

FAQs for changes to Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 International GCSE (9-1) in French (4FR1)/German (4GN1)/Spanish (4SP1)/Chinese (4CN1) May/June 2021

Issue 3

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The following FAQs have been compiled to provide an understanding of the key changes for French, German, Spanish and Chinese in our International GCSE portfolio for 2021 May/June assessment.

Will there be any formal exams in 2021?

No. Pearson will ask centres to generate teacher assessed grades (TAGs) for their students. These grades will be an overall grade for the qualification.

Do the teacher assessed grades have to be based on the full content of the specification?

No. In recognition of the fact that teaching and learning has been disrupted during the pandemic, teachers will only have to assess what they have taught.

What can count as evidence for a teacher assessed grade (TAG)?

The grades should be based on a range of evidence completed as part of the whole course which demonstrates the student's performance on the subject content they have been taught. The types of assessment evidence may include:

- Student work produced in response to assessment materials provided by the exam board, such as unseen content (unseen assessment materials), past papers

- or similar materials, e.g. practice or sample papers.
- Student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, that follow the same format as exam board materials and have been marked internally in a way that reflects exam board mark schemes. This can include substantial class or homework (including those that took place during remote learning), internal tests taken by pupils and mock exams taken over the course of study.
 - Records of each student's progress and performance over the course of study.

Pearson will make available unseen content (unseen assessment materials), to be used as an optional form of assessment within the [prescribed time window](#) if they are to be marked by Pearson. These materials will be delivered to centres in the paper format in April. They may be taken as either full sets of papers, individual papers (e.g. Paper 1 and 2, or Paper 1 or Paper 2 only) or sections of papers. In these instances, Pearson will return the marks to the teacher to help inform the final grade to be produced by the teacher. Details about the marking service and how unseen content may be used is explained further [here](#) (under heading *Approach for International GCSE and International AS/A Level*).

After the time window indicated, the materials may be used as sample content, alongside past papers, sample assessment materials and specimen papers – all available on [examWizard](#) (a bank of past paper questions and support materials to help teachers create their own mock exams and tests). Seen materials may be used flexibly as full papers or sets of questions.

Teachers should determine the grades as late in the academic year as is practicable, and not confined to a defined window, to enable teaching to continue for as long as possible.

Note: Speaking cannot be used as part of the evidence for the TAG as this is to be assessed separately via a speaking endorsement (see details below). Speaking will not contribute to the final grade for 2021.

Will the unseen content be available online after the prescribed time window?

It is possible that unseen assessment materials (with mark schemes still padlocked) may be uploaded to our website after the [prescribed time window](#) and, therefore, in the public domain from 15 May, 2021 although this is still under discussion.

Can we expect any changes to the unseen content for Listening and Reading and Writing papers?

As many as possible non-core-vocabulary words will either be 'glossed', meaning that non-core-vocabulary words in the target language will be accompanied by their equivalent in English, or non-core vocabulary words will be removed from Papers 1 and 2. We will still include some basic, familiar vocabulary items in the papers which students are likely to have encountered prior to starting an International GCSE course in the French, German, Spanish and Chinese. (We will also include obvious cognates not listed in the non-core vocabulary and these will not be glossed. Students may need to understand these to answer some of the questions. This is because excluding such items from the assessments could, potentially, increase the demand of the tasks.) No modifications are planned to the writing section of unseen content for Paper 2: Reading and Writing.

What is the minimum amount of evidence on which teachers should base their decisions?

There are no set requirements for the minimum amount of content to be assessed. However, Heads of centres will have to confirm that students have been taught and therefore assessed on sufficient content to allow progression to the next stage of their education; for example, for progressing from International GCSE to International A level.

If a centre uses the unseen materials and makes use of the marking service offered by Pearson, are they required to use the results as part of their TAGs process?

No, centres may use their judgement according to individual circumstances and teacher assessed grades should be based on a broad range of evidence. The results from the unseen assessment materials may make up a larger or smaller part of the range of evidence the centre have decided to base TAGs on. We would of course recommend that centres use any results as part of the TAG decision process as it provides one of the most robust pieces of evidence available. However, this is not a requirement.

Will the marking service include speaking endorsements?

No, speaking endorsements are to be centre assessed only.

What level of evidence is required from each of the four skills to submit a teacher assessed grade?

Speaking skills must **not** be used to form a final teacher assessed grade as speaking will be assessed separately via an endorsement (see FAQs below). Speaking will not contribute to the final grade for 2021. Teachers will need to base their grading judgements on the best evidence they have across the remaining three skills (listening, reading and writing), accepting that this may not be equally weighted.

Will grade boundaries be issued for 2021 assessments?

No grade boundaries can be issued for the 2021 summer assessments as these can only be issued when formal awarding has taken place. Grading guidance, however, will be available. This will include grade descriptors.

