



Examiners' Report Principal Monitor Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In English Language (1EN2)
Paper E Spoken Language Endorsement

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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 valuable opportunity to plan and research an oral presentation on any suitable topic, that has hopefully enthused or inspired them, and to demonstrate their ability to engage an audience. To be able to communicate well orally is an extremely important life skill and it was evident that many centres took time and care to guide and support their candidates. In turn, almost every one of these candidates took the demands of the SLE very 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. There were a good number of centres where the confident and relaxed demeanour of their candidates indicated that their presentations were the culmination of years of well-honed speaking and listening skills. As always, it was a pleasure and a privilege to view this work.

Monitors were very pleased to note that there was clear evidence that many centres had responded positively to advice and guidance issued in previous reports; as a result there were fewer pair/group presentations and there was a move away from extensive reliance on notes. Centres are reminded that, in addition to this report that is based on the findings of all the monitors, they can access a report giving feedback on their own centre on Edexcel Online.

Whilst the vast majority of centre grades were agreed by monitors, which is testament to teachers' professional and careful application of the standard, there was an occasional lack of consistency in the awarding of grades across different teaching groups within some centres. Centres are reminded of the need to carry out their own moderation of standards. There is a link to the JCQ document on NEA at the end of this report; Appendix 2 of the document gives advice on the SLE.

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 with no indication that an extension had been requested. 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 – sample requirements are set out 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

Candidates should also introduce themselves at the start so that monitors can be sure exactly whose work they are reviewing. It is important that files are saved in an appropriate format and those listed in the specification such as MOV do **not** all work well on the platform. Monitors reported that some presentations would not play on LWA and had to be downloaded which could take time and is not advisable. Some work had to be returned to centres so that it could be saved and resubmitted in a suitable form. Most monitors felt that **mp4** worked best. It would be very helpful if centres could check recordings before uploading them as there were still some that were audio only or where the candidate was not audible.

In addition to uploading the presentations, centres also need to upload the assessment record sheets for all candidates in the sample. 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 for monitors 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 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. Although centres are advised to upload the assessment sheets as a single pdf, many monitors found it more helpful to have each one individually alongside the candidate's presentation

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.

If candidates are being re-entered for GCSE English Language their spoken language grade can be transferred. It is important that the correct entry code (1EN2 T) is used. Candidates whose Pass, Merit or Distinction grades are being transferred from a previous series should not be recorded as NC.

Where centres are acting as a consortium, as is the case with some colleges, it is important that there is consistency in administration and in the assessment of candidates. It would be helpful if documentation confirming the consortium details could be uploaded with the work.

Quality of recordings

On the whole, monitors reported that the quality of recordings showed an improvement, 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, whilst the candidate was hard to hear. 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. A few centres used hand-held recording equipment but this often led to distracting zooming in and out or constant movement.

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 does not work well. Candidates sit written exams in a quiet environment and suitable places need to be found for this endorsement work.

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.

As stated earlier in the report, mp4 is the preferred format for ease of viewing files.

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: social media; serial killers; mental health; video games; gender inequality and various sports. Post-16 students often gave talks that linked to their practical studies; these had the potential to be very interesting but sometimes did not move beyond fairly straightforward presentations and opportunities to explore the more complex ideas linked to the topic were missed. One monitor was impressed by the bravery and sensitivity of a talk on the candidate's experience of endometriosis.

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 'Delayed gratification; 'The impact of AI on young people and learning' and 'Financial Pressures on the NHS'. 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. . Similarly, where candidates chose to talk about a pet animal, ideas rarely rose above the level of 'straightforward information' but if they explored issues such as the rising cost of vet fees, the choice of buying from a breeder or adopting a rescue animal then the degree of challenge would rise considerably.

Monitors were impressed by some unusual and inspiring presentations: one candidate spoke about her experience of education in Pakistan and in England with incredible maturity and passion, for example, and another candidate produced a fascinating presentation about the issues surrounding salmon farming. Others mentioned well-argued pieces about feminism in Hollywood and why the 10th Dr Who is over-rated. Often these speeches sought to persuade and entertain or provoke thought as well as inform.

Overall, it was wonderful to see students given the chance – and freedom – to explore their understanding of the world and express what were often very sensitive and mature views.

Delivery of presentations

Delivery of speeches was often of a high standard with many candidates taking a very positive approach and preparing well. One monitor reported: It was a pleasure to watch and listen to candidates, at all grades, who clearly wanted to present themselves and their chosen subject, at their best.'

Most centres had made real efforts to accommodate candidates: where necessary there were small group settings and video calls as well as the more traditional classroom set up.

It was pleasing to see that many centres had responded to advice to encourage candidates to move away from reading their presentation. This endorsement is an assessment of spoken language and therefore reading a script is not appropriate; where it happens there is no opportunity for a speaker to engage with their audience. There is also the sense sometimes that the material is second-hand as candidates are seen to stumble over more complex words or names. Additionally, in a few centres, it was observed that candidates were reading or referring to notes from their phones during the presentation. This is not recommended, as it further reduces natural delivery and eye contact, often leading to a disjointed and less engaging performance. Centres should discourage the use of phones during assessments and instead encourage printed notes or rehearsed, independent delivery.

The reminder is given that the signed assessment/authentication sheets are a confirmation that the work is the candidate's own.

It was also observed that there has been a positive move away from the use of PowerPoint 'scripts' although there were still some in evidence. When used appropriately, for example to show a relevant image, an explanatory diagram, a map, an illustrative graph, the use of PowerPoint 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.

