



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority

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# **Review of standards in economics and business studies**

*GCSE and A level 1998 and 2003*

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2005

QCA order ref: QCA/05/1573

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## **Introduction**

This study is primarily a review of standards over time in GCSE and A level business studies and economics between 1998 and 2003. By reviewing GCSE and A level syllabuses at the same time, the study provided the opportunity to consider progression between GCSE and A level in the two subjects. The review also considered comparability of standards between business studies and economics across all levels for 1998 and 2003.

Over 90,000 candidates took GCSE business studies in 2003 and about 4,000 took GCSE economics. At A level there were about 33,000 candidates for business studies and about 15,000 for economics. In all cases the specifications used in this study were the only ones available.

The 2003 GCSE economics and business studies syllabuses conformed to the 2000 criteria for each subject. These replaced the previous subject-specific criteria for GCSE economics and GCSE business studies that governed the 1998 syllabuses in each subject. At A level the 2003 A level economics and A level business studies specifications conformed to the corresponding Curriculum 2000 subject criteria. The 1998 A level economics syllabuses were developed in the light of the 1993 A level economics subject core. The 1998 A level business studies syllabuses were developed in the light of the 1994 A level business studies subject core. Subject cores tended to give guidance on content, but not structure.

## **Common findings**

A number of findings emerged that were common to GCSEs and A levels in both business studies and economics across all awarding bodies. These findings indicated a significant improvement in 2003 compared to 1998 in the following areas:

- Across all awarding bodies the 2003 syllabuses were very detailed with clear guidance for teachers on content, depth and range of the subject area. The 2003 syllabuses also summarised assessment objectives and their weightings.
- The weighting of the assessment objectives was more fully reflected in the question papers and mark schemes in 2003 when compared with 1998. In 2003 assessment objectives were clearly matched to each question. An assessment grid showed clearly where question demands matched a relevant assessment objective skill.
- Mark schemes for 2003 matched assessment objectives' weightings to question demands and gave clearer guidance on subject content and a wider range of suggested answers than in 1998.

## **GCSE business studies 1998–2003**

### **Introduction**

While there was continuity between 1998 and 2003 in the syllabus topic areas, in tiering arrangements and in the description and weighting of the assessment objectives, the review identified the following changes:

- Syllabus and guidance documents for 2003 provided greater detail than in 1998.
- The weighting of the assessment objectives was more fully reflected in the question papers and mark schemes in 2003 when compared with 1998.
- Mark schemes for 2003 gave clearer guidance on subject content and a wider range of suggested answers than in 1998.

The main structural changes to GCSE business studies examinations between 1998 and 2003 were by the following:

- OCR and AQA developed pre-release case studies in 2003. For OCR this was as an alternative to the examination option, while for AQA this was a compulsory written examination paper.
- OCR converted from a compulsory coursework task in 1998 to optional coursework in 2003 with candidates taking either the coursework option or a pre-release case study examination paper.
- AQA changed from a syllabus in 1998 with two compulsory written examinations and the choice between coursework and an alternative written examination to a syllabus with one compulsory written examination and compulsory coursework.

### **Examination demand**

#### **Materials available**

Reviewers considered the 1998 and 2003 syllabus documents, examiners' reports and question papers with mark schemes from each awarding body. Details of the syllabuses included in the review are given in appendix A.

#### **Assessment objectives**

The assessment objectives for all awarding bodies remained the same in 1998 and 2003. There were four equally weighted assessment objectives: AO1: knowledge, AO2: application, AO3: analysis and AO4: evaluation.

Between 1998 and 2003 considerable improvements were made by all awarding bodies to match assessment objectives to question papers, individual questions and to mark schemes.

- In 2003 assessment objectives were clearly matched to each question. An assessment grid showed clearly where question demands matched a relevant assessment objective skill.
- The 2003 syllabuses summarised assessment objectives and their weightings and mark schemes matched assessment objectives' weightings to question demands.

This is in contrast with 1998 where there was only limited evidence of consistent matching of questions to assessment objectives and their weightings across question papers.

#### **Syllabus content**

The topic range was similar in 1998 and 2003. Across all awarding bodies the 2003 syllabuses were very detailed with clear guidance for teachers on content, depth and range of the subject area. In 1998, while the topics were detailed, guidance for teachers was less clear than in 2003.

## Scheme of assessment

**Table 1: schemes of assessment in 1998 and 2003**

<b>Awarding body and year</b>	<b>Total examination time</b>	<b>Nature of assessment</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Coursework tasks</b>	<b>Coursework time/length</b>	<b>Coursework weighting</b>
AQA 1998	3hrs or 4hrs if doing examination option	3 components: 2 compulsory externally assessed written examinations + coursework or alternative examination	Choice of coursework or alternative written examination	Internally assessed; task set by centre or AQA.	~3,000 words	25%
AQA 2003	2hrs	2 components: 1 compulsory externally assessed written examination including pre-release case study + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed; task set by centre	2,000–3,000 words	25%
CCEA 1998	3hrs 30mins	3 components: 2 compulsory externally assessed written examinations including pre-release case study + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed; task set by centre	~2,500 words	25%
CCEA 2003	3hrs 30mins	3 components: 2 compulsory externally assessed written examinations including pre-release case study + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed; task set by centre	~2,500 words	20%
Edexcel 1998	2hrs	2 components: 1 compulsory externally assessed written examination + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed; task set by Edexcel	~1,500 words	20%

Edexcel 2003	2hrs	2 components: 1 compulsory externally assessed written examination + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed; task set by Edexcel	~1,500 words	25%
OCR 1998	3hrs	3 components: 2 externally assessed written examinations (1 common core and 1 option) + compulsory coursework	Choice of 1 option from 4: accounting, business change, commerce or technical change.	Internally assessed; task set by OCR	~2,500 words ~10 hrs' work	25%
OCR 2003	2hrs 45mins or 4hrs 15mins if doing optional case study paper	3 components: 2 x externally assessed written examinations (1 common core and 1 option). Coursework or pre-release case study examination	Choice of 1 option from 2: business and change or business communications. Choice of coursework or case study examination paper	Internally assessed; task set by OCR	~2,500 words ~10hrs' work	25%
WJEC 1998	2hrs	2 components: 1 x externally assessed written examination + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed; task set by centre or WJEC	2,000–3,000 words ~15 hrs' work	25%
WJEC 2003	2hrs	2 components: 1 x externally assessed written examination + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed; task set by centre or WJEC	2,000–3,000 words ~15 hrs' work	25%

- Assessment structures were broadly similar in 2003 and 1998 but OCR decreased the total examination time in 2003 for candidates taking the coursework option
- In 2003 OCR was the only awarding body with optional papers and with optional coursework
- In 2003 CCEA weighted coursework at 20 per cent compared with 25 per cent by other awarding bodies.
- AQA had introduced pre-release case studies by 2003 and decreased the examination time from 3 hours in 1998 to 2 hours in 2003.
- AQA and CCEA had pre-release case studies within their compulsory external assessments.

