

## Listening and Reading Exam Scheduling

An overview of your  
thoughts and feedback

Our new 2024 Pearson Edexcel French, German and Spanish GCSEs have generated lots of positive conversations with teachers, and we have been listening to your thoughts about the scheduling of the listening and reading papers – how it works (or doesn't work) currently, and what you would prefer for the live exams in 2026.

From your feedback, we know that the current model for the listening and reading exams can intimidate and worry students, making them feel anxious and unconfident. The new GCSE is an opportunity for us to challenge the status quo and do something different that will improve the student experience.

In our new qualifications, the **three listens, moderate speaking pace, appropriate pause lengths, chunked texts** and **gap fill in dictation** will all be working to make our listening paper much more accessible for your students. All these great features have required a slight increase in the exam duration for listening compared to the current exams, an additional 10 minutes at Foundation and 15 minutes at Higher. Therefore, it was important that we reviewed the current practice of scheduling the listening and reading exams in the same exam session to make the right decision for you and your students.





In January and February, we invited MFL teachers and their students to respond to our surveys about the scheduling of our listening and reading exams. We had responses from 75 teachers and 465 students, and the results were clear.

### What is your preference for the scheduling of the listening and reading exams?



**69%** of teachers

would prefer the reading and listening exams on different days

## The reality of back-to-back scheduling

You told us about a number of downsides to back-to-back exams, including:

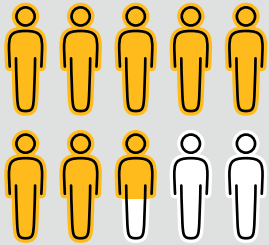
- negative impact on student confidence in the second exam if they felt they struggled in the first
- cognitive overload of two intense exams back-to-back
- tiredness and loss of focus
- lack of opportunity to provide focussed revision sessions prior to each exam
- logistical rooming issues for two exams

"We have to schedule listening exams in classrooms which causes lots of re-rooming. Impact would be less if exams were separated as reading could be done in exam hall."

"Some students are so overwhelmed with the first exam; they lose focus on the second."

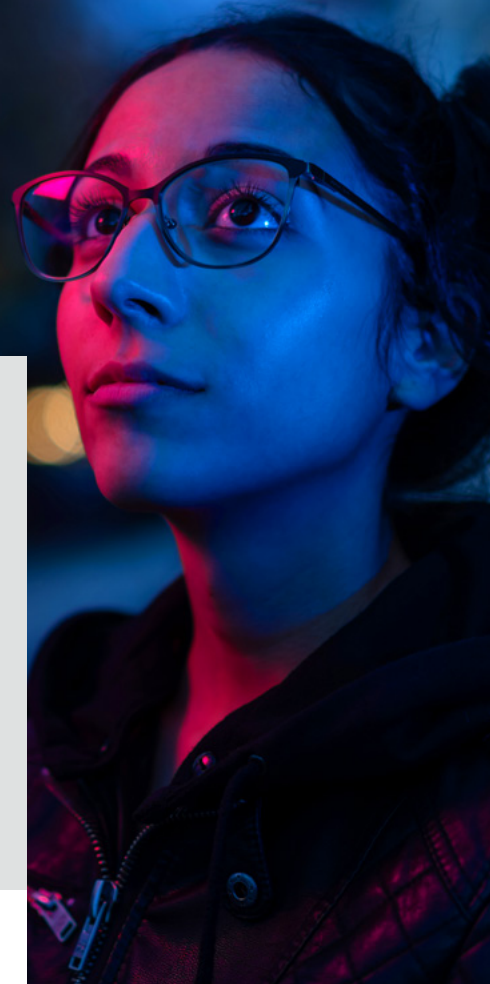
You also shared that the immense practical difficulties mean that **less than 50% of centres are able to consistently deliver back-to-back exams in the mocks**. This means many students have never experienced the back-to-back scheduling before the high stakes live assessments.

# Accessible access arrangements



Over **75%**

of you agreed that having separate days for the listening and reading exams would be better for those students who can access 25% extra time. This suggests that the current back-to-back scheduling is detrimental to those very students who most need improved access arrangements.



## Student perspectives

We wanted to understand how students feel about doing back-to-back listening and reading exams to better understand how the scheduling of these exams would affect their overall assessment experience.

**52% of students selected the more negative emotions of 'worried' and 'tired'**, with their comments revealing the depth of anxiety felt by the students in response to the thought of back-to-back exams:

"Overwhelmed - I feel like in order to do your best on the reading and listening exams, they should be done at separate times, so we're not having to have double the amount of information in our heads going into the exam."

"Stressed - Reading and listening exams are the hardest and the thought of having them back-to-back scares me."

"Mentally destroyed."

"On the one hand, I feel relieved to get them both out the way, but again I don't really want a reading and a listening back-to-back because I'll lose motivation especially if the first one didn't go as well."

Students offered a range of perspectives, with over **60% wanting the listening and reading exams to be scheduled on different days or with a significant break in between sessions.**



## Results

**The opportunity to separate the listening and reading exams is a game-changing decision for many.**

We've listened to our teachers and students in informal conversations at events, as well as through online surveys, and it is clear that the overwhelming majority would prefer the scheduling of the reading and listening exams to take place in separate exam sessions.

To hold true our vision for compassionate assessments, we need to ensure the best and most successful exam experience for students, with their wellbeing at the heart of our decision.

**We can confirm that the reading and listening exams for GCSE French, German and Spanish will be scheduled in separate exam sessions from Summer 2026.**



To find out more information about our qualifications,  
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