

**GCSE (9–1)**

**Moderators' report**

# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**J351**

For first teaching in 2015

**J351/03/04 Summer 2023 series**

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## Introduction

Our moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

## Online courses

We have created online courses to build your confidence in delivering, marking and administering internal assessment for our qualifications. Courses are available for Cambridge Nationals, GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016).

### Cambridge Nationals

All teachers delivering our redeveloped Cambridge Nationals suite from September 2022 are asked to complete the Essentials for the NEA course, which describes how to guide and support your students. You'll receive a certificate which you should retain.

Following this you can also complete a subject-specific Focus on Internal Assessment course for your individual Cambridge Nationals qualification, covering marking and delivery.

### GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016)

We recommend all teachers complete the introductory module Building your Confidence in Internal Assessment, which covers key internal assessment and standardisation principles.

Following this you will find a subject-specific course for your individual qualification, covering marking criteria with examples and commentary, along with interactive marking practice.

### Accessing our online courses

You can access all our online courses from our teacher support website [Teach Cambridge](#).

You will find links relevant to your subject under Assessment, NEA/Coursework and then Online Courses from the left hand menu on your Subject page.

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## General overview

The Spoken Language endorsement is a compulsory component of GCSE English Language. The endorsement is reported as a separate grade (Pass, Merit, Distinction or Not Classified) and does not contribute to the result of the overall GCSE English Language qualification.

Candidates must undertake a prepared spoken presentation on a specific topic following which they must listen to and respond appropriately to questions and feedback. Presentations must be formal but may take a wide variety of forms.

The Spoken Language endorsement is assessed holistically as a grade, using competency-based marking criteria. Competency means that a candidate must meet all the criteria in a grade to achieve it. If they only meet some of the criteria, they cannot be given that grade.

Centres are responsible for internal standardisation of assessments across all teaching groups. Standardisation materials are available on the OCR website and should be used to train all teaching staff involved in the assessments.

In this series, the Spoken Language component was monitored externally following series where centres were not required to submit recordings due to disruption during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most satisfied the requirements of the monitoring process, submitting the recorded samples and documentation by the deadline. Monitors reported seeing some excellent work in centres of all sizes, with the full range of ability able to access and pass the assessment. The topics chosen were mostly appropriate and engaged candidates fully, and the questioning was generally helpful in helping candidates to achieve their potential.

## Administration

Centres were required to submit recorded evidence of the assessments, sending up to thirty recordings to the monitor to allow the centre's grading to be monitored. Up to ten recordings of assessments on all three grades, distinction, merit and pass, were required where appropriate. Some centres chose to upload their recordings onto the OCR repository, other sent their recordings to the monitor on USB sticks or DVDs. Many centres sent the correct number of recordings on each grade; however, some centres did not send thirty recordings where they had fewer than ten candidates on a particular grade. Centres are reminded that where this occurs, they should make the total number of recordings in the sample up to thirty by sending more recordings on the grades that they do have available.

Centres are also required to send the monitor a copy of the centre mark sheet detailing the grades of all candidates, not just those in the sample, but many centres did not fulfil this requirement and had to be contacted. In this series, there was also a requirement for centres to send details of the teaching sets. Many centres did not include the appropriate forms and had to be contacted by the monitor.

### Misconception



Centres are required to send details of the teaching sets to help monitors to sample candidates across teaching groups. Some centres had only recorded one teaching set, which meant this requirement had not been met.

Centres are reminded that their recorded sample of thirty should be drawn from different teaching sets so monitors can check that internal moderation is being carried out to make sure consistency of grading across different teaching sets.

Monitors reported that many centres submitted their recordings by the deadline and the USB sticks/DVDs were clearly and helpfully labelled with candidate numbers, names and the grade given. Some centres did not label them fully and had to be contacted to provide more details, usually the grade given to individual candidates.

Centres should make sure that they have sent all necessary documentation to the monitor:

- video recordings of ten candidates on each grade, clearly labelled with candidate name, number and grade given
- a copy of the centre grade sheet submitted to OCR
- teaching set details on the appropriate form.

