Questions matter

Teaching guide

GCSE French (8652), GCSE German (8662) and GCSE Spanish (8692)

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Introduction

This guide offers clear answers to common questions about our GCSE French, German and Spanish specifications. It provides straightforward guidance to help you deliver our specifications with confidence and ease.

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Vocabulary and grammar

What are the assessment objectives for this GCSE?

There are three assessment objectives in the new specification:

- **AO1**: understand and respond to spoken language in speaking and in writing – 35%
- **AO2**: understand and respond to written language in speaking and in writing – 45%
- **AO3**: demonstrate understanding and accurate application of the grammar and vocabulary prescribed in the specification – 20%.

How did you create your vocabulary list and grammar for this specification?

We are required to take at least 85% of words for our vocabulary list from the top 2,000 most frequent words used according to the corpus specified in the DfE subject content.

There is also a list of words from the prescribed grammar list which have to be listed in the vocabulary list and these are listed in the subject content Annex E. The prescribed grammar is listed in the DfE Subject Content and is included in our specification as an appendix.

Are there different grammar requirements for Foundation and Higher tier (i.e. different lists for each tier)?

All the vocabulary and grammar listed at Foundation tier is also listed at Higher tier. Additional grammar and vocabulary for Higher tier can be found listed in our published specifications on the AQA website.

How have you shown a commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in your vocabulary lists?

We have developed our vocabulary list in line with EDI principles to ensure it includes inclusive language, which will feed through into our assessments and represent the diversity of today's society.

We have also added a statement in our mark scheme for productive skills that learners' preferred ways of referring to themselves and others through the use of pronouns, gendered language and grammatical agreements will be credited by examiners.

What is glossing and when will glossing be used in this specification?

Glossing is providing the English meaning of a word alongside the target language word in written texts. Glossing is permitted in Paper 3 Reading assessments in Higher and overlapping tier texts which may include a small number of words outside the vocabulary list. No more than 2% of words in any given text may be glossed in this way. For both Foundation and Higher tiers, all proper nouns (such as cities or countries) that are not on the vocabulary list and are not deemed to be easily understood by learners will be glossed. Please see the sample papers for examples of where glossing has been used.

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Where can we find the interactive vocabulary resource?

The interactive vocabulary lists are available for all three languages under their respective 'Teaching resources' tab on the main subject page. The interactive vocabulary lists have proved to be very popular, and we have had some fantastic feedback from hundreds of teachers through our market testing. If you haven't seen the lists already, do have a look because it really will save you a lot of time in terms of how you want to sort the vocabulary, whether by theme/topic, parts of speech etc. We know lots of teachers have been using the interactive versions already and think they are really helpful.

On the interactive vocabulary resource lists, what do the asterisks mean?

Asterisks on the Vocabulary list indicate where an item appears more than once in the list with a different use. For example, in the French list, we might have 'le*' meaning 'the' and then 'le**' meaning 'it' further down the list.

What is meant by 'no prior knowledge will be assumed' in terms of vocabulary? Can this be more specific?

Exactly that; no prior knowledge at all is assumed, so, for example, *le/la/les* etc are included on the vocabulary list for French. All words from the start of learning a language are included in the lists.

Learners will only be tested on the vocabulary and grammar set out in the defined vocabulary list provided. The only tasks where any words not on the lists will appear in the assessments will be two words in the dictation task and two words on the Reading paper in the inference tasks – please see the sample assessments on our website.

What is the difference between 'required' and 'other' words on the vocabulary list?

Required words are those which the DfE said had to appear in the vocabulary list as separate items. These are listed in Annex E of the Subject Content on the DfE website and are the same across exam boards. They are demonstrating key aspects of the required grammar. It should be noted that learners are expected to know **all** items on the vocabulary list, not just the 'required' ones.

What is meant by a 'word family'?

This is explained in Annex D of the DfE subject content. The word family of each individual headword is not listed separately in the vocabulary list because they follow regular patterns according to the prescribed grammar for each tier. For example, in French, the adjective *grand* is listed in the vocabulary list, but learners will be expected to also recognise and use the feminine and plural forms of this adjective, for example, *grande, grands* and *grandes*.

Does the vocabulary list include all the conjugated forms of every verb included in the exam?

The vocabulary and prescribed grammar lists (the grammar is also listed in the DfE Subject Content) determine which conjugations will be required for each verb at each tier. The vocabulary list must include, as part of the 1,200/1,700 words, irregular forms of high frequency verbs and other parts of speech. More common verbs following a regular pattern will not be listed in full – see the grammar section of the specification for full details.

What are 'multi-word phrases' and 'cultural items' in the vocabulary lists?

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Multi-word phrases refer to phrases in the target language which usually consist of no more than five identifiable words, such as '*il y a*' or '*es tut mir Leid.*' There are 30 of these phrases on the vocabulary list.

Cultural items are items of vocabulary in addition to the main list that represent the specific cultures of target language countries. There are 20 cultural items on the vocabulary list for each language.

Do infinitives and conjugated verbs count as different words on the vocabulary list?

Some or all forms of very irregular verbs are required by the subject content to be listed in full in the vocabulary list. More common verbs following a regular pattern will not be listed in full – see the grammar section of the specification for full details.

Can teachers teach additional vocabulary, outside of the AQA list?

Yes. Learners will get equal credit for using vocabulary outside the AQA list in productive tasks (speaking and writing) and this is confirmed in the mark schemes. For example, if a learner wants to say their favourite sport is badminton and badminton isn't in our list, they will still get full and equal credit.

Would you recommend that high attaining learners hoping for Grade 9 learn basic subjunctive, pluperfect and conditional tenses?

The only required grammar for this specification is that listed in the grammar section of the specification (meaning there is no requirement to include vocabulary or grammar not in the specification lists to achieve a top grade) but learners will of course receive equal credit for including vocabulary and grammar from outside the lists if they wish to do so. We would certainly recommend that learners aiming to continue a language beyond GCSE look beyond the vocabulary and grammar listed in the GCSE specification, but there is no requirement to do so for the purposes of the GCSE exam itself.

Why are the papers still tiered?

The Ofqual consultation on the new specification DfE Subject Content confirmed that MFL papers should continue to be tiered as they were for previous specifications. We have provided tiering guidance on our website.

Which words are in the 'general' column in the vocabulary list?

These are words in the list which are likely to be relevant to a wide range of themes and topics.

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Topics and themes

Does it matter how many topics there are?

It is not intended that the themes and topics will be specifically referenced in all assessment tasks. Learners will be expected to use the prescribed vocabulary and grammar across a range of contexts and assessment tasks.

I am not sure how to teach the topic of Celebrity Culture. Can you help?

