



Department
for Education

Modern foreign languages

GCE AS and A level subject content

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The content for modern languages AS and A level

Introduction

1. AS and A level subject content sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills common to all AS and A level specifications in modern languages.

Context

2. The study of a modern language is understood to be an interdisciplinary subject offering the same cognitive and academic advantages as other disciplines within the humanities. In addition to high level practical language skills, the content of AS and A level in modern languages provides depth of knowledge, understanding and intercultural competence and fosters a range of transferable skills such as communication skills, critical thinking, autonomy, resourcefulness, creativity, and linguistic, cultural and cognitive flexibility; all of which are of value to the individual, to wider society, to higher education and to employers. The content for AS and A level in a modern language has been designed to be of relevance to students of all disciplines, whether they intend to progress to further study in the subject or not. It will provide a robust foundation for those wishing to study a modern language to degree level or equivalent.

Aims and objectives

3. AS and A level specifications in a modern language must enable students to:

- enhance their linguistic skills and promote and develop their capacity for critical thinking on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of the language, culture and society of the country or countries where the language is spoken
- develop control of the language system to convey meaning, using spoken and written skills, including an extended range of vocabulary, for both practical and intellectual purposes as increasingly confident, accurate and independent users of the language
- develop their ability to interact effectively with users of the language in speech and in writing, including through online media
- develop language learning skills and strategies, including communication strategies to sustain communication and build fluency and confidence
- engage critically with intellectually stimulating texts, films and other materials in the original language, developing an appreciation of sophisticated and creative uses of the language and understanding them within their cultural and social context
- develop knowledge about matters central to the society and culture, past and present, of the country or countries where the language is spoken
- mediate between cultures and between speakers of the language and speakers of English

- foster their ability to learn other languages
 - equip themselves with transferable skills such as autonomy, resourcefulness, creativity, critical thinking, and linguistic, cultural and cognitive flexibility that will enable them to proceed to further study or to employment
4. In addition, the A level specifications must also enable students to:
- develop their capacity for critical and analytical thinking through the language of study
 - develop as independent researchers through the language of study

Subject content

5. AS and A level specifications in modern languages must build on the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the GCSE subject content.
6. The content for AS and A level is conceived as an integrated study with a focus on language and culture and society.
7. AS and A level specifications must require students to:
- develop knowledge and understanding, through the language of study, of themes relating to the society and culture, past and present, of the country or countries where the language is spoken. Students must study one theme at AS and two themes at A level, from each of the following areas of interest (i.e. 2 themes at AS; 4 themes at A level):
 - (i) social issues and trends
 - (ii) political and/or intellectual and/or artistic culture

With regard to area of interest (ii):

- at both AS and A level, students must use authentic spoken and written sources from a variety of different contexts and genres, including online media, as stimulus material for the study of the themes and, concurrently, for language development
8. AS and A level specifications must require students to develop their language knowledge, understanding and skills¹ through:

¹ Exceptions for Chinese are detailed in Annex: Exceptions to subject content for Chinese.

- using language spontaneously to initiate communication; ask and answer questions; express thoughts and feelings; present viewpoints; develop arguments; persuade; and analyse and evaluate in speech and writing, including interaction with speakers of the language
- applying knowledge of pronunciation, morphology and syntax, vocabulary and idiom to communicate accurately and coherently, using a range of expression – including the list of grammar at annex A for French, German and Spanish. For other languages, all specifications must include appendices setting out requirements for grammar which represent a level of challenge and breadth comparable to the requirements for French, German and Spanish.
- using language learning skills and strategies, including communication strategies such as adjusting the message, circumlocution, self-correction and repair strategies
- listening and responding to spoken passages including some extended passages from a range of different contexts and sources, adapted as necessary, covering different registers and types, including authentic communication involving one or more speakers
- reading and responding to a variety of texts including some extended texts written for different purposes and audiences drawn from a range of authentic sources, including contemporary, historical and literary, fiction and non-fiction texts, adapted as necessary
- understanding the main points, gist and detail from spoken and written material
- inferring meaning from complex spoken and written material, including factual and abstract content
- assimilating and using information from spoken and written sources, including material from online media
- summarising information from spoken and written sources, reporting key points and subject matter in speech and writing
- translating an unseen passage or passages from the language of study into English at AS and A level
- translating unseen sentences or short texts at AS, and an unseen passage or passages at A level, from English into the language of study

9. At AS, specifications must also require students to study one work, either a literary work or a film. They must:

- know, understand and be able to respond critically in writing, in the language of study, to the work, taken from the prescribed list provided in the specification.

