



Moderators' Report

Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2023

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In English Language (4EB1)
Spoken Language Endorsement

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Reminder to centres on entry codes

There are a range of entry and option codes for 4EB1. These are listed in the [information manual](#) and in the [Int GCSE resit rules](#). A grade and sample of video-recordings are required for all candidates entered with option codes: 4EB1 E/RE. Centres with fewer than 30 candidates sitting the SLE are required to submit video-recordings for every candidate. Centres with more than 30 candidates sitting the SLE are required to submit 30 video-recordings from across teaching groups with the distribution 10 pass, 10 merits and 10 distinctions.

General Administration

This was the first May/June exam series in which centres were required to upload their students' work to the Learner Work Transfer (LWT) platform. Most centres uploaded their spoken language endorsement (SLE) videos in good time, and most correctly named files according to the guidance in the specification so that they included candidate names and numbers. The file name should also include the grade awarded by the centre to each candidate. Please ensure that candidates introduce themselves by name at the start of each video. It is helpful if wear name badges and clearly state the topic of their presentation.

A small minority of centres, submitted their candidates' work in zip files. This is particularly wasteful of monitors' time because each file has to be downloaded before it can be viewed. Another very small minority submitted audio files only, thus making effective monitoring impossible since as it was not possible to evaluate how or to what extent the candidate had engaged their audience.

It is important that centres check the quality of their video files before uploading them, as there were instances where the beginning or the end of a clip was clearly missing.

The vast majority of centres had clearly put a great deal of effort into creating the most favourable circumstances for their students. These included choosing a suitable setting for making recordings and making sure that the quality of sound and vision is as high as possible. The ideal camera shot should show the candidate's upper body and be front-on. There were a few isolated instances of cameras being placed on the floor, looking up, or even pointing to the back of a candidate.

Microphones should also be positioned carefully, quite close to the candidate presenting. On occasions, monitors could hear very clearly the teacher who was sitting next to the camera but found it much more difficult to make out what the candidate was saying. It is also quite difficult, at times, to hear the questions asked by other students in the audience.

Centres are reminded that presentations should be made to an audience which must include the candidate's teacher. There were occasions when recordings were made without a teacher being present and this meant that candidates, and sometimes other students, were left to their own devices and therefore not asked any questions at the end of a presentation, which is a requirement of the specification. Remote recordings are acceptable, when the situation demands it, but the teacher must be in an online meeting with the candidate as they present.

It must be said that the great majority of centres complied with the advice and requirements outlined above but it is perhaps inevitable that a report such as this has to focus on the occasions when best practice was not adhered to.

The presentations: topics

On the whole, centres have returned to the video-recording of the SLE, after the pause in monitoring during the pandemic, with considerable enthusiasm and expertise. Centres which fully embrace the SLE clearly understand the opportunities which it offers candidates to research and speak on topics which would not necessarily be touched upon in other parts of the curriculum. Monitors reported a much higher prevalence of candidates being encouraged to choose their own topics, often ones which engaged or interested them deeply.

If candidates aspire to gaining a higher grade, they should select a topic which is demanding and offers some scope for debate or discussion. Such candidates tend to opt for subjects which are of general interest and have links to current affairs and contemporary concerns. Typical topics, this series, included:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Child Marriage
- The Dark Side of Fast Fashion
- The Influence of Mass Media
- The Dangers of the Internet
- Pay Inequality
- Death Penalty
- Euthanasia
- Global Warming and threats to the environment.

One monitor commented:

“Topics linked to favourite music, films, hobbies, e.g., go-karting and computer games, presented in a straightforward, factual way, were mostly chosen by candidates awarded Pass grades, although, in a few cases, these included more challenging content and met the Merit criteria.”

What is absolutely clear is that candidates work better when they make their own choices. This has to be negotiated with the teacher, of course. There are rare occasions when the teacher instructs a whole cohort to speak on the same topic, for example on a text from their English Literature course. This can be worthwhile and stimulating but, in practice, often limits candidates as they can lack the interest and passion which seems to drive others.

Not every candidate will have a passionate interest in a topic, clearly, and the teacher’s role is vital in helping them choose something suitable and then develop it in a way which can engage an audience.

The best topics allow candidates to build arguments and develop a more complex line of thought.

