GCE AS and A Level Subject Criteria for Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

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Contents

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 organisation creates the detail of the specification`1.

Aims and objectives

1.   AS and A level specifications in MFL should encourage learners to:

     ■   develop an interest in, and enthusiasm for, language learning;

     ■   develop understanding of the language in a variety of contexts and genres;

     ■   communicate confidently, clearly and effectively in the language for a range of purposes;

     ■   develop awareness and understanding of the contemporary society, cultural background and heritage of countries or communities where the language is spoken;

     ■   consider their study of the language in a broader context.

2.   AS and A level specifications in MFL should enable learners to:

     ■   derive enjoyment and benefit from language learning;

     ■   acquire knowledge, skills and understanding for practical use, further study and/or employment;

     ■   communicate with speakers of the language;

     ■   take their place in a multilingual global society.

3.   AS and A level specifications should also:

     ■   provide a coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study for learners who do not progress to further study in the subject.

4.   In addition, A level specifications in MFL should:

- provide a sufficient basis for the further study of languages at degree level or equivalent.

Subject content

5. AS and A level specifications in MFL must specify that, in order to study the subject at AS and A level, learners should normally have acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills equivalent to those specified for GCSE at higher tier in the relevant language.

Knowledge, understanding and skills

6. AS specifications must require learners to:

- listen and respond to a variety of spoken[1] sources, including authentic sources;

- read and respond to a variety of written texts, including authentic sources, covering different contexts, registers, styles and genres;

- adapt their spoken and written language appropriately for different situations and purposes;

- use the language accurately to express facts and ideas, and to present explanations, opinions and information in both speech and writing;

- understand and apply the grammatical system and a range of structures as detailed in the AS specification (see Appendix 1 for French, German and Spanish);

- transfer meaning from the modern foreign language into English, Welsh or Irish, and/or vice versa.

7. Spoken and written sources must include material that relates to the contemporary society, cultural background and heritage of one or more of the countries or communities where the language is spoken.

8. Understanding and responding to the spoken form of the modern foreign language, and/or communicating through the spoken word may not apply to specifications for certain languages, subject to an agreement with the regulators.

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[1] Understanding and responding to the **spoken** form of the modern foreign language, and/or communicating through the **spoken** word may not apply to specifications for certain languages, subject to an agreement with the regulatory authorities.

9. In addition, A level specifications must require learners to:

    ■   use the language to present viewpoints, develop arguments, analyse and evaluate, in speech and in writing;

    ■   understand and apply the grammatical system and a range of structures as detailed in the A level specification (see Appendix 1 for French, German and Spanish);

    ■   study aspects of the contemporary society, cultural background and heritage of one or more of the countries or communities whose language is being studied;

    ■   transfer meaning from English, Welsh or Irish into the modern foreign language, and/or vice versa. If one skill is not assessed at AS level, it must be assessed at A2 level.

Assessment objectives

10. The objectives for AS and A level are the same.

11. All 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	Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to spoken language	35–40%	25–30%	30–35%
AO2	Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to written language	35–40%	45–50%	40–45%
AO3	Show knowledge of and apply accurately the grammar and syntax prescribed in the specification	25%	25%	25%

12. The assessment objectives apply to the whole specification.

13. 'Understand and respond in **speech** to **spoken** language' and 'respond in **speech** to written language' may not apply to specifications for certain languages, subject to an agreement with the regulators.

14. For specifications without a speaking component the following applies:

Assessment objectives		Weighting		
		AS level	**A2 level**	**A level**
AO1	Understand and respond, **in writing**, to spoken language	25–30%	15–20%	20–25%
AO2	Understand and respond, **in writing**, to written language	45–50%	55–60%	50–55%

15. For specifications with neither a speaking nor a listening component the following applies:

Assessment objectives		Weighting		
		AS level	**A2 level**	**A level**
AO1	N/A			
AO2	Understand and respond, **in writing**, to written language	75%	75%	75%

Scheme of assessment

16. Assessment must be entirely through external assessment.

Synoptic assessment

17. All specifications must include synoptic assessment at A2.

18. The definition of synoptic assessment in the context of MFL is as follows:

- Knowledge, understanding and skills in MFL are closely linked.

