

**Business
A-level**

General Introduction

Welcome to your A-level Business course. This Introduction should provide you with all the information you need to make a successful start to your studies.

The Specification (or Syllabus)

This course has been designed to give you a full and thorough preparation for the AS level or A level Business specification, set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA).

The **Subject Code** for entry to the AS only award is **7131**.

The **Subject Code** for entry to the A-level award is **7132**.

This subject was, until recently, known as 'Business Studies'. The reduction in the name to 'Business' is not significant.

Private Candidates

The AQA specification is open to private candidates. Private candidates should contact AQA for a copy of *Information for Private Candidates*.



Oxford Open Learning

Arrangement of Lessons

Part 1: AS Level

Module One: What is Business?

	Marcou�� units
1. Introduction to Business	1
2. Different Business Forms	2, 3
3. The External Environment	4
Tutor-marked Assignment A	

Module Two: Management

4. Managers	5, 6
5. Management Decision-making	7-9
6. The Role and Importance of Stakeholders	10
Tutor-marked Assignment B	

Module Three: Marketing

7. Effective Marketing	11-13
8. Customers and Market Research	14-18
9. Segmentation	19-20
10. The Marketing Mix	21-25
Tutor-marked Assignment C	

Module Four: Operational Objectives

11. Operational Objectives	26
12. Analysing Operational Performance	27, 29
13. Productivity	28, 30-31
14. Quality Control	32, 35
15. Stock	33-34
Tutor-marked Assignment D	

Module Five: Financial Objectives

16. Financial Objectives	36-37, 39, 41-2
17. Analysing Financial Performance	38, 40
18. Sources of Finance	43-44
Tutor-marked Assignment E	

Module Six: Human Resources

19. HR Objectives	45
20. Analysing HR Performance	51
21. Job Design and Organisational Design	48-49
22. Motivating Employees	46-47
23. Employer/Employee Relations	50, 52
Tutor-marked Assignment F	
TMA G (Practice Exam)	

Part 2: A-level (2nd Year Course)

Marcoué
units

Module Seven: The Business Environment

24. Corporate Objectives	53-56
25. Performance Ratios	57-60
26. Strategic Analysis	61-63
Tutor-marked Assignment H	
27. Politics and the Legal Environment	64-65, 84
28. The Economic and Commercial Environment	66-67
29. The Social & Technological Environment	68-70
Tutor-marked Assignment I	

Module Eight: Marketing and Finance

30. Competitors: Porter's Five Forces	71-72
31. Investment Appraisal	73-74
32. Choice of Market	75
33. Ways to Compete	76-77
Tutor-marked Assignment J	

Module Nine: Strategic Change

34. Change in Scale	78-80
35. Innovation	81-83
36. Internationalisation	85-88
37. Digital Technology	89
Tutor-marked Assignment K	

Module Ten: Change and Culture

38. Change	90-92
39. Organisational Culture	93
Tutor-marked Assignment L	
40. Strategic Implementation	94-95
41. Strategic Problems	96-99
Tutor-marked Assignment M	
Mock Exam Papers: TMA N and TMA O	

Textbook

The course has been prepared in conjunction with an excellent textbook:

AQA Business for A Level (Hodder)
Ian Marcousé, Nigel Watson & Andrew Hammond
ISBN: 978-1471835698

This covers the complete A-level. If you only intend to study for AS level (the 1st year course), you can buy the first half of this text, with the following details:

AQA Business for AS (Hodder)
Ian Marcousé, Nigel Watson & Andrew Hammond
ISBN: 978-1471835803

Chapter (unit) references are the same. Make sure you acquire *one* of these two books to support your studies. The full text covers all the topics required for both AS and the 2nd Year and includes a CD-ROM which is also extremely helpful. It requires a broadband internet connection and it will not run on a network, unfortunately.

If you buy the 1st Year book (only) and subsequently change your mind, it should be possible to buy the 2nd Year book separately.

One easy way of acquiring accompanying textbooks is through the Oxford Open Learning website (www.ool.co.uk). Marcousé's book has been written with the AQA A-level syllabus in mind and you will find that it supplements the reading and exercises required by this course.

As you work through the lessons, you will be asked to refer to Marcousé for additional study. Directions for reading will be found both on the first page of each lesson and within the lesson itself. These readings are important for a full understanding of the course, as the lessons do not aim to repeat ideas which have been satisfactorily covered in the linked text. Inevitably, there is *some* duplication of information.

The Marcousé exercises are for self-assessment and should not be sent to your tutor. You can check your answers by referring to the unit that precedes each set of questions, although you could consider purchasing the (expensive!) teachers' book (*Answers and Resources*) that accompanies the textbook. This is primarily intended to give teachers guidance on delivering and assessing the course but also contains comprehensive answers to all the exercises.

Supplementary Reading

It is important that you should get into the habit of reading as widely as possible. Get to know the business studies section in your local library and keep an eye on the business and financial sections of the daily press.

