

Getting Started September 2007

GCE General Studies

Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE in General Studies (8GS01)

First examination 2009

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First examination 2010



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Introduction

Edexcel's GCE in General Studies has been developed in consultation with schools, colleges, university lecturers and professional bodies to ensure it provides a coherent and engaging programme of study at Advanced Subsidiary and natural progression into A2.

This Getting Started book will give you an overview of the course and what it means for you and your students. The guidance in this book is intended to help you plan the course in outline and to give you further insight into the principles behind the content to assist you and your students in succeeding in the course.

Some teachers may effectively have as little as 15 to 20 hours in which to prepare their candidates for each unit. The need is to focus on the weightings of the assessment objectives. Knowledge and understanding (AO1) are both important but not **all** important. At AS they account for no more than one third of the marks. Most of these marks are linked to multiple choice questions in Section A so candidates need to understand how to approach such questions when the correct choice is not immediately apparent to them.

Perhaps more important than knowledge and understanding are a range of **skills** which candidates require for success. These include:

- communicating with accuracy, including accurate spelling and punctuation
- successfully undertaking mathematical reasoning or interpretation
- demonstrating good application of number skills
- distinguishing between different forms of knowledge/belief
- recognising different types of argument,
- selecting and marshalling suitable evidence to support arguments and conclusions or
- correctly interpreting pictures, diagrams or text.

General Studies skills

Students require a wide range of skills to successfully complete Edexcel's GCE in General Studies. The information in this section outlines the skills required in each unit.

Meeting AO3 requirements successfully

Unit 1

All candidates should know, understand and be able to apply the following characteristics:

Term	Characteristics
Fact	Facts are objective and can be verified and supported by evidence
Opinion	Opinions are subjective, not generally agreed, contain value judgements and may or may not be supported by evidence
Belief	If a statement is believed by at least one person it is a belief - beliefs may be true or false and may or may not be supported by evidence

Often candidates are asked to identify a statement that is **fact only** or **opinion only**. In such cases candidates should be careful not to include inappropriate parts of a statement. In the statement:

Mr Buchanan said 'the event was a waste of time'. He added that a pathetic profit of £1.87 was the only result of hours of work by truly dedicated people.

- Mr Buchanan said... is **fact**
- 'the event was a waste of time' is **opinion**
- 'profit of £1.87' would be **fact** but 'pathetic profit of £1.87' is **opinion**
- 'truly dedicated people' is **opinion**.

Unit 2

Candidates preparing for AO3 also need to practise identifying the differences between various types of argument – inductive, deductive, arguments from analogy, cause and authority. They also need to be aware of fallacies. All candidates should know, understand and be able to apply the following characteristics:

Term	Characteristics
Inductive argument	In this type of argument which goes from particular observations to a general conclusion, even if the premises are true and the argument is good, the conclusion is still only more or less probable.
Deductive argument	If the premises are true in this type of argument - in which a general premise leads to a specific conclusion - and the argument is a good one, the conclusion must be true
Argument from analogy	This type of argument rests upon the premise that something is somehow similar to something else and the idea that things that are similar in one way will be similar in another.
Argument to a cause	This type of argument suggests that if one thing happens before another, the first must be the cause of the second – this is not necessarily true since sometimes correlations have nothing to do with causes.
Argument from authority	This type of argument rests upon the claim of an individual who has expertise in the subject or area under consideration
Fallacy	This refers to a pattern of reasoning which is mistaken but which people commonly use.

Communicating effectively

Approximately 15% of marks are now allocated to communication (AO4), so a good communication mark can ensure a student scores one or perhaps two grades more than equally well-informed candidates whose work may be untidy, difficult to read, misspelt, poorly structured and virtually unpunctuated. All candidates are strongly advised to:

- write neatly in black or blue ink or biro
- ensure their handwriting fits comfortably onto the lines of the exam paper and is neither minutely small nor over-large (centres of candidates unable to conform to such conventions for health or physical reasons should consider applying to use an amanuensis)
- structure their work in a logical and careful manner
- avoid the use of familiar, colloquial or obscene language
- write in complete sentences, starting each sentence with a capital letter
- organise the different stages of their answer into paragraphs
- ensure the words they use are spelled correctly and that proper nouns start with capital letters
- obey recognised conventions of grammar with proper use of apostrophe, commas, inverted commas and full stops.

Although some candidates may use few, if any, of these conventions when texting or communicating with their friends, the allocation of 15% of marks to demonstration of this skill means there is a real reward awaiting those who consistently communicate clearly and accurately.

Application of number

Questions on number could appear in any section and will build on skills acquired from studying GCSE Maths.

- Candidates need to bring a ruler and a calculator to the exam (a ruler because it makes it easier for the candidate to interpret any graphs or diagrams more accurately).
- Candidates are not likely to be asked to draw diagrams themselves.
- Before the exam, candidates should practise estimating numerical answers from given data.
- Great care should always be taken in stating the units in which any answer is calculated and getting decimal points in the correct place.
- Calculations will usually involve addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, decimals and percentages.
- Candidates will need to be able to identify trends from graphical or numerical data and to identify means, medians or modes.
- They should understand the differences between bar charts, line graphs, lines of best fit, scatter diagrams, etc. when it is most appropriate to use each and why.

