



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



GCE AS and A level subject criteria for English language and literature

September 2006

QCA/06/2848

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Aims	3
3.	Subject content	3
4.	Key skills	6
5.	Assessment objectives	6
6.	Scheme of assessment	7

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 English language and literature must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

2. Aims

2.1 All AS and A level specifications in English language and literature should encourage students to develop their interest and enjoyment in English as they:

- use integrated linguistic and literary approaches in their reading and interpretation of texts
- engage creatively and independently with a wide range of spoken, written and multimodal texts, exploring the relationships between texts
- undertake independent and sustained studies to develop their skills as producers and interpreters of language.

3. Subject content

3.1 AS and A level specifications in English language and literature should build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established at GCSE, developing students' ability to integrate linguistic and literary approaches. A level specifications should extend these studies in breadth and depth, further developing students' techniques of analysis, evaluation and production of texts.

- 3.2 Specifications should clearly show how the knowledge, understanding and skills associated with the disciplines of linguistic and literary studies combine to make a coherent course. Texts and materials for study should be grouped in ways that develop students' understanding of the value and purpose of an integrated approach to reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Knowledge and understanding

- 3.3 AS specifications should require students to undertake a wide and varied programme of study so that they show knowledge and understanding of:
- a range of spoken and written texts from different times, including at least two substantial texts from one of the genres of prose fiction, poetry and drama and at least one other substantial written text
 - some of the key constituents of language and how they function in combination to make meaning in spoken and written English
 - how variations in language, form and context shape and change meanings in speech and writing
 - some of the ways in which individual texts are interpreted by different readers or listeners
 - some analytical and creative approaches to the critical study of texts, drawing on linguistic and literary methodologies and concepts.
- 3.4 In addition, A level specifications should require candidates to show deeper knowledge and understanding of:
- a wider range of spoken and written texts from different times, including at least two further texts from a genre (prose fiction, poetry, drama) not studied at AS, and at least one other substantial written text
 - the significance of contextual factors in the production and reception of texts
 - how to apply linguistic and literary methodologies and concepts to inform their responses to and interpretations of texts.
- 3.5 All AS and A level specifications in English language and literature must ensure that the combination of texts and materials studied and tasks set on them together provide sufficient challenge to merit serious consideration.
- 3.6 Specifications should contain clear principles for the review and updating of selected texts and materials and methods used for studying them.

Skills

3.7 AS specifications should require candidates to:

- apply integrated linguistic and literary methods and concepts in the study of spoken, written and multimodal texts
- vary strategies for reading and listening according to text type and purpose for study
- identify and describe how meanings and effects are created and conveyed in texts
- compare and contrast texts, exploring relationships between them
- use English appropriately, accurately and creatively for a variety of audiences and purposes
- use a range of techniques to produce texts for different audiences and purposes, informed by wide reading and listening
- make accurate reference to texts and sources.

3.8 In addition, A level specifications should require candidates to show judgement and independence as they:

- synthesise and reflect on their knowledge and understanding of linguistic and literary concepts and methods in the study of spoken and written texts
- make creative connections between elements of the course as a whole
- sustain informed, critical judgements about issues raised in an integrated approach to textual analysis
- devise, draft, edit and evaluate the effectiveness of their own texts, informed by their integrated studies
- make appropriate use of the conventions of writing in advanced studies in English, including references to quotations and sources.

4. Key skills

4.1 AS and A level specifications in English language and literature 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 There are four assessment objectives (AOs) covering both AS and A level specifications. They aim to describe the areas in which evidence for knowledge, skills and understanding should be collected.

5.2 Knowledge, understanding and skills are closely linked, as are the individual assessment objectives.

5.3 Differences in demand between AS and A level specifications may be shown through the choice of different weightings for AOs either singly or in combination to reflect the differences in the depth and breadth of the requirements of the specifications.

5.4 The weightings of AOs in each part of the course must in combination offer a balanced approach to the assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to advanced level study of English language and literature.

5.5 Specifications must require that all candidates meet the following assessment objectives in the context of the content and skills prescribed.

Assessment objectives		Weighting		
		AS	A2	A level
AO1	Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic and literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate, coherent written expression.	15–35%	15–35%	15–35%
AO2	Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in a range of spoken and written texts.	15–35%	15–35%	15–35%
AO3	Use integrated approaches to explore relationships between texts, analysing and evaluating the significance of contextual factors in their production and reception.	15–35%	15–35%	15–35%
AO4	Demonstrate expertise and creativity in using language appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences, drawing on insights from linguistic and literary studies.	15–35%	15–35%	15–35%

6. Scheme of assessment

Internal assessment

- 6.1 All A level specifications in English language and literature must have internal assessment with a weighting of between 15 and 40 per cent.
- 6.2 No more than 40 per cent of either the AS or the A2 may be internally assessed.
- 6.3 Specifications must make clear how reliability and fairness are secured, by setting out requirements that ensure the robustness of each stage of the internal assessment, ie:
- the specific skills to be assessed
 - 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.

Synoptic assessment

- 6.4 Courses as a whole should develop candidates' abilities to use a repertoire of integrated skills and approaches to the interpretation and production of texts, and enable them to make connections between components of the specification, including the requirement to produce a range of writing. The A2 assessment units will require candidates to draw together some of the key insights from their work overall and make purposeful use of these in undertaking assessment tasks.
- 6.5 Synoptic assessment in English language and literature includes:
- synthesis of insights gained from the study of a range of texts, both spoken and written
 - evidence of ability to select appropriate analytical tools to assess the validity of different views expressed about texts and contexts of production and reception
 - skills of interpretation and expression to give insightful, accurate, well-argued responses to texts.

Quality of written communication

- 6.6 These aspects of candidates' skills will be assessed through AO1, which includes assessment of candidates' overall competence in using language accurately and effectively in constructing well-argued responses to assessment tasks in English language.
- 6.7 Where candidates are required to produce written material on paper or on screen in English, the assessment arrangements in AS and A level English language must 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.

Resources in examinations

- 6.8 Where a scheme of assessment includes access to open-book or pre-release material in examinations, a clear rationale must be given for their use.
- 6.9 Only clean texts will be allowed in examinations, and awarding bodies must prescribe editions for use in examinations that are free from editorial material or commentaries.

- 6.10 The amount of annotation allowed by students on pre-release materials prior to the examinations must be clearly prescribed and kept to a minimum. Pre-release materials brought into the examination room must also be free from annotation.