

GCE AS and A Level Subject Criteria for English Language and Literature



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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.

Aims and objectives

1. All AS and A level specifications in English language and literature should encourage learners to develop their interest and enjoyment in English as they:
 - use integrated linguistic and literary approaches in their reading and interpretation of texts;
 - engage creatively and independently with a wide range of spoken, written and multimodal texts, exploring the relationships between texts;
 - undertake independent and sustained studies to develop their skills as producers and interpreters of language.

Subject content

2. AS and A level specifications in English language and literature should build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established at GCSE, developing learners' ability to integrate linguistic and literary approaches. A level specifications should extend these studies in breadth and depth, further developing learners' techniques of analysis, evaluation and production of texts.
3. Specifications should clearly show how the knowledge, understanding and skills associated with the disciplines of linguistic and literary studies combine to make a coherent course.
4. Texts and materials for study should be grouped in ways that develop learners' understanding of the value and purpose of an integrated approach to reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Knowledge and understanding

5. AS specifications should require learners to undertake a wide and varied programme of study so that they show knowledge and understanding of:
 - a range of spoken and written texts from different times, including at least two substantial texts from one of the genres of prose fiction, poetry and drama and at least one other substantial written text;
 - some of the key constituents of language and how they function in combination to make meaning in spoken and written English;
 - how variations in language, form and context shape and change meanings in speech and writing;
 - some of the ways in which individual texts are interpreted by different readers or listeners;
 - some analytical and creative approaches to the critical study of texts, drawing on linguistic and literary methodologies and concepts.
6. In addition, A level specifications should require learners to show deeper knowledge and understanding of:
 - a wider range of spoken and written texts from different times, including at least two further texts from a genre (prose fiction, poetry, drama) not studied at AS, and at least one other substantial written text;
 - the significance of contextual factors in the production and reception of texts;
 - how to apply linguistic and literary methodologies and concepts to inform their responses to and interpretations of texts.
7. All AS and A level specifications in English language and literature must ensure that the combination of texts and materials studied and tasks set on them together provide sufficient challenge to merit serious consideration.
8. Specifications should contain clear principles for the review and updating of selected texts and materials and methods used for studying them.

Skills

9. AS specifications should require learners to:
 - apply integrated linguistic and literary methods and concepts in the study of spoken, written and multimodal texts;
 - vary strategies for reading and listening according to text type and purpose for study;
 - identify and describe how meanings and effects are created and conveyed in texts;
 - compare and contrast texts, exploring relationships between them;
 - use English appropriately, accurately and creatively for a variety of audiences and purposes;
 - use a range of techniques to produce texts for different audiences and purposes, informed by wide reading and listening;
 - make accurate reference to texts and sources.

10. In addition, A level specifications should require learners to show judgement and independence as they:
 - synthesise and reflect on their knowledge and understanding of linguistic and literary concepts and methods in the study of spoken and written texts;
 - make creative connections between elements of the course as a whole;
 - sustain informed, critical judgements about issues raised in an integrated approach to textual analysis;
 - devise, draft, edit and evaluate the effectiveness of their own texts, informed by their integrated studies;
 - make appropriate use of the conventions of writing in advanced studies in English, including references to quotations and sources.

Assessment objectives

11. There are four assessment objectives (AOs) covering both AS and A level specifications. They aim to describe the areas in which evidence for knowledge, skills and understanding should be collected.

12. Knowledge, understanding and skills are closely linked, as are the individual assessment objectives.
13. Differences in demand between AS and A level specifications may be shown through the choice of different weightings for AOs either singly or in combination to reflect the differences in the depth and breadth of the requirements of the specifications.
14. The weightings of AOs in each part of the course must in combination offer a balanced approach to the assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to advanced level study of English language and literature.
15. Specifications must require that all learners meet the following assessment objectives in the context of the content and skills prescribed.

Assessment objectives		Weighting		
		AS level	A2 level	A level
AO1	Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic and literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate, coherent written expression	15–35%	15–35%	15–35%
AO2	Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in a range of spoken and written texts	15–35%	15–35%	15–35%
AO3	Use integrated approaches to explore relationships between texts, analysing and evaluating the significance of contextual factors in their production and reception	15–35%	15–35%	15–35%
AO4	Demonstrate expertise and creativity in using language appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences, drawing	15–35%	15–35%	15–35%

	on insights from linguistic and literary studies			
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Scheme of assessment

Internal assessment

16. All A level specifications in English language and literature must have internal assessment with a weighting of between 15 and 40 per cent.
17. No more than 40 per cent of either the AS or the A2 may be internally assessed.
18. 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, i.e.:
 - 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

19. Courses as a whole should develop learners' abilities to use a repertoire of integrated skills and approaches to the interpretation and production of texts, and enable them to make connections between components of the specification, including the requirement to produce a range of writing. The A2 assessment units will require learners to draw together some of the key insights from their work overall and make purposeful use of these in undertaking assessment tasks.
20. Synoptic assessment in English language and literature includes:
 - synthesis of insights gained from the study of a range of texts, both spoken and written;

- evidence of ability to select appropriate analytical tools to assess the validity of different views expressed about texts and contexts of production and reception;
- skills of interpretation and expression to give insightful, accurate, well-argued responses to texts.

