

AQA GCSE French, German and Spanish

Making the evidence-based choice:
Switching to AQA

Why study languages?

For our future selves

- ✓ Scientists believe knowledge of a second language can **boost your brain power** alongside enhancing your **analytical** and **creative skills** and improving your **cognitive development**
- ✓ Speaking another language uncovers new ways of seeing the world and **seeing the world through someone else's eyes**
- ✓ Knowledge of another language can help **unlock a different culture** and society
- ✓ Speaking another language shows you're not afraid of making mistakes – **you are constantly learning to improve and enhance your skills and knowledge**
- ✓ A recent study shows that nearly **one in two adults** who cannot have a conversation in a modern language regret not engaging more with languages at school
- ✓ Learning a new language means overcoming your shyness, **developing confidence** and **improving your communication skills**
- ✓ Learning another **language improves our aptitude for study itself**, especially our listening and communication abilities
- ✓ Language **influences culture** and being able to speak another language can help you **better understand the world**
- ✓ Speaking another language helps **break down cultural barriers** and encourages better understanding of different people's perspectives

Why study languages?

For future opportunities

- ✓ It's very easy to take notice of excuses like “English is the world language” to stop us seeing the value of learning a second language. In an increasingly globalised world, **languages are seen as currency or stock in the workplace** – the more you speak, the higher your value rises
- ✓ Employers believe knowledge of a second language **boosts your employability** – demand for languages skills is booming in the global job market
- ✓ Studying a language **fits** nicely with the **majority of subject choices for current and future study**
- ✓ Knowing the language means you can **travel beyond the tourist trails** and have an authentic experience of another culture

- ✓ Learning another language helps you to **develop really useful transferable skills**, like being a good communicator, having an ability to listen and also confidence in delivering presentations in the workplace. These are the things that **give your overall confidence levels a boost and add value to your CV**
- ✓ Employers often rank language skills as a **high priority when recruiting**
- ✓ Speaking another language can help you to **stand out from the crowd** in a multitude of career paths
- ✓ Knowledge of another language can help **unlock a different culture** and society
- ✓ Speaking another language helps you to **be more confident when travelling and exploring the world**, allowing you to be fully immersed in local life

Assessment impact at a glance

Why AQA works for learners across all four exam papers



Paper 1 – Listening

Reduces cognitive load so all learners can demonstrate genuine listening skills fairly.



Paper 2 – Speaking

Authentic, flexible assessment builds confidence, inclusion and fairness in spoken communication.



Paper 3 – Reading

Accessible texts and tasks assess reading skills accurately without unnecessary barriers.



Paper 4 – Writing

Predictable, structured writing tasks allow time to think, reflect and self-correct for accuracy.



Paper 1: Listening

Reduces cognitive load so all learners can demonstrate genuine listening skills fairly.

Paper 1: Listening (Comprehension and Dictation)

All listening passages are broken into **short sections** which helps to **reduce memory load** and cognitive burden for students.

Assessment focuses on **listening skills** rather than memory capacity.

Each utterance in Section A is **heard twice**, with pauses for processing.

Dictation sentences are heard **three times** in total **without** extending the duration of the test.

Dictation supports accessibility by rewarding both **communication** and **accuracy**, as opposed to focusing on individual word accuracy over meaning.

Students receive **five minutes' reading time** at the start of the test and **two minutes' checking time** at the end of the test to support them.

Shorter overall exam time for AQA means listening and reading exams can be sat on the same day, reducing administrative load for the school.

Predictable and familiar question types

AQA guarantees defined and predictable task types, using familiar formats to ensure learner confidence. The following list includes all task types used in papers.

- ✓ Select a letter, letters or number from a list of options
- ✓ Choose Positive/Negative/Positive + Negative
- ✓ Short written answers in English
- ✓ Three option multiple choice (A, B or C)
- ✓ Choose the correct time frame P for Past, N for Now, F for Future
- ✓ Choose the correct statement/statements (A, B or A + B)
- ✓ Completing a gap in a sentence with a word in English
- ✓ Dictation



Paper 2: Speaking

Authentic, flexible assessment builds confidence, inclusion and fairness in spoken communication.

Paper 2: Speaking (Role-play)



All Role-play assessment tasks are designed to **reflect real-life authentic communication**.



AQA's role-plays are all rooted in realistic **peer-to-peer social interactions**, as opposed to generic contexts such as tourist offices and hotels, making them much **more accessible** to learners.



Learners can go into their speaking exam confident that **their lived experiences will not disadvantage them** and that the task contexts will be **clear and easy to visualise**.



Students are addressed in the informal register throughout, which removes potential barriers to comprehension and access.