We understand that this is a new topic and so we have provided further detail on this in our training courses, as well as teaching and learning ideas for this topic through our sample schemes of work and our sample lesson plans, all available via the teaching resources tab of the website subject page for each language. There is no requirement to teach learners about a specific celebrity, however learners should be familiar with the vocabulary attached to the topic. If you filter for the topic in our interactive vocabulary list, you will find the list.

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Paper 1 Listening

Is there now an additional 2 minutes' checking time at the end of the test as well as the 5-minute reading time at the beginning?

Yes, learners will have 2 minutes' checking time at the end of our Listening tests as well as 5 minutes' reading time at the beginning. This is to give learners the time to check back over their paper, make sure they have not missed any questions out, and importantly, check over the accuracy of their dictation. If they have gaps in their dictation, they could think about what word could reasonably go there and write it during the checking time.

What should learners do during the 5 minutes' reading time?

There are a number of things learners can do during the 5 minutes' reading time which will help them. They could highlight the topic to visualise the context, anticipate what vocabulary they might hear, annotate the options in the target language and highlight key words in the written answers section.

Why have you chosen to maintain the number of repetitions so each extract in Section A (comprehension questions) is heard twice?

Our research with practising teachers showed that there was not an appetite for the extract to be heard three times because it would mean a much longer listening paper – at least an hour at Higher tier and 45 minutes at Foundation tier. We know that learners already find it difficult to maintain concentration in listening tasks. Also, this could result in a more stressful experience for learners; teachers told us that if they have not understood the extract at the second listening, they are unlikely to in a third listening and this can increase anxiety. We have carefully tailored pauses to match the requirements of the task, including page turning and reading of the question before the recording is heard, to provide the support learners need.

Paper 3 follows Paper 1, so that was also a very important consideration in terms of the burden on learners for one exam session.

The new AQA dictation task, however, will be heard **three** times with breaks during the second hearing (these are indicated in the transcript by '/' marks) to allow learners sufficient time to complete the task and without unnecessarily extending the exam time. We have also included two minutes' checking time at the end of the test to allow learners to check their work on the dictation task, particularly before the test finishes.

Why are there more questions in the AQA listening comprehension paper than for the other exam board?

The AQA papers focus on shorter chunks of language, to avoid placing a burden on learners' memory and to make the tasks more accessible, particularly at Foundation tier.

This helps learners move through the paper confidently, avoids them losing their place in the test and provides clarity on which questions are answered from each piece of language they hear, rather than answering a series of questions based on a longer extract, as they are required to do with other boards.

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Do the Listening and Reading papers increase in difficulty as the paper progresses?

The demand of questions in our Listening and Reading papers follows peaks and troughs **within a steady incline of difficulty** – this ensures that learners don't give up during the test as soon as they come to a more challenging question and attempt all questions, irrespective of the level of demand. This approach has been adopted over many years for our papers and is proven to motivate learners to attempt all tasks within a paper.

You can see examples of this approach in the item commentaries on our website.

Are there still distractors on Listening papers in the comprehension questions in Section A?

We are required to have assessments which differentiate appropriately between learners of different abilities, although in this specification the listening comprehension tasks can only include words from the prescribed vocabulary list, so this makes it more accessible. In order to test learners' understanding of the spoken/written language and reward learners who can demonstrate understanding and close listening skills, there will be questions which require learners to select the correct information and discount other options which are referred to as distractors. All listening tests across the different exam boards require learners to demonstrate comprehension and an ability to select the correct information to answer the question and distractors are used by all exam boards for this reason.

Learners find negative constructions in English questions confusing – how do you manage this challenge in assessments?

Our assessments avoid negative constructions wherever possible for better clarity for learners and for the purposes of accessibility. If a negative construction is used, careful consideration will be given to its inclusion, with particular regard to level of demand.

Why are there some words in the dictation which aren't in the vocabulary list?

This is a requirement of the DfE subject content. The intention is for learners to demonstrate understanding of a small number of unfamiliar words using their knowledge of listed words, grammar and Sound Symbol Correspondences (SSC). Two words from outside of the vocabulary list are included at both tiers. The words we select to be included in the dictation from outside the prescribed lists will be words which represent sounds with which learners will be familiar from the words included on the vocabulary lists.

Will the Foundation tier dictation only include present tense verbs?

Not necessarily, but only tense forms required by the Foundation grammar content in the specification would be included in the Foundation tier dictation.

Will learners lose a mark if they don't use an accent or use an incorrect adjectival agreement?

Learners do not have to get everything fully accurate to score the marks and marks are not awarded for individual words. The dictation is assessed for Communication of meaning (AO1) and Transcription and grammatical accuracy (AO3) and the learner's response across all the spoken extracts is considered as a whole. (The use of *aimer* instead of *aimé* means that the meaning would still be communicated, for example.)

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Occasional minor errors do not preclude a top-band mark for AO3 and therefore minor errors such as a wrong accent, incorrect adjectival agreement or double consonants do not mean a learner will miss a mark. However, numerous minor errors would have an impact on the overall mark for AO3. You will find detailed marking guidance and examples of learner responses in the mark scheme and in some of our training courses available via the Professional Development page of our website.

If a number is part of the dictation sentence in Paper 1, can it be written as a number rather than as a word in the exam?

No. This is a transcription task where we are testing knowledge of the SSCs and a learner's ability to transcribe words accurately.

How do the requirements for accurate spellings and clear reading aloud help learners with SEND to access MFL GCSEs?

Our access arrangements team will provide advice and guidance on the most appropriate support available to learners requiring this. Please contact our access arrangements team well in advance of the new exams to discuss support available to any learners who you think may require additional assistance to help them access any of the assessments – a range of possible support measures are available, tailored to the needs of the individual learner.

Will the dictations across all three languages follow the same format?

Yes, the format of the dictation will be the same across the three languages; four short sentences at Foundation tier and five short sentences at Higher tier, as in the sample assessments published on our website for each language.

Do you have an example of the dictation task teachers can listen to?

Our specimen papers can be found on our website in the Assessment tab. The dictation task is the last question in the Listening paper. An audio file of the sample transcript, plus a version for learners entitled to 25% additional time are available.

Will the sentences in the dictation be thematically related?

The sentences in the dictation will be from different topics/themes. This is important because it avoids learners being disadvantaged if the dictation is on a topic in which they feel less confident. It also means we will be able to test vocabulary from across a wider range of topics rather than narrowing into one topic or theme.

We believe it will encourage learners to have a 'fresh start' with every sentence because if they don't understand one of the sentences, they will not be put off completing the other sentences.

Do you provide a listening recording with 25% extra time built in for those learners who require this extra time?

