feedback on Documentation

We always welcome comments and feedback on the quality of our documentation including on-line help files and handbooks.

If you have any comments, feedback or suggestions regarding the module help file, this handbook (PDF file) or any other aspect of our documentation, please email:

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Please ensure that you include the module name, version and aspect of documentation on which you are commenting.

Introduction

This guide has been produced in order to assist you in importing examination basedata and then structuring it in a meaningful way using Examinations Organiser.

This guide provides background information and suggests things you should consider before, during and after the import of your basedata. For step by step instructions on how to import basedata, please refer to *Chapter 5: Importing and Administering Basedata* in the *Examinations Organiser Handbook (EXAMSW.PDF)*.

Examinations Organiser is used for the administration of external examinations and uses information provided by the Examination Boards (basedata) to enable candidates to be entered for examinations and for the results to be subsequently received.

This guide assumes that you have already set up Examinations Organiser by defining School Details, by creating an appropriate Season and Season Pattern, selecting the Examination Boards with which you wish to work and defining valid Examination Rooms. Therefore, the processes leading up to the time you wish to import the basedata are not included in this guide. For more information on these processes, please refer to the *Examinations Organiser Handbook (EXAMSW.PDF)*.

Once the basedata has been successfully imported using Examinations Organiser and it has been structured according to your requirements, you can enter candidates for examinations, create submission files and subsequently import and analyse your examination results. For information relating to the import and analysis of examination results, please refer to the *Guide to Importing and Analysing Examination Results Handbook (EXAMAN.PDF)*.

Chapter 2: Understanding Basedata Files and Awards

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Understanding Basedata Files

The basedata file formats are fully described in the booklet **Formats for the Exchange of Examination Related Data** published by the **Joint Council for General Qualifications (JCGQ)**. The latest version of this book is Version 9 and is commonly known as 'The Black Book' for the 2002-03 academic year.

The formats book is no longer published in printed form, but is available for download from the JCGQ website at:

http://www.jcgq.org.uk/Publications_and_Common_Docs/Formats_booklet_v9_effective_Sept_2002.pdf.

Version 9 was originally intended to remain current until August 2003 but will remain to be valid until August 2004, as there are no changes to the structure of basedata.

A set of basedata comprises four files:

Syllabus (S File)

This is a header record, consisting only of a code and a title. It may be appropriate to import this as an Award. The importance of the S file will be described as you progress through this guide.

Options (O File)

Each item in this file may be the subject of a candidate entry. The file name is a legacy of an earlier version and is not an entirely accurate description of its contents. In addition to options, the O file may now contain registrations, units or modules, as well as certifications. Each item is assigned to a parent item from the S file. Items from this file are imported into Examinations Organiser as elements. The importance of the O file will be described as you progress through this guide.

Components (C File)

Each item in this file represents an assessable task that candidates must complete, either as coursework or a timetabled paper. These components can be assessed either internally or externally.

Links (L File)

Each item in this file consists of an option code and a component code and is generally taken to signify that a candidate entry for the option implies a commitment to submit the component.

The relationships between the options, components and links files almost always conform to a set standard across the Examination Boards.

Understanding Courses and Awards

The most important thing to understand when dealing with basedata, is the concept and use of an **Award**. It is an important part of the data structure within Examinations Organiser and works in close partnership with the **Course**. Successful use of the system depends on a firm understanding of these structures.

Where do Courses Come From?

Previous versions of SIMS modules for School have not adopted the concept of a course. However, it is now central to college-based systems and a number of recent developments in the management of schools indicate that it will also become increasingly significant for schools. SIMS SQL modules, such as Profiles, Assessment Manager and Examinations Organiser all make use of courses.

A course can be regarded principally as a qualification aim, such as GCSE History or Intermediate GNVQ in Art and Design. It is located within the Curriculum Management area of the SIMS SQL system and is implemented as a type of Group. Associated with it are:

- an analysis of the subject area or areas that it addresses
- the components of the curriculum that it involves
- the students who are pursuing it at any selected time
- the classes that deliver curricular content to those students.

Future SIMS curriculum management modules will allow users to create and manage courses directly. In the meantime, Core Integrator is used to provide this information.

Core Integrator infers the existence of a course from the declaration in STAR or Nova-T that a **subject** is being taught at a particular **level**. A **Component** is a year's worth of this course. A class that delivers a subject at a level to a year is inferred to be delivering its year's content – its component – to the members of the course. Core Integrator also assigns any students in the class to the course.

Example

Core Integrator detects that your school has one or more classes that are designated as subject **Hi** (History) and level **G** (GCSE). It creates a course coded **Hi/GCSE** and it is displayed in SIMS as **History (GCSE)**. It further detects that there are six classes that conform to this pattern: **10x/Hi1**, **10x/Hi2**, **10x/Hi3**, **11x/Hi1**, **11x/Hi** and **11x/Hi3**. It therefore infers that both Year 10 and Year 11 are receiving instruction in GCSE History.

