

**GCSE (9–1)**

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

**J351**

For first assessment in 2017

**Assessment Story:  
Exploring our  
question papers**



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# Introduction

Our GCSE (9-1) English Language qualification has been available for first teach since September 2015. It is a skills-based qualification that supports students to engage with a range of exciting literary and non-fiction texts and to develop their writing skills. It can be taught across one or two years and is ideal as a standalone qualification, for taking alongside GCSE (9-1) English Literature, or as an accessible option for post-16 resits.

We've thought carefully about our approach so that our question papers are straightforward, easy to navigate and do not require students to jump through hoops in order to meet the Assessment Objectives. This is supported by our mirror-image assessment structure: the question papers for both examined components are two hours long; both contain two unseen texts; there are two sections each worth 50% of each paper (25% each of the final GCSE mark); questions have the same mark tariffs across both sections of both papers.

## Our assessments:

- Are straightforward to teach – both examined components have a simple assessment that is easy for teachers and students to understand.
- Provide accessible and consistent question papers – the graduated level of demand to questions supports students' understanding throughout.
- Are engaging – each component uses relevant, interesting and diverse unseen texts.
- Offer a choice of writing tasks – a choice of two writing tasks is given in each question paper.

## Our support includes:

- Named Subject Advisors available to provide help and support.
- A range of free resources available from our [GCSE English Language webpage](#):

Teaching and learning resources include:

- Delivery guides: teaching support/activities for course content and skill development
- Schemes of work
- Teacher guides (e.g. Approaching unseen texts; Reading skills; Writing skills)

Assessment preparation resources include:

- Past papers
- Candidate exemplars
- Practice papers
- Examiner reports
- [Active Results](#) (our free online results analysis service).

# Qualification overview

Our GCSE (9-1) English Language qualification consists of two examined components and a Spoken Language endorsement. Students must sit both examined components to be awarded the qualification.

The qualification is marked out of a total of 160 marks. The marks, duration and weightings are the same for both components, as shown below:

Component	Marks	Duration	Weighting
Component 1 (written exam paper) <b>Communicating information and ideas</b> This component focuses on non-fiction texts and non-fiction writing tasks	80	2 hours	50%
Component 2 (written exam paper) <b>Exploring effects and impact</b> This component focuses on literary texts and creative writing tasks.	80	2 hours	50%

The Spoken Language endorsement is internally assessed by centres and graded separately. It does not contribute to the GCSE (9-1) English Language grade. Students will receive a separate grade for this endorsement: Pass, Merit, Distinction or Not Classified. All GCSE (9-1) English Language students should be given the opportunity to take the Spoken Language endorsement.

# Assessment objectives and weighting

Assessment Objectives indicate what students are working towards and what they will be tested on in the exams. Every question in our examined components tests one or two Assessment Objectives. Our mark schemes indicate the Assessment Objective(s) targeted in each question.

Assessment Objectives are defined by Ofqual and have required, associated weightings. Exam boards must ensure that the weighting for each Assessment Objective is within the range specified by Ofqual.

The six Assessment Objectives in the examined components of GCSE (9-1) English Language, along with the OCR weightings, are as follows:

AO	Description	Weighting
Reading		
AO1	Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. Select and synthesise evidence from different texts.	8.75%
AO2	Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.	18.75%
AO3	Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts.	7.5%
AO4	Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.	15%
Writing		
AO5	Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.	30%
AO6	Students must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.	20%



Both examined components assess all of the above Assessment Objectives. AO1-AO4 are assessed in Section A of both papers (reading) and AO5-AO6 are assessed in Section B of both papers (writing).

We have placed greater emphasis on AO2 and AO4 in both components. This means that students are rewarded more for their insight into the texts through analysis and evaluation than for the explicit skills of comparison. This has shown to be more enabling for a wider range of students when engaging with unseen texts.

