

GCE AS and A Level Subject Criteria for Economics

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The criteria

Introduction

AS and A level subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all AS and A level specifications in a given subject.

They provide the framework within which the awarding body creates the detail of the specification.

Aims and objectives

1. AS and A level specifications in Economics should encourage students to:
 - develop an interest in and enthusiasm for the study of the subject;
 - appreciate the contribution of economics to the understanding of the wider economic and social environment;
 - develop an understanding of a range of concepts and an ability to use these concepts in a variety of different contexts;
 - use an enquiring, critical and thoughtful approach to the study of economics and an ability to think as an economist; and
 - develop skills, qualities and attitudes which will equip them for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of adult and working life.

Subject content

2. Previous study of economics should not be a requirement.
3. The AS course must provide a free-standing, coherent course of study while also providing progression to study at A2.
4. A level specifications must extend beyond AS in terms of breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding. They will involve application to a wider range of contexts and further develop higher-level skills.

Knowledge, understanding and skills

5. The knowledge, understanding and skills set out for AS should constitute 60–100 per cent of the AS specifications. The knowledge, understanding

and skills set out for A2 should constitute 60–100 per cent of the A2 specifications.

6. Specifications in Economics must:

- provide a coherent combination of micro-economic and macro-economic content, drawing on local, national and international contexts;
- foster the appreciation of economic concepts and theories in a range of contexts and appreciate their value and limitations in explaining real-world phenomena.

7. Specifications must require learners to:

- develop an understanding of economic concepts and theories through a critical consideration of current economic issues, problems and institutions that affect everyday life;
- select, interpret and use appropriate data from a range of sources;
- analyse, explain and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the market economy and the role of government within it; and
- develop a critical approach to economic models and methods of enquiry.

8. At **AS** learners must be required to:

- understand simple micro-economic and macro-economic market models with a limited number of variables; use the models to explore current economic behaviour; make causal connections; and develop an understanding of how the models shed light on the economy as a whole;
- be aware of the assumptions of the basic model of supply and demand; explain the way it works in both words and diagrams; and use the model to describe, predict and analyse economic behaviour;

- develop an understanding of the range of ways in which markets may fail; and understand the implications of market failure for individuals, firms and government;
- use the basic aggregate supply/aggregate demand (AS/AD) model and data to understand why supply-side and/or demand-side policies may be seen as appropriate ways of managing an economy; predict the possible impact of such policies and recognise the assumptions involved; argue for different approaches; and identify criteria for success.

9. In addition, at **A level** learners must:

- use and evaluate more complex models involving more variables;
- apply models to a wider range of contexts;
- develop the ability to apply and evaluate economic models as represented in written, numerical and graphical forms;
- interpret and evaluate different types of data from multiple sources;
- be able to propose possible solutions to problems;
- understand the relationships and linkages that underpin macro-economic models;
- be able to predict the possible impact of policy changes on local, national and international economies;
- be able to evaluate the effectiveness of government policies across a range of contexts.

10. Specifications must require learners to study:

- economic choices and markets;
- the national and international economy.

Economic choices and markets

10.1 The emphasis must be on the market model of resource allocation. Learners must be required to understand the economic behaviour of consumers, producers and governments in competitive and non-competitive markets. The impact of technological innovation, environmental change, globalisation and better-informed consumers on present and future economic behaviour must be considered.

Area of study	Amplification
Scarcity and choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The basic economic problem. ■ Opportunity cost.
How competitive markets work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Allocation of resources. ■ The objectives of economic agents. ■ Supply and demand. ■ Elasticity. ■ Productive and allocative efficiency. ■ The interaction of markets.
Competition and market power.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Business objectives. ■ Market structures and their implications for the way resources are allocated. ■ Interdependence of firms.
Market failure and government Intervention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Externalities. ■ Market power. ■ Information asymmetries. ■ Alternative methods of government intervention. ■ Government failure.

The national and international economy

10.2 The emphasis must be on the use of economic models to develop critical understanding of macro-economic and international issues. AS and A level specifications must use contemporary and recent historical data. (Awarding organisations must define clearly ‘recent historical’ in their AS and A level specifications.) Learners must be required to understand government objectives and policies as they relate to stability and growth in local, national and global terms.

Area of study	Amplification
The determination of output, employment and prices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aggregate demand and aggregate supply.
Economic policy objectives and indicators of macro-economic performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ For example economic growth, employment, inflation, the balance of payments, income distribution and welfare. ■ Policy conflicts and trade-offs.
The global context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Specialisation and trade. ■ Globalisation and sustainability. ■ Trade policies and negotiations. ■ Exchange-rate changes.
The application of policy instruments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The nature and impact of fiscal, monetary, exchange rate and supply-side policies.

