



CCEA GCE Specification in Economics

For first teaching from September 2008

For first award of AS Level in Summer 2009

For first award of A Level in Summer 2010

Subject Code: 4410

econom omics

Foreword

This booklet contains CCEA's Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced GCE Economics specification for first teaching from September 2008.

The AS is the first part of the full advanced GCE course and will be assessed at a standard appropriate for candidates who have completed the first half of the full Advanced GCE course.

The full Advanced GCE comprises the AS and the second half of the Advanced GCE course referred to as A2. However, the AS can be taken as a "stand-alone" qualification without progression to A2.

The A2 will be assessed at a standard appropriate for candidates who have completed a full advanced GCE course and will include synoptic assessment and an element of stretch and challenge.

The Advanced GCE award will be based on aggregation of the marks from the AS (50%) and the A2 (50%).

An A* will be awarded to the candidates who attain an overall grade A in the qualification and an aggregate of at least 90% of the uniform marks across the A2 units.

| | |
|---------------------------|------------|
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1 Introduction

This specification sets out the content and assessment details for our Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced Level (A Level) courses in Economics. This specification is for first teaching from September 2008. You can view and download the latest version of this specification on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

Students can take the AS course as a final qualification or as the first half of the A Level qualification. Students who wish to obtain a full A Level qualification must also complete the second half of the course, which is referred to as A2. We will make the first AS awards for this specification in 2009 and will make the first A Level awards in 2010.

The specification builds on the broad objectives of the revised Northern Ireland curriculum. It is also relevant to key curriculum concerns in England and Wales.

The revised Northern Ireland curriculum stresses the economic dimension of education. The curriculum's emphasis on citizenship, both locally and globally, recognises the need for young people to engage with the issues of resource allocation that are at the heart of economics.

Economics addresses some of the most pressing problems and issues that society faces today, including the following:

- What should be the market's role in providing for society's needs and wants?
- How can individuals, businesses and governments manage their resources effectively?
- What are the best solutions for environmental problems such as pollution, road congestion and climate change?
- How can we ensure sustainable economic development?
- How can we ensure that poorer countries as well as richer ones benefit from globalisation?

Economics provides students with a tool kit of concepts, ideas and techniques. These tools allow them to critically investigate and analyse problems, evaluate information and evidence and arrive at reasoned conclusions and judgements. The subject provides numerous opportunities for students to communicate ideas orally and in writing, apply numerical skills and use information and communication technology to access, interpret and analyse data. Economics helps students to develop their problem-solving ability, thinking and study skills. It also provides opportunities to work with other students in teams.

Economics opens up a wide range of opportunities for further and higher education and interesting and rewarding careers. It also combines well with other social sciences and the humanities, with foreign languages, with mathematics and sciences and with vocational subjects such as engineering, manufacturing and business. Those with economics qualifications are well placed for careers in business, finance, government services and professions such as teaching and the law.

1.1 Aims

This specification aims to encourage students to:

- develop an interest and enthusiasm for the study of economics;
- appreciate the subject's contribution to the understanding of the wider economic and social environment;
- develop an understanding of a range of concepts and an ability to use these concepts in a variety of different contexts;
- use an enquiring, critical and thoughtful approach to the study of economics and an ability to think as an economist; and
- develop skills, qualities and attitudes that will equip them for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of adult and working life.

1.2 Key features

The key features of the specification are listed below:

- It offers relevant, stimulating and manageable content.
- It requires students to complete fewer assessment units; there are only two AS and two A2 units, and there is no coursework.
- The AS course provides an opportunity to broaden students' education as well as a progression route to the full A Level.
- A2 students are stretched and challenged, thereby establishing a sound foundation for higher education and a range of interesting careers.
- Dedicated support materials are available for teachers and students.

1.3 Prior attainment

AS and A Level Economics require students to produce clear and coherent extended writing, to handle numerical data and to make calculations. Before taking these courses, students should, therefore, ensure that they have adequate levels of literacy and numeracy.