- Synoptic assessment covers both knowledge of the language and skills in using it that have been developed in different parts of the A level course.

- Learners will demonstrate understanding and the ability to use advanced-level language skills in one or more tasks. Synoptic assessment in MFL should draw on all A level assessment objectives.

19. Examples of synoptic assessment tasks might include:

    - an assessment for which learners study a topic with reference to both written and spoken sources and respond to these in speech and/or writing;

    - two assessments: one requiring learners to respond in speech to a written stimulus and to discuss this; the other requiring learners to respond in writing.

20. Study through **spoken** sources and response in **speech** may not apply to specifications for certain languages, subject to an agreement with the regulators.

Answers in English, Welsh or Irish

21. A maximum of 10 per cent of the total marks for the subject at each level (AS and A-level) may be awarded for answers in English, Welsh or Irish.

Resources in examinations

22. In A level examinations, the use of dictionaries will not be permitted in any assessment.

AS performance descriptions for modern foreign languages

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to spoken language.[2]	Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to written language.[3]	Show knowledge of and apply accurately the grammar and syntax prescribed in the specification.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	In the context of materials appropriate to the AS specification, learners characteristically: a) show a clear understanding of spoken language; b) understand the main points and details, including points of view; c) are able to infer meaning with only a few omissions; d) are able to develop their ideas,	In the context of materials appropriate to the AS specification, learners characteristically: a) show a clear understanding of a range of written texts; b) understand the main points and details, including points of view; c) are able to infer meaning with only a few omissions; d) are able to develop their ideas,	In the context of grammar and syntax listed in the AS specification, learners characteristically: a) make effective use of a range of vocabulary and structures appropriate to the task; b) generally deploy grammar, syntax and morphology accurately; c) are able to manipulate language appropriately when required.

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[2] Understand and respond in speech to spoken language may not apply to the specifications for certain languages, subject to an agreement with the regulators.

[3] Understand and respond in speech to written language may not apply to the specifications for certain languages, subject to an agreement with the regulators.

	and express points of view, with some appropriate justification; *e)* respond readily and fluently and take the initiative *(speaking)*; *f)* have generally accurate pronunciation and intonation *(speaking)*; *g)* are able to deal with unpredictable elements *(speaking)*; *h)* show the ability to organise and structure their response coherently *(writing)*; i) offer relevant information which addresses the requirements of the task *(writing)*.	and express points of view, with some appropriate justification; e) respond readily and fluently and take the initiative *(speaking)*; f) have generally accurate pronunciation and intonation *(speaking)*; *g)* show the ability to organise and structure their response coherently *(writing)*; h) offer relevant information which addresses the requirements of the task *(writing)*.	
E/U boundary performance descriptions	In the context of materials appropriate to the AS specification, learners characteristically: a) show some understanding of	In the context of materials appropriate to the AS specification, learners characteristically: a) show some understanding of	In the context of grammar and syntax listed in the AS specification, learners characteristically: a) use a restricted range of

basic, often concrete, spoken language, while experiencing difficulties with more complex and abstract language; b) understand some of the main points and details, including basic points of view; c) have a limited ability to infer meaning where appropriate to the task; d) are able to convey some basic information when transferring meaning; e) may be hesitant in their response and their fluency is mostly confined to pre-learnt material. Their target language performance may be influenced by their first language (*speaking*); f) may have some difficulty communicating factual information, narrating events and expressing basic points of view in	straightforward written texts, but experience difficulties with more complex and abstract language; b) understand some of the main points and details, including limited points of view; c) have a limited ability to infer meaning where appropriate to the task; d) are able to convey some basic information when transferring meaning. e) may be hesitant in their response and their fluency is mostly confined to pre-learnt material. Their target language performance maybe influenced by their first language (*speaking*); f) may have some difficulty communicating factual information, narrating events and expressing basic points of view in response to the task set, and do	vocabulary and structures; b) have language characterised by frequent errors in grammar, syntax and morphology; c) may be influenced by the first language; d) demonstrate a very limited ability to manipulate language where required.

	response to the task set, and do not always address the requirements of the task (*writing*); g) show some ability to structure and organise their response where appropriate.	not always address the requirements of the task (*writing*); g) show some ability to structure and organise their response where appropriate.	

