



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



# GCE AS and A level subject criteria for citizenship studies

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# Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Aims	3
3. Subject content	4
4. Key skills	7
5. Assessment objectives	7
6. Scheme of assessment	8

# 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 citizenship 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 citizenship must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria and should build on requirements for citizenship at key stage 4.

## 2. Aims

- 2.1. AS and A level specifications in citizenship studies should encourage students to:
- a. develop a critical interest in topical citizenship issues and debates and encourage independent thinking skills
  - b. understand how everyday politics and law work in practice, how inequalities and fairness affect individuals and communities, and how decisions are made in society
  - c. develop political literacy and an understanding of democracy and decision making through both academic study and practical action
  - d. develop the necessary skills, confidence and conviction to contribute to debates, take action on citizenship issues in their communities and play an active role as effective citizens in public life.

- 2.2 Both the aims and the assessment objectives require candidates to participate and take action on citizenship issues in their communities. An award should not be made without evidence of this participation and action.

## Subject content

- 3.1 Specifications in citizenship studies should provide opportunities to:
- a. build on and extend the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in statutory requirements at key stage 4
  - b. draw extensively on topical citizenship issues and political and social debates in different contexts (local, regional, national, European, international, global) and explore the implications for individuals and communities
  - c. acquire and apply knowledge, skills and understanding about the nature of democratic processes and how citizens can engage with these to bring about continuity or change in different situations
  - d. enable candidates to develop critical awareness of issues, problems and events through participation and engagement in forms of democratic action
  - e. equip students to research, evaluate and communicate their understanding of a range of sources of information, views and perspectives about the issues studied, with which they may or may not agree and to draw their own conclusions
  - f. draw together knowledge and understanding of how different areas of the subject relate to each other in different contexts (local, regional, national, European, international, global) and situations.

### Knowledge and understanding

- 3.2 Students should acquire knowledge and understanding about:
- a. topical citizenship issues, political and social problems, and events that affect individuals and communities in the UK and the wider world
  - b. different concepts of citizenship and concepts underpinning citizenship issues<sup>1</sup> (such as power and authority, fairness and justice, equality and the rule of law, rights and responsibilities, human rights and freedom, identity and diversity, community and society, governance and democracy, globalisation and sustainable development, diplomacy and internationalism)

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<sup>1</sup> The examples given in brackets are used to amplify the meaning of criteria. Specifications do not need to address all examples given.

- c. rights and responsibilities of citizens in the UK, how they can express their views and oppose or bring about change through democratic processes
- d. the nature of democracy and democratic processes at different levels and through different institutions (eg organisations, workplaces, community groups, pressure groups, local councils and authorities, local and national government, intergovernmental and supra-governmental organisations such as the European Union, Commonwealth, United Nations)
- e. influences, checks and balances on decisions and solutions affecting individuals and communities (such as those relating to political, legal, economic, institutional, scientific, technological and environmental systems, processes and developments)
- f. the role of the media in informing and influencing opinion and the impact of media in society
- g. different opinions, ideas and perspectives on issues and reasons for these (such as moral, ethical, political, socioeconomic, cultural, values and beliefs)
- h. implications of social, economic and political continuity or change for individuals, groups and communities in different contexts (eg local, regional, national, European, international, global).

3.3 The nature of democracy and democratic processes involving the active participation of citizens in decision making is a constant theme underpinning the teaching and learning of citizenship studies at both AS and A2 levels.

3.4 In AS specifications, students are required to address the following themes within the areas and topics they study:

- i. the relationship between the individual, the law and the state
- ii. the nature of identities including national identities in the UK.

In A2 specifications, students are required to address the following themes within the areas and topics they study:

- iii. principles and characteristics of justice systems including the UK
- iv. the nature of representative democracy and the role of parliament in the UK.

3.5 It is not expected that students will necessarily cover each theme in equal breadth or depth, or that specifications should adopt the structure implied above.

- 3.6 In addition, A2 level specifications should require students to extend their understanding beyond the local and national contexts to include a European and/or international dimension in themes iii and/or iv.

### **Skills**

- 3.7 Students should be able to:
- a. use and apply citizenship knowledge, understanding and their own participative experiences in order to communicate and articulate different views, ideas and perspectives
  - b. advocate, negotiate, plan, make decisions and take action on citizenship issues in the wider community
  - c. carry out research and in-depth investigations of citizenship issues, problems and events, using different forms of information including first-hand evidence
  - d. select, interpret, analyse, evaluate and synthesise information and evidence in order to generalise, construct reasoned and coherent arguments, make decisions, propose alternative solutions and form conclusions
  - e. work with others, using problem solving and critical approaches to the issues, problems and events they explore and engage in through participation and action.

## 4. Key skills

4.1 AS and A level specifications in citizenship 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 The assessment objectives (AO) 1, 2 and 3 are the same for AS and A levels. Assessment objective 4 applies only to the A2 part of the A level course.

5.2 Knowledge, understanding and skills are closely linked. Specifications should require that all candidates demonstrate the following assessment objectives in the context of the content and skills prescribed.

### **AO1 Knowledge and understanding**

5.3 Candidates should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of specific citizenship issues (problems, events, concepts, ideas, processes and opinions)
- relate subject knowledge and understanding to citizenship issues using a range of real and topical examples.

### **AO2 Analysis and evaluation**

5.4 Candidates should be able to:

- analyse issues, problems and events in relation to the citizenship concepts and topics studied

- evaluate information, views, opinions, ideas and arguments and assess their validity.

### AO3 Communication and action

5.5 Candidates should be able to:

- select, organise and present relevant information and arguments clearly and logically, using specialist terminology

construct and advocate reasoned, coherent arguments with conclusions, drawing on evidence of their **own** participation and actions within the study of citizenship.

### AO4 Synthesis

5.6 Candidates should be able to:

- synthesise knowledge, ideas and concepts from different areas of the subject in order to generalise, argue a case or propose alternative solutions.

5.7 The assessment objectives are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated in the following table. The assessment objectives apply to the whole specification.

Assessment objectives		Weighting		
		AS level	A2 level	A level
AO1	Knowledge and understanding	15%	10%	25%
AO2	Analysis and evaluation	10%	15%	25%
AO3	Communication and action	25%	10%	35%
AO4	Synthesis	0%	15%	15%

## 6. Scheme of assessment

6.1 Assessment must be entirely through external assessment.

6.2 All specifications should ensure that candidates are assessed on their **own** participation and action on citizenship issues in their communities and that there is evidence of this.



## Synoptic assessment

- 6.4 All specifications should include synoptic assessment at A2.
- 6.5 Assessment objective 4 relates specifically to synoptic assessment. The definition of synoptic assessment in the context of the citizenship studies is as follows.
- Synoptic assessment involves the explicit drawing together of knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in different parts of the A level course. The emphasis of synoptic assessment is on understanding and application of the issues and concepts included in the specification to real and topical (rather than simulated) situations and contexts.
- 6.6 Synoptic assessment should:
- require candidates to make and use connections between different areas of the subject, for example by applying knowledge and understanding of more than one context (local, regional, national, European, international, global) and using different arguments and their **own** experiences of participation and action to explore ideas, issues and problems, draw conclusions and offer solutions
  - include opportunities for candidates to use ideas and skills that permeate the subject, for example the analysis and evaluation of citizenship problems, issues and events in contexts and situations that may be new to them.

## Quality of written communication

- 6.7 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.