1.4 Prohibited combinations

Students should not enter for examinations in this specification if they are also entered for examinations in other GCE Economics or combined GCE Economics and Business Studies specifications at the same time.

2 Specification at a Glance

The structures of the AS and A Level courses are summarised in the table below:

| Unit | Assessment | Weighting | Availability |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| AS 1: Markets and Prices | 1 hour 30 minutes external examination paper (data response and structured essay) | 50% of AS 25% of A Level | January and Summer |
| AS 2: The National Economy | 1 hour 30 minutes external examination paper (data response and structured essay) | 50% of AS 25% of A Level | January and Summer |
| A2 1: Business Economics | 2 hour external examination paper (unseen case study and essay) | 25% of A Level | January and Summer |
| A2 2: The Global Economy | 2 hour external examination paper (unseen case study and essay) | 25% of A Level | January and Summer |

3 Subject Content

The AS course is divided into two units: AS 1 and AS 2. Students following the A Level course must complete the two AS units and study two further units: A2 1 and A2 2.

All units require students to:

- interpret and present written, numerical, diagrammatic and graphical data;
- express themselves clearly and coherently in extended writing;
- make relevant calculations including the use of fractions, percentages, percentage changes and index numbers; and
- distinguish between nominal and real values.

Units AS 2 and A2 2 require candidates to make use of contemporary and recent historical data since 1997.

**Aspects of content that can be enhanced by the use of formal diagrammatic analysis are indicated with an asterisk.*

3.1 Unit AS 1: Markets and Prices

This unit explores:

- the nature of the basic economic problem;
- the role of markets and prices in resolving it;
- the workings of the market and how prices are determined;
- why markets sometimes fail;
- how governments may intervene; and
- why government intervention may sometimes be counter-productive.

The table below lists the content areas covered in this unit together with the respective learning outcomes for each:

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|--|---|
| The basic economic problem of scarcity and choice | Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand the nature of economic resources (factors of production); and• appreciate that the finite supply and alternative uses of resources creates the need for individuals, organisations and communities to make choices. |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|---|--|
| Opportunity cost | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the concept of opportunity cost; • understand the concept of a production possibility curve*; and • use these concepts as tools for analysing and evaluating the choices facing individuals, organisations and societies*. |
| Rational decision-making | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand that economic choices are made at the margin; • understand that decision-making involves weighing up the costs and benefits of alternative options; • understand that costs and benefits may be non-monetary as well as monetary; • understand that economic agents respond to incentives; and • understand that globalisation and technological development have changed the context in which decisions are made. |
| The benefits of specialisation | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the impacts of specialisation at a personal, regional and national level; and • analyse how specialisation and voluntary economic exchange may lead to higher living standards. (Students do not require a detailed technical knowledge of absolute and comparative advantage at this stage.) |
| Markets as an allocative mechanism | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the meaning and nature of markets; • explain the rationing and signalling functions of price in a market; and • understand the objectives of economic agents such as consumers, workers and shareholders. |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|--|--|
| <p>The basic market model of demand, supply and price determination</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the distinction between a movement along and a shift of demand and supply curves*; • explain the causes of such movements and shifts; • explain how supply and demand determine equilibrium price and quantity in competitive product and factor markets. (Students do not need to understand the theoretical derivation of demand and supply curves. They should, however, be clear about the assumptions of utility maximisation by consumers and profit maximisation by firms)*; • explain how changes in one market may have effects on other markets*; and • evaluate the relevance of this model in analysing how resources are allocated in most economies. |
| <p>Elasticity of demand and supply</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define, measure and interpret: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • price elasticity of demand; • income elasticity of demand; • cross-price elasticity of demand; and • price elasticity of supply*; • use these concepts as tools to analyse and evaluate market changes and the behaviour of firms and governments*; • evaluate the usefulness of these concepts as decision-making tools. |
| <p>Consumer surplus and producer surplus</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the concepts of consumer and producer surplus*; • use these concepts as tools to analyse and evaluate the effects of market changes and government policy upon economic welfare*. (Students are not required to have a knowledge of deadweight welfare loss at this stage.) |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|---|--|
| Economic rent and transfer earnings | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the concepts of economic rent and transfer earnings*; • use these concepts as tools to analyse and evaluate the effects of market changes and government policy upon economic welfare*; and • apply these concepts in the analysis of the distribution of income*. |
| Allocative and productive efficiency | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a basic understanding of allocative and productive efficiency. (Students are not required to understand marginal and average cost at this stage.); and • use these concepts as tools to analyse and evaluate market changes and government policy. |
| Why markets may fail | <p>Students should be able to explain the reasons why markets may not allocate resources efficiently, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the existence of externalities*; • market dominance and extreme inequality in the distribution of income and wealth; • a failure to supply public goods; • the under-provision of merit goods*; • over-provision of de-merit goods*; and • mis-matches in information. |
| Government intervention in markets | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the main reasons why governments may intervene in markets, including political consideration; and • describe and analyse the various forms of government intervention such as price controls, state provision, regulation, taxation and subsidies*. |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|---------------------------|---|
| Government failure | Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="544 383 1353 562">• explain how government intervention may sometimes reduce economic efficiency because of factors such as conflicts of interest, unexpected responses by economic agents, administrative costs and unforeseen circumstances and consequences; and<li data-bbox="544 600 1353 674">• evaluate the impact of government intervention in a range of markets such as agriculture, housing, transport and labour*. |

