



Examiners' Report Principal Monitor Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In English Language (1EN0)
Paper E Spoken Language Endorsement

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Publications Code 1EN0_E_ER_2406

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Introduction

The Spoken Language Endorsement (SLE) is a compulsory part of the qualification and the focus of the component is on developing spoken language skills. It provides candidates with the opportunity to plan and research an oral presentation on any suitable topic and to demonstrate their ability to engage an audience. Whilst this may be quite a daunting prospect for some, it was wonderful to see how many had embraced the challenge and many monitors reported back on how it was both a pleasure and a privilege to watch and review the presentations. One monitor stated that there was 'lots of passion and maturity seen from candidates'. It is evident that many centres took time and care to guide and support their candidates who, in turn, took the demands of the SLE seriously and made great efforts to achieve their best. This led to some excellent and impressive work on which centres and their candidates are to be congratulated.

Centre administration:

The majority of centres submitted work on to the LWT platform by the deadline date of May 15th but there were some where work was late; it is important to remember that the 'submit' button must be pressed in order for the work to be available to monitors. Most samples were made up of the correct selection of presentations – requirements are given in the specification and the submission guidance which is available on the website. There is also a link at the end of this report.

Most recordings were correctly labelled but on some occasions the grade awarded by the centre was missing. The instructions given for labelling each presentation are as follows:

name each file according to the following naming convention: [centre #]_[candidate number #]_[surname]_[first letter of first name]_[grade]
Example: Joshua Smith with candidate number 7890 at centre 12345 would a recording titled, '12345_7890_Smith_J_Merit

With the move to LWT, it is important that files are saved in an appropriate format. Monitors reported that occasionally the presentations would not play on the platform and had to be downloaded which could take time and is not advisable. At other times only the sound would play or the files appeared to be encrypted. Some work had to be returned to centres so that it could be saved and resubmitted in a suitable form. Most monitors felt that mp3/mp4 worked well. It would be very helpful if centres could check recordings both before and after they have been uploaded.

In addition to uploading the presentations, centres also need to upload the assessment record sheets for all candidates in the sample. There were new sheets available to use this series but some had been completed before the new forms were introduced. Monitors noted that where the assessing teachers had written comments on the sheets this was very helpful. It is important to remember that in order to achieve a particular grade all of the criteria for that grade need to be achieved. It was also interesting to see where centres

recognised that a candidate might have demonstrated some of the qualities for the grade above by ticking any relevant statements. The new updated form, which has to be signed by both the candidate and teacher and covers the issue of AI, is available on the website and there is a link at the end of this report.

Centres should also complete a Head of Centre Declaration form but this can now be stored at the centre and does not need to be submitted with the work.

Centres should ensure that candidate grades are submitted on Edexcel Online before the final deadline; it is normally possible to put these on the system up to one month prior to the deadline. They should, however, be checked to ensure that they match the grades given on the recording information.

Quality of recordings

On the whole, monitors reported that the quality of recordings was good, but there were still some instances where the recording device was not placed in the most advantageous position. It is important that monitors are able to hear the candidate and those who ask questions. There were some occasions where the device was next to the teacher whose every movement and sound was picked up exceptionally loudly. At other times, candidates were in shadow, moved out of view or only the top of their head or feet were captured. Best position for the recording device is facing the candidate rather than sideways on. Monitors noted that sometimes there seemed to be a lot of background noise; this cannot always be avoided and indeed, where it happened, candidates seemed to take it in their stride, but recording outside or in a corridor did not work well. A few centres used hand-held recording equipment but this often led to distracting zooming in and out or constant movement.

Candidates should introduce themselves with name and candidate number at the start. Sometimes the teacher gave this information and at other times it was written on a board; that is fine as long as the details are correct and apply to that particular candidate.

Choice of topics

Monitors were impressed by the range of diverse, challenging and engaging topics that candidates presented. In the vast majority of cases candidates had been given freedom of choice which allowed them to speak about something which interested and often inspired them. Some of the more popular subjects covered included: AI; social media; mental health; the cost of living crisis; animal cruelty; vaping; domestic abuse; self-acceptance; gender inequality and various sports.

It is important to remember that for a Merit the ideas need to be 'challenging' and for a Distinction 'sophisticated'. Monitors reported some generous awarding of top grades to candidates who were articulate but whose ideas lacked the requisite degree of challenge. At the top level some speeches covered topics such as memory, corruption, colonialisation, the paranormal and refugees. However, it is perfectly possible to produce a high quality talk on, for example, football if some of the more thought-provoking themes are considered. Examples of these are: inequality in pay for men and women; footballers as role

models; the cost of kits; what a club can mean to a community. Often these speeches sought to persuade and entertain as well as inform. Overall, monitors reported how wonderful it was to see students given the chance to explore their understanding of the world and express what were often very sensitive and mature views.

