

# A sure thing

## Sure Q software

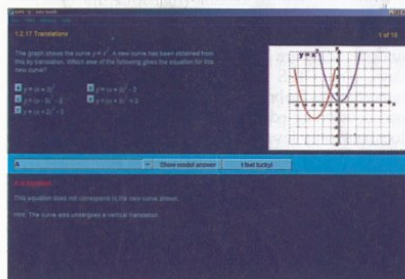
Published by Counting Thoughts  
Scottish Higher physics, biology and maths

Teachers at Harlaw Academy in Aberdeen have been reviewing three Counting Thoughts software packages that support the Scottish Higher qualifications. The overall response was very favourable indeed and the software has been trialled successfully in the classroom.

### Sure Q Higher Physics

Sure Q with Higher Physics question pack is innovative study and revision software for pupils studying Higher Physics (Scottish Qualifications Authority – SQA). It includes over 250 questions with instant, constructive feedback and is ideal for individual study or for whole class revision sessions.

The package has many thoughtful components such as a help function, a calculator and immediate feedback with analysis of the type of mistake. Questions are graded according to difficulty and can be selected by topic, or accessed randomly according to unit. The program monitors student performance, which is useful to teacher and pupil alike. Unfortunately conventional current is used and the Scottish syllabus is based on electron flow. Some symbols used are not those specified by the SQA (for example, op amps). The software is easy to use but the entering of answers in



Standard Form is not intuitive for pupils. It is pitched at the right level and, according to my pupils, it is neither boring, nor over the top. The learning outcomes for Higher Physics are well covered with straight recall questions and problem-solving tasks.

It is fun to use in class with an interactive whiteboard (we also used individual whiteboards or split into teams). The product improves the learning experience and satisfies Assessment For Learning. I would recommend this for a Physics department.

• Jane Ross, PT, physics department

### Sure Q Higher Maths Software

This software package is designed for students following the SQA Higher mathematics course. It is available to run on PC or Mac and is easily loaded from CD Rom onto the user's computer. The package contains a large bank of questions on the topics in the syllabus.

The software is extremely easy to use. It attractively presents a randomly selected set of questions from the Higher maths syllabus. The user can select the degree of difficulty of the questions and the units or combination of units that they wish the questions to be from. Some of the questions are multi-choice and others are single answer entry.

Having purchased a number of maths software packages over the last few years I can safely say that this is the best that I have seen. It provides sufficient flexibility and ease of use to be a very helpful tool for a student following the course. One of the biggest plus points is the helpful feedback given on the screen after the answer has been selected/entered.

This package is very suitable for the student doing computer-based revision at home. Equally it would be very useful to have in the classroom.

Top marks to Counting Thoughts for an excellent resource!

• Rob Stephen, teacher, maths department

### Sure Q Higher Biology

The Sure Q biology software package contains 183 questions designed to test candidates across all three units of the Higher course. It is a formative assessment and



revision tool which could be used by a class on a network or individually as part of a pupil's personal study.

The questions are multiple choice, graded easy, medium or difficult. Good feedback is given after each faulty response, giving pointers towards the correct answer. Correct answers also elicit comments, underlining why the response was the correct one. Marks are awarded and a progress bar shows the pupil's current score. A couple of questions have only three answers and this means that even a third attempt gains the reward of a mark.

A few answers are inappropriate and would be unacceptable in the SQA exam, for example, xylem vessels formed in the spring are described as large, when the exam board requires wide; insulin and glucagon are described as catalysing glucose into glycogen and vice versa; and the answer to a question about differences should include statements about both organisms.

One excellent feature of the software is that it allows a teacher to track each pupil's progress, even to the extent that it evaluates each user's ability in factual and various forms of data handling questions. This sort of feedback is invaluable if a pupil's problem areas are to be addressed.

The software is straightforward to use, has good graphics and ought to prove helpful to any student using it regularly. It would be good to know that a similar programme is planned for Higher human biology.

• Dr PA Morrice, teacher, biology department

A single subject site licence is £175, while a single subject home licence £12. Home licences can be purchased at £3 each by a school possessing a site licence. For details, of the software and free demos, visit [www.countingthoughts.com](http://www.countingthoughts.com). For more information, email [sales@countingthoughts.com](mailto:sales@countingthoughts.com)