Paper 2: Speaking (Reading aloud)

AQA's paperwork/cards is **streamlined** to reduce teacher-examiner administrative burden.

Students can retain the Read-aloud text and use vocabulary items or short phrases from it in their responses **at any time** during their exam.



AQA provides all teacher and learner cards, and this **reduces the associated risk** around the security of the confidential materials.

The AQA Read-aloud text is presented in **large font**, with each sentence **clearly spaced** on a separate line to **improve accessibility and readability**.

Learners may restart or self-correct during the Read-aloud task, and it is the final attempt which is marked.

Paper 2: Speaking (Photo card description and Unprepared conversation)



The AQA Unprepared conversation is **teacher-led** with **no prescribed tense or time frame requirements**. This flexibility allows learners to demonstrate their language skills in a variety of ways.



By contrast, the requirement to refer to past, present and future events creates additional linguistic demand, making it less accessible and restricting spontaneous, authentic communication.



With AQA, all questions are **at the teacher-examiner's discretion** within the theme, enabling them to **tailor the discussion** to each learner's interests and ability. This personalised approach **empowers learners** to showcase their language skills at their highest level.



Paper 2: Speaking (Photo card description and Unprepared conversation)



AQA photos are in black and white, but students are still credited for referring to appropriate colours, allowing greater vocabulary freedom.



The Photo card description is flexible, with no prescriptive bullet points or any requirement for equal coverage of the two photos. This allows learners freedom in how they respond, ensuring they are well placed to demonstrate their knowledge.



The AQA photo card description is only assessed for AO2. This means learners are not required to demonstrate a variety of language, and are not penalised for minor errors which do not affect communication.



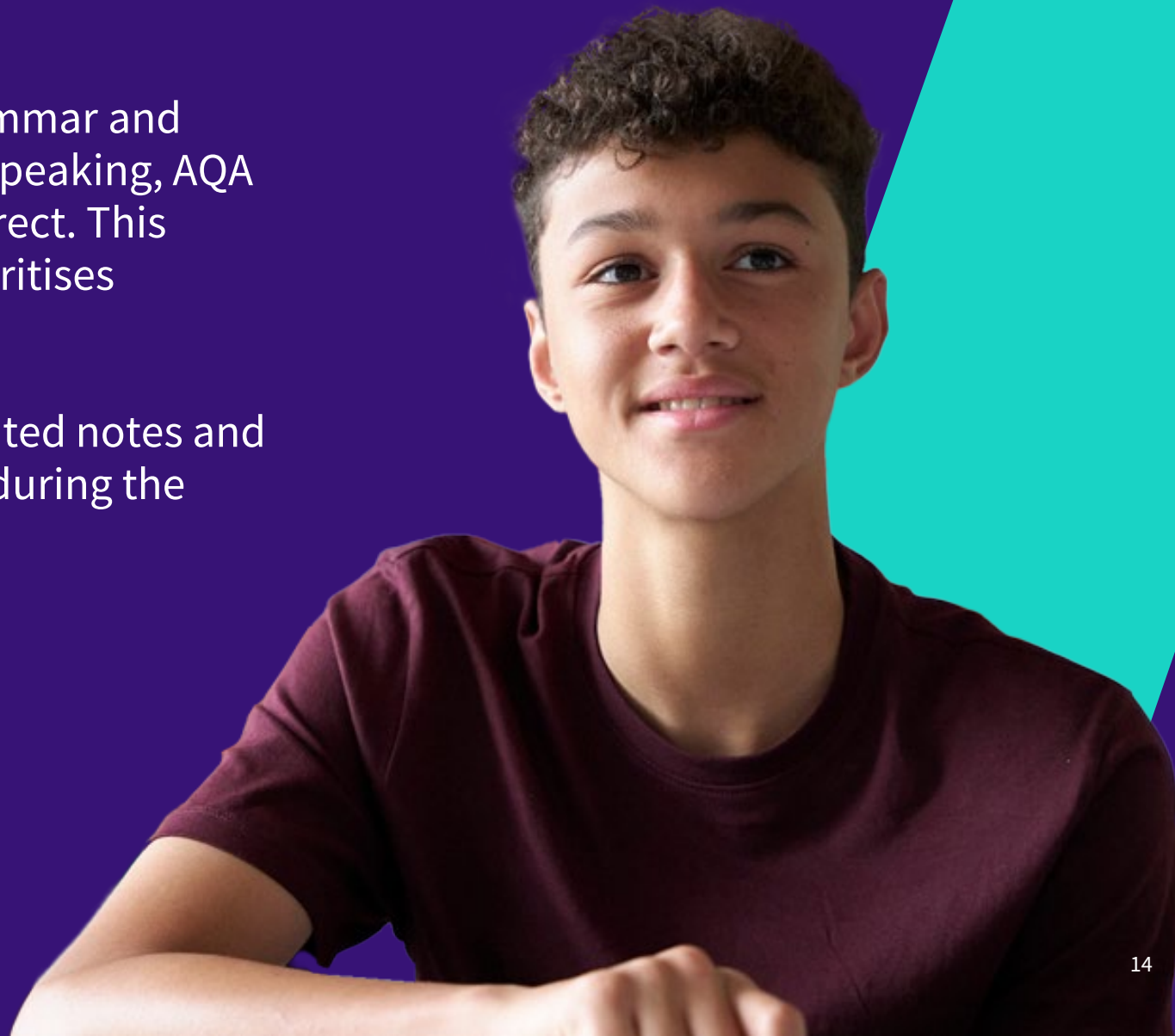
Paper 2: Speaking (general points to consider)

