

Instructions for the conduct of the exams Summer 2026

FCSE Modern foreign languages

These instructions apply to FCSE MFL exams in:

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|------------------------------------|-------------|
| • Chinese (Spoken Mandarin) | 8973 |
| • French | 8958 |
| • German | 8968 |
| • Spanish | 8998 |

Staff conducting the tests must read and be familiar with both these instructions and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) [Instructions for Conducting Examinations](#) in advance of the exam.

One copy of these instructions, together with a copy of JCQ's instructions, must be available in each exam room – including, for the speaking tests, the preparation area and the room(s) used for the conduct of the tests.

Yellow highlighting indicates a change or addition to the previous version of the *Instructions for the conduct of the exams*

Version 1.1

General instructions

All FCSE materials are strictly confidential.

The FCSE specification assessment materials, Sets C, D (and E Speaking role-play tasks only), Units 1–8, are available to all registered FCSE schools/colleges via Centre Services. Access is limited to teachers and exams officers.

Teachers can print/copy the tests as needed and can study the materials at any time following access. **However, students must not be allowed access to these, other than when they are being tested.**

Once copied, the tests must be kept in secure storage at all times. This secure storage may be in the Modern Foreign Languages Department.

The 'open window' for assessment means that completed tests cannot be returned to students at any time, to ensure complete confidentiality and comparability of experience for all students sitting the tests throughout their shelf life.

Bilingual dictionaries must not be used in any externally-assessed tests.

A complete portfolio must contain the following:

Full course:

- 3 listening tasks
- 3 reading tasks
- 1 speaking task (plus marks for the two unrecorded tasks)
- 3 writing tasks (**note:** one speaking task must be a role-play and one writing task must be a translation task)

Spoken short course:

- 3 listening tasks
- 1 speaking task (plus marks for the two unrecorded tasks) **Note:** one speaking task must be a role-play.

Written short course:

- 3 Reading tasks
- 3 Writing tasks (**note:** one writing task must be a translation task).

The three tasks for listening, reading, speaking and writing **must** come from three different units, and each unit must come from a different theme.

Teachers should also familiarise themselves with the essential information contained in the *FCSE Notes and guidance* which can be found in Centre Services.

Consult our website for [guidance](#) for submitting marks online and sending work to the moderator.

All FCSE centre marks must be submitted online to AQA and the Moderator by 15 May 2026.

Externally set assignments

Listening tests

Requirements

- 1 Materials required:
 - sound files (available from Centre Services)
 - CD player (if required)
 - students' question paper
 - transcript of the recording
 - a copy of these instructions.
- 2 The tests will be provided as sound files on Centre Services in MP3 format. The sound files can only be downloaded to the secure part of a school's network, ie the part of the network which is only accessible to ICT staff and not to students, until the permitted time. If required, the sound files can be copied to CD. Prior permission does **not** need to be sought from AQA. Appropriate measures must be in place to ensure that this material is kept totally secure at all times.
- 3 **The listening sound files and transcripts must be treated as confidential exam materials.**
- 4 The machine(s) which will be used to play the recordings for the tests should be checked and serviced.
- 5 If possible, spare CD players should be available in case of emergency.

Conduct of the tests

- 6 A transcript is provided for the information of the teacher and may be referred to at any time following access from Centre Services.
- 7 Students should be seated in a manner appropriate to the fact that they are taking a formal assessment. They should not be able to see the question paper of other students.
- 8 Supervising teachers should note that the time taken to conduct the Listening tests will vary between units.
- 9 At the start of the test, students should be asked to complete the details at the top of the question paper.
- 10 When all students have completed the details at the top of the question paper they should be given clear instructions on how to complete the test.

Without reference to any answers or information which would unfairly advantage their students, teachers should go through the test, explaining what to do for each task and, if necessary, explaining icons or unfamiliar rubric.

Students must be instructed that, once the recording has started, there must be no questions or interruptions during the test. It is advisable, therefore, to give them two minutes to read through the question paper once teachers have gone through any possible issues.