There are three further Assessment Objectives for the Spoken Language endorsement. The endorsement is assessed separately from the examined components and does not count towards the final GCSE (9-1) English Language grade.

The Assessment Objectives for the Spoken Language endorsement are as follows:

AO	Description	Weighting
AO7	Demonstrate presentation skills in a formal setting.	Assessed holistically through competency-based assessment.
AO8	Listen and respond appropriately to Spoken Language, including to questions and feedback to presentations.	
AO9	Use spoken Standard English effectively in speeches and presentations.	

## Unseen texts

GCSE (9-1) English Language is a skills-based qualification. There are no set texts for students to study, instead the assessment of reading skills is based on a range of unseen texts taken for the 19th-21st centuries.

Each of our examined components has two unseen texts. Students will be assessed on four unseen texts in total.

In Component 1, the unseen texts are non-fiction. One text is taken from the 19th century, the other is taken from the 20th or 21st century.

In Component 2, the unseen texts are literary: either prose-fiction or literary non-fiction. Both texts are taken from the 20th and/or 21st centuries.

The word count across both unseen texts in each component is approximately 600-900 words. The minimum word count for an unseen text will be just under 300 words. There is always a clear thematic link between the two texts in each question paper. In the exam, the unseen texts are provided in a separate reading insert so that students have space to annotate and make notes on the texts and refer to them alongside the question papers. Each unseen text has a short introduction explaining what the text is about. Some texts may be slightly edited or glossed for clarity to make them accessible to the range of students that take this qualification.

The themes of the unseen texts are carefully chosen so that they are relevant, engaging and accessible.

As each question paper is based around two unseen texts, students have greater support in the event that they find a particular text more challenging; one text can be used as a springboard to help their understanding of the other. The reading questions require students to look at the texts individually and then together (more detail is provided in 'The examined components' section below). This means that even if a student struggles with understanding a text, they will be able to respond to some of the reading questions.

Each examined component is 2 hours long. This timing allows approximately 15 minutes for students to read both texts.

# Assessment structure

<b>Component 1 – Communicating information and ideas</b>	<b>Component 2 – Exploring effects and impact</b>
2 hours	2 hours
80 marks	80 marks
50% of GCSE	50% of GCSE
Unseen texts: Two thematically linked non-fiction texts. One from the 19th century, the other from the 20th or 21st century.	Unseen texts: Two thematically linked literary texts from the 20th and/or 21st centuries.
<b>Section A: Reading information and ideas</b>	<b>Section A: Reading meaning and effects</b>
Four reading questions based on the unseen texts: Question 1: 4 marks; AO1i Question 2: 6 marks; AO1ii Question 3: 12 marks; AO2 Question 4: 18 marks: AO3 and AO4	Four reading questions based on the unseen texts: Question 1: 4 marks; AO1i Question 2: 6 marks; AO2 Question 3: 12 marks; AO2 Question 4: 18 marks: AO3 and AO4
40 marks; AO1-AO4	40 marks; AO1-AO4
<b>Section B: Writing for audience, impact and purpose</b>	<b>Section B: Writing imaginatively and creatively</b>
One non-fiction writing task from a choice of two, loosely based on or an extension of the reading theme:  Question 5: 40 marks (AO5 and AO6) or Question 6: 40 marks (AO5 and AO6)	One creative writing task from a choice of two, loosely based on or an extension of the reading theme:  Question 5: 40 marks (AO5 and AO6) or Question 6: 40 marks (AO5 and AO6)
40 marks; AO5 and AO6	40 marks; AO5 and AO6

In Section A of both components, the four reading questions assess the Assessment Objectives in order and provide a graduated assessment structure to increase accessibility: Question 1 is the most straightforward and Question 4 is the most complex. As students work through each reading section, the questions help them to develop their understanding of both texts and provide a good grounding for Question 4, the comparison and evaluation question.