Successfully tackling multiple choice questions in AS

One third of the marks for the examination can be gained from the multiple choice questions. Sometimes a candidate will immediately recognise a correct answer. But when this is **not** the case, it is best to work through the answers and eliminate those which are ridiculous or not possible. If a question asked:

'What is a firm's weekly wage bill if it employs 2000 workers for 30 hours per week at £7 per hour?'

- A £300,000 cannot be A 300,000 is not divisible by 7
B £420,000 fd
C £423,150 cannot be C 423,150 is not divisible by 2000
D £434,000 cannot be D 434,000 is not divisible by 30...

So the answer is B.

An example of how to deal with stimulus material

Unit 2: Do the Arts challenge or reflect society-unit?

Candidates will not be questioned about particular architects, composers, writers, poets or painters nor will there be questions about the works they produced. But candidates **must** understand the nature of **style** and **innovation** and how artistic works may reflect or lead to **changes** in society and to be able to give **examples**. A good approach might be for students to work in teams to focus on **styles** and **typical works** of particular painters or composers and the **innovations** introduced by later painters or composers.

Students could contrast several works providing the group with access to examples of:

- specific works from different styles – changing views of ‘reality’ and ‘the ideal’
- different ways in which works of art reflect society and how different artists present different societies
- changes in styles, topics, techniques and materials used
- how innovations occur – differences between works and techniques
- different ways in which artists engage with their audiences.

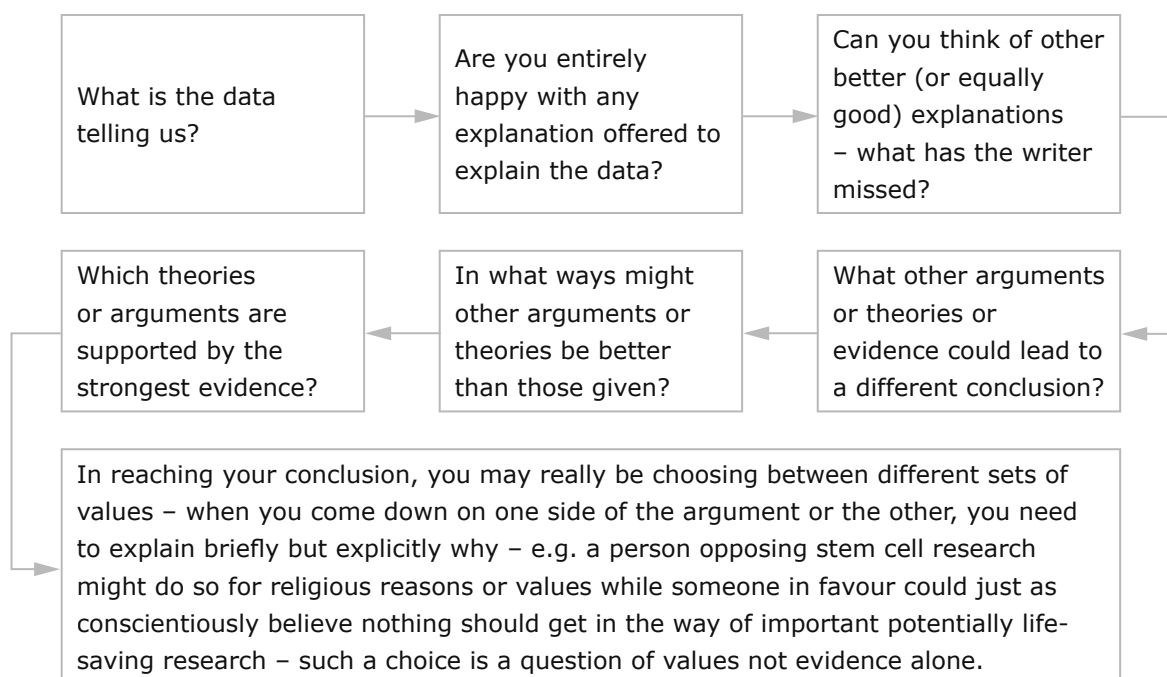
So, guided by the teacher acting as facilitator, one student might focus on *The Regatta at Argenteuil*, by impressionist Claude Monet, 1872 while another member of the group might prefer to study *Coming out of school* by a 20th Century artist such as L S Lowry, 1927. Equally, a group of students might build up a set of contrasting works from different disciplines – music, literature, architecture and from any period of time.

Successful extended writing

Opportunities for extended writing occur in both AS and A2. Where the answer comes out of a data response most successful candidates will adopt a systematic approach:

In Section C, there will be other perspectives to recognise apart from any information given.

- More than one viewpoint should always be explored.
- Arguments should follow a clear and logical path.
- Conclusions should be reached on the basis of the adequacy of evidence or the imperatives which flow from people’s values.



Cross referencing chart

The following chart is a quick-reference guide to how new unit content relates back to the old specification.

