

GCE AS and A Level Subject Criteria for Business Studies

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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 Business Studies should encourage learners to:
 - develop an enthusiasm for studying business;
 - gain an holistic understanding of business;
 - develop a critical understanding of organisations and their ability to meet society's needs and wants;
 - understand that business behaviour can be studied from a range of perspectives;
 - generate enterprising and creative solutions to business problems and issues;
 - be aware of the ethical dilemmas and responsibilities faced by organisations and individuals;
 - acquire a range of relevant business and generic skills, including decision making, problem solving, the challenging of assumptions and the quantification and management of information.

Subject content

2. Previous study of business studies should not be a requirement.
3. AS content and assessment material should be a stepping-stone to A2 content and assessment material.

4. A level specifications should further develop higher-level skills and extend beyond AS in terms of breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding.
5. All content and assessment material included in A level specifications must represent a coherent whole and demonstrate clear and logical progression to further study and training.
6. Knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the AS and A level specifications must:
 - enable learners to investigate different types of organisations in various business sectors and environments, recognising that they face varying degrees of competition;
 - enable learners to:
 - identify business problems;
 - plan appropriate investigations into such problems;
 - promote a holistic understanding of business and enterprise;
 - make justifiable decisions using both qualitative and quantitative methods, taking into account opportunity cost.
7. The progression from AS to A2 should be achieved through requiring learners to:
 - apply basic business concepts to a wider range of contexts;
 - understand and apply more sophisticated concepts and techniques;
 - analyse and interpret more complex business information;
 - take a more strategic view when addressing business problems and issues.
8. All AS specifications must cover the following core knowledge, understanding and skills. This core should constitute 60–100 per cent of the AS specification content.

| Area of study | Amplification |
|--------------------------------|---|
| External influences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Micro factors: the market, competition. |
| Marketing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identifying and anticipating customer needs. ■ Marketing mix. ■ Product life cycle. |
| Accounting and finance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Budgeting. ■ Cash-flow forecasting. ■ Break-even analysis. |
| People in organisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Motivation. ■ Leadership. ■ Organisation design. |
| Operations management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality. ■ Productivity. ■ Added value. |

9. All A2 specifications must cover the following core knowledge, understanding and skills. This core should constitute 60–100 per cent of the A2 specification content.

| Area of study | Amplification |
|---|--|
| Business objectives and strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Different stakeholder and organisational objectives. ■ Strategy and tactics. ■ Risk and uncertainty. |
| External influences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Macro factors. ■ International context. ■ Political, social, legal and environmental issues. |
| Business analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Forecasting. ■ Data analysis. ■ Market analysis. ■ Decision making. ■ Measures of performance: financial and non-financial |
| Change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Causes and effects of change ■ Employer/employee relationships |

Assessment objectives

10. All learners must meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated in the following table, with assessment objectives 3 and 4 given a greater weighting for A level than for AS.

| 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 to problems and issues arising from both familiar and unfamiliar situations | 20–30% | 20–30% | 20–30% |
| AO3 | Analyse problems, issues and situations | 20–30% | 20–30% | 20–30% |
| AO4 | Evaluate, distinguish between and assess appropriateness of fact and opinion, and judge information from a variety of sources. | 15–25% | 25–35% | 20–30% |

Scheme of assessment

11. Assessment must be entirely through external assessment.

Synoptic assessment

12. Synoptic assessment in Business Studies should take place across the two A2 units and should encourage learners to:

- gain a holistic understanding of business;
- develop the ability to deal with the interrelationships between external and internal factors affecting business in different contexts;

13. Where a specification contains options, synoptic assessment should focus on the elements contained within the compulsory content.

AS performance descriptions for Business Studies

| | Assessment objectives 1 | Assessment objective 2 | Assessment objective 3 | Assessment objective 4 |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Assessment objectives | Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content. | Apply knowledge and understanding to problems and issues arising from both familiar and unfamiliar situations. | Analyse problems, issues and situations. | Evaluate, distinguish between and assess appropriateness of fact and opinion, and judge information from a variety of sources. |
| A/B boundary performance descriptions | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key business concepts in the AS specification, with few significant omissions.</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate the ability to apply relevant knowledge to familiar and unfamiliar business contexts;</p> <p>b) show knowledge and understanding of the issues arising from these situations.</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) analyse problems, issues and situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ build logical arguments; ■ use appropriate numerical and non-numerical techniques. | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) distinguish between fact and opinion;</p> <p>b) assess the appropriateness of information from a variety of sources;</p> <p>c) make a reasoned evaluation of the sources considered.</p> |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>E/U boundary performance descriptions</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate a basic knowledge and some understanding of the business concepts in the AS specification.</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate the ability to apply a basic level of relevant knowledge to familiar business contexts;</p> <p>b) show some knowledge and understanding of the issues arising from these situations.</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) provide partial analysis of problems, issues and situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ build arguments; ■ use appropriate numerical and non-numerical techniques. | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>b) make some distinction between fact and opinion;</p> <p>c) assess at a basic level the appropriateness of information from one or more sources;</p> <p>d) make a partial evaluation of the sources considered.</p> |
|---|--|--|--|---|

A2 performance descriptions for Business Studies

| | Assessment objectives 1 | Assessment objective 2 | Assessment objective 3 | Assessment objective 4 |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Assessment objectives | Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content. | Apply knowledge and understanding to problems and issues arising from both familiar and unfamiliar situations. | Analyse problems, issues and situations. | Evaluate, distinguish between and assess appropriateness of fact and opinion, and judge information from a variety of sources. |
| A/B boundary performance descriptions | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate precise knowledge and understanding of key business concepts drawn from the A2 specification, with few omissions;</p> <p>b) show knowledge and understanding of the links between business concepts.</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate effective application of relevant knowledge to familiar and unfamiliar business contexts;</p> <p>b) show knowledge and understanding of the issues arising from these situations</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) critically analyse business problems, issues and situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ build logical arguments; ■ use appropriate numerical and non-numerical techniques; <p>b) analyse a business strategy;</p> <p>c) develop a business strategy.</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) distinguish between fact and opinion;</p> <p>b) assess critically the appropriateness of information from a wide variety of sources;</p> <p>c) make a well-reasoned evaluation of the sources considered.</p> |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <p>E/U boundary performance descriptions</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate knowledge and some understanding of business concepts drawn from the A2 specification;</p> <p>b) show some knowledge and understanding of the links between business concepts.</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate the application of relevant knowledge to familiar and unfamiliar business contexts;</p> <p>b) show some knowledge and understanding of the issues arising from these situations.</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) provide a simple analysis of business problems, issues and situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ build arguments; ■ use appropriate numerical and non-numerical techniques; <p>b) outline a business strategy.</p> | <p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) distinguish between fact and opinion;</p> <p>b) assess the appropriateness of information from several sources;</p> <p>c) make an evaluation of the sources considered.</p> |
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|--|-------------------|
| 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