AQA

Level 3 Certificate
MATHEMATICAL STUDIES

Paper 1

June 2026

Preliminary Material

To be opened and issued to candidates on
Sunday 1 March 2026 or as soon as possible after that date.

REMINDER TO CANDIDATES

YOU MUST **NOT** BRING THIS PRELIMINARY MATERIAL
WITH YOU WHEN YOU SIT THE EXAMINATION.
A CLEAN COPY WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE.

INFORMATION

This Preliminary Material is to be seen by teachers and candidates **only**, for use during preparation for the examination on Tuesday 12 May 2026. It **cannot** be used by anyone else for any other purpose, other than as stated in the instructions issued, until after the examination date has passed. It must **not** be provided to third parties.

Income Tax and National Insurance 2025–2026

Income tax 2025–2026

Many people in the UK have a personal allowance. This is their annual amount of tax-free income. The standard personal allowance for 2025–2026 is £12 570

However, if your annual income is more than £100 000 your personal allowance is reduced. Your personal allowance goes down by £1 for every £2 that your income is above £100 000

This means that your personal allowance is zero if your income is £125 140 or over.

The rates of income tax you pay depend on how much income you have **above** your personal allowance.

Income tax rates and taxable bands 2025–2026

Income after allowances	Income tax rate
up to £37 700	20%
over £37 700 and up to £125 140	40%
over £125 140	45%

To calculate your income tax

Find your taxable income by subtracting your personal allowance from your annual gross income.

You pay income tax at 20% on the first £37 700 of your taxable income.

You pay income tax at 40% on your taxable income over £37 700 and up to £125 140

You pay income tax at 45% on your taxable income over £125 140

National Insurance (NI) 2025–2026

Percentage NI due	Minimum monthly income	Maximum monthly income	Minimum yearly income	Maximum yearly income
0%		up to £1048		up to £12 570
8%	£1048	£4189	£12 570	£50 270
2%	above £4189		above £50 270	

Examples

A person who has a monthly income of £1800 pays 8% on the amount above £1048

A person who has a yearly income of £62 000 pays 8% on the amount between £12 570 and £50 270 plus 2% of the amount above £50 270

The Party Factory

A factory makes items for many different types of parties.

They have machines that can make different 2D and 3D shapes from cardboard or plastic, which are then decorated to make matching sets or for a particular theme.

At different times of the year the factory will specialise in various themes eg Christmas or Easter, or one-off events such as a royal wedding or coronation.

Additional items are sometimes made at these times, eg rabbit masks at Easter or crowns for a royal wedding.

The machines can be set to produce many different mathematical shapes.

If the machines are producing small simple items such as cups, bowls and plates they can produce the basic shapes at a rate of between 950 and 1000 items per hour.

Larger items made of more than one basic shape take longer so the factory can only produce between 350 and 520 per hour depending on the complexity of the item.

Items then have to be decorated by spray painting or adding transfers. Separate machines can do this relatively quickly to keep up with the production rate.

Student Loans

While studying at university the Student Loans Company (SLC) may lend you money to pay your tuition fees and to pay your living expenses.

The SLC will charge interest on these loans straight away.

Plan 2 interest rates while you're studying

The interest rate on your Student Loan is usually **RPI plus 3%** while studying.

In March 2024, RPI was 4.3%, so the Plan 2 interest rate from September 2024 is 7.3%

The RPI rate is generally set every September for the next year using the rate from March of the same year.

Plan 2 interest rates once you've graduated

After graduating, the interest rate on your Student Loan is usually set at RPI plus anything from 0%–3% depending on your earnings:

- If you earn £28 470 or less, the interest rate is **just RPI**
- If you earn over £28 471 it's **RPI plus a percentage of up to 3%**. This added percentage will start low and rise in line with whatever you're earning. It stops increasing when you start earning more than £51 245, at which point it's capped at 3%

As an example, if you earn £39 858 (approximately halfway between £28 470 and £51 245) the interest applied to your loan that year would be around RPI plus 1.5% (1.5% being half of 3%).

This means that as your income grows, the interest will also grow up to RPI + 3%

The table shows RPI interest rates from 2020 to 2025

Date for RPI	Period applied	RPI rate (%)
March 2020	Sept 2020 – Aug 2021	2.1
March 2021	Sept 2021 – Aug 2022	2.9
March 2022	Sept 2022 – Aug 2023	13.8
March 2023	Sept 2023 – Aug 2024	11.6
March 2024	Sept 2024 – Aug 2025	4.3

Repayment plan 2 – If you started your course between 1 September 2012 and 31 July 2023

You'll only start making repayments if your income is over the repayment threshold, which is currently £28 470 a year, £2372 a month or £547 a week in the UK. If your income falls below the repayment threshold, your repayments will stop and only restart when your income is over the threshold again.

You will pay 9% of your income over the repayment threshold.

Usually, you do not have to start repaying your loan until the April after you complete your studying. However, you can start repaying early and you can also make additional voluntary repayments to the SLC at any time. This can save you money as you will pay less interest.

END OF PRELIMINARY MATERIAL

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