Accordingly, it creates two components – **History (GCSE Year 10)** and **History (GCSE Year 11)**. The first three classes are recorded as delivering the first component to the course members and the last three as delivering the second component. All members of all these classes are assigned to the course. A student who follows a Year 10 class membership with a Year 11 class membership will be assigned to membership of the course for these two years.

However, the process becomes more complicated at Post-16 level. You might decide to assign all your GCE classes to **Level @** (GCE A), as this is the path you might expect the majority of them will eventually follow. Alternatively, you might assign your Year 13 GCE classes to **Level @** and your Year 12 GCE to **Level W** (GCE ASB). In the first case, this will be represented in SQL in a similar fashion to the GCSE model previously described. In the second case, you will have an **AS** course and an **A** course, each containing students for only one year.

These are the links used by Examinations Organiser to provide the membership of the course and the classes that are associated with a course.

NOTE: Examinations Organiser currently has a limited ability to create courses and to assign members and Supervisors to these courses. This facility is provided only to allow users to fill any gaps in Core Integrator's understanding of the legacy data. This facility will be withdrawn when the new Curriculum Management suite of software is released.

How do Awards Operate?

The examinations for which a student is likely to be entered will be determined, above all, by the courses they are following. This is where the importance of the Award becomes evident. The Award resides within the examinations system and is persistently linked to a course. On a season by season basis, the Award declares the option, unit, registration or certification entries for which a course member might be eligible.

If it is a linear examination, as most GCSEs currently are, each student on the course will be taking one or the other of the options on offer. If it is a modular examination, a candidate will take a succession of first attempts, retakes and certifications, according to individual progress or preference.

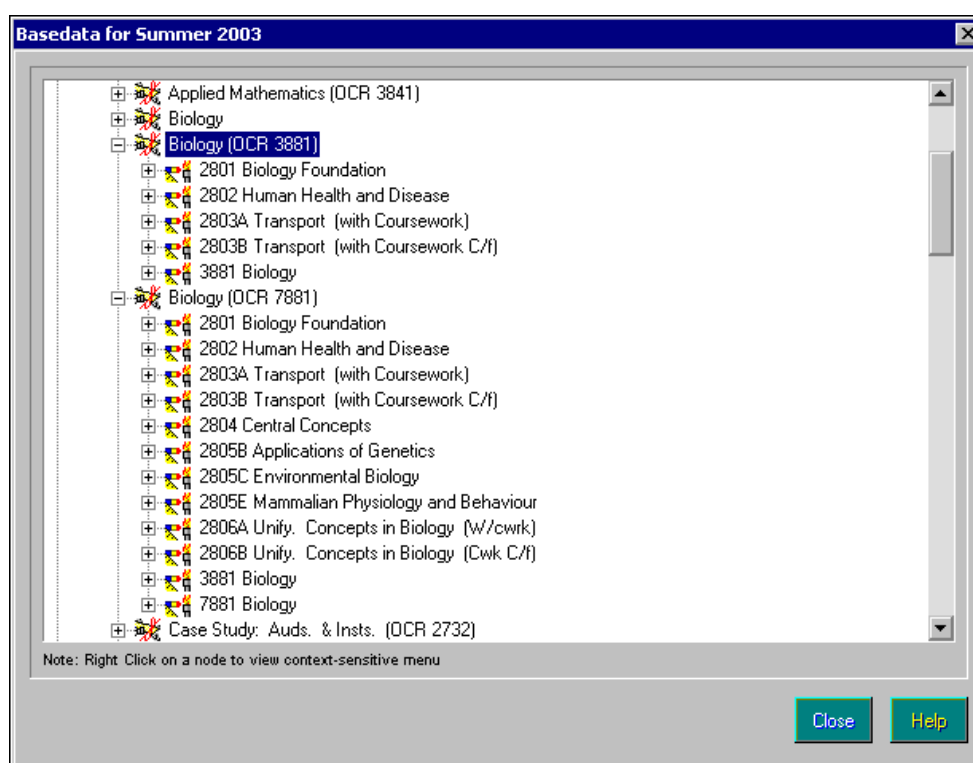
Imagine that you have set up your class levels and therefore courses, by assigning all GCE classes to **Level @**, as previously described and you are just starting to deliver GCE Electronics. There are two classes in Year 12, one being taught unit 1 in the Autumn term, the other unit 3. In the first January Season therefore, you import unit 1 and unit 3, as these are the only units for which entries will be made. You can then attach them to the GCE Electronics Award, which would either have been imported or created manually. You can then enter Set A for unit 1 and Set B for unit 3.

By June, the teaching for all units (1, 2 and 3) would have been completed for both sets (A and B). Members of Set A may wish to retake unit 1 and members of Set B may wish to retake unit 3. However, some may opt for certification at AS level. Therefore, you will need to import four items of basedata (units 1-3 and AS certification) and attach them all to the Award.

