



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



GCSE subject criteria for humanities

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Introduction

1. GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in humanities. They provide the framework within which an awarding body creates the detail of the specification.
2. Specifications must also meet the regulators' general requirements, including the common and GCSE criteria as defined in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications* (QCA/04/1293).
3. Subject criteria are intended to:
 - help ensure consistent and comparable standards in the same subject across the awarding bodies
 - ensure that the rigour of GCSE is maintained
 - ensure that specifications build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established by the national curricula for England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and facilitate progression to higher level humanities subjects
 - help higher education institutions, employers and other stakeholders such as learners and parents/guardians know what has been studied and assessed.
4. Any GCSE specification that contains significant elements of humanities must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

Aims and learning outcomes

5. GCSE specifications in humanities should encourage learners to be inspired, moved and changed by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study and gain an insight into related sectors. They should prepare learners to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices.
6. GCSE specifications in humanities must enable learners to:
 - actively engage in the process of humanities to develop as effective and independent learners, and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds
 - develop an understanding that is coherent, holistic and extends beyond the remit of any single subject discipline

- develop an awareness of how people of different cultures and societies relate to each other and the world in which we live, now and in the past
- explore ways in which cultural, economic, environmental, historical, moral, political, religious, social, spatial, and spiritual factors interact to shape the world in which we live today
- consider the opportunities and constraints that influence human societies at a range of different levels
- examine issues that affect the nature and quality of human life, including an appreciation of diversity and similarities and differences of attitudes, values and beliefs in society
- develop enquiry, critical thinking and decision-making skills through personal and collaborative investigation of issues that are important, real and relevant to young people and to the world in which they live
- consider the rights and responsibilities they have as individuals and their own contribution to humanity.

Subject content

7. The content of GCSE specifications in humanities must reflect the learning outcomes.
8. GCSE specifications in humanities must allow learners to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding specified below.
9. GCSE specifications in humanities must require learners to:
 - Study the key features and characteristics of issues and themes of the societies studied, and the past and current experience of people in these societies
 - investigate the social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversities of the societies studied
 - explore and examine issues important to humanity from individual, family, local, national and global perspectives
 - study the attitudes and values that inform human behaviour, influence human processes and shape a sustainable future

- study cultural, economic, environmental, historical, moral, political, religious, social, spatial and spiritual factors that have an impact on issues important to people and the world we live in.

Assessment objectives

10. All specifications must require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

| Assessment objectives | | % weighting |
|-----------------------|--|-------------|
| AO1 | Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of concepts, issues and terminology | 40–50 |
| AO2 | Apply their knowledge and understanding in familiar and unfamiliar contexts | 30–40 |
| AO3 | Analyse and evaluate information, sources, arguments and interpretations | 15–25 |

Scheme of assessment

11. GCSE specifications in humanities must allocate a weighting of 75% to external assessment and a weighting of 25% to controlled assessment in the overall scheme of assessment.
12. Question papers must be targeted at the full range of GCSE grades.

Grade descriptions

13. Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.
14. The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of

candidates' performance in the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.

| Grade | Description |
|-------|--|
| A | <p>Candidates recall, select and communicate detailed knowledge and thorough understanding of a range of features, characteristics and diversities of the societies studied. They understand the factors that impact on people and their societies, and the attitudes and values that shape human behaviour. They convey a perceptive understanding of the concepts and issues important to humanity. They understand and use terminology accurately.</p> <p>They apply relevant knowledge and understanding of different concepts to familiar and unfamiliar contexts. They have a discriminating understanding of the complex relationships between individuals, individuals and groups, society and the environment, and of the consequences when relationships break down.</p> <p>They summarise, organise and present information in an effective and coherent manner to identify patterns and trends. They construct effective arguments and make informed decisions. They examine issues and debates systematically and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of arguments. They analyse and evaluate the sources and methods of investigation used to arrive at substantiated conclusions.</p> |
| C | <p>Candidates recall sound knowledge and understanding of the key features, characteristics and diversities of the societies studied. They identify and describe the factors that have impacted on people and societies, and the attitudes and values that shape human behaviour. They identify the concepts and issues important to humanity and provide reasons for these. They use terminology appropriately.</p> <p>They apply knowledge and understanding of different concepts to familiar and unfamiliar contexts. They understand relationships</p> |

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| | <p>between individuals, individuals and groups, society and the environment, and of the consequences when relationships break down.</p> <p>They organise and present information in a structured manner, and identify obvious patterns and/or trends. They construct reasoned arguments. They identify issues and debates, and recognise the main strengths or weaknesses in the arguments. Their evaluation of sources and/or methods of investigation is generally appropriate.</p> |
| F | <p>Candidates recall some relevant knowledge and understanding about human societies, the factors that have impacted on people and societies, and the attitudes and values that shape human behaviour. They demonstrate some basic understanding of terminology.</p> <p>Candidates understand some key ideas and simple concepts from the specification content. They apply some basic knowledge and understanding in familiar and/or unfamiliar contexts. They understand simple relationships between individuals, individuals and groups, society and the environment, and some consequences when relationships break down.</p> <p>They present information with limited organisation and identify simple patterns or trends. They identify simple connections between information to make generalisations. They show some awareness of the adequacy of the arguments and/or sources and/or methods of investigation used.</p> |