

GCE Subject Criteria for Applied Business

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The criteria

Introduction

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

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

Aims and objectives

1. Subject criteria define the relationship between the AS (3-unit), the AS double award (6-unit), the A level (6-unit) and the A level double award (12-unit) qualifications.
2. Any GCE specification that contains significant elements of the subject applied business must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria. Awarding organisations must ensure that GCE specifications and external assessment approaches are clearly differentiated from other qualifications they offer in this and similar subject(s) at this level.
3. The titles of the qualifications are:
 - Advanced Subsidiary General Certificate of Education in Applied Business;
 - Advanced Subsidiary General Certificate of Education in Applied Business (double award);
 - Advanced General Certificate of Education in Applied Business;
 - Advanced General Certificate of Education in Applied Business (double award).
4. All specifications in Applied Business should provide learners with a broad introduction to the business sector and should encourage learners to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in realistic business contexts, such as discovering the problems and opportunities faced by local businesses and/or organising an enterprise activity.
5. They should provide opportunities for learners to develop sufficient depth of understanding to inform their choices for further study or training.

6. Learners should be encouraged to acquire the following range of skills through the study of realistic business contexts:
 - practical skills: personal organisation and time management; ICT skills;
 - presentational skills: producing a business report; making a presentation;
 - personal skills: initiative; creativity; perseverance; willingness to learn and progress;
 - interpersonal skills: working in teams; discussing problems or issues; leading a team;
 - cognitive skills: investigative and research skills; problem solving; decision making; using theory to analyse a real organisation; planning a project.
7. All specifications should encourage learners to develop knowledge and understanding of:
 - the practices and techniques used within marketing, finance, operations management and human resource management, and the links between them;
 - the processes, attractions and risks of setting up an enterprise;
 - the relationship between the business and the changing external environment;
 - social and ethical issues in business.
8. All specifications should also encourage learners to:
 - contribute to the development of the skills required for success as an entrepreneur, manager or employee;
 - apply numerical and written business techniques to a variety of business contexts;
 - explore business problems and learn to identify possible solutions.
9. The A level and A level (double award) specifications should develop learners' understanding of business by making connections between areas of knowledge, skills and understanding.

Specification content

10. All specifications must build on the knowledge, understanding and skills that may be acquired through level 2 qualifications in business or through equivalent experience.
11. The core content, which is common to all awarding organisation specifications, is grouped into areas of study, with amplification. The core content to be included in AS is in normal type; the content to be included in A2 is in **bold** type. Areas of study titles do not necessarily constitute unit titles. All areas of study and associated amplification must be covered in awarding organisation specifications.
12. The knowledge, understanding and skills detailed in areas of study 1 to 5 represent the entire content of the AS (three-unit) and half of the AS double award (six-unit).
13. The content specified in area of study 6 represents one-third of the A2 part of the six-unit A level and one-sixth of the A2 part of the A level (double award).
14. In addition to the areas of study in the core content, specifications must include other areas of study related to business in vocational settings, to make up the remainder of the following specifications:
 - AS (three-unit): no awarding organisation devised content;
 - AS double award (six-unit): one-half awarding organisation devised content;
 - A level (six-unit): one-third awarding organisation devised content;
 - A level double award (12-unit): two-thirds awarding organisation devised content.
15. AS content and assessment material should be a stepping stone to A2 content and assessment material.
16. A2 content and assessment material should require, in addition to the knowledge, understanding and skills developed in the AS content and assessment material:
 - understanding and application of more complex concepts within realistic business contexts;
 - an ability to relate knowledge from different areas of business to arrive at a deeper understanding of the complexity of business;

- an ability to analyse and evaluate business situations to draw substantiated and convincing conclusions with an understanding of their limitations;
 - demonstration of higher-level business skills, including team working, self-management and organisation.
17. All content and assessment material included in A level and A level (double award) specifications must represent a coherent whole and demonstrate clear and logical progression to further study or training.
18. All specifications must:
- include guidance for teachers on the provision of the vocational context;
 - set out for learners the purpose and vocational relevance of the content (knowledge, skills and understanding);
 - set out for learners the skills, knowledge and understanding that they will need to demonstrate to achieve the assessment units;
 - set out for learners the evidence that they will need to produce for the internally assessed units;
 - set out for learners the marking criteria for the internally assessed units against which they will be assessed.