In the second January, the teaching for units 5 and 6 would have been completed for both Set A and Set B, so these will need to be imported and attached as necessary. Also required will be units 1-3 (for any candidates wishing to retake an examination) together with the AS certification. At the same time, there will also be a cohort of first year candidates to be taken into consideration and therefore you will need to import and attach units 1 and 3. Nobody will yet need unit 4 or A2 certification, so these do not need to be processed.

In the second June, everything should be imported as all units have been taught at some stage and the Award is now 'mature'.

If you have adopted the second model (assigning your Year 13 GCE classes to **Level @** and your Year 12 GCE to **Level W**), you will require both an AS and an A Award. The AS Award will only ever comprise the 3 AS units and the certification. The A Award however, must take account of the fact that some of the students on the A course will be wanting to retake AS units or retrospectively claim AS certification. Therefore, you will need to attach both the AS and the A items to the A Award. The following graphic shows how this might appear in the basedata tree in Examinations Organiser.



IMPORTANT NOTE: The same element can be attached in the same Series to more than one Award. However, if you select an element from the tree and edit its Properties, the changes made will affect every occurrence of it in the Series. The same applies to the components, located at the next level down.

There are a number of rules governing the use of Awards:

- one Award must operate within a single Board and within a single Qualification

- an Award can be imported from the basedata S file or can be created manually using Examinations Organiser
 - an Award must be linked to a course for the Award to be useful in Examinations Organiser.
-

*NOTE: As Awards might apply to more than one season, this functionality is found in **Tools** | **Schools Setup** | **Exam Award**.*

Since the selection of an Award is the starting point for the creation of Templates and Marksheets, setting up your Awards is an extremely important process. As most of what is defined for an Award will be valid for as many examination seasons as required, it is suggested that you plan the way you wish Awards to be presented and structured.

Chapter 3: Importing and Structuring the Basedata

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Introduction

The import and organisation of GCSE examinations is relatively straightforward as they tend to be structured in a traditional, linear way. A syllabus has one or more options:

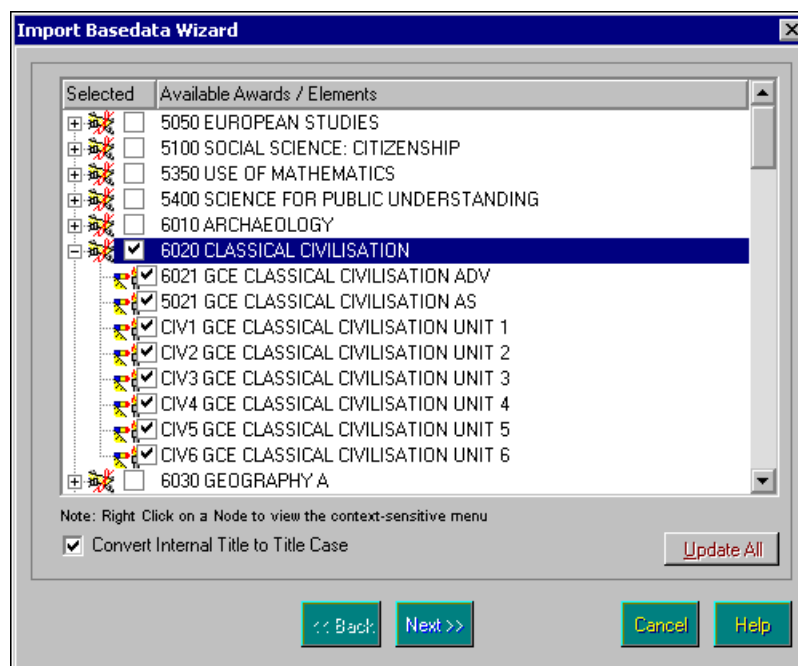
- in the case of History for example, these represent the combinations of optional papers
- in the case of more skill-based subjects such as Mathematics or Modern Languages, these represent Foundation and Higher tiers.

However, the process of importing and organising examinations at Post-16 level is more complex.

Importing Basedata from AQA

AQA is the only Examination Board that shares the concept inherent to Exams Organiser where the units and certifications for which a student will be entered on their way to a GCE in Classical Civilisation, for example, are assembled into a single framework (the example described in the opening paragraph of this section).

The following graphic shows how Examinations Organiser displays this basedata.