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.

In terms of timing, most Merit and Distinction candidates delivered presentations that were sufficiently long within the suggested 10-minute timeframe, allowing them to elaborate on their topics. There were, however, some presentations that went far beyond the 10-minute maximum; this was found to lead to the presentation losing impetus and direction or falling into a discussion amongst audience members.

Pass grade presentations were sometimes very brief, allowing time for only a limited range of points. Others featured heavy reliance on notes, with candidates reading directly from scripts. This limited their ability to engage with the audience and affected the overall fluency and coherence of the delivery.

There were very few centres that opted to assess candidates in pairs or groups. 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. One centre submitted group discussions which lasted in total only two-three minutes – brief for a single candidate, but not nearly enough time to demonstrate the achievement of several people.

The most successful presentations were marked by strong preparation, with candidates showing clear evidence of rehearsal and familiarity with their material. These candidates typically avoided reading from notes, instead delivering their speeches fluently and with natural expression. This not only improved the overall flow but also allowed for more spontaneous interaction with the audience and better eye contact, both of which contributed positively to audience engagement.

Candidates who were genuinely interested in their chosen topics and could bring in a personal element tended to present more confidently and with greater enthusiasm. This connection enabled them to elaborate more effectively on their points and maintain the attention of the audience through a lively and persuasive approach. Their ability to speak with conviction and depth reflected both strong preparation, practice and a clear understanding of their subject matter.

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 to remember that they can 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
- a judicious use of humour.

To sum up: encouraging candidates to select topics that interest them, alongside providing ample rehearsal opportunities to practise delivery techniques, will continue to be key in supporting strong, confident and successful performances.

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. These sessions are a key part of the assessment, offering an opportunity for candidates to show spontaneity, critical thinking, and their capacity to communicate effectively beyond their prepared speech.

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 (not advisable), there was generally a less successful outcome as these were often simply read with limited interaction. It was pleasing to see audiences generally listening attentively, supporting their peers in a positive manner (often applauding at the end) and asking pertinent questions.

Teachers often played a very significant role in this element of the presentation. They gently supported anxious candidates and were often able to draw out more information or re-frame questions to help them achieve their grade. It is crucial also that candidates who demonstrate Merit and Distinction skills in their speech are asked questions that are suitably challenging and enable them to sustain and achieve that level overall. It is important to note that the grade criteria make reference to the way in which a candidate responds to 'questions', so a single question is rarely going to allow them to demonstrate high-order skills.

The best questions are open, probing, clearly relate to the topic and require more than 'yes' or 'no' as an answer. 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?', which allowed limited or no opportunity for expansion of ideas. 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. If no questions are asked and responded to, then the grade has to be NC, no matter how good the quality of the talk.

Key factors affecting performance by grade

Distinction

Candidates achieving Distinction typically:

- select challenging, thought-provoking topics
- use sophisticated vocabulary and strategies to engage
- respond perceptively in Q&A sessions, expanding on ideas

Common Issues:

- over-reliance on scripts, limiting audience engagement
- brief Q&A sessions, reducing opportunities to demonstrate depth
- some topics lack sufficient intellectual challenge

Merit

Candidates achieving Merit typically:

- choose personally engaging topics
- structure presentations well but often read from scripts or slides
- respond thoughtfully but not always expansively in Q&A sessions

Key Concerns:

- lack of spontaneity due to script dependence
- some responses are too brief to meet Merit criteria
- degree of 'challenge' not always sustained
- minimal audience interaction in some cases

Pass

Candidates achieving Pass typically:

- speak clearly in Standard English with coherent structure
- select straightforward topics
- often read directly from scripts, limiting engagement
- perform better in unscripted Q&A sessions

Areas for Improvement:

- use cue cards instead of full scripts
- ensure presentations are long enough to develop ideas
- offer more open-ended questions to allow deeper responses

ADVICE TO CENTRES

- 1) Check that all guidance for submitting work is followed (see links below).
- 2) If any special circumstances apply, please upload the relevant paperwork to LWT.
- 3) Record more than the minimum number at each grade to allow for those candidates who perform at a different level to that anticipated.
- 4) Support candidates in choosing topics which interest and inspire them.

- 5) Help candidates to explore the more complex or challenging issues of their topic.
- 6) Ensure that the recording device is placed in the optimum position.
- 7) Encourage candidates to use cue cards rather than full scripts and engage with their audience.
- 8) Practise effective techniques for asking and answering questions.
- 9) Ensure presentations do not extend beyond 10 minutes.
- 10) Revisit the joint awarding bodies exemplar presentations, available on the Pearson website for this specification.
- 11) Allow some time to moderate assessments so there is consistency in the awarding of grades.
- 12) Follow the links below to: Pearson submission guidance; a video giving guidance on SLE submission from the Pearson subject Adviser; the assessment/authentication sheet; JCQ document on NEA (see Appendix 2).

Useful links

[Spoken language endorsement submission guidance \(pearson.com\)](https://www.pearson.com/qa/qa-articles/2024/08/20/Spoken-language-endorsement-submission-guidance)

[GCSE English Language SLE submission support June 2025 - presentation and recording](https://www.pearson.com/qa/qa-articles/2024/08/20/GCSE-English-Language-SLE-submission-support-June-2025-presentation-and-recording)

[Assessment-record-sheet-spoken-language-endorsement-v2.docx \(live.com\)](https://www.pearson.com/qa/qa-articles/2024/08/20/Assessment-record-sheet-spoken-language-endorsement-v2.docx)

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