# OCR - Oxford Cambridge and RSATeacher Delivery Guide Pure Mathematics: Algebra

| **Specification** | **Ref.** | **Learning outcomes** | **Notes** | **Notation** | **Exclusions** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PURE MATHEMATICS: ALGEBRA (1)** | | | | | |
| Algebraic language | Ma1 | Know and be able to use vocabulary and notation appropriate to the subject at this level. | Vocabulary includes constant, coefficient, expression, equation, function, identity, index, term, variable, unknown. |  |  |
| Solution of equations | \* | Be able to solve linear equations in one unknown. | Including those containing brackets, fractions and the unknown on both sides of the equation. |  |  |
|  | \* | Be able to change the subject of a formula. | Including cases where the new subject appears on both sides of the original formula, and cases involving squares, square roots and reciprocals. |  |  |
|  | a2 | Be able to solve quadratic equations. | By factorising, completing the square, using the formula and graphically.  Includes quadratic equations in a function of the unknown. |  |  |
|  | a3 | Be able to find the discriminant of a quadratic function and understand its significance. | The condition for distinct real roots of  is:  Discriminant > 0. The condition for repeated roots is: Discriminant = 0.  The condition for no real roots is: Discriminant < 0. | For  the discriminant is . | Complex roots. |
|  | a4 | Be able to solve linear simultaneous equations in two unknowns. | By elimination and by substitution. |  |  |
|  | a5 | Be able to solve simultaneous equations in two unknowns with one equation linear and one quadratic. | By elimination and by substitution. |  |  |
|  | a6 | Know the significance of points of intersection of two graphs with relation to the solution of equations. | Including simultaneous equations. |  |  |
| Inequalities | a7 | Be able to solve linear inequalities in one variable. Be able to represent and interpret linear inequalities graphically e.g. | Including those containing brackets and fractions. |  |  |
| a8 | Be able to solve quadratic inequalities in one variable. Be able to represent and interpret quadratic inequalities graphically e.g.. | Algebraic and graphical treatment of solution of quadratic inequalities.  For regions defined by inequalities learners must state clearly which regions are included and whether the boundaries are included. No particular shading convention is expected. |  | Complex roots |
| a9 | Be able to express solutions of inequalities through correct use of ‘and’ and ‘or’, or by using set notation. | Learners will be expected to express solutions to quadratic inequalities in an appropriate version of one of the following ways.   * or  * and |  |  |
| Surds  Indices | a10 | Be able to use and manipulate surds. |  |  |  |
| a11 | Be able to rationalise the denominator of a surd. | e.g. |  |  |
| a12 | Understand and be able to use the laws of indices for all rational exponents. |  |  |  |
| a13 | Understand and be able to use negative, fractional and zero indices. | ( ), |  |  |
| Proportion | a14 | Understand and use proportional relationships and their graphs. | For one variable directly or inversely proportional to a power or root of another. |  |  |
| **PURE MATHEMATICS: ALGEBRA (2)** | | | | | |
| Partial fractions | a15 | Be able to express algebraic fractions as partial fractions. | Fractions with constant or linear numerators and denominators up to three linear terms. Includes squared linear terms in denominator. |  | Fractions with a quadratic or cubic which cannot be factorised in the denominator. |
| Rational expressions | a16 | Be able to simplify rational expressions. | Including factorising, cancelling and simple algebraic division. Any correct method of algebraic division may be used. |  | Division by non-linear expressions. |

# Thinking Conceptually

**General approaches:**

Prior to working with the subject content of this section of the specification, it is essential that learners have gained a thorough understanding of a number of topics at GCSE level such as the four rules of number including the priority of operations, signed numbers, fractions, algebra including substitution, bracket expansion, simplification of terms and factorisation, products, factors, index notation, graphs and transformations.

Learners’ understanding should be deepened by a hands-on approach to this subject as they tend to struggle with the algebra involved.

**Common misconceptions or difficulties learners may have:**

Learners make many mistakes when using indices. Their weaknesses lie primarily in negative and fractional indices but also a common mistake is to wrongly think that. A common misconception is thinking that if the power is negative, the result must be negative.

Also misconceptions concerning negative numbers lead to errors in using the laws of indices as learners wrongly think that two negatives always make a positive when adding / subtracting negative numbers.

A common misconception when using surds is to think that  and many learners find the concept  very challenging.

Very often when learners are solving simultaneous equations, they make a minor algebraic error or a transposition error.

One common misconception when working with quadratic functions is that learners only give the positive value as the square root of a positive number. They tend to forget about the negative value being a solution as well.