In Section B of both components, students have a choice of two writing tasks, both of which will be loosely related to the theme of the reading section. This choice enables students to make appropriate decisions for their level and respond to the task that they feel more comfortable with. Both writing tasks have the same marks and test the same Assessment Objectives.

The division of marks and Assessment Objectives in both components is very similar. Tasks testing the same skills are rewarded the same way across both papers to give students and teachers greater confidence in what is required for each question.

This mirrored approach also makes the skills across both components co-teachable so there is less requirement to approach the two exam papers as separate entities.

# The examined components

## Component 1

### **Communicating information and ideas (2 hours, 80 marks)**

Recommended time allocation:

Read and annotate both unseen texts – 15 mins

Section A – 1 hour

Section B – 45 minutes

### **Section A: Reading information and ideas (40 marks)**

This section is based on two unseen non-fiction texts. One text is taken from the 19th century, the other is taken from the 20th or 21st century. Each text is 300-400 words.

The texts are thematically linked.

Students respond to four reading questions based on the unseen texts.



## Question 1: Information retrieval and interpretation (Text 1)

Question 1 is about **Text 1**, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by William Howard Russell.

**1** Look again at lines 1–6.

Line references focus students on a particular area of the text.

**(a)** Identify **two** phrases from these lines which show what time of day it was.

..... [2]

**(b)** Give **one** reason why the writer is surprised that these soldiers have been sent to attack the enemy.

..... [1]

Questions assessing AO1i ask students to identify information in the text and/or to interpret information.

**(c)** The writer calls the soldiers' bravery 'desperate valour'. Explain why he chooses the word 'desperate' to describe their behaviour.

..... [1]

There is a total of 4 marks available for AO1i in this component.

This question focuses on the first unseen text and assesses AO1i: 'Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.'

This question is made up of part-questions that have a total of 4 marks. The configuration of part-questions can differ each year, for example, 2 x 2 mark questions; 2 x 1 mark question and 1 x 2 mark question etc.

Some questions will:

- direct students to look at specific lines in the text and retrieve information.
- ask students to interpret the information in the text.

These questions require direct quotation or short responses (phrases or sentences).

## Question 2: Synthesising information from both texts

Question 2 is about **Text 1**, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by William Howard Russell and **Text 2**, *Let Us Make a Vow to the Dead* by Ronald Reagan.

**2** Both texts describe soldiers attacking enemy guns.

What are the **similarities** between the two attacks?

Draw on evidence from **both** texts to support your answer.

.....

.....

..... **[6]**

Students are asked to make connections between both texts.

There is a total of 6 marks available for AO1ii in this component.

The connections need to be supported by evidence from both texts (quotes or textual references).

This question focuses on both unseen texts and assesses AO1ii: 'Select and synthesise evidence from different texts.' This question has 6 marks.

This question requires students to identify similarities in an idea common to both texts, as directed by the question. These similarities should be supported with evidence (quotations or close textual references) from both texts. This question focuses on comprehension, connecting and interpreting information in the texts. Students do not need to analyse the texts in this question.

### Question 3: Analysis of the effects of language and structure (Text 2)

Question 3 is about **Text 2**, *Let Us Make a Vow to the Dead* by Ronald Reagan.

**3** Look again at lines 17–29.

Explore how Ronald Reagan uses language and structure to persuade his audience that the soldiers' bravery was worthwhile.

Support your ideas by referring to the text, using relevant subject terminology.

Line references focus students on a particular area of the text.

**[12]**

The focus is on the effects.

There is a total of 12 marks available for AO2 in this component.

Students are asked to comment on the use of both language and structure.

This question focuses on the second unseen text and assesses AO2: 'Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.'

This question has 12 marks.

The question will direct students to a specific section of the text. Students are required to analyse the use of language and structure in this section in terms of the effects on the reader. Students are asked to use relevant subject terminology in their responses. Here, the focus is on using the identification of a particular feature as a springboard to explain the impact.



