



CCEA GCSE Specification in Economics

For first teaching from September 2009

For first award in Summer 2011

Subject Code: 4410

econom
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Foreword

This booklet contains CCEA's General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Economics for first teaching from September 2009. We have designed this specification to meet the requirements of the following:

- GCSE Subject Criteria for Economics;
- GCSE Qualifications Criteria; and
- Common Criteria for all Qualifications.

We will make the first full award based on this specification in summer 2011.

We will notify centres in writing of any major changes to this specification. We will also publish changes on our website at www.ccea.org.uk

The version on our website is the most up-to-date version. Please note that the web version may be different from printed versions.

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1 Introduction

This specification sets out the content and examination details for our GCSE Economics course. First teaching begins from September 2009, and we will make the first awards for this specification in 2011. You can view and download the latest version of this specification on our website at www.ccea.org.uk

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

The Northern Ireland Curriculum stresses the importance of the economic dimension of education and local and global citizenship. These emphases recognise the need for students to focus on the issues of resource allocation that are central to the study of economics.

Economics helps students to critically examine and reflect on a range of relevant issues. Examples are:

- What is the real cost of alcohol and tobacco consumption?
- What causes house, food and fuel prices to rise and fall?
- Are large inequalities in income and wealth justified?
- How can young people make informed financial decisions?
- What should be the most important economic priorities for government?
- What are the costs and benefits of globalisation?

Economics provides students with a tool kit of concepts, ideas and skills. This allows them to critically investigate and to analyse problems, evaluate information and evidence, and arrive at reasoned conclusions and judgements.

Economics provides numerous opportunities for students to communicate ideas orally and in writing and apply numerical skills. It also allows them to use information and communication technology to access, interpret and analyse data. Economics helps students to develop their problem-solving ability as well as their thinking and study skills. It also provides opportunities to work with other students in teams.

Economics gives students access to a wide range of further learning opportunities and career choices. It 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. Students 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 helps students to:

- actively engage in the study of economics to develop as effective and independent learners and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds;
- use an enquiring, critical approach to distinguish between fact and opinion, build arguments and make informed judgements;
- apply their knowledge, understanding and skills to contemporary issues in a range of local, national and global contexts;
- understand the perspectives of a range of different stakeholders in relation to economic activity;
- consider the moral issues that arise as a result of the impact of economic activity on the environment and economic development; and
- recognise that their economic knowledge, understanding and skills help them to understand current events and provide a basis for their role as citizens and for the possible further study of economics.

1.2 Key features

The key features of the specification appear below:

- The specification's content is updated and slimmed down.
- There is a single tier of entry, no controlled assessment requirement and less examination time.
- The course offers opportunities to build on the skills and capabilities developed through the delivery of the Key Stage 3 curriculum in Northern Ireland.
- The course helps students develop financial capability.
- The specification gives students a sound foundation for the study of economics and related subjects at AS level.

1.3 Prior attainment

Students taking this course should be able to communicate ideas in writing, make basic mathematical calculations and handle data presented in charts, tables and graphs.

1.4 Classification codes and subject combinations

Every specification is assigned a national classification code that indicates the subject area to which it belongs. The classification code for this qualification is 4410.

Progression to another school/college

Should a student take two qualifications with the same classification code, schools and colleges that they apply to may take the view that they have achieved only one of the two GCSEs. The same view may be taken if students take two GCSE qualifications that have different classification codes but have content that overlaps significantly. Students who have any doubts about their subject combinations should check with the schools and colleges that they wish to attend before embarking on their planned study.

Centres in England

Centres in England should also be aware that, for the purpose of the School and College Achievement and Attainment Tables, if a student enters for more than one GCSE qualification with the same classification code, only one grade (the highest) will count.

2 Specification at a Glance

The structure of the course is set out below:

Content	Assessment	Weighting	Availability
Basic Economic Ideas Producing and Consuming Financial Capability Managing the Economy Trade, Aid and Development	<p>Students take two papers set and marked by our examiners. Each paper may assess any of the subject content in Section 3 of the specification.</p> <p>Paper 1: 1 hour Students write a structured report based on a pre-released case study. The case study is available to students in centres from January in the year of the examination.</p> <p>Paper 2: 2 hours The paper has a range of different question types: short answer and data response questions (which are compulsory), and one essay from a choice of four.</p>	<p>40%</p> <p>60%</p>	<p>Summer only</p> <p>Summer only</p>

3 Subject Content

We have divided the course into five sections. The content of each section and its respective learning outcomes appears below. There is no prescribed teaching order. Teachers may organise this content as they wish.