3.2 Unit AS 2: The National Economy

This unit:

- introduces students to macroeconomic issues in the domestic context of the United Kingdom economy;
- develops their understanding of, and ability to apply, some of the major statistical indicators of economic performance;
- offers insights into the nature and causes of contemporary economic problems;
- investigates differing views as to how these may best be resolved through analysis of aggregate supply and aggregate demand and consideration of government's fiscal, monetary and supply-side policies; and
- provides a framework for students to investigate economic issues affecting other countries.

The table below lists the content areas covered in this unit together with the respective learning outcomes for each:

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|--|--|
| The scope of macroeconomics | Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distinguish between micro- and macroeconomics. |
| The circular flow of income | Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and apply the circular flow of income model, which involves firms, households, government and other economies*. |
| Macroeconomic policy objectives of government | Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand that governments are concerned generally with inflation, employment and unemployment, economic growth and the balance of international payments; • understand the concepts of macroeconomic stability and the output gap; • understand that governments may have, or be compelled to consider, other policy objectives such as redistribution of income or protection of the environment; • analyse possible policy conflicts and trade-offs; • analyse possible causes and consequences of inflation, unemployment, poor economic growth and long-term international trading imbalances; • consider the possibility of the existence of a natural rate of unemployment; |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|---|---|
| <p>Macroeconomic policy objectives of government (cont.)</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand that rates of economic growth may vary over time, between different regions of an economy and between different economies; • analyse the impact of various economic events, including changes in global demand or supply on a domestic economy; • analyse and evaluate attempts by government to achieve a more equitable distribution of income; • appreciate the difficulties of economic forecasting; • examine economic policy priorities and how these may differ over time and between different political parties; and • evaluate the success of government economic policies. |
| <p>Measures of economic performance</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand differences between the main national income accounting concepts; • make basic calculations based on the above; • appreciate the uses to which national income statistics may be put, including as an indicator of economic growth; • analyse the factors that limit the usefulness of national income statistics in comparing living standards over time and between countries; • compare the usefulness of published national income statistics with other indicators of economic welfare; • explain how the rate of inflation is measured in the UK and why the government uses a range of measures; • distinguish between the claimant-count and international labour organisation approaches to measuring the levels of unemployment in an economy; and • understand how the economic activity rate is measured and explain its usefulness. |

