



Department
for Education

Modern foreign languages (smaller cohorts)

GCE AS and A level subject content

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The content for modern foreign languages AS and A level (smaller cohorts)

Introduction

1. AS and A level subject content sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills common to all AS and A level specifications in the relevant subject.

Context

2. The study of a modern foreign language is understood to be an interdisciplinary subject offering the same cognitive and academic advantages as other disciplines within the humanities. In addition to high level practical language skills, the content of AS and A level modern foreign languages provides depth of knowledge, understanding and intercultural competence, and fosters a range of transferable skills such as communication skills, critical thinking, autonomy, resourcefulness, creativity, and linguistic, cultural and cognitive flexibility; all of which are of value to the individual, to wider society, to higher education and to employers. The content of AS and A level modern foreign languages has been designed to be of relevance to students of all disciplines, whether they intend to progress to further study in the subject or not. It is designed to support the continued provision of a wide range of languages at AS and A level and will provide a robust foundation for those wishing to study a modern foreign language to degree level or equivalent.

3. The content is designed specifically for AS and A levels in the following modern foreign languages: Arabic, Bengali, Gujarati, Modern Greek, Modern Hebrew, Japanese, Panjabi, Persian, Portuguese, Polish, Turkish and Urdu. These modern foreign language AS and A level specifications will have no requirement to demonstrate spoken language skills, and the modern foreign languages content document¹, published in 2014, is not applicable. AS and A level specifications for all modern foreign languages must nonetheless offer comparable levels of rigour and demand.

Aims and objectives

4. AS and A level specifications in a modern foreign language covered by this subject content must enable students to:

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-modern-foreign-languages>

- enhance their linguistic skills and promote and develop their capacity for critical thinking on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of the language, culture and society of the country or countries where the language is spoken
- develop control of the language system to convey meaning, using written skills, including an extended range of vocabulary, for both practical and intellectual purposes, as increasingly confident, accurate and independent users of the written language
- develop their ability to understand language in spoken and written form and to interact effectively with users of the language in writing
- develop language skills and strategies, including comprehension strategies such as using contextual clues and cues, and communication strategies to build fluency and confidence in writing. Specifications should encourage the development of speaking skills as part of their courses of study, although there will be no assessment of those skills
- engage critically with intellectually stimulating texts, films and other materials, in the original language, developing an appreciation of sophisticated and creative uses of the language and understanding them within their cultural and social context
- develop knowledge about matters central to the society and culture, past and present, of the country or countries where the language is spoken
- mediate between cultures and between speakers of the language and speakers of English in writing
- foster their ability to learn other languages
- equip themselves with transferable skills such as autonomy, resourcefulness, creativity, critical thinking, and linguistic, cultural and cognitive flexibility that will enable them to proceed to further study or to employment

5. In addition, the A level specifications must enable students to:

- develop their capacity for critical and analytical thinking through the language of study
- develop as independent researchers through the language of study

Subject content

6. AS and A level specifications in modern foreign languages covered by this subject content must build on the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the GCSE subject content in relation to the skills of listening, reading and writing.

7. The content for AS and A level is conceived as an integrated study with a focus on language and culture and society.

8. AS and A level specifications must require students to develop knowledge and understanding, through the language of study and using a variety of texts including literature, of themes relating to the society and culture, past and present, of the country or countries where the language is spoken. These themes must be set out in specifications:

- At AS, students must study two themes overall: one theme from society, past and present; and one theme from political and/or intellectual and/or artistic culture, past and present
- At A level, students must study four themes overall: two themes from society, past and present; and two themes from two of: political and/or intellectual and/or artistic culture, past and present
- At both AS and A level, students must use authentic spoken and written sources from a variety of different contexts and genres, as stimulus material for the study of the themes and, concurrently, for language development. This material must include contemporary, historical and literary fiction and non-fiction texts, adapted as necessary

9. AS and A level specifications must require students to develop their language knowledge, understanding and skills² through:

- using language in writing: independently to initiate communication; explore and answer questions; express thoughts and feelings; present viewpoints; develop arguments; persuade; analyse and evaluate
- applying knowledge of morphology and syntax, vocabulary and idiom to communicate accurately and coherently in writing, using a range of expression. As outlined in paragraph 16 below, all specifications must include appendices setting out requirements for grammar which represent a level of challenge and breadth comparable to the requirements in the content document for modern foreign languages³
- listening, and responding in writing, to spoken passages including some extended passages from a range of different contexts and sources, adapted as necessary,

² Exceptions for Japanese are detailed in Annex: Exceptions to subject content for Japanese

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-modern-foreign-languages

covering different registers and types, including authentic communication involving one or more speakers

- reading and responding in writing to a variety of texts including some extended texts written for different purposes and audiences drawn from a range of authentic sources, including contemporary, historical and literary, fiction and non-fiction texts, adapted as necessary
- understanding the main points, gist and detail from spoken and written material
- inferring meaning from complex spoken and written material, including factual and abstract content
- assimilating and using information from spoken and written sources
- summarising information from spoken and written sources, reporting key points and subject matter in writing
- translating an unseen passage or passages from the language of study into English at AS and A level
- translating unseen sentences or short texts at AS, and an unseen passage or passages at A level, from English into the language of study

10. Specifications must require students to apply language skills in combination. They must:

- at AS, identify main ideas or key points of information drawn from spoken and written sources addressing common subject matter, expressing and justifying points of view, in writing
- at A level, identify main ideas, and summarise a line of argument and/or different points of view, drawn from spoken and written sources addressing common subject matter, evaluating and drawing conclusions, in writing

11. At AS, specifications must also require students to study one work, either a literary work or a film, and:

- know, understand and be able to respond critically in writing, in the language of study, to the work, taken from the prescribed list provided in the specification
- critically respond to aspects such as the structure of the plot, characterisation, and use of imagery or other stylistic features, as appropriate to the work studied

12. At A level, specifications must require students to study two works, either a literary work and a film, or two literary works, and:

- appreciate, analyse and be able to respond critically in writing, in the language of study, to the works, taken from the prescribed list provided in the specification

13. At A level, specifications must require students to develop a more detailed understanding of the works, showing a critical appreciation of the concepts and issues covered, and a critical and analytical response to features such as the form and the

technique of presentation, as appropriate to the work studied (e.g. the effect of narrative voice in a prose text or use of language and cinematic technique in the analysis of film).

14. The works prescribed in AS and A level specifications must be appropriate authentic sources:

- the list of literary works must include a range from at least two of the following genres: novels, series of short stories, plays, selections of poems, life writing (such as autobiography, biography, letters and journals)
- the list of films must include feature length films and can include selections of short films organised by theme or director
- students are required to study two discrete works at A level, i.e., students cannot be assessed on a film adapted from a literary work as well as on the original literary work itself

15. In addition, A level specifications must require students to:

- develop research skills in the language of study, demonstrating the ability to initiate and conduct individual research on a subject of interest, relating to the country or countries where the language is spoken, taken from the prescribed list of research subjects in the specification
- select relevant information from a range of authentic sources in the language of study
- use information from research activity and additional unseen spoken and/or written stimulus material, to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the research subject in writing
- evaluate and draw conclusions, referring to research findings and stimulus material, putting forward and sustaining a line of argument

16. AS and A level specifications must include lists of grammar and structures of the language, which represent a level of challenge and breadth that is comparable to the requirements for modern foreign languages⁴.

17. AS and A level specifications will require students to know and understand the grammatical system and structures set out in these lists. Knowledge of the grammar and structures specified for GCSE is assumed. Specifications must require students to use, actively and accurately, grammar and structures appropriate to the tasks set, drawn from these lists. The mention of an item in these lists implies knowledge of both its forms and its functions at an appropriate level of accuracy and complexity.

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-modern-foreign-languages

Annex: Exceptions to subject content for Japanese

The expectations at AS and A level for Japanese are different to other smaller cohort languages covered by this document.

- There is an exception to the expectation for students to use their language knowledge, skills, and understanding in their response to spoken and written language. Questions and responses in comprehension (listening and reading) tasks must be in English, unless writing skills are also intentionally being assessed.
- Questions about the literary works and films will be provided in both Japanese and English. In the literary works and films section, students will still be required to respond in the language of study.



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