## Centres using the OCR Repository

Centres should make sure that they have uploaded all necessary recordings and documentation:

- video recordings of ten candidates on each grade, clearly labelled with candidate name, number and grade given

And using the Administration Tab:

- a copy of the centre grade sheet submitted to OCR
- teaching set details on the appropriate form.

Monitors reported that many centres, who used the repository to submit their samples, did not use the Administration Tab and therefore had to be contacted directly.

Monitors also reported that many of the uploaded files took a long time to download. It is the centre's responsibility to make sure that all recordings are compressed and can be accessed easily.

## Assessment preparation and procedures in centres

Centres are required to agree a topic with the candidates and offer them sufficient preparation and guidance for the assessment. The filmed assessments should take place in a suitable setting, which can be during a lesson. The camera should remain focused on the candidate, offering a clear view, and the sound quality should make sure that every word can be heard clearly, including the questions. Questions can come from other candidates or the teacher, but it is the teacher's responsibility to make sure that all questions are appropriate and helpful in terms of inviting the candidate to extend their talk.

This series, the topics chosen varied widely and it was clear that in most centres, candidates had made choices which were judiciously guided by the teacher allowing for personal engagement with the subject-matter as well as an appropriate level of complexity for the grade given. In this series, monitors saw very few centres where talks were based on literature texts, or other syllabus-related topics where candidates had clearly not had much choice in their subject-matter. As a result, there was a noticeable increase in the overall level of candidate engagement in the assessments. Centres are reminded that for any candidates given merit or distinction grades, the topics need to have a level of complexity and interpretation. Less complex topics, such as work-experience, or my favourite hobby, should be reserved for candidates aiming for a pass grade.

Monitors reported that the filming of the assessments was mostly very helpful and with appropriate levels of visual and sound quality. However, some centres did not provide a recording of the whole assessment, including the questions. Centres are reminded that the whole assessment must be filmed with the candidate clearly in view. There is no need to film the person asking the questions or to scan the audience. Occasionally, the sound quality on the recording was poor, sometimes due to extraneous noise in the background and sometimes due to the camera being positioned too far from the candidate where projection was poor and could not be picked up fully by the camera's microphone. It is crucial that monitors can hear every word of the presentation and the questions for effective monitoring to take place. It is also fairer to candidates if background noise and disturbances are kept to a minimum during these assessments. A few centres only sent audio recordings which were not sufficient for full monitoring to take place.

Monitors reported that some films were difficult to access where they were too large for monitors to upload or saved in an unusual format, although there was further improvement in this area this year. Centres should check their submissions carefully to make sure that they can be accessed easily.

Monitors reported seeing a great deal of good practice, where candidates had planned their presentation carefully and used a wide variety of presentational skills and rhetorical devices to engage their audience, judiciously using a PowerPoint or short notes to assist them. In a number of centres there was too much reliance on whole scripts where candidates were simply reading a pre-prepared script, sometimes with very little emphasis and often far too quickly. This led to ineffective talks with no communication established between the presenter and the audience. The presence of the script hindered rather than assisted the candidates and limited their scope to demonstrate good presentational skills and awareness of audience needs. Often these candidates had been given higher grades that seemed to be based on the content of the script rather than considering how effectively the content was delivered. These higher grades could not be justified, as the requirement to engage the audience had not been met. Other candidates used PowerPoint slides which contained far too much information and were read aloud by the candidate.

The presentations and questions should last approximately eight – ten minutes. Monitors reported seeing some presentations that were too short – between one and two minutes at times. Some of these presentations had been given distinctions and merits. Although at times the questions allowed candidates to expand their talk through extended responses enabling a higher grade, this was not always the case. Centres are reminded that candidates aiming for higher grades should present an extended talk on their topic, allowing them to fulfil all the criteria for these grades. Conversely, a few presentations were far too long, and some monitors reported seeing individual presentations and questions lasting up to twenty-five minutes. This is not helpful for either the candidate or the monitoring process and centres are reminded that ten minutes is the maximum time recommended. Teachers should work closely with candidates to make sure that their presentations are an appropriate length.