| Content | Learning outcomes |
|---|--|
| <p>Aggregate demand, aggregate supply and determination of macroeconomic equilibrium</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the components of aggregate demand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consumption; • investment; • government expenditure; and • net exports ($X - M$); • apply these concepts to explain effects of injections into or withdrawals from the circular flow of income; • apply these concepts to define aggregate demand (AD) and explain the shape of the aggregate demand curve*; • analyse the effects on the aggregate demand curve of changes in such factors as fiscal policy, monetary policy, expectations and changes in exchange rates*; • understand the concepts of aggregate supply (AS) and the aggregate supply curve*; • identify factors that may cause the short-run aggregate supply curve to shift, such as changes in factor prices and business taxation*; • understand that the long-run AS curve represents the productive potential of the economy and that it can shift due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in the quantity or quality of factors of production available; or • the efficiency with which existing resources are used*; • understand that AD and AS interact to determine equilibrium levels of income, output and prices*; and • explain the effects of shifts in AD and/or AS curves*. |
| <p>The operation and effects of government economic policy</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain what is involved in fiscal, monetary and supply-side policies; • use AS/AD analysis to predict the possible effects of changes in the above policies such as alterations to tax rates, government spending, interest rates or incentives to effort and enterprise*; |

| Content | Learning outcomes |
|--|--|
| The operation and effects of government economic policy (cont.) | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• appreciate that different policy instruments may be required to address different aspects of a single macroeconomic problem;• appreciate that external constraints such as international treaty obligations may limit the government's scope for macro-economic policy changes;• understand that setting targets for improvement in any one economic indicator reduces its effectiveness as an indicator (Goodhart's law); and• compare and evaluate the likely effectiveness of different policy options. |

3.3 Unit A2 1: Business Economics

This unit builds on the content of unit AS 1. It examines in greater depth:

- the decision-making processes of firms in the short and long runs;
- various market models and their usefulness in explaining market behaviour;
- current influences on firms' behaviours such as globalisation, environmental considerations and the growth of the internet; and
- the role and effectiveness of government policy in attempting to promote competition.

The table below lists the content areas covered in this unit together with the respective learning outcomes for each:

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|---|---|
| The diverse nature of production | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand that production comes in a wide variety of forms; and • appreciate that all production involves the use of resources and creates opportunity costs. |
| Decision-making in the short and long runs | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the distinction between the short and long run; • understand that the timescales of the short and long runs may differ between industries; • explain the law of diminishing marginal returns to a variable factor*; • explain the distinction between fixed and variable costs of production; • analyse trends in short-run marginal, average and total costs as output changes*; • understand the concepts of total, average and marginal revenue*; • apply these cost and revenue concepts in analysing a firm's decision making*; |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|--|---|
| <p>Decision-making in the short and long runs (cont.)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the connection between short and long run average and marginal cost curves*; • apply the distinction between the short and long run in analysing the implications of a firm's costs and revenue situation, for example, whether or not a loss-making firm should close*; • understand the concepts of economies of scale, diseconomies of scale, external economies and external diseconomies*; • analyse the effects of such economies and diseconomies on returns and costs for the firm and industry*; and • explain how globalisation, environmental concerns and the growth of internet usage may affect firms' costs and consumers' behaviour*. |
| <p>The growth of the firm</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the distinction between organic growth and growth by merger or acquisition; • explain different types of integration; and • analyse and evaluate the motives for growth, including the inputs of workers, directors, shareholders and government into the firm's decision-making process. |
| <p>The objectives of the firm</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the condition for profit maximisation in terms of the equality of marginal cost and marginal revenue*; • evaluate how useful the assumption of profit maximisation is as the basis for business decision-making; • explain how the inputs of other stakeholders, such as workers, directors, pressure groups and government, may affect firms' objectives; and • understand and evaluate other theories of firms' behaviours such as the maximising of sales revenue, long-run profit and managerial utility*. |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|---|---|
| <p>The competitive environment</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the main features of perfectly competitive, monopolistic and oligopolistic markets*; • compare firms' behaviours in different market structures, for example competitive pricing, product differentiation, non-price competition, collusion and price leadership, and price wars*; • use the concepts of productive efficiency, allocative efficiency and deadweight welfare loss to evaluate the implications of different market structures*; • show how the theory of contestable markets can be used to explain the behaviour of firms in a range of market structures where barriers to entry and exit are low*; and • consider the strengths and limitations of this theory. |
| <p>Market dominance and competition policy</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand how market dominance may be measured and some of the problems experienced in attempting such measurement; • appreciate that there may be different approaches to dealing with market dominance and a lack of competition and consider how these may be affected by views about the contestability of markets; • consider a range of possible policy instruments, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breaking up monopolistic businesses; • restricting mergers and acquisitions; • regulation of natural monopolies and the outlawing of unfair trading practices. (Students are not required to have a detailed knowledge of UK and EU competition legislation.); and • evaluate the effectiveness of these instruments. |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Business and the environment | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand how certain types of business activity may have negative environmental impacts;• appreciate that increasing environmental awareness may create market openings for business;• explain how government policy on environmental protection may affect consumers and producers*; and• evaluate the effectiveness of the main government policy instruments for environmental protection including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• regulation;• 'green' taxation;• tradeable pollution permits; and• voluntary agreements*. |

