

A Student's Guide to the AS and Advanced GCE in English Language

What do I need to know or be able to do before taking this course?

In order to study this subject it is useful to have a GCSE qualification in English. Several areas covered in the course are developments of work at GCSE but others are new. You will need to be prepared to study concepts and frameworks for the study of language and to develop your skills in speaking and writing for different purposes and audiences. For Advanced GCE, you will need to develop your ability to apply linguistic frameworks to a wide variety of texts and to express yourself fluently and competently. You will have the opportunity to study both modern texts, including media texts, and texts from the past.

Students will find that the skills they have learned in GCSE English will prove a valuable foundation for further studies at this level.

What will I learn on this Advanced GCE course?

The course will enable you to:

- ◆ develop your interest and enjoyment in the use of English
- ◆ listen critically and attentively to spoken English
- ◆ express yourself in speech and writing with increasing competence and sophistication
- ◆ demonstrate expertise in writing for a variety of specific purposes and audiences
- ◆ know and use key features for the systematic study of spoken and written English
- ◆ understand and explore concepts and issues relating to language in use
- ◆ analyse variations in the meanings and forms of spoken and written language from different times
- ◆ gain experience of the Key Skills of Communication, Information Technology, Improving Own Learning and Performance and Working With Others

What kind of student is this course suitable for?

This course will appeal to students who:

- ◆ have an interest in reading a wide variety of examples of spoken and written language from the past and present
- ◆ enjoy expressing their opinions and justifying their comments on texts
- ◆ enjoy studying a subject which is relevant to their own lives and experiences
- ◆ want to keep their options open for further study - English Language is a popular qualification for entry to a wide range of courses in higher education or for future careers



What examinations will I have to take to get my qualification?

AS

AS is short for Advanced Subsidiary. This is the first half of the Advanced GCE course. It is a stepping-stone to the full Advanced GCE qualification. You can take just the AS on its own, if you and your teacher agree that this is best for you. You can even decide at the end of the AS course whether to continue to take the full Advanced GCE qualification. An AS course consists of three units of assessment described below.

Unit 1 Textual Commentary

1 hour 30 minutes
(AS 30%)
(Advanced GCE 15%)

In this unit you will be given passages for textual commentary. There will be two questions on the examination paper and you will be asked to answer one question. You will be asked to comment on examples of contemporary English in different varieties, both spoken and written. Most questions involve comparisons between pairs or groups of texts. You will be asked to describe and interpret distinguishing features of the texts, relating these to their function and context and discussing your responses to the texts.

Unit 2 Desk Study

2 hours (AS 40%)
(Advanced GCE 20%)

In this unit you will be given textual material for written tasks. You will be asked to answer one question. You will be given a collection of source material with a common link, usually of content, and will be asked to complete one or two writing tasks based on this material. You will also be asked to write a short commentary on the language used in your own writing style. The source material will be given out one week before the examination to give you time to study it in advance.

You may make notes in the margin on the advance material and must bring this into the examination but you may not bring any additional notes into the examination on separate sheets.

You should spend about half an hour in the examination in further preparation, about an hour in writing the tasks and a further half an hour on the commentary.

Unit 3 The Language of the Media

(AS 30%)
(Advanced GCE 15%)

This unit gives a choice between writing coursework (Unit 3a) or taking an examination (Unit 3b - 1 hour 30 minutes). If you submit coursework for Unit 3a, you will need to write a coursework folder of about 1,500 words on an aspect of the language used in the media. The study should be of an aspect which can be studied in some depth. You may study, for example, the style, content and attitudes of newspapers, magazines, radio, television or advertising but the study must be language related.

If you take the examination for Unit 3b, you will need to write about passages from the media. There will be two questions on the examination paper and you will be asked to answer one question. You may be asked to comment on, for example, the style, attitudes and content of extracts from newspapers, magazines, radio, television and advertising but the questions will be language related. The questions may include such aspects as bias and prejudice, a contrast between different media, persuasive or manipulative techniques, the representation of particular groups, the work of a particular journalist or broadcaster or a specific radio or television genre.

Advanced GCE

The full Advanced GCE qualification is made up of the AS units plus three more units which are studied at a higher level. You don't necessarily have to take the full Advanced GCE qualification; you can still get a certificate just for the AS, and your teacher will advise you on what is best. If you do decide to take the second half of the course it will cover the three units described below.