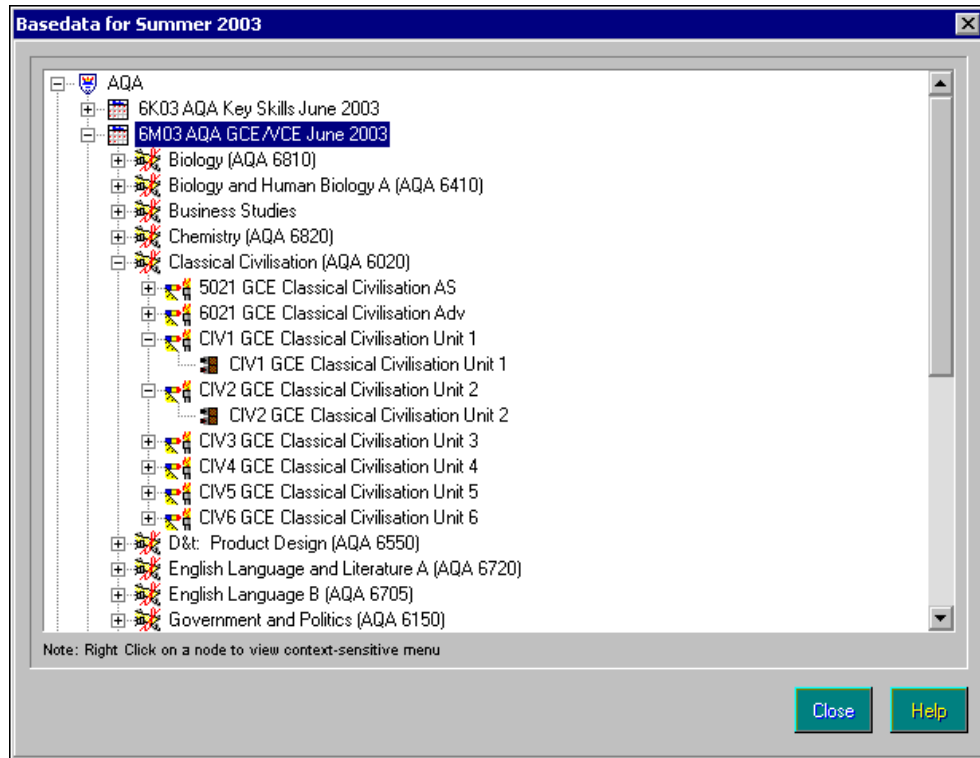


The top level nodes (e.g. 6020 CLASSICAL CIVILISATION) display the information from the syllabus file (S file) and the second level nodes (e.g. 6021 GCE CLASSICAL CIVILISATION ADV) display information from the options file (O file).

In the previous example, the only basedata that is going to be imported is Classical Civilisation. In the current Season (Summer 2003), candidates are expected to be entered for all units, either as first attempts or retakes and there is also the possibility of certification claims at both A and AS level. Therefore, all items at option level have been selected for import. The S file record in the top level has also been selected.

NOTE: The check box will display a black tick on a white background to denote the selection of a complete syllabus. If the check box displays a dark grey tick on a light grey background, this indicates that some options have been selected for the corresponding syllabus but that the syllabus record is not selected.

Following a successful import of the required data, it is suggested that you view the basedata tree to check that the correct data has been imported. The structure displayed in this case will exactly reflect the structure of the basedata.



This graphic illustrates that:

- The Examination Board from which you have imported basedata is **AQA**.
- The Series into which basedata has been imported is **6M03**, which has been labelled **AQA GCE/VCE June 2003** in order to give a meaningful Series name.
- The Award that you are viewing is **Classical Civilisation (AQA 6020)**. The Award is always displayed at level 3 in the basedata tree.
- For Classical Civilisation, you elected to import two certifications without components – **5021 GCE Classical Civilisation AS** and **6021 GCE Classical Civilisation Adv**.
- For Classical Civilisation, you also elected to import six units with components – **CIV1 GCE Classical Civilisation Unit 1**, **CIV2 GCE Classical Civilisation Unit 2**, etc. The options (or elements, as they are known in Examinations Organiser) are always displayed at level 4 in the basedata tree.
- Beneath each of the six units is a single component - **CIV1 GCE Classical Civilisation Unit 1**, **CIV2 GCE Classical Civilisation Unit 2**, etc.

The following icons are used to represent the various levels in the navigation tree.