A2 performance descriptions for modern foreign languages

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to spoken language.[4]	Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to written language.[5]	Show knowledge of and apply accurately the grammar and syntax prescribed in the specification.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	In the context of materials appropriate to the A level specification, learners characteristically: a) show a clear understanding of spoken language; b) understand the main points and details, including points of view; c) demonstrate an ability to infer meaning; d) are able to transfer meaning with only minor omissions;	In the context of materials appropriate to the A level specification, learners characteristically: a) show a clear understanding of a range of written texts; b) understand the main points and details, including points of view; c) demonstrate an ability to infer meaning; d) are able to transfer meaning with only minor omissions;	In the context of materials appropriate to the A level specification learners characteristically: a) make effective use of a wide range of vocabulary and a variety of complex structures as appropriate; b) predominantly use grammar, syntax and morphology in an accurate way; c) are able to manipulate language accurately and appropriately where required.

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[4] Understand and respond in speech to spoken language may not apply to specifications for certain languages, subject to an agreement with the regulators.

[5] Understand and respond in speech to written language may not apply to specifications for certain languages, subject to an agreement with the regulators.

	e) are able to develop their ideas, and express and justify points of view effectively; f) respond readily and fluently and take the initiative (*speaking*); g) have generally accurate pronunciation and intonation (*speaking*); h) are able to deal appropriately with unpredictable elements (*speaking*); i) show the ability to organise and structure their response coherently (*writing*); j) offer relevant information which addresses the requirements of the task (*writing*).	e) are able to develop their ideas, and express and justify points of view effectively; f) respond readily and fluently and take the initiative (*speaking*); g) have generally accurate pronunciation and intonation (*speaking*); h) are able to deal appropriately with unpredictable elements (*speaking*); i) show the ability to organise and structure their response coherently (*writing*).	
E/U boundary performance descriptions	In the context of materials appropriate to the A level specification, learners characteristically:	In the context of materials appropriate to the A level specification, learners characteristically:	In the context of grammar and syntax listed in the A level specification, learners characteristically:

a) show some understanding of spoken, usually concrete, language, but may experience difficulty with more complex and abstract language;	a) show some understanding of a range of written texts, usually straightforward, but may experience difficulty with more complex and abstract language;	a) use a restricted range of vocabulary and structures. The deployment of grammar, syntax and morphology contains frequent error and may be influenced by their first language;
b) understand some of the main points and details, including basic points of view;	b) understand some of the main points and details, including basic points of view;	b) demonstrate a very limited ability to manipulate language correctly when required.
c) demonstrate a limited ability to infer meaning, where appropriate, to the task;	c) demonstrate a limited ability to infer meaning, where appropriate, to the task;	
d) are able to convey the basic information when transferring meaning;	d) are able to convey the basic information when transferring meaning;	
e) may be hesitant in their response and their fluency is mostly confined to pre-learnt material. Their target language performance may be influenced by their first language (*speaking*);	e) may be hesitant in their response and their fluency is mostly confined to pre-learnt material. Their target language performance may be influenced by their first language (*speaking*);	
f) may have some difficulty communicating factual information and narrative events	f) may have some difficulty communicating factual information and narrative events	

	and expressing basic points of view in response to the task set, and do not always address the requirements of the task appropriately (*writing*); g) show some ability of structure and organise their response, where appropriate.	and expressing basic points of view in response to the task set, and do not always address the requirements of the task appropriately; g) show some ability of structure and organise their response, where appropriate.	

