

# **GCE**

**AS and A Level Specification**

## **General Studies A**

**AS exams 2009 onwards**

**A2 exams 2010 onwards**



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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Why choose AQA?

It's a fact that AQA is the UK's favourite exam board and more students receive their academic qualifications from AQA than from any other board. But why does AQA continue to be so popular?

- **Specifications**

Ours are designed to the highest standards, so teachers, students and their parents can be confident that an AQA award provides an accurate measure of a student's achievements. And the assessment structures have been designed to achieve a balance between rigour, reliability and demands on candidates.

- **Support**

AQA runs the most extensive programme of support meetings; free of charge in the first years of a new specification and at a very reasonable cost thereafter. These support meetings explain the specification and suggest practical teaching strategies and approaches that really work.

- **Service**

We are committed to providing an efficient and effective service and we are at the end of the phone when you need to speak to a person about an important issue. We will always try to resolve issues the first time you contact us but, should that not be possible, we will always come back to you (by telephone, email or letter) and keep working with you to find the solution.

- **Ethics**

AQA is a registered charity. We have no shareholders to pay. We exist solely for the good of education in the UK. Any surplus income is ploughed back into educational research and our service to you, our customers. We don't profit from education, you do.

If you are an existing customer then we thank you for your support. If you are thinking of moving to AQA then we look forward to welcoming you.

## 1.2 Why choose General Studies A?

- This specification will allow students to broaden their post-16 education by reinforcing and enhancing the subjects studied up to GCSE and being followed at AS/A level.
- To encourage thinking across specialist subjects the cultural, scientific and social domains are divided into **'Culture and Society'** in Modules 1 and 3 and **'Science and Society'** in Modules 2 and 4.
- Authentic source materials will be used in the examinations to enable candidates to engage successfully with contemporary issues.
- A range of assessment techniques will be employed to provide variety and enable different skills to be assessed.
- Centres currently following the GCE General Studies A specification will be familiar with most question types and examination material. The best of the former specification has been retained (see Specification at a glance, Section 2).
- The nature of this specification provides the flexibility to deliver the course in many different ways. Centres may choose to adopt a 'carousel'

approach involving subject specialists, or in groups taught by one teacher for all modules, or a combination of the two.

- General Studies A is designed to complement other studies and will prove to be useful preparation for higher education, work and life in general.

Through following the specification students will develop their:

- thinking and analytical skills
- capacity to construct arguments and draw conclusions
- facility to deal with broad considerations and subject matter
- communication and presentation skills
- ability to work both independently and with others.

## 1.3 How do I start using this specification?

### Already using the existing AQA General Studies A specification?

- Register to receive further information, such as mark schemes, past question papers, details of teacher support meetings, etc, at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/rn/askaqa.php>**  
Information will be available electronically or in print, for your convenience.
- Tell us that you intend to enter candidates. Then we can make sure that you receive all the material you need for the examinations. This is particularly important where examination material is issued before the final entry deadline. You can let us know by completing the appropriate Intention to Enter and Estimated Entry forms. We will send copies to your Exams Officer and they are also available on our website  
**[http://www.aqa.org.uk/admin/p\\_entries.html](http://www.aqa.org.uk/admin/p_entries.html)**

### Not using the AQA specification currently?

- Almost all centres in England and Wales use AQA or have used AQA in the past and are approved AQA centres. A small minority are not. If your centre is new to AQA, please contact our centre approval team at **[centreapproval@aqa.org.uk](mailto:centreapproval@aqa.org.uk)**

## 1.4 How can I find out more?

### Ask AQA

You have 24-hour access to useful information and answers to the most commonly-asked questions at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/rn/askaqa.php>**

If the answer to your question is not available, you can submit a query for our team. Our target response time is one day.

### Teacher Support

Details of the full range of current Teacher Support meetings are available on our website at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/support/teachers.html>**

There is also a link to our fast and convenient online booking system for Teacher Support meetings at **<http://events.aqa.org.uk/ebooking>**

If you need to contact the Teacher Support team, you can call us on 01483 477860 or email us at **[teachersupport@aqa.org.uk](mailto:teachersupport@aqa.org.uk)**

# 2 Specification at a Glance

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AS Examinations	
<p><b>Unit 1 – GENA1</b>  <b>AS Culture and Society</b></p> <p>50% of AS, 25% of A Level                      1 hour 30 minutes written examination                      65 marks</p> <p>Objective test questions and documentary source analysis questions                      Available January and June</p>	<p>AS Award 1761</p>
<p><b>Unit 2 – GENA2</b>  <b>AS Science and Society</b></p> <p>50% of AS, 25% of A Level                      1 hour 30 minutes written examination                      65 marks</p> <p>Objective test questions and source based questions                      Available January and June</p>	

