



Department
for Education

Ancient history

GCE AS and A level subject content

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The content for AS and A level ancient history

Introduction

1. AS and A level subject content sets out the knowledge, understanding, and skills 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

2. GCE specifications in ancient history should enable students to learn about the history of ancient societies in their wider context in the ancient world. The study of ancient history at GCE should deepen students' understanding of the events, people and periods studied. Specifications should enable them to think critically, weigh evidence (literary and material sources from the ancient world), sift arguments, make informed decisions and develop perspective and judgement. Specifications should prepare students to make informed decisions about further education opportunities and progression onto Higher Education.

3. AS and A level specifications in ancient history must encourage students to:

- develop a broad and extensive interest in the military, political, religious, social and cultural history of the ancient world
- acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of selected periods of ancient history and use this knowledge and understanding to formulate coherent arguments with substantiated judgments
- understand Greek and/or Roman history in the context of their neighbouring civilisations and the interrelations of these civilisations
- explore and evaluate the significance of events, individuals, issues, identities and societies in the history of the ancient world
- understand the nature of historical evidence from the ancient world and its scarcity to build an understanding of historical periods studied and the methods used in the analysis and evaluation of evidence. Students should develop an understanding of how the ancient past has been represented by ancient historians and, also at A level only, how the ancient past has been interpreted by modern historians
- develop an understanding of historical concepts such as change, continuity, causation, consequence and significance within the context of the historical periods studied
- develop an awareness and understanding of relevant historical debates and how these can be investigated
- develop the ability to make connections and draw comparisons between different periods, individuals, issues, identities and societies of the ancient past

Subject content

4. AS and A level specifications must require students to study:
 - significant events, individuals, societies, developments and issues within their broad historical context demonstrating breadth (through period study) and, in addition at A level only, depth (through studying of a narrower, more specific topic), which must be drawn from the period 3000 BC to 500 AD
 - period studies must focus on a coherent medium time span of at least 75 years and require students to understand the unfolding narrative of substantial developments, events and issues associated with the period. A period study must cover a period of time sufficient to allow students to demonstrate understanding of the process of change, both long term and short term. For example, a period study may focus on Sparta or the fall of the Roman Republic
 - depth studies must focus on a substantial and coherent short time span and require students to understand the complexity of historical events and situations and the interplay of different factors within it. Depending on the particular historical event or situation selected for study, these aspects may include (but are not restricted to) social, economic, political, cultural, religious, technological and military factors. For example, a depth study may focus on the Peloponnesian War or the foundation of the Principate
 - AS level specifications must require students to study two period studies. Awarding organisations must include a rationale for the specification of topics including periods which indicate how the following criteria for content are addressed. AS level specifications must require students to study a substantial amount of the history of at least one of ancient Rome or ancient Greece. (one society to be a minimum 50% of the qualification)
 - for A level, specifications must require students to study two depth studies and two period studies. Awarding organisations must include a rationale for the specification of topics including periods which indicate how the following criteria for content are addressed. A level specifications must require students to study a substantial amount of the history of both ancient Rome and ancient Greece (each society to be a minimum 20% of the qualification)
 - each period / depth study within the specification of the AS and A level must form a coherent and substantial study of ancient history in which each of the topics are reasonably balanced across the full range of assessed content
 - developments affecting at least two different and clearly defined groups of people within the societies studied
 - at least two appropriate historical perspectives, for example cultural, economic, ethnic, military, political, religious, scientific or social

- relevant literary and material sources from the ancient world, as appropriate, as evidence for the historical events studied
- a span of ancient history which, in their course of study, must be at least 400 years from the start of the earliest topic to the end of the latest topic

Knowledge, understanding and skills

5. Both AS and A level specifications must require students to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical events, individuals, issues, identities and societies studied and historical debates
- demonstrate their breadth of historical knowledge and understanding by making links and drawing comparisons between different aspects of the period or society studied
- analyse and evaluate the significance of events, individuals, groups, developments and ideas in history relevant to the periods studied
- demonstrate their understanding of key historical terms and historical concepts relevant to the context of the historical periods studied, including change, continuity, causation, consequence and significance
- analyse and evaluate the causes and consequences of historical events and situations, and changes and developments in the historical periods
- understand the nature of historical evidence from the ancient world and the methods used by historians today in analysis and evaluation
- use relevant and appropriate literary and material sources from the ancient world in order to support evidence-based arguments about the key events studied, including analysing the reliability and context of the evidence used
- understand, interpret, analyse and evaluate historical evidence and events in their historical context
- understand, analyse and evaluate how the portrayal of events by the ancient writers/sources relates to the social, political, religious and cultural contexts in which they were written/produced, for example the influence of mythological literature on Herodotus' writing

6. In addition, A level specifications will require students to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the views of a range of historians regarding the events which have been studied. Students should be able to critically analyse and evaluate how the ancient world has been interpreted in different ways by these historians
- draw on a greater depth and range of content and evidence from the ancient world, and evaluate with more sophistication, demonstrating a deeper understanding of historical concepts, producing responses that are more analytical and judgements that are more effectively substantiated



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