How will teacher assessed grades be quality-assured?

Pearson will provide full details of the quality assurance requirements as soon as possible. Each centre will be required to put in place an internal quality assurance process, including internal standardisation of marking and grading judgements, which will be checked by Pearson. Pearson will also check a sample of the evidence used to support teacher grades with more targeted scrutiny where a cause for concern has been identified. Heads of centre are required to confirm, when submitting their grades, that the requirements set by Pearson have been met.

Can teachers tell students the teacher assessed grade that they will submit to Pearson?

Teachers will be able to share with their students 'working at' grade if they wish, to enable students to discuss, monitor and assess their own progress and to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers must not share with the student the final grade they will submit to Pearson.

When will teachers be expected to submit teacher assessed grades?

Teachers will need to submit grades to exam boards by 18 June.

When will International GCSE results be published?

Results will be published on 12 August 2021.

Will students be able to appeal their teacher assessed grade?

Yes. A student who is unhappy with their grade will first ask their centre to check whether an administrative or procedural error had been made. Where a centre does identify an error in the grade submitted to Pearson, it can submit a revised grade and a rationale for the board to consider. If Pearson is satisfied with the rationale, it will issue a revised grade. Where a centre does not believe an error had been made, a student can ask the centre to appeal to us on their behalf. The centre will submit the student's appeal to Pearson and provide the evidence on which its judgement had been made; Pearson will consider whether, in its view, the grade reflected an appropriate exercise of academic judgement. If Pearson judges that it did not, it will determine the grade that the evidence would support. Pearson will also check that the centre had followed its own process.

Will there be an additional Autumn series in 2021?

We are still awaiting confirmation as to whether there will be an additional Autumn series and we will let you know as soon as possible.

The following FAQs relate to the speaking assessment.

Will the speaking endorsement still go ahead for summer 2021?

Yes. Arrangements for the speaking endorsement remain unchanged and are set out in the FAQs below.

What is the speaking endorsement?

Although separate to the main qualification, which for summer 2021 *only* will be made up of teacher assessed grades based on the skills of listening, reading and writing, the teacher- assessed speaking endorsement will enable teachers to indicate the appropriate level that each of the students has achieved in target-language speaking. Teachers will draw on each student's overall speaking performance during normal speaking activities (however see the FAQ below for assessments based on a one-off performance).

When carrying out the speaking endorsement, we will mirror the approach taken by the GCSE qualifications to ensure comparability between the GCSE and International GCSE modern foreign language qualifications for International GCSE in French, German, Spanish and Chinese. The common assessment criteria applicable to GCSE modern language qualifications, and consequently to International GCSE in French, German, Spanish and Chinese, have been published on pp. 20-21 of Ofqual's [GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Modern Foreign Languages \(2021\)](#) document, made available in November 2020.

How will the speaking endorsement be 'graded'?

The speaking endorsement will not be graded 9-1. Instead, teachers will provide an indication of their students' level of target-language Speaking according to Ofqual's common assessment criteria cited above that links to a three-point scale: *pass*, *merit* and *distinction*. Any students that do not meet the requirements for *pass* or do not have an endorsement level submitted will receive *not classified*.

When must the speaking endorsement take place?

There will be no prescribed assessment window. Teachers will submit each student's level in target-language Speaking based on their achievement during the course of study.

The deadline for the submission of levels to Pearson is 18 June, the same date as for the teacher assessed grades for the whole qualification.

Is the speaking endorsement compulsory?

Each centre is required to take reasonable steps to ensure that all in-centre students have the opportunity for an assessment of spoken language. If a centre fails to do so, this will be considered malpractice and subject to further investigation by Pearson.

What moderation arrangements are planned for the speaking endorsement?

There will be no Pearson moderation of the speaking endorsement in 2021.

How should centres keep records of students' performance?

This is an internal decision for each centre. Centres are not required to submit details of students' performance, only the final level they have determined (Pass/Merit/Distinction).

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

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

How should teachers assess large classes, particularly with social distancing?

If teachers are having difficulty assessing large classes, particularly because of COVID-19 restrictions, teachers can also arrange to assess their students on a one-to-one basis, either in the centre or remotely.

Can students use their notes for their endorsement?

It is expected that many teachers will assess their students' Speaking skills in an integrated way that supports everyday classroom practice and, if necessary, remote learning. Although the same prescribed topic areas must be covered, teachers are now free to use *different task types* to those outlined in the specification and could, if wished, assess students when engaged in pair or group work. In a classroom situation, when students are presented with a task that they have not seen before, it may sometimes be logical for them to make some notes so a few bullet points or key words would be tolerated. Extensive notes or those produced in full sentences are not allowed. (It is important to note that the assessment criteria for the speaking endorsement assess a student's ability to communicate and interact accurately and that, if a candidate was simply to read their notes aloud, any assessment would be limited to pronunciation and intonation.)