Yes. We provide listening audios with 25% extra time built in for learners entitled to this additional time. This recording is also provided for specimen papers.

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Will you provide recordings with 50% extra time?

We provide recordings with 25% extra time on Centre Services. Learners who require more than 25% extra time need agreement from our access arrangements team for this and the recording needs to be paused manually. See the latest *Instructions for the Conduct of Exams* resource on our website for further information.

Does AQA recognise that transcription of sound to written correspondence is more difficult in French than Spanish and German?

Absolutely – we raised this issue with DfE and Ofqual in the early stages of discussions on the Subject Content. The words tested will be carefully selected to maintain a fair level of demand across all three languages, considering in particular the demand of French in comparison with the other languages. The fact that we have split the marks for the dictation between AO1 and AO3 mitigates some of these concerns as marks will be awarded for more phonetic renderings of the sounds.

Is grammar assessed explicitly elsewhere in the Listening tasks outside of the dictation?

The comprehension questions on the Listening paper are all set and responded to in English or non-verbally (for example task types such as multiple choice, selecting the current statements from a list, etc.) and are marked for communication of the correct information required by the questions, so there is no explicit assessment of grammatical accuracy in the responses on the Listening papers outside the dictation task. However, grammatical knowledge will of course be important for a full understanding of the comprehension tasks in Section A to enable learners to respond correctly to the questions set.

Will the Spanish recordings include speakers from Latin America?

We continue with the previous practice in that all of our recordings are carried out by Castilian Spanish speakers because the majority of learners will have been taught by Castilian Spanish speakers. To add in Latin American speakers would add to the challenge of the assessment and could disadvantage those learners who may not have been exposed to Latin American spoken language as part of teaching and learning. We do of course reference Latin American countries and communities in the rubrics. This mirrors the approach for the other languages where we do not use speakers with non-standard pronunciation.

Learners are free to use vocabulary from outside of our published vocabulary list and from other Spanish speaking countries in Papers 2 and 4 if they wish.

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Paper 2 Speaking

Why is Speaking classed as NEA?

The Speaking test is classed as NEA (non-exam assessment) because this in an umbrella term for any assessment which all learners do not do at the same time on the same day (NEA also includes assessments such as Geography fieldwork, Dance practicals, etc.). There is a five-week window for the Speaking tests to take place at a time organised by the school, so the Speaking test is also classified as NEA.

How is the Speaking test marked?

Speaking tests are conducted and recorded by teachers and all recordings are sent to AQA for marking.

Does the speaking window still fall in the school Easter holidays?

The Speaking test window, according to Ofqual requirements, must be scheduled in April and May. Inevitably therefore, there is some overlap with Easter holidays, which are taken at different times by schools across the country. It is up to individual schools to decide which weeks within the window they want to use to conduct their own tests, taking their Easter holiday dates into account.

Why do Foundation and Higher speaking tests have the same preparation time?

The preparation time given is the amount of time needed to prepare the three tasks in the Speaking exam, and is the same in both tiers, as was the case in the legacy specification.

What is meant by 'time frames' in the assessment criteria?

Time frames refer to a period of time in which something occurs or is planned to take place. You can make a reference to a time frame without always using a verb in that tense. For example, "I am going to the cinema tomorrow" is a reference to the future and counted as the future time frame even though the verb is in the present tense. Using the term 'time frames' in the assessment criteria means that learners can use the present tense with an appropriate time marker if they do not want to use a verb form in the required tense and this will be credited.

Are different tenses required for full marks in the new Speaking test mark schemes?

There is no requirement to specifically test tenses in the Speaking test, although an ability to use different tenses does contribute to the demonstration of variety of language which is required for top marks in some of the speaking tasks, such as the unprepared conversation following the photo card description. Please refer to the mark schemes for specific guidance on each task type.

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Could you clarify how the access arrangement of extra time is to be applied in Speaking exams?

Where a learner has access arrangements for extra time, this percentage may be applied to the preparation time of Speaking exams.

Learners may also be entitled to extra time in the speaking part of the exam, provided that they have a documented speech or communication disorder. These learners may have up to 100% extra time in the actual Speaking tests, but this must be agreed with our access arrangements team well in advance of the test taking place.

Can learners use Latin American or southern Spanish pronunciation in the speaking tasks? Will this be credited equally?

In all parts of the exam, credit will be given for regional variations in the pronunciation of Spanish, for example the different pronunciation of *ce* and *ci*.

Can learners carry forward their marks for Speaking from the legacy specification to the new specification.

No. Marks cannot be carried forward between different specifications.

What are the recommended timings for each tier for AQA?

Please note that there's no requirement to time or adhere strictly to the time recommended for each individual section of the test, but recommended timings are summarised below and teachers are expected to give learners the opportunity to respond fully to all tasks.

	Foundation tier	Higher tier
Part 1: Role-play	Between 1 and 1.5 minutes	Between 1 and 1.5 minutes
Part 2: Reading aloud task	Between 2 and 2.5 minutes	Between 3 and 3.5 minutes
Part 3: Photocard task	Between 4 and 5 minutes in total (approximately one minute for description of the photos and between 3 and 4 minutes for the unprepared conversation)	Between 6 and 7 minutes in total (approximately one minute for description of the photos and between 4.5 and 5.5 minutes for the unprepared conversation)
Total	7 – 9 minutes	10 – 12 minutes

If a learner gets through Part 1 and Part 2 of the Speaking exam in under the recommended time, do teacher-examiners need to make the time up in Part 3 of the exam?

Timings for the speaking exam are 'recommended' and as such there's no need to make up the time in the unprepared conversation.

Some learners may move through the role-play and the reading aloud task (both the text and questions) in less than the recommended time.

Learners should be able to achieve full marks if the recommended timings are followed (provided that the other requirements of the mark scheme criteria are met). There's no need

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for the higher conversation, for example, to be longer than 5.5 minutes and teachers don't need to make the conversation 7.5 minutes to make up for the first two parts being very short.

When does marking stop?

Marking stops when the maximum time for the tier is reached: nine minutes in total for Foundation tier and twelve minutes in total for Higher tier. If the teacher-examiner is asking a question or if the learner is still answering a question when the maximum time allowed has been reached, the learner is allowed to give a response to the question even if this goes beyond the maximum time and this response will be assessed. No additional questions can be asked after the maximum time allowed is reached.

Candidate notes and preparation time

Is there a limit on the amount or nature of notes learners can make during the preparation time?

There are no restrictions on the amount or type of notes that learners make. Learners have access to their notes and the tasks from the start until the end of the exam when they are taken in and retained by the centre in a secure location until after results day. Teacher-examiners must not take away a learner's notes during the exam.

