

GCSE (9–1)

French, German & Spanish

A guide to the amendments
to our assessments from
summer 2021.



Learning from learners to create a better exam experience

This Guide outlines the brand-new amendments we've made to our assessments in response to teacher feedback on the 2018 and 2019 GCSE (9-1) French, German and Spanish assessments.

Your valuable feedback contributed to our regular review of qualifications and led us to research effective amendments, which we trialled with 400 students from 6 different schools across a range of locations, abilities, languages and tiers. As a result, we've made amendments to our GCSE (9-1) French, German and Spanish assessments across all 4 papers. These changes will be implemented from summer 2021*.



This Guide gives you an overview of the types of changes we have made and how they will allow your students to achieve their full potential in our examinations.

*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.

To present the information as clearly as possible, we have organised this Guide by examination papers. However, the amendments exemplified should be viewed as guiding principles that are in place for all papers. See the samples of the changes we've made to the Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing papers throughout this Guide. These examples are indicative of the types of changes teachers will see in future exam series.

Our brand-new SAMs are available for download from our website.

Click on the links below to take you to your language.

 [GCSE \(9-1\) French](#)


 [GCSE \(9-1\) German](#)

 [GCSE \(9-1\) Spanish](#)

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has offered feedback, taken part in the trialling of assessments and been a vital part in helping us make these improvements.

If you have any questions or feedback on these improvements, please get in touch at:

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Paper 1 Listening and understanding

You said...

What's changed?

Students don't have enough time to answer all questions.

We've removed all examples and distributed the additional time gained throughout the paper.

Spoken extracts are too long.

All extracts are shorter; the focus is on understanding not memory.

Spoken extracts contain too many words not on vocabulary lists.

There are fewer non-vocabulary list words: they are spread more evenly and students are not tested on them.

Spoken extracts contain too much complex language.

Language has been made more accessible with shorter sentences at Foundation and a reduction and spreading out of complex structures at Higher.

Some question structures are too complex.

We have redesigned some multiple choice questions to test understanding more effectively and to grant greater access to questions.

There are too many inference questions.

There are now fewer and less demanding inference questions, particularly at Foundation tier.

Before and After samples on **page 5** and **6, 8** and **9**



Examples of changes to Paper 1, Listening

French, Question 6, Higher

Before

Apprenticeships

Question 6

F1: Les jeunes Français peuvent quitter le collège à 14 ans pour devenir apprentis. Certains disent que 14 ans, c'est trop jeune pour prendre une telle décision ou que les jeunes auront plus de chances de trouver un bon emploi s'ils restent à l'école.

Écoutons le témoignage de Thierry.

M1: Moi, j'ai choisi de faire un apprentissage de mécanicien. Je passe 15 jours dans un garage et 15 jours à l'école professionnelle. On étudie les matières de base et la mécanique. Maintenant, je suis plus travailleur et je me comporte mieux. Le monde du travail me plaît. Mes collègues s'occupent de moi. Je reçois aussi un petit salaire, ça me donne de l'indépendance. Je me sens plus adulte.

French, Question 6, Higher

After

Apprenticeships

Question 6

Part (a)

F1: Les jeunes Français peuvent quitter le collège à 14 ans pour devenir apprentis. Certains disent que 14 ans, c'est trop jeune pour prendre cette décision ou que les jeunes auront moins de chances de trouver un bon emploi s'ils quittent l'école.

Part (b)

Écoutons Thierry.

M1: Moi, j'ai choisi de faire un apprentissage de mécanicien. Je passe 15 jours dans un garage et 15 jours à l'école professionnelle. Maintenant, je suis plus travailleur. Je reçois aussi un petit salaire, ça me donne de l'indépendance. Je me sens plus adulte. Le monde de travail me plaît.

The longest extracts in the higher tier paper have been split into two.

Language has been simplified within the text, for example:

'prendre une telle décision ...', has become 'prendre cette décision ...'.

Some more difficult sentences have been removed, for example, 'On étudie les matières de base,' 'je me comporte mieux,' 'Mes collègues s'occupent de moi'.