The following book is a good supplement to *Business Studies*:

Lines, Marcou   and Martin, *Complete A-Z Business Studies Handbook* (Philip Allan, 6th edition, ISBN: 978-0719585913)

The following books would be especially helpful with specific sections of the course:

Charles Handy, *Understanding Organizations* (Penguin, 4th ed., ISBN: 978-0140156034)

Philip Kotler & Kevin Lane Keller, *Marketing Management* (Pearson, ISBN: 978-1292092621)

Many of the available textbooks are too technical and complex for your needs. Find ones which you can read comfortably. On the other hand, there are a large number of badly-written books about business, mostly for those who dream about making a fast buck rather than passing an examination. You will find a fair selection of these books (e.g. *How to become an Overnight Millionaire*) advertised in the popular press and the colour supplements. Beware the Americanised approach to business success which will not go down well with examiners in the UK! You need to be able to understand and describe how a good business works and how it fits into the world at large, not sell coals to Newcastle.

Using the Course Materials

The full two-year course consists of 41 lessons divided into four modules. As well as the self-assessment tests and activities to be found in each lesson, there are tutor-marked assignments evenly spaced through the course, and a final practice examination paper to be attempted as part of your revision programme.

The tutor-marked assignments and practice examination paper should be submitted to your tutor for marking. Experience shows that students who do submit assignments are much more successful than those who don't. It is your primary means of gaining individualised help, of sorting out problems and maintaining motivation.

Suggested Answers to the tutor-marked assignments and examination papers will be sent to you with your marked work. Look very carefully at every comment your tutor makes and try to understand *why* your tutor has given you a high mark for this and a low mark for that. If you should encounter particular problems when studying a lesson then contact your tutor.

The 'AS' Level and A-level System

The Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level (1 year course)

Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses have been redefined as follows:

- As a final qualification, allowing candidates to broaden their studies and to defer questions about specialism;
- As roughly half of the total A-level studies

The AS no longer constitutes the first half of an Advanced Level qualification and no marks may be carried forward to that qualification. So, if you are expecting to complete the full A-level, there is no obligation to attempt the AS examinations at the halfway point.

The AS is designed to provide an appropriate assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of candidates who have completed the first half of a full Advanced Level Qualification.

All topics and study required for AS level are also required for the full A-level, although not necessarily on the same examination paper.

The Advanced Level (2 year course)

The Advanced Level (or A-level) consists of three written exam papers, all of which must be tackled at the same exam sitting, i.e. it is no longer possible to carry forward the marks from one paper to a later sitting.

There is no coursework.

Students following this course have the option to take either the AS or the full A-level examination. Studies for the AS are confined to the first half of the course.

Grading

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.

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.

The Examination Structure

This information is correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change. Prior to the examination, students should contact the exam board for the latest information.

This course is designed to match the requirements of the AQA 7131 (AS) and 7132 ('A' level) specifications. The AS exam consists of two written papers (called units) while the A-level has three more substantial papers.

Shelf-life of this specification

This AS specification is examined for the first time in June 2016 and the A-level specification is examined for the first time in June 2017. No end date has yet been set.

AQA Specifications

AQA Subject content

There are ten Content areas specified by AQA. Of these, the first six are required for both AS papers while all ten are required for all three A-level papers.

1. What is business?
2. Managers, leadership and decision making
3. Decision making to improve marketing performance
4. Decision making to improve operational performance
5. Decision making to improve financial performance
6. Decision making to improve human resource performance
7. Analysing the strategic position of a business (A-level only)
8. Choosing strategic direction (A-level only)
9. Strategic methods: how to pursue strategies (A-level only)
10. Managing strategic change (A-level only)

Students of this course should study business in a variety of contexts (e.g. large/small, UK focused/global, service/manufacturing) and consider:

- the importance of the context of business in relation to decision making
- the interrelated nature of business activities and how they affect competitiveness
- the competitive environment and the markets in which businesses operate
- the influences on functional decisions and plans including ethical and environmental issues
- the factors that might determine whether a decision is successful, e.g. the quality of data and the degree of uncertainty
- how technology is changing the way decisions are made and how businesses operate and compete
- the impact on stakeholders of functional decisions and their response to such decisions
- use of non-quantitative and quantitative data in decision making (including the interpretation of index numbers and calculations such as ratios and percentages). See the Specification Annex: Quantitative skills in Business

AS Examinations

This consists of two written papers, normally taken at the end of the first year of study.

Paper 1: Business 1

- written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes
- 80 marks in total
- 50% of AS

Three compulsory sections:

- Section A has 10 multiple choice questions (MCQs) worth 10 marks
- Section B has short answer questions worth approximately 20 marks
- Section C has two data response stimuli with questions worth approximately 25 marks.

Paper 2: Business 2

- written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes
- 80 marks in total
- 50% of AS

One compulsory case study consisting of approximately seven questions.