A2 Examinations	
<p><b>Unit 3 – GENA3</b>  <b>A2 Culture and Society</b></p> <p>25% of A Level                      2 hour written examination                      70 marks</p> <p>Source evaluation exercise and two essays                      Available January and June</p>	<p>A Level Award 2761</p>
<p><b>Unit 4 – GENA4</b>  <b>A2 Science and Society</b></p> <p>25% of A Level                      2 hour written examination                      70 marks</p> <p>Questions on pre-release Case Study and one essay                      Available January and June</p>	

AS + A2 = A Level

# 3 Subject Content

## 3.1 AS Thinking, Analytical and Communication Skills

The skills, knowledge and understanding detailed below will be assessed in the context of the content statements set out in units 1 and 2.

The content statements for units 1 and 2 should be interpreted in the light of the level of the knowledge, understanding and attainment of skills that a candidate might reasonably be expected to possess after following a broad range of subjects at GCSE Grade C level, including English, Mathematics and Science, and a one year post-16 course in General Studies alongside other specialist AS subjects.

<b>3.1.1 Understanding the nature of knowledge, truth and belief and the distinctions between them</b>	Examination of the way concepts such as knowledge, truth and belief are used; development of the ability to draw distinctions between them, understanding what constitutes 'proof'.
<b>3.1.2 Analysis of data, information, ideas, opinions and arguments</b>	Exploration of sources of knowledge and information, methods of research, how information is collected and analysed; the differences between quantitative and qualitative data, facts and opinions.
<b>3.1.3 Use of the above to examine questions, form values, make judgements and draw conclusions</b>	Development of the ability to assess the validity and reliability of data and information; understand arguments; appreciate the nature of objectivity and subjectivity; recognise bias; distinguish between deductive and inductive reasoning, and arguments based on cause, authority and analogy; recognise fallacy and unsound arguments; draw conclusions.
<b>3.1.4 Understanding of different kinds of knowledge, appreciating their strengths and limitations</b>	Appreciation of the different characteristics of the arts, social sciences and sciences and the kinds of understanding gained from these; methods and processes of study of different disciplines.
<b>3.1.5 Use of language to impart knowledge and understanding and present opinions and argument</b>	Selecting and using a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and subject matter; organising relevant information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate; ensuring text is legible and spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate, so that meaning is clear.

## 3.2 Unit 1 GENA1 AS Culture and Society

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|---|---|
| <b>3.2.1 An understanding and appreciation of the changing nature and importance of culture</b> | Cultural values and the similarities and differences between people and cultures; nature and use of language; ways in which different uses and forms of language can affect meaning; literary and linguistic devices.   |
| <b>3.2.2 Creativity and innovation</b>  | The role of artists; their contribution to society and interaction with their audiences; benefits of participation in the arts; the place and value of arts in education. Examples of art works and practitioners of major artistic movements.  |
| <b>3.2.3 Aesthetic evaluation</b>   | Personal response to the arts and appreciation of a variety of forms using appropriate critical language; differences between subjective and objective evaluation of works and performances across a range of art forms. Objective criteria for such judgements.  |
| <b>3.2.4 Beliefs, values and moral reasoning</b>  | The role and importance of religious and value systems; a broad outline of the distinguishing features and tenets of major world religions.   |
| <b>3.2.5 Religious belief and experience and connections between them</b>                       | Differences of opinion about beliefs and values; tolerance; the place of religious and moral education. Viewpoints on moral issues; bases for moral and value judgements; religious and secular approaches to moral arguments.  |
| <b>3.2.6 Examination and appreciation of ideologies and values in society</b>                   | Factors which affect the interaction of individuals with society as a whole: concepts of freedoms and restrictions; rights and responsibilities; equality of opportunity.   |
| <b>3.2.7 Media and communication</b>  | Processes and effects of the media and communication industries; similarities and differences between various media and between popular culture and 'high' art in entertainment; control and censorship. How the media present information and the recognition of a biased viewpoint. Effects and use of the internet and information technology. |
| <b>3.2.8 Political processes and goals</b>  | The British political system and the role of the monarchy. Processes and powers of government and parliament; electoral procedures; main policies of the major UK political parties; citizenship.   |
| <b>3.2.9 Relationship between law, society and ethics</b>                                       | Values and ethical issues which affect social interaction in such areas as politics, society and business; crime and punishment.  |

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## Unit 1 Assessment

This unit consists of an objective test component (Section A) and a structured writing component (Section B).

### Section A

Material for comprehension, analysis and evaluation in objective test format.

