



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



# **GCE AS and A level subject criteria for law**

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# Contents

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

# 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 law. 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 law must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

## 2. Aims

- 2.1 AS and A level specifications in law should encourage students to:
- develop and sustain their enjoyment of, and interest in, the subject
  - develop knowledge and understanding of selected areas of the law of England, Wales and Northern Ireland
  - develop an understanding of legal method and reasoning
  - develop the techniques of logical thinking and the skills necessary to analyse and solve problems by applying legal rules
  - develop the ability to communicate legal arguments and conclusions with reference to appropriate legal authority
  - develop a critical awareness of the changing nature of law in society.

### 3. Subject content

- 3.1 There should be no prior knowledge requirements for AS and A level specifications in law.
- 3.2 AS and A level specifications in law should be of sufficient length, depth and breadth to allow candidates to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills specified below, and must include a rationale for the choice of areas of law and/or themes that indicate how the following criteria for content are addressed.

#### Knowledge, understanding and skills

- 3.3 AS and A level specifications should require candidates to study:
- legal structures, eg court structures, legal personnel
  - legal processes, eg dispute resolution, law making
  - legal issues, eg law reform, relationship between law and morals
  - legal methods and legal reasoning, eg precedent, statutory interpretation.
- 3.4 AS and A level specifications should require candidates to:
- analyse and evaluate, interpret and use legal material to consider issues and/or problems appropriate to the areas covered in the specification
  - communicate a clear, concise and logical argument substantiated by legal authority.
- 3.5 In addition, A level specifications should require candidates to:
- study one or more areas of substantive law in depth
  - develop the skills necessary to analyse and solve problems by applying legal rules.

### 4. Key skills

- 4.1 AS and A level specifications in law 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)).
- Communication
  - Improving own learning and performance
  - Information and communication technology
  - Problem solving
  - Working with others

## 5. Assessment objectives

5.1 All candidates must be required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated in the table below. The assessment objectives for AS and A level are the same.

Assessment objectives		Weighting		
		AS level	A2 level	A level
<b>AO1</b>	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of legal rules and principles by selecting and explaining relevant information and illustrating with examples and citation.	45–55%	35–45%	40–50%
<b>AO2</b>	Analyse legal material, issues and situations, and evaluate and apply the appropriate legal rules and principles.	30–40%	45–55%	37.5–47.5%
<b>AO3</b>	Present a logical and coherent argument and communicate relevant material in a clear and effective manner using appropriate legal terminology.	5–15%	5–15%	5–15%

5.2 The assessment objectives apply to the whole specification.

## 6. Scheme of assessment

6.1 AS and A level specifications in law will be assessed entirely through external assessment.

### Synoptic assessment

6.2 All specifications should include synoptic assessment at A2. Synoptic assessment in law will draw on all three of the assessment objectives and will require candidates to:

- select appropriate legal rules, using legal methods and reasoning to analyse, evaluate and apply these rules to reach legal conclusions and draw together

and make connections between at least one area of law and the content specified in paragraph 3.3

6.3 Examples of synoptic assessment tasks might include:

- a legal problem-solving unit of assessment using a scenario based on one or more of the branches of law being studied in A2, the response to which would involve candidates making connections with other elements of the knowledge and understanding in the specifications, for example 'legal structures' or 'legal processes'
- a case study, intended to exploit the advantages of time and variety of means of information gathering and analysis. The topic would involve rigorous legal research and interpretation of data and cover at least one branch of law, drawing in appropriate elements of the knowledge and understanding in the specification
- an essay that would require candidates to explore legal concepts, using their knowledge and understanding of legal processes, institutions and substantive law, gained through their study of other modules, to illustrate their arguments.

### **Quality of written communication**

6.4 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.