Why can't learners annotate their copy of the reading aloud text during the preparation time?

We wanted to make sure that the reading aloud task was deliverable in all schools, no matter their resources, size or number of learners.

Learners are not permitted to annotate the Candidate cards given to them as this would make it difficult for schools to make sure every learner had an appropriate 'clean' copy. All schools have different numbers of learners and providing a copy to annotate would result in significant paper and printing waste and also potential security breaches if materials were not kept confidential.

For the speaking component, as we have no limits on the number or nature of the notes learners can make, learners can use their preparation time to write out the reading aloud text if they wish and annotate it or use any kind of phonetic symbols or notes to help them deliver it in the test.

Learners have 15 minutes in this exam for their preparation instead of the 12 from the legacy specification, so there is sufficient time to do this. Our approach where the learner can produce a script to read with phonetic spellings, for example, is likely to be easier to follow than reading an annotated version of the original text. Furthermore, learners may refer to the reading aloud text during the follow up questions and use the text to lift words and short phrases to help with their answers to the follow up questions.

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Can learners use tracing paper to record their notes in their Reading aloud preparation?

It is permissible for learners to use tracing paper as an overlay for the candidate card for the reading aloud if they wish as long as teachers collect it in with their notes and keep it securely until results day. However, an AQA issued card must not be compromised in any way, so teachers have to ensure that there are no marks on it as a result of using the tracing paper.

Do learners see all three tasks in the 15 minutes' preparation time?

Learners will be given their role-play, reading aloud and photo card containing two related photos at the start of their preparation time (15 minutes) according to the sequence chart. In the role-play task, there is no longer an unpredictable task, meaning learners will see and can prepare all the bullet point tasks during the preparation time. They're able to script their answers if they wish and use their notes during the exam at any time.

In the reading aloud and photo card tasks, learners will see the text and the photos but both are followed by an unprepared interaction, as required by the DfE Subject Content. All notes made by the learner during the preparation time can be retained and used by the learners for the duration of the Speaking test and can be referred to at any point during the test.

Part 1: Role-play task

What is the format of the role-play?

Our role-plays are all informal social interactions between two friends. We haven't included any transactional role-plays to make sure that there are no tricky scenarios which some learners (especially those from a lower socio-economic background) may find unfamiliar or difficult to navigate because of a lack of lived experience such as tourist information office, restaurant or hotel bookings, buying tickets, lost property etc.

Learners can go into the exam knowing that their lived experiences will not prevent them from accessing the tasks and they will be able to easily visualise the context (an informal conversation between two friends) on aspects of the topics they have studied during their course, making the task accessible to all learners.

The role-play includes a question task for the learner. However, there is no longer any requirement for the learner to ask a question in any of the other tasks within the speaking test.

How many details per utterance do learners need to give in the role-play?

Learners need to provide one detail per task at Foundation tier, but some tasks require two details at Higher tier to reflect the higher level of demand. Learners will be expected to give five details in total across a Foundation tier role-play, and eight details in total across a Higher tier role-play.

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When asking a question in the role-play, will it still be acceptable to form the question using 'and you?' (Moi, j'aime le sport, et toi?) or does it have to be a formed question?

Yes, any form of words which fulfils the question function is accepted.

Is the question that the learner must ask in the same place in every role-play?

The question task may be in different places according to the role-play content – please refer to the sample papers on our website for examples. The question task is marked clearly with a '?' and we have adapted the layout on the Candidate and Teacher card, so the task is set out in a table, meaning the task is easier to follow and more accessible. The question task will never appear first on the role-play.

Does the teacher have to follow the script in the teacher's booklet, or can it be adapted?

Teachers are required to follow the script for the role-play exactly as it appears in the teacher's booklet.

Are the role-play tasks in target language?

The prompts for the role-play on the Candidate card are all in English.

Are the role-play prompts on the candidate card in 'full sentences' or 'phrases'?

The prompts for the role-play are instructional sentences in English, for example 'give **one** opinion about your region'. You can see more examples in our sample assessments for Paper 2 on the AQA website.

Does the option for learners to choose pronouns extend to use of formal/informal address in role-play tasks, for example?

All Role-plays will use informal address to reflect a learner's normal way of speaking in the classroom and teachers should adhere to the script in the teacher's booklet for the role-play task but there will be no penalty if learners respond using the formal form of address instead.

How many tasks require a verb in the role-play?

All tasks at Foundation tier require a verb for full marks and this is made clear with an instruction on the Candidate card 'you must include a verb in your response to each task'. Each task will require at least one verb at Higher tier.

Does a learner get no marks if a verb isn't used?

A verb is required for full marks, but a learner can score one mark for communicating some appropriate information in response to the task without a verb. Please see the detailed mark scheme for each Role-play for more guidance.

If a role-play prompt read, for example, 'say what your favourite day of the week is', would 'J'adore lundi' be credited with full marks?

Yes – this would be credited with full marks (2/2) in this scenario as it completes the prompt using a verb. For information on what would constitute full-credit answers in any of our sample role-plays, please review the sample mark schemes on our website for each language.

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If a role play bullet point is a two-part task separated by three dots in the teacher script (opinion and reason, for example), can teachers ask the first element (opinion) and then ask 'Why?' after the learner has responded to the first element?

Yes. However, if a learner answers the 'why' element in their first response because they are delivering what they have prepared, there is no need for the teacher to then ask the 'why' element as the task has already been fulfilled.

Will my learner be penalised if I inadvertently use formal address in the role-play or the reading aloud conversation?

No, but teacher-examiners should adhere to the script provided to ensure all learners have the same experience.

In the role-play, if teacher-examiners need to repeat the teacher prompt, do they have to repeat the prompt in full or can they repeat just parts of it?

If a teacher prompt is repeated, then it must be repeated in full.

Can a teacher-examiner prompt a missing detail in the role-play?

Yes, please see the instructions for the conduct of the exams for further information.

Can the teacher-examiner prompt the question in the role-play if the learner is not forthcoming with this task?

Yes, please see the instructions for the conduct of the exams for further information.

Part 2: Reading aloud task and short unprepared conversation

Does the learner have to relate their answers to the four compulsory questions to the text they have just read for the reading aloud task, or is it just to introduce the topic and the learner can answer based on their own experiences?

There is no requirement for learners to relate answers back to the reading aloud text, but they can use short phrases or vocabulary items from the text if they wish, to help them answer the compulsory questions.

Can learners restart their reading aloud task if they make a mistake?

Learners are allowed to restart their reading aloud of the text if they stumble, or self-correct their pronunciation of words. It is the final version which is marked. This provides reassurance to learners that they can do this task without worrying about having to do it in a single attempt, particularly if they are less confident.

