



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



Rewarding Learning

GCE AS and A level qualification criteria

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This is an extract (pages 28–30) from the ‘General Certificates of Education (GCEs)’ section of *The statutory regulation of external qualifications* (QCA/04/1293). Changes to the previous criteria are indicated in bold.

Content of General Certificates of Education (GCEs)

85 The titles of GCEs must:

- a) correspond to the titles used in the relevant subject criteria published by the regulatory authorities, where such criteria exist
- b) be sufficiently broad to cover different specifications in the same subject area, if relevant subject criteria are not published by the regulatory authorities.

86 The subject matter of GCEs must:

- a) meet the GCE subject criteria published by the regulatory authorities for the subject title, where they exist
- b) compare in substance and range to the GCE subject criteria published by the regulatory authorities for other subjects, if relevant subject criteria do not exist
- c) for AS qualifications:
 - i) provide an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills and understanding to match the first half of a full A level course of study
 - ii) enable candidates to be assessed normally, by means of **two** assessment units, which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A level
 - iii) include assessment units that will normally be weighted within the range of **15–35** per cent of the full A level. **Weightings outside this range may be agreed where appropriate with the regulatory authorities**
 - iv) for double-award specifications, enable candidates to be assessed normally by means of **four** assessment units, which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A level double award
- d) for A2 assessments that will be combined with AS assessments to lead to the award of a full A level:
 - i) provide an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills and understanding to match the second half of a full A level course of study
 - ii) enable candidates to be assessed normally, by means of **two** assessment units, which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A level
 - iii) include assessment units that will normally be weighted within the range of **15–35** per cent of the full A level. **Weightings outside this range may be agreed where appropriate with the regulatory authorities**
 - iv) for double-award specifications, enable candidates to be assessed normally by means of four assessment units, which, taken together, will have a total weight of 50 per cent of the A level double award
- e) include optional units **only** if these:
 - i) demand additional skills, knowledge and/or understanding
 - ii) extend the core content within a specialist context and/or introduce links to another subject area

f) identify opportunities to generate evidence for the assessment of the nationally specified wider key skills of improving own learning and performance, problem solving, and working with others.

Assessment in GCEs

87 The assessment arrangements in GCEs must:

a) offer candidates the opportunity to be assessed either (in stages) during the course or at the end of the course

b) include an explanation of the relationship between the assessment objectives and the assessment units

c) normally include only one component of assessment (internal assessment may involve more than task, while external assessment may, for example, involve listening, reading and writing aspects. In each case, there will be one awarding process per unit)

d) ensure that internal assessment is used only where it is the soundest method of assessing specific skills within the assessment objectives, and agree it with the regulatory authorities on a subject-by-subject basis

e) ensure that, where internal assessment is included, specifications make clear how reliability and fairness are to be secured, by setting out requirements that ensure the robustness of each stage of the internal assessment, ie:

- **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**

f) not exceed a maximum examining time for external assessments of three hours at AS and four hours at A2, unless otherwise agreed in the subject criteria

g) show the proportion of marks allocated to each assessment objective (or group of assessment objectives) and to each assessment unit

h) show which assessment objectives will include the assessment of written communication

i) include sufficient synoptic assessment at A2 to test the candidates' understanding of the connections between the different elements of the subject **and their holistic understanding of the subject**

j) include A2 assessments that provide appropriate demand through

- **the use of a variety of stems in questions**
- **ensuring connectivity between sections of questions**
- **requiring extended writing in all subjects, except where agreed with the regulatory authorities as inappropriate**
- **using a wide range of question type to address different skills**
- **including synoptic assessment**

- k) be comparable for all candidates, even where there are optional assessment units or optional examination questions
- l) where candidates are required to produce written material in English, Welsh and Irish (Gaeilge), 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
- m) comply with subject criteria relating to the balance between external and internal assessment, including synoptic assessment where such criteria exist
- n) allow results of an assessment unit with the best result counting towards the qualification
- o) stipulate that results for a unit have a shelf-life limited only by the shelf-life of the relevant specification.

Reporting of GCEs

88 The qualification must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of GCEs so that:

- a) attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate at AS level is reported on a five-grade scale from A to E, where A is the highest
- b) attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate at A level is reported on a six-grade scale from A* to E, where A* is the highest
- c) attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate at AS or A level is reported as unclassified or U
- c) the grades awarded match performance descriptions published by the regulatory authorities, if available
- d) if relevant performance descriptions published by the regulatory authorities are not available, the grades awarded match performance descriptions for AS and A2 levels at the grade boundaries A/B and E/U submitted by the awarding body and approved by the regulatory authorities.

89 AS double award is reported on the following grading scale: AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE.

90 A level double award is reported on the following grading scale: A*A*, A*A, AA, AB, BB, BC, CC, CD, DD, DE, EE.