### **Options**

By 2003 OCR was the only awarding body offering optional papers. Coursework was compulsory for all awarding bodies except OCR where candidates could choose coursework or a pre-release case study examination paper.

### **Question papers, tasks and mark schemes**

There was little consistency in terms of question types used across the awarding bodies in 1998 and 2003.

- OCR and AQA higher tier and foundation question papers were characterised by the use of open-ended and extended-answer questions in both 1998 and 2003.
- In both 1998 and 2003 CCEA question papers were predominately short-answer response questions. This can be contrasted with Edexcel in 2003 where the higher tier paper used a range of structured open-ended questions.
- OCR and AQA made similar demands in terms of assessment tasks in 1998 and 2003, with questions consisting of a range of short-answer and open-ended questions across foundation and higher tiers.
- In 1998 WJEC question papers were predominantly short-answer questions compared with 2003 when there was a mixture of short-answer and extended-answer questions for both foundation and higher tier papers.

The review of question papers for both 1998 and 2003 suggests that the demands placed on foundation candidates by OCR and AQA were greater than for candidates from the other awarding bodies. The review group concluded that this resulted from the use of more open-ended or extended-answer question types by AQA and OCR, and the increased use of short-answer question types by the other awarding bodies.

There were considerable improvements to mark schemes between 1998 and 2003. Mark schemes in 2003 were very detailed with a range of suggested answers targeted to the assessment objectives. These banded answers, with marks allocated directly to an assessment objective skill, were easily auditable against the question assessment grid and weighting allocations provided in the specification.

In 1998 there was some limited evidence that questions were targeted at assessment objectives. However where levels of response schemes were provided they exemplified levels in a generic way (for example L1 few advantages, L2 limited reasoning and L3 sophisticated reasoning) rather than by reference to the content of the required response at each level.

In contrast with this in 2003 there was a much stronger relationship between the question demands and the suggested responses in the mark schemes. In 1998 there was lack of clarity in the matching of the demands of questions to mark schemes.

### **Tiering**

There were no changes to tiering arrangements, with all awarding bodies offering papers at foundation and higher tier in both years.

In 2003 all awarding bodies used some similar questions at foundation and higher tier, often with the same stimulus material. Reviewers judged that within OCR and AQA these questions did not differentiate clearly for the range of skills of the candidature. The language and structure of the questions and the suggested answers appeared to favour higher tier candidates.

### **Coursework**

The nature and demands of coursework were unchanged for four of the awarding bodies between 1998 and 2003. OCR introduced a pre-release case study examination paper as an alternative to coursework in 2003. There was some variation between awarding bodies in both years in terms of the amount of coursework required of candidates. For example Edexcel required a piece of work of about 1,500 words, while AQA and WJEC required 2,000–3,000 words. Edexcel increased coursework weighting from 20–25 per cent, while the amount of work required remained the same.

### **Summary**

- Assessment objectives and their weightings remained the same in 1998 and 2003.
- The topic range was similar in 1998 and 2003, although guidance for teachers on syllabus content was more detailed across all awarding bodies in 2003 than in 1998.
- Mark schemes across all awarding bodies in 2003 were more detailed than in 1998 and were clearly matched to the assessment objectives.
- There were two changes to examination time by awarding bodies between 1998 and 2003. OCR decreased total examination time for candidates taking the coursework option by 15 minutes. AQA decreased examination time from 3 hours to 2 hours. However reviewers considered that these changes had no effect on the level of demand.
- By 2003 OCR was the only awarding body to offer optional units and optional coursework.
- There was evidence of inconsistency in the level of demand of question papers across awarding bodies. In 2003 AQA and OCR question papers at both foundation and higher tiers included a greater proportion of open-ended questions compared to the other awarding bodies and were considered to be more demanding. Foundation tier papers were particularly demanding, as the use of open-ended questions did not differentiate well for foundation tier candidates. CCEA question papers at foundation and higher tiers were focused predominantly on structured short-answer, low-tariff questions and were considered to be less demanding than WJEC and Edexcel.

## **Standards of performance at GCSE in business studies**

### **Materials available**

Reviewers considered candidates' work from all the awarding bodies in 2003.

Details of the materials used are given in appendix B.

### **Performance descriptors**

Reviewers were asked to identify key features of candidate performance in 2003, based on the work seen at each of the key grade boundaries. Performance descriptors for each grade boundary were drawn up, focusing on the assessment objectives as well as allowing for additional features of performance.

### **Standards of performance at GCSE grade A boundary**

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- sound knowledge and understanding across the range of subject content
- the ability to apply knowledge and understanding accurately to familiar and unfamiliar business situations
- consistent and confident written communication skills
- evaluation skills in coursework, although this was more limited in written papers.

Performance by candidates from all awarding bodies was broadly comparable with the exception of Edexcel, where the standard of grade A performance was considered to be lower. Edexcel candidates tended to demonstrate a more superficial grasp of key concepts and their application. They also showed less depth in their analysis and evaluation.

### **Standards of performance at GCSE grade C boundary**

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- knowledge and understanding covering some parts of the specification
- some ability to apply knowledge of basic numerical and other techniques to situations
- analytical skills limited by the knowledge base
- some evidence of evaluation in coursework rather than in written papers but with coursework tending to lack focus.

Performance by candidates was broadly comparable across awarding bodies although the standard of performance of OCR foundation tier candidates was considered to be higher than for others. OCR candidates demonstrated better knowledge and its application across a range of topics. They also showed stronger analytical skills.

### **Standards of performance at GCSE grade F boundary**

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- a basic knowledge of business terms and ideas covering some parts of the specification
- the ability to apply this knowledge to simple calculations and situations
- some attempt to analyse or interpret, characterised by inaccurate or cursory comment
- some attempt to weigh up situations in the form of largely unsupported statements.

Performance by candidates was broadly comparable across awarding bodies.

### **Summary**

Although there were some slight differences between awarding bodies, there was no evidence that any one awarding body was consistently out of line with the others across all the grade boundaries.

## **GCSE economics 1998–2003**

### **Introduction**

While there was continuity between 1998 and 2003 in the syllabus topic areas, in tiering arrangements and in the description and weighting of the assessment objectives, the review identified the following changes:

- Syllabus and guidance documents for 2003 provided greater detail than in 1998.
- The weighting of the assessment objectives was more fully reflected in the question papers and mark schemes in 2003 when compared with 1998.
- There was an increase in the depth and range of topics in 2003 when compared to 1998.
- Mark schemes for 2003 gave clearer guidance on subject content and a wider range of suggested answers.
- The role of coursework declined between 1998 and 2003. By 2003 only AQA offered coursework and then as an alternative to an examination paper.

### **Examination demand**

#### **Materials available**

Reviewers considered the syllabus documents, examiners' reports and question papers with mark schemes for the three awarding bodies (AQA, CCEA and OCR) offering GCSE economics in 1998 and 2003. Details of the syllabuses included in the review are given in appendix A.