10. At AS, knowledge and understanding of the work must include a critical response to aspects such as the structure of the plot, characterisation, and use of imagery or other stylistic features, as appropriate to the work studied.
11. At A level, specifications must require students to study two works, either a literary work and a film, or two literary works. They must:
 - appreciate, analyse and be able to respond critically in writing, in the language of study, to the works, taken from the prescribed list provided in the specification.
12. At A level, students must develop a more detailed understanding of the works, showing a critical appreciation of the concepts and issues covered, and a critical and analytical response to features such as the form and the technique of presentation, as appropriate to the work studied (e.g. the effect of narrative voice in a prose text or camera work in a film).
13. The works prescribed in the specification must be appropriate authentic sources.
 - the list of literary works must include a range from at least two of the following genres: novels, series of short stories, plays, selections of poems, life writing (such as autobiography, biography, letters and journals)
 - the list of films must include feature length films and can include selections of short films organised by theme or director
 - students are required to study two discrete works at A level i.e., students cannot be assessed on a film adapted from a literary work as well as on the original literary work itself
14. In addition, A level specifications in a modern language must require students to:
 - develop research skills in the language of study, demonstrating the ability to initiate and conduct individual research on a subject of personal interest, relating to the country or countries where the language is spoken
 - identify a key question or subject of interest and select relevant information in the language of study from a range of authentic sources, including the internet
 - use information to illustrate knowledge and understanding of the research subject
 - analyse and summarise research findings, elaborating on key points of interest, as appropriate, through oral presentation and discussion

Annex: Exceptions to subject content for Chinese

The expectations at AS and A level for Chinese are different to other modern foreign languages covered by this document.

- There is an exception to the expectation for students to use their language knowledge, skills, and understanding in their response to spoken and written language. Questions and responses in comprehension (listening and reading) tasks must be in English, unless writing skills are also intentionally being assessed.
- Questions about the literary works and films will be provided in both Chinese and English. In the literary works and films section, students will still be required to respond in the language of study.

Annex: grammatical content, appropriate to French, German and Spanish

AS and A level students will be expected to have studied the grammatical system and structures of the language during their course. Knowledge of the grammar and structures specified for GCSE is assumed.

In the examination students will be required to use, actively and accurately, grammar and structures appropriate to the tasks set, drawn from the following lists. The mention of an item in these lists implies knowledge of both its forms and its functions at an appropriate level of accuracy and complexity.

The lists below, for French, German and Spanish, are divided into AS and A level. The examples in italics in parentheses are indicative; that is, they serve to illustrate the part of speech or structure that the candidate must know and hence do not represent an exhaustive specification of the required grammatical knowledge. For items marked (R), receptive knowledge only is required.

The lists for other languages must be developed by awarding organisations and included as appendices to relevant specifications, to represent a level of challenge and breadth that is comparable to the requirements for French, German and Spanish.