Unit 4 Varieties of English

1 hour 30 minutes
(Advanced GCE 15%)

In this unit you will be asked to study examples of different kinds of English for linguistic analysis and evaluation. There will be two questions on the examination paper and you will be asked to answer one question. There will be a range of literary and non-literary examples in the materials. These may occasionally include transcripts of speech. You will be asked to analyse single texts or to contrast two or more texts relating linguistic features to contexts and functions. The texts may be chosen from some of the following possible areas: language in the classroom, language acquisition, informal and personal uses in the home, letters, diaries and telephone conversations, language in religion and law, games and sport, style in the media and arts.

Unit 5 Spoken or Written Study

(Advanced GCE 15%)
1 hour 30 minutes

This unit gives a choice between writing coursework (Unit 5a) or taking an examination (Unit 5b - 1 hour 30 minutes).

If you submit coursework for Unit 5a, you will need to write a coursework folder of about 2,500 words on an aspect of the spoken or written language in a given context. The folder must be based on a facsimile of written data or on the transcription of 2½ minutes of tape-recorded speech. You will need to produce a detailed linguistic study of significant features of the language used in the data or the recorded speech. Your folder could be based on any area of written or spoken language. The folder should contain the following sections: Introduction, Description, Transcription or Written Data, Analysis, Evaluation and Bibliography.

If you take the examination for Unit 5b, you will be given language extracts to study. There will be two questions on the examination paper and you will be asked to answer one question. The questions may be on single texts or you may be asked to compare and contrast texts. You will be asked to write a report which gives your aims in studying the extracts, selects and explains linguistic features from the extracts and comes to some conclusion on the usefulness of your approaches.

Unit 6 Editorial and Language Topics

(Advanced GCE 20%)
2 hours

In this unit you are expected to draw together many of the different skills you have learned during the course. You will answer two questions in the unit. One question will consist of an editorial task and one question will be on a language topic. In Section A, Editorial, you will be given one or more editorial tasks of different kinds, adapting or rewriting material in various ways or writing in response to given material, together with a commentary on the editorial processes involved and an analysis of the style adopted. There will be two questions on the examination paper and you will be asked to answer one question. In Section B, Language Topics, you will be asked to answer questions on knowledge about language and issues in language. There will be four questions on the examination paper and you will be asked to answer one question. The questions will be drawn from the following areas language change; language and society; language acquisition; language varieties.

How can I develop my full range of skills by doing this course?

As well as covering advanced level study of English Language, this course will enable you to develop some Key Skills, which will be essential to you whatever you go on to do afterwards. The Key Skills you can develop during this course are listed below, together with some examples of how Key Skills can be used in the subject.

Communication

- ◆ Taking part in group discussions about issues such as human rights;
- ◆ Making presentations on aspects such as the language of advertising;
- ◆ Producing two different types of documents on complex subjects.

Information technology

- ◆ Using two different databases such as CD-ROMS, Internet etc to search for information
- ◆ Presenting information from two different sources, using desk top publishing and word-processing skills.

Improving own learning and performance

- ◆ Planning your coursework or your reading of a number of texts over a period of time
- ◆ Following a plan to meet your coursework or reading targets.

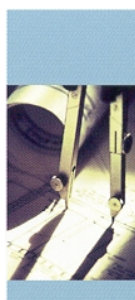
Working with others

- ◆ Working with others to plan and present a description of an aspect of language
- ◆ Working with others to plan a group presentation based on issues such as spelling reform, racism and sexism in language etc.

What could I go on to do at the end of my course?

Students with AS or Advanced GCE English Language have a wide range of possible career and higher education opportunities. You will learn and use a wide variety of transferable skills during the course. These include writing for a variety of audiences and purposes, responding to written and spoken texts, expressing informed and independent opinions and identifying and developing the links between different parts of the subject. These skills are in demand from employers and universities and colleges and are also valuable in their own right.

English Language can be studied as a single subject in higher education or can be combined with English Literature or a wide variety of other subjects. It could form a good basis for study in any arts-based subject in combination with, for example, history, media studies, philosophy, law, politics or foreign languages. Many students will also use their qualification to go straight into employment rather than into higher education. A very wide range of occupations is open to students with an AS or Advanced GCE in English Language. The qualification can lead to further training in areas such as journalism, the media or the law.



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