Examples of changes to Paper 1, Listening

French, Question 3, Foundation

Before

School life

Question 3

Example

F1: Alors Mehdi ?

M1: J'envoie des textos en classe, ce n'est pas bien !

Question 3

M1: En plus, j'oublie toujours mes cahiers... et mon stylo !

F1: Toi Aurélie ?

F2: Je suis très calme en classe mais je n'écoute pas le prof.

F1: Jérôme ?

M2: J'arrive toujours en retard mais je travaille bien en classe !

Students told us that they found these examples distracting and unhelpful.

French, Question 3, Foundation

By removing the example and changing the extract style to three short sentences rather than an interview, the amount to listen to has reduced from 45 words to 20.

After

School life

Question 3

M1: J'oublie toujours mes cahiers... et mon stylo !

F2: Je n'écoute pas le prof, les cours sont ennuyeux !

M2: J'arrive toujours en retard !

The phrase 'en plus' has been removed to eliminate an unnecessary and more difficult piece of language for this level.

“ The changes look really positive! I especially like the changes made to questions 3 and 4 on Foundation Listening as it makes the question much more a test of what they can understand. ”

Feedback from Woodlands School, Essex

“ It’s a really positive step forward and great to see that there is an appetite for change to try and ease the crisis in the subject. ”

“ Fantastic – in line with modern methodology and the research of prominent MFL teaching experts – the problem of cognitive overload will be alleviated to an extent by this change. ”

Feedback from Calday Grange Grammar School, Wirral



Examples of changes to Paper 1, Listening

Spanish, Question 3, Foundation

Before

Volunteering in Latin America

3 Some students are talking about their experience of volunteering in Latin America.

What do they do?

Listen to the recording and put a cross ☒ in each one of the **three** correct boxes.

		Mariana	Isabel	Javier
Example:	I work in a hospital	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A	I teach adults	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	I teach languages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	I help to plant trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	I deliver food to the villages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E	I help clean up the beaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F	I work in the main office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G	I help to protect wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This question type for questions 3 and 4 on the Foundation tier required too much processing time before students could select their answers; this was a barrier to students being able to demonstrate their listening comprehension.

Spanish, Question 3, Foundation

After

Work

3 Where do these three students work?

Listen to the recording and put a cross ☒ in **each one** of the **three** correct boxes.

<input type="checkbox"/>	A bank
<input type="checkbox"/>	B petrol station
<input type="checkbox"/>	C restaurant
<input type="checkbox"/>	D cinema
<input type="checkbox"/>	E school
<input type="checkbox"/>	F library
<input type="checkbox"/>	G hospital

As well as using a more accessible question type, another amendment shown here is that we have changed the topic title to remove any difficult language that might become a distractor during the students' exam experience.



Examples of changes to Paper 1, Listening

Spanish, Question 4, Foundation

Before

Spanish Grand Prix in Cataluña

4 Camila and her friends are planning to visit the racing circuit in Cataluña.

What do they want to do during their stay?

Listen to the recording and put a cross ☒ in each one of the **three** correct boxes.

		Camila	Hugo	Jorge
Example:	stay at a local campsite	☒	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A	choose where to sit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	get tickets in advance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	meet the drivers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	eat in the special restaurant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E	take photos of the cars	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F	drive on the track	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G	buy a special brochure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Spanish, Question 4, Foundation

After

Spanish Grand Prix in Cataluña

4 What do these people want to do?

Complete the sentences. Use the correct word or phrase from the box.

organisers	cheap tickets	sit at the front
drivers	take photos	a brochure
		arrive early

- (a) Hugo wants to (1)
- (b) Camila wants to buy (1)
- (c) Jorge wants to meet the (1)

Questions 3 and 4

These new question types are more accessible. They are also familiar to students as they are already used elsewhere in the Foundation paper.

Paper 2 Speaking

You said...

It's unfair that students don't get marks for their question(s) if prompted in the role play.

What's changed?

To make sure that students don't forget to ask a question, teacher-examiners now ask students if they have a question as part of the teacher script.

For the 5th prompt at Foundation tier and the 4th prompt at Higher tier the following teacher questions have been added (depending on the register and the language):

As-tu une question ? / Avez-vous une question ?

