

Ofqual consultation: Conditions and requirements for assessment of GCSE modern foreign languages in 2021

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

A. Introduction

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents over 20,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million young people in more than 90 per cent of the secondary and tertiary phases, and in an increasing proportion of the primary phase. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.

B. General comments

2. We broadly welcome the proposals made in this consultation and believe that schools and colleges will find the changes are worthwhile, without undue impact on the overall validity of the assessment.
3. The mechanism of endorsement is already used in other GCSE subjects and hence will be familiar to centres. The increased flexibility this generates and the reporting mechanism for the assessment alongside a 9 to 1 grade will mean centres are spared the arrangements for speaking exams which would have proved extremely challenging to coordinate under current circumstances.
4. It may well be seen as a positive move by teachers of MFL that speaking can now be incorporated more purposefully into all aspects of lessons. If there is a continuous assessment of speaking contributing to the endorsement it may well encourage students to be more ambitious and less reluctant to speak in the target language. Indeed, this may result in better assessment overall; language speaking exams have become somewhat of a rehearsed, artificial set piece.
5. The requirement for a statement by the centre acknowledging the opportunities for learners to have their spoken language assessed is sensible and proportionate. We welcome the fact that speaking remains an important part of the assessment overall but agree with the decision not to change arrangements for A levels in modern languages.
6. The contexts and criteria set out in the Subject Level Conditions are clear. However we would expect awarding organisations to provide illustrative examples of candidates' spoken assessments which are broadly at each of the Pass, Merit, Distinction levels.
7. Notwithstanding the positive benefits of these proposals, teachers of modern foreign languages will have to familiarise themselves with the arrangements which will make a demand on their time and workload. Given this, and the recent history of delayed

decision making by government and the regulator, we would suggest that consideration is given to putting these arrangements in place for both 2021 and 2022 to further assist centres' planning and to return an additional benefit on MFL teachers' efforts.

C. Conclusion

8. We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this call for evidence.
9. We hope that this response is of value to the process. ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

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