



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



GCE AS and A level subject criteria for business 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 business 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 business studies must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

2. Aims

- 2.1 AS and A level specifications in business studies should encourage students to:
- develop an enthusiasm for studying business
 - gain a holistic understanding of business
 - develop a critical understanding of organisations and their ability to meet society's needs and wants
 - understand that business behaviour can be studied from a range of perspectives
 - generate enterprising and creative solutions to business problems and issues
 - be aware of the ethical dilemmas and responsibilities faced by organisations and individuals
 - acquire a range of relevant business and generic skills, including decision making, problem solving, the challenging of assumptions and the quantification and management of information.

3. Subject content

- 3.1 Previous study of business studies should not be a requirement.
- 3.2 AS content and assessment material should be a stepping-stone to A2 content and assessment material.
- 3.3 A level specifications should further develop higher-level skills and extend beyond AS in terms of breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding.
- 3.4 All content and assessment material included in A level specifications must represent a coherent whole and demonstrate clear and logical progression to further study and training.
- 3.5 Knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the AS and A level specifications must:
 - a. enable candidates to investigate different types of organisations in various business sectors and environments, recognising that they face varying degrees of competition
 - b. enable candidates to:
 - identify business problems
 - plan appropriate investigations into such problems
 - c. promote a holistic understanding of business and enterprise
 - d. make justifiable decisions using both qualitative and quantitative methods, taking into account opportunity cost.

The progression from AS to A2 should be achieved through requiring students to:

- a. apply basic business concepts to a wider range of contexts
- b. understand and apply more sophisticated concepts and techniques
- c. analyse and interpret more complex business information
- d. take a more strategic view when addressing business problems and issues.

- 3.5.1 All AS specifications must cover the following core knowledge, understanding and skills. This core should constitute 60–100 per cent of the AS specification content.

Area of study	Amplification
External influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • micro factors: the market, competition
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying and anticipating customer needs • marketing mix • product life cycle
Accounting and finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budgeting • cash-flow forecasting • break-even analysis
People in organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • motivation • leadership • organisation design
Operations management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality • productivity • added value

3.5.2 All A2 specifications must cover the following core knowledge, understanding and skills. This core should constitute 60–100 per cent of the A2 specification content.

Area of study	Amplification
Business objectives and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different stakeholder and organisational objectives • strategy and tactics • risk and uncertainty
External influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • macro factors • international context • political, social, legal and environmental issues
Business analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forecasting • data analysis • market analysis • decision making • measures of performance: financial and non-financial
Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • causes and effects of change • employer/employee relationships

4. Key skills

AS and A level specifications in business 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).

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

5. Assessment objectives

5.1 All candidates must meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated in the following table, with assessment objectives 3 and 4 given a greater weighting for A level than for AS.

Assessment objectives		Weighting		
		AS level	A2 level	A level
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content.	25–35%	15–25%	20–30%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding to problems and issues arising from both familiar and unfamiliar situations.	20–30%	20–30%	20–30%
AO3	Analyse problems, issues and situations.	20–30%	20–30%	20–30%
AO4	Evaluate, distinguish between and assess appropriateness of fact and opinion, and judge information from a variety of sources.	15–25%	25–35%	20–30%

6. Scheme of assessment

6.1 Assessment must be entirely through external assessment.

Synoptic assessment

6.2 Synoptic assessment in business studies should take place across the two A2 units and should encourage candidates to:

- gain a holistic understanding of business
- develop the ability to deal with the interrelationships between external and internal factors affecting business in different contexts.

Where a specification contains options, synoptic assessment should focus on the elements contained within the compulsory content.

Quality of written communication

6.3 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.