French: AS level

Nouns

- Gender
- Singular and plural forms

Articles

- Definite, indefinite and partitive

Adjectives

- Agreement
- Position
- Comparative and superlative
- Use of adjectives as nouns (e.g. *le vieux, les Anglais*)
- Demonstrative (*ce, cet, cette, ces*)
- Indefinite (including *autre, chaque, même, quelque*)
- Possessive (*mon, ma, mes, etc.*)
- Interrogative and exclamatory (*quel, quelle, quels, quelles*)

Numerals

Cardinal (e.g. un, deux)
Ordinal (e.g. *premier, deuxième*)
Expression of time and date

Adverbs

Formation of adverbs in *-ment*
Comparative and superlative
Interrogative (including *combien (de), comment, où, pourquoi, quand*)

Quantifiers/intensifiers

(including *assez, beaucoup, moins, plus, la plupart, plusieurs, presque, tant, très, / trop*)

Pronouns

Personal: subject, including *on*
Object: direct and indirect
Disjunctive/emphatic personal, as subject and object: *moi/moi-même*, etc.
Position and order
Reflexive
Relative (including *qui, que, dont, lequel etc., auquel etc., ce qui, ce que*)
Demonstrative (*celui, celle, ceux, celles; and celui-ci/celui-là etc.*)
Indefinite (including *quelqu'un, quelque chose*)
Possessive (*le mien etc.*)
Interrogative (including *qui, que, quoi*)
Use of *y, en*

Verbs

Conjugation of regular *-er, -ir, -re* verbs, modal verbs, principal irregular verbs, including reflexive verbs Agreement of verb and subject Use of *il y a*
Modes of address (*tu, vous*)
Impersonal verbs
Constructions with verbs
 Verbs followed by an infinitive (with or without a preposition)
Dependent infinitives (*faire réparer*) (R)
Perfect infinitive
Negative forms
Interrogative forms
Use of tenses
 Present
 Perfect (including agreement of past participle)
 Imperfect

Future
Conditional
Future perfect
Conditional perfect
Pluperfect
Past historic (R)
Use of the infinitive, present participle (e.g. *en arrivant*) and past participle
Verbal paraphrases and their uses
(including *aller* + infinitive, *venir de* + infinitive)
Passive voice
Present tense
Other tenses (R)
Subjunctive mood: present (common uses, for example, after expressions of possibility, necessity, obligation and after conjunctions such as *bien que*)

Prepositions

All prepositions, both simple (e.g. *sous*) and complex (e.g. *au-delà de*)

Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions (e.g. *et, ou, mais*)
Subordinating conjunctions

Negation

Use of negative particles (e.g. *ne...pas, ne...personne, ne...que*)
Use of *ne* with negative subjects (e.g. *Personne n'est venu*)

Questions

Commands

Word order

Inversion after speech

Other constructions

Time expressions with *depuis* and *il y a*
Comparative constructions
Indirect speech

Discourse markers

(e.g. *Au contraire, En fait*)

Fillers

(e.g. *alors, bon*)

French: A level

All grammar and structures listed for AS level, plus:

Verbs

Dependent infinitives (*faire réparer*)

Passive voice: all tenses

Subjunctive mood:

perfect tense

imperfect tense (R)

Word order

Inversion after adverbs

German: AS level

Nouns

- Gender
- Singular and plural forms
- Case marking on nouns
- Weak masculine nouns

Determiners

- Definite article
- Indefinite article, including *kein*
- Demonstratives, including *der/die/das*
- Possessives
- Other determiners (e.g. *alle, viel/viele, welcher*)

Pronouns

- Personal pronouns
- Reflexive pronouns
- Relative pronouns
- Demonstrative pronouns
- Possessive pronouns
- Indefinite pronouns (e.g. *jemand*)
- Interrogative pronouns (e.g. *wer*)

Adjectives

- Adjectival endings
- Comparative and superlative
- Adjectives with the dative (e.g. *es ist mir klar*)
- Adjectives with prepositions (e.g. *stolz auf*)

Adverbs and adverbials

- Time
- Place
- Direction (e.g. *hin, heraus*)
- Manner
- Degree (e.g. *sehr*)
- Interrogative (e.g. *wann, warum*)
- Comparative and superlative
- Numbers and fractions
- Clock time, days of the week, months

Modal Particles / Discourse Markers

e.g. *ja, doch, wohl*

Verbs

Principal parts of weak, strong and irregular verbs

Reflexive verbs

Separable/inseparable

Auxiliary verbs (*haben, sein, werden*) Use

of *haben* or *sein* in the perfect

Modal verbs (*dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen, wollen*): present and imperfect

tenses; imperfect subjunctive of *mögen* and *können*

Infinitive constructions (*um... zu, ohne... zu*, verbs with *zu*)

