

Criteria for GCE AS and A-level Qualifications

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The criteria

Introduction

1. The following criteria will be used as the basis for the development and accreditation of all GCE AS and A levels.
2. GCE AS and A-level criteria were previously published within *The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004).

Content

Titling

3. The titles of GCE AS and A levels must:
 - 3.1 where relevant subject criteria exist, correspond to the titles used in the relevant subject criteria published by the regulators;
 - 3.2 where relevant subject criteria do not exist, be sufficiently broad to cover different specifications in the same subject area.

Subject matter

4. The subject matter of GCE AS and A levels must:
 - 4.1 state which aspects/options must be taken to meet the requirements of the respective countries, where statutory requirements differ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
 - 4.2 include optional units only if these:
 - 4.2.1 demand additional skills, knowledge and/or understanding;
 - 4.2.2 extend the core content within a specialist context and/or introduce links to another subject area;
 - 4.3 identify opportunities to generate evidence for the assessment of the skills of improving own learning and performance, problem solving and working with others;
 - 4.4 for AS qualifications:

- 4.4.1 provide an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills and understanding to match the first half of a full A-level course of study;
 - 4.4.2 enable candidates to be assessed, normally by means of two assessment units which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A level;
 - 4.4.3 include assessment units that will be weighted within the range of 15–35 per cent of the full A level;
 - 4.4.4 for double-award specifications, enable candidates to be assessed, normally by means of four assessment units which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A-level double award;
- 4.5 for A2 assessments that will be combined with AS assessments to lead to the award of a full A level:
- 4.5.1 provide an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills and understanding to match the second half of a full A-level course of study;
 - 4.5.2 enable candidates to be assessed, normally by means of two assessment units which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A level;
 - 4.5.3 include assessment units that will be weighted within the range of 15–35 per cent of the full A level;
 - 4.5.4 enable candidates undertaking double-award specifications to be assessed by means of four assessment units which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A-level double award.

Assessment

5. The assessment arrangements for GCEs must:
- 5.1 offer candidates the opportunity to be assessed either (in stages) during the course or at the end of the course;
 - 5.2 normally include only one component of assessment (internal assessment may involve more than one task, while external

- assessment may, for example, involve listening, reading and writing aspects. In each case, there will be one awarding process per unit);
- 5.3 not exceed a maximum examining time for external assessments of three hours at AS and four hours at A2, unless otherwise agreed in the subject criteria;
 - 5.4 set out the relationship between the assessment objectives and the assessment components;
 - 5.5 show the proportion of marks allocated to each assessment objective (or group of assessment objectives) and to each assessment unit;
 - 5.6 show which assessment objective(s) will include the assessment of written communication;
 - 5.7 include sufficient synoptic assessment at A2 to test the candidates' understanding of the connections between the different elements of the subject and their holistic understanding of the subject;
 - 5.8 include A2 assessments that provide appropriate demand and:
 - use a variety of stems in questions
 - ensure connectivity between sections of questions
 - use a wide range of question types and tasks to address different skills;
 - 5.9 be comparable for all candidates, even where there are optional assessment units or optional examination questions;
 - 5.10 include extended writing in all subjects (except where agreed with the regulators as inappropriate) and must be in accordance with the regulations that apply to the quality of written communication;
 - 5.11 allow resits of an assessment unit with the best result counting towards the qualification;
 - 5.12 use internal assessment only where it is the soundest method of assessing specific skills within the assessment objectives, and in accordance with the regulations.

Reporting

6. There must be arrangements for grading and reporting of GCEs so that:
 - 6.1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate at AS level is reported on a five-grade scale from A to E, where A is the highest grade;
 - 6.2 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate at A level is reported on a six-grade scale from A* to E, where A* is the highest grade;
 - 6.3 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate at AS or A level is reported as Unclassified or U;
 - 6.4 the grades awarded match performance descriptions published by the regulators, where these do not exist, match the performance descriptions for AS and A2 levels at the grade boundaries of A and B, and E and U;
 - 6.5 the AS double award is reported on the following grading scale: AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE;
 - 6.6 the A-level double award is reported on the following grading scale: A*A*, A*A, AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE.

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