3.4 Unit A2 2: The Global Economy

This unit deepens and extends understanding of policy issues examined in AS 2 to include consideration of:

- trade, trade barriers and participation in international organisations and agreements;
- UK membership of the European Union;
- issues arising from increasing globalisation; and
- reasons why nations experience different stages of economic development and ways in which international inequalities might eventually be reduced.

The table below lists the content areas covered in this unit together with the respective learning outcomes for each:

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|---|---|
| Reasons for international trade | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the reasons for trade, including unequal distribution of resources, comparative advantages in production, and strategic and geo-political motives; • apply the concepts of specialisation and comparative advantage to explain the gains from, and patterns of, trade*. (Students are not required to have detailed advance knowledge of patterns of trade.); and • evaluate the usefulness of the theory of comparative advantage. |
| Free trade and protection | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain and evaluate arguments for and against free trade; • understand the range of measures that may be used to control trade*; • analyse the motivation for and effectiveness of trade controls*; and • understand the main purposes of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and evaluate its effectiveness. |
| The United Kingdom balance of payments | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand, in broad terms, the main elements of the UK balance of payments accounts; • appreciate that inward flows of investment may partially offset deficits on current accounts; |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|--|--|
| <p>The United Kingdom balance of payments (cont.)</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the general trends since 1997 in the UK’s trade in goods and services and in financial investment flows; • explain problems caused by imbalances in national trading accounts; • appreciate that the UK government is constrained in its response to balance of payments difficulties; and • evaluate the significance of payments imbalance. |
| <p>Exchange rates</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding how exchange rates are determined under a floating exchange rate system*; • analyse effects of changes in the exchange rate*; • explain why a stable exchange rate may assist international trade; and • explain how exchange rates may be stabilised by government or international action*. |
| <p>The European Union</p> | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distinguish between free trade areas, customs unions and common currency areas*; • explain how European Union policies both create and divert trade*; • evaluate the effects of the European union enlargement since 2001; • evaluate the case for the UK and other countries joining the ‘eurozone’; • understand the aims, operation and impact of the European Central Bank (ECB); and • analyse and evaluate the effects of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) within and outside the European Union*. |

| Content | Learning Outcomes |
|---|--|
| Globalisation | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the main features of globalisation; • analyse and evaluate the impacts of globalisation on developed and less developed economies; and • appreciate that negotiations by international groupings of economies may have significant roles in shaping the direction of global economic change. |
| Trade, aid and economic development | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the main classifications, characteristics and priorities of countries at different stages of economic development; • explain factors that may enhance or inhibit development; • understand the roles of governments, non-governmental organisations and international agencies in providing and administering aid; • understand the roles of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; and • compare the effectiveness of foreign aid programmes and trade liberalisation in assisting less developed economies. |
| Government macroeconomic policy in an open economy | <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand that internal and external pressures may oblige governments of developed countries to develop policies to protect the environment; and • analyse how government fiscal and monetary policy may be influenced and constrained by international considerations*. |

4 Scheme of Assessment

4.1 Assessment opportunities

Students can choose either to be assessed in stages during their AS and A Level courses or to leave all assessment to the end of these courses. The availability of assessment units is shown in Section 2 of the specification.