Infinitive constructions (*lassen* and *sich lassen* with infinitive)

Tense, voice and mood

Present

Past (i.e. simple past/imperfect)

Perfect

Perfect (modal verbs) (R)

Pluperfect

Future

Future perfect (R)

Conditional

Conditional perfect (R)

Passive with *werden*

Imperative

Subjunctive in conditional clauses (past)

Subjunctive in conditional clauses (pluperfect) (R)

Subjunctive in indirect speech (R)

Prepositions

Fixed case and dual case

Prepositional adverbs (*da(r)*+preposition, e.g. *darauf*)

Conjunctions

Coordinating

Subordinating

The case system

The subject and the finite verb

Accusative objects

Dative objects

Prepositional objects

The use of the nominative case with copular verbs (e.g. *sein, werden, bleiben*)

Clause structure and word order

- Main clause word order
- Questions and commands
- Position of pronouns
- Position of adverbials
- Position of *nicht*
- Word order variation to change emphasis
- Subordinate clauses introduced by a conjunction (e.g. *dass*, *obwohl*)

Word formation

- Compound nouns
- Forming nouns from verbs
- Forming nouns from adjectives
- Forming verbs from nouns
- Forming verbs from adjectives
- Separable and inseparable verb prefixes

German: A level

All grammar and structures listed for AS level, plus:

Adjectives

- Use of long adjective phrases (R)

Tense, voice and mood

- Perfect (modal verbs)
- Future perfect
- Conditional perfect
- Conditional sentence with omitted *wenn*, e.g. *Hätte ich mehr Zeit gehabt, wäre das nicht passiert* (R)
- Passive with *sein*
- Subjunctive in conditional clauses (pluperfect)
- All forms of indirect speech

Clause structure and word order

- Use of the prepositional adverb (*da(r)*+preposition, e.g. *darauf*) to anticipate *dass* clauses and dependent infinitive clauses (R)

Spanish: AS level

Nouns

- Gender
- Singular and plural forms
- Plural of male/female pairs (e.g. *los Reyes*)
- Affective suffixes (R)

Articles

- Definite and indefinite
- El* with feminine nouns beginning with stressed *a* (*el agua*)
- Lo* + adjective

Adjectives

- Agreement
- Position
- Apocopation (e.g. *gran, buen, mal, primer*)
- Comparative and superlative (e.g. *más fuerte; mejor, peor, mayor, menor*)
- Use of adjectives as nouns (e.g. *una triste, la roja, las norteamericanas*)
- Demonstrative (e.g. *este, ese, aquel*)
- Indefinite (e.g. *alguno, cualquiera, otro*)
- Possessive (weak and strong forms) (e.g. *mi / mío*)
- Interrogative and exclamatory (e.g. *¿cuánto? / ¡cuánto!*, etc., including use of *¿qué? / ¡qué!*)
- Relative (*cuyo*) (R)

Numerals

- Cardinal (e.g. *uno, dos*)
- Ordinal 1-10 (e.g. *primero, segundo*)
- Agreement (e.g. *cuatrocientas chicas*)
- Expression of time and date

Adverbs

- Formation of adverbs in *-mente*
- Comparative and superlative (e.g. *más despacio*)
- Use of adjectives as adverbs (e.g. *rápido, claro*)
- Adjectives as equivalents of English adverbs (e.g. *Salió contenta*)
- Interrogative (e.g. *¿cómo?, ¿cuándo?, ¿dónde?*)

Quantifiers/intensifiers

- (e.g. *muy, bastante, poco, mucho*)

Pronouns

Subject

Object: direct and indirect; use of *se* for *le(s)*; 'redundant' use of indirect object (e.g. *Dale un beso a tu papá*)

Reflexive

Unstressed / stressed forms (e.g. *me / mí*)

Position and order

Relative (*que, quien, el que, el cual*)

Demonstrative (*este, ese, aquel; esto, eso, aquello*)

Indefinite (e.g. *algo, alguien*)

Possessive (e.g. *el mío, la mía*). Expression of possession by the use of the indirect object pronoun (*Le rompió el brazo*) must also be included.