Unit 1:

Unit Content	Cross reference from new content to old specification
Characteristics of the sciences (physical, life and earth)	Units 2, 6
Understanding of scientific methods, principles, criteria and their application	Units 2, 6
Social, ethical and environmental implications and consequences of scientific discoveries and technological developments	Units 2, 6
Religious belief and experience, and connections between them	Units 1, 4, 6
Examination and appreciation of ideologies and values in society	Units 3, 5, 6
Explanation and evaluation of human behaviour	Units 3, 5, 6

Unit 2

Unit Content	Cross reference from new content to old specification
Media and communication	Units 1, 4, 6
Examination and appreciation of ideologies and values in society	Units 3, 5, 6
Political processes and goals	Units 3, 5, 6
Explanation and evaluation of human behaviour	Units 5, 6
Social and economic trends and constraints	Units 3, 5, 6
Beliefs, values and moral reasoning	Units 1, 4, 6

Unit 3

Unit Content	Cross reference from new content to old specification
The nature of scientific objectivity and the question of progress	Units 2, 6
The relationship between technology, science, society (past and/or present) and ideology	Units 2, 6
An understanding and appreciation of the changing nature and importance of culture	Units 1, 4, 6
Creativity and innovation	Units 1, 4, 6
The nature of objectivity in social sciences	Units 3, 5, 6

Unit 4

Unit Content	Cross reference from new content to old specification
The moral responsibility of scientists	Units 2, 6
Beliefs, values and moral reasoning	Units 1, 4, 6
Aesthetic evaluation	Units 1, 4, 6
Explanation and evaluation of human behaviour	Units 3, 5, 6
Relationship between law, society and ethics	Units 3, 5
Religious belief and experience, and connections between them	Units 1, 4, 6

Mathematical reasoning and its application will be addressed in all four units and takes the form of analysing, interpreting and representing mathematical information.

Course planner

This course planner has been developed as one possible way of delivering the course. The timings are based on a 2-year course but can easily be adapted for 1-year courses

Week number	Examined content
Year 1	
1-3	Unit 1: What do scientists do?
4-6	Unit 1: How does science affect society?
7-9	Unit 1: Does science benefit society?
10-12	Unit 1: What makes a humane society?
13-15	Unit 1: Should the punishment fit the crime?
16	Thinking and analytical skills (AO3)
17	Effective essays (AO2) and communication (AO2)
18-20	Unit 2: Is it nature or nurture that best explains human behaviour?
21-23	Unit 2: Where do our values and opinions come from?
24-26	Unit 2: Mass media; representation or reality?
27-29	Unit 2: Do the arts challenge or reflect society?
30-32	Unit 2: Is the UK really a democracy?
33	Application of number activities (AO1 and AO2)
33 – 34	Revision and AS exams
Year 2	
1-3	Unit 3: Does the world have to change? Thinking and analytical skills (AO3)
4-6	Unit 3: How do new ideas come about?
7-9	Unit 3: How have inventions affected society?
10-12	Unit 3: How do changes in social attitude come about?
13-15	Unit 3: How and why do we measure change in society? Application of number activities (AO1 and AO2)
16-18	Unit 4: Do we need religious beliefs?
19-21	Unit 4: Should everyone have the same moral responsibilities?
22-24	Unit 4: How do we decide what is right and wrong?
25-27	Unit 4: Why do people do what they do?
28-29	Unit 4: How should art be valued?
30	Synopticity (AO1, AO2, AO3)
	Revision and A2 exams



It is also worth noting that in General Studies:

- Units 1 and 2 can be tackled in any order, as can Units 3 and 4.
- Depending on the resources available in the centre, it should be possible to plan for a range of different kinds of teaching (lecture/discussion/debate/group and individual presentation/individual project) to be used in each Unit.
- If you have two or more groups on at a time you could introduce a rotation system e.g. term 1 teacher A delivers Unit 1 to group 1 and teacher B delivers unit 2 to group 2; then in term 2 teacher A delivers unit 1 (again) to group 2 and teacher B delivers unit 2 to group 1. This has many attractions to teachers because it can reduce preparation time, allow delivery of the same lesson more than once; reduce demand on resources. Candidates entered in January can be entered either for Unit 1 or Unit 2.

Unit content

The following section contains helpful information on unit content, including topics for investigation, debate, group discussions, presentations and activities.

Unit 1

Prediction and Induction

One of the main purposes of science is to enable us to predict what will happen in the future e.g. when we change the temperature and pressure in a chemical reaction, when we cross-pollinate different varieties of plant or when we plot the trajectory of a planetary probe. Scientific prediction is based on induction, which is simply a generalisation from previous observed regularities. A useful way to explain induction is to compare induction with deduction. Consider these two examples.

Example A - Deduction

- 1 Parallel lines never meet.
- 2 Lines P and Q are parallel.
- 3 Therefore lines P and Q will never meet.

If statements 1 and 2 are true then statement 3 **has** to be true.

Example B - Induction

- 1 It rained on Monday morning.
- 2 It rained on Tuesday morning.
- 3 Therefore it will rain on Wednesday morning.