This section will assess candidates' ability to identify themes and arguments; to recognise and distinguish between explicit and implicit statements, inferences, assumptions and conclusions; perceptions of the nature and use of language, style, references, illustration and justification; grasp of interrelationships of ideas, organisational structure, overall meaning and validity of argument.

### Section B

Structured questions requiring written responses and based on a collection of short extracts provided in the question paper.

Assessing candidates' abilities to summarise and comment on ideas, arguments and issues, using their own words and presenting their own opinions and judgements.

## 3.3 Unit 2 GENA2 AS Science and Society

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|---|--|
| <b>3.3.1 Characteristics of the sciences (physical, life and earth)</b>   | An outline of the nature of, and ideas on, the origins of the universe, space and matter; natural forces and sources and forms of energy; the earth's resources.   |
| <b>3.3.2 Explanation and evaluation of human behaviour</b>  | Characteristics of human and social behaviour and approaches to social studies and policy: the changing role of the family; class, gender, race, age and disability.   |
| <b>3.3.3 Social and economic trends and constraints</b>   | Economic issues on a national scale; the workings of business, commerce and industry; impact of political and economic issues on science, society and the environment; aspects of employment and unemployment; education; poverty.   |
| <b>3.3.4 Understanding of scientific methods, principles, criteria and their application</b>                            | The nature of scientific investigation; design and use of scientific investigations; design, manufacture and use of equipment and technology in contemporary society and description of underlying scientific principles.  |
| <b>3.3.5 The nature of scientific objectivity and the question of progress</b>  | <p>Research in science and the extent to which scientists can be impartial in their methods and contribution to scientific research and development.</p> <p>Background to scientific discoveries and emergence and use of scientific ideas. Recent developments in information and communications technology, transport systems, sport and leisure.</p>  |
| <b>3.3.6 The nature of objectivity in social sciences</b>   | Research in social science and the extent to which social scientists can be impartial in their methods and contribution to society and social policy.  |
| <b>3.3.7 Mathematical reasoning and its application</b>   | Use of mathematics in science and society; mathematical functions and their graphs; interpretation of statistical information; representations of two- and three-dimensional objects and situations; relationships between moving parts in mechanical devices.   |
| <b>3.3.8 The social, ethical and environmental implications of scientific discoveries and technological development</b> | Analysis of the impact and implications of new inventions, developments and techniques, and decisions to put them into practice. The influence of scientific applications on the quality of life. Developments in genetics and biotechnology, agriculture, food production and conservation; health, fitness and balanced diets; hygiene; disease and everyday medical matters; the use and abuse of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco. |
| <b>3.3.9 Moral responsibility of scientists</b>   | Moral dilemmas associated with the work of scientists, technologists and industrialists; the application of moral dilemmas in a social and economic context.   |

### 3.3.10 Past and present relationships between technology, science and society

The contributions of science and technology to human progress and lifestyles in society; effects of industry on ecological systems; consumption of the earth's resources; pollution and methods of waste disposal; the protection and conservation of the environment; medical advances.

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## Unit 2 Assessment

This unit consists of an objective test component (Section A) and a structured writing component (Section B)

### Section A

Material for comprehension, analysis, evaluation and mathematical reasoning in objective test format.

This section will assess candidates' ability to understand scientific principles and information; interpret and apply statistical information and graphs; grasp ideas; consider validity of argument and implications for society.

### Section B

Three optional questions requiring written responses. Candidates answer **one** question only. Each question will be divided into parts and will have its own source.

Section B will assess candidates' abilities to analyse and evaluate sources and use own knowledge to present arguments about scientific and social issues.

## 3.4 A2 Thinking, Analytical and Communication Skills

The skills, knowledge and understanding detailed below will be assessed in the context of the content statements set out in units 3 and 4.

The content statements for units 3 and 4 should be interpreted in the light of the level of the knowledge, understanding and attainment of skills that a candidate might reasonably be expected to possess after following a broad range of subjects at GCSE Grade C level, including English, Mathematics and Science, and a two-year post-16 course in General Studies alongside other specialist AS and A Level subjects.

