

OxfordAQA

International AS/A-level

Business (9725)

Teaching guidance

For teaching from September 2026 onwards

For International AS exams in June 2027 onwards

For International A-level exams in June 2028 onwards

Our specification is published on our website . We will let centres know in writing about any changes to the specification. We will also publish changes on our website. The definitive version of our specification will always be the one on our website; this may differ from printed versions.. We will let centres know in writing about any changes to the specification. We will also publish changes on our website. The definitive version of our specification will always be the one on our website; this may differ from printed versions.

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Introduction

The updated 9725 OxfordAQA International AS and A-level Business specification has been developed to inspire, challenge and motivate all students regardless of their academic ability. It provides students with opportunities to explore theories and concepts within a framework that reflects the different business cultures and structures that operate throughout the world. Students will have an opportunity to develop a range of skills which will enable them not only to have a good grounding in business theory, but which will also allow them to develop their problem solving, analytical and decision-making skills.

We have listened closely to feedback from teachers to design an engaging and relevant specification and an assessment structure which is accessible to all. The rigorous summative assessment, which is presented in a simple and straightforward structure, enables students to demonstrate their breadth of knowledge and understanding of the subject and their skills of analysis and evaluation.

This qualification provides a good foundation for further study of business and is ideal for students who may want to continue and explore business either at degree level or in their career.

This guide will provide the following for teachers and prospective teachers of this course:

- an overview of this specification's philosophy and approach to the study and assessment of International AS and A-level Business.
- a unit-by-unit look at what is required in learning and assessment
- suggested possible routes through the course.

Aims and learning outcomes

Our International AS and A-level Business qualifications should encourage students to be inspired, motivated and challenged by following a broad, coherent, practical, satisfying and worthwhile course of study. It should encourage students to develop their curiosity about the business world, enable students to engage with business in their everyday lives in order to make informed choices about further study in business and related disciplines.

The OxfordAQA International AS and A-level Business qualification should encourage students to:

- know and understand business concepts, business terminology, business objectives, the integrated nature of business activity and the relationship between individuals and wider society
- apply this knowledge and understanding to make sense of the world of business in a global setting
- develop as enterprising individuals with the ability to think critically and creatively and draw on evidence to make informed business decisions and solve business problems
- develop as effective and independent students, and as analytical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds
- investigate and analyse real business opportunities and issues and, so by doing construct

- well-argued, well-evidenced, balanced and structured arguments, demonstrating depth and breadth and understanding of business
- develop and apply quantitative skills relevant to business, including using and interpreting data
- develop the ability to analyse critically business behaviour and to be able to make judgements on the appropriateness of proposed courses of action.

Assessment Objectives (AOs)

There are four Assessment Objectives for the International AS and A-level Business:

AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of business terms, concepts, theories, methods and models.
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding to various business contexts.
AO3	Analyse business issues, showing an understanding of the impact on individuals and organisations of external and internal influences.
AO4	Evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to make informed judgements on business issues.

Weighting of Assessment Objectives

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the International AS and A-level Business components:

AS Business

Assessment Objectives (AOs)	Unit weightings (approx %)		Overall weighting of AOs (approx %)
	Unit 1	Unit 2	
AO1	19.15	19.15	38.3
AO2	10.85	10.85	21.7
AO3	13.35	13.35	26.7
AO4	6.65	6.65	13.3
Overall weighting of units (%)	50	50	100

A-level Business

Assessment Objectives (AOs)	Unit weightings (approx %)				Overall weighting of AOs (approx %)
	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	
AO1	7.65	7.65	7.5	7.5	30.3
AO2	4.35	4.35	7.5	7.5	23.7
AO3	5.35	5.35	9	9	28.7
AO4	2.65	2.65	6	6	17.3
Overall weighting of units (%)	20	20	30	30	100

Specification at a glance

Unit 1: Business and markets

What's assessed

Any content from section 3.1 Unit 1: Business and markets.

How it's assessed

Written exam: 1 hour 15 minutes

60 marks

50% of International AS

20% of International A-level

Questions

Four compulsory sections:

Section A has short answer questions worth 10 marks.

Section B has calculation questions worth 10 marks.

Section C has extended response questions worth 16 marks.

Section D has extended response questions worth 24 marks.

Unit 2: Managing operations, human resources and finance

What's assessed

Any content from section 3.2 Unit 2: Managing operations, human resources and finance.

How it's assessed

Written exam: 1 hour 15 minutes

60 marks

50% of International AS

20% of International A-level

Questions

Four compulsory sections:

Section A has short answer questions worth 10 marks.

Section B has calculation questions worth 10 marks.

Section C has two extended response questions worth 16 marks.

Section D has two extended response questions worth 24 marks.

Unit 3: Business analysis

What's assessed

Any content from section 3.3 Business analysis.

How it's assessed

Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes

80 marks

30% of International A-level

Questions

Two compulsory sections:

Section A has one case study followed by five short answer and extended response questions worth 40 marks.

Section B has one case study followed by five short answer and extended response questions worth 40 marks.

Unit 4: Business decision making

What's assessed

Any content from section 3.4 Business strategy.

How it's assessed

Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes

80 marks

30% of International A-level

Questions

Two compulsory sections:

Section A has one case study followed by five short answer and extended response questions worth 40 marks.

Section B has one case study followed by five short answer and extended response questions worth 40 marks.

Assessment in closer detail

These AS and A-level qualifications are modular. The International A-level is intended to be taken over two years. The specification content for the International AS is approximately half that of an International A-level.

The International AS can be taken as a stand-alone qualification, or it can count towards the International A-level. To complete the International A-level, students can take the International AS in their first year and the International A2 in their second year or they can take all the units together in the same examination series at the end of the two-year course.