Statements 1, 2 and 3 may all be true, but it is possible for statements 1 and 2 to be true and statement 3 to be false.

Mathematics is based on deduction so if the original premises/axioms are true then the mathematical theories which are developed from them must also be true. Think of the way Pythagoras' theorem is proved. In science, we can develop theories which explain our observations and enable us to predict what we expect will happen in particular circumstances, but we can never be absolutely certain about our predictions.



Students could do/investigate/discuss:

- the difference between induction and deduction
- the 'Black Swan' example
- whether the number of observations makes predictions based on induction more likely
- whether the "certainty" of predictions is different in different areas of science
- does the lack of certainty mean that science is worthless or does not 'work'
- how does knowledge in science compare with other areas e.g. economics or social sciences?
- is anything absolutely certain?

The Copernican Revolution

Astronomy has always been closely linked to religions of various sorts. In 16th century Europe science was still largely based on the works of Aristotle, while astronomy still used the Ptolemaic model with the Earth at the centre of the solar system and mankind at the centre of a universe created by God. It was also believed that the heavenly bodies, the sun and observable planets, had to move in 'perfect' spherical orbits.

The Ptolemaic system had to use a series of complicated 'spheres within spheres' to match the observed orbits of the planets with the belief in spherical orbits. Copernicus realised that the observed orbits of the planets could be explained much more simply if the Sun was placed at the centre, with the Earth and other planets in orbit around the Sun. Copernicus was reluctant to challenge traditional thinking and beliefs and even 100 years later Galileo was forced to deny his belief in a heliocentric model of the solar system.

Students could do/investigate/discuss:

- find and compare diagrams of the Ptolemaic and Copernican models of the solar system.
- the meaning of geocentric and heliocentric – what are the roots of the words?
- draw up a timeline of important events in European astronomy 1400-1700
- write a sketch biography of Copernicus or Galileo
- why was a heliocentric model such a challenge to the church in Europe?
- why were Galileo's observations of the moons of Jupiter so significant?
- in what way did Darwin's theory of evolution challenge religious beliefs?
- what is Occam's razor?

Science and Technology - Problems or Solutions?

It is sometimes argued that the problems associated with global warming, pollution and the extinction of plant and animal species are due to our increasing dependence on the technological applications of science.

Topics for research

Ask students to prepare a short (3 min) presentation on one of the following:

- What are the alternatives to burning fossil fuels? Are they realistic?
- What is the evidence for or against global warming?
- What are greenhouse gases and how are they produced?
- What does 'carbon footprint' mean?
- What is 'carbon offsetting'?
- What is 'carbon capture'?
- What happens to our household rubbish?
- How long does it take for a 'biodegradable' bag to degrade?
- How are plastics/glass/metals recycled?
- What is a bioplastic?
- How do recycling rates in Britain compare with elsewhere?

Topics for debate

Ask students in pairs to prepare a case for/against the following:

- Technology will solve the problem of global warming.
- The consequences of global warming are inevitable so the only thing to do is prepare for them.
- It doesn't matter what we do because the USA and China produce far more CO₂.
- Personalised transport will disappear with cheap oil.
- Compulsory recycling should be introduced as soon as possible.

Animal Rights

A very small minority of people feel so strongly about animal rights that they are prepared to go to extreme lengths in pursuit of their aims. However many more people take a much more ambivalent approach. While most of us find the use of animal furs unacceptable, there are very few people who do not wear or use something made out of leather. The whole question of animal rights is one which many young people in particular are passionate about and this can be a very good topic for research and debates which link animal and human rights to science and ethics.

Topics for Research

Ask students to prepare a short (3 min) presentation on one of the following:

- What does free-range mean?
- What are the alternatives to testing drugs on animals?
- How many animals are used in testing compared to the number of farmed animals?
- What are the regulations controlling the use of animals for drug testing?
- What are the advantages /disadvantages of vegan/vegetarian diets?
- What rights should animals have?



Topics for Debate

Ask students in pairs to prepare a case for/against the following:

- Fox-hunting is banned so fishing should also be banned.
- Animal rights are not really about animals but about the way humans feel about animals.
- Does a rat have the same animal rights as a cat?
- Animal rights are a luxury we can afford in Britain that people cannot afford elsewhere

Crime and Punishment

Our conceptions of both what constitutes a crime and what is a suitable punishment have changed enormously since the last public hanging in England in 1868. Political disagreement about whether crime rates are increasing or decreasing is common as is discussion about whether it is actual crime or the fear of crime which really matters. It has been said that the purpose of laws and sanctions is to align the particular interests of the individual with the general interests of society, but few would argue that the current system achieves that.

Topics for Research

Ask students to prepare a short (3 min) presentation on one of the following:

- What forms of punishment are available in the British penal system?
- What is recidivism?
- How does the prison population/penal system in Britain compare with elsewhere?
- What does the probation service do?
- What are the rates for different crimes in Britain. How have they changed?
- Are particular groups more likely to be imprisoned than others?
- What education does prison offer?
- Is youth crime increasing?
- What different categories of crime are there?
- Do countries with severe penal codes have less crime?