**NB** Statements in italics indicate extensions for A2 beyond AS.

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|---|--|
| <p><b>3.4.1 Understanding the nature of knowledge, truth and belief and the distinctions between them</b></p>   | <p>Examination of the way concepts such as knowledge, truth and belief are used; <i>demonstrate</i> the ability to draw distinctions between <i>and recognise the impact of values upon</i> them, understanding what constitutes 'proof'. <i>Demonstrate appreciation of the limitations of knowledge.</i></p>   |
| <p><b>3.4.2 Analysis of data, information, ideas, opinions and arguments</b></p>                                | <p><i>Evaluation</i> of sources of knowledge and information, methods of research, how information is collected and analysed; <i>examine</i> the differences between quantitative and qualitative data, facts and opinions, <i>assessing their relative merits.</i></p>  |
| <p><b>3.4.3 Use of the above to examine questions, form values, make judgements and draw conclusions</b></p>    | <p>Assess the validity and reliability of data and information; <i>integrate and evaluate</i> arguments; <i>make informed judgements</i>, appreciating the nature of objectivity and subjectivity; recognise bias; distinguish between deductive and inductive reasoning, and arguments based on cause, authority and analogy; recognise fallacy and unsound arguments; <i>draw justified</i> conclusions.</p> |
| <p><b>3.4.4 Understanding of different kinds of knowledge, appreciating their strengths and limitations</b></p> | <p>Appreciation of the different characteristics of the arts, social sciences and sciences and the kinds of understanding gained from these; methods and processes of study of different disciplines. <i>Show understanding of how values can influence judgements and that one mode of analysis or branch of knowledge may provide an incomplete picture.</i></p>   |
| <p><b>3.4.5 Use of language to impart knowledge and understanding and present opinions and argument</b></p>     | <p>Selecting and using a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and <i>complex</i> subject matter; organising relevant information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate; ensuring text is legible and spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate, so that meaning is clear.</p>  |

## 3.5 Unit 3 GENA3 A2 Culture and Society

**NB** Statements in italics indicate extensions for A2 beyond AS.

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| <p><b>3.5.1</b> An understanding and appreciation of the changing nature and importance of culture</p> | <p>Cultural values and the similarities and differences between people and cultures; nature and use of language; ways in which different uses and forms of language can affect meaning; literary and linguistic devices.</p>   |
| <p><b>3.5.2</b> Creativity and innovation</p>  | <p><i>The human creative impulse and its processes; the role of art and design in society, the structure of art forms and genres and how their meanings are communicated; benefits of participation in the arts; the place and value of the arts in education.</i></p> <p>The role of artists; their contribution to society and interaction with their audiences; <i>the role and responsibility of musicians, writers, film makers, television producers, artists and those involved in creative arts; issues of taste, judgement, morality and the law in the evaluation of art and protection of the public.</i></p> <p>Examples of art works and practitioners of artistic movements; <i>the development and impact of artistic styles and movements; major examples of artistic achievement from a range of cultures and times, including modern and contemporary movements.</i></p> |
| <p><b>3.5.3</b> Aesthetic evaluation</p>   | <p>Personal response to the arts and appreciation of a variety of forms using appropriate critical language; differences between subjective and objective evaluation of works and performances across a range of art forms. Objective criteria for such judgements.</p>  |
| <p><b>3.5.4</b> Beliefs, values and moral reasoning</p>  | <p><i>The role and importance of religious and value systems; features and tenets of major world religions.</i></p>  |
| <p><b>3.5.5</b> Religious belief and experience and connections between them</p>                       | <p>Differences of opinion about beliefs and values; tolerance; <i>the dilemmas and complexity of a multi-faith and pluralist society; tolerance; the process and problems of changing and developing morality; the place of religious and moral education.</i></p> <p>Viewpoints on moral issues; bases for moral and value judgements; religious and secular sides of moral arguments; <i>philosophical, moral and ethical problems faced by society and individuals.</i></p>   |
| <p><b>3.5.6</b> Examination and appreciation of ideologies and values in society</p>                   | <p>Factors which affect the interaction of individuals with society as a whole: freedoms and restrictions; rights and responsibilities; equality of opportunity, <i>the law and judiciary, the relationship between civil law and religious belief.</i></p>  |
| <p><b>3.5.7</b> Media and Communication</p>  | <p>Processes and effects of the media and communication industries; similarities and differences between various media and between popular culture and 'high' art in entertainment; control and censorship; <i>how information is presented and the power of language and images to transmit, persuade or distort; 'spin' and propaganda; the creation of wealth and exercise of power in the media and communication industries.</i> Effects and use of the internet and information technology.</p>  |

### 3.5.8 Political processes and goals

The British political system *and philosophies; the nature, processes, problems and responsibilities of a democracy*; Processes and powers of government *in Britain and other countries (from local policies through to the EU)*; the monarchy; electoral procedures; main policies of the major UK political parties; citizenship *and rights and responsibilities of the individual within a political context*.

### 3.5.9 Relationship between law, society and ethics

Aspects of social interaction *at personal, local, national and international levels*; values and ethical issues in such areas as politics, society and business; crime and punishment. *International relations; standards in public life*.

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## Unit 3 Assessment

This unit consists of a source evaluation exercise (Section A), a culture essay (Section B) and a society essay (Section C).

