Edexcel and AQA GCSE Maths

It's easy to get excited about Edexcel GCSE Maths and AQA GCSE Maths from Oxford University Press. Not only are they brand new and look lovely on the educational forecourt, they have plenty under the bonnet in terms of horsepower, too. They manage to grunt and purr at the same time; the maths team at OUP must be feeling pleased with its work – and rightly so.

Getting the challenge and pitch right for the new maths exam specifications is no mean feat – but you need have no worries here. These resources have been designed to enable a deep understanding of the subject. There are all sorts of goodies on offer: student differentiated student books to heaps of assessment in the exam practice books, including excellent online resources; this course provides learning which can be tailored to every student.

All angles
The focus of the Edexcel and AQA Oxford Maths resources is very much a three-pronged attack so that fluency, problem-solving and reasoning all get plenty of attention. There is a wealth of practice available with carefully chosen examples throughout the course supported by multiple levels of differentiation built into two student books - Foundation and Higher.

The colourful and vibrant student books are maths marvels, full of real-life scenarios for students to get to grips with. Each chapter is organised in pairs with the first lesson focused on helping learners to master the basics required whilst the second applies these skills in questions that develop reasoning and problem-solving. They have clearly been expertly organised and extremely well written. There is a general introduction with a 'what's the point?' explanation as to why the maths under focus is important. This then leads into 'check-in' questions to test students' prior knowledge with a chapter investigation to delve deeper. A 'skills' page provides some carefully chosen and well worded examples before moving onto a 'fluency' page of questions to practice. There is then an 'applications' page, which offers a quick recap and 'how to' reminder with more worked examples to follow, demonstrating to students how to form logical arguments and show reasoning; this is outstanding.

Wordier question problems come next with yet more excellent exercise practice. I really like the summary sections with a checkout box of what students should be able to do alongside regular vocabulary sections that define maths words and provide examples. Review sections test knowledge of the chapter objectives and there is constructive guidance for student self-improvement and further online resources.

And now the best bit: at the bottom of each page there are direct, relevant links to MyMaths, the online learning resource where you will find interactive lessons, games and worksheets. The links correspond to MyMaths lessons and online homeworks and my word, what you are getting as a result is an awful lot for your money.

Teachers' choice
To back up the student books you will also find teacher companion books where there is a suggested lesson plan for every lesson, with customisable word files included. Everything is included that you need to make a lesson as successful as possible - including learning outcomes, prior knowledge, links to online resources, development ideas, a chapter investigation, starter skills, teaching notes, and plenary ideas. To go with the student exercises are thoughtful commentaries with pointers for simplification and extension skills. Of course you get the answers, but probably the best feature for me is the flagging up of possible misconceptions students might display and solutions to overcome them. This is exactly the kind of support you need to teach with confidence.

You can present your lessons using the digital student books, or show learners problem-solving examples from the brilliant 400 InvisiPen videos. There are 50 hours' worth of printable assessment, online auto-marked tests, assessment tracking sheet and self-assessment checklists. To add further support there are some brilliant homework books too in A5 size with fluency practice and exam-style questions also to help students prepare for the new exams. I'd say that’s an impressive package, all in all.

In short, not only are these resources competent and professional throughout, they impress with their high production values. They are beefy in terms of their content, they are clear and engaging, and in terms of support they will have students feeling like they have a Tolkien army behind them - with a few hundred maths Orcs to help out when the going gets tough.

VERDICT: IT ALL ADDS UP
Oxford University Press has created quite a package here. This really is a fully integrated single solution for teaching either GCSE Edexcel or GCSE AQA with added oomph.