Appendix 1

AS and A level learners will be expected to have studied the grammatical system and structures of the language during their course. In the examination they will be required to use actively and accurately grammar and structures appropriate to the tasks set, drawn from the following lists. The lists are divided into AS and A level. The examples in italics are indicative, not exclusive. For structures marked (R), receptive knowledge only is required.

French: AS level

Nouns

- Gender

- Singular and plural forms

Articles

- Definite, indefinite and partitive

Adjectives

- Agreement

- Position

- Comparative and superlative

- Demonstrative *(ce, cet, cette, ces)*

- Indefinite *(chaque, quelque)*

- Possessive

- Interrogative *(quel, quelle)*

Adverbs

- Comparative and superlative

- Interrogative *(comment, quand)*

Quantifiers/intensifiers

- Très, assez, beaucoup

Pronouns

- Personal: subject

- Object: direct and indirect

- Position and order

- Reflexive

- Relative *(qui, que)*

- Relative: *lequel, auquel, dont* (R)

- Disjunctive/emphatic

- Demonstrative *(celui)* (R)

- Indefinite *(quelqu'un)*

- Possessive *(le mien)* (R)

- Interrogative *(qui, que)*

- Interrogative *(quoi) (R)*

- Use of *y, en*

Verbs

- Regular and irregular verbs, including reflexive verbs

- Modes of address *(tu, vous)*

- Impersonal verbs

- Verbs followed by an infinitive (with or without a preposition)

- Dependent infinitives *(faire réparer)* (R)

- Perfect infinitive

- Negative forms

- Interrogative forms

Tenses

- Present

- Perfect (including agreement of past participle)

- Imperfect

- Future

- Conditional

- Future perfect (R)

- Conditional perfect (R)

- Pluperfect

- Past historic (R)

- Passive voice

- Present tense

- Other tenses (R)

- Imperative

- Present participle

- Subjunctive mood: present (common uses, for example, after expressions of possibility, necessity, obligation and after conjunctions such as *bien que*)

Indirect speech

Inversion after speech (R)

Prepositions

Conjunctions

Number, quantity and time

- (Including use of *depuis, venir de*)

French: A level

All grammar and structures listed for AS level, plus:

Pronouns

- Relative: *lequel, auquel, dont*

- Possessive *(le mien)*

- Demonstrative *(celui)*

- Interrogative *(quoi)*

Verbs

- Dependent infinitives *(faire réparer)*

- Future perfect tense

- Conditional perfect tense

- Passive voice: all tenses

- Subjunctive mood: present

- Perfect

- Imperfect (R)

Inversion after adverbs

Inversion after speech

German: AS level

The case system

Nouns

- Gender

- Singular and plural forms

- Genitive singular and dative plural forms

- Weak nouns

- Adjectives used as nouns

Articles

- Definite and indefinite, including *kein*

Adjectives

- Adjectival endings

- Comparative and superlative

- Demonstrative *(dieser, jeder)*

- Possessive

- Interrogative *(welcher)*

Adverbs

- Comparative and superlative

- Interrogative *(wann, warum, wo, wie, wie viel)*

Qualifiers

- *Sehr, besonders, kaum, recht, wenig*

Particles

- *Doch, eben, ja, mal, schon*

Pronouns

- Personal

- Position and order

- Reflexive

- Relative

- Indefinite *(jemand, niemand)*

- Possessive

- Interrogative *(wer, wen, wem, was)*

Verbs

- Weak, strong, mixed and irregular forms of verbs

- Reflexive usages

- Modes of address *(du, ihr, Sie)*

- Impersonal verbs

- Separable/inseparable

- Infinitive constructions: *lassen* with infinitive (R)

- Modal verbs *(dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen, wollen)*: present and imperfect te*nses; imperfect subjunctive of mögen and können*

- Auxiliary *(haben, sein, werden)*

- Infinitive constructions (*um… zu*, *ohne… zu*, verbs with *zu*)