### Section A

Two compulsory structured writing questions requiring written responses.

Section A will assess candidates' ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of at least one source and provide a personal opinion on the topic concerned.

### Section B

Four optional essay questions taken from the main cultural themes in the Unit 3 content. Candidates answer **one** question only.

Section B will assess candidates' abilities to analyse the question; conduct arguments and justify opinions with appropriate knowledge and illustrations; synthesise and communicate ideas; make overall judgements and draw valid conclusions.

### Section C

Four optional essay questions taken from the main social themes in the Unit 3 content. Candidates answer **one** question only.

Section C will assess candidates' abilities to analyse the question; conduct arguments and justify opinions with appropriate knowledge and illustrations; synthesise and communicate ideas; make overall judgements and draw valid conclusions.

## 3.6 Unit 4 GENA4 A2 Science and Society

- 3.6.1 Characteristics of the sciences (physical, life and earth)** An outline of the nature of, and ideas on, the origins of the universe, space and matter; natural forces and sources and forms of energy; *the origin, extraction, processing, storage and distribution of the earth's resources.*  
*The concept of life;*  
*Science and religion in society.*
- 3.6.2 Explanation and evaluation of human behaviour** Characteristics of human and social behaviour and approaches to social studies and policy; the changing role of the family; class, gender, race, age and disability.  
*Approach of different disciplines in social science to how we understand and evaluate people and problems.*
- 3.6.3 Social and economic trends and constraints** Economic issues on a national *and international* scale; the workings of business, commerce and industry; impact of political and economic issues on science, society and the environment; aspects of employment and unemployment; education; poverty.  
*Different stages of social, industrial and scientific development in other countries.*  
*Nature, effects of, and approaches to, solving world problems and trouble spots; co-operation and intervention; international agencies.*
- 3.6.4 Understanding of scientific methods, principles, criteria and their application** *The nature of hypothesis and theory in scientific development.*  
The nature of scientific investigation; design and use of scientific investigations; design, manufacture and experience of equipment and technology in contemporary society and *explanation* of underlying scientific principles.
- 3.6.5 The nature of scientific objectivity and the question of progress** *The nature and reliability of research methodology in science and the extent to which scientists can be impartial in their methods and contribution to scientific research and development.*  
Background to scientific discoveries and emergence and use of scientific ideas. Recent developments in information and communications technology, transport systems, sport and leisure.
- 3.6.6 The nature of objectivity in social sciences** *The nature and reliability of research methodology in social science and the extent to which social scientists can be impartial in their methods and contribution to society and social policy.*
- 3.6.7 Mathematical reasoning and its application** *Commenting on data and representations of data; interpreting results and drawing conclusions. Assessing their implications.*

### 3.6.8 The social, ethical and environmental implications of scientific discoveries and technological development

*Evaluating* the impact and implications of new inventions, developments and techniques, and decisions to put them into practice. The influence of scientific applications on the quality of life. Developments in genetics and biotechnology, agriculture, food production and conservation; health, fitness and balanced diets; hygiene, disease and everyday medical matters; *birth control*; the use and abuse of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.

### 3.6.9 Moral responsibility of scientists

Moral dilemmas associated with the work of scientists, technologists and industrialists; the application of moral dilemmas in a social and economic context. *Professional codes of behaviour*.

### 3.6.10 Past and present relationships between technology, science and society

The contributions of science and technology to human progress and *lifestyles in different societies*; effects of industry on ecological systems; consumption of the earth's resources; pollution and methods of waste disposal; the protection and conservation of the environment; *genetic engineering* and medical advances.

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## Unit 4 Assessment

This unit consists of a Case Study exercise (Section A) and a science and society essay (Section B).

### Section A

Short answer questions assessing a Case Study on a major issue. The source material will be part pre-released (approximately five extracts) and part contained in the examination paper (approximately one extract). It will involve wide-ranging stimulus material including data and statistics.

The pre-release material will be available from 1 November for January examinations and 1 April for June examinations. Teachers **will** be allowed to discuss the pre-release materials with their candidates.

This section will assess candidates' ability to show understanding of the detail of the material and to summarise the points and arguments contained within the extracts; to recognise the connections between the different elements of the subject concerned; and to exercise their own judgements on the nature of the problems presented. Questions related to the statistical data within the material will assess candidates' ability to handle statistics and appreciate their use in the context of a broader issue.

### Section B

Four optional science and society essay questions. Candidates answer **one** question only.

Section B will assess candidates' abilities to analyse the question; conduct arguments and justify opinions with appropriate knowledge and illustrations; synthesise and communicate ideas; make overall judgements and draw valid conclusions.