Students can choose to resit AS and A2 assessment units. The best result for each assessment unit will count towards the AS and A Level qualifications.

Results for each assessment unit can continue to contribute to an AS or A Level qualification while the specification is offered.

4.2 Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives of the specification are listed below. Students must:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified content (AO1);
- apply knowledge and understanding of the specified content to problems and issues arising from both familiar and unfamiliar situations (AO2);
- analyse economic problems and issues (AO3); and
- evaluate economic arguments and evidence, making informed judgements (AO4).

4.3 Assessment objective weightings

The assessment objective weightings for each assessment unit and the overall AS and A Level qualifications are set out in the table below:

| Assessment Objective | Assessment Unit Weighting | | | | Overall Weighting | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|------|------|------|-------------------|---------|
| | AS 1 | AS 2 | A2 1 | A2 2 | AS | A Level |
| AO1 | 30% | 30% | 20% | 20% | 30% | 25% |
| AO2 | 30% | 30% | 20% | 20% | 30% | 25% |
| AO3 | 20% | 20% | 30% | 30% | 20% | 25% |
| AO4 | 20% | 20% | 30% | 30% | 20% | 25% |

4.4 Quality of written communication

In each assessment unit for AS and A Level Economics, students must demonstrate their quality of written communication. In particular, students must:

- ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear;
- select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to their purpose and to complex subject matter; and
- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

Examiners assess the quality of students' written communication in their responses to questions or tasks that require extended writing. The examiners assess quality of written communication within all assessment objectives and assessment units in this specification.

4.5 Synoptic assessment

The A2 assessment units include an element of synoptic assessment. This relates to all the assessment objectives and allows students to demonstrate expertise in the essential knowledge, understanding and skills of economics. Synoptic assessment tests students' understanding of the connections between different elements of the subject. It emphasises their ability to think as economists and to use effectively the economist's 'tool kit' of concepts, theories and techniques. In particular, synoptic assessment in GCE Economics requires students to demonstrate that they can:

- understand the interrelatedness of many economic, issues problems and institutions;
- understand how economic concepts, theories and techniques may be relevant to a range of contexts; and
- apply such concepts, theories and techniques in the evaluation of arguments and evidence.

4.6 Stretch and challenge

The A2 assessment units provide opportunities for stretch and challenge. This is achieved by requiring students to:

- place greater emphasis on their powers of analysis and evaluation;
- use and evaluate more complex economic models;
- apply models to a wider range of contexts;
- interpret and evaluate more complex written, numerical and graphical data from multiple sources;
- predict and evaluate the impact of government policies across a range of contexts;
- respond to a variety of question stems and more open-ended questions; and
- demonstrate their ability to understand the relationships and linkages of different aspects of their studies.

4.7 Reporting and grading

We report the results of individual assessment units on a uniform mark scale that reflects the assessment weighting of each unit.

We award AS qualifications on a five grade scale from A to E with A being the highest. We award A Level qualifications on a six grade scale from A* to E with A* being the highest. We determine the AS and A Level grades awarded by aggregating the uniform marks obtained on individual assessment units. To be awarded an A*, candidates will need to achieve a grade A on their full A level qualification and an A* on the aggregate of their A2 units. For students who fail to attain a grade E, we report their results as unclassified (U).

The grades we award match the performance descriptions published by the regulatory authorities (See Section 5.4).

5 Links

5.1 Support materials

CCEA currently provides the following materials to support this specification:

- specimen papers and mark schemes;
- past papers and mark schemes;
- a resource list;
- Chief Examiner's reports; and
- guidance for teachers.

You can obtain these materials from our website (www.ccea.org.uk) or in printed form from our Distribution Section.

We will expand our range of support materials to include:

- exemplar schemes of work;
- dedicated 'course companions' for each unit; and
- study and revision guidance for students.

We will make these materials available via our website and, where appropriate, in printed form.

