



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



# GCSE subject criteria for humanities

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## Introduction

1. GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in humanities. They provide the framework within which an awarding body creates the detail of the specification.
2. Specifications must also meet the regulators' general requirements, including the common and GCSE criteria as defined in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications* (QCA/04/1293).
3. Subject criteria are intended to:
  - help ensure consistent and comparable standards in the same subject across the awarding bodies
  - ensure that the rigour of GCSE is maintained
  - ensure that specifications build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established by the national curricula for England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and facilitate progression to higher level humanities subjects
  - help higher education institutions, employers and other stakeholders such as learners and parents/guardians know what has been studied and assessed.
4. Any GCSE specification that contains significant elements of humanities must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

## Aims and learning outcomes

5. GCSE specifications in humanities should encourage learners to be inspired, moved and changed by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study and gain an insight into related sectors. They should prepare learners to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices.
6. GCSE specifications in humanities must enable learners to:
  - actively engage in the process of humanities to develop as effective and independent learners, and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds
  - develop an understanding that is coherent, holistic and extends beyond the remit of any single subject discipline

- develop an awareness of how people of different cultures and societies relate to each other and the world in which we live, now and in the past
- explore ways in which cultural, economic, environmental, historical, moral, political, religious, social, spatial, and spiritual factors interact to shape the world in which we live today
- consider the opportunities and constraints that influence human societies at a range of different levels
- examine issues that affect the nature and quality of human life, including an appreciation of diversity and similarities and differences of attitudes, values and beliefs in society
- develop enquiry, critical thinking and decision-making skills through personal and collaborative investigation of issues that are important, real and relevant to young people and to the world in which they live
- consider the rights and responsibilities they have as individuals and their own contribution to humanity.

## **Subject content**

7. The content of GCSE specifications in humanities must reflect the learning outcomes.
8. GCSE specifications in humanities must allow learners to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding specified below.
9. GCSE specifications in humanities must require learners to:
  - Study the key features and characteristics of issues and themes of the societies studied, and the past and current experience of people in these societies
  - investigate the social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversities of the societies studied
  - explore and examine issues important to humanity from individual, family, local, national and global perspectives
  - study the attitudes and values that inform human behaviour, influence human processes and shape a sustainable future

- study cultural, economic, environmental, historical, moral, political, religious, social, spatial and spiritual factors that have an impact on issues important to people and the world we live in.

## Assessment objectives

10. All specifications must require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

Assessment objectives		% weighting
AO1	Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of concepts, issues and terminology	40–50
AO2	Apply their knowledge and understanding in familiar and unfamiliar contexts	30–40
AO3	Analyse and evaluate information, sources, arguments and interpretations	15–25

## Scheme of assessment

11. GCSE specifications in humanities must allocate a weighting of 75% to external assessment and a weighting of 25% to controlled assessment in the overall scheme of assessment.
12. Question papers must be targeted at the full range of GCSE grades.

## Grade descriptions

To be added later