- ✓ The use of a limited number of photo cards, with identical images at both tiers, streamlines administration and reduces workload for teachers and invigilators.
- ✓ The clear and straightforward sequencing process significantly reduces the administrative burden on teacher-examiners, and teacher feedback consistently highlights the simplicity and usability of the sequencing chart.
- ✓ This ease of delivery reduces the likelihood of errors and facilitates the process for teacher-examiners.



Paper 2: Speaking (general points to consider)

- ✓ By allocating most AO3 (knowledge of grammar and vocabulary) marks to Writing rather than Speaking, AQA allows learners time to reflect and self-correct. This ensures that the speaking assessment prioritises effective communication over accuracy.
- ✓ AQA learners are permitted to make unlimited notes and may refer to them for support at any time during the test.



Paper 3: Reading

Accessible texts and tasks assess reading skills accurately without unnecessary barriers.

Paper 3: Reading



AQA stimulus texts are **split into manageable chunks or mini-texts**, often with **one idea per paragraph**, with the **questions following the order of the text** closely. This makes locating key information less challenging for learners.



The layout typically includes **white space** to enable learners to track meaning more effectively. These features support **comprehension** and **accessibility** for learners at all levels.



The inference question type uses **multiple-choice formats** to increase accessibility.

Paper 3: Reading



Visuals and clear rubrics provide strong contextual support and facilitate understanding, ensuring learners are not disadvantaged by a lack of cultural capital.



AQA's comprehension content actively builds cultural capital whilst celebrating diversity and inclusivity. We embed culture more explicitly within our assessment design, for example **through the topics of Celebrity Culture and Customs and Festivals and Celebrations**, supporting learners to engage with target-language culture and society and find greater meaning in their language learning.



AQA maintains **sentence-based translation tasks at both tiers** to support accessibility and **reduce omissions** of key linguistic elements. A paragraph-based translation places greater demands on learners and increases the risk of missing key details. AQA's sentence-based translation tasks are easy to practise in the classroom.

Paper 4: Writing

Predictable, structured writing tasks allow time to think, reflect and self-correct for accuracy.

Paper 4: Writing

All task instructions are in English to remove avoidable barriers.

Grammar is **assessed explicitly and accessibly**, including multiple-choice tasks at Foundation tier.

Writing questions follow a **consistent and predictable tense sequence**, which can be shared with learners in advance. For example, the 90-word question follows the structure: present time frame, past time frame, future time frame.

The highest proportion of grammar marks sit in the Writing component, allowing learners **time for self-correction** and to achieve **greater accuracy**.

AQA maintains sentence-based translation tasks at both tiers to support accessibility and reduce omissions of key linguistic elements.

AQA's sentence-based translation tasks are easy to practise in the classroom.

Supporting your switch to AQA



Administration

Clear Switching roadmap and timeline provided by AQA to support teaching



Staff confidence

Switching guide document provided by AQA, as well one-to-one switching clinics with a named AQA contact for quick, targeted support



Resourcing

Comprehensive resources to support teaching and learning

Supporting your switch to AQA



Training

Free on-demand and live training to support and enhance specification delivery



GCSE to A-level continuity and A-level uptake and retention

Training and resources available to ensure smooth, coherent learning journey and encourage sustained language study post-16

AQA Subject Support Team

Free@3 – Book in with the AQA Languages Subject Support team



We're here to support you throughout the year, answer your questions and always provide up-to-date, expert advice.

Email: mfl@aqa.org.uk

Tel: **01423 534 381** 8am–5pm Monday to Friday



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Rosy Thompson
Subject Lead - Languages



Sadaf Najib
Subject Support Manager - Languages



Chloe Burrows
Subject Support Manager - Languages



Rachel Livingstone
Subject Support Manager - Languages

Thank you