Assessment objectives

11. Learners must be required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated.

Assessment objectives		Weighting		
		AS level	A2 level	A level
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content	25–35%	15–25%	20–30%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of the specified content to problems and issues arising from both familiar and unfamiliar situations	25–35%	15–25%	20–30%
AO3	Analyse economic problems and issues	15–25%	25–35%	20–30%
AO4	Evaluate economic arguments and evidence, making informed judgements	15–25%	25–35%	20–30%

Scheme of assessment

12. Assessment must be entirely through external assessment.

Synoptic assessment

13. All specifications must include synoptic assessment at A2. Synoptic assessment in Economics will test learners' understanding of the connections between different elements of the subject. It will relate to all the assessment objectives. In particular, synoptic assessment should test learners' ability to:

- understand the interrelatedness of many economic issues, problems and institutions;
- understand how economic concepts, theories and techniques may be relevant to a range of different contexts;

- apply such concepts, theories and techniques in the analysis of economic issues and problems and in the evaluation of arguments and evidence.
14. The emphasis in synoptic assessment should be on learners' ability to think as economists and to use effectively the economist's 'tool kit' of concepts, theories and techniques. Synoptic assessment could be conducted through the use of an extended case study or essay questions.

AS performance descriptions for Economics

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3	Assessment objective 4
Assessment objectives	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content.	Apply knowledge and understanding of the specified content to problems and issues arising from both familiar and unfamiliar situations.	Analyse economic problems and issues.	Evaluate economic arguments and evidence, making informed judgements.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate detailed knowledge of a range of facts and concepts included in the AS specification;</p> <p>b) demonstrate clear understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ terminology; ■ institutions; ■ models. 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ concepts; ■ numerical and graphical techniques; ■ theories and models; ■ terminology to issues arising in familiar and unfamiliar situations. 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) select relevant concepts, models, theories and techniques;</p> <p>b) demonstrate, for the most part, development of logical explanations of economic problems and issues with focus and relevance.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) evaluate straightforward economic arguments and evidence by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ prioritising evidence and arguments; ■ making judgements; ■ reaching and presenting conclusions.

<p>E/U boundary performance descriptions</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate knowledge of some facts and concepts included in the AS specification;</p> <p>b) demonstrate some understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ terminology; ■ institutions; ■ models. 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) apply in part some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ concepts; ■ numerical and graphical techniques; ■ theories and models; ■ terminology of issues arising in familiar situations 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate some evidence of selecting relevant concepts, models, theories and techniques;</p> <p>b) demonstrate partial explanations of economic problems and issues.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) evaluate straightforward economic arguments and evidence at a simple level, for example by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ offering judgements; ■ stating conclusions.
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A2 performance descriptions for Economics

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3	Assessment objective 4
Assessment objectives	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content.	Apply knowledge and understanding of the specified content to problems and issues arising from both familiar and unfamiliar situations.	Analyse economic problems and issues.	Evaluate economic arguments and evidence, making informed judgements.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Learners characteristically demonstrate, across the AS and A2 specifications:</p> <p>a) detailed knowledge of a range of facts and concepts;</p> <p>b) clear understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ terminology; ■ institutions; ■ models; <p>c) detailed knowledge and</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) apply clearly and effectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ concepts; ■ numerical and graphical techniques; ■ theories and models; ■ terminology of complex issues; <p>arising in familiar and unfamiliar situations.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) select relevant concepts, models, theories and techniques;</p> <p>b) demonstrate, for the most part, development of logical explanations for complex economic problems and issues, with focus and relevance.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) evaluate effectively complex economic arguments;</p> <p>b) prioritise evidence and arguments;</p> <p>c) make reasoned judgements;</p> <p>d) reach and present supported conclusions;</p> <p>e) make reasoned</p>

	clear understanding of the inter-connections between the different elements of the subject content.			recommendations.
E/U boundary performance descriptions	<p>Learners characteristically demonstrate, across the AS and A2 specifications:</p> <p>a) knowledge of some facts and concepts;</p> <p>b) some understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ terminology; ■ institutions; ■ models; <p>c) some knowledge and understanding of the inter-connections between the different elements of the subject content.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) apply appropriately some:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ concepts; ■ numerical and graphical techniques; ■ theories and models; ■ terminology; <p>to complex issues arising in a range of situations, some of which may be unfamiliar.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate some evidence of selecting relevant concepts, models, theories and techniques;</p> <p>b) demonstrate partial development of logical explanations for complex economic problems and issues.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate some evaluative skills in relation to complex economic arguments and evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ make judgements; ■ reach and present conclusions with some supporting evidence; ■ make recommendations.

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation	
Spring Place	2nd Floor
Coventry Business Park	Glendinning House
Herald Avenue	6 Murray Street
Coventry CV5 6UB	Belfast BT1 6DN

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346