3.1 Basic Economic Ideas

This section introduces students to the basic economic problem and other concepts underpinning the study of economic decisions.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Basic Economic Problem</p> <p>Resources and Goods</p> <p>Specialisation</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the basic economic problem and the need for choice; • explain the concept of opportunity cost and apply it in various situations; • use a straight-line production possibility frontier to illustrate resource choices and costs; • define the factors of production and their associated rewards; • understand how an economy must decide what, how and for whom to produce; • consider different ways in which these decisions could be made and the moral, ethical, social, legislative and cultural issues involved; • distinguish between consumer goods, capital goods and services; • classify production into primary, secondary and tertiary sectors; • explain and apply the concept of specialisation in a range of different contexts; and • demonstrate an understanding of how specialisation results in interdependence and the need for exchange.

3.2 Producing and Consuming

This section gives students the chance to study how product and labour markets work and why they sometimes fail to operate efficiently.

Content	Learning Outcomes
Demand, Supply, and Price Determination	Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain what is meant by a market and market forces; • understand the role of prices and profits in a market economy and consider the moral, ethical and cultural issues involved in production for profit; • apply the concepts of demand and supply to product, service and factor markets; • analyse how equilibrium price and quantity are established and affected by changes in demand and supply; • analyse differences in wage rates and consider the moral, ethical and social issues involved; • understand the role of trade unions, analyse their impact on the labour market and consider the moral, ethical and legislative issues involved in trade union activity; • analyse the impact of population changes on product and labour markets, including the social, cultural and legislative issues involved in immigration and emigration;
Competition and Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the various ways in which businesses can compete and grow; • evaluate the possible effects of competition and growth on producers and consumers;
Costs and Revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the importance of information on costs and revenue in business decision-making; • analyse the costs and revenue of a business; • undertake simple break-even analysis and examine the effects of changes in costs or revenue; and • understand the factors that give rise to economies and diseconomies of scale.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Costs and Revenue (cont.)</p> <p>Market Failure</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine the impact of the growth of the internet on business costs and revenue; • explain and analyse ways in which markets may fail to operate efficiently; and • evaluate the potential social, environmental and ethical consequences of particular production and consumption decisions, for example those involving merit and demerit goods, pollution, congestion and climate change.

3.3 Financial Capability

This section is designed to give students a sound knowledge and understanding of money, financial products and services, and risk and return. It also shows students how to manage their personal finances effectively.

Content	Learning Outcomes
Money and Financial Products	Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the functions that money performs in the economy; • describe how people pay for goods and services; • evaluate cash, debit cards, credit cards, and store cards as means of payment; • explain the role of interest rates and account for differences and changes; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of savings, loan, mortgage, insurance and pension products and make comparisons between alternatives in terms of risk and return;
Managing Personal Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relate their knowledge of financial products to an individual's changing financial needs; • understand the reasons for growing consumer debt; • identify sources of financial information and advice and understand how information on cost, risk and return can help to inform financial choices; • discuss how individuals can best avoid or resolve financial difficulties; • consider the moral, ethical, social, legislative and cultural issues associated with lending and borrowing;
Business Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain why entrepreneurs and businesses need finance; • understand and explain the available sources of finance; • compare the suitability of different sources of finance for particular purposes; and • explain the role and operation of the stock market.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Financial Services Industry</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine the contribution of the financial services industry to the UK economy; • consider instances of malpractice in the provision of financial services and the moral, ethical and legislative issues involved; and • understand the regulatory roles of the Financial Services Authority and the Bank of England and evaluate how well these are performed.

3.4 Managing the Economy

In this section, students explore the workings of the national economy and the role played by government and the central bank.