Monitors reported that a few centres had given the same literature title to all candidates eg 'How does Scrooge develop over the course of *A Christmas Carol*?' Whilst the reason for this is understandable, in these instances it was very clear that candidates were less engaged in what they were saying and often did not show the same degree of engagement or enthusiasm.

Delivery of presentations

Delivery of speeches was often of a very high standard with many candidates taking a very positive approach and preparing well. Some candidates used powerpoints and, if used appropriately eg to show images, a diagram, a map, a graph, these can enhance a talk. Occasionally however, a candidate turned to face the screen and read out every word of their talk which meant there was no attempt to engage the audience. Some talks were very brief which made it almost impossible for a candidate to achieve beyond a Pass as they made only a limited range of points. Conversely, some presentations were far too long; the maximum length of a talk plus question and answer session is 10 minutes and it is perfectly possible for a candidate to meet all the criteria for a high grade in less time.

There were very few centres in this series that opted to assess candidates in pairs. Monitors reported that where this did take place it was often the case that candidates had been given the same grade even when performance levels were very different. These presentations sometimes consisted of each candidate giving a brief talk on certain elements of a topic or the two speakers expressing opposing views but there was often very little or limited interaction between them. Overall, candidates do significantly better when they present alone.

Although monitors reported that there was overall improvement in delivery, there were still some speakers who were heavily reliant on notes (at times full scripts) and who made only minimal eye contact with their audience. Inevitably, this has an impact on how well they meet the needs of their listeners. Centre assessors need to remember that to be awarded a Pass, a candidate must, as well as meeting the other criteria, make 'an attempt to meet the needs of the audience'. For a Merit, they must 'meet the needs of the audience' and 'achieve the purpose of his or her presentation'. For a Distinction, they must use 'an effective range of strategies to engage the audience' and 'achieve the purpose of his or her presentation'.

All of these assessment criteria refer to the candidate's connection with an audience. It is extremely difficult for a candidate to meet these criteria if they read their prepared presentation without taking the audience into account.. Some candidates may feel nervous if they do not have a script to hand but should never feel that a pause to collect thoughts or the occasional glance at notes will detract from their presentation.

It was clear throughout this series that candidates who used cue cards, or no notes at all, invested their presentations with greater freshness and spontaneity and often spoke with a good degree of confidence and clarity. The more a candidate relates to their audience, the better their chance of gaining a higher grade and it is essential that they only be awarded a Distinction grade if they use 'an effective range of strategies to engage the audience'.

Such strategies might include:

- Verbal rhetorical devices such as anaphora, repetition, rhetorical sentences, triadic sentences and lists
- Modulation of tone, volume or expression
- Physical gestures and facial expressions
- Devices to elicit audience participation
- The judicious use of humour.

Question and answer sessions

To be awarded a grade there must be evidence of a candidate responding to questions and this is a vital part of the presentations. It was interesting to note how on many occasions, candidates visibly relaxed when they moved on to this part of the presentation and away from their notes; they engaged more securely with their audience when responding spontaneously to questions. In the few instances where answers to questions had been pre-prepared, there was generally a less successful outcome as these were often simply read with limited interaction.

Teachers often played a very significant role in asking questions that were challenging and encouraged the candidate to develop arguments and expand on points. They also gently supported anxious candidates and were often able to draw out more information and help them achieve their grade.

The best questions are open, requiring more than 'yes' or 'no' as an answer, and clearly relate to the topic. All too often however, even when the candidate had already explained the reasons for their interest, the question was 'What made you choose this topic?' It is important to remember that for a Merit grade candidates need to answer 'formally and in some detail' and for a Distinction they need to respond 'perceptively'. Where candidates achieved at a high level, supportive listeners asked thoughtful questions that led to detailed and assured responses. Monitors reported that the quality of the question and answer session could really impact the final grade awarded.

Advice to centres

- Check that all guidance for submitting work is followed (see links below).
- If any special circumstances apply, please upload the relevant paperwork to LWT.
- Support candidates in choosing topics which interest and inspire them.
- Ensure that the recording device is placed in the optimum position.
- Encourage candidates to use cue cards rather than full scripts and engage with their audience.
- Practise effective techniques for asking and answering questions.
- Allow some time to moderate assessments so there is consistency in the awarding of grades.

[Spoken language endorsement submission guidance \(pearson.com\)](#)

[Assessment-record-sheet-spoken-language-endorsement-v2.docx \(live.com\)](#)