The presentations: format

It was noticeable, this series, that most candidates presented a prepared speech on their own, to an audience of their peers and/or their teacher. There were some examples of group presentations or discussions but, almost invariably, these caused problems for the fair assessment of candidates. For one thing, it was not always possible for the monitor to identify each candidate clearly. Also, it is highly unlikely that each of the candidates involved gets a chance to speak for an equal amount of time. Furthermore, not all candidates get an equal opportunity to respond to questions put to the group as a whole. It is extremely difficult to manage this kind of group format in a way which gives fair chances to all involved.

Presentations should last for up to ten minutes, including questions and responses. Monitors noted that there were some very brief responses of less than three minutes and, although it is possible for a candidate to achieve a Pass grade in such a short amount of time, it is practically impossible for anyone to access the higher grades.

There were also a few presentations which went on for much more than ten minutes and it must be stressed that candidates can gain no advantage from this. A presentation must be subject to the discipline of time constraints.

The delivery of presentations.

It was a pleasure to watch and listen to many candidates, at all grades, who clearly wanted to present themselves and their chosen subject at their best. There was clear evidence that candidates and their audiences had been carefully briefed. Most candidates attempted to engage their audience and audiences gave help to candidates by listening attentively and then asking questions which were pertinent and which elicited thoughtful replies. Thought was given to presentations and candidates were often able to present well, in a formal manner using a high standard of spoken English and had chosen suitably demanding topics that allowed access to the higher grades.

The Endorsement is not designed to assess the reading skills of candidates. It is acceptable for candidates to refer to notes whilst delivering their presentation and there is no prescription about how detailed these notes may be. However, centres are reminded that, in order to be awarded any grade, a candidate must meet all the criteria set down for that grade.

To be awarded a Pass, a candidate must, as well as meeting the other criteria, make 'an attempt to meet the needs of the audience'. For a Merit, they must 'meet the needs of the audience' and 'achieve the purpose of his or her presentation'. For a Distinction, they must use 'an effective range of strategies to engage the audience' and 'achieve the purpose of his or her presentation'.

All these assessment criteria refer to the candidate's relationship to an audience. It is extremely difficult for a candidate to meet these criteria if they read their prepared presentation without taking the audience into account. We therefore advise that all candidates should address their audience to some extent and consequently should not read from a script without even looking at their audience or acknowledging that their audience is present. It was clear throughout this series that candidates who made limited use of notes such as bullet points, or no notes at all, invested their presentations with greater freshness and spontaneity.

The more a candidate relates to their audience, the better their chance of gaining a higher grade and it is essential that they only be awarded a Distinction grade if they use 'an effective range of strategies to engage the audience'. Such strategies are manifold and can include:

- Verbal rhetorical devices such as anaphora, repetition, rhetorical sentences, triadic sentences and lists
- Modulation of tone, volume or expression
- Physical gestures and facial expressions
- Devices to elicit audience participation
- The judicious use of humour.

Centres are advised to re-visit the assessment criteria regularly and pay particular attention to the key words for each grade: **straightforward** for a Pass; **challenging** for a Merit; **sophisticated** and **perceptive** for a Distinction.

Candidates must alight on a topic which offers the potential to fulfil the criteria and then use the appropriate vocabulary, organisation and strategies to realise that potential.

Candidates can, of course, make use of slides and other audio-visual aids but these should be used strategically to support the points they are making. It is rarely effective to use slides containing lists of points to be included in the talk, but a photograph or diagram, produced at the right moment to illustrate a specific point, can be very effective.

Questions and responses

Following a presentation, the candidate must listen and respond to questions and feedback. If a candidate is to access a Merit grade, such questions must be responded to in some detail and, if a candidate is to access a Distinction grade, the candidate must respond 'perceptively'. It is essential, therefore, that questions are ones which enable the candidate to develop and elaborate on their ideas. Questions which are closed and are only designed to elicit a simple, brief answer cannot enable a candidate to do what is required for a Merit or Distinction.

In a number of centres, teachers either allowed the audience to ask a series of closed questions or resorted to standbys such as 'what made you choose this topic?' and it was extremely disheartening to see several centres where no questions were asked at all, with the recording ending immediately after the presentation. The guidance is crystal clear about the requirement for a Q&A session at the end; candidates cannot be awarded any grade if they do not respond to questions.

