



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
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# **GCE AS and A level subject criteria for English language**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 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 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 specification that contains significant elements of the subject English language must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

## 2. Aims

- 2.1 AS and A level specifications should encourage students to deepen their interest and enjoyment in the use of English as they:
- develop and apply their understanding of the concepts and methods appropriate for the analysis and study of language
  - undertake independent investigative work related to language in use
  - engage creatively and independently with a varied programme for the study of English from the past to the present day
  - develop their skills as producers and interpreters of language.

## 3. Subject content

- 3.1 AS and A level specifications in English language should build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established in GCSE English.
- 3.2 All AS and A level specifications should introduce students to the concepts and methods of the discipline of linguistic study in relation to a wide range of spoken and written forms of English, including electronic and multimodal forms.

- 3.3 Students' contextual study of language should be based on sound theoretical knowledge developed through a coherent course of study.
- 3.4 All AS and A level specifications must ensure that the combination of materials and the tasks set on them are of sufficient challenge for advanced level study.

### **Knowledge and understanding**

- 3.5 AS specifications should require candidates to show broad knowledge and understanding of some of the key constituents of language and how they contribute to meaning in spoken and written English, including:
- the characteristic speech sounds and intonation patterns (phonetics and phonology)
  - the vocabulary of English, including the origins, meanings and usage of words (lexis)
  - the forms and structures of words, phrases, clauses, sentences and texts in speech and writing (morphology, grammar and discourse)
  - how meanings and forms in language are influenced by variations in mode (spoken and written, including multimodal and electronic forms) and context, including personal, cultural and social factors.
- 3.6 In addition, A level specifications should require students to show deeper knowledge and understanding of:
- how some of the following frameworks can be applied to the systematic study of meaning in language:
    - phonology and phonetics, lexis, morphology, grammar, discourse
  - the influence of mode and context, including time and place, on the meanings and forms of English
  - connections between different areas of study in their course as a whole.

### **Skills**

- 3.7 AS and A level specifications should require students to:
- apply linguistic concepts and methods of analysis appropriately and systematically to the study of meanings and topical issues in language
  - describe, explain and interpret variation in and between spoken and written texts, including multimodal texts
  - develop their skills in using spoken and written English accurately and creatively for a variety of different audiences and purposes
  - use linguistic terminology and concepts appropriately and accurately in discussions of language
  - make accurate references to texts and sources.

3.8 In addition, A level specifications should require students to:

- sustain informed, critical judgements about issues raised through the study of language
- undertake independent investigations of language, selecting appropriate linguistic methods and techniques
- draw on their knowledge of the forms and structures of spoken and written English to create imaginative and informative texts for different audiences and purposes
- synthesise and reflect on linguistic knowledge and understanding drawn from different areas of their studies of English language.

## 4. Key skills

4.1 AS and A level specifications in English language 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 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.

5.2 Knowledge, understanding and skills are closely linked, as are the individual assessment objectives.

5.3 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.

- 5.4 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 literary study.
- 5.5 Specifications must require that all candidates meet the following assessment objectives in the context of the content and skills prescribed.

	<b>Assessment objectives</b>	<b>Weighting</b>		
		<b>AS</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>A level</b>
<b>AO1</b>	Select and apply a range of linguistic methods to communicate relevant knowledge using appropriate terminology and coherent, accurate written expression.	15-35%	15-35%	15-35%
<b>AO2</b>	Demonstrate critical understanding of a range of concepts and issues related to the construction and analysis of meanings in spoken and written language, using knowledge of linguistic approaches.	15-35%	15-35%	15-35%
<b>AO3</b>	Analyse and evaluate the influence of contextual factors on the production and reception of spoken and written language, showing knowledge of the key constituents of language.	15-35%	15-35%	15-35%
<b>AO4</b>	Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English in a range of different contexts, informed by linguistic study.	15-35%	15-35%	15-35%

## 6. Scheme of assessment

### Internal assessment

- 6.1 All A level specifications in English language must have internal assessment with a weighting of between 15 and 40 per cent.
- 6.2 No more than 40 per cent of either the AS or the A2 may be internally assessed.
- 6.3 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, ie:
- 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

- 6.4 Courses as a whole should develop candidates' understanding of methodologies for describing and studying spoken and written language, 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 candidates to draw together some of the key insights from their work overall and make purposeful use of these in undertaking assessment tasks.
- 6.5 Synoptic assessment in English language includes:
- synthesis of insights developed through the application of linguistic knowledge to the study of speech and writing, including multimodal texts
  - evidence that critical understanding of meaning and variation in language is informed by the appropriate use of linguistic analyses
  - skills of interpretation and expression in insightful, accurate, well-argued responses.

### Quality of written communication

- 6.6 These aspects of candidates' skills will be assessed through AO1, which includes assessment of candidates' overall competence in using language accurately and effectively in constructing well-argued responses to assessment tasks in English language.

- 6.7 Where candidates 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 candidates to:
- (i) ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear
  - (ii) select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and to complex subject matter
  - (iii) organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

### **Resources in examinations**

- 6.8 Where a scheme of assessment includes access to open-book or pre-release material in examinations, a clear rationale must be given for its use.
- 6.9 Only clean texts will be allowed in examinations, and awarding bodies must prescribe editions for use in examinations that are free from editorial material or commentaries.
- 6.10 The amount of annotation allowed by students 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.