#### **Assessment objectives**

The assessment objectives for all awarding bodies remained the same in 1998 and 2003. There were four equally weighted assessment objectives: AO1: knowledge, AO2: application, AO3: analysis and AO4: evaluation.

#### **Syllabus content**

The topic range was broadly similar in 1998 and 2003 with some changes in emphasis rather than substance by different awarding bodies. Stakeholder analysis was introduced to most syllabus areas in 2003. OCR required more depth on consumer sovereignty, advertising, product differentiation, tax and unemployment, and removed references to literacy and numeracy skills and also decreased the emphasis on a quantitative approach. AQA increased the depth of knowledge in areas such as money, capital movements and credit in 2003 when compared to 1998. CCEA increased the number of topics to study.

**Scheme of assessment****Table 2: schemes of assessment in 1998 and 2003**

<b>Awarding body and year</b>	<b>Total examination time</b>	<b>Nature of assessment</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Coursework tasks</b>	<b>Coursework time/length</b>	<b>Coursework weighting</b>
AQA 1998	2hrs (F) 2hrs (H)	2 components: 1 x compulsory externally assessed written examination + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed; task set by centre	1,500–2,000 words	20%
AQA 2003	2hrs (F) 2hrs 30mins + 1hr if doing examination option (H)	2 components: 1 x compulsory externally assessed written examination + coursework or case study examination	Choice of coursework or externally assessed case study examination	Internally assessed; task set by centre	2,000 words	20%
CCEA 1998	Paper 1: 1hr 15mins (F) Paper 1: 1hr 15mins (H) Paper 2: 2hrs 15mins (F) Paper 2: 2hrs 15mins (H)	3 components: 2 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed; task set by CCEA	2,000 words	20%
CCEA 2003	Paper 1: 1hr 15mins (F) Paper 1: 1hr 30mins (H) Paper 2: 2hrs (F) Paper 2: 2hrs 15mins (H)	2 components: 2 x externally assessed written examinations	No options	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable

OCR 1998	Paper 1: 2hrs (F) Paper 2: 1hr (F) Paper 3: 2hrs (H) Paper 4: 1hr (H)	2 components: 2 x externally assessed written examinations	No options	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable
OCR 2003	Paper 1: 1hr 30mins (F) Paper 2: 1hr 30mins (H) Paper 3: 1hr 30mins (F) Paper 4: 1hr 30mins (H)	2 components: 2 x externally assessed written examinations	No options	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable

- AQA and CCEA had shorter times for examination papers for foundation than for the higher tier in 2003.
- CCEA and OCR had a compulsory pre-release case study for one question paper that enhanced the accessibility of the examination for foundation candidates. AQA did not follow this approach.

### **Question papers, tasks and mark schemes**

In 2003 a broad range of strategies was used across all awarding bodies with short and open/extended questions. However there was evidence that question papers in general did not differentiate in the types of questions used for foundation and higher tier candidates. OCR and AQA, for example had the same question strategies for both tiers.

The 2003 CCEA foundation tier question papers were more accessible to candidates than in 1998.

In 2003 assessment objectives were clearly matched to each question and illustrated in a grid where question demands were matched to a relevant assessment objective skill. Each awarding body also provided summaries of targeted assessment objectives and their weightings. Contrasted with 1998 there was only limited evidence of consistent matching of questions to assessment objectives and their weightings across the question papers.

Overall the complexity of technical language, theory and calculations made the foundation tier question papers overly demanding across all awarding bodies for lower ability candidates.

There were considerable improvements to mark schemes between 1998 and 2003. Mark schemes in 2003 were very detailed with a range of suggested answers targeted to the assessment objectives. With the exception of CCEA (which did not match the assessment objectives across the question papers and mark schemes) the banded response answers allocated directly to an assessment objective skill were easily auditable against the question assessment grid and weighting allocations provided in the 2003 specifications.

There was evidence of poor differentiation within mark schemes between the foundation and higher tiers in 2003. This can be linked to questions, which although different, made the same level of demand on both foundation and higher tier papers. Reviewers found that the foundation tier mark schemes did not sufficiently credit the range and type of answers that foundation tier candidates might produce in response to more demanding questions.

In 1998 – where levels of response mark schemes were provided – they exemplified levels in a generic way (for example L1 lists few advantages, L2 limited reasoning and L3 sophisticated reasoning) rather than by reference to the content of the required response at each level. In contrast to this in 2003 there was a much stronger relationship between the question demands and the suggested responses in the mark schemes.

### **Tiering**

There were no changes to tiering arrangements, with all awarding bodies offering papers at foundation and higher tier in both years.

Reviewers judged that the most demanding areas of the foundation tier papers did not provide adequate opportunities for all candidates to demonstrate what they knew, understood and could do. Where similar questions were used at foundation and higher tier, the language and structure of these questions and the suggested answers appeared to favour higher tier candidates, particularly for AQA and OCR.

### **Summary**

- Syllabus content and teacher guidance across all awarding bodies were more detailed in 2003 than in 1998.
- The role of coursework in the examination declined, with only AQA offering it as an alternative to an examination paper by 2003.
- There was little change to overall examination times.
- There was evidence of inconsistency in the level of demand between awarding bodies:

- OCR and AQA foundation tier question papers were overly demanding in both 2003 and 1998, due to a lack of effective differentiation in questions between the tiers.
- CCEA 2003 question papers were predominantly short-answer questions at both tiers and were considered to be insufficiently demanding, particularly at higher tier.
- Mark schemes across all awarding bodies were more detailed, with better links to assessment objectives in 2003 than in 1998.

### **Standards of performance at GCSE in economics**

Reviewers considered candidates' work at each key grade boundary from AQA and OCR in 2003. Candidates' work from CCEA was only available at grade A.

#### **Performance at the GCSE grade A boundary**

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- good knowledge and understanding of basic economic principles from across the specification and the ability to describe and explain them
- the ability to apply knowledge appropriately from a range of content areas to analyse the situations posed
- good communication of understanding in written responses and the appropriate use of diagrams
- evidence of the ability to weigh up situations.

Candidate performance was broadly comparable across awarding bodies.

#### **Performance at the GCSE grade C boundary**

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- knowledge and understanding covering some parts of the specification
- some ability to apply this knowledge to problems and issues
- analytical skills that were limited by the knowledge base
- some evidence of evaluation.

Performance at the higher tier was broadly comparable, but at foundation tier OCR candidates performed better than AQA candidates. OCR candidates demonstrated a greater range of knowledge from across the specification as well as better application of theory and stronger analysis and evaluation.

#### **Performance at GCSE grade F boundary**

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- limited knowledge of some parts of the specification
- limited success in using diagrams to explain a situation
- limited ability to analyse and evaluate.

OCR candidates demonstrated a higher standard of performance than AQA candidates, showing better knowledge across a greater range of topics.