Topics for Debate

Ask students in pairs to prepare a case for/against the following:

- Prison doesn't work.
- Most crime is punished too leniently.
- Rehabilitation is more important than retribution.
- Crimes against the person should be punished much more severely than crimes against property.
- Criminals should be forced to pay compensation to their victims.

Unit 2

Here are some examples of how to teach unit 2, similar approaches might be adopted for each section in the unit.

Mass media: representation or reality?

A possible course programme:

- Get the class to compare two reports of the same story from different newspapers – introduce representation and reality idea – use texts to highlight different types of knowledge/argument.
- Introduce students to the idea of producing a Glossary of Terms – students to share responsibility for defining every term in the Mass Media section of the specification including the Clarification of Content, the connections between them and finding examples of each.
- Discuss/debate/agree the content of the Glossary (to which all members of the group will have contributed) and the connections between different terms and undertake an 'interpretation' exercise perhaps based on data from Social Trends to develop skills of verbal or mathematical interpretation/reasoning.
- Class to be split into several groups to research and tackle different extended writing activities related to Mass media: representation or reality and to compare work (This could be a private study/homework activity if time is short). Class to discuss and share content of different extended writing exercises.

Is it nature or nurture that best explains human behaviour?

- Group 'brainstorm' on the connections or differences between terms; looking mainly at the Clarification of Content section for the first part of the unit.
- Explore the 'nature' dimension, looking at such issues as: genes, gender, DNA, physical traits, genetic determination.
- This could lead to a consideration of other 'nature' issues such as stem cell research, IVF, gender selection.
- Explore the 'nurture' dimension, looking at issues such as: life chance, environment, social determination, behavioural traits, free will and tabula rasa.
- This could lead to a consideration of other 'nurture' issues such as: sexual orientation, personality traits, intelligence.
- Encourage the group to come to a conclusion.

Marshalling evidence and drawing conclusions

AO2 assesses candidates' ability to marshal evidence and draw conclusions: select, interpret, evaluate and integrate information, data, concepts and opinions.

- A02 accounts for 35% of marks and is tested mainly in Sections B and C.
- In Section C questions candidates may well have opportunities to present arguments which differ from those in the stimulus materials.
- To fully meet the demands of this objective, students should practise looking at pictures, numerical tables, diagrams such as line graphs or bar charts and detailed text, developing an eye for detail and a capacity to appreciate fine nuances of meaning.
- Students should look critically at stimulus materials and learn to look for counter arguments or alternative perspectives compatible with the evidence – sometimes mathematical reasoning may be required. 'Quality' newspapers such as The Times, The Independent or The Guardian are good sources of appropriate materials (useful for AO3 also) on which to work
- Also helpful because it includes commentaries to support/explain diagrams and other data - is Social Trends which can be downloaded from the ONS website free of charge

The use of stimulus is also linked to AO3 which accounts for about 15% of marks and assesses candidates ability to demonstrate understanding of different types of knowledge , appreciating their strengths and limitations.

Is the UK really a democracy?

A passage such as the extract below might be used as a starting point to discuss issues in section 2.7 of this unit.

Ageing UK needs 7 million immigrants to survive

Only an influx of workers from the East can help Britain's shrinking labour force support the post-war generation in retirement. In the last 30 years economic growth was 2.5%, in the next 30 years experts say it is likely to be no more than 1.7%. As older workers retire, there are fewer young workers to replace them because the birth rate towards the end of the 20th century was much lower. So every worker now has more pensioners to support — and that could have a drastic effect on living standards all round as everyone has to work longer, incapacity benefits are cut to get people back into the labour market, retirement ages rise and women who might not have expected to work come to recognise the need to so for more and more hours a week. One way to get the workers we need is to admit 145,000 immigrants a year mainly from EU countries till 2055 - 7 million in total - but the link between protecting living standards and welcoming immigrants is an idea that has yet to become widely understood.

Adapted from Christopher Johnson, The Observer, 13 May 2007

The passage could be used to test the AO3 issues. It could question the strength of the evidence on which the conclusion is reached – could a different conclusion be reached? It could form the basis of a mathematical reasoning question about how the balance between workers and non-workers can best be maintained – perhaps instead of raising school leaving ages, as the government now plans, they should be lowered? Equally, in Section C, it could be the stimulus for a question about whether Britain has to become more of a multicultural society, with candidates needing to consider alternatives to the conclusion reached above.

Unit 3

Conservation

The ideas behind conservation lend themselves to some very interesting discussion and exchange of views. Students can be directed to debate along the following lines:

- Using an Internet search, dictionary or encyclopaedia, find out the meaning of 'conservation' and the verb it is derived from.
- How does 'conservation' differ from 'conservatism' and the English Conservative Party?
- Conservation, in an ecological sense, advocates the preservation of habitats and species. There are many possible reasons why this may be regarded as a sensible strategy – currently the most obvious is the long-term survival of humans in the face of climate change. How realistic is this?

Suggestions for debate topics:

- Conservation only leads to a dead end.
- We need only to conserve what is best from the past to make a brighter future.
- In order to conserve the best from the past, it is also necessary to preserve the worst.

