

GCE AS and A Level Subject Criteria for Law

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The criteria

Introduction

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 organisation creates the detail of the specification.

Aims and objectives

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.

Subject content

2. There should be no prior knowledge requirements for AS and A level specifications in Law.
3. AS and A level specifications in Law should be of sufficient length, depth and breadth to allow learners 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

4. AS and A level specifications should require learners to study:
 - legal structures, for example court structures, legal personnel;

- legal processes, for example dispute resolution, law making;
 - legal issues, for example law reform, relationship between law and morals;
 - legal methods and legal reasoning, for example precedent, statutory interpretation.
5. AS and A level specifications should require learners 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.
6. In addition, A level specifications should require learners to:
- study one or more areas of substantive law in depth;
 - develop the skills necessary to analyse and solve problems by applying legal rules.

Assessment objectives

7. All learners 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
AO1	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%
AO2	Analyse legal material, issues and situations, and evaluate and apply the appropriate legal rules and principles.	30–40%	45–55%	37.5–47.5%

AO3	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%
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8. The assessment objectives apply to the whole specification.

Scheme of assessment

9. AS and A level specifications in Law will be assessed entirely through external assessment.

Synoptic assessment

10. All specifications should include synoptic assessment at A2. Synoptic assessment in Law will draw on all three of the assessment objectives and will require learners to:
- select appropriate legal rules and use 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 4
11. 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 learners 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 learners 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.

AS performance descriptions for Law

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of legal rules and principles by selecting and explaining relevant information and illustrating with examples and citation.	Analyse legal material, issues and situations, and evaluate and apply the appropriate legal rules and principles.	Present a logical and coherent argument and communicate relevant material in a clear and effective manner using appropriate legal terminology.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	Learners characteristically: a) show detailed knowledge and understanding of legal rules and principles, selecting and explaining relevant material; b) relate appropriate legal rules and principles within the context of the question paper.	Learners characteristically: a) demonstrate good application, analysis and evaluation of appropriate legal rules and principles in the context of the question paper.	Learners characteristically: a) present an argument in response to the question set with a definable and coherent structure, using appropriate legal terminology; b) use standard conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar with accuracy.
E/U boundary performance descriptions	Learners characteristically: a) show some limited knowledge and understanding of legal rules and principles;	Learners characteristically: a) demonstrate some limited skills of application, analysis and evaluation of legal rules and principles relevant to the	Learners characteristically: a) present a basic argument in response to the questions, supported by limited legal terminology;

	b) relate material and principles that have some relevance to the question.	question paper.	b) use standard conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar with limited accuracy.
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A2 performance descriptions for Law

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of legal rules and principles by selecting and explaining relevant information and illustrating with examples and citation.	Analyse legal material, issues and situations, and evaluate and apply the appropriate legal rules and principles.	Present a logical and coherent argument and communicate relevant material in a clear and effective manner using appropriate legal terminology.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate extensive and accurate knowledge and understanding of legal rules and principles;</p> <p>b) select, explain and evidence relevant material using examples and citation with a high degree of accuracy and relevance to the question.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate accurate and relevant application and/or evaluation of appropriate legal rules and principles in the context of the question, coming to a reasoned conclusion;</p> <p>b) demonstrate high-level analytical and/or problem-solving skills;</p> <p>c) identify correctly most of the issues central to the question.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <p>a) present a well-structured argument in response to the questions;</p> <p>b) support the argument with appropriate legal terminology;</p> <p>c) use standard conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar with a high degree of accuracy.</p>

<p>E/U boundary performance descriptions</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of legal rules and principles evidenced with some relevant material; b) select, explain and evidence material with some degree of accuracy and some relevance to the question. 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate limited application and/or evaluation of appropriate legal rules and principles in the context of the question, without necessarily coming to a conclusion; b) demonstrate limited analytical and/or problem-solving skills; c) identify some issues that are relevant to the question. 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) present a response to the question set with some form of structure; b) construct a limited argument supported by some legal terminology; c) use standard conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar with some accuracy.
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