Also when solving an equation such as, often they are able to factorise and get  and then just give the solution and forget about the solution.

Completing the square of a quadratic polynomial requires learners to have a high level of skills in algebra. As the foundation of algebra is basic arithmetic, many misconceptions in algebra are found to be rooted in misconceptions in arithmetic.

Learners often make mistakes when completing the square when the coefficient of  is not .

Many learners fail to realise that completing the square of a quadratic function reveals the maximum or minimum value of the function it defines.

Many learners struggle to recognise that.

Some learners might not be able to find integer solutions when solving quadratic functions and therefore conclude that no solutions exist.

Many learners find the solving of a quadratic equation very difficult but even when they do manage to solve the quadratic equation; they still do not always possess an understanding of the meaning of their solutions. Very often when learners are given quadratic word problems, they have difficulty comprehending the context and are unable to formulate the equation to be solved.

A persistent misconception when solving inequalities is expressing inequalities as equations. As many learners think that inequalities and equations require the same mathematical solution process, they treat problems involving inequalities in exactly the same manner as equations, and assume the questions require similar processes. Very often learners treat inequalities as equations and solve the equations then they simply put the sign back. Learners often forget the rule that multiplying and dividing by a negative number changes the direction of the inequality.

Also, even when learners find the solution to inequalities, they do not always possess an understanding of the meaning of their solutions.

A common misconception when manipulating polynomials algebraically is failing to understand that two expressions that appear to be different can still be equivalent. Learners have difficulty recognising that the properties and operations for integers is the same as that for polynomials.

When simplifying rational expressions, learners make errors related to their prior knowledge on common fractions. As they try to simplify the rational expressions, learners follow certain procedures without full understanding. As the learners do so, they retrieve wrong or incomplete rules that lead them to make errors. The most common errors and misconceptions learners make due to their prior knowledge on simplifying common fractions are errors to do with cancellation, partial cancellation and like terms.

Learners have a limited understanding of the relationship between graphs and functions,

When decomposing rational functions into partial fractions, learners make errors related to their prior knowledge on common fractions and algebra. Learners follow certain procedures without full understanding which leads to errors.

# Thinking Contextually

Algebra is a fundamental skill that will set learners up for topics later in the course:

**Straight Lines** – learners need to be able to solve equations graphically and this involves drawing a straight line graph.

**Circles** – learners need a good understanding of how to complete the square when finding the centre and radius of a circle.

**Binomial expressions** – learners need a good understanding of the laws of indices when expanding binomial expressions.

**Integration** – learners need a good understanding of partial fractions to be able to integrate functions using partial fractions.

Many learners fail to make connections between what they are learning and how that knowledge will be used. They struggle to understand the concepts in mathematics unless they can see the relevance to their everyday lives.

Learners will be more successful if they investigate mathematics through real life scenarios as they can see how these concepts are actually used outside of the classroom. They will then be able to discover the meaningful relationship between abstract ideas and practical applications in the real world. This in turn, will lead to greater motivation, enjoyment through discovery, improved confidence, independent thinking and better retention of skills.