### **Summary**

Standards of performance were broadly comparable across awarding bodies at the higher end of the grade range. However OCR candidates demonstrated stronger performance at grade C foundation tier and at grade F.

## **Comparability of demand between business studies and economics at GCSE**

### **Common themes**

- Syllabus and guidance documents for 2003 provided greater detail than in 1998.
- The weighting of the assessment objectives was more fully reflected in the question papers and mark schemes in 2003 when compared with 1998.
- Mark schemes for 2003 gave clearer guidance on subject content and a wider range of suggested answers than in 1998.
- In 2003 similar questions used at foundation and higher tiers did not differentiate clearly for the range of skills of the candidates. The language and structure of these questions and the suggested answers appeared to favour higher tier candidates.

### **Assessment comparability**

- There was more coursework in business studies than in economics. All awarding bodies offered coursework at least as an option in business studies. By 2003 AQA was the only awarding body offering coursework for economics and this was optional.
- OCR offered options in business studies but not in economics.
- There was no difference between examination timings for foundation and higher tier candidates in business studies. In economics AQA higher tier candidates had a 2-hour, 30-minute examination compared to a 2-hour examination for foundation candidates.
- Overall examination timings between economics and business studies were broadly the same.
- A common feature of both subjects was the use by some awarding bodies of pre-release case study material to support external assessments.
- The CCEA papers in business studies were considerably less demanding than their economics counterparts.
- A broader range of question types was used across all awarding bodies in economics when compared to business studies. For economics these types of questions remained consistent between 1998 and 2003.
- Reviewers considered economics more demanding than business studies due to the range of topics to be covered.

### **Comparability across awarding bodies**

- There was evidence of inconsistency in the level of demand between awarding bodies. CCEA question papers, for example were predominantly short-answer questions at both tiers, and reviewers considered them to be less demanding than other awarding bodies in both economics and business studies.
- AQA and OCR foundation tier papers were more demanding in both subjects when compared to other awarding bodies.
- In 2003 a broad range of strategies was used across all awarding bodies with short and open/extended questions. There was evidence, however, that question papers in general did not differentiate in the types of questions used at foundation and higher tier. OCR and AQA, for example had the same question strategies for higher and foundation tiers in economics and business studies.
- In 2003 OCR focused on abstract theory for economics that made it more demanding than CCEA and AQA.

## **Comparison of standards of performance in GCSE economics and business studies**

### **Standards of performance at GCSE grade A**

Economics candidates demonstrated a higher standard of performance at this grade boundary. They showed stronger analysis and evaluation and the quality of their written communication was better.

### **Standards of performance at GCSE grade C**

Standards of performance were broadly comparable in the two subjects at this grade boundary.

### **Standards of performance at GCSE grade F**

Business studies candidates demonstrated a higher standard of performance at this grade boundary, as they showed a sounder knowledge base.

### **Summary**

Reviewers concluded that business studies papers were founded in day-to-day recognisable contexts to which candidates could relate easily, while the nature and content of economics specifications appeared abstract and difficult for GCSE. As a result less able candidates tended to perform better on business studies papers while economics papers tended to elicit stronger responses from more able candidates.

## **A level business studies 1998–2003**

### **Introduction**

The most significant factor affecting the demand of A level business studies examinations between 1998 and 2003 was the change in design of the A level qualification in line with the Curriculum 2000 reforms. This involved moving to unitised assessment based on a six-unit structure, in line with the Curriculum 2000 A level criteria. The overall assessment of the A level qualification was split into the first half, advanced subsidiary (AS) and the second half, A2. The AS and A2 sections of the course were each assessed by three units, making six units for the A level overall. The most significant changes in A level business studies were:

- the change to a mandatory six unit AS/A2 assessment structure as described above
- a move to more accessible AS assessment units, to reflect the standard for the new AS qualification
- the development of four assessment objectives common to all syllabuses with weightings differentiated between AS and A2
- the allocation of a minimum of 20 per cent weighting for A level overall, to synoptic assessment
- the opportunity for optional specialist study units
- the introduction of an examination paper alternative to coursework by all awarding bodies by 2003.

### **Examination demand**

#### **Materials available**

Reviewers considered the syllabus documents, question papers and mark schemes from each of the awarding bodies in 1998 and 2003. Details of the syllabuses included in the review are given in appendix A.

#### **Assessment objectives**

Key changes:

- In 2003 all syllabuses shared common assessment objectives, in contrast to 1998 when there was considerable variation in the number and description of assessment objectives between awarding bodies.
- In 2003 there was much greater clarity in the description and weighting of assessment objectives targeted at the skill of analysis.

### **Syllabus content**

Syllabus content, in terms of the range of topics, was broadly the same in 1998 and 2003. However there were changes in emphasis across all awarding bodies and by individual awarding bodies.

There were several extensions of topic areas for some awarding bodies in 2003 compared to 1998. The common areas were as follows:

- A greater focus on the synoptic understanding of business and its interrelated nature in 2003 compared to 1998, and a consequent increase in the demands of question papers.
- Additional reference to the role of stakeholder analysis in business in the 2003 syllabus aims.

In addition:

- For Edexcel in 2003 there was a move towards more numerical techniques and specified theories when compared to 1998.
- For AQA, Edexcel, WJEC and CCEA in 2003 the only optional units were those that offered an examination paper alternative to coursework.
- OCR was the only awarding body offering optional units at A2. Candidates could choose one from four alternatives, in addition to coursework or an examination option.
- There was evidence within AS and A2 across all awarding bodies of the repetition of topic areas. However where topic areas were similar they were differentiated to meet the different demands of AS and A2 assessment objectives.

## Scheme of assessment

**Table 3: schemes of assessment in 1998 and 2003**

<b>Awarding body and year</b>	<b>Total examination time</b>	<b>Nature of assessment</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Coursework tasks</b>	<b>Coursework time/length</b>	<b>Coursework weighting</b>
AQA 1998	4hrs 30mins with coursework in both modular and non-modular routes. 6hrs with examination option	2 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations or 4 if doing modular route	Choice of modular or non-modular routes. Choice of coursework or alternative examination	Internally assessed	~3,000 words	20%
AQA 2003	6hrs with coursework; 7hrs 30mins with examination option	5 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	1 option: coursework or examination	Internally assessed	~3,000 words	15%
CCEA 1998	6hrs	3 components: 2 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations + compulsory coursework	No options	Internally assessed	~4,000 words	20%
CCEA 2003	6hrs 10mins with coursework or 7hrs 40 mins with examination option	5 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	1 option: coursework or examination	Internally assessed	~3,000 words	15%
EDEXCEL 1998	5hrs 15mins	3 components: 2 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations +	No options	Internally assessed	~6,000 words	20%