Teachers may, if they wish, and if circumstances allow, continue to assess using formal tests as outlined in the specification. In such cases, the usual 'no notes' rule would still apply.

Can students read pre-prepared answers for their endorsement?

No, this is not permitted.

Is it acceptable to use the foreign language assistant to assess some of the speaking endorsement tasks?

It is important to remember that the criteria are not the mark scheme but provide an overall description of the students' ability by the end of the course. A foreign language assistant conversant with the assessment criteria could contribute to the decision about a student's level. It is the responsibility of the centre to confirm that the criteria have been applied correctly.

Do we still have to cover the current International GCSE topics?

Yes, the assessment must be based on the topics that are set out in the specification. Speaking activities should be used to support the study of the topics for the other assessed skills of Listening, Reading and Writing, in an integrated way. This will ensure that there is no extra burden placed on teaching Speaking separately and with different content.

Can students be assessed via a one-off performance?

Yes, the endorsement does allow for assessment via a one-off performance, including via remote assessment by centres, where this is deemed to be the most appropriate. However, the speaking endorsement was introduced to allow for students to be assessed during regular classroom activities, in order to maximise time for teaching and learning, which has been disrupted because of COVID-19.

In this circumstance, teachers must ensure that any one-off assessment covers all of the requirements of the assessment criteria. Teachers should make themselves familiar with the requirements in relation to spoken language assessments, included on pages 17 to 21 of Ofqual's [GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Modern Foreign Languages \(2021\)](#).

How much speaking would need to be assessed in a one-off performance?

It is important to say that there are no formal requirements or arrangements set down by Pearson in this respect. Teachers can choose how they assess students' Speaking as

long as students are given the opportunity to meet all the Speaking assessment criteria. However, we recognise that teachers have been seeking guidance on the amount of evidence needed if the endorsement is to be awarded based on a one-off performance. We therefore set out below some guidance which will help centres in this respect.

Please note that this is guidance only and that the suggestions given are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

Applicable requirements state that to be awarded a *pass*, *merit* or *distinction*, learners must take part in **different tasks** across a **variety** of topics and that the assessment criteria are designed to be used across a **range** of purposes. Whilst this will be easier to achieve within a classroom situation where teachers can assess their learners on an ongoing basis (the speaking endorsement was introduced to allow for students to be assessed during normal classroom activities, in order to maximise time for teaching and learning which has been disrupted by the impact of COVID-19), we have set out below some guidance for teachers on some of the terms used and what would constitute the minimum to satisfy the criteria:

- **different tasks**: our guidance is that this constitutes at least **two** different tasks (see below for further guidance on tasks)
- **variety of topics**: our guidance is that a *variety* constitutes aspects of at least **two** different subtopics, each based on a different overarching topic
Note: topics and subtopics must be taken from those within the specification.
- a **range of purposes**: our guidance is that a *range* constitutes at least **two** of the following purposes: conversations, presentations, transactions, formal and informal settings, descriptions and narrations (again, the suggestions given are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive).

Possible one-off assessments could be as follows:

- A description/interview/conversation/discussion/narration based on a picture/photo* or object, on any subtopic listed in the specification plus a conversation covering at least another different topic. Teachers could decide to give their students some preparation time if using stimulus materials for this task. The picture/photo could show people, objects in the background, and interactions showing what people are doing.
- Role-play task* on one topic plus a conversation covering at least another different topic. Teachers could decide to give their students some preparation time if using stimulus materials for the role-play.
- Presentation and discussion on one topic plus a conversation on at least another different topic. Teachers could allow students to prepare a

presentation in advance.

- A description/interview/narration based on a book or a film of the student's choice (based on one of the topics) plus a conversation on at least another different topic.
- A mixture of any of these tasks **or any other task** the teacher feels is appropriate - as long as the assessment covers as a minimum two different subtopics under two different overarching topics, two different tasks, and two different purposes.

*The picture/photo/role-play tasks could be based on materials that have formed part of previous formal assessments produced by the awarding organisation, or any other kinds of materials.

Is the speaking endorsement a permanent change?

No, the speaking endorsement is a temporary change for May/June 2021 only.

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

Yes, the spoken endorsement level will feature on each candidate's International GCSE certificate their teacher assessed grade (TAG) based on evidence gathered around the other three skills. It must also be noted that if no speaking endorsement level is provided for a candidate, the endorsement will be reported as *not classified* on the International GCSE certificate. As speaking is a core language skill and forms part of the programme of study, a separate speaking endorsement opportunity must be offered wherever possible.