# 4 Scheme of Assessment

## 4.1 Aims

AS and A Level courses based on this specification should encourage candidates to:

- View issues from a wider range of perspectives than those offered by subject specialisms.
- Integrate knowledge from a range of disciplines in order to:
  - develop an understanding of the interrelationship between them
  - encourage a broader and deeper understanding of issues.
- Think logically and creatively in order to:
  - assess the relative merits of evidence
  - make informed judgements
  - reach justifiable conclusions.

## 4.2 Assessment Objectives (AOs)

The Assessment Objectives are common to AS and A Level. The assessment units will assess the following Assessment Objectives in the context of the content and skills set out in Section 3 (Subject Content).

- AO1 Demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding applied to a range of issues, using skills from different disciplines.
- AO2 Marshal evidence and draw conclusions: select, interpret, evaluate and integrate information, data, concepts and opinions.
- AO3 Demonstrate understanding of different types of knowledge, appreciating their strengths and limitations.
- AO4 Communicate clearly and accurately in a concise, logical and relevant way.

### Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

In GCE specifications which require candidates to produce written material in English, candidates must:

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

In this specification QWC will be assessed in all units by means of Assessment Objective 4.

### Weighting of Assessment Objectives for AS

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the AS units.

Assessment Objectives	Unit Weightings (%)		Overall weighting of AOs (%)
	Unit 1	Unit 2	
AO1	15	18	33
AO2	20	17	37
AO3	7	7	14
AO4	8	8	16
Overall weighting of units (%)	50	50	100

## Weighting of Assessment Objectives for A Level

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the AS and A2 units.

Assessment Objectives	Unit Weightings (%)				Overall weighting of AOs (%)
	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	
AO1	7.5	9	7	6.5	30
AO2	10	8.5	8	9	35.5
AO3	3.5	3.5	5	5	17
AO4	4	4	5	4.5	17.5
Overall weighting of units (%)	25	25	25	25	100

### 4.3 National Criteria

This specification complies with the following.

- The Subject Criteria for General Studies
- The Code of Practice for GCE
- The GCE AS and A Level Qualification Criteria
- The Arrangements for the Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Common Criteria

### 4.4 Prior Learning

There are no prior learning requirements. Any requirements set for entry to a course following this specification are at the discretion of centres.

We recommend that candidates should have acquired the skills and knowledge associated with GCSE English, Mathematics and Science courses or equivalent.

### 4.5 Synoptic Assessment and Stretch and Challenge

Synoptic assessment in GCE General Studies A is assessed in the A2 units by the requirement to integrate knowledge from a range of disciplines in order to develop an understanding of the interrelationships between them, and to examine issues from a broader standpoint than that of a single discipline.

Further, candidates should be encouraged to think logically and creatively in order to assess the relative merits of evidence, make informed judgements and reach justified conclusions. They should communicate clearly and accurately in a concise and logical way.

The requirement for Stretch and Challenge at A2 is met by:

- the use of a variety of stems in the questions – for example analyse, evaluate, discuss, assess – to elicit a full range of response types and thereby avoid a formulaic approach
- ensuring connectivity between parts of questions, avoiding questions that are atomistic
- the requirement for extended writing throughout units 3 and 4
- using a range of question types and synoptic questions.

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## 4.6 Access to Assessment for Disabled Students

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

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

Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates in order to enable them to access the assessments. For this reason, very few candidates will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment.

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

# 5 Administration

## 5.1 Availability of Assessment Units and Certification

Examinations and certification for this specification are available as follows:

	Availability of units		Availability of certification	
	AS	A2	AS	A Level
January 2009	✓			
June 2009	✓		✓	
January 2010	✓	✓	✓	
June 2010	✓	✓	✓	✓
January 2011 onwards	✓	✓	✓	✓
June 2011 onwards	✓	✓	✓	✓

## 5.2 Entries

Please refer to the current version of *Entry Procedures and Codes* for up to date entry procedures. You should use the following entry codes for the units and for certification.

Unit 1 – GENA1

Unit 2 – GENA2

Unit 3 – GENA3

Unit 4 – GENA4

AS certification – 1761

A Level certification – 2761

## 5.3 Private Candidates

This specification is available to private candidates. Private candidates should write to AQA for a copy of '*Supplementary Guidance for Private Candidates*'.

## 5.4 Access Arrangements and Special Consideration

We have taken note of equality and discrimination legislation and the interests of minority groups in developing and administering this specification.

We follow the guidelines in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) document: *Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration: General and Vocational Qualifications*. This is published on the JCQ website (<http://www.jcq.org.uk>) or you can follow the link from our website (<http://www.aqa.org.uk>).