Quality of written communication

21. These aspects of learners' skills will be assessed through assessment objective 1, which includes assessment of learners' overall competence in using language accurately and effectively in constructing well-argued responses to assessment tasks in English language.
22. Where learners are required to produce written material on paper or on screen in English, the assessment arrangements in AS and A level English language must require learners to:
 - ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear;
 - select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and to complex subject matter;
 - organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

Resources in examinations

23. Where a scheme of assessment includes access to open-book or pre-release material in examinations, a clear rationale must be given for their use.
24. Only clean texts will be allowed in examinations, and awarding organisations must prescribe editions for use in examinations that are free from editorial material or commentaries.
25. The amount of annotation allowed by learners on pre-release materials prior to the examinations must be clearly prescribed and kept to a minimum. Pre-release materials brought into the examination room must also be free from annotation.

AS performance descriptions for English language and literature

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3	Assessment objective 4
Assessment objectives	Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic and literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate, coherent written expression.	Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in a range of spoken and written texts.	Use integrated approaches to explore relationships between texts, analysing and evaluating the significance of contextual factors in their production and reception.	Demonstrate expertise and creativity in using language appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences, drawing on insights from linguistic and literary studies.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) communicate wide knowledge and understanding of linguistic and literary texts; b) present relevant responses, using appropriate terminology to support informed interpretations; c) structure and organise 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) identify relevant aspects of linguistic approach, structure, form and language in literary texts; b) explore, through critical analysis, how writers use specific aspects to shape meaning; c) generally use specific references to texts to support their 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) explore connections and points of comparison between texts and the contexts that have shaped them; b) communicate clear understanding of the views expressed in different interpretations or readings; c) communicate a clear understanding of 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) write effectively in a form and style matched to audience, purpose and genre; b) select and order relevant content in creative ways; c) identify where and suggest how linguistic and literary features are used in their writing to create

	<p>their writing well;</p> <p>d) communicate content and meaning through expressive and accurate writing.</p>	<p>responses.</p>	<p>issues and concepts relating to language in use.</p>	<p>specific effects.</p>
<p>E/U boundary performance descriptions</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) communicate some knowledge and understanding of linguistic and literary texts;</p> <p>b) make some use of appropriate terminology or examples to support interpretations;</p> <p>c) communicate meaning using straightforward language</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) identify some aspects of linguistic approach, structure, form or language;</p> <p>b) describe some aspects with reference to how they shape meaning</p> <p>c) make some related references to texts to support their responses.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) identify some connections and points of comparison between texts and the contexts that have shaped them;</p> <p>b) show some appreciation of the views expressed in other interpretations of texts;</p> <p>c) reflect some understanding of issues relating to language in use.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate some ability to write in a form or style matched to audience or purpose;</p> <p>b) order content in creative ways;</p> <p>c) identify where some linguistic and literary features are used in their writing to create effects.</p>

A2 performance descriptions for English language and literature

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3	Assessment objective 4
Assessment objectives	Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic and literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate, coherent written expression.	Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in a range of spoken and written texts.	Use integrated approaches to explore relationships between texts, analysing and evaluating the significance of contextual factors in their production and reception.	Demonstrate expertise and creativity in using language appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences, drawing on insights from linguistic and literary studies.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) communicate extensive knowledge and understanding of linguistic and literary texts;</p> <p>b) create and sustain well-organised and coherent arguments, using appropriate terminology to support informed interpretations;</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) communicate relevant understanding of linguistic approaches, structure, form and language in a range of spoken and written texts;</p> <p>b) explore, through detailed analysis, how writers use these aspects to create meaning;</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) analyse and evaluate connections or points of comparison between texts and the contexts that have shaped them;</p> <p>b) engage sensitively and with understanding with different readings and interpretations of texts;</p> <p>c) communicate an informed understanding of</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) write effectively in a form and style matched to audience and purpose;</p> <p>b) manipulate complex relevant content in creative ways;</p> <p>c) identify where and explain how key linguistic and literary features are used in their writing to create</p>

	<p>c) structure and organise their writing using an appropriate register;</p> <p>d) communicate content and meaning through expressive and accurate writing.</p>	<p>c) consistently make reference to texts and sources to support their responses.</p>	<p>issues and concepts relating to language in use.</p>	<p>specific effects.</p>
<p>E/U boundary performance descriptions</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) communicate knowledge and some understanding of linguistic and literary texts;</p> <p>b) present responses making some use of appropriate terminology and examples to support interpretations;</p> <p>c) communicate content and meaning using straightforward language accurately.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) communicate some understanding of linguistic approaches of structure, form and language in spoken and written texts;</p> <p>b) comment on specific aspects with reference to how they shape meaning;</p> <p>c) make some reference to authorities, texts or sources to support their responses.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) make connections between texts and the contexts that have shaped them;</p> <p>b) communicate understanding of the views expressed in other interpretations or readings of texts;</p> <p>c) communicate an understanding of issues relating to language in use.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate some ability to write in a form and style matched to audience or purpose;</p> <p>b) manipulate relevant content in creative ways;</p> <p>c) identify where key linguistic and literary features are used in their writing to create specific effects.</p>

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