The questions asked should help candidates to extend their talk rather than repeat information. Monitors reported seeing some excellent examples of pertinent questions which enabled candidates to achieve a higher grade in many cases; these questions tended to probe and challenge using precise language. Other questions were less helpful and sometimes too detailed, leaving the candidates with little to add, or they were asked closed questions which invited very perfunctory responses. Occasionally candidates were asked very challenging questions which they were unable to answer. It is useful if the questions are teacher-led rather than allowing other candidates to freely ask questions, as often candidate-led questions were far less helpful to the candidates. Candidates should not be told the questions in advance: monitors reported a few instances of candidates reading out responses to pre-prepared questions – this is clearly not in the spirit of the assessment and did not help those candidates to demonstrate further skills.

Some centres adopted a format where the teacher used questions to structure the candidate's talk for them. This is a supportive format, but it is one that should be reserved for candidates aiming to achieve a pass grade. Candidates given a merit or distinguish must show evidence of the ability to structure their talk effectively to meet the needs of the audience independently.

The vast majority of centres used the competency-based mark scheme accurately and put candidates in the correct grade band. As the marking criteria for the Spoken Language component is competency-based, candidates must fulfil all the criteria in the appropriate grade descriptor to achieve that grade. There was some evidence in a few centres that a 'best-fit' approach was being taken and candidates were given a higher grade based on fulfilling one of the descriptors in the grade above. Centres are reminded that internal moderation must take place to make sure that the mark scheme has been applied fairly and consistently across all teaching sets.

**Assessment for learning**



Where candidates had been over-marked, it was usually for one of the following reasons:

- the presentation was too short and undeveloped
- the candidate read aloud a pre-prepared essay with no attempt to engage the audience or meet the needs of the audience
- the candidate did not use the range of strategies required for a distinction grade.

Centres are advised to prepare candidates carefully for the assessment, teaching them to plan and structure their talks effectively.

Candidates should be offered opportunities to practise their talks to reduce reliance on their notes and develop their confidence.

Candidates should be supported with bullet-point notes, or a PowerPoint rather than a script. This will support them without tempting them to read aloud.

Where centres had enthusiastically embraced the demands and challenges of the Spoken Language component, candidates had produced some outstanding work. Monitors reported seeing a great deal of excellent presentations where the candidates were enthusiastic about their subject and fully engaged the audience. OCR recommends that all candidates are given opportunities across the GCSE English Language course to develop a range of oracy skills in preparation for this final assessment.

Candidates who did well generally:	Candidates who did less well generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chose a suitable topic in which they had genuine interest</li> <li>• prepared their talk carefully, structuring it effectively to engage the audience</li> <li>• used a range of rhetorical devices to arouse the interest of the audience</li> <li>• used their notes or a PowerPoint effectively without being reliant on reading aloud</li> <li>• answered questions confidently using the opportunities offered by them to broaden their ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chose a topic in which they did not seem to have much interest</li> <li>• gave a brief outline of the topic without developing their talk fully through using examples</li> <li>• did not acknowledge the audience</li> <li>• read a prepared speech rather than delivering a talk</li> <li>• spoke too quickly without considering the audience</li> <li>• answered questions very briefly or repeated the content of their talk.</li> </ul>



## Avoiding potential malpractice

Centres should follow the guidance and instructions for monitoring procedures carefully. Monitors cited the following reasons for referring centres for potential malpractice:

- not sending a full range of filmed samples
- not covering a range of teaching groups in the filmed sample
- recordings that were missing sound or video
- no questions asked or scripted responses to questions
- a speech that is clearly plagiarised from another source

## Helpful resources

OCR has published a guide for preparing candidates for the Spoken Language assessment.

[Teacher Guide for Preparing Learners for their Spoken Language Assessment](#)

OCR has published a guide for providing recorded evidence for the monitoring of the Spoken Language assessment.

[Instructions for conducting and recording audio visual evidence](#)

## Additional comments

Working on the skills required for the Spoken Language component is essential throughout the course, to help candidates to develop effective strategies for this final assessment. Future candidates may benefit from being aware of the need to engage with their audience using gesture, eye-contact and body language to make their presentations effective. Spoken language skills can be developed through group and paired presentations when studying literature texts or developing ideas for non-fictional writing tasks. They should be built into the GCSE Language and Literature schemes of work to develop the candidates' skills and confidence gradually.

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For the June 2023 series, Exams Officers will be able to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts' for all of our General Qualifications including Entry Level, GCSE and AS/A Level. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

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