



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



Rewarding Learning

GCE AS and A level subject criteria for government and politics

September 2006

QCA/06/2853

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Aims	3
3. Specification content	4
4. Key skills	5
5. Assessment objectives	5
6. Scheme of assessment	6

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 government and politics must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

2. Aims

- 2.1 AS and A level specifications in government and politics should encourage candidates to:
- develop a critical awareness of the nature of politics and the relationship between political ideas, institutions and processes
 - acquire knowledge and understanding of the structures of authority and power within the political system of the United Kingdom, and how these may differ from those of other political systems
 - acquire knowledge and informed understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the individual
 - develop an interest in and engagement with contemporary politics.

3. Specification content

Knowledge and understanding

3.1 AS level specifications should:

- develop a broad knowledge and understanding of the political system of the UK, including the local and European Union (EU) dimensions
- encourage candidates to develop their capacity for critical thinking, to see relationships between different aspects of government and politics and to perceive their field of study in a broader perspective, including some comparisons with other political systems
- develop knowledge and understanding of relevant political concepts and processes.

3.2 AS and/or A2 specifications should address the following:

- the essential characteristics and interrelationships of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary
- the adequacy of existing political arrangements for ensuring representative democracy and participation
- the rights and responsibilities of the individual
- ideologies, theories and traditions
- current political debates.

Although candidates should cover all the above issues, it is not expected that they will cover each area of study in equal breadth or depth, or that specifications should adopt the structure implied above.

3.3 In addition, A2 specifications may require candidates to extend their knowledge and understanding of the political system of the United Kingdom. However, they should require candidates to go beyond the context of the United Kingdom in at least one of the following areas:

- the politics and government of another state
- comparative politics
- international politics
- political ideologies or political thought
- politics of the European Union.

Skills

3.4 AS and A level specifications should require candidates to:

- comprehend, synthesise and interpret political information in a variety of forms
- analyse and evaluate:
 - political institutions, processes and behaviour
 - political arguments and explanations
 - the relationship between institutions, processes, ideologies, concepts, behaviour and values
- identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied
- select and organise relevant material to construct arguments and explanations leading to reasoned conclusions
- communicate arguments and explanations with relevance, clarity and coherence, using appropriate political vocabulary.

4. Key skills

4.1 AS and A level specifications in government and politics 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 The assessment objectives for AS and A level are the same.

All candidates must be required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated.

Assessment objectives		Weighting
A01	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant institutions, processes, political concepts, theories and debates.	40–50%
A02	Analyse and evaluate political information, arguments and explanations, and identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of the political systems studied.	30–40%
A03	Construct and communicate coherent arguments making use of a range of appropriate political vocabulary.	10–20%

Within a specification covering both AS and A2, assessment objective 2 should have a higher weighting at A2 than at AS.

The assessment objectives apply to the whole specification.

6. Scheme of assessment

Synoptic assessment

- 6.1 Assessment must be entirely through external assessment.
- 6.2 All A2 specifications should include synoptic assessment. Synoptic assessment in government and politics will draw on all three assessment objectives and be defined in the context of government and politics as follows:
- the drawing together of knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in different parts of the A level course. It involves the explicit assessment of understanding of the connections between the relevant areas of study included in sections 3.1 to 3.4 above.

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.