# Resources

| **Title** | **Organisation** | **Description** | **Ref** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| [A guide for students including examples, question practice on key topics and suggested reading before starting the A Level.](http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/373371-bridging-the-gap-between-gcse-and-as-a-level-mathematics-a-student-guide.docx) | OCR | A guide for students including examples, question practice on key topics and suggested reading before starting the A Level. | a1-a14 |
| [Section Check In: Pure Mathematics Algebra](http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/404609-section-check-in-pure-mathematics-algebra.docx) | OCR | 10 questions with worked solution | a1-a16 |
| [Equations and Inequalities](http://mei.org.uk/files/sow/03-equations-and-inequalities.pdf) | MEI | MEI curriculum notes on equations and inequalities | a1 – a9 |
| [What is a Quadratic Equation?](http://www.virtualnerd.com/algebra-1/quadratic-equations-functions/graphing-solutions/graphing-solution-definitions-examples/equation-definition) | Virtual Nerd | This video resource introduces learners to quadratic equations and the methods of solving them. | a2 |
| [Completing the Square Example](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lS0ork9JvSc) | Exam Solutions | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to complete the square of the quadratic polynomial | a2 |
| [Completing The Square](http://www.mathcentre.ac.uk/resources/uploaded/mc-ty-completingsquare2-2009-1.pdf) | Mathscentre | This comprehensive resource covers completing the square. It includes worked examples and exercises for the learners to complete along with answers. | a2 |
| [Completing the Square](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FD7vZ5jt0yg) | Exam Solutions | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to complete the square of the quadratic polynomial | a2 |
| [How to Complete the Square For Quadratics](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oVmtQ88gt0) | Foxmaths | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to complete the square using two examples. | a2 |
| [Completing the Square](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/FSMA%20Completing%20the%20square%20student.pdf) | Nuffield foundation | This concise resource demonstrates how to complete the square of the quadratic polynomial and highlights an application of completing the square. | a2 |
| [Completing The Square](http://www.mathsmutt.co.uk/files/com%20squares.htm) | Maths Mutt | This excellent resource demonstrates how to complete the square using numerous detailed examples. | a2 |
| [Sketching Quadratic Graphs By Completing the Square](http://www.onlinemathlearning.com/sketch-quadratic-graph.html) | OnlineMaths Learning.com | This resource includes a number of video clips and demonstrates how to complete the square to sketch a quadratic graph, locate the maximum or minimum points and the equation of the line of symmetry. | a2 |
| [Solving Quadratics by Factorising](https://corbettmaths.com/2013/05/03/solving-quadratics-by-factorising/) | Corbettmaths | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to solve quadratics by factorising. | a2 |
| [Real World Examples of Quadratic Equations](https://www.mathsisfun.com/algebra/quadratic-equation-real-world.html) | Maths is Fun | This excellent resource highlights where quadratic equations are used in the real world and then uses completing the square and the quadratic formula to solve the real life problems. It also demonstrates how to solve a real life problem graphically. | a2 |
| [What is the Discriminant?](http://www.virtualnerd.com/algebra-1/quadratic-equations-functions/discriminant-quadratic-formula/discriminant/discriminant-definition) | Virtual Nerd | This video resource introduces learners to the method of calculating the discriminant of a quadratic equation. | a3 |
| [Quadratic Theory: The Discriminant](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/higher/maths/algebra/quadratic_theory/revision/4/) | BBC | This excellent resource introduces learners to the discriminant of quadratic equations and determines the number and nature of the roots. | a3 |
| [How do you find the Discriminant of a Quadratic Equation with 2 solutions?](http://www.virtualnerd.com/algebra-1/quadratic-equations-functions/discriminant-quadratic-formula/discriminant/discriminant-two-solutions-example) | Virtual Nerd | This video resource demonstrates how to calculate the discriminant of a quadratic equation. | a3 |
| [Discriminants and Determining the Number of Real Roots of a Quadratic Equation](https://www.mytutor.co.uk/answers/801/A-Level/Maths/Discriminants+and+determining+the+number+of+real+roots+of+a+quadratic+equation) | My tutor | This excellent short resource introduces learners to the discriminant of quadratic equations and determines the number and nature of the roots. It includes four questions for learners to attempt, along with answers. | a3 |
| [Roots of a Quadratic Equation: Discriminant](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awL6Znlemoo) | Exam Solutions | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to solve quadratic equations using the quadratic formula. It then demonstrates how to use the discriminant to determine the number and nature of the roots of the quadratic equation and then relates the results to a graph. | a3 |
| [Examples on the Nature of Roots of a Quadratic Equation](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zepJRXw-3o4) | Exam Solutions | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to use the discriminant to determine the number and nature of the roots of the quadratic equation and then relates the results to a graph. | a3 |
