AS/A Level Maths has moved from a modular course to a linear one, so finding the right resources to support students through their studies and beyond is a key factor in helping them achieve the grades they need.

I’m looking at the Cambridge University Press Student Book 1 for OCR A and Student Book 1 for AQA and both share similar features. Reassuringly, the content is current, relevant and accurate with the aims, targets and objectives fully aligned to the new specifications. Each book is knitted around proof, modelling and problem solving with impressive links between topics, between subjects and the real-world.

The layout of the textbooks is impressive and boasts some fine features to support learning. Each chapter is logical, consistent and very well organised, making it immensely usable. There are objectives given from the outset, ‘Before you start’ reminders of what students should know coming into the chapter, interesting ‘Did you know?’ snippets of information, top tips and useful guidance, plenty of really clear worked examples, key summaries and opportunities to investigate and explore further. There are superb colour-coded exercises that drill basic fluency and include practice questions to advanced level with food for thought questions ripe for discussion and reflection. At the end of each chapter there is a checklist of learning and understanding with mixed practice questions. There are no missed opportunities to make connections and clear links are signposted throughout the books.

The concepts presented are correct and precise and the examples and illustrations given are interesting and relevant to students’ experience. The ‘Work it Out’ feature, with its focus on misconceptions, is extremely useful – and the sheer volume of exam-style and past exam questions is impressive.

There is an appropriate balance between depth and breadth and the level of difficulty is consistent with curriculum requirements and the cognitive level of students. Activities have been designed to facilitate active engagement, practise and the application of new skills. They connect prior knowledge, help students organise new content, support reflection and extend thinking.

These quality, comprehensive and affordable resources are full of rigour and are admirably equipped to prepare students for A level study and beyond. They serve as not only first-class teaching materials for teachers, but are platinum plated self-directed learning materials for students as they provide a roadmap for learning, preparation and revision. They easily surpass the textbook guidance given by the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics.

You are looking for self-contained, dependable and coherent resources matching the new specifications that promote sophisticated mathematical thinking and a deeper understanding of maths as a whole subject.

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