- 12 There should be no reason for the recording to be stopped, except in an emergency. A tone on the recording will indicate the end of each item.

After the tests

- 13 The question papers should be collected, marked by the teacher (**peer marking of any FCSE component is not permissible**), then kept strictly confidential until the portfolios are requested by the Moderator.
- 14 After completion of the tests, the recordings, if copied to a CD, must be placed in secure storage until further use. Sound files downloaded to the secure part of a school's network must be deleted.

Reading and compulsory writing tests

Requirements

- 1 One question paper for each student.

Conduct of the tests

- 2 Students should be asked to complete the details at the top of their question paper before starting the test.
- 3 When all students have completed the details at the top of the question paper they should be given clear instructions on how to complete the test.

Without reference to any answers or information which would unfairly advantage their students, teachers should go through the test, explaining what to do for each task and, if necessary, explaining icons or unfamiliar rubric.

After the tests

- 4 The question papers should be collected, marked by the teacher (**peer marking of any FCSE component is not permissible**), then kept strictly confidential until the portfolios are requested by the Moderator.

Note: listening and reading tests

Schools/colleges should note that where the Listening, Reading or compulsory Writing translation tests are conducted in one single session, papers must be collected in before the tests for another skill are distributed. Under no circumstances may students have access to more than one test at the same time.

Speaking tests

Requirements

- 1 Students must produce a minimum of three speaking assignments, **one of which must be a compulsory role-play task.**
- 2 **One speaking assignment must be recorded.**
- 3 All speaking assignments must be marked by the teacher and submitted to AQA for moderation.
The **marks** for the two non-recorded assignments included in the complete portfolio must also be submitted to the moderator.
- 4 The assessment criteria for speaking are in Section 4c of the FCSE specification and must be adhered to.

5 Externally set role-play assignments

- Students may not see the compulsory role-play task in advance.
- Dictionaries are not allowed in the preparation or production of the role-play task.
- Students are allowed only one attempt at producing a role-play task.
- Each role-play task must be produced in one single session.

Students should be given appropriate preparation time immediately before producing the role-play task, during which they may make notes. These notes must be handed to the teacher at the end of the test for secure disposal.

6 Internally set speaking tasks

- Students may know the tasks in advance.
- Dictionaries are only allowed in the preparation of the speaking assignments.
- Students are allowed two attempts at producing each assignment.

Each internally set assignment must be recorded in one single session in the school under supervised conditions but not necessarily under direct supervision (see Section 4c of the specification).

Students may record their Speaking assignments with **brief** notes in front of them. They can contain a maximum of 10 words in English and/or the target language. These must not contain full sentences or conjugated verbs.

7 Rooms must be suitable for conducting the recording. Consider:

- using a small room, with curtains and/or carpet
- no outside noise
- the positioning of the microphone on a padded surface, pointing at the student (**not** sideways or towards the teacher), and as far away from the machine as possible.

Equipment should be set up and tested before the start of the recording.

Extreme care should be taken in all technical aspects of the recording of the assignments to obviate the possibility of students' performances being rendered wholly or partially inaudible. Students must be made aware of the danger of recording over their own work or that of other students.

- 8 Teachers should remind students that they must not have access to any unauthorised material such as books, papers, mobile phones or any electronic devices during the recording.
- 9 When recording their speaking assignments, each student should give the following information:

Record this
'FCSE _____(language) 2026, Centre no. _____
'Student No. _____, _____ (name of student)'
'End of test'

- 10 **Please note:** we do **not** supply any media for schools/colleges to record their speaking assignments.

Recording speaking assignments on CDs/memory sticks

We will accept recordings of speaking assignments on CDs or memory sticks. We will **not** accept speaking assignments recorded on any other medium.

