



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



*Rewarding Learning*

# **GCE AS and A level subject criteria for media studies**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 These subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all advanced subsidiary (AS) and advanced (A) level specifications in media studies. They provide the framework within which the awarding body creates the detail of the specification.

Subject criteria are intended to:

- help ensure consistent and comparable standards in the same subject across the awarding bodies
- define the relationship between the AS and A level specifications, with the AS as a subset of the A level
- ensure that the rigour of A level is maintained
- help higher education institutions and employers know what has been studied and assessed.

Any GCE specification that contains significant elements of media studies must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

## 2. Aims

- 2.1 AS and A level specifications in media studies should encourage students to:
- enhance their enjoyment and appreciation of the media and its role in their daily lives
  - develop critical understanding of the media through engagement with media products and concepts and through the creative application of practical skills
  - explore production processes, technologies and other relevant contexts
  - become independent in research skills and their application, in their practical work and in developing their own views and interpretations.

## 3. Subject content

- 3.1 AS and A level specifications in media studies should build on students' informal learning, prior experience of media in key stages 1 to 3 and the knowledge, understanding and skills established at key stage 4. AS specifications should introduce students to a range of media products, concepts and contexts, the study of which will

inform their practical production work. A level specifications should extend this study in breadth and depth, and further develop students' independence, critical understanding and skills in research and analysis.

At A2 students should be able to synthesise the knowledge, understanding and skills gained at AS, demonstrating the ability to engage with increasingly complex and sophisticated ideas. They should also experience a wider range of critical perspectives, developing and demonstrating an understanding of how wider contexts such as social, economic, cultural, historical, political factors shape the creation of meanings and responses.

### **Knowledge, understanding and skills**

3.2 AS and A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- how media forms, codes and conventions create meanings
- how the media represents, for example, events, issues, places, social/cultural groups
- contexts of media production and distribution
- media technologies
- how different audiences/users respond to and interact with media products and processes
- relevant critical debates about the media
- a minimum of three different media.

In addition at A level students must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- how wider contexts shape the creation of meaning and responses
- a wider range of critical debates and perspectives.

3.3 AS and A level specifications must require students to develop the ability to:

- use media terminology appropriately
- undertake relevant research
- research, plan and construct media products and evaluate the products and the processes
- apply their knowledge and understanding of media concepts through analysis and interpretation of media products
- present ideas and arguments supported by evidence.

In addition at A level:

- engage with increasingly complex and sophisticated ideas and concepts
- make connections between media concepts, products and contexts and critical debates that inform the study of them
- use research in a focused way to support a specific outcome.

## 4. Key skills

4.1 AS and A level specifications in media studies should provide opportunities for developing and generating evidence for assessing relevant key skills from the list below. Where appropriate these opportunities should be directly cross-referenced, at specified level(s), to the key skills standards, which may be found on the QCA website ([www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)).

- Application of number
- Communication
- Improving own learning and performance
- Information and communication technology
- Problem solving
- Working with others

## 5. Assessment objectives

5.1 Knowledge, understanding and skills are closely linked. The specifications must require that all candidates meet the following assessment objectives in the context of the content and skills prescribed.

5.2 The assessment objectives are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated in the following table.

<b>Assessment objectives</b>		<b>AS weighting</b>	<b>A2 weighting</b>	<b>Overall weighting</b>
<b>AO1</b>	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates.	30–40%	30–40%	30–40%
<b>AO2</b>	Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products and processes and evaluating their own practical work, to show how meanings and responses are created.	30–40%.	30–40%	30–40%
<b>AO3</b>	Demonstrate the ability to plan and construct media products using appropriate technical and creative skills.	20–30%	20–30%	20%–30%
<b>AO4</b>	Demonstrate the ability to undertake, apply and present appropriate research.	10–15%	10–15%	10–15%

## 6. Scheme of assessment

### Number of units

6.1 All A level specifications in media studies must be assessed through four units.

### Internal assessment

6.2 All A level specifications in media studies must include internal assessment up to a maximum weighting of 40–50 per cent. The weighting for internal assessment must not exceed 50 per cent at either AS or A2.

6.3 Where internal assessment is included, specifications must make clear how reliability and fairness are secured, by setting out requirements that ensure the robustness of each stage of the internal assessment, ie:

- the specific skills to be assessed
- setting of tasks
- extent of supervision in carrying out of tasks

- conditions under which assessment takes place
- marking of the assessment and internal standardising procedures  
any moderation process.

### **Synoptic assessment**

- 6.4 Synoptic assessment in media studies must take account of the requirement that A level qualifications should enable candidates to develop a broader and deeper understanding of the links between the elements of knowledge and understanding set out in the specification as a whole. Synoptic assessment will involve the explicit synthesis of insights gained from a close and detailed study of a range of media texts, institutions and technologies. It will require candidates to show evidence of the ways in which contextual factors and media concepts inform their own readings, and ensure that candidates demonstrate their skills of interpretation and evaluation to give articulate, well-argued responses.

The assessment at A2 must require candidates to draw together insights gained from their study of a range of media texts and experience of practical production. Students will be expected to show the ability to make connections between media concepts, products and contexts and the critical debates that inform the study of them.

### **Quality of written communication**

- 6.5 AS and A level specifications will be required to assess the candidates' quality of written communication in accordance with the guidance document produced by QCA. Mark schemes must clearly show how the ability to use terminology appropriately and write with accurate and coherent expression is assessed.

### **Group production**

- 6.6 All specifications in media studies must make clear how they will make arrangements to mark individual candidates as *contributors* to a group production and not as *sharers* of a final mark awarded for the overall quality of a final product.