### Access Arrangements

We can make arrangements so that candidates with disabilities can access the assessment. These arrangements must be made **before** the examination. For example, we can produce a Braille paper for a candidate with a visual impairment.

### Special Consideration

We can give special consideration to candidates who have had a temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of the examination. Where we do this, it is given **after** the examination.

Applications for access arrangements and special consideration should be submitted to AQA by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

## 5.5 Language of Examinations

We will provide units in English only.

## 5.6 Qualification Titles

Qualifications based on this specification are:

- AQA Advanced Subsidiary GCE in General Studies (A), and
- AQA Advanced Level GCE in General Studies (A).

## 5.7 Awarding Grades and Reporting Results

The AS qualification will be graded on a five-point scale: A, B, C, D and E. The full A Level qualification will be graded on a six-point scale: A\*, A, B, C, D and E. To be awarded an A\* candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A Level qualification and an A\* on the aggregate of the A2 units.

For AS and A Level, candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade E will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate. Individual assessment unit results will be certificated.

## 5.8 Re-sits and Shelf-life of Unit Results

Unit results remain available to count towards certification, whether or not they have already been used, as long as the specification is still valid.

Candidates may re-sit a unit any number of times within the shelf-life of the specification. The best result for each unit will count towards the final qualification. Candidates who wish to repeat a

qualification may do so by re-taking one or more units. The appropriate subject award entry, as well as the unit entry/entries, must be submitted in order to be awarded a new subject grade.

Candidates will be graded on the basis of the work submitted for assessment.

# Appendices

## A Performance Descriptions

These performance descriptions show the level of attainment characteristic of the grade boundaries at A Level. They give a general indication of the required learning outcomes at the A/B and E/U boundaries at AS and A2. The descriptions should be interpreted in relation to the content outlined in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.

The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the Assessment Objectives (see Section 4) overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of the examination may be balanced by better performances in others.

## AS Performance Descriptions for General Studies

	<b>Assessment Objective 1</b>	<b>Assessment Objective 2</b>	<b>Assessment Objective 3</b>	<b>Assessment Objective 4</b>
<b>Assessment Objectives</b>	Demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding applied to a range of issues, using skills from different disciplines.	Marshal evidence and draw conclusions: select, interpret, evaluate and integrate information, data, concepts and opinions.	Demonstrate understanding of different types of knowledge, appreciating their strengths and limitations.	Communicate clearly and accurately in a concise, logical and relevant way.
<b>A/B boundary performance descriptions</b>	Candidates characteristically: a) demonstrate focused knowledge and understanding of a range of issues b) use skills from different disciplines with confidence and consistency.	Candidates characteristically: a) provide evidence of selecting, interpreting and applying relevant information, data, concepts and opinions b) organise evidence to support arguments c) draw reasoned conclusions.	Candidates characteristically: a) identify different types of knowledge and make relevant evaluative comments.	Candidates characteristically: a) communicate accurately, clearly and fluently, using appropriate language and structure.
<b>E/U boundary performance descriptions</b>	Candidates characteristically: a) demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of issues b) use skills from different disciplines with variable success.	Candidates characteristically: a) provide limited evidence of selecting and applying some relevant information, data and opinions b) draw simple conclusions.	Candidates characteristically: a) recognise examples of different types of knowledge.	Candidates characteristically: a) convey meaning clearly despite limited powers of expression.

## A2 Performance Descriptions for General Studies

	<b>Assessment Objective 1</b>	<b>Assessment Objective 2</b>	<b>Assessment Objective 3</b>	<b>Assessment Objective 4</b>
<b>Assessment Objectives</b>	Demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding applied to a range of issues, using skills from different disciplines.	Marshal evidence and draw conclusions: select, interpret, evaluate and integrate information, data, concepts	Demonstrate understanding of different types of knowledge, appreciating their strengths and limitations.	Communicate clearly and accurately in a concise, logical and relevant way. and opinions.
<b>A/B boundary performance descriptions</b>	Candidates characteristically: a) deploy knowledge and understanding across a wide range of issues b) use skills from different disciplines with confidence and consistency.	Candidates characteristically: a) provide evidence of selecting, interpreting and applying relevant information, data, concepts and opinions b) organise and evaluate evidence to support arguments c) make connections and draw reasoned conclusions.	Candidates characteristically: a) identify correctly different types of knowledge b) offer a sound evaluation of different types of knowledge.	Candidates characteristically: a) communicate accurately, clearly, concisely, logically and fluently, using appropriate language and structure.
<b>E/U boundary performance descriptions</b>	Candidates characteristically: a) deploy some knowledge and understanding across issues b) use skills from different disciplines with variable success.	Candidates characteristically: a) provide limited evidence of selecting and applying some relevant information, data and opinions b) make limited connections and draw simple conclusions.	Candidates characteristically: a) identify examples of different types of knowledge b) recognise some strengths and weaknesses of types of knowledge, but with limited success.	Candidates characteristically: a) convey meaning clearly.