		compulsory coursework				
EDEXCEL 2003	5hrs 45mins with coursework or 7hrs 15mins with examination option	5 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	1 option: coursework or alternative examination	Internally assessed Task set by centre	3,000 words	15%
OCR 1998	7hrs 30mins	5 components: 2 x compulsory externally assessed modules, 2 x optional externally assessed modules + compulsory coursework	Optional modules: choice of 2 from 4	Externally assessed Task set by centre and approved by OCR	4,000–5,000 words	16.7%
OCR 2003	6hrs 30mins with coursework; 8hrs with examination option	5 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	In A2 choice of 1 from 4 and choice of coursework or alternative examination	Internally assessed Task set by centre	~4,000 words	15%
WJEC 1998	5hrs 30mins with coursework or 6hrs 45mins with examination option?	4 components: 1 x core compulsory externally assessed module + <b>either</b> 2 optional externally assessed modules + coursework <b>or</b> 3 optional externally assessed modules	Choice of 3 optional modules from 5, including a coursework option	Internally assessed Task set by centre and approved by WJEC	Not specified in syllabus	16.66%
WJEC 2003	6hrs with coursework; 7hrs 30mins with examination option	5 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	1 option: coursework or alternative examination	Internally assessed Task set by centre	3,000–4,000 words	15%

- While examination timings varied across awarding bodies, the differences were not considered to be significant.
- There were small variations in coursework weightings across the awarding bodies in 1998. By 2003 all awarding bodies gave it identical weighting at 15 per cent.
- The number of examinations undertaken by candidates increased in 2003 compared to 1998. This meant that, in order to do well, candidates had to perform consistently across a wider variety of papers. Reviewers considered that this led to an increase in the demand of the A level qualification in 2003 compared with 1998.

### **Options**

In 1998 CCEA, Edexcel and OCR had compulsory coursework. By 2003 all awarding bodies offered an examination paper alternative to coursework. In addition, in 2003 OCR offered optional written units. At A2 candidates could choose one unit from further marketing, further accounting, further people in organisations and further operations management. In 1998 OCR, AQA and WJEC offered optional routes.

### **Question papers, tasks and mark schemes**

Question paper strategies in 2003 reflected the response of awarding bodies to the unitisation of assessment at A level and the introduction of common assessment objectives. In general 2003 question papers employed a wider variety of questioning strategies than in 1998. The 1998 question papers relied heavily on open-ended questions, some of which were case study driven and others not.

- In 2003 candidates had more opportunities to develop analytical and evaluative answers than in 1998, when there was a greater emphasis on basic knowledge recall. In 2003 command words in question papers were more carefully targeted and related to expectations in mark schemes.
- Where case study material was included, questions in 2003 were related closely to the associated case study whereas in 1998 some questions had no direct relationship with the case materials.

In 2003 there was considerable variation in the range of question types used by awarding bodies. For example at AS level Edexcel and WJEC placed greater reliance upon structured and data response questions than AQA, OCR, and CCEA, an approach that affected the demands of question papers. Reviewers judged that structured questions were less demanding than open-ended questions, which required a higher level of strategy from candidates.

Mark schemes in 2003 were very detailed with suggested answers and mark allocations that were generally closely related to the assessment objectives. In 2003 mark schemes appeared to be more complex to follow than in 1998. Awarding bodies used a variety of methods to identify the skill levels within answers. For example AQA targeted marks to the appropriate assessment objectives within an expected answer. OCR identified a 'top down' hierarchical approach to marking where the highest-level assessment objective found was recorded. For example an examiner would be expected to read a candidate's answer and decide whether there was any evidence of evaluation present; if there was then the candidate would be awarded marks in the level 4 band. If analysis but not evaluation was present then the appropriate mark band would be level 3 and so on.

### **Coursework**

The introduction of an examination paper alternative to coursework raises the question of comparability of demand of a question paper against research-based coursework. The review group concluded that despite the efforts of awarding bodies to test broadly similar skills, the alternative approaches were not comparable in demand or as assessment experiences.

The route of the examination paper was felt to be more demanding as candidates would need to perform under examination conditions and this added to the pressure. The coursework option was felt to enable candidates to achieve the higher-level skill base as they were more familiar with the subject matter and would have discussed it over a much longer period with tutors.

## Summary

- There was greater focus on the interrelated nature of business in 2003 syllabuses, question papers and coursework.
- The key areas of study remained broadly the same between 1998 and 2003 although 2003 syllabuses were more detailed with guidance indicating what candidates should know and be able to do.
- Total examination time in 2003 varied between 5 hours, 45 minutes (Edexcel) to 6 hours 30 minutes (OCR), though this variation was less than in 1998 when the range was between 4 hours, 30 minutes (AQA) and 7 hours, 30 minutes (OCR).
- There was an increase in the number of examination papers being taken in 2003 across all awarding bodies and reviewers judged that this led to an increase in demand.
- There was considerable variation in the range of question types used by the awarding bodies in 2003 and the review group concluded that this led to a variation in demand between awarding bodies.
- Reviewers judged that there was lack of comparability between coursework and the examination paper alternative offered by awarding bodies in 2003, with the examination option considered to be more demanding.

## Standards of performance at A level in business studies

### Materials available

Reviewers considered candidates' work from all the awarding bodies in 2003.

Details of the materials used are given in appendix B.

### Performance descriptors

Reviewers were asked to identify key features of candidate performance in 2003, based on the work seen at each of the key grade boundaries. Performance descriptors for each grade boundary were drawn up, focusing on the assessment objectives, as well as allowing for additional features of performance.

### Standards of performance in GCE AS level business studies

#### *Performance at GCE AS level business studies grade A boundary*

The following statements refer to candidate performance observed, appropriate to this level. Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- extensive knowledge of business ideas and concepts across the range of content areas
- ability to apply knowledge drawn from a range of content areas to interpret and develop case study material and to explain the basis for the statements made
- generally accurate analysis with a wide use of appropriate quantitative and other business tools
- coherent, relevant and focused answers that were clearly presented
- some evidence of effective evaluation.

Candidate performance was broadly comparable across awarding bodies.

#### *Performance at GCE AS level business studies grade E boundary*

The following statements refer to candidate performance observed, appropriate to this level. Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- basic knowledge of business concepts across content areas
- application of some knowledge across the content areas
- some analysis with attention to the pros and cons of business situations
- some numerical inaccuracies
- frequent repetition of case study material
- limited evidence of evaluation or judgements being made in context.

Performance was broadly comparable across awarding bodies, except for WJEC, where the standard of performance was considered to be lower. WJEC candidates demonstrated less breadth in their knowledge of business concepts from across the specification and inconsistent application of that knowledge.

### **Standards of performance at GCE A level business studies**

#### *Performance at GCE A level business studies grade A boundary*

The following statements refer to candidate performance observed, appropriate to this level. Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- extensive knowledge of business ideas and concepts across the range of content areas
- strong application of knowledge drawn from a range of content areas to interpret and develop case study material and to explain the basis for the statements made
- generally accurate analysis with a wide use of appropriate quantitative and other tools of business analysis
- well-constructed, coherent, relevant and focused answers that were clearly presented
- evidence of effective evaluation.