Award icon



Element icon



Component icon

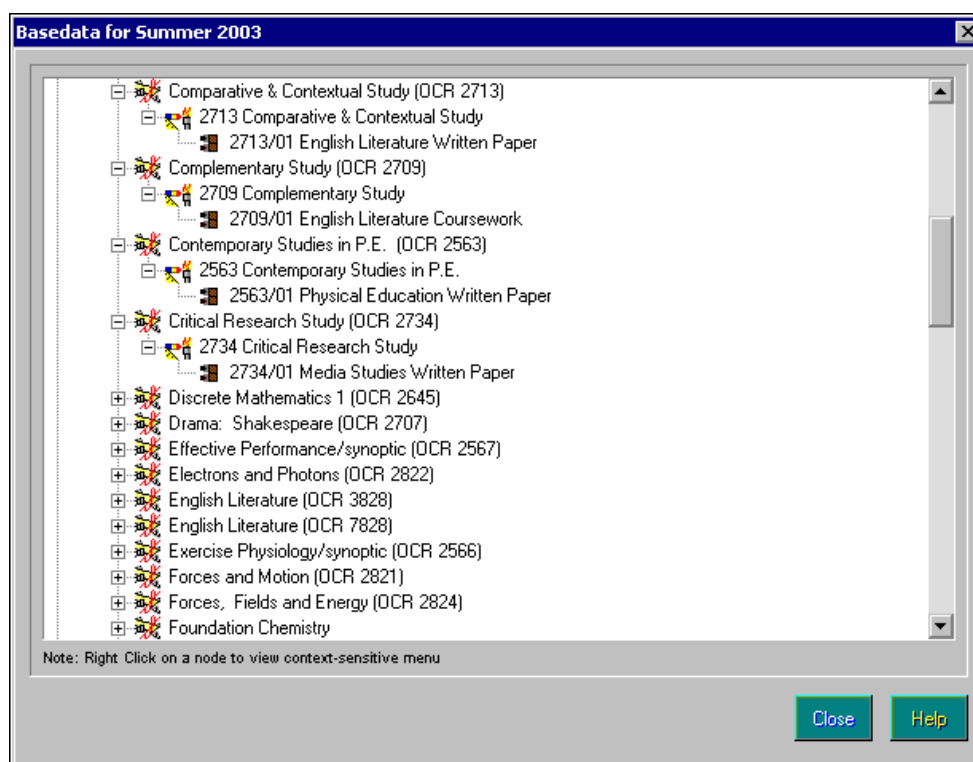
NOTE: The code assigned to the syllabus record (6020) is imported as the code of the Award. It is not possible to enter a candidate for a syllabus record as they must be entered for one or more elements of that syllabus.

With basedata structured in this way, all associated items, units or certifications will be displayed in an ordered fashion and will be associated with each other when you create Templates or Marksheetworks to manage the entry processes for the candidates on the Classical Civilisation course. Applying this structure to the basedata also helps when running a report in Examinations Organiser where the selection of an Award is required.

Importing and Structuring Basedata from Other Examination Boards

All other Examinations Boards (Edexcel, OCR, WJEC, CCEA) have adopted a convention whereby, in general, each unit and each certification in the options file (O file) has its own header in the syllabus file (S file), with a limited number of items possessing options.

If you import basedata from OCR, selecting items from both the syllabus and options nodes, the basedata structure will be similar to that displayed in the following graphic.

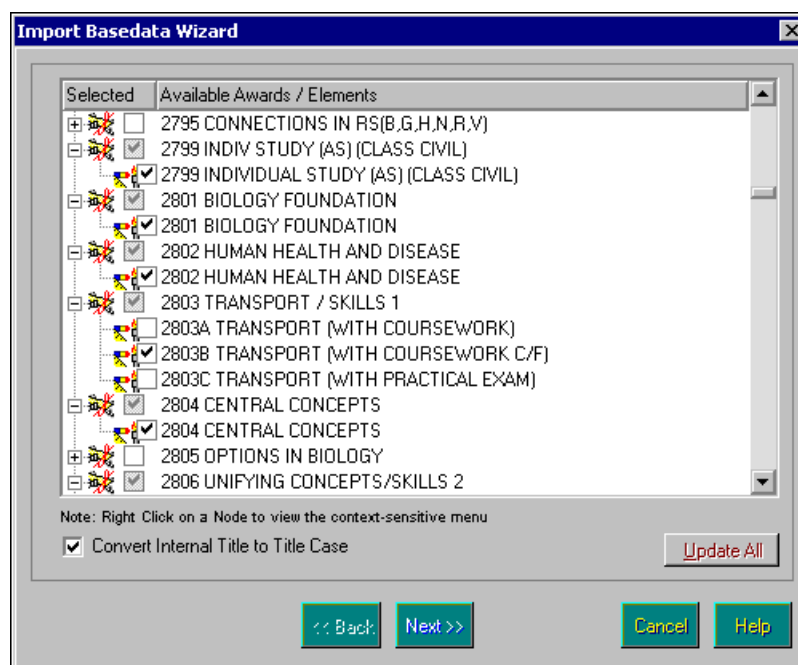


Each of the Awards displayed is associated with only one element. For example, the **Comparative & Contextual Study (OCR 2713)** Award has only one element titled **2713 Comparative & Contextual Study**.

As these elements are units, each of them has one component. Unfortunately, they are displayed in what would appear to be a random order, as the basedata tree displays the Awards alphabetically. This could potentially cause confusion for the Exams Officer when they are navigating through the basedata tree, as the list of Awards could be quite long. It would therefore be difficult to find the required Award in the list unless you know its exact title.

As each Award is associated with just one element, if you created a Template or a Marksheet with the basedata in this format, no more than one item will be displayed. To make the resulting Templates and Marksheets contain more than one item, it is necessary to structure the basedata in a similar way to the AQA basedata, as described in the previous section.