Hast du eine Frage? / Haben Sie eine Frage?

¿Tienes una pregunta? / ¿Tiene una pregunta?

For the 5th prompt at Higher tier, one of the following two teacher questions have also been added (depending on the register and the language):

As-tu une autre question ? / Avez-vous une autre question ?

Hast du noch eine Frage? / Haben Sie noch eine Frage?

¿Tienes otra pregunta? / ¿Tiene otra pregunta?

Paper 3 Reading and understanding

You said...

The texts are too long.

Texts contain too many words not on vocabulary lists.

Language in the literary and authentic texts is too complex.

There are too many inference questions.

What's changed?

All texts are shorter.

There are fewer non-vocabulary list words: they are spread more evenly and students are not tested on them.

Literary texts are more carefully adapted to make them more accessible.

There are now fewer and less demanding inference questions so they are easier to access.

See Before and After samples on **page 12, 13 and 14.**



Examples of changes to Paper 3, Reading

French, Question 4, Higher

Students had to understand quite complex language, abstract concepts and inference to get the correct answer to question (iii), 'What surprises Arthur about the woman?'. For some students, even understanding the words in English, 'Her look surprised me because it was mine exactly,' and, 'Those blue eyes, I see them every morning in my mirror,' may not have led them to the answer, 'She looks like him,' because the information in both of these phrases is abstract.

Before

Né Maudit by Arthur Ténor

4 Read the text. In this story, Arthur is making an important visit.

J'ai **respiré à fond** et enfin j'ai pressé le **bouton de la sonnette**. **Soudain** la panique m'a **submergé** : j'étais venu sans rien. Pas un bouquet de fleurs, pas une boîte de chocolats.

Je voyais une **silhouette** derrière le verre de la porte. Son visage apparaissait, celui d'une femme âgée. Son **regard** m'a surpris parce que c'était le mien exactement ! Ces yeux bleus, je les vois chaque matin dans ma **glace**.

« Entrez, je vous en prie. Asseyez-vous, » dit-elle. « Vous voulez un café ? »

« Volontiers. Je vous remercie d'avoir accepté qu'on se rencontre. Je sais depuis plus de vingt ans que vous habitez ici. »

Elle m'a adressé un sourire triste.

« Pourquoi avez-vous décidé de m'écrire ? » m'a-t-elle demandé.

« Parce que j'étais très malade le mois dernier, » ai-je répondu.

« Moi aussi j'**ai eu envie** de vous écrire quand je me suis **retournée** à l'hôpital l'an dernier. »

The highlighted words are all non-vocabulary list words. (NB: 'regard' and 'glace' are in the vocabulary list but not with the meaning within this text).

7 non-vocabulary list words were grouped quite closely together in the first 3 paragraphs.

Put a cross ☒ in the correct box.

Example: As he arrives at the house, Arthur...

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A sounds the alarm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B enjoys the sunshine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C sings a song |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | D rings the doorbell |

(i) As he waits outside, Arthur feels...

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A cheerful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B nervous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C annoyed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D excited |

(ii) As a gift, Arthur brings...

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A flowers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B chocolates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C ice cream |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D nothing |

(iii) What surprises Arthur about the woman?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A she looks like him |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B she is old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C she offers him coffee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D she is friendly |



Examples of changes to Paper 3, Reading

French, Question 4, Higher

After

Né Maudit by Arthur Ténor

4 Read the text. In this story, Arthur is making an important visit.

J'ai sonné à la porte.

J'ai paniqué : j'étais venu sans rien. Pas de fleurs, pas de chocolats, pas de gâteau.

Une dame âgée a ouvert la porte. Son visage m'a surpris parce qu'elle avait le même visage que moi !

« Entrez, asseyez-vous », dit-elle. « Vous voulez un café ? »

« Oui. Merci d'avoir accepté de me voir. Je sais depuis vingt ans que vous habitez ici. »

Elle m'a souri tristement.

« Pourquoi avez-vous décidé de m'écrire ? » a-t-elle demandé.

« Parce que j'étais très malade le mois dernier », ai-je répondu.