The following **must** accompany the recordings when they are sent to your moderator:

- **audio CDs** with a card insert for **each CD** containing the following information:
 - the track number and name/number of each student on the CD (eg Track 1 0041 Michael Stipe)
 - language code (eg 5858)
 - school number
 - teacher-examiner's name.

(The school number and language code should be written on the CD with an indelible pen. Do not use a sticky label).

Or

- **Data CD** with a card insert for **each CD** containing the following information:
 - the number and name of each student on the CD
 - language code (eg 5858)
 - school number
 - teacher-examiner's name.

Individual student recordings can be saved either as .mp3 or .wav files. (mp3 recommended). The filename **must** contain the language code, school number and student number eg 5858_55217_0041.mp3

(The school number and language code should be written on the CD with an indelible pen. Do not use a sticky label).

or

- **Memory sticks** with the following information securely attached to the memory stick on a tag:
 - the number and name of each student on the memory stick
 - language code (eg 5858)
 - school number
 - teacher-examiner's name.

Individual student recordings can be saved either as .mp3 or .wav files. (mp3 recommended). The filename **must** contain the language code, school number and student number eg 5858_55217_0041.mp3

You must ensure that the memory sticks are virus free and use a separate CD/memory stick for each language submitted.

Please note that it is permissible for schools/colleges to 'mix and match' the media used for recording students within an individual language.

Schools/colleges must obtain students' permission if any digital copies are made and retained at the school. All such copies must be deleted no later than the date of publication of results for that series.

Writing tests

Requirements

- 1 Students must produce three writing assignments. One writing task must be a compulsory translation task.**
- 2 All writing tasks must be marked by the teacher and submitted to us for moderation. Writing tasks **must be annotated**, in order to show the moderator which items/time frames etc have been credited.
- 3 The assessment criteria for writing are in Section 4c of the specification and must be adhered to.
- 4 Externally set writing assignments (translation)**
 - Students may not see the compulsory Writing translation task in advance.
 - Students may not make more than one attempt at the same translation task.
 - The translation task must be produced in one session under controlled conditions.
 - Dictionaries are not allowed in the preparation or production of the translation task.
- 5 Internally set writing assignments**
 - There is no specified total number of words required for the completion of the internally set Writing assignments, but the assessment criteria indicate the minimum number of sentences for successful completion of the task.
 - Students will be given sight of the task before the date they are to produce their assignment but must not take the paper home.
 - Students may not make more than one attempt at the same assignment, although they may attempt a different assignment within the same unit if they wish to improve their work.
 - Students may have notes containing a maximum of 10 words in English and/or the target language. These must not contain full sentences or conjugated verbs.
 - The final version of the assignment should be completed in one session under controlled conditions.
 - Dictionaries are allowed in the preparation and production of the internally set writing assignments.
- 6 Students must not use translation software or translation websites.

Senior FCSE moderator advice for teachers

- When choosing the topics, take students' views into account if possible as they are then less likely to become demotivated if they are involved in the decision making.
- Ask the student to sign the Candidate Record Form (CRF) at the start of the course to avoid problems at the end if students are absent.
- When the student is signing the CRF go through the declaration in detail (makes assessments more formal and also explains consequences of any examination misconduct).
- Arrange completed assessments alphabetically and file safely (easy to find documents for requested portfolios).
- Create spreadsheet of results as they are completed (students can see how they are doing and it can generate healthy competition).
- Highlight 'counting' tasks after each unit (easier to pick out the marks for the CRF and the samples for the portfolios).
- Students complete unit mark boxes on CRF after each unit is completed (promotes ownership and leaves less to do at the end).
- Total results after each unit and have cumulative results (students can see how close they are to the next boundary).
- Complete writing tasks on headed paper with centre and candidate name and number.

Contact details

Please contact your FCSE adviser or the AQA languages Subject Support team with any queries.

If you have not received contact details for your FCSE adviser please contact adviceadmin@qa.org.uk

AQA languages Subject Support team contact details:

Tel: 01423 534 381

Email: mfl@qa.org.uk