For the reading aloud task, how does the mark scheme deal with it being more difficult in French than Spanish and German?

All reading aloud tasks across the three languages are designed to test the Sound Symbol Correspondences (SSCs) listed in the DfE Subject Content for the new specification. The tasks will be designed to be of comparable demand across all three languages, and the setting of the text will consider the challenges of French in comparison with the other two languages.

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Do learners see the four questions in the discussion that follows the reading of the text?

The questions for reading aloud are unseen as required by the DfE Subject Content. Learners will prepare the text they are reading out during their preparation time and know that the follow-up questions will be based on the topic of the text, which is given in English on the candidate card to support them. This means they can use the preparation time to anticipate what they might be asked and note down vocabulary/structures they could use.

What have you done to make this task accessible to all learners?

We have split the text into short sentences and changed the layout to a bigger font and wider spacing to make the text easier to read. There is a lot of white space around every word, allowing learners to focus in on specific words and recognise targeted phonemes.

Do the learners keep the reading aloud card in front of them for the duration of the reading aloud task, both reading the text and follow up questions?

Learners are allowed to keep the reading aloud card with them for the entirety of the test, and they may refer to it as many times as they wish during the follow-up questions. All the compulsory questions are very accessible, present tense questions, which cover topic content which will be familiar to learners from teaching and learning.

All cards and notes are kept by the learner until the end of the test when they are taken in by the teacher-examiner and retained by the centre in a secure location until after results day.

Should we interrupt learners if it looks like they are likely to go over the specified time for Part 2 (reading aloud task)?

The reading aloud task is recommended to last approximately two to two and a half minutes at Foundation tier and three to three and a half minutes at Higher tier, but this is only a recommendation, so when the task is completed, you move on to Part 3. The allocation of recommended time is generous to allow for even the most hesitant of learners.

Why are the same assessment criteria used at both tiers for the short conversation?

The criteria are the same at both tiers, so the differentiation is by task through the more demanding questions at Higher tier in comparison to Foundation tier. The response to the four compulsory questions is marked as a whole, not as individual questions.

Are verbs required in learner responses to the follow up questions on the reading aloud task to access the top marks?

Pages 7 and 8 of our sample mark scheme for Paper 2 give detailed guidance on what is needed across all four answers in the reading aloud task to access full marks. The guidance provided in the table at the top of page 8 of the mark scheme focuses on development of answers in order to score in the top bands, and makes reference to needing 'A response which contains at least three clauses (a piece of information that includes an appropriate verb)' in order to score in the top band for the follow-up questions.

We would recommend watching our free on-demand Paper 2 training courses such as our *Getting to grips with the new Speaking test* webinar and our *Getting Started* Paper 2 eLearning to get a deeper understanding of what is required for full marks in this task.

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Part 3: Discussion of a photo card

Will the theme of the photo card be different from the theme in the reading aloud task?

Yes, the theme for the photo card will be different to the theme for the Reading aloud task and each individual sequence will ensure that there is no overlap of content between the three different parts of the test.

Will there be a nominated theme in the photo card task?

There is no choice of theme given because of the flexibility of the task in that the conversation that follows the description of the photos can broaden out into any or all the three broad topics within the theme, at the discretion of the teacher-examiner. This means that the teacher-examiner can tailor questions to the interests and abilities of each individual learner and move across topics if necessary to sustain the conversation.

There are also no compulsory questions in this part of the exam, meaning the conversation can be adapted to suit the learners' needs and interests. As learners are allowed to make unlimited notes in the exam, they are able to keep and use their notes to support them in this part of the test as well, e.g. they can write opinion phrases, verb endings, etc, to use in their responses.

Learners cover all three themes as part of teaching and learning and will practise their speaking skills as part of teaching and learning before the exam. All learners will be able to feel successful in this part of the test because of the breadth of the topics. For example, if the theme is People and lifestyle, the teacher can ask any questions on identity and relationships with others, healthy living and lifestyle, and education and work.

There are no prescribed questions for the task and no requirement to ask questions in particular time frames – the criteria refer only to 'complex language' at Higher tier. There is more guidance on this in the published mark scheme. The benefit of this approach is that it allows teachers to cover any aspects of three broad topics for each learner's conversation, allowing all learners to be successful.

There is no set number of questions and learners must not know in advance which questions will come up in their own test.

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Do learners have to describe both photos on their card, one after the other or compare and contrast the photos?

In the photo card task, learners are allocated one photo card containing two related photos from one of the themes. The first part of the task is a description of the content of the photos. This lasts approximately one minute at Foundation tier and one and a half minutes at Higher tier.

Learners look at the two photos and make notes on the content of both photos in their preparation time. They can compare and contrast the photos if they would like to, but there is no requirement to do so. They must say at least one thing about each photo, but coverage does not have to be equal.

Both photos have plenty of content and, as there is no requirement for coverage to be equal, learners can say more about one photo than the other if they feel more confident in their description of that photo.

They can make unlimited notes in the preparation time and use these notes in the test.

In the description of the photos, can the teacher prompt the learner to say something about the other photo to avoid the mark deduction, such as 'and photo 2?'

Yes – more information is provided on this in our *Preparing for 2026* training courses and in our instructions for the conduct of exams. Although not compulsory to divide their descriptions in this way, it's also good practice for the learner to prepare to refer to each photo in turn, for example "In Photo 1…" and "In Photo 2…" to ensure they remember to cover both.

Do learners have to focus on compulsory details in the picture?

No. There are no compulsory details on which learners must focus. This gives learners the total freedom to focus on the aspects of the photos they feel comfortable and confident in describing. Any plausible descriptions of the photos will be rewarded.

As there are two photos and the minimum requirement is to say one thing about each, learners have the flexibility to base their description of the photos on their chosen aspects, minimising any anxiety around not having enough to say about the photos or not saying the 'right' things.

How much should learners say at each tier when describing the content of the two photos in Part 3 of the Speaking test to meet the top band descriptor 'quite a lot of information' at Foundation tier and 'a lot of information' at Higher tier?

We provide more information and exemplification of this as part of our online eLearning and training courses, but to achieve a top band, a learner speaking at a steady pace for the recommended amount of time will be able to fulfil the requirement. 'A lot' is how much you would expect a learner to convey if they speak at a reasonable pace for the recommended time of 90 seconds at Higher tier. Because learners have a 30-second shorter recommended time at Foundation tier compared to Higher tier, they are likely to convey 'quite a lot' rather

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than 'a lot' of information. This is why the descriptor for top band at Foundation tier refers to 'quite a lot'.

In the description of the photos, can the learner place themselves in the photos in the same way they can for Foundation Question 1 in Paper 4 Writing?