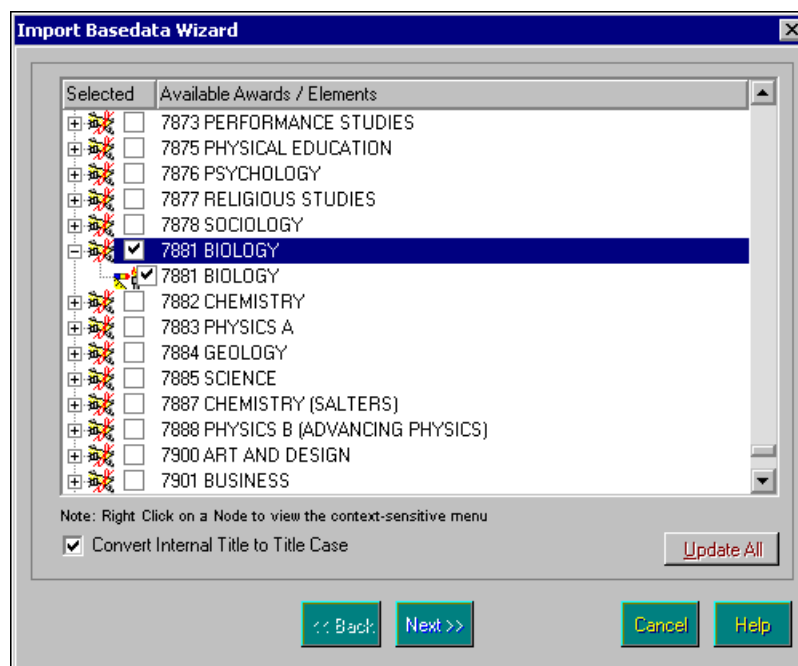
The following graphic displays the items of OCR GCE/VCE basedata that have been selected for import.



This time only the second level nodes, representing the units you wish to offer, have been selected.

NOTE: If the check box displays a dark grey tick on a light grey background, this indicates that some options have been selected for the corresponding syllabus. The check box will display a black tick on a white background to denote the selection of the syllabus to import as an Award.

The certifications will be displayed further down the same list.



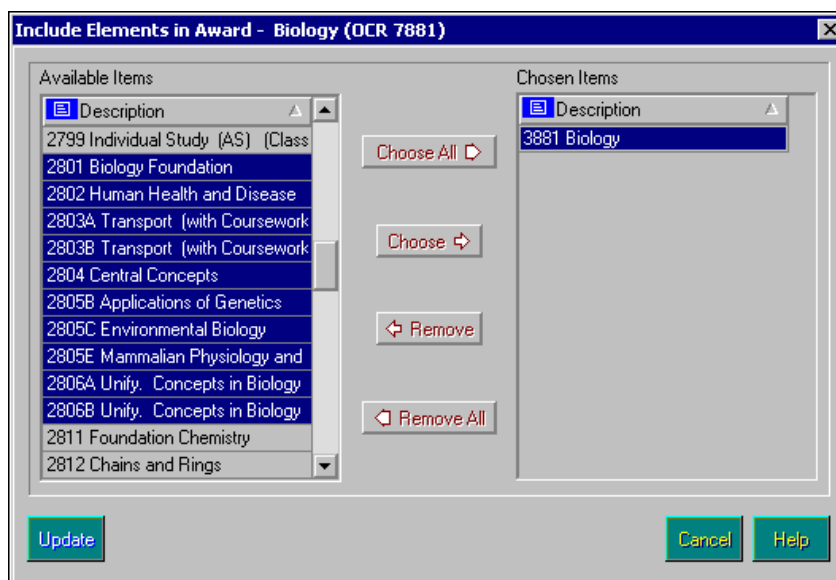
The top level nodes (e.g. 7881 BIOLOGY) display the information from the syllabus file (S file) and the second level nodes (e.g. also 7881 BIOLOGY) display the certification information from the options file (O file).

Select the A level certification option 7881 (from the second level node), together with its parent S file record (from the top level), as this will be used as the Award. You might also wish to do the same for the AS certification (in this case 3881, which is not shown). If you do select the AS certification, you should select only the O file item from the second level node. You should not select the S file item from the top level node.

Once the basedata has been successfully imported, the units selected for import will still not be displayed in the basedata tree. To display these units, you must attach them to an Award.