Details of our Annual Support Programme of events and materials for GCE Economics can be found on our website.

5.2 Curriculum objectives

This specification addresses and builds upon the broad curriculum objectives for Northern Ireland, England and Wales. In particular, it enables students to:

- develop as individuals and in their roles as contributors to society, the economy and the environment;
- address moral, ethical and social issues associated with the allocation of resources such as:
 - the environmental effects of economic activity (Units AS 1 and A2 1); and
 - the national and international distribution of income and wealth (Units AS 2 and A2 2);
- consider how economic development can be made sustainable (Units AS 2, A2 1 and A2 2);
- explore the role of an expanding European Union and its implications for the UK (Unit A2 2); and

- develop skills and dispositions that will enhance their employability, including:
 - communication;
 - numeracy;
 - the ability to think logically and rationally;
 - problem-solving;
 - ICT;
 - business acumen; and
 - teamwork.

5.3 Key skills

All units in this specification provide opportunities for students to develop the following nationally recognised Key Skills at Level 3:

- Application of Number;
- Communication;
- Improving Own Learning and Performance;
- Information and Communication Technology;
- Problem-Solving; and
- Working with Others.

You can find details of the current standards and guidance for each of these skills on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk.

5.4 Performance descriptions

You can obtain performance descriptions for the AS and A2 judgemental A/B and E/U boundaries from the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk.

5.5 Examination entries

The following entry codes apply to individual assessment units and the overall AS and A Level cash-ins in GCE Economics:

| | |
|------------------|-------|
| AS 1: | AAE11 |
| AS 2: | AAE12 |
| AS cash-in: | S4412 |
| A2 1: | AAE21 |
| A2 2: | AAE22 |
| A Level cash-in: | A4412 |

You can view details of how to make entries on our website. Alternatively, you can contact our Entries Team using the details provided in Section 5.8.

5.6 Students with particular requirements

We have designed this specification to minimise the need to adjust the assessment of students who have particular requirements. Details of the arrangements you can make for such students are available in the Joint Council for Qualifications document *Access Arrangements and Special Consideration: Regulations and Guidance Relating to Candidates Who Are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations*.

5.7 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

AS/A Levels often require assessment of a broad range of competences. This is because they are general qualifications and, as such, prepare candidates for a wide range of occupations and higher level courses.

The revised AS/A Level qualification and subject criteria were reviewed to identify whether any of the competences required by the subject presented a potential barrier to any disabled candidates. If this was the case, the situation was reviewed again to ensure that such competences were included only where essential to the subject. The findings of this process were discussed with disability groups and with disabled people.

Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates in order to enable them to access the assessments. For this reason, very few candidates will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment. Information on reasonable adjustments is found in the Joint Council for Qualifications document referred to in 5.6 above.

Candidates who are still unable to access a significant part of the assessment, even after exploring all possibilities through reasonable adjustments, may still be able to receive an award. They would be given a grade on the parts of the assessment they have taken and there would be an indication on their certificate that not all of the competences have been addressed. *This will be kept under review and may be amended in the future.*

5.8 Contact details

The following list provides contact details for relevant members of our staff:

- Specification Support Officer: Arlene Ashfield
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension 2291, email: aashfield@ccea.org.uk)
- Officer with Subject Responsibility: Nick Heard
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, email: nheard@ccea.org.uk)
- Examination Entries, Results and Certification: Philip Macauley
(telephone: (028) 9026 1262, email: pmcauley@ccea.org.uk)
- Examiner Recruitment
(telephone: (028) 9026 1243, email: appointments@ccea.org.uk)
- Distribution (past papers and support materials)
(telephone: (028) 9026 1228, email: smurray@ccea.org.uk)
- Support Events Administration: Events Information Service
(telephone: (028) 9026 1401, email: events@ccea.org.uk)
- Information Section (including Freedom of Information requests)
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, email: info@ccea.org.uk)
- Business Assurance (appeals): Jeffrey Hamilton
(telephone: (028) 9026 1205, email: jhamilton@ccea.org.uk).



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