Ancient Greeks and the Modern World

It is not often realised how much modern Western thinking is still influenced by the work of Greek philosophers and teachers of around 2500 years ago. Many concepts we argue about today were first defined and discussed in the work of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

Some key points in teaching this section:

- Socrates and Socratic teaching
Socrates and his pupil, Plato, provide the basis for many modern ideas in politics, philosophy, science and teaching. The Socratic approach to teaching – creating understanding by careful questioning of the learner – is implicit in most modern educational systems.
- Aristotle and his interpretation of nature
For hundreds of years in Europe, Aristotelian beliefs were accepted as the basis of all science and morality. Education consisted of imbibing these beliefs and arguments. St Thomas Aquinas was the most influential of thinkers in medieval times to promote Aristotelianism in Western thinking.
- The Enlightenment shook off some of the restrictions of classical thinking – by challenging Aristotelian assumptions (they were based only on his original observations of nature and not subjected to experimental test). This brought about a complete change in the way we acquire and substantiate our understanding of the way nature works.

The scope of this topic is vast – which is why it is important to consider key features, and to relate them to modern arguments and disputes. We have ignored here the development of mathematics, for example, and it would be possible for an interested teacher to develop this, if time is available.

Innovation in art – the production of a new style or form

'Art' is a generic term including all expressive arts – visual, musical, literary, architectural.

Work for individual students:

- Choose an artistic style and list its defining characteristics or features.
- Find out some important biographical facts about the artist who created this style.
- Establish a timeline for the development and production of works in this style.
- Is the style associated with any social, moral, philosophical or political beliefs?
- Did the artist intend to promote these beliefs?

When you have done this, compare it with other styles or forms studied by fellow students through a focussed discussion.

Group discussion

This is best done in groups of 8-10. Appoint a chair to manage the discussion. The group should be challenged to relate their studies of individual artists to one broad general question about art. For example:

- What makes good art?
- Does a new art form always challenge convention?
- What is the job of the artist?

The chair should make a brief record of agreed conclusions, for comparison with those of other groups.

A Scientific Revolution

Students are given a list of scientific theories that resulted in revolutions which they might research and develop an understanding.

Suggested topics include:

- The development of the heliocentric theory by Copernicus.
- The Newtonian theory of gravitation.
- The wave theory of light.
- The theory of special relativity.
- The structure of the atom.
- Tectonic plate theory and continental drift.
- The evolution of organisms by natural selection.

Students should prepare a poster that illustrates:

- The main points of the theory.
- Demonstrates how it differs from previous understanding.
- Shows how the proponent of the theory came to think of it.
- Shows how the new theory affected subsequent scientific understanding.
- Shows briefly why the theory is the basis for a revolution in scientific thinking.
- Shows whether the theory had an influence on subsequent social, philosophical or political thinking.

The posters could provide a competition when displayed – viewers could vote for the clearest explanation/insight, or for quality of presentation.

Ethical implications of discoveries in medicine

The rapid increase in understanding of the biology of disease, genetics and human physiology has given rise to a wide range of decisions that may have been made by doctors and the general public.

Decisions to be made by doctors and medical staff might include: Is a drug safe to use, since it may have side effects?; Does a surgical procedure involve acceptable risks?; Is the diagnosis of the problem sound?; Are there sufficient resources available to deal with this patient's problem?; How urgent is it to make a decision?; For a patient with a terminal illness, what are the risks of the pain relief provided?

Decisions by the patient, or by the patient's relatives may include: Do I accept the diagnosis and advice of the doctor?; If not, what do I do about it?; Do I, as a relative, have the right to make decisions on the part of the patient (where the patient is incapable of making them)?

A strategy for getting students to understand the ethical problems generated by medical advances is to look at a specific development. They need to understand the basis of the advance, how speculative it might be, and the basis for the moral reasoning involved. Examples might be:

- Organ transplantation involving an organ from a deceased donor (e.g. heart).
- Organ transplantation from a living donor (e.g. kidney).
- In vitro fertilisation.
- Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis.
- Vaccination of young children.
- Testing a new drug.
- Stem cell harvesting.

The Media and Morality

The media are obviously active in providing information and entertainment. The media will wish to reflect the interests and prejudices of their audiences; how much they create prejudice is a matter for discussion and analysis.

Some newspapers take on a leadership role when there has been an event, such as child abduction, where the editors believe that they can attract new readers by adopting a cause. Many may argue that they are following public opinion, rather than influencing it.



Students should search the Internet for references to 'Sarah's Law'. This legislation was suggested in the wake of the abduction and murder of a little girl by a child sex offender in 2000 and basically provides for the publication of the names and addresses of sex offenders, for the information of parents in any particular locality. Find out and summarise the answers to the following questions:

- The proposal originated in another country. What was the nature and implementation of this?
- How did different newspapers respond to the murder of Sarah Payne?
- What was the public reaction to the murder in the weeks and months following?
- How influential were the newspapers in this reaction?
- What are social, legal and moral consequences of implementing such a law?
- What evidence is available on the effects of such a law?
- Do you believe such a law should be introduced?