Area of study	Amplification
<p>1. Investigating business</p> <p>AS core content for the AS (three-unit).</p>	<p>The emphasis should be on investigating actual businesses, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ business aims and objectives; ■ functional areas within businesses; ■ enterprise and innovation; ■ business planning; ■ monitoring and reviewing business activities; ■ resource management and quality control.
<p>2. Introduction to marketing</p> <p>AS core content for the AS (three-unit).</p>	<p>The emphasis should be on actions businesses should take in response to customers' needs and competitive forces, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ understanding consumer wants and needs; competition; distribution channels; ■ mass versus niche marketing; ■ market research; ■ marketing mix – the four Ps.
<p>3. Financial management</p> <p>AS core content for the AS (three-unit).</p>	<p>The emphasis should be on management accounting to aid decision making, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ cash-flow management; ■ the use of software, for example spreadsheets, for record-keeping and other financial purposes; ■ profit and break-even analysis; ■ setting and monitoring budgets.

<p>4. People in organisations</p> <p>AS core content for the AS (three-unit).</p>	<p>The emphasis should be on the effective management, motivation and development of staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identification of the qualities employers look for in employees; ■ recruitment, retention and training; ■ motivational factors for the individual; ■ the roles and responsibilities of managers, supervisors and employees.
<p>5. External influences on business</p> <p>AS core content for the AS (three-unit).</p>	<p>The emphasis should be on investigating the impact of external conditions on businesses and their responses to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ changes in economic and market conditions; ■ environmental issues; ■ social and ethical issues; ■ legal and self-regulatory constraints and issues.
<p>6. Business investigation</p> <p>A2 core content for the A level (six-unit).</p>	<p>The investigation should encompass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ aims and objectives; ■ target market / market research; ■ marketing issues; ■ financial analysis and planning; ■ resource management; ■ recommendations; ■ evaluation of outcomes and/or processes.

Assessment objectives

19. All specifications must require learners to demonstrate the following objectives in a range of vocationally related contexts.
20. The weightings for the assessment objectives over the whole qualification must be between the ranges set out below:

Assessment objective		Weighting (%)		
		AS	A2	A level / A level (double award)
AO1	Knowledge, skills and understanding Learners demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content and relevant business skills.	30–40	20–30	25–35
AO2	Application of knowledge, skills and understanding Learners apply knowledge and understanding of the specified content and relevant business skills.	25–35	25–35	25–35
AO3	Research and analysis Learners use appropriate methods in order to obtain and select information from a range of sources to analyse business problems.	15–25	15–25	15–25
AO4	Evaluation Learners evaluate evidence to reach reasoned judgements.	10–20	20–30	15–25

Scheme of assessment

21. Assessment units must be assessed either internally or externally.
22. AS content and A2 content must be assessed separately.
23. In each AS specification, at least one assessment unit must be assessed externally.
24. In each AS (double award) specification, at least two assessment units must be assessed externally.
25. In each A level specification, at least two assessment units must be assessed externally, one of which must be in A2.
26. In each A level (double award) specification, at least four assessment units must be assessed externally, two of which must be in A2.
27. All A level and A level (double award) specifications must include synoptic assessment at A2. Synoptic assessment will involve the learner bringing together and making connections between the areas of knowledge, skills and understanding covered within the specification and applying this when carrying out a business investigation.
28. All specifications must require learners to show their knowledge, understanding and skills in a variety of ways, including extended writing.¹
29. All specifications must include external assessment that is set externally, timed and includes some part completed under 'controlled' conditions. The assessed outcome(s) should be marked by the awarding organisation or marked by the centre and moderated by the awarding organisation.

¹ Any reference to 'writing' or 'written communication' should be interpreted as the production of text by any means, for example pen, word processor and so on.

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