Content	Learning Outcomes
Circular Flow of Income	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the circular flow model; • examine the effects of the ‘injections’ into and ‘leakages’ from the circular flow that occur as a result of the economic activity of firms, households and government;
The Private and Public Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distinguish between the private and public sectors of the economy; • examine the economic functions of central and local government; • discuss the arguments for and against privatisation, deregulation and public private partnerships;
Government Economic Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the government’s key economic objectives, including market efficiency and fairness, environmental concerns, economic growth, job creation and price stability; • understand how these are related and, on occasions, may conflict; • consider the moral, ethical, social and legislative issues involved in deciding on policy priorities and resolving policy conflicts; • understand how economic data can be used to measure the effectiveness of government economic policy and inform policy changes;
Correcting Market Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand that governments may attempt to correct market failure but that such actions do not always succeed;
Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain what is meant by economic growth and sustainable growth; • examine the causes of economic growth; and • analyse the effects of economic growth, including the potential social and environmental consequences.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Unemployment</p> <p>Inflation</p> <p>Government Policy Instruments</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define unemployment and explain how it may be measured; • analyse the potential causes of unemployment; • examine the effects of unemployment on individuals, communities and the economy as a whole; • explain what is meant by inflation and how it is measured; • understand the main causes of inflation; • examine the effects of inflation on individuals, firms and the economy as a whole; • explain ways in which governments and agencies attempt to regulate and control markets, through, for example, public provision, price controls, taxation, subsidies and a national minimum wage; • understand the roles of the Trading Standards Service, the Consumer Council, the Office of Fair Trading, the Competition Commission, the regulators of utility industries such as OFWAT and the Low Pay Commission; • evaluate the effectiveness of such controls and regulation; • understand the basic principles of fiscal, monetary and supply-side policies and describe how they may be used to try to achieve key economic objectives; • explain the role of the Bank of England in implementing monetary policy; and • evaluate the likely impact of changes in fiscal, monetary and supply-side policies on economic growth, unemployment and inflation.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Exchange Rates (cont.)</p> <p>European Union</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the impact of exchange rate changes on trade and the economy as a whole; • describe the aims and role of the EU; • analyse the effects of the EU on the UK and other economies, including its social, cultural and legislative implications; • examine the effects of EU enlargement; and • evaluate the impact of the euro on the UK and Eurozone economies.

4 Scheme of Assessment

4.1 Assessment opportunities

Candidates must sit two examination papers as described in Section 2 of the specification. These examination papers are only available in the summer series.

4.2 Assessment objectives

Below are the assessment objectives for this specification. Candidates must show they are able to:

- recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of concepts, issues and terminology (AO1);
- apply skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of contexts (AO2); and
- analyse and evaluate evidence, make reasoned judgements and present appropriate conclusions (AO3).

4.3 Assessment objective weightings

The assessment objective weightings for each examination component and the overall GCSE qualification are set out below:

Assessment Objective	Assessment Objective Weighting for Each Component		Overall Weighting
	Paper 1	Paper 2	
AO1	25%	37%	32%
AO2	30%	30%	30%
AO3	45%	33%	38%
Total	100%	100%	100%

4.4 Quality of written communication

In GCSE Economics, candidates must show their quality of written communication. In particular, candidates must:

- make sure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are correct 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 candidates' written communication in their responses to questions or tasks that require extended writing. They assess the quality of written communication within all of the specification's assessment objectives and examination components.

4.5 Reporting and grading

We award GCSE qualifications on an eight grade scale from A*–G, with A* being the highest. If candidates get below a grade G, we report their results as unclassified (U).

We award grades that match the grade descriptions published by the regulatory authorities (see Section 5).

5 Grade Descriptions

Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.

The grade awarded depends in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of candidates' performance in the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.

Grade	Description
A	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate detailed knowledge and thorough understanding of a wide range of concepts, theories and issues. They use economic terminology appropriately and accurately.</p> <p>They select and organise information appropriately from a wide variety of sources to investigate economic behaviour in a variety of contexts. They use a wide range of skills appropriately and apply their knowledge and critical understanding effectively to address problems and issues.</p> <p>They use and evaluate quantitative and qualitative evidence effectively with a high degree of accuracy to analyse problems and issues, make informed and reasoned judgements, and to present reasoned and substantiated conclusions.</p>
C	<p>Candidates recall, select and communicate sound knowledge and understanding of a range of concepts, theories and issues. They use economic terminology appropriately.</p> <p>They select and organise information from a variety of sources to investigate economic behaviour in different contexts. They use a range of skills and apply their knowledge and understanding relevantly to address problems and issues.</p> <p>They use and evaluate evidence to analyse problems and issues with some accuracy, make reasoned judgements and present conclusions that are supported by evidence.</p>