## Question 4: Comparison and evaluation of both texts

Question 4 is about **Text 1**, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by William Howard Russell and **Text 2**, *Let Us Make a Vow to the Dead* by Ronald Reagan.

**4** 'Both texts powerfully persuade you to admire the bravery of the soldiers.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss what each text says we should admire about the soldiers
- explain how far the texts do present the soldiers as admirable
- compare the ways the texts present their ideas about the soldiers.

Support your response with quotations from **both** texts.

Students are asked to evaluate both texts by considering the impact on them as the reader.

These bullet points relate to AO4.

This bullet point relates to AO3.

**[18]**

Scaffolding bullet points are provided in this question regardless of the increase in challenge.

There is a total of 6 marks available for AO3 and 12 marks available for AO4 in this component.

This question focuses on both unseen texts and assesses AO3 and AO4:

- AO3: 'Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts.'
- AO4: 'Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.'

This question has 18 marks. There are 6 marks for AO3 and 12 marks for AO4.

This question requires students to compare the two unseen texts and to make independent judgements about them, prompted by a statement given in the question. Comparison includes commenting on similarities and differences in the texts. There is no requirement for students to analyse the use of language and structure for this question, but their evaluation of the impact of the texts should be supported by references to both texts.

## Section B: Writing for audience, impact and purpose (40 marks)

The section contains two non-fiction writing tasks. Students are required to choose and respond to one of the tasks. The writing tasks will be loosely connected to the theme of the reading section. From 2019 onwards, these tasks will ask students to write a letter, an article or a speech/talk. Students may use ideas they've formulated in the reading section for inspiration in their writing.

Each writing task assesses AO5 and AO6:

- AO5: 'Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences.  
Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.'
- AO6: 'Students must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.'

Each writing task has 40 marks. There are 24 marks for AO5 and 16 marks for AO6.

### Question 5 – original writing task (optional)

#### 5 "Was it worth it?"

Write an article for a magazine to describe a time when you had to do something difficult.

In your article you should:

- explain why you had to do it
- describe the difficulties you had to face
- explain whether you thought it was worthwhile.

Scaffolding bullet points are provided for guidance and support.

There is a total of 24 marks available for AO5 and 16 marks available for AO6 in this component.

[40]\*

Writing tasks will be loosely connected to the theme of the reading section.

In this component, students are asked to write a letter, an article or a speech/talk.

This question requires students to produce a piece of original writing in the form specified in the task: a letter, an article or a speech/talk. This question requires students to adapt their writing to suit the purpose and audience (if specified) of the task and to use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures with accurate spelling and punctuation.

**Question 6 – original writing task (optional)**

- 6** Write a speech for an event to congratulate young people who have achieved something remarkable.

In your speech you should:

- describe what the young people achieved
- explain why the young people should be congratulated
- explain what is so remarkable about their achievement.

Scaffolding bullet points are provided for guidance and support.

There is a total of 24 marks available for AO5 and 16 marks available for AO6 in this component.

**[40]\***

Writing tasks will be loosely connected to the theme of the reading section.

In this component, students are asked to write a letter, an article or a speech/talk.

This question requires students to produce a piece of original writing in the form specified in the task: a letter, an article or a speech/talk. This question requires students to adapt their writing to suit the purpose and audience (if specified) of the task and to use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures with accurate spelling and punctuation.



## Component 2

### Communicating information and ideas (2 hours, 80 marks)

Recommended time allocation:

Read and annotate both unseen texts – 15 mins

Section A – 1 hour

Section B – 45 minutes

#### Section A: Reading information and ideas (40 marks)

This section is based on two unseen literary texts: either prose-fiction or literary non-fiction. Both texts are taken from the 20th and/or 21st centuries.

Students respond to four reading questions based on the unseen texts.

#### Question 1: Information retrieval and interpretation (Text 1)

Question 1 is about **Text 1**, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* by Alan Sillitoe.

