



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



*Rewarding Learning*

# **GCE AS and A level subject criteria for history of art**

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# 1. Introduction

1.1 Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (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 and standards are maintained over time
- help higher education institutions and employers know what has been studied and assessed

History of art is interpreted as the historical, theoretical and critical study of one or more of the areas of western or non-western art, architecture, craft and design<sup>1</sup>.

Any specification that contains significant elements of the subject History of art must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

The critical and contextual endorsement of GCE Art and Design provides the appropriate alternative for those who intend to respond through practical forms.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless made clear otherwise, *art* in this document is to be understood in the broad collective sense here defined, and not simply referring to (fine) art.

## 2. Aims

- 2.1 History of art subject criteria aim to develop specifications which allow candidates to demonstrate their historical, theoretical and critical study of one or more of the areas of western or non-western art, architecture, craft and design.
- 2.2 AS and A level specifications in History of art should encourage students to develop and communicate their knowledge and understanding of:
- the roles and achievements of practitioners
  - the relationship between society and art
  - art historical terms, concepts and issues
  - methods of researching, investigating and analyzing
  - use of evidence and how works are interpreted and evaluated

## 3. Subject content

- 3.1 AS and A2 specifications in History of art should specify that the student engages in historical, theoretical and critical study encouraging, where possible, looking and learning through first-hand experience of artworks.

The subject criteria require specifications to be developed that encourage students to participate actively in their course of study, recognizing and developing their own strengths in the subject and identifying and sustaining their own lines of enquiry. In this way the criteria should facilitate and encourage independent learning and provide a stimulating experience.

## **Knowledge, understanding and skills**

3.2 At AS, specifications in History of art should include opportunities for students to develop:

- the foundations of knowledge and understanding of art historical movements, practitioners and works, considering the way that these change and evolve within chronological and other frameworks
- the ability and confidence to express and communicate knowledge and understanding
- awareness of art historical terms, concepts and issues
- knowledge and understanding of the significance of techniques and materials in the creation of artefacts
- understanding of the principal methods of analysis and interpretation
- the ability to make critical judgements
- active and independent learning.

3.3. At A level, specifications should build on the AS, allowing for greater depth of study by providing the opportunities to develop:

- an awareness of different sources of historical evidence
- understanding of the relationships between society and art within historical and other frameworks
- knowledge and understanding of the significance and role of environment, setting, display and audiences
- an understanding of art historical approaches, such as technical, formal, iconographic and contextual
- increased independence in learning
- skills to explore, enquire, evaluate, discuss and compare evidence, develop and support persuasive argument and counter-argument.

## **Structure**

3.4 All specifications will comprise of four units, externally set and marked.

## 4. Key skills

4.1 AS and A level specifications in History of art 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)).

- Application of number
- Communication
- Improving own learning and performance
- Information and communication technology
- Problem solving
- Working with others.

## 5. Assessment objectives

5.1 All candidates are required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives are to be weighted within the tolerances in all specifications as indicated. Assessments will be relative to the opportunities and demands within the AS and A2 examinations.

Assessment objectives		Weighting	
		AS level	A2 level
AO1	<b>Knowledge:</b> Source, select, recall material to demonstrate knowledge effectively	33%	20-30%
AO2	<b>Understanding:</b> Demonstrate understanding, through analysis and make substantiated judgements and sustained discussion and/or arguments	33%	20-30%
AO3	<b>Communication:</b> Present a, clear and coherent response	33%	20-30%
AO4	<b>Synopsis:</b> Apply knowledge and understanding of the relationships between aspects of art historical study		20-30%

## 6. Scheme of assessment

6.1 Assessment of this subject must be entirely through external assessment.

### **Synoptic assessment**

6.2 All specifications must include synoptic assessment. The definition of synoptic assessment in the context of History of art is as follows:

- Synoptic assessment involves the candidate in drawing together the knowledge, understanding and skills learned in different parts of the A level course
- Synoptic assessment is primarily assessed through AO4 at A2.

The aims at A2 reflect the increased synoptic requirement.

### **Quality of written communication**

6.3 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.