



Department  
for Education

# **Ancient languages**

## **GCE AS and A level subject content**

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# The content for ancient 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 subject specifications in ancient languages.

## Aims and objectives

2. AS and A level specifications in an ancient language should enable students to:
- develop an appropriate level of competence in the language studied
  - acquire the language skills which enable a student to read literary texts, both prose and verse<sup>1</sup>, in the original language
  - develop an interest in, and enthusiasm for, the literary, historical and cultural features of the ancient world
  - acquire the literary skills which enable students to read ancient literature, both prose and verse, in its original language with appropriate attention to literary techniques, styles and genres
  - apply analytical and evaluative skills at an appropriate level which show direct engagement with original texts in the ancient language
  - make an informed personal response to the material studied
  - begin to develop a sensitive and analytical approach to language generally
  - AS and A level specifications must also encourage students to develop research and analytical skills that will empower them to become independent learners

## Prior knowledge

3. AS and A level specifications in ancient languages must build on the knowledge, understanding and skills specified for GCSE in the relevant subjects but prior attainment of a GCSE qualification in an ancient language should not be a requirement.

## Subject content

4. AS and A level specifications in ancient languages must require the reading of original texts in both poetry and prose (as set by awarding organisations) and must

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<sup>1</sup> For Biblical Hebrew: throughout this document, verse (singular) should be taken to mean poetry, and verses (plural) are numbered units of text within a biblical chapter.

extend these studies in breadth and depth from GCSE, further developing students' ability to analyse, evaluate and draw conclusions across the material they are studying.

5. AS specifications must require students to study one prose text (or one group of prose texts) and one verse text (or one group of verse texts). Each text (or group of texts) must be of approximately 200-250 lines<sup>2</sup> in the original language.

6. In addition, A level specifications must require the reading of a further 200-250 lines (approximately) of prose text (or group of prose texts) and a further 200-250 lines (approximately) of verse text (or group of verse texts).

7. Students at A level must cover four different authors or genres across their course of study<sup>3</sup>.

8. In Biblical Hebrew<sup>4</sup>:

- specifications must not require the study of content beyond books from which set texts are taken
- references in this document to social, cultural and historical contexts, and the ancient world, are as described within the books from which each set text is taken (not beyond)
- references to authors and audiences do not apply to Biblical Hebrew

## **Knowledge and understanding of the language**

9. AS and A level specifications must require students to:

- extend their knowledge of vocabulary and linguistic structures through continued linguistic study and through reading and studying texts in the original language
- know and understand the application of accent<sup>5</sup> and syntax
- know a defined vocabulary list of at least 700 words at AS level, and in addition<sup>6</sup> regular compounds of these words. No minimum is set for A level as students are expected to build on the defined vocabulary list at AS level and extend their knowledge of vocabulary through wider reading and study of texts in the original language

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<sup>2</sup> In Biblical Hebrew: 150 -175 verses (numbered units of text within a biblical chapter).

<sup>3</sup> In Biblical Hebrew, four books of the Hebrew Bible, including at least one book from Pentateuch or Former Prophets, and at least two books from Latter Prophets or Writings (excluding Job). Two texts must be prose, two poetry.

<sup>4</sup> These restrictions apply to the aims and objectives in paragraph 2, and to the third and fifth bullet of paragraph 11.

<sup>5</sup> In Biblical Hebrew, accent should be taken to mean morphology.

<sup>6</sup> Ancient Greek and Latin only.

- demonstrate their language skills and assimilation of linguistic material by the accurate translation of unseen material in the target language, either conected or original (adapted if necessary)
- demonstrate a detailed understanding of the linguistic structures of material written by ancient authors in the original language, including an understanding of individual words, phrases or sentences
- understand and appreciate ancient literature in the original language and have a critical awareness of its meaning and its literary techniques
- present relevant information in a clear, concise and logical manner using appropriate terminology in English
- for AS, demonstrate their ability to recognise, analyse and/or deploy, as appropriate, syntax and accidence (covering a wider range than at GCSE)

EITHER

- by their translation or comprehension of a narrative prose passage of adapted unseen ancient language

OR

- by translating sentences with two clauses from English into the ancient language

10. In addition A level specifications must require students to:

- know and understand the application of more complex examples of accidence and syntax
- demonstrate their ability to recognise, analyse, explain and/or deploy syntax and accidence

EITHER

- by demonstrating their understanding of a passage of unseen original text (either poetry or prose) through comprehension, translation and questions of syntax in English

OR

- by translating a short passage from English into the ancient language

## **Knowledge and understanding of literature, society and values**

11. AS and A level specifications must require students to:

- extend their knowledge and appreciation of ancient literature beyond that specified for GCSE by the reading and detailed study of texts in the original language (as specified above in paragraphs 5 and 6)

- understand and appreciate the literary context for the prescribed texts by reading an appropriate selection of ancient literature in English translation, usually the remainder of the text from which the prescription is set
- understand and appreciate, as appropriate, the social, cultural and historical contexts for the prescribed texts, their authors and audiences
- identify, analyse and evaluate the literary techniques of a prescribed text, using appropriate technical terms in English to describe such techniques
- demonstrate appropriate historical or cultural knowledge when it is essential to the understanding or evaluation of a given phrase, sentence or passage
- demonstrate the appropriate selection of relevant information from a range of sources (such as the prescribed texts themselves, including sections read in English translation, material in suitable commentaries on the set texts, and, if appropriate, further material by the same author as the set text read in English translation), use this information to illustrate knowledge and understanding, and to analyse and summarise their findings
- present relevant information in a clear, concise and logical manner using appropriate terminology in English

12. In addition, A level specifications must require students to develop judgement and independence as they synthesise and reflect upon their knowledge and understanding of a range of literary texts and their contexts, and to demonstrate this increased level of critical appreciation by writing at sustained length on passages and topics from the prescribed texts.



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