GCSE (9−1) ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Switching to OCR from AQA

Introduction

We've developed a specification designed to be accessible and engaging at GCSE level, focussed on key English skills that students will use whatever path they choose to pursue. Through their study of and engagement with non-fiction and literary texts, students will develop critical reading skills which will also inform and improve their writing skills. So why choose OCR's GCSE English Language?

- There are two exams: one focusing on non-fiction texts and writing tasks, the second focusing on literary texts and creative writing tasks. Both exams put equal emphasis on reading and writing skills.
- Clear, well balanced exam papers that mirror each other in terms of format and weighting.
- The choice of writing tasks on each exam allows students to opt for a focus that best allows them to demonstrate their skills as writers.
- Students develop their creative and imaginative writing skills and the ability to write accurately for a range of purposes and audiences,
- The study of authentic and engaging unseen texts from the 19th to 21st centuries can be effectively integrated with the GCSE (9-1) English Literature course.
- A comprehensive range of creative, well researched resources to cover every aspect of the course, from candidate exemplars to specific skills development to handy revision and reference guides.

How do I find out more?

- Visit our GCSE English Language subject webpage to access the specification, specimen assessment materials and a wide range of free support materials, from scheme of work planners to skills-based teacher guides, candidate exemplars and more.
- Join our conversation on the OCR English Community and @ocr_english to talk about and share good practice.

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Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Key differences

OCR English Language	AQA English Language
Paper 1 features one 19th century non-fiction text and one 20th or 21st century non-fiction text. The 19th century text will always be non-fiction. Paper 2 features two 20th and 21st century prose fiction or literary non-fiction texts.	Paper 1 features one 20th or 21st century literary prose text. Paper 2 features one non-fiction text and one literary non-fiction text (one 19th century text and one 20th or 21st century text). The 19th century text could be non-fiction or literary non-fiction.
A total of 4 hours' assessment time: 2 hours for each paper.	A total of 3.5 hours' assessment time: 1 hour 45 mins for each paper.
Each paper is worth 50% weighting overall.	Each paper is worth 50% weighting overall.
Each paper features two unseen texts for balanced assessment, including a comparison question.	Paper 1 features one unseen text and Paper 2 features two unseen texts. This means that skills in comparing texts are only weighted and assessed in one of two equally weighted papers.
Language and structure are assessed together: no separate structure question.	Separate structure question in Paper 1.
Choice of writing task in both papers.	Choice of writing task in Paper 1 but no choice in Paper 2.
Writing tasks do not include any visual prompts.	Visual prompt for Paper 1 writing task (choice of 2 tasks).

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Content

The key content and skills to be covered by all new GCSE (9-1) English Language specifications mean it's simple and straightforward to move to a different exam board, even if you're halfway through a course. If you're thinking of making a move from AQA to OCR for GCSE English, there are some key similarities in the teaching and assessment of the course:

Key subject requirements

- Read fluently and critically, a wide range of texts from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, including literature and literary non-fiction as well as other writing such as journalism or travel writing.

Key skills

- Read and evaluate texts critically and make comparisons between texts
- Summarise and synthesise information or ideas from texts
- Use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- Write effectively, accurately and coherently for different audiences and purposes, using standard English appropriately
- Use grammar correctly and punctuate and spell accurately
- Acquire and apply a wide vocabulary, alongside a knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology, and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- Listen to and understand spoken language and use spoken standard English effectively.

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Assessment

OCR English Language	AQA English Language
Paper 1: Communicating information and ideas 50% of GCSE Written paper 2 hours 80 marks **Section A:** Reading an unseen 19th century non-fiction text and a 20th or 21st century non-fiction text. Responding to a range of question types (4 in total), including comparison between the two texts. Language and structure are assessed together: no separate structure question. **Section B:** One transactional writing task from a choice of two, linked to theme of the reading texts in Section A.	**Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing** 50% of GCSE Written paper 1 hour 45 mins 80 marks **Section A:** Reading an unseen 20th or 21st century literary fiction text. Responding to a range of question types (4 in total). Separate questions on language and on structure. **Section B:** One imaginative writing task from a choice of two. Linked to theme of the reading text in Section A. Includes a visual prompt.
Paper 2: Exploring effects and impact 50% of GCSE Written paper 2 hours 80 marks **Section A:** Reading two unseen 20th / 21st century literary prose texts. Responding to a range of question types (4 in total), including comparison between the two texts. Language and structure are assessed together: no separate structure question. **Section B:** One imaginative writing task from a choice of two. Linked to theme of the reading texts in Section A.	**Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives** 50% of GCSE Written paper 1 hour 45 mins 80 marks **Section A:** Reading two unseen texts, one 19th century and one either 20th or 21st century (one non-fiction and one literary non-fiction). Responding to a range of question types (4 in total), including comparison between the two texts. No direct reference to structure on this paper. **Section B:** One transactional writing task with no choice of question. Linked to theme of the reading texts in Section A.

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Want to switch to OCR?

If you're an OCR-approved centre, all you need to do is download the specification and start teaching.

Your exams officer can complete an intention to teach form which enables us to provide appropriate support. When you're ready to enter your students, you just need to speak to your exams officer to make estimated entries then final entries by the specified deadline ahead of the examination session.

If you are not already an OCR-approved centre, please refer your exams officer to the centre approval section of our website.

Next steps

1. Familiarise yourself with the specification, sample assessment materials and teaching resources on the GCSE English Language qualification page of the OCR website.
2. Browse the teaching and learning resources including online delivery guides for teaching ideas and use the Scheme of Work builder to create your personal scheme of work.
3. Get in touch if you'd like specific advice, guidance or support – email english@ocr.org.uk or telephone 01223 553 998.
4. Get a login for our secure site, Interchange – allows you to access the latest past/practice papers and use our results analysis service, Active Results.
5. Sign up to receive subject updates by email.
6. Sign up to attend a training event or take part in webinars on specific topics running throughout the year and / or our Q&A drop-in webinar sessions every half term.
7. Attend one of our free regional teacher network events.