Past reports have advised that audiences are made aware of a candidate's topic in advance so that they can formulate helpful and fruitful questions. It is also the case that a teacher's role can be crucially important in asking the kind of questions that will allow a candidate to secure a higher grade.

There were occasions when candidate and audience had pre-planned and rehearsed their questions and responses, and even read them out, which does tend to remove all sense of spontaneity and meaningful interaction.

Awarding of grades

Pass. Pass grade presentations are those which express straightforward ideas, information and/or feelings. These are often factual reports of a researched area of interest, or one that is close to the candidate's own experience. Examples include accounts of a hobby, or favourite sport, or pet or holiday, where there is no dimension of complexity or discussion. Candidates apply some order or organisation to the presentation and, it is to be hoped, directly address their audience to meet the audience's needs. Pass candidates respond to feedback appropriately and in a straightforward manner.

Monitors can often see and suggest ways in which Pass grade presentations can be turned into Merit ones by candidates introducing elements of debate or complexity to their work. For example, by examining the social and health benefits of a particular hobby through research they may be able to engage their audience more fully and be helped to expand their ideas with the aid of helpful questions.

Merit. Merit candidates express more challenging ideas and their range of vocabulary increases as a result. Their presentations are more securely organised and they may well have a more pronounced

interaction with their audience. Often, there is more complexity, discussion or debate and candidates may set themselves a question or conundrum to explore.

Indeed, some centres actively encourage candidates to set themselves a question as their topic. One centre, this series, had Merit candidates who investigated:

‘Is it ethical to eat meat?’ Or

‘Can you have too much money?’ Or

‘Why do we worry so much about what others think?’ Or

‘Is anything possible?’

Quite a popular area of interest this year was the disparity between people’s incomes, e.g. nurses and footballers, and there are many issues in the news that concern young people similarly. Needless to say, it is a vital part of a student’s development that they find out about the debates that go on around them and formulate their own opinions.

Merit candidates often stimulate their audience, who ask genuine and searching questions that elicit detailed responses.

Distinction. Distinction candidates express sophisticated ideas using sophisticated vocabulary. Their choice of topic, and their approach to it, are therefore of the utmost importance, although the range of potential subjects is probably infinite.

It is unlikely that a presentation about a favourite football team and its history will gain a Distinction, yet we have seen these awarded by centres for just such a topic – a purely factual account that could have been taken from Wikipedia. There are many ways that the subject can be elevated and expanded, of course. It could lead to a debate about football club ownership, financial fair play, sportswashing, tribal behaviour, group displacement activity and so on. But a limited, straightforward, factual narrative should normally be awarded a Pass.

There are many ways to achieve a Distinction. One candidate’s topic was ‘Public Speaking’ and this was not inherently imbued with contention and debate. The candidate gave a superb talk on how to speak before an audience and explained many of the rhetorical techniques needed to be successful whilst using those techniques herself. The talk was organised, well-timed, impeccably paced and perfectly judged. It was delivered without notes but with brief sound clips from famous speeches (Churchill et al) to illustrate particular points. Questions were answered with perception.

Concluding remarks

This series, monitors reported that they were able to confirm most of the grades awarded by colleagues in centres, who are commended for their professionalism and expertise in delivering the SLE. It was evident, however, that the practice of reading from notes, and subsequently the ignoring of audiences, was widespread. Although it can be appreciated that candidates are often nervous and rely on notes for support, there is much to be said for freeing candidates from what starts as a prop but becomes a burden. As one monitor put it:

“It is often noticeable how powerful (and seemingly authoritative) speaking without a reliance on notes is.”

Centres are again reminded that candidates must meet **all** the criteria for a particular grade before that grade is awarded, and that the question and response part of the presentation should be

treated with due care and attention. It is the section of the presentation which has the most potential to support each candidate.

In conclusion, we are always impressed with the achievements of young people taking the SLE. One monitor stated:

“[the Endorsement] is the most engaging part of the qualification to monitor/assess. I hesitate to use the word ‘fun’ but candidates have made me laugh out loud and have made me want to cry this series. There really are some remarkable students out there.”

And another spoke for so many of us, thus:

“As always it was a pleasure and an honour to listen to the viewpoints and ideas of such a wide range of young people and it enabled me to see their 'views' on the world around us. I would just like to say thank you to each of them for the time and dedication they showed to making their presentations.”