Follow-up activities to this research might be small group discussion, with a specific problem to resolve, or a bigger debate on a specific proposal.

Human rights

Appeals to 'my rights' are becoming more and more familiar. It is important that we develop better insights into what is meant by 'rights'; even if we are unable to resolve fundamental differences.

Key points and questions for a teaching scheme:

- 'Human' and 'natural' rights are held to be synonymous by some experts, different by others. The idea that all human beings have certain 'inalienable rights' is stated in the American Declaration of Independence, based on the belief that human beings must follow their nature. Presumably this means that individuals have a right to ensure their own survival – by having enough to eat, to defend themselves against attack and to procreate. However, the realisation that crude exercise of such rights might cause some problems led to the early development of social contract theories.
- Human rights are established by domestic laws in some countries and by many are regarded as a pillar of any democracy. Students should acquire some familiarity with the European Court of Human Rights, and the UK's relationship with the court. In countries with monarchies, it is interesting to examine the relationship between the rulers and the ruled.
- Other rights are thought to exist, and there have been many attempts to establish natural rights in different circumstances. Good examples for discussion or debate include:
 - Are children's rights different to adult's rights?
 - Do animals have rights?
 - Do those individuals who do not believe in human rights have a right to express and implement their views?
 - Is it possible to have rights without responsibilities?

Measuring society

Students should be given some insight into the statistical information available from government sources and the uses to which it can be put. The most useful resource is at National Statistics Online.

The simplest strategy is to give students a specific task to follow up. For example:

- What is the level of migration into and out of the UK in the last 10 years?
- What is the current level of inflation in the UK and how has it changed in recent years?
- How well are shops doing in the UK?
- What differences are there in the income of men and women in the UK?
- Is unemployment in the UK increasing or decreasing?
- Is there evidence of improvements in the treatment of cancer in the UK?
- What does the British Crime Survey tell us about the level of crime in the UK?

Teachers are advised to try to answer these questions themselves first and think up examples that may be more appropriate to their school or college, locality, or other current topics of study.

In addition, students should be required to carry out some simple data manipulation and mathematical tasks, one of the requirements of this section of the unit.

For example:

- Convert tabular data into graphical data.
- Extract specific data from generic tables and graphs.
- Calculate means from tables.
- Convert percentages to numbers, and vice versa.
- Extrapolate and interpolate from tabular or graphical data.



Unit 4

Do we need religious beliefs?

The key focus is the contribution of religion to a modern secular society. Two lessons are allocated. Tutors should select material that is appropriate to their group.

- Start with tutor input on the nature of belief. Note that religious belief is a sub-set of belief. Handouts may be used for essential information.
- Students then brainstorm in small groups to identify different beliefs and belief systems and their characteristics. Feedback should distinguish between beliefs and religious beliefs.
- Use handouts to identify major world religions with examples of different beliefs, key and different practices.
- Lesson 2 could start with discussion on why people hold or reject religious beliefs. Tutors should adopt a neutral position.
- Further discussion should focus on possible effects of religious beliefs. Consider positive and negative effects. Stress the range of people affected by religious beliefs. Examples should be identified.
- Conclude with a consideration of the need for religious beliefs today. The key word is 'need'. Pay attention to 'we'. The activity could be a debate or extended writing.

Should everyone have the same moral responsibilities?

The key focus is whether creative freedom should have greater moral restrictions than society normally imposes, involving freedom of expression (arts) and responsibility for future application of discoveries (sciences).

- Start by considering through discussion the meaning of moral values and moral responsibilities. Build on work done for AS (using handouts).
- Students brainstorm why creativity is important for individuals and society. Consider differences between stagnant and progressive societies.
- Students should discuss the function of creators. Identify similarities and differences between artistic and scientific/technological creativity, in terms of work methods and outcomes.
- Outline arguments for social responsibility versus individual freedom. How can we decide which is most significant?
- Use handouts identifying existing legal and social/moral constraints on individual freedom. Question who decides such restrictions.
- Commence lesson 2 with a debate/discussion on this question. Identify and consider the costs/benefits of different constraints.
- Debate (or extended writing) whether and under what circumstances protest based on moral objections to creativity is justified.
- Consider when breaking the law in order to protest is justified.

How do we decide what is right and wrong?

The key focus is the origin, nature and application of morality. Students should differentiate between moral values and moral reasoning and apply these to a range of contemporary issues.

- Introduce the concepts of moral codes and moral values. Question their development and whether they are absolute and whether they can change.
- Consider moral reasoning as a process of applying moral codes or moral values to issues.
- Students discuss the basis of moral reasoning examining the origins of different types. Use handouts to describe different forms of moral reasoning.
- Brainstorm to identify contemporary moral issues. Discuss how different forms of moral reasoning could be applied to some of these issues.
- Start lesson 2 by discussing conflict between social responsibility and freedom of choice. Examine one of the contemporary moral issues in terms of social responsibility versus individual freedom.
- Show how moral attitudes to this issue have changed over the last half century.
- In groups discuss how and why attitudes have changed and feedback to list possible causal factors. Consider how society has been affected by such changes in attitudes.
- Compare the morality and attitudes of today with earlier societies. Identify similarities and differences.