Performance was broadly comparable across awarding bodies, except for CCEA, where the standard of performance was considered to be lower. CCEA candidates demonstrated inconsistent and less sophisticated analysis and evaluation. Their knowledge and application of business concepts was more limited.

#### *Performance at GCE A level business studies grade E boundary*

The following statements refer to candidate performance observed, appropriate to this level.

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- basic knowledge of business concepts across some but not all of the content areas
- some ability to apply knowledge, but this lacked exemplification from across the content areas
- some ability to analyse the pros and cons of business situations, but this was not used consistently or accurately
- written communication that lacked fluency and accuracy and often repeated case study material
- limited evidence of evaluation or judgements being made in context.

Performance was broadly comparable across awarding bodies.

### **Summary**

While there was some variation in the standards of performance between awarding bodies, no one particular awarding body was found to be consistently out of line at each grade boundary.

## Relationship between GCSE and A level business studies

**Table 4: comparison of the assessment objective weightings for GCSE, AS and A2 in 2003**

Awarding body	Level	AO1 knowledge	AO2 application	AO3 analysis	AO4 evaluation
AQA	GCSE*	24.5%	23.5%	23.5%	23.5%
	AS	30%	30%	23%	17%
	A level	25%	25%	24.5%	25.5%
CCEA	GCSE	25%	25%	25%	25%
	AS	28%	28%	24%	20%
	A level	23%	24%	26%	27%
Edexcel	GCSE	25%	25%	25%	25%
	AS	28%	28%	22%	22%
	A level	25%	25%	25%	25%
OCR	GCSE	25%	25%	25%	25%
	AS	30%	26.5%	23.5%	20%
	A level	25%	25%	25%	25%
WJEC	GCSE	25%	25%	25%	25%
	AS	30%	25%	25%	20%
	A level	25%	22.5%	27.5%	25%

\*In 2003 AQA GCSE had quality of written communication as AO5, with a weighting of 5 per cent

- Assessment objectives at GCSE gave greater weighting to the skills of analysis (AO3) and evaluation (AO4) than at AS. While this implied a greater demand, there was no evidence that question papers at GCSE were as demanding as at AS.
- Overall the review group concluded there were sufficient progression opportunities between GCSE and AS.
- Awarding bodies applied different weightings to assessment objectives in AS and A2, demonstrating the intention that A2 would be more demanding than AS.
- In particular at A2 the increased weighting given to the skill of evaluation (AO4) indicated strong progression in demand from AS. This was especially evident within AQA and CCEA, where the weighting for AO4 increased by 8.5 per cent and 7 per cent respectively at A2.
- Overall the review group concluded that there were sufficient progression opportunities between AS and A2, largely due to differences in the subject content, in the question types and key command words used between the two levels.

- GCSE question papers were more structured with answer booklets providing spaces for candidates' answers. At AS question papers did not provide this assistance and candidates were required to develop their own strategies for responding to questions.

## **A level economics 1998–2003**

### **Introduction**

The most significant factor affecting the demand of A level economics examinations between 1998 and 2003 was the change in design of the A level qualification in line with the Curriculum 2000 reforms. This involved moving to unitised assessment based on a six-unit structure, in line with the Curriculum 2000 A level criteria. The overall assessment of the A level qualification was split into the first half, advanced subsidiary (AS) and the second half, A2. The AS and A2 sections of the course were each assessed by three units, making six units for the A level overall. The most significant changes in A level economics were:

- the change to a mandatory six-unit AS/A2 assessment structure as described above
- a move to more accessible AS assessment units, to reflect the standard for the new AS qualification
- the development of four assessment objectives common to all syllabuses with weightings differentiated between AS and A2
- the allocation of a minimum of 20 per cent weighting for A level overall, to synoptic assessment
- the emphasis on the interrelatedness of economics topics through the introduction of synoptic assessment/understanding
- the opportunity for optional specialist study units
- clear mapping of assessment objectives and weightings across question papers and mark schemes

### **Examination demand**

#### **Materials available**

Reviewers considered the syllabus documents, question papers and mark schemes from each of the awarding bodies in 1998 and 2003. Details of the syllabuses included in the review are given in appendix A.

#### **Assessment objectives**

Key changes:

- In 2003 all syllabuses shared common assessment objectives, whereas in 1998 there was considerable variation in the number and description of assessment objectives between awarding bodies.
- The assessment objective targeted at analysis was more clearly identified in 2003.
- While the overall weightings of assessment objectives at A level were the same across awarding bodies in 2003, there was some variation in the distribution of assessment objective weightings between AS and A2, and reviewers judged that this had an impact on the demand of question papers and on the standards of candidates' performance across the awarding bodies.
- The depth and breadth of the application of the syllabus content was more clearly defined in 2003 than in 1998.

#### **Syllabus content**

Overall syllabus content in terms of the range of topics was broadly the same in 1998 and 2003. Reviewers judged that in 2003 broadly similar subject content was covered at both AS and A2.

## Scheme of assessment

**Table 5: schemes of assessment in 1998 and 2003**

<b>Awarding body and year</b>	<b>Total examination time</b>	<b>Nature of assessment</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Coursework tasks</b>	<b>Coursework time/length</b>	<b>Coursework weighting</b>
AQA 1998	4hrs with coursework; 5hrs 15mins with alternative examination	3 components: 2 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations + coursework or examination option	Choice of coursework or alternative examination	Internally assessed; task set by centre	2,500–3,500 words	20%
AQA 2003	6hrs with coursework 7hrs 40mins with alternative examination	5 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	Choice of coursework or alternative examination at A2	Internally assessed; task set by centre	3,500–4,000 words	20%
CCEA 1998	7hrs	3 components: 3 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	No options	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable
CCEA 2003	7hrs 20mins	6 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	Choice of 1 out of 2 options for 1 x A2 unit	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable
Edexcel 1998	6hrs 15mins	3 components: 3 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	On paper 3 candidates do option 1 or option 2	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable
Edexcel 2003	7hrs 15mins	6 x compulsory externally	Choice of 1 out of 2 options for 1 x A2	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable

		assessed written examinations	unit			
OCR 1998	5hrs 45mins	3 components: 3 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	No options	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable
OCR 2003	7hrs 45mins	6 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	Choice of 2 out of 4 options for 2 x A2 units	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable
WJEC 1998	6hrs 15mins	3 components: 3 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	No options	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable
WJEC 2003	7 hrs 45 mins	6 x compulsory externally assessed written examinations	No options	No coursework	Not applicable	Not applicable

- Examination timings increased for all awarding bodies between 1998 and 2003. In 2003 there was a variation in total examination times between awarding bodies but reviewers did not consider this to be significant.
- The number of examinations sat by candidates increased in 2003 compared to 1998. This meant that in order to do well candidates had to perform consistently across a wider variety of papers. Reviewers considered that this led to an increase in the demand of the A level qualification in 2003 compared with 1998.
- The introduction of a synoptic paper in 2003 led to an increase in demand across all awarding bodies.
- AQA was the only awarding body to offer a coursework option in 1998 and 2003.