No, the task is a descriptive one where learners are required to describe the content of the photos. They can, if they wish, give a personal response in relation to the description, such as *'there is a boy playing football. I like football.'* In Paper 4, the rubric allows for the learner to include themselves if they wish because the rubric refers to *sharing photos with friends.*

Can learners give a personal view about something on the photos, for example, if it is a boy playing football, can the learner say that they like football?

Yes, this would be accepted as it is relevant to the content of the photo. Any content relevant to the photo regardless of the theme/topic of the photo will be credited.

However, as this is a descriptive task, learners cannot place themselves in the photos.

If both photos have people in them and the learner says 'there are people' twice, is it credited both times?

Yes, it is counted twice.

If the learner has said, for example, 'there are trees', but not said which photo this relates to, could this be credited to a photo they haven't said anything about, provided there are trees in both photos?

Yes, examiners will look to reward the content wherever possible to avoid applying the one-mark deduction. However, although it is not compulsory, it is helpful if learners begin their description of the first photo by saying, in the target language, "In photo 1 …" and then "In photo 2 …" when they move on to the second photo.

There seems to now be no emphasis on the need for opinions – is this deliberate?

Learners will of course be credited for giving opinions as part of an extended response to the questions in the unprepared conversation in Part 2 and in Part 3. It is useful for learners to be able to express opinions to describe themselves and the world around them, including things that interest them. However, the requirement to assess specifically the ability to express opinions has been removed from the DfE Subject Content and so learners will not be penalised for not including opinions.

Can learners use conjecture when describing the photo? For example, could a learner say 'it is sunny' if there is a picture of a beach?

Yes. Provided the information given is plausible about the photo and it is communicated clearly, it will be credited.

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Can the learners make up the colours in the photo as the photos are in black and white?

The photo cards are in black and white as per the legacy specification, to keep costs to schools/colleges as low as possible and because colours are not integral to the task. Plausible speculation is credited in the same way as with the legacy specification, for example 'I think the man is wearing a yellow shirt' or 'The sky is blue'. Statements such as 'the photo is black and white' and 'I like the photo' are not credited as the learner has to refer what is in the photo in question rather than make general points which do not refer to the content of the photo.

Are there any compulsory questions to ask apart from 'tell me about the photos', for example in the unprepared conversation?

There are no compulsory questions in the photo card unprepared conversation in the AQA test. Once the description of the content of the photos is complete, teachers move on to the unprepared conversation and have a free choice of questions within the three topics of the theme of the card, allowing for a conversation that is personalised to the interests and ability of each individual learner.

Teachers may wish to stick to one or two topics within the theme for the duration of the unprepared conversation, or may want to switch between topics for learners who may struggle with maintaining a conversation on one topic. There is no requirement to cover more than one topic.

Can teachers prepare the learners in class with a bank of questions over the course of the 2 years, which will then be used for the photo task follow up questions?

For this specification, the Subject Content requires an 'unprepared conversation'. Because teachers are advised to tailor questions for learners, it would be practical for teachers to have a range of 'starter' questions per topic which cover different aspects, are of different levels of demand and then use a selection of these in the test for individual learners as well as following up on what they have said to develop an unprepared conversation.

Learners will be able to practise a range of questions for each of the Themes as part of teaching and learning. However, a learner must not know which questions will be asked during the test itself or which topics/themes will be discussed. They also cannot request particular questions to be included in advance. Teachers should facilitate the conversation by following up on a learner's answers where appropriate.

Does every learner test need to be completely different? Are teacher-examiners permitted to repeat a question across different learners?

It's natural that some questions will be repeated and it would be unrealistic to expect every unprepared conversation to be completely different. What's important is avoiding a rigid, pre-set list of questions for all learners. Instead, the conversation should feel natural and develop based on the learner's responses. More information on this can be found in the instructions for the conduct of exams which states that 'The Unprepared conversation should be conducted in a way which is individual to each learner, taking into account their interests and level of ability and should include follow-up questions as appropriate.'

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Is there a maximum time that the learners can talk about the photos for?

No, there are no separate time limits for any of the Speaking test tasks, just recommended times – these are not compulsory. The only timing restriction is the **overall time of the whole test** which is a maximum of 9 minutes at Foundation tier and 12 minutes at Higher tier. Examiners will not mark beyond the overall time limits for the tier.

Is there any benefit to learners if more topics are covered in the unprepared conversation – will they get more marks?

No. The format of this task allows all learners to demonstrate their speaking skills to the best of their ability within the maximum time for the test at the tier.

Some learners may be able to sustain a conversation on one aspect of a topic, whereas a lower-attaining learner may need to move across different topics to keep the conversation going. This makes this task really flexible. There are no requirements around how many topics or how long must be spent on a topic and this makes the test less stressful for teacher-examiners and for learners.

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Paper 3 Reading

Is the P/N/P+N question type used in the Reading papers?

Yes. We will continue to use the **P**(ositive)/**N**(egative)/**P + N** question type in the Reading and Listening papers and there are examples of this question format in the specimen papers.

Our learners always miss the negative in the P + N answers, what would you advise?

We'd encourage learners to read the whole extract before deciding on an answer. Some learners read the first part of the extract and decide on the answer as being positive or negative too quickly. Reading the whole extract will help to see if an opposing point is made to ensure that they do not miss the P + N answers.

Are there any questions in the target language in the reading comprehension section?

No, all questions and answers are in English in this specification.

Can you confirm there is no literary text on the Reading paper anymore?

The requirement to include literary text extracts is not part of the DfE Subject Content for the new specifications. There will be no literary text extracts in the Reading assessments in the new specifications.

Are there still distractors on Reading papers?

We are required to have assessments which differentiate appropriately between learners of different abilities. In order to test learners' understanding of the written language and reward learners who can demonstrate understanding and close reading skills, there will be questions which require learners to select the correct information and discount other options, which are referred to as distractors. All reading tests across the different exam boards require learners to demonstrate comprehension and an ability to select the correct information to answer the question.

Are we offering the same standard and style of question at the same point of the Reading paper year on year, to allow teachers to do question level analysis?

We are required by Ofqual to ensure that our assessments are not predictable over time, so we will not be structuring our assessments the same way each year. Our approach is to decide the best task type to test particular aspects of our content, i.e. vocabulary and grammar, which is in line with good assessment practice.

We have a range of task types which can be seen in the specimen papers and great care is taken to ensure we use the most appropriate task type for the material being tested, e.g. matching or selecting positive, negative or positive and negative. As all of the task types will be familiar to learners, there is no need to have a pre-determined structure. All of the instructions are in English, and we will use examples where needed to ensure tasks are accessible to all learners. We will not be introducing any new task types in addition to those included in our specimen papers and additional specimen papers across the languages. The exhaustive list of task types for Papers 1 and 3 can be found as part of our 'Introduction to the new specification' meeting materials.