1 Look again at lines 1–4.

(a) Identify **two** phrases **from these lines** that show the narrator feels positive about long distance running.

.....  
 ..... [2]

(b) Explain **two** positive effects which long distance running has on him.

.....  
 ..... [2]

Line references focus students on a particular area of the text.

Questions assessing AO1i ask students to identify information in the text and/or to interpret information.

There is a total of 4 marks available for AO1i in this component.

As in Component 1, this question focuses on the first unseen text and assesses AO1i: 'Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.'

This question is made up of part-questions that have a total of 4 marks. The configuration of part-questions can differ each year, for example, 2 x 2 mark questions; 2 x 1 mark question and 1 x 2 mark question etc.

Some questions will:

- direct students to look at specific lines in the text and retrieve information.
- ask students to interpret the information in the text.

These questions require direct quotation or short responses (phrases or sentences).

## Question 2: Analysis of the effects of language and structure (Text 1)

Question 2 is about **Text 1**, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* by Alan Sillitoe.

**2** Look again at lines 16–21.

How does Alan Sillitoe use language and structure to describe the runner's feelings and thoughts about the pain of his run?

You should use relevant subject terminology to support your answer.

.....  
 .....  
 ..... [6]

Line references focus students on a particular area of the text.

The focus is on the effects.

There is a total of 18 marks available for AO2 in this component across Questions 2 and 3.

Students are asked to comment on the use of both language and structure.

This question focuses on the first unseen text and assesses AO2: 'Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.'

This question has 6 marks.

The question will direct students to a short section of the text. Students are required to analyse the use of language and structure in this section in terms of the effects on the reader. Students are asked to use relevant subject terminology in their responses. Here, the focus is on using the identification of a particular feature as a springboard to explain the impact.

## Question 3: Analysis of the effects of language and structure (Text 2)

Question 3 is about **Text 2**, *The Ingenious Edgar Jones* by Elizabeth Garner.

**3** Look again at lines 10–25.

Explore how the writer uses language and structure to present the different feelings William Jones has about where he lives and where he works.

Support your ideas by referring to the text, using relevant subject terminology.

[12]

Line references focus students on a particular area of the text.

The focus is on the effects.

There is a total of 18 marks available for AO2 in this component across Questions 2 and 3.

Students are asked to comment on the use of both language and structure.

As in Component 1, this question focuses on the second unseen text and assesses AO2: 'Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.'

This question has 12 marks.

This question follows the same requirements as Question 2 in this component but focuses on the other unseen text. This means that in this paper, students are required to analyse the language and structure of both texts, fitting well with the literary context of this paper.

Students are expected to provide a longer response to this question for 12 marks, compared to Question 2 for 6 marks.

## Question 4: Comparison and evaluation of both texts

Question 4 is about **Text 1**, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and **Text 2**, *The Ingenious Edgar Jones*.

- 4** 'In these texts being on your own is described as a pleasant and worthwhile experience.'

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

- discuss the characters' different experiences of being on their own
- explain how far their experiences are pleasant or worthwhile
- compare the ways the writers present characters' experiences of being on their own.

Support your response with quotations from **both** texts.

Students are asked to evaluate the impact of both texts on them as a reader.

These bullet points relate to AO4.

[18]

This bullet point relates to AO3.

Scaffolding bullet points are provided in this question regardless of the increase in challenge.

There are 6 marks available for AO3 and 12 marks available for AO4 in this component.

As in Component 1, this question focuses on both unseen texts and assesses AO3 and AO4:

- AO3: 'Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts.'
- AO4: 'Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.'

This question has 18 marks. There are 6 marks for AO3 and 12 marks for AO4.

This question requires students to compare the two unseen texts and to make independent judgements about them, prompted by a statement given in the question. Comparison includes commenting on similarities and differences in the texts. There is no requirement for students to analyse the use of language and structure for this question, but their evaluation of the impact of the texts should be supported by references to both texts.