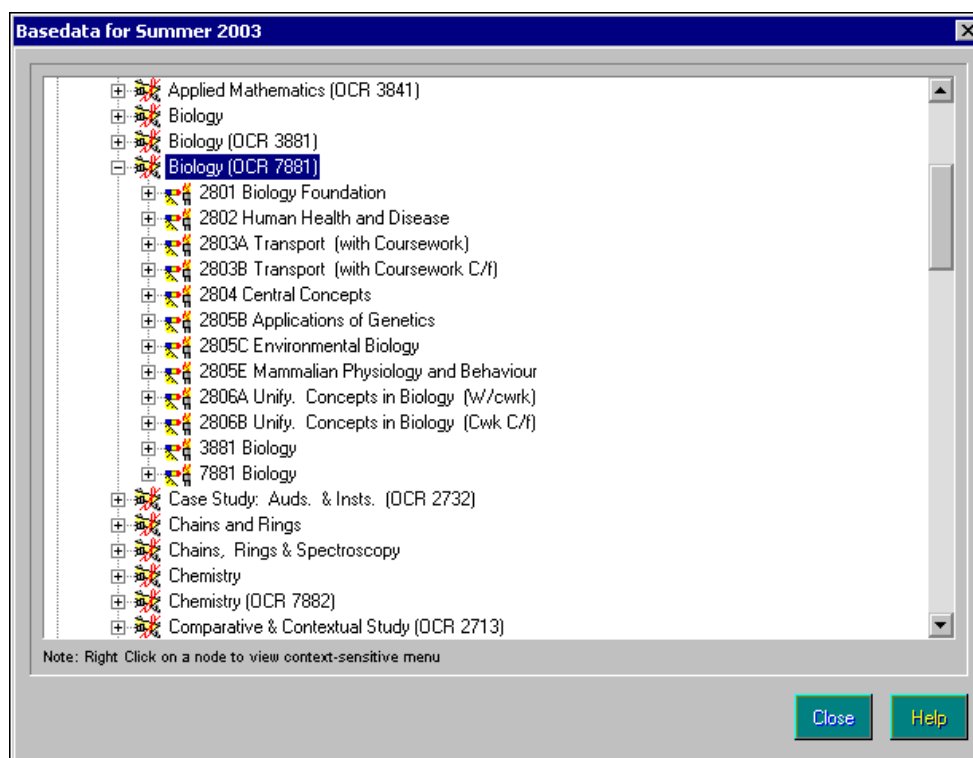
This is achieved by right clicking the Award in the basedata tree (7881 in the previous graphic) and select **Include an Existing Element** from the pop-up menu.

The certification record 7881 will automatically be attached as it was imported with the Award. Navigate to the AS certification 3881 and select it from the list. You should then locate the units and attach them to the Award. These should be easier to locate as they are now arranged in Code order and therefore they are clustered together.



Select the required Elements by double clicking their names in the **Available Items** frame or single clicking the name then clicking the **Choose** button. Multiple Elements can be selected by holding down the **Ctrl** key and single clicking each name, then clicking the **Choose** button. Select all the Elements by clicking the **Choose All** button. All selected Elements will be displayed in the **Chosen Items** frame of the chooser.

This will attach the units to the Award and you will then find that the expanded Award resembles the earlier AQA example, as shown in the following graphic.



As a result, more meaningful Templates and Marksheets can be created (i.e. more than one item can be included in an Entries Marksheet).

Chapter 4: Improving Your Basedata Structure

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Introduction

Imagine that you have already imported basedata from Edexcel or OCR GCE in its original, untouched format. The first graphic displayed in *Importing and Structuring Basedata from Other Examination Boards* on page 12 demonstrates this scenario, where each Element is attached to a different Award.

Once you have reorganised your basedata structure by attaching any associated units and certifications to an appropriate Award, as described in the previous chapter, you may wish to tidy the basedata structure by detaching the original, unwanted Awards and Elements so that they do not appear in the basedata tree.

The purpose of the Award in the basedata tree is purely to cluster items into manageable and meaningful groups for use in Examinations Organiser. You must therefore decide whether an Award appears in a specific series or not and the Elements you wish to associate with that Award.

The only restriction that Examinations Organiser imposes is that it does not allow you to detach an Element from an Award, if by doing so it becomes ‘orphaned’ (i.e. the Element is not associated with any Award). This would effectively make it disappear from the basedata tree and it would not reappear until you had attached it to another Award. If this restriction was not imposed, it would not be obvious by looking at the basedata tree that the Element exists.


Detaching Unwanted Awards and Elements

IMPORTANT NOTE: You should only detach Awards and Elements once you have reorganised your basedata, as described in the previous chapter.

Detaching an Element from an Award

1. Select **Focus** | **Basedata** from the Menu Bar to open the **Basedata for Season** dialog.

2. Navigate to the fourth level by clicking the + button to expand the navigation tree and highlight the required Element.


 *Element icon*

3. Right click the required Element and select **Detach Element From Award** from the pop-up menu to detach the selected Element.
4. A message dialog will ask you to confirm that you wish to detach the selected Element. Click the **Yes** button to confirm your choice.

Detaching an Award from a Series

You would use this functionality if you have imported an Award in error, for example. It deletes the selected Award and any links between the Award and its associated Elements for the associated Series.

1. Select **Focus | Basedata** from the Menu Bar to open the **Basedata for Season** dialog.
2. Navigate to the third level by clicking the + button to expand the navigation tree and highlight the required Award.

