

GCSE (9–1) Modern Languages
New amendments to Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) Modern Languages assessments

Learning from our learners to create a better exam experience

We're pleased to announce the launch of our new amendments to our GCSE (9-1) French, German and Spanish assessments, for which the changes will take effect in the summer 2021 exam series*.

Students have been the complete focus of these amendments, which will improve all learners' chances of success. The changes to our assessments will not affect day-to-day teaching; there'll be no need to update schemes of work or lesson plans; but they will create a better exam experience for students.

After the summer exams of 2018 and 2019, teachers expressed concerns about the accessibility of some aspects of our assessments and the impact that this was having on students' experience of the subject. At Pearson, we want to see language learning flourish and make our assessments accessible to every type of learner.

We carried out our own internal audit of student achievement and our own research with teachers and students to explore ways of improving the students' assessment experience. We trialed amended assessments with nearly 400 students and carried out surveys with both the students and their teachers. After carefully analysing the results we identified the changes which would make the most positive impact, and we will be applying these amendments to our live assessments at the earliest opportunity, summer 2021.

And it was the learners that have directed our learning! For example, where we thought that including examples in the reading and listening exams was helpful guidance, students told us that they were misleading because they were sometimes easier than the questions. They were also just another item to process which took time away from the actual assessment and made the amount of reading and listening material longer. We've therefore removed them.

Where we thought that the target language questions in the writing paper might be too wordy or difficult to understand, students told us that if we made them shorter, they had less vocabulary scaffolding to use in their answers and less clues as to which tense to respond in. Our trialing also showed that students did not perform better, or have a better experience of the question, with reduced target language prompts. We've therefore simplified the wording of the questions to make them as clear and understandable as possible, but maintained the crucial scaffolding which students have told us they need.

Other types of improvements we have made focus on issues such as, to detail a few:

- shortening the length of listening extracts, to focus listening skills, and reduce the burden on memory;
- reducing the use of words not on the vocabulary list in listening and reading papers and
- adapting the frequency and demand of inference questions in the listening and reading papers to ensure higher accessibility to the full mark scale.



We have created an **Amendments Guide** and we'll be running an online network session on the 25th of June to talk through the changes. You can **book your place** at our network session on our website.

We've placed the learner at the heart of our assessments to create a much better exam experience, supporting them to feel confident and enabling them to access their full potential.

Yours faithfully,



Katy Lewis

Head of English, Arts and Languages

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**At the time of writing. This is subject to any possible changes that DfE may make for summer 2021 examinations in light of COVID-19.*