« Moi aussi j'ai eu envie de vous écrire quand j'ai été à l'hôpital l'an dernier », a-t-elle répondu.

Put a cross ☒ in the correct box.

(i) As he waits outside the house, Arthur feels...

<input type="checkbox"/>	A cheerful.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B nervous.
<input type="checkbox"/>	C annoyed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D excited.

(ii) As a gift, Arthur brings...

<input type="checkbox"/>	A flowers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B chocolates.
<input type="checkbox"/>	C cake.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D nothing.

There is now only one word not in the vocabulary list in the whole text.

The text has been reduced to fall within the shorter word range for this question of 105-110 words. It was previously 130-140 words.

The updated SAMs demonstrate a more accessible inference question in (iii): students now only have to understand 'elle avait le même visage que moi,' ('she has the same face as me') to infer that 'she looks like him.'

(iii) What surprises Arthur about the woman?

<input type="checkbox"/>	A she looks like him
<input type="checkbox"/>	B she smiles at him
<input type="checkbox"/>	C she offers him coffee
<input type="checkbox"/>	D she is friendly

More complex linguistic aspects have been removed such as 'la panique m'a submergé,' (quite demanding linguistically and conceptually), along with the demonstrative and possessive pronouns, 'celui d'une femme âgée,' and 'c'était le mien exactement.'

Although it is an authentic, literary text targeting higher levels, it has been highly adapted to match the level of the qualification. For example, 'J'ai respiré à fond' and 'et j'ai pressé le bouton de la sonnette,' have been replaced with, 'J'ai sonné à la porte'.



Examples of changes to Paper 3, Reading

Spanish, Question 6, Foundation

Before

Manolito Gafotas: Un cumpleaños feliz by Elvira Lindo

6 Read the text about what Manolito says about his grandfather and his birthday.

Mi abuelo no quiere celebrar su cumpleaños. Dice que no y que no. —¡Que no! Los viejos no celebran el cumpleaños, eso no se ha visto nunca.

Mi madre le dice:

—Pero papá, ochenta años no se cumplen todos los días.

—Gracias a Dios—dice mi abuelo. Además, en las fiestas de cumpleaños, la gente te regala bufandas para el frío, te llenan el armario de bufandas. Ni una corbata, ni un frasco de colonia, que es lo que yo quiero.

—¡Sí, abuelo, dí que sí! Nosotros te prepararemos la fiesta, tú invitarás a tus amigos, mis padres van a comprar las bebidas y mi tía la comida.

Answer the following questions **in English**. You do not need to write in full sentences.

(a) Who doesn't celebrate birthdays?

(b) How old will Manolito's grandfather be?

(1)

(c) What present does his grandfather not like to receive?

(1)

(d) Who will buy the food for the party?

(1)

Some inference questions have been replaced by more straightforward questions. In this example from the original SAMs, part (c) required students to process what the grandfather wanted before they could infer the answer to the question about what he did **not** want. (... people give you scarves for the cold, they fill your closet with scarves. Not a tie, not a bottle of cologne, which is what I want'.

The negative formation of question (c) added another hurdle to the students being able to show their reading skill.

Spanish, Question 6, Foundation

After

Manolito Gafotas: Un cumpleaños feliz by Elvira Lindo

6 Read what Manolito says about his grandfather's birthday.

Mi abuelo no quiere celebrar su cumpleaños. Dice que es muy viejo. Los viejos no celebran el cumpleaños.

Mi madre le responde:

—Pero papá, vas a tener ochenta años. Es un cumpleaños muy significativo.

Mi abuelo dice: en las fiestas de cumpleaños, la gente te regala cosas que no necesitas, te regala bufandas para el frío. A mí, me gustan las corbatas y las camisas, eso quiero yo.

—Abuelo, nosotros te prepararemos la fiesta, tú invitarás a tus amigos, mis padres van a cocinar y mi tía comprará el postre.

Answer the following questions **in English**. You do not need to write in full sentences.

(a) Why does Manolito's grandfather not want to celebrate his birthday?

(1)

(b) How old will Manolito's grandfather be this year?