## Options

In 2003 WJEC was the only awarding body to offer no options. AQA offered an examination paper alternative to coursework. Reviewers considered that the availability of optional A2 units offered by Edexcel, CCEA and OCR in 2003 provided the opportunity for candidates to cover different areas of the subject. They did not report any concerns about the comparability of optional routes within or across awarding bodies.

## Question papers, tasks and mark schemes

Question paper strategies in 2003 reflected the response of awarding bodies to the unitisation of assessment at A level and the introduction of common assessment objectives. Awarding bodies used different question types for AS and A2 units, reflecting the different level of demand at AS and A2.

- Across all awarding bodies there was reliance upon data response questions for AS level and extended essay style questions for A2.
- A direct result of the increase in unitisation was that 2003 candidates had more opportunities to develop analytical and evaluative answers than in 1998.
- A characteristic of the AS and A2 papers across all awarding bodies was optional questions. Question choice within papers was broadly consistent across awarding bodies (for example one structured essay from a choice of three, one data response question from a choice of two). WJEC appeared to balance the lack of options within its scheme of assessment by offering more choice than the other awarding bodies within question papers. It offered the largest number of optional questions, with paper 3 requiring candidates to answer two questions from six and paper 6 requiring candidates to answer three from six.

Mark schemes in 2003 were very detailed with clear suggested answers and mark allocations, which, for most awarding bodies, were closely related to the assessment objectives. This did not necessarily make the schemes easier to follow, as they were often long and complex documents. In contrast 1998 mark schemes were less detailed and it was less easy to see how question command words were followed through into mark schemes and related to assessment objectives. It was difficult also to identify the different requirements in a 'levels of response' mark scheme that at L2 required 'some knowledge' and at L3 'thorough knowledge.'

## Coursework

AQA was the only awarding body to offer coursework in either 1998 or 2003. Candidates could opt for either coursework or an alternative examination. This raised the issue of comparability of demand of a question paper against research-based coursework. The review group concluded that despite the efforts of the awarding body to test broadly similar skills, the alternative approach was not comparable in demand or as an assessment experience, and the examination option was the more demanding.

## Summary

- The 2003 syllabuses were more detailed and prescriptive when compared to 1998, guidance going as far as to indicate what candidates should know and be able to do.
- The key areas of study remained broadly the same across 1998 and 2003 although there was an increase in the level of detail available in the 2003 syllabuses.
- The total examination time varied between 7 hours, 15 minutes for Edexcel and 9 hours, 15 minutes for OCR in 2003, although reviewers felt that this did not have a significant impact on demand.
- There was an increase in the number of examination papers across all awarding bodies in 2003 and reviewers judged that this increased demand overall.
- The review group concluded that there was a lack of comparability between the coursework and alternative examination offered by AQA in 1998 and 2003, with the examination option being the more demanding.

- Reviewers found that the introduction of the synoptic paper in 2003 led to an increase in demand.

## **Standards of performance at A level in economics**

### **Materials available**

Reviewers considered candidates' work from all awarding bodies in 2003, with the exception of Edexcel.

### **Performance descriptors**

Reviewers were asked to identify key features of candidate performance in 2003, based on the work seen at each of the key grade boundaries. Performance descriptors for each grade boundary were drawn up, focusing on the assessment objectives, as well as allowing for additional features of performance.

### **Standards of performance in GCE AS economics**

#### *Performance at GCE AS economics grade A boundary*

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- good knowledge and understanding across the range of content areas
- good application of knowledge with accurate use of diagrams in most situations
- some ability to analyse situations presented in graphical and written forms and to make predictions about those situations
- good written communication skills with some ability to construct an argument
- evidence of ability to draw together a number of points but which fell short of effective evaluation.

Candidate performance was broadly comparable across awarding bodies.

#### *Performance at GCE AS economics grade E boundary*

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- sound knowledge and understanding of concepts and ideas in most content areas with an ability effectively to describe problems and issues
- some meaningful, if inconsistent, inaccurate and incomplete, application of knowledge
- some ability to conduct a basic analysis of situations, although a tendency for this to appear as pre-rehearsed points and to lack detail
- very little evidence of or attempt to evaluate.

Candidate performance was broadly comparable across awarding bodies.

#### *Performance at GCE A level economics grade A boundary*

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- extensive knowledge and understanding of theory and the ability to describe situations in a wide range of content areas
- good application of knowledge through, for example the accurate use of appropriate diagrams, in familiar and unfamiliar situations
- the ability to interpret information and to identify and analyse the pros and cons of situations using numerical and other techniques
- fluent and confident writing skills
- evidence of attempts to draw balanced conclusions, to reason and to evaluate.

Candidate performance was broadly comparable across awarding bodies, except for CCEA where the standard of performance was considered to be lower. CCEA candidates demonstrated weaker knowledge of economic theory and in particular less sophisticated analysis and limited evaluation.

*Performance at GCE A level economics grade E boundary*

Candidates at this grade boundary showed:

- basic knowledge of theory in some content areas, with a fair attempt to apply knowledge through, for example the use of diagrams. However these were not always accurately drawn and interpreted and there was inconsistency in the appropriate selection of knowledge to be applied
- limited ability to analyse the situations consistently and accurately
- limited fluency in extended responses with the inclusion of much irrelevant information
- little evidence of attempts to evaluate and, where this was attempted, these appeared to be rehearsed points or one side of an issue only.

There was some variation in the standards of performance between awarding bodies at this grade boundary, with OCR candidates demonstrating a slightly higher standard and WJEC and especially CCEA candidates showing a lower standard of performance. OCR candidates tended to demonstrate greater depth of explanation and analysis in their answers. CCEA candidates demonstrated a narrower range of theoretical knowledge and both WJEC and CCEA candidates showed limited analysis and evaluation.

**Summary**

Standards of performance were broadly comparable across the awarding bodies at AS but there was more variation at A level, with CCEA candidates demonstrating a lower standard of performance at both grade boundaries. Reviewers commented in particular on the lack of opportunity in the CCEA question papers for candidates to develop extended answers that demonstrated sophisticated economic thinking with the required level of analysis and evaluation.

## Relationship between GCSE and A level economics

**Table 6: comparison of GCSE, AS and A2 assessment objectives and their weightings**

Awarding body	Level	AO1 knowledge	AO2 application	AO3 analysis	AO4 evaluation
AQA	GCSE	25%	25%	25%	25%
	AS	30%	30%	20%	20%
	A2	20%	25%	25%	30%
CCEA	GCSE	25%	25%	25%	25%
	AS	25%	25%	25%	25%
	A2	22.5%	22.5%	27.5%	27.5%
*Edexcel	AS	30%	30%	20%	20%
	A2	20%	20%	30%	30%
OCR	GCSE	25%	25%	25%	25%
	AS	30%	30%	20%	20%
	A2	20%	20%	30%	30%
*WJEC	AS	30%	30%	20%	20%
	A2	25%	25%	25%	25%

\*Edexcel and WJEC did not offer GCSE economics in 2003.

