Ancient languages

GCSE subject content and assessment objectives

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Contents

Introduction

GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject. They provide the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications, so ensuring possibilities for progression to A level.

Subject aims and learning outcomes

GCSE specifications in ancient languages should provide a strong foundation in linguistic and cultural competence, enabling students to break the boundaries of time and space and access knowledge and understanding of the classical/biblical world directly through reading and responding to its language and literature. They should prepare students to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities in school and higher education and career choices.

GCSE specifications in an ancient language should enable students to:

- develop and deploy their knowledge of vocabulary, morphology and syntax in order to read, understand and interpret the ancient language
- demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of classical literature, values and society through the analysis and evaluation of adapted and original texts
- develop their critical, analytical and reflective skills to evaluate evidence from a range of sources, including verse and prose literature, inscriptions, letters and artefacts, as appropriate
- select, analyse and evaluate evidence to draw informed conclusions from the sources studied to:
    - demonstrate understanding of the historical, literary and cultural context of a text and
    - identify and appreciate its literary form and impact
- develop insights into the relevance of classical language and literature and ancient civilisation to our understanding of our modern world of diverse cultures
- deploy their knowledge and understanding of the ancient language to deepen their understanding of English and other languages.

A GCSE in an ancient language should also encourage students to:

- relate their knowledge and understanding of the ancient world to other disciplines
- develop research and analytical skills which will empower them to become independent students and enquirers, equipping them for further study in arts, humanities and sciences.

Subject content

This content sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in ancient languages. Awarding organisations may, however, use any flexibility to increase depth, breadth or context within the specified topics or to consolidate teaching of the subject content.

The content of the GCSE specifications in ancient languages must fully reflect the aims and learning outcomes.

Prior learning

Students may study a GCSE course in an ancient language without prior knowledge of its grammar and vocabulary. However, a prior introduction to an ancient language will help students engage successfully with the GCSE requirements given here.

Scope of study

GCSE specifications in ancient languages should require students to:

Linguistic competence: knowledge and understanding of the language

- understand short and longer narrative passages of unseen confected or adapted ancient language, identifying the main message or central argument by answering a variety of comprehension questions in English
- recognise, recall and manipulate the relevant accidence and syntax prescribed in the specification independently and in context (the manipulation of language will be tested through the text of the prose and/or verse prescriptions)
- deploy knowledge of inflectional morphology and syntax by adapting phrases and short sentences to make new meaning
- identify and explain the derivation of English words from the ancient language, as appropriate
- translate accurately into English an unseen passage of the ancient language adapted from an original source.

The accidence, syntax and vocabulary for developing linguistic competence will be specified in appendices for each of the ancient languages to ensure smooth transition to A level

Cultural competence: understanding of literature, society and values through analysis, evaluation and response

- read a range of original and adapted texts and answer questions in English on aspects of culture, social practices and values, translating and explaining key words and phrases, as appropriate

- understand and evaluate prose and verse literature, deploying knowledge of word-order and morphology in the ancient language to focus on explaining their form and impact

- demonstrate understanding of the cultural content and historical and literary context in which passages of adapted prose and verse literature were composed

- identify, explain and respond to the impact of literary effects such as simile, metaphor, assonance, alliteration and word order, appropriate to the text

- select, analyse and evaluate evidence from classical literature and other primary sources, drawing informed conclusions to make a reasoned evidence-based response to the material studied

- use their knowledge of Greco-Roman culture/classical civilisation/the ancient world to understand the modern world of diverse cultures by comparing and contrasting ideas, values and social practices.

Assessment objectives

	Assessment objectives	Weighting
AO1	*Linguistic competence:* ▪ knowledge and understanding of the language	50%
AO2	*Cultural competence:* ▪ understanding of literature, society and values through analysis, evaluation and response	50%

Equal weighting: linguistic competence and cultural competence are seen as interdependent, since to demonstrate the latter, candidates have to deploy their knowledge and understanding of morphology and syntax in context.