Why do people do what they do?

The key focus is whether human behaviour is taught through socialisation or whether behaviour patterns evolve. Links exist with other sections, especially in Units 1 and 3.

- Explain the meaning of 'human behaviour' and brainstorm different types of behaviour. A useful introduction might be the use of local newspapers to identify different forms of behaviour.
- Outline three categories of behaviour and describe the criteria that identify them. This may be done through discussion or using a handout.
- Using copies of local newspapers (or lists previously created) categorise examples of behaviour under each of the three headings.
- Discuss different influences (psychological and sociological) that may shape behaviour. Explain how each factor may achieve its influence. Introduce the idea of socialisation.
- Brainstorm who decides which behaviour fits into each category.
- Lesson 2 starts with the definition of deviance. In groups discuss whether society needs deviant behaviour. Identify benefits of certain types of deviance. Does deviance help society to develop?
- Debate on the theme 'Do humans evolve desired behaviour patterns?'

How should art be valued?

The key focus is how to judge the quality of different art works. Is objectivity possible? The second issue is the role and funding of museums as guardians of heritage. The two issues are linked by how museums determine what is good and worth preserving.

- Brainstorm the nature and purpose of art. Identify different art forms with examples.
- Discuss how to judge the quality of art. Use a specific example using sub-headings: who, why when and how? Consider differences between subjective judgements.
- Discuss the values of personal taste compared with advantages and disadvantages agreed criteria.
- Outline key aesthetic criteria. Consider the relative usefulness of form, content and longevity. Who should define such criteria? Are there other criteria?
- Apply the criteria to compare examples taken from different styles or genres.
- In lesson 2 define museums and examine their function. Identify with examples different types (specialist/general, private/public, local/national etc.)
- Use figures to show the relative wealth of selected international museums and ask if they should be competitive and whether competition simply inflates costs.
- Look at different ways to fund museums. Discuss the relative merits of each.
- Conclude with a debate about the cultural significance of museums. Link to earlier discussion about aesthetic evaluation.

Useful resources: *A Level General Studies* (Davies and Little) pages 15, 60-71
The Longman Revision Guide pages 168-169, 176-185

Student Guide

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

Although there are no prior knowledge requirements for the Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced GCE in General Studies, it would be useful to have studied at GCSE or BTEC First level.

What will I learn?

You will be exploring three areas: science, culture and society and you will learn how to:

- use thinking and analytical skills
- recognise the difference between knowledge, truth and belief
- recognise different ways of arguing
- use mathematical reasoning - analyzing, interpreting and representing mathematical information.

Below is a breakdown of the units:

Unit number and unit title	Level	Summary of unit content
Unit 1: Challenges for Society	AS	This unit explores the challenges facing society, whether they are scientific, technological or moral. It looks at such issues as nuclear power, genetics, climate change and global warming and asks what makes a humane society.
Unit 2: The Individual in Society	AS	This unit explores the individual in society and asks what influences behaviour and where values and opinions come from. It looks at such issues as developments in travel and new communication systems, peer groups, multi-culturalism, media influences, bloggers.
Unit 3: Change and Progress	A2	This unit explores the nature of change and progress in different fields of human experience - art, science and technology. It looks at such issues as education, industrialisation, employment, changes in male/female roles, equality, inequality, migration and human rights.
Unit 4: Beliefs, Values and Responsibilities	A2	This unit explores the unifying themes of values and beliefs that societies develop to guide the behaviour of individuals and groups. It looks at such issues as religious belief, social norms, antisocial behaviour, deviance and creativity.

Is this the right subject for me?

General Studies is suitable for all students. All it requires is a curiosity about the world we live in, and a willingness to engage in arguments and discussions. The course will help you to develop the ability to think independently and to recognise false arguments.

How will I be assessed?

Unit number and unit title	Level	Assessment information
Unit 1: Challenges for Society	AS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour 30 minute examination. • Assessment will take the form of multiple choice questions, questions based on stimulus material and short essay questions.
Unit 2: The Individual in Society	AS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour 30 minute examination. • Assessment will take the form of multiple choice questions, questions based on stimulus material and short essay questions.
Unit 3: Change and Progress	A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour 30 minute examination. • Assessment will take the form of short answer questions, questions based on stimulus material, essay questions.
Unit 4: Beliefs, Values and Responsibilities	A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour 30 minute examination. • Assessment will take the form of short answer questions, questions based on stimulus material, essay questions

What can I do after I've completed the course?

This qualification is excellent preparation for both employment and higher education, where a range of problems and conflicting ideas has to be considered and worked through. This process will help you develop highly-valued study and communication skills.

Next steps!

If you feel that this course is of interest to you, speak to your Sixth form tutor. You could also look at the Edexcel website, www.edexcel.org.uk, for further information on the qualification.

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We will inform centres of any changes to this issue. The latest issue can be found on the Edexcel website: www.edexcel.org.uk.

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