A-level Examinations

Before the full A-level qualification can be awarded, students must undertake all three of the assessments.

Paper 1: Business 1

- written exam: 2 hours
- 100 marks in total
- 33.3% of A-level

Three compulsory sections:

- Section A has 15 multiple choice questions (MCQs) worth 15 marks.
- Section B has short answer questions worth 35 marks.
- Sections C and D have two essay questions (choice of one from two and one from two) worth 25 marks each.

Paper 2: Business 2

- written exam: 2 hours
- 100 marks in total
- 33.3% of A-level

Three data response compulsory questions worth approximately 33 marks each and made up of three or four part questions.

Paper 3: Business 3

- written exam: 2 hours
- 100 marks in total
- 33.3% of A-level

One compulsory case study followed by approximately six questions.

Detailed Content

Students should refer to the specification (e.g. on the AQA website) for full details of the topics to be covered.

AQA Objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all AS and A-level Business specifications and all exam boards.

The exams will measure how well students have achieved the following assessment objectives:

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge of terms, concepts, theories, methods and models to show an understanding of how individuals and organisations are affected by and respond to business issues.

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding to various business contexts to show how individuals and organisations are affected by and respond to issues.

AO3: Analyse issues within business, showing an understanding of the impact on individuals and organisations of external and internal influences.

AO4: Evaluate quantitative and qualitative information to make informed judgements and propose evidence-based solutions to business issues.

Weighting of assessment objectives for AS level Business

Assessment Objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx. %)		Overall weighting (approx. %)
	Component 1	Component 2	
AO1	17-20	13-15	31-34
AO2	13-15	10-13	24-27
AO3	9-11	11-13	21-23
AO4	6-9	11-14	19-21
Overall weighting of components	50	50	100

Weighting of assessment objectives for A-level Business

Assessment Objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx. %)			Overall weighting (approx. %)
	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	
AO1	9-11	6-8	5-8	22-25
AO2	9-11	8-11	5-7	24-27
AO3	5-8	8-11	9-12	25-28
AO4	5-8	6-9	9-12	23-26
Overall weighting of components	33.33	33.33	33.33	100

Further Guidance

Don't just read through your lessons. Make notes as well. What *sort* of notes is your own business, but note-taking has two main purposes:

- (a) it clarifies and cements the idea in your own mind;
- (b) it gives you something concise to come back to when you embark on assignments or revision.

Of these it is all too easy to forget the first. Most open learners find that they forget what they read but the very act of writing something down forces them to focus on the underlying concept and to see how it relates to other aspects of the topic under consideration.

Don't underestimate the amount of time required for study if you are to achieve full understanding. Simply reading the lessons through once or twice is unlikely to be sufficient. You should go through them with a fine tooth-comb, referring back and forth to syllabus and textbook, considering sample examination questions, etc.

Do full justice to the self-assessment tests and activities. Many of them are similar in form to the tasks you will face in your exams. It is all too easy to convince yourself that you have understood a particular point and go straight on to the next section without making a proper formal attempt at the test or activity.

Don't just work out the answers in your head. Put them down on a piece of paper. And if they are wrong, don't just proceed blithely on to the next section. Work out *why* they are wrong and go back over the relevant parts of the lesson or textbook until you are confident that you would not make the same mistake again. If you still do not understand why you have got something wrong, it may be time to contact your tutor.

Look for examples of each concept in your own experience if you are lucky enough to have some first-hand contact with business organisations, small or large. If not, see how the ideas relate to the companies that are making the news in the local or national press. Do your best to cultivate your contacts with the business world. If you are already working within a business organisation, try to see how the concepts relate to the day-to-day life and, whenever appropriate, try them out in your own working life.

Business is an enjoyable, challenging and rewarding subject. It is not *just* a useful educational qualification and may well

contribute to your professional life. Enjoy your studies and good luck!

Studying the Syllabus

You should be sure to acquire your own copy of the syllabus, either via the AQA Publications Dept or from the website www.aqa.org.uk.

The syllabus can be purchased from

AQA Publications
Unit 2, Wheel Forge Way,
Trafford Park
Manchester
M17 1EH (tel: 0870-410-1036)

or downloaded from www.ool.co.uk/0012bu.

We advise that you obtain a copy of the syllabus so that you can assess which topics you have covered in the most detail and which ones you will feel happiest about in the exam. AQA can also provide advice booklets on your course, including 'Supplementary Guidance for Private Candidates'. As you approach the examination, it will also be helpful to purchase and tackle past papers from AQA.

Using the Internet

All students would benefit from access to the Internet. You will find a wealth of information on all the topics in your course. As well as the AQA website (www.aqa.org.uk), you should get into the habit of checking the Oxford Open Learning site (www.ool.co.uk) where you may find news, additional resources and interactive features as time goes by. Put it on your Favourites list now!

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