## Section B: Writing imaginatively and creatively (40 marks)

The section contains two creative writing tasks. Students are required to choose and respond to one of the tasks. The writing tasks will be loosely connected to the theme of the reading section. Some tasks specify a form, such as a story, and other tasks are more open to enable students to address the focus of the tasks as they choose, for example, by producing a descriptive piece or a piece of personal writing. Students may use ideas they've formulated in the reading section for inspiration in their writing.

Each writing task assesses AO5 and AO6:

- AO5: 'Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences.  
Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.'
- AO6: 'Students must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.'

Each writing task has 40 marks. There are 24 marks for AO5 and 16 marks for AO6.

### Question 5 – original writing task (optional)

#### 5 *Alone.*

Use this as the title for a story.

In your writing you should:

- choose a clear viewpoint
- describe the setting
- explore your characters' thoughts and feelings about being alone.

Writing tasks will be loosely connected to the theme of the reading section.

Students are asked to produce a piece of creative writing.

[40]\*

Scaffolding bullet points are provided for guidance and support.

There is a total of 24 marks available for AO5 and 16 marks available for AO6 in this component.

This question requires students to produce a piece of creative writing. This question requires students to adapt their writing to suit the task and to use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures with accurate spelling and punctuation.

**Question 6 – original writing task (optional)**

**6** Describe a time when you found yourself in a crowd or surrounded by people.

You could write about:

- things that made the biggest impression on you
- how the experience affected your thoughts and feelings
- the way you feel about that experience now.

Clearly indicate which question you have chosen to answer.

Scaffolding bullet points are provided for guidance and support.

There is a total of 24 marks available for AO5 and 16 marks available for AO6 in this component.

Students are asked to produce a piece of creative writing.

**[40]\***

Writing tasks will be loosely connected to the theme of the reading section.

This question requires students to produce a piece of creative writing. This question requires students to adapt their writing to suit the task and to use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures with accurate spelling and punctuation.



# Command words

Command word	Definition	Used in	Assessment objective
Identify	Select the relevant quotation from the text	Question 1 of both components	AO1i
Give	Retrieve information from the text		
Explain	Interpret information in the text		
Draw on evidence	Give the quotations/textual references that show the connections between the texts	Question 1 of Component 1	AO1ii
How does...use	Analyse the use of language and structure in the text; identify features of the text and use this as a springboard to explain the impact on the reader	Question 2 of Component 2	AO2
Explore	Analyse the use of language and structure in the text; identify features of the text and use this as a springboard to explain the impact on the reader	Question 3 of both components	AO2
How far do you agree	Make personal judgements on the texts in response to a statement; weigh up the impact of the texts	Question 4 of both components	AO4
Discuss	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the texts and the ability to evaluate the writers' ideas and perspectives		AO4
Explain	Interpret information in the texts to support the points made		AO4
Compare	Find connections between the texts, both similarities and differences		AO3
Support	Provide textual references/ quotations to support the points made	Question 2 of Component 2; Question 3 and Question 4 of both components	AO2 AO3 AO4

# Accessibility principles

The principles and rationale underpinning our paper construction approach for OCR GCSE (9-1) English Language are outlined below. These make sure the assessments are as accessible as possible for all candidates.

No.	Accessibility principle	Why?
1	<b>Layout (clear for all)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arial font will be used.</li> <li>Adequate space for responses.</li> </ul>	To make it easy for candidates to add their responses.
2	<b>Tone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Texts and vocabulary will be considered for currency and appropriateness for students.</li> <li>Language used throughout the question will be consistent. For example, usage matches throughout the question.</li> </ul>	To make it as clear as possible what response is expected.
3	<b>Format</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Italics will not be used in questions with the exception of the introductions to texts.</li> <li>All text will be left aligned.</li> </ul>	<p>Italics is used for the text introductions to distinguish them from the body of the text.</p> <p>To align with the principles applied to our modified question papers (left alignment is easier to understand for a range of visual impairments).</p>

# Our approach to marking

When designing our mark schemes we have applied the principles below to ensure reliability and consistency.