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What sort of focus do you have on cultural content and inclusivity in the assessments?

The comprehension questions cover a broad range of different topics and content. We have focused on building cultural capital and celebrating cultural diversity within the contexts of the reading stimulus texts to inspire and broaden learners' knowledge of the target language speaking cultures and communities.

Our specimen papers contain a range of stimulus texts to inspire cultural curiosity and broaden the knowledge of the target language countries and communities.

How are you making sure that learners are not confused by texts referring to unfamiliar people or places?

We have included photos where appropriate alongside the stimulus texts to provide learners with context for places or situations with which they may not be familiar. We have also used the rubric to add helpful context to support learners, for example *Martinique, an island in the Caribbean Sea* or *Togo, a country in Africa*.

Why are there two inference questions in the papers at both tiers?

Testing inference is a Subject Content requirement. We decided to test inference as a multiple-choice task type to make this new task sufficiently accessible for even lower attaining learners.

All of the words apart from the word in bold in the stimulus text are in the vocabulary list, so learners have to use their knowledge of the other words within the sentence to infer the meaning of the word in bold. There are two inference questions, worth one mark per question, in each paper at each tier in every series, and they are always multiple-choice items.

In the Reading paper, are the longer texts found in the Higher tier paper separated into chunks with questions in between or are they one long text?

As you can see from the sample Higher Reading papers, longer texts are clearly split into shorter sections, with the questions following the different sections and order of the text to make the tasks accessible for learners.

Learners sometimes find the level of accuracy required in the translations very demanding. Is this the case for this specification?

Translation is defined as 'an appropriate and sufficient rendering of the meaning of the original language'. In practice, this means that we require less precision in the way the text is translated (see sample mark schemes and Paper 3 training courses for examples). The translations are made up of separate sentences at both tiers to make the task accessible for all learners and reduce the risk of learners missing out words from their translations. It also makes the skill easier for teachers to develop in the classroom, as it is much clearer to translate short sentences rather than a whole passage.

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For the Paper 3 translation, is there always one sentence in each time frame for both tiers?

At Foundation tier, a non-present tense time frame is included and at Higher tier, all three time frames are included. All grammar aspects tested will come from the prescribed grammar list for the appropriate tier.

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Paper 4 Writing

Are the bullet points for the written tasks in English or the target language?

Unlike in the legacy specification, all the bullet point tasks in the Writing exam are now in English, in line with the requirements of the DfE Subject Content.

Can the learners make the colour up for Foundation Question 1 as the photos are in black and white?

The photos are in black and white as per the legacy specification, to keep costs to schools/colleges as low as possible and because, like with the Speaking photo card, colours are not integral to the task. Plausible speculation is credited in the same way as with the legacy spec such as 'the man is wearing a yellow shirt' or 'the sky is blue', providing this speculation is credible for the photo in question. Statements such as 'the photo is black and white' and 'I like the photo' are not credited as the learner has to refer to what is in the photo in question, not just make general points which do not refer to the content of the photo.

Can learners still respond to Question 1 on the Foundation Paper by placing themselves in the photo, for example 'I am chatting with my friends'.

Unlike in the Speaking card photo, learners can place themselves in the photo, as the rubric for the question suggests they are sharing a photo and so, it is logical for learners to describe the photo in the first person. More guidance is available in the published mark scheme on our website.

Can learners use vocabulary from other Spanish speaking countries in writing exams?

Yes. Exactly the same principle applies for French and German and countries/communities where those languages are spoken.

Why are there now five bullet points for Foundation Question 2 and approximately 50 words?

We have increased the number of bullet points in this question to provide more structure to this task to help learners and to ensure that we can differentiate sufficiently between learners of different abilities at this level. The suggested number of words increased from 40, in the legacy specification, to 50, in line with the addition of a bullet point.

Can learners just circle the correct answer in the new Foundation tier Question 3 grammar task, rather than write the word in the gap?

No, as this task is included in the Writing paper, learners are required to complete the task **in writing**. To credit circling of the correct answer would not meet the regulatory requirements for this paper.

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How have you allocated the marks for AO3 (demonstrate understanding and accurate application of the grammar and vocabulary) in this specification?

We have allocated the largest proportion of AO3 marks to Paper 4 Writing, in which learners are able to reflect on their use and accuracy of language. It is much easier to do this in writing tasks than in speaking tasks. Full details of how assessment objectives are split across the papers can be found below:

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx. %)				Overall weighting (approx. %)
	Paper 1: Listening	Paper 2: Speaking	Paper 3: Reading	Paper 4: Writing	
AO1	22.5	12.5			35
AO2		7.5	25	12.5	45
AO3	2.5	5		12.5	20
Overall weighting of components	25	25	25	25	100

Why have you introduced a grammar task into Foundation tier?

We have introduced this additional task for AO3 at this tier to ensure that we have the correct proportions of AO3 marks in comparison with Higher tier. It would have been inappropriate to add more AO3 marks to Foundation tier Question 2, and the overlap question has to be the same at both tiers, so that remains at 10 marks for AO2 and 5 marks for AO3.

It is a multiple-choice task to aid accessibility, and an example is provided to help learners understand what they need to do. This is a very straightforward task and reflects the aims of the Subject Content in terms of learners demonstrating understanding of grammar.

In Question 3 of Foundation Writing paper, is the missing word always a verb?

As seen in the sample papers, the grammar tested includes familiar verb forms in different tenses, but also extends beyond verbs to other grammatical items within the Foundation tier grammar list. For example, there could be questions on adjectival agreement, pronouns or on gender agreements.

Learners should be familiar with the grammatical items being tested and, as the task is multiple choice, this makes the question very accessible.

Do words such as il y a count as one or three words?

Il y a counts as three words as each part of this multi-word phrase is an entry on the vocabulary list in its own right. As with the legacy specification, suggested approximate word counts for any assessed written tasks are provided purely as a guide to help to ensure learners cover the bullet points in enough detail to enable access to the full range of marks. There is no maximum or minimum number of words and learners should not spend time counting the words in the exam – all work will be marked.

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Are the three bullet points on the overlap question always presented in the same order e.g. present, past, future, or could these be mixed up year on year?

Yes. There are only three bullet points on this specification overlap question (see the sample papers). There is no longer a Subject Content requirement to specifically test opinions as a separate task in addition to the bullets targeting the three time frames.