Interrogative

Verbs

Regular conjugations of *-ar, -er* and *-ir* verbs, including radical-changing (e.g. *recordar / recuerdo, pedir / pido*) and orthographic-changing (e.g. *abrazar / abracé*) verbs, in all tenses and moods, finite and non-finite forms

Regular and Irregular verbs, in all tenses and moods, finite and non-finite forms

Agreement of verb and subject

Use of *hay que* in all tenses

Use of tenses

Present

Preterite

Imperfect

Future

Conditional

Perfect

Future perfect

Conditional perfect

Pluperfect

Use of the infinitive, the gerund and the past participle

Verbal paraphrases and their uses. These include but are not limited to the following:

ir a + infinitive

estar + gerund

acabar de + infinitive

estar para + infinitive

llevar + gerund

ir + gerund (R)

venir + gerund (R)

Use of the subjunctive

Commands

Conditional sentences
After conjunctions of time
After *para que, sin que*
In relative clauses (R)
After other subordinating conjunctions (R)
With verbs and verbal expressions of wishing, commanding, influencing, emotional reaction, doubt, denial, possibility, probability (R)
Sequence of tense in indirect speech and other subordinate clauses

Voice

Use of the reflexive as a passive (e.g. *El puente se construyó para unir a las comunidades*)
Use of the reflexive to express an impersonal subject (e.g. *¿Cómo se llega a la estación?*)
Use of *ser* + past participle
Use of *estar* + past participle
'Nuance' reflexive verbs (e.g. *caerse, pararse*)
Modes of address (*tú, usted; vos* (R))
Constructions with verbs
Verbs followed directly by an infinitive (e.g. *querer, poder*)
Verbs followed by a preposition plus an infinitive or noun phrase (e.g. *insistir en, negarse a*)
Verbs followed by a gerund (e.g. *seguir*)
Verbs of perception (e.g. *Vi asfaltar la calle*)
Uses of *ser* and *estar*

Prepositions

All prepositions, both simple (e.g. *bajo*) and complex (e.g. *encima de*)
'Personal' *a*
Discrimination of *por* and *para*

Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions (e.g. *y, o, pero*)
Subordinating conjunctions. These include but are not limited to the following:
Cause (*porque*)
Purpose (*para que*)
Proviso (*con tal que*)
Supposition (*a no ser que*)
Time (*cuando*)
Concession (*aunque*)
Use of *que* to introduce a clause (e.g. *¡Cuidado, que se va a quemar la tortilla!*) (R)

Negation

Questions

Commands

Word order

Subject following verb (*Ha llegado el profesor; Me gustan las patatas*)

Focalisation (*Tú ¿qué opinas?; A Cristiano lo odian*) (R)

Other constructions

Time expressions with *hace / hacía* and *desde hace / hacía*

Cleft sentences (*Fue en Madrid donde nos conocimos*)

Comparative constructions. These include but are not limited to the following:
tan... como..., etc.

más... que..., etc.

Tiene más dinero de lo que creía (R)

Indirect speech

Discourse markers

(e.g. *Es que..., Por ejemplo, Ahora bien...*)

Fillers

(e.g. *pues, bueno*)

Spanish: A level

All grammar and structures listed for AS level, plus:

Adjectives

Relative (*cuyo*)

Verbs

Use of the subjunctive

In relative clauses

After other subordinating conjunctions

With verbs and verbal expressions of wishing, commanding, influencing, emotional reaction, doubt, denial, possibility, probability

Conjunctions

Use of *que* to introduce a clause (*¡Cuidado, que se va a quemar la tortilla!*)

Other constructions

Comparative constructions

Tiene más dinero de lo que creía

Expression of concession other than by *aunque* (*por muy* adjective *que*, *por mucho que*) (R)



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