Mark scheme design principles:

- AO descriptor included at the top of the mark scheme for each question.
- Question guidance focuses on approaches candidates might take. They are reviewed before standardisation to take account of student responses seen by senior examiners in preparation for standardisation.
- AO descriptors and appropriate terminology inserted into each band descriptor.
- A clear descriptor present for 0 marks that is separate from the lowest level containing marks.
- No more than four marks will be used in any level for an Assessment Objective.
- Descriptions kept as short as possible while still covering the Assessment Objective.
- Clear marking guidance provided on approaches that may be taken.

## Marking approach

All questions, with the exception of Question 1, are assessed using levels of response (LOR) mark schemes. LOR mark schemes are always approached in the same way, with the marks split into up to six levels clearly assigned to the appropriate Assessment Objective. These are marked using a best-fit approach.

Our examiners are given the following guidance to aid their marking of LOR questions (this information is also repeated in our published mark schemes):

Using 'best-fit', decide first which set of Level of Response Band Descriptors best describes the overall quality of the answer. Once the band is located, adjust the mark concentrating on features of the answer which make it stronger or weaker following the guidelines for refinement.

- Highest mark: If clear evidence of all the qualities in the band descriptors is shown, the HIGHEST Mark should be given.
- Lowest mark: If the answer shows the candidate to be borderline (i.e. they have achieved all the qualities of the bands below and show limited evidence of meeting the criteria of the band in question) the LOWEST mark should be given.
- Middle mark: This mark should be used for candidates who are secure in the band. They are not 'borderline' but they have only achieved some of the qualities in the band descriptors.

# Spoken language endorsement

The Spoken Language endorsement is assessed separately from the two examined components and does not contribute to the final GCSE (9-1) English Language grade. Students are given a separate grade for this endorsement: Pass, Merit, Distinction or Not Classified.

The requirements for the Spoken Language assessment are the same across all exam boards. Students deliver a presentation on an agreed topic which will usually be of the student's own choice. They should use Standard English. This assessment requires students to give their presentation in front of an audience and to engage with the audience through gesture, eye contact and body language. The presenting student then listens and responds appropriately to questions and feedback.

The Spoken Language presentations are videoed and internally assessed and graded by teachers. A sample of recordings is sent to OCR for monitoring.

Further guidance on the [Spoken Language endorsement](#)

Joint [exam board exemplars](#) to support assessment of the Spoken Language endorsement.

# Meet the English team



**Keeley Nolan**

Subject Advisor

Keeley joined the English team in 2014 and led on the development of OCR's GCSE (9-1) English Language qualification. She is responsible for a portfolio of English qualifications, including GCSE (9-1) English Language, GCSE (9-1) English Literature and Entry Level English.

As Subject Advisor, Keeley supports teachers in delivering our English qualifications and understanding the assessments. Keeley speaks with teachers at conferences and network events, answers teacher queries and communicates with teachers via email updates and Twitter. She engages with stakeholders in the English community; reviews teaching and learning resources, CPD materials and examiner reports.



**Stephanie Wyre**

Assessment Standards Senior Manager

Stephanie joined OCR in 1998 and has had a number of roles from Subject Officer, Qualifications Development Manager and leading the Accreditation Team through the development of the GCSE (9-1) qualifications.

As Assessment Standards Senior Manager, Stephanie plays a key role in assuring appropriate standards for assessment processes and qualifications in line with regulatory requirements. Stephanie currently has a portfolio of English qualifications including GCSE (9-1) English Language.

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Get in touch with one of OCR's Subject Advisors:

Email: [English@ocr.org.uk](mailto:English@ocr.org.uk)

Twitter: @OCR\_English

Customer Contact Centre: 01223 553998

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