## B Spiritual, Moral, Ethical, Social and other Issues

A General Studies course should contribute to a candidate's understanding of spiritual, moral, ethical and social issues, within which there are necessarily many connections. It is the essence of General Studies to illuminate the connections between what in other contexts might be seen as discrete areas of subject content and sets of considerations.

Opportunities to explore these issues occur particularly in:

AS Unit 1 – sections 3.2.4, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.9

AS Unit 2 – sections 3.3.2, 3.3.5, 3.3.6, 3.3.8, 3.3.9, 3.3.10

A2 Unit 3 – sections 3.5.4, 3.5.5, 3.5.6, 3.5.9

A2 Unit 4 – sections 3.6.1, 3.6.5, 3.6.6, 3.6.8, 3.6.9, 3.6.10

### European Dimension

AQA has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community in preparing this specification and associated specimen units.

Opportunities to explore these issues occur particularly in:

AS Unit 1 – sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.4, 3.2.5

AS Unit 2 – sections 3.3.3, 3.3.8, 3.3.9

A2 Unit 3 – sections 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 3.5.4, 3.5.5

A2 Unit 4 – sections 3.6.3, 3.3.8, 3.3.9

### Environmental Education

AQA has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community and the Report “Environmental Responsibility: An Agenda for Further and Higher Education” 1993 in preparing this specification and associated specimen units. Candidates will need to consider environmental issues when studying within all units.

Opportunities to explore these issues occur particularly in:

AS Unit 2 – sections 3.3.1, 3.3.3, 3.3.8, 3.3.9

A2 Unit 4 – sections 3.6.1, 3.6.3, 3.6.8, 3.6.9

Environmental considerations may also be integral to the material for examination in AS unit 1 and in A2 unit 3, and hence to candidates' preparation for these units.

### Avoidance of Bias

AQA has taken great care in the preparation of this specification and specimen units to avoid bias of any kind.

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## C Overlaps with other Qualifications

With AS and A Levels still based on individual choice, the case for General Studies is as strong as ever.

General Studies A will broaden and complement any course of study and is a useful core curriculum for all post-16 students.

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## D Key Skills – Teaching, Developing and Providing Opportunities for Generating Evidence

### Introduction

The Key Skills Qualification requires candidates to demonstrate levels of achievement in the Key Skills of Communication, Application of Number and Information Technology.

The units for the ‘wider’ Key Skills of Improving own Learning and Performance, Working with Others and Problem Solving are also available. The acquisition and demonstration of ability in these ‘wider’ Key Skills is deemed highly desirable for all candidates, but they do not form part of the Key Skills Qualification.

Copies of the Key Skills Units may be downloaded from QCA’s website:

**[www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_6455.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_6455.aspx)**

The units for each Key Skill comprise three sections:

- What you need to know.
- What you must do.
- Guidance.

Candidates following a course of study based on this specification for General Studies can be offered opportunities to develop and generate evidence of attainment in aspects of the Key Skills of:

- Communication;
- Application of Number;
- Information Technology;
- Working with Others;

- Improving own Learning and Performance;
- Problem Solving.

Areas of study and learning that can be used to encourage the acquisition and use of Key Skills, and to provide opportunities to generate evidence for Part B of the units, are signposted below.

## Key Skills Opportunities in General Studies A

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
<b>Communication</b>				
C3.1a	✓	✓	✓	✓
C3.1b	✓	✓	✓	✓
C3.2	✓	✓	✓	✓
C3.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Application of Number</b>				
N3.1	✓	✓	✓	✓
N3.2		✓		✓
N3.3		✓		✓
<b>Information Technology</b>				
ICT3.1	✓	✓	✓	✓
ICT3.2	✓	✓	✓	✓
ICT3.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Working With Others</b>				
WO3.1	✓	✓	✓	✓
WO3.2	✓	✓	✓	✓
WO3.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Improving Own Learning and Performance</b>				
LP3.1	✓	✓	✓	✓
LP3.2	✓	✓	✓	✓
LP3.3	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Problem Solving</b>				
PS3.1	✓	✓	✓	✓
PS3.2	✓	✓	✓	✓
PS3.3	✓	✓	✓	✓



## GCE General Studies A (2760) 2009 onwards

Qualification Accreditation Number: AS 500/2222/2 - A Level 500/2184/9

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**<http://events.aqa.org.uk/ebooking>**

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