| [Quadratic Functions and Equations](http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zs9wxnb/revision/7) | BBC | This concise, interactive resource demonstrates how to calculate the discriminant of quadratic equations and determine the nature of the roots. It includes a test of 12 questions and the learners can check their score. | a3 |
| [Exam Questions – Roots and Discriminant](https://www.examsolutions.net/tutorials/exam-questions-roots-and-discriminant/) | Exam Solutions | This interactive resource offers learners the opportunity to practice their understanding of quadratic equations (including the discriminant and roots) to help address some misconceptions. | a3 |
| [Solve Quadratic Equations Using Discriminants](http://www.analyzemath.com/Equations/Quadratic-1.html) | Free Mathematics Tutorials | This interactive resource offers learners the opportunity to practice solving quadratic equations using discriminants to help address some misconceptions. | a3 |
| [Simultaneous Linear and Quadratic](https://www.mathssite.com/resources/docs/maths/keystage4/gcsemaths/ma2/quadratic/a-simultaneous-linear-and-quadratic.pdf) | Maths Site | This resource offers learners the opportunity to practice their understanding of simultaneous equations to help address some misconceptions. Answers are given to the questions. | a4 and a5 |
| [Simultaneous Equations – Linear / Quadratic](http://www.mathsteacher.com.au/year10/ch13_quadratic_graphs/10_simult_equations/simquad.htm) | Mathsteacher | This concise resource demonstrates how to solve simultaneous equations when one is linear and one is quadratic. Detailed algebraic and graphical solutions are given. | a5 |
| [Simultaneous Equations (Linear and Quadratic)](https://corbettmaths.com/2013/05/07/simultaneous-equations-linear-and-quadratic/) | Corbettmaths | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to solve simultaneous equations when one equation is linear and the other is a quadratic. | a5 |
| [Simultaneous Equations – Linear and Non-Linear](http://www.onlinemathlearning.com/simultaneous-linear-quadratic-2.html) | OnlineMaths Learning.com | This resource includes two video clips and demonstrates how to solve simultaneous equations when one is linear and one is quadratic. | a5 |
| [Systems of Linear and Quadratic Equations](http://www.phschool.com/atschool/new_york/phmath07_intalg/IANYSENY06.pdf) | Learning Standards for Mathematics | This excellent comprehensive resource demonstrates how to solve simultaneous equations (when one equation is linear and one is quadratic) graphically and algebraically. It includes worked examples and exercises for the learners to attempt. | a5 |
| [Solve Inequalities That Contain Fractions](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=410aoajrAu4) | TenMarks Amazon | This short video demonstrates how to solve linear inequalities that contain fractions. | a7 |
| [Inequalities in Real Life](https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/inequalities-in-real-life-6439663) | TES | This resource invites learners to solve a problem using inequalities | a7 |
| [Solving Real Life Linear Inequalities](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnXcIS-CD7M) | Sarah Messing | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to solve a real life problem using inequalities. | a7 |
| [Solving Inequalities](http://www.cimt.org.uk/ske/F6/Text.pdf) | CIMT | This comprehensive resource introduces learners to solving inequalities. It includes detailed worked examples and exercises for the learners to complete. | a7 and a8 |
| [Inequalities](https://revisionmaths.com/advanced-level-maths-revision/pure-maths/algebra/inequalities) | Revision Maths | This concise resource demonstrates how to solve linear and quadratic inequalities. | a7 and a8 |
| [Inequalities](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ2NE4emOgs) | mathstutorbiz | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to solve linear and quadratic inequalities | a7 and a8 |
| [Solving Inequalities](http://www.mathcentre.ac.uk/resources/uploaded/mc-ty-inequalities-2009-1.pdf) | Mathscentre | This comprehensive resource introduces learners to solving inequalities. It includes worked examples and exercises for the learners to complete. | a8 |
| [Solving Quadratic Inequalities](https://www.mathsisfun.com/algebra/inequality-quadratic-solving.html) | Maths is Fun | This excellent interactive resource demonstrates how to solve quadratic inequalities. It includes ten questions for the learners to complete with detailed answers. | a8 |
| [How do you Solve A Quadratic Inequality Algebraically?](http://www.virtualnerd.com/algebra-2/quadratics/inequalities/graphing-solving-inequalities/solve-inequality-algebraically) | Virtual Nerd | This short video resource demonstrates how to solve a quadratic inequality algebraically. | a8 |
| [Solving Quadratic Inequalities (Application)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F76CZmNlDv4) | Myhre Math MCHS | This excellent video resource demonstrates how quadratic inequalities are used in the real world. | a8 |
| [Solving Compound Inequalities](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFXo2ws-roU) | Maths Meeting | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to solve compound inequalities. It also introduces learners to expressing solutions with interval notation. | a9 |
| [Interval Notation and Linear Inequalities](https://online.math.uh.edu/Math1300-unpaid/ch1/s17/1300_Ch1_Section7.pdf) | University of Houston | This comprehensive resource gives detailed examples of how to write the solutions to linear inequalities using interval notation. | a9 |
| [Writing Compound Inequalities in interval notation and graphing(Part 1)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPyphMG3haI) | Maths Meeting | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to express solutions to inequalities using interval notation. | a9 |