(1)

(c) What presents does his grandfather want this year? Give **ONE** example

(1)

(d) What plans have been made for the party? Give **ONE** detail.

(1)

The negatively phrased inference question in (c) has been removed and replaced with a more direct, positively phrased question. Asking positively what the grandfather wants is more straightforward and the text now matches this by stating the answer clearly ('I like ties and shirts, that's what I want').

Paper 4 Writing

You said...

Contexts to questions are too long and unrealistic.

Bullets to questions are unclear and too wordy.

The expectations of the translations are unclear.

What's changed?

Contexts have been shortened and questions relate more closely to learners' experience.

Bullets are shorter, simpler, and always clarify the required time frame so that students can respond confidently; the language of question 2 at Foundation and Higher now uses the familiar grammatical form.

The translations at both tiers will only include one past tense and will only elicit words on the vocabulary list ensuring all learners can access the full assessment criteria.

See Before and After samples on **page 16** and **17**.



Examples of changes to Paper 4, Writing

German, Question 1, Foundation

Before

Auf dem Markt



(Source: © Maximilian Stock Ltd./Getty Images)

- 1 Du bist in Berlin. Du postest dieses Foto online für deine Freunde.
Beschreibe das Foto **und** schreibe deine Meinung über Einkaufen.
Schreibe ungefähr 20–30 Wörter **auf Deutsch**.

German, Question 1, Foundation

After

The title matches the task more clearly.

Einkaufen



(Source: © Maximilian Stock Ltd./Getty Images)

- 1 Beschreib das Foto **und** schreib deine Meinung über Einkaufen.
Schreib ungefähr 20–30 Wörter **auf Deutsch**.

The extraneous context has been removed and the question only uses enough language to make the task clear. Questions will only use words from the vocabulary list.



Examples of changes to Paper 4, Writing

Spanish, Question 2, Foundation

Before

This question required students to imagine how they would prepare for a trip to work abroad and how they would get there; this placed a burden on the imagination of the student as it is something that they are unlikely to have thought about before.

Un viaje de trabajo

2 Usted va a España para trabajar en un campamento de verano.

Escriba usted un email para el jefe con la información siguiente:

- cómo viaja
- la hora que llega
- cómo se prepara
- lo que más le gustará hacer en el trabajo.

Escriba aproximadamente 40–50 palabras **en español**.

The formal register of the question made understanding the requirements of the question more difficult.

Spanish, Question 2, Foundation

After

In this new question, the student is asked to write about aspects which are within their immediate experience, ie to write about their personal details, pastimes and future work ambitions. Having to say when they want to start (the 3rd bullet point) does not put an unacceptable burden on their imagination.

The fourth bullet point makes it clear that students must refer to a future event, by inserting the words 'en el futuro.'

Un trabajo en España

2 Quieres trabajar en un campamento de verano.

Escribe un email al jefe.

Menciona:

- tus detalles personales
- tus pasatiempos preferidos
- cuándo puedes empezar
- el trabajo que te gustaría hacer en el futuro

Escribe aproximadamente 40–50 palabras **en español**.

The wording of the new context is shortened and language is simplified.

The new question is written using the grammatically more accessible informal register, even though the question is still set in a formal context.

GCSE (9–1) French, German & Spanish

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Our qualifications at a glance

Paper	Internal/external exam/assessment	% of course
<p>Paper 1: Listening and Understanding Foundation (35 minutes) Higher (45 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students assessed on understanding of the target language by one or more speakers • Range of public and social settings • Multiple choice and short answers 	25%
<p>Paper 2: Speaking in the target language Foundation (7-9 minutes) Higher (10-12 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role Play – allocated by Pearson • Picture Card – allocated by Pearson • Conversation – based on two themes. First theme chosen by students in advance. Second theme allocated by Pearson 	25%
<p>Paper 3: Reading and Understanding Foundation (45 minutes) Higher (60 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students assessed on understanding of variety of written texts in the target language including advertisements, emails, letters, articles and literary texts • Includes one translation 	25%
<p>Paper 4: Writing in the target language Foundation (70 minutes) Higher (80 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students required to produce responses of varying lengths and types to express ideas and opinions • Includes one translation 	25%

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