- Infinitive constructions: *lassen* with infinitive

- Negative forms

- Interrogative forms

Tenses

- Present

- Perfect

- Perfect (modal verbs) (R)

- Imperfect/simple past (all verbs)

- Future

- Conditional

- Future perfect (R)

- Conditional perfect (R)

- Pluperfect

- Passive voice (verbs with a direct object) (R)

- Passive voice (verbs with an indirect object) (R)

- Imperative

- Subjunctive in conditional clauses (imperfect)

- Subjunctive in conditional clauses (pluperfect) (R)

- Subjunctive in indirect speech (R)

Prepositions

- Fixed case and dual case

Clause structures

- Main clause word order

- Subordinate clauses (including relative clauses)

Conjunctions

- Coordinating

- Subordinating: most common, including *damit, ob, so dass*

- Subordinating: *als ob, seitdem* (R)

Number, quantity and time

- (Including use of *seit, seitdem*)

German: A level

All grammar and structures listed for AS level, plus:

Verbs

- Infinitive constructions: *lassen* with infinitive

- Tenses

    □ Perfect (all verbs, including modal verbs)

    □ Future perfect

    □ Conditional perfect

- Passive voice (verbs with a direct or indirect object)

- Subjunctive in conditional clauses (pluperfect)

Other uses of the subjunctive

- (With *als, als ob*)

Conjunctions

- Subordinating: *als ob, seitdem*

All forms of indirect speech

Variations of normal word order

Spanish: AS level

Nouns

- Gender

- Singular and plural forms

Articles

- Definite and indefinite (including *lo* plus adjective)

Adjectives

- Agreement

- Position

- Apocopation *(buen, mal)*

- Comparative and superlative

- Demonstrative *(este, ese, aquel)*

- Indefinite *(alguno, cualquiera, otro)*

- Possessive (short and long forms) *(mi, mío)*

- Interrogative *(cuánto, qué)*

- Relative *(cuyo)*

- Exclamatory *(qué)*

Adverbs

- Comparative and superlative

- Interrogative *(cómo, cuándo, dónde)*

Quantifiers/intensifiers

- *(Muy, bastante, poco, mucho)*

Pronouns

- Subject

- Object: direct and indirect

- Position and order

- Reflexive

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

- Disjunctive/emphatic

- Demonstrative *(éste, ése, aquél, esto, eso, aquello)*

- Indefinite *(algo, alguien)*

- Possessive *(el mío, la mía)*

- Interrogative *(cuál, qué, quién)*

Verbs

- Regular and irregular forms of verbs, including reflexive verbs

- Modes of address *(tú, usted)*

- Radical-changing verbs

- Impersonal verbs

- Verbs followed by an infinitive (with or without a preposition)

- Perfect infinitive

- Negative forms

- Interrogative forms

- Reflexive constructions *(se vende, se nos dice que)*

- Uses of *ser* and *estar*

Tenses

- Present

- Preterite

- Imperfect

- Future

- Conditional

- Perfect

- Future perfect (R)

- Conditional perfect (R)

- Pluperfect

- Passive voice: present and preterite tenses

Other tenses (R)

- Continuous tenses

- Imperative

- Gerund

- Past participle

- Subjunctive mood: present

- Perfect

- Imperfect

- Pluperfect

- Uses of subjunctive: polite commands

- Negative commands

- After verbs of wishing, command, request, emotion

- To express purpose *(para que)*

- To express possibility/impossibility

- After conjunctions of time *(cuando lleguemos)*

- In conditional sentences after *si*

- All other common uses (R)

Prepositions

- Personal *a*

- Uses of *por* and *para*

Conjunctions

- Common, including *y*, *pero*, *o*, *porque*, *como*, *cuando*

Number, quantity and time

- Constructions with *hace* and *desde hace*

Spanish: A level

All grammar and structures listed for AS level, plus:

Verbs

- Future perfect tense

- Conditional perfect tense

- Passive voice: all tenses

- Subjunctive mood: all common uses