

Given the very significant concerns about the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on students' education and the considerable disruption to learning that has ensued, Ofqual set out a series of proposals for assessments in summer 2021. This was accompanied by a consultation, and contributions from teachers and other stakeholders were welcomed.

The outcomes of the consultation have now been published and can be found on the Ofqual website:

[Consultations Decisions: Proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2021](#)

Frequently asked questions

The following FAQs have been compiled to help provide an understanding of the key changes that will result as a consequence of the Ofqual decisions across the four language skills. These will affect *all languages* in our GCSE languages portfolio.

Will the GCSE speaking tests (Paper 2) take place in summer 2021?

No, Paper 2 (Speaking) will not be assessed in summer 2021 in any of the GCSEs in languages. The assessment of the qualification will be completely based on the skills of listening, reading and writing. Consequently, Papers 1, 3 and 4 will now account for 100% of the GCSE qualification and will each be equally weighted at 33.33%. A separate speaking endorsement will, however, be available.

What is the speaking endorsement?

Although separate to the main qualification, the teacher-assessed endorsement will enable you to indicate the appropriate level that each of your students has achieved in target-language speaking. Teachers will draw on each student's overall speaking performance during normal speaking activities in the classroom (or remote assessments for any students who are self-isolating).

Common assessment criteria will be provided by Ofqual in due course following collaboration across all awarding organisations.

How will the speaking endorsement be 'graded'?

The speaking assessment will not be graded 9-1 like the GCSE papers that are formally examined. Instead, teachers will provide an indication of their students' level of target-language speaking according to Ofqual common criteria that will link to a four-point scale: *not classified*, *pass*, *merit* and *distinction*.

When must the speaking endorsement take place?

There will be no 'one-off' test within a prescribed assessment window. It is expected that teachers will submit each student's level in target-language speaking based on their work during the course of study.

The window for the submission of levels will be confirmed in due course.

Will the speaking endorsement be tiered?

The GCSE speaking endorsement will not be tiered so the same assessment criteria will apply to *all candidates* regardless of their tier of entry for the language qualification.

What moderation arrangements are planned for the speaking endorsement?

There will be no Pearson-Edexcel moderation of the speaking endorsement.

Will teachers need to submit student recordings for the speaking endorsement?

Teachers do not need to record students' work and will not be required to submit recordings to Pearson-Edexcel.

Can the speaking endorsement be undertaken for (a) language(s) not taught at my centre?

It is possible for a speaking endorsement to be submitted for a candidate studying a language that is not taught at your school or college.

In such cases, your centre would need to provide and authenticate the candidate's level in target-language speaking to confirm that it accurately reflects their target-language skills profile. To do this, centres may bring in external tutors or other specialist language trainers to assess the candidate.

If it is not possible for a centre to authenticate, a candidate could still be entered for the GCSE qualification but would receive a '*not classified*' result for the speaking endorsement.

Will the separate speaking endorsement level appear on the GCSE certificates?

Yes, the spoken endorsement level will feature on each candidate's GCSE certificate alongside their combined grade from Papers 1, 3 and 4. It must also be noted that, if no speaking endorsement level is provided for a student, the endorsement will be reported as 'not classified' on the GCSE certificate.

Can we expect any changes to the listening and reading papers?

As Ofqual is lifting the requirement to include non-minimum core vocabulary (MCV) words in the listening and reading papers for summer 2021, we shall review our papers accordingly. Any words that do not appear in the specification's vocabulary list will be removed or glossed. We shall confirm details on this in due course.

Are any modifications to the writing papers planned?

Following a review of the papers, we will be adding an option to Foundation paper Question 2, where there is currently only one question. The 2(a) and 2(b) questions will each relate to a different theme. This will give more choice to students who may not have been able to study the whole specification. We will be adding an additional 5 minutes to Foundation Paper 4 to ensure students have sufficient time to read the options and make decisions.

We will also be changing the topic titles of the questions into English to aid swift identification of themes by students (Questions and rubrics are already set in English for GCSE Chinese and Japanese).

We will not be making changes to the Higher tier as optionality is already available for all questions except for the translation.

Because Question 1 in Paper 4 Foundation and the translations at both tiers will be the only questions where there is no option, we will not include coverage of Pearson's Theme 5 (International and global dimension) in these questions.

How do these changes impact on those announced earlier in the summer for the Pearson Edexcel GCSEs in French, German and Spanish?

It's important to note that the amendments that we have already made to our GCSEs in French, German and Spanish from summer 2021 are quite separate and additional to those determined by Ofqual. The Pearson Edexcel-specific amendments to papers 1, 3 and 4 will still apply. It's also expected that our amendments to the speaking test (paper 2) will be implemented from summer 2022 or as soon as formal speaking tests resume. You can discover more about our exciting amendments to GCSEs in French, German and Spanish [here](#).