International AS assessments contribute 40% of the total marks for the International A-level qualification. The remaining 60% comes from the International A2 assessments.

The specification content will be split across units and will be assessed in a modular manner. Only content featured in that unit can appear in that paper, for example, only content from unit 1 can be examined in the paper for unit 1. In answering an A2 question, students may draw on AS content if relevant, but this will not be a requirement, unless it is also featured in that unit.

All materials are available in English only.

Our International AS and A-level exams in Business include questions that allow students to demonstrate their ability to:

- draw together their knowledge, skills and understanding from across the course of study to analyse business issues
- make reasoned judgements
- make supported recommendations
- calculate and interpret numerical data
- apply their understanding to business issues.

Assessment design

The examinations will provide coverage of the specification through the combination of short answer questions, data response and case studies. This variety of assessment allows students to demonstrate their skills in different ways. Questions are designed to be accessible and easily understood. The language used is deliberately kept clear and precise.

Both AS papers have four sections:

- Section A: Short answer questions.
- Section B: Calculation questions.
- Section C: Analysis questions. These questions require students to produce logical chains of reasoning. All analysis questions are worth 9 marks.
- Section D: Evaluative questions. In this section students are encouraged to provide advice, make a recommendation or make judgements. All evaluative questions are worth 12 marks.

Paper 1 covers Business and markets.

Paper 2 covers Managing operations, human resources and finance.

Both A2 papers have two sections.

Section A: One case study followed by five short answer and extended response questions worth 40 marks.

Section B: One case study followed by five short answer and extended response questions worth 40 marks.

These papers have all been designed with consistency in mind – making it easier for teachers and students to understand the demands of the question and become familiar with the assessment design. There are several similar question types across the AS and A2 level.

The A2 papers both contain two case studies and therefore have been allocated 1 hour 45 minutes per paper. This allows students sufficient time to read the items carefully and plan their responses.

A truly international qualification

This is a truly international qualification that includes many aspects of global business relevant to today's world. Items and questions refer to businesses from around the world and issues that businesses face in their countries and when trading globally. In their responses students are encouraged to refer to the business environment and business behaviour in their own countries.

Business is meant to be a relevant and living subject. It comes to life by applying the knowledge and understanding that students have to real business situations. We encourage you therefore to show students why this knowledge and understanding is useful by applying to different businesses in your own country and thinking about the particular challenges and opportunities businesses in this environment face, whilst also recognising that the context can change over time and between countries, We also encourage you to highlight the global nature of economies and markets these days and show how studying business within your economy necessarily involves thinking about other economies and the impact of changes there.

Our approach

Working with teachers, we have developed a specification that:

- Has a logical structure that first considers the internal functions of business at AS level, and then at A2 considers more decision making and strategic issues.
- Is not overloaded with content to ensure teachers and learners have time to explore the topics in some detail and be able to discuss them in some depth.
- Provides clarity of what will be assessed, to provide certainty for students and teachers around what they will be assessed upon.
- Enables learners to draw on their knowledge of their own economy and will reward relevant insights based on this.
- Has questions that are clearly written so they are accessible to learners for whom English may be their second language.
- Has a range of assessment methods including short answer and quantitative questions.
- Has an approach to marking that is clear and consistent (e.g. the same marking grid is used for 8 mark analysis questions).
- Is well supported by resources to support teachers and learners.
- Will be recognised and respected by leading employers and universities across the world.

Teaching challenges

Building evaluative skills

Business is an evaluative subject. It requires students to look at the context of a business situation and make a judgement. Questions ask students to recommend what to do, advise a manager on what action to take, decide on a strategy or decide on the relative importance of something. Students can find this difficult to do at first. It is often easier to outline relevant arguments without a judgement. If asked whether A is a better option than B students' response is often to analyse the benefits of A and the benefits of B without making a judgement on one compared to another. The challenge as teachers is to help students weigh up their arguments.

Success relies not just on knowing or being able to analyse a topic but being able to use understanding to make judgements. These skills will be developed through effective questioning and suitable evaluative homework and lesson tasks that build evaluation. For example, we might ask students to rank the various options and explain their choices; we might ask them to prioritise and justify their choices.

To help students make effective judgements we have phrased many of the questions in a way that tends to lead to an initial judgement that can then be supported. For example, instead of just asking students to "evaluate" or "assess" we have in many cases tried to provoke more judgement by directly asking them whether to do X or not, whether they think Y is the best or whether Z is right. This approach to questions should encourage students to form a view and defend it.

Answering the question as a whole

The levels of response approach focuses on how well the question as a whole has been answered. Students are advised to plan before writing. When planning they should consider: what are the demands of the question ie what exactly is the question asking them to do? Once this is established students should consider what they actually think – what is the answer to the question and can they explain and defend their view. Too many answers show knowledge of relevant issues but do not answer the questions asked specifically. Imagine you asked someone whether Manchester United was the best football team in the world and the answer you received explained why Manchester United was a very good football team. The content of the answer is relevant but the question itself has not been directly answered – we still don't know whether the person thinks Manchester United was the best team or not. The same is true of many answers to A-level Business questions – there is relevant understanding but the question is not fully addressed. The challenge as teachers is to get students to unpick the demands of the question, think about it, work out what they want to say and then write. When writing they need to keep focused on what the question asked not just what they have learned.

Conclusion

The Oxford AQA International AS and A-level Business is an exciting opportunity for schools and colleges outside the UK to study an AS and A-level course which contains many similar features to the UK qualification, while at the same time having distinctive features of its own. This teaching guide is an introduction to the course at the point of its inception. Further reports, advice and guidance will be offered once the course is up and running.

Teachers should note that in due course there will be approved text books (details of which can be found at oxfordaqaexams.org.uk).