Grade	Description
F	<p>Candidates demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding of some concepts, theories, terminology and issues. They use some basic economic terminology.</p> <p>They show some ability to select and organise simple information to investigate economic behaviour. They use a limited range of skills and apply some knowledge and understanding to begin to address problems and issues.</p> <p>They identify simple evidence to address problems and issues, and make judgements. They present simple conclusions that are sometimes supported by evidence.</p>

6 Links

6.1 Support

We provide the following resources to support this specification:

- a subject microsite within our website;
- specimen papers and mark schemes;
- a resource list.

Some support material from the previous specification may also remain useful.

We intend to expand our range of support to include the following:

- past papers and mark schemes;
- Chief Examiner's reports;
- an exemplar scheme of work;
- support days for teachers;
- a student guide;
- exemplification of standards;
- a course companion that provides elaboration and guidance on particular aspects of content; and
- guidance for students on report writing for Paper 1.

You can find our Annual Support Programme of events and materials for Economics on our website at www.ccea.org.uk

6.2 Curriculum objectives

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

- develop as individuals and contributors to the economy, society and environment by thinking critically about the causes and effects of economic behaviour;
- engage with the moral, ethical, social, legislative and cultural issues that may arise out of economic activity, for example:
 - resource allocation and the role of prices and profits;
 - the depletion of non-renewable resources;
 - fairness, inequality, exploitation and trade union activity;
 - migration;
 - pollution, waste and climate change;
 - lending, borrowing and financial malpractice;
 - government policy priorities and conflicts; and
 - trade, aid and debt relief;
- address the issue of how sustainable development can be achieved;
- consider the effects of economic activity on the health and safety of workers and consumers;
- evaluate the implications of European developments, such as the enlargement of the EU and the Eurozone;
- appreciate the wider international and global interdependence of economic activity;
- develop their financial capability;

- develop skills that contribute to their employability, such as the ability to think for themselves and communicate effectively in a variety of forms; and
- make effective use of information and communication technology.

For further guidance on how this specification enables progression from the Northern Ireland Curriculum at Key Stage 3, go to our subject microsite, which you can access at www.ccea.org.uk

6.3 Key Skills

This specification provides students with opportunities to develop and generate evidence for assessing the following nationally recognised Key Skills:

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

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

6.4 Examination entries

Entry codes for this subject and details on how to make entries are available on our Examinations Administration Handbook microsite, which you can access at www.ccea.org.uk

Alternatively, you can telephone our Examination Entries, Results and Certification team using the contact details provided in this section.

6.5 Equality and inclusion

We have considered the requirements of equalities legislation in developing this specification.

GCSE qualifications often require the assessment of a broad range of competences. This is because they are general qualifications and, as such, prepare students for a wide range of occupations and higher level courses.

The revised GCSE and qualification criteria were reviewed to identify whether any of the competences required by the subject presented a potential barrier to any students with disabilities. 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 and equality groups and with people with disabilities.

During the development process, we carried out an equality impact assessment. This was to ensure that we identified any additional potential barriers to equality and inclusion. Where appropriate, we have given consideration to measures to support access and mitigate against barriers.

Reasonable adjustments are made for students with disabilities in order to reduce barriers to access assessments. For this reason, very few students will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment. It is important to note that where access arrangements are permitted, they must not be used in any way that undermines the integrity of the assessment. **You can find information on reasonable adjustments 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*.**

6.6 Contact details

The following list provides contact details for relevant staff members and departments:

- 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
(telephone: (028) 9026 1262, email: entriesandresults@ccea.org.uk)
- Examiner Recruitment
(telephone: (028) 9026 1243, email: appointments@ccea.org.uk)
- Distribution (past papers and support materials)
(telephone: (028) 9026 1242, email: cceadistribution@ccea.org.uk)
- Support Events Administration
(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)
(telephone: (028) 9026 1244, email: appealsmanager@ccea.org.uk).

