



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



GCSE subject criteria for law

December 2007

QCA/07/3458

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Aims and learning outcomes	3
Subject content	4
Assessment objectives	5
Scheme of assessment	5
Grade descriptions.....	5

Introduction

1. GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in law. 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 further study
 - 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 law must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

Aims and learning outcomes

5. GCSE specifications in law should encourage learners to be inspired, moved and changed by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study and explore ways in which legal, cultural, historical, moral, political, religious and social factors interact to shape the world in which we live today. They should prepare learners to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices.
6. GCSE specifications in law must enable learners to:
 - actively engage in the study of law to develop as effective and independent learners, and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds
 - develop an understanding of the role of law in underpinning relationships among individuals, groups and institutions within society

- develop enquiry, critical thinking and decision-making skills through investigation of legal issues that are important, real and relevant to the world in which they live, and base reasoned judgements and arguments on evidence
- know the rights and responsibilities they have as individuals, appreciate their own contribution to society and develop skills that enhance their ability to act in informed roles within different contexts.

Subject content

7. The content of GCSE specifications in law must reflect the learning outcomes.
8. GCSE specifications in law must allow learners to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding specified below.
9. GCSE specifications in law must require learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:
 - legal structures, including the institutions of the legal system, law enforcement arrangements, the main classifications of law and the social structures that the law supports
 - legal processes, including the nature of law making, dispute resolution (with reference to at least one area of substantive law), the application and interpretation of law, and the provision of legal services
 - legal issues, including the balance between the rights and obligations of individuals and groups, consistency in law enforcement and the connections between legal and social developments.
10. GCSE specifications in law must require learners to apply critical understanding and demonstrate that they can:
 - acquire information for different purposes from a range of sources
 - interpret and evaluate information, considering its validity
 - use information to examine issues, demonstrate problem-solving skills and construct and evaluate arguments and conclusions.

Assessment objectives

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

Assessment objectives		% weighting
AO1	Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of legal structures, processes and issues	30–40
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts both familiar and unfamiliar	20–30
AO3	Analyse and interpret information, sources and arguments	30–40

Scheme of assessment

12. GCSE specifications in law must allocate 100% of the weighting to external assessment in the overall scheme of assessment

13. Question papers must be targeted at the full range of GCSE grades

Grade descriptions

14. 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.

15. 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 legal structures, processes and issues. They use terminology accurately and appropriately.</p> <p>They apply relevant knowledge and understanding accurately in a range of contexts. They recognise, describe and examine in detail legal issues or debates and select appropriate arguments. They recognise and systematically analyse the links between legal structures, processes and issues to produce substantiated analyses and explanations, and reach valid and reasoned conclusions.</p> <p>They identify, select and use a wide range of appropriate methods, sources, information and data to investigate questions or issues, and justify their selection. They analyse and interpret accurately and appropriately information and data presented in a variety of forms. They critically evaluate the relevance of evidence to construct valid arguments and reasoned judgements.</p>
C	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate a sound knowledge and understanding of legal structures, processes and issues. They use appropriate terminology.</p> <p>They apply a sound knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts. They recognise and describe relevant legal issues or debates, and select arguments to examine issues. They identify some straightforward links between legal structures, processes and issues to produce partial analyses and explanations, and reach broadly relevant conclusions.</p> <p>They select and use a range of methods, sources, information and data to find out about legal issues or topics. They examine the main elements of legal issues or debates. They handle a variety of information and data, and evaluate their evidence in relation to the arguments to make reasoned judgements and present plausible</p>

	conclusions that are supported by evidence.
F	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate basic knowledge and understanding of some aspects of legal structures, processes and issues. They use some basic terminology.</p> <p>They apply a basic knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts. They recognise and provide a partial description of some legal issues or debates. They apply a basic understanding of a few legal structures and processes.</p> <p>They use a limited range of methods, sources, information and data uncritically and in a simple manner to find out about issues or topics. They present simple conclusions that are sometimes supported by evidence.</p>