| [Writing Compound Inequalities in interval notation and graphing(Part 2)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdIeBjdyPxs) | Maths Meeting | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to express solutions to inequalities using interval notation. | a9 |
| [Surds](https://revisionmaths.com/advanced-level-maths-revision/pure-maths/algebra/surds) | Revision Maths | This introductory resource covers the addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of surds. | a10 |
| [Surds – Application To Adding / Subtracting](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1Jm6HaUWWo) | Dani Wright | This short video resource looks at a real life application of adding surds. | a10 |
| [Surds](http://mathematics.laerd.com/maths/surds-intro.php) | Laerd Mathematics | This excellent interactive resource is an introduction to surds. It includes twenty questions for learners to complete along with detailed solutions. | a10 and a11 |
| [Relevance Of Surds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4K5y2K83Zrc) | Maths With Jacob | This short video resource highlights some areas where surds are used in real life. | a10 and a11 |
| [Surds and Indices](http://mei.org.uk/files/sow/01-surds-indices.pdf) | MEI | MEI curriculum notes on surds and indices | a10, a11, a12 and a13 |
| [Indices and Surds](https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/A-level_Mathematics/OCR/C1/Indices_and_Surds) | Wikibooks | This introductory resource covers the laws of indices including negative, zero and fractional indices. | a10, a11, a12 and a13 |
| [Surds and Other Roots](http://www.mathcentre.ac.uk/resources/uploaded/mc-ty-surds-2009-1.pdf) | Mathscentre | This comprehensive resource covers surds and demonstrates how to simplify and rationalise expressions containing surds. It includes worked examples and exercises for the learners to complete along with answers. | a11 |
| [Indices](https://revisionmaths.com/advanced-level-maths-revision/pure-maths/algebra/indices) | Revision Maths | This introductory resource covers the laws of indices. | a12 and a13 |
| [Indices or Powers](http://www.mathcentre.ac.uk/resources/uploaded/mc-ty-indicespowers-2009-1.pdf) | Mathscentre | This comprehensive resource covers the laws of indices. It includes worked examples and exercises for the learners to complete along with answers. | a12 and a13 |
| [Advanced Laws of Indices](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyLANy096j0) | Gaudianista | This video resource introduces learners to the  laws of indices including fractional and negative indices. | a12 and a13 |
| [More Advanced Indices](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbwSKpJkR2s) | The Maths Man | This excellent video resource includes worked examples using the laws of indices including fractional and negative indices. | a13 |
| [Exponents in the Real World](http://passyworldofmathematics.com/exponents-in-the-real-world/) | Passy’s World of Mathematics | This informative resource looks at how exponents are used in the real world. | a14 |
| [Interpreting Proportional Relationship Graphs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOVk30fK9NU) | School21 | This video resource demonstrates how to use real life proportional relationships and their graphs. | a14 |
| [Partial Fraction Decomposition](https://www.khanacademy.org/math/algebra-home/alg-rational-expr-eq-func/alg-partial-fraction/v/partial-fraction-expansion-1) | Khan Academy | This challenging video resource introduces partial fraction decomposition. | a15 |
| [Partial Fractions](http://www.mathcentre.ac.uk/resources/uploaded/mc-ty-partialfractions-2009-1.pdf) | Mathscentre | This comprehensive resource demonstrates how to use partial fractions. It includes worked examples and questions for learners to attempt (along with the answers). | a15 |
| [Partial Fractions](https://www.mathsisfun.com/algebra/partial-fractions.html) | Maths is Fun | This excellent interactive resource demonstrates how to decompose rational functions into partial fractions. It includes ten questions for the learners to complete with detailed answers. | a15 |
| [Partial Fractions](http://montroseacademymaths.weebly.com/uploads/2/7/6/7/27674275/2_-_partial_fractions_notes.pdf) | Montrose Academy | This excellent concise resource demonstrates how to decompose rational functions into partial fractions. | a15 |
| [Using Partial Fractions with the Binomial Expansion](https://www.examsolutions.net/tutorials/using-partial-fractions-with-the-binomial-expansion/) | Exam Solutions | This excellent video resource demonstrates how to express a fraction in partial fractions before using the binomial expansion. | a15 |
| [Algebra](http://mei.org.uk/files/sow/27-algebra.pdf) | MEI | MEI curriculum notes on algebraic fractions and rational expressions | a15 and a16 |
| [How to Simplify Rational Expressions](http://www.mathwarehouse.com/algebra/rational-expression/how-to-simplify-rational-expressions.php) | Mathwarehouse | This interactive resource demonstrates how to simplify rational expressions and includes worksheets for learners to attempt (along with the answers). | a16 |
| [Simplifying Rational Expressions Part 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfToPZqbvu4) | Al Richards | This short video resource is the first part of a two part lesson. It demonstrates how to simplify rational expressions. | a16 |
| [Simplifying Rational Expressions Part 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AL6RdmKxPaE) | Al Richards | This excellent video resource is the second part of a two part lesson and continues with the simplification of rational expressions. | a16 |
| [Rational Expressions](http://tutorial.math.lamar.edu/Classes/Alg/RationalExpressions.aspx) | Paul’s Online Notes | This challenging resource demonstrates how to simplify rational expressions. It includes questions for the learners to attempt along with detailed solutions. | a16 |

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