The overlap questions are intended to make the time frames required very clear to the learner, with a bullet targeting the present, followed by one targeting the past, followed by a bullet targeting the future. The same sequence of bullets and time frames will be maintained in every series to provide clarity for learners.

For AO3, can the tense usage be credited wherever it appears in the learner response. For example, if a past tense is used in the answer to a future time frame bullet point?

Yes. Time frame coverage can be credited in relation to any bullet point, provided the tense is used appropriately.

Is there a choice of questions for the 90- and 150-word writing questions?

Yes – there is a choice of two questions for the 90- and 150-word tasks, as with the legacy specification – please see the sample papers on our website for examples.

Is there an expectation to cover three time frames in the 150-word question?

As in the legacy specification, the only question on the Writing paper where all three time frames are specifically targeted is in the 90-word overlap questions (which appear on both the Foundation and Higher tier papers), and this is reflected in the mark scheme. Higher tier Question 3 bullets target a present time frame and one other time frame in each question, and this will vary series on series.

The 150-word writing task is assessed for AO2 (15 marks) and AO3 (10 marks). To access the top band in AO3 learners need to demonstrate a very good variety of appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures. Therefore, we would encourage learners to demonstrate knowledge of all three time frames to help them meet these criteria, although there is no explicit requirement to do so and the work will be assessed on its own merits.

In the mark schemes, where words such as 'generally', 'mostly' and 'sometimes' are used, will these be defined, for example with a percentage?

Detailed guidance with applying the mark scheme bands for a particular question or paper, including sample answers and commentaries can be found in our mark schemes. Further guidance and examples are also be provided in our *Prepare to teach* and *Preparing for 2026* meetings available on-demand via the Professional Development page of our website. You may also with to view our Getting Started eLearning course for GCSE MFL Paper 4 which contains further exemplars and commentaries for a range of question types in each language.

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Support, resources and training

What support is available via Exampro?

Exampro has been helping teachers prepare learners for GCSE and A-level exams for many years. It is ideally placed to help teachers and MAT leads prepare for the new specifications. Some of the new Exampro features include:

Vocabulary

New onscreen vocabulary assessments for years 7–11 for GCSE French, German and Spanish.

Flexibility

New question banks mapped to the new specifications for both print and onscreen delivery.

Powerful Insights

Learner, class, school and MAT-level reports, including population analysis, tracking learner progress, specimen papers for mock exams.

Support and training

Training courses tailored to your needs

Please see the Exampro website for further information.

What textbooks are available for the new GCSE specifications?

Oxford University Press (OUP) has been selected to supply textbooks to support both Foundation and Higher French, German and Spanish specifications. The OUP textbooks will be the only textbooks approved by AQA for the new specifications.

- Foundation and Higher books for French, Spanish and German that follow the themes and topics of the specification. New features include phonics support, activities that reflect the new skills required for GCSE, and cultural elements.
- Accompanying online resources delivered via Kerboodle including vocabulary builders, auto-marked grammar interactives, checkpoint assessments, and thematic worksheets and assessments to practise the new skills required for GCSE.

Why is AQA not approving Kerboodle use?

We only provide approval for the learner books, in line with our publisher agreements across all subjects.

Is AQA training free of charge?

Yes. All national training is available free of charge via the AQA website. We have a wealth of live, on-demand and eLearning courses available to support you in delivering the new GCSE courses. To view our upcoming events, please visit the Professional Development section of our website. You may also wish to sign up to our email updates to keep up with all of the latest news about our resources and support offer.

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Will AQA provide a suggested two or three-year scheme of work?

We have produced an editable sample scheme of work for both KS3 and KS4 for all three languages to support you in preparing your learners for the new exams in 2026. These are available now for you to use or to adapt to suit your own teaching approaches in your school/college context and can be found on our website.

We do a three-year GCSE. What do you suggest as our best course of action?

The specification for all exam boards is designed to be taught over two years, and we have published a sample scheme of work for all three languages. We have also provided a sample KS3 SOW. There should be no need to amend your existing year 9 SOW if you are happy with it, but the example SOWs can be adapted for the requirements of your own learners.

Will the papers be in a format suitable for learners with dyslexia?

For guidance on modified papers, please refer to our website. The body text of all AQA exam papers is printed in 11-point Arial font which has proven to be clear and easily read by learners over a number of years now.

Our access arrangements team are able to advise on individual circumstances for learners with special educational needs.

Are there further sample materials available so schools can use them for mock exam purposes?

Yes. In addition to the specimen papers which accompanied our submission to Ofqual which are on our public website, we have produced a second full set of sample papers intended for mock exam purposes. These sets of papers can be accessed via Centre Services and are kept secure so that you can decide when to use the papers with your own learners.

We have also produced a third set of papers for Papers 1, 3 and 4 which will stay on Centre Services for the lifetime of the specification.

Is there any further support for the new tasks which appear in this new specification?

As well as the sample assessment materials, we've produced additional example questions on the new tasks, for example such as reading aloud and dictation and other tasks where there have been changes to ensure that your learners feel confident. These can be found on Centre Services.

Will there likely be changes coming for the other languages such as Italian and Chinese?

Currently we are not aware of any DfE plans to reform any of the other language GCSEs.

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Have you produced any teaching and learning resources for the new GCSE specifications?

We have produced a range of resources designed to support teachers and learners, and these are all available on the AQA website under the 'Teaching resources' page for each specification.

In particular, our Top Tips for exam success posters contain lots of great advice supporting learners with exam best practice, and our vocabulary sound banks allow learners to hear recordings of the new specification vocabulary. The sound banks are especially useful because they're fully mobile and tablet friendly, making them easy for learners to access from home. Teachers can download individual sound files for easy upload to virtual learning environments (VLEs), or for embedding digital lesson resources. The sound banks are also filterable by topic, theme, part of speech and tier, making it simple to find the right examples to support vocabulary teaching.

Do you have any guidance on grade boundaries to use for year 11 mocks when using the sample assessment materials?

If the cohort ability at your school is considered broadly comparable to the most recent year for which you have actual exam results, the best approach may be looking at the proportion of learners who achieved which grade in the given year and creating boundaries which create a similar proportion of learners on each grade **at subject level** (we would suggest focusing on this rather than the notional component boundaries – it's the overall performance at subject level which counts) once you have the full rank order of learners' performance in mock exams. If the cohort doing the new specification exams is considered likely to perform better or worse overall than the reference cohort from a previous year, then the notional grade boundaries (decided by the school) can be adjusted slightly up or down but there is no precise way of doing this with a new specification. You may wish to take a look at our grade boundary guidance resource too for further information on how awarding and the setting of grade boundaries will work for the new specifications.

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Contact us

Our friendly team will be happy to support you between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

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