- CCEA was the only awarding body to give the same weightings to the assessment objectives at AS and at GCSE. AQA and OCR weighted 'knowledge' and its 'application' (AO1 and AO2) higher at AS than at GCSE.
- Overall there was strong evidence of increased demand between AS and A2 not only in terms of the weighting of assessment objectives, but also in terms of question papers and mark schemes. The exception to this was CCEA where the weighting for AO4 'evaluation' increased by only 2.5 per cent between AS and A2 compared to 5 per cent for WJEC and 10 per cent for the other awarding bodies. The review of both examination demand and candidate performance suggests that this had an impact on the level of demand of CCEA question papers and on the standard of candidates' performance.

## **Comparability between economics and business studies at A level**

### **Common themes**

- In 2003 all syllabuses shared common assessment objectives in contrast with 1998 when there was considerable variation in the number and description of assessment objectives between awarding bodies.
- The depth and breadth of the application of the syllabus content was more clearly defined in 2003 than in 1998.

### **Assessment comparability**

- In business studies there was greater use of internal assessment in the form of coursework than in economics in both 1998 and 2003.
- Generally data-response questions dominated the AS level in economics whereas business studies had a wider range of question styles. The exception to this was AQA that had a greater range of question types in AS economics than in AS business studies, using multiple-choice tests in addition to data response, case studies and essays.
- The nature and range of topics remained the same between 1998 and 2003, although economics had slightly fewer topic areas when compared to business studies.
- Reviewers judged that Edexcel economics was less demanding than its business studies counterpart, although this discrepancy was less pronounced at AS than at A2.

## **Standards of performance in AS and A level economics and business studies**

### **Standards of performance at AS grade A boundary**

Economics candidates demonstrated a higher standard of performance at this grade boundary. They showed stronger technical knowledge that they were able to apply consistently. They also demonstrated stronger analysis and evaluation.

### **Standards of performance at AS grade E boundary**

Standards of performance were broadly comparable in the two subjects at this grade boundary.

### **Standards of performance at A level grade A boundary**

Standards of performance were broadly comparable in the two subjects at this grade boundary.

### **Standards of performance at A level grade E boundary**

Economics candidates demonstrated a higher standard of performance at this grade boundary. They demonstrated more theoretical knowledge and were also stronger on analysis. Their work showed more evidence of evaluation.

### **Summary**

Economics candidates demonstrated stronger performance at A level grade E and AS grade A than business studies candidates. Performance at the other grade boundaries was broadly comparable.

## Appendix A: details of GCSE and A level syllabuses reviewed

### GCSE

#### Business studies

Year	Awarding body and syllabus				
	AQA	CCEA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC
2003	3132	612/043	1503	1952	122
1998	1411	612/043	1501	1351	122

#### Economics

Year	Awarding body and syllabus				
	AQA	CCEA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC
2003	3144	627	Not offered	1985	Not offered
1998	1141	627	1176	1485	

## A level

### Business studies

Year	Awarding body and syllabus				
	AQA	CCEA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC
<b>2003</b>	6131	A3210	9076	7811	059
<b>1998</b>	0650	A3210	9075	9542	007

### Economics

Year	Awarding body and syllabus				
	AQA	CCEA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC
<b>2003</b>	6141	A4410	9120	7812	064
<b>1998</b>	0618	A4410	9120	9070	011

## Appendix B: details of numbers of scripts reviewed

### GCSE

#### Business studies

<b>AQA</b>	<b>CCEA</b>	<b>Edexcel</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>WJEC</b>
2003	2003	2003	2003	2003
A – 15	A – 15	A – 11	A – 15	A – 15
C(H) – 12	C(H) – 15	C(H) – 12	C(H) – 15	C(H) – 15
C(F) – 14	C(F) – 14	C(F) – 13	C(F) – 15	C(F) – 15
F – 11	F – 15	F – 4	F – 15	F – 15

#### Economics

<b>AQA</b>	<b>CCEA</b>	<b>Edexcel</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>WJEC</b>
2003	2003	2003	2003	2003
A – 15	A – 13	Not offered	A – 15	Not offered
C(H) – 15	C(H) – 15		C(H) – 15	
C(F) – 15	C(F) – 15		C(F) – 15	
F – 15	F – 14		F – 15	

## AS

### Business studies

<b>AQA</b>	<b>CCEA</b>	<b>Edexcel</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>WJEC</b>
2003	2003	2003	2003	2003
A – 15 E – 15	A – 13 E – 6	A – 15 E – 15	A – 15 E – 15	A – 15 E – 15

### Economics

<b>AQA</b>	<b>CCEA</b>	<b>Edexcel</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>WJEC</b>
2003	2003	2003	2003	2003
A – 15 E – 15	A – 15 E – 7	A – 15 E – 15	A – 15 E – 15	A – 15 E – 15

## A2

### Business studies

<b>AQA</b>	<b>CCEA</b>	<b>Edexcel</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>WJEC</b>
2003	2003	2003	2003	2003
A – 13 E – 13	A – 4 E – 0	A – 15 E – 15	A – 4 E – 4	A – 15 E – 15

### Economics

<b>AQA</b>	<b>CCEA</b>	<b>Edexcel</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>WJEC</b>
2003	2003	2003	2003	2003
A – 14 E – 15	A – 12 E – 3	A – 15 E – 15	A – 14 E – 4	A – 15 E – 15

## Appendix C: list of reviewers

<b>Coordinator</b>	Prof Steve Hodgkinson
<b>Deputy coordinator</b>	Mrs Ann Whorrall
<b>Reviewers</b>	<p>Mr David Browne (Edexcel)  Mr S Challoner (OCR)  Mr Tim Chapman  Mr Piers Coutts  Mr M Culliford (WJEC)  Mr Russell Dudley-Smith (Edexcel)  Mr Brian Ellis  Mr Tony Emery (OCR)  Mr Ian Etherington (Edexcel)  Mr Simon Hawkins  Mr Mike Herbert  Mr A Holmes (OCR)  Mrs Denise Hughes  Mr Christopher Jenner  Mrs Carol Kane  Ms A Kennedy (EBEA)  Ms H Kerr (CCEA)  Mr Stuart Kneller (Edexcel)  Mr Ian Marcouse (AQA)  Mr A McCann (CCEA)  Mr R Nutter (WJEC)  Mr Michael Penfold  Mr P Powell (AQA)  Mr Andrew Ruff  Mr Michael Schofield  Mrs Hala Seliet (EBEA)  Mrs Victoria Skelton  Mr Ronald Stevens  Mr Peter Stimpson  Mr David Swainson (OCR)  Mrs Jennifer Wales</p>