 *Award icon*

The series is represented on the second level of the navigation tree.

3. Right click the required Award and select **Remove Award** from the pop-up menu to remove the selected Award.
4. A message dialog will ask you to confirm that you wish to delete the selected Award. Click the **Yes** button to confirm.

You can detach an Award from a series without having first detached its elements and still delete the award, providing it is not attached to any other series.

If you detach an Award from a series without detaching its elements, the elements remain attached to the Award. This means that if you then reattach it, the previously linked elements will remain attached. It also means that if you are using the Award in another season and you request an Award-based report that runs across seasons, the previously attached elements might still appear.

Unless you have specific reasons for retaining the element associations, it is advised that you remove them prior to removal of the Award from the series.

Deleting an Award

This allows you to delete any Award from Examinations Organiser that is no longer attached to any Series.

1. Select **Tools | School Setup | Exam Award** from the Menu Bar to open the **Award** browser.
2. Highlight the required Award and click the **View/Edit** button to open the **Award Details** form.

3. Click the **Delete Record** button on the Focus Bar.



If any Element attached to the Award you are attempting to delete has been included in a Marksheet, a warning message will advise you that results exist for the selected Award and that if the Award is deleted, its associated data may be difficult to access. The data attached to the Element can still be accessed at a later date, if required.

NOTE: The use of the term 'Results' in the warning message could mean results, entries or forecast grades, etc.

This message will not be displayed if you have detached the elements before attempting to detach the award.

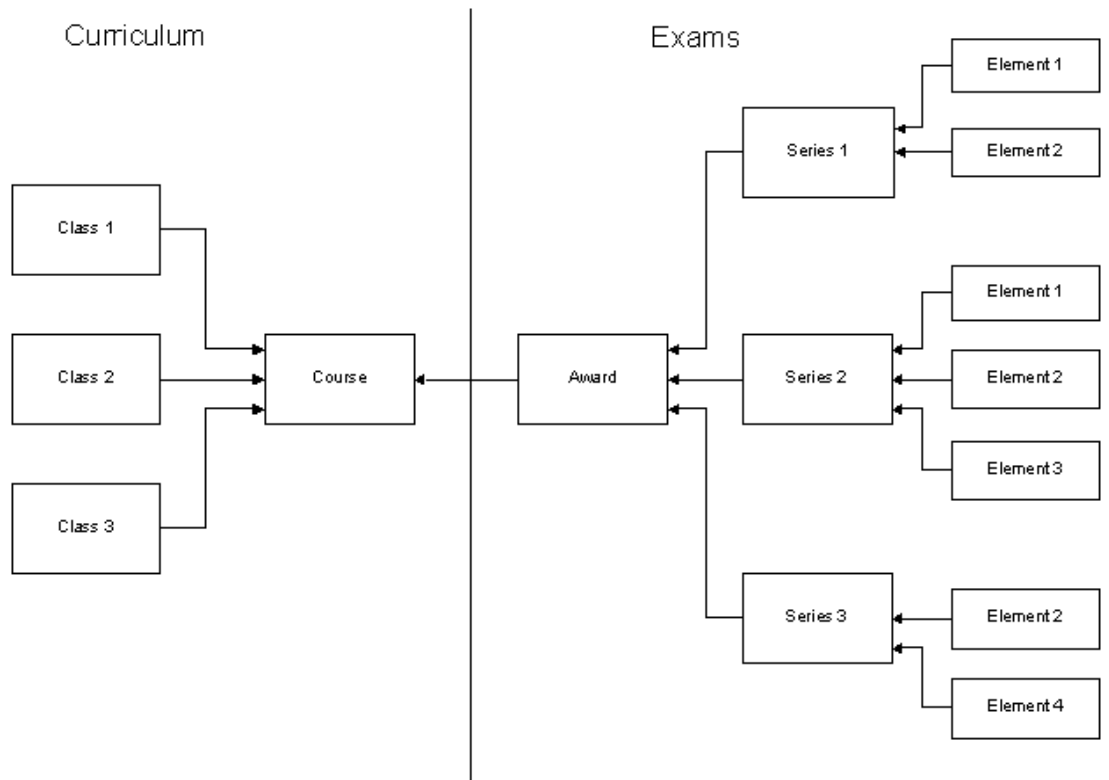
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Summary

The following diagram displays the relationships described in this guide. Core Integrator currently manages the tasks on the **Curriculum** side of the diagram. The tools provided in Examinations Organiser enable the Exams Officer to maintain the tasks on the **Exams** side of the diagram, as cleanly and unambiguously as possible.



Classes deliver curriculum content to the students on a Course.

The Course members are all pursuing the same, or closely related, qualification aim.

The Award is the collection of items that, over time, the students on the Course require for the achievement of their qualification aim.

In successive Seasons, Series contain the successive opportunities for course members to fulfil the steps towards their qualification aim.

The Elements are the 'enterables' – the certifications, units etc. – that the course members require.

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