



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

Report of investigation into the assessment of speaking for GCSE modern foreign languages

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Executive summary

Assessment of GCSE speaking: the current position

The current method of assessing speaking in modern foreign languages (MFL) has changed little since the introduction of GCSE in 1988. The majority of students take one examination at the end of the two-year course. This test is usually composed of short structured role-plays and a prepared presentation followed by a conversation. The test is recorded. In most cases the recordings are sent to the awarding body for marking, but some awarding bodies give centres the option to mark the tests and for their marks to be moderated by the awarding body.

The nature of this test can lead to formulaic responses and heavy reliance on a limited range of memorised language. This in turn has a negative impact on teaching and learning, with little opportunity for students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and skills and to develop independence.

Methodology for the investigation

A number of approaches to the assessment of speaking have been reviewed. These include the languages examinations within the International Baccalaureate, a new pilot GCSE, tests of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and speaking and listening in GCSE English. These approaches formed the basis of discussions with teachers, students and awarding bodies about different models of assessment.

Recommendations

The recommendations draw on the discussions with teachers, students and awarding bodies and propose assessment models for revised GCSE specifications. These specifications will promote innovative teaching and learning, enabling students to develop independence and to communicate on topics that are realistic and relevant to their interests. These changes could transform perceptions of GCSEs in MFL and help to increase the take-up of languages at key stage 4.

- Successful assessment of speaking should build on good classroom practice and enable students to demonstrate a wide range of skills in a variety of contexts, including the ability:
 - to give a talk in the target language
 - to respond appropriately to questions or comments

- to engage in spontaneous discussion or debate of topics of interest to the age group in pairs or as a member of a group
- to demonstrate independent and creative use of language.
- Appropriate recognition of achievement in these skills requires assessment on more than one occasion. Assessing speaking over a period of time would produce a variety of evidence and allow students to work in a range of contexts. In all GCSE examinations in specified languages the assessment of speaking should therefore move from a one-off examination at the end of the course to controlled assessment on several occasions during the course.
- Controlled assessment in speaking should not be an alternative to controlled assessment of writing. (In the past, when given a choice between oral or written coursework, teachers have opted for written coursework.)
- Consideration should be given to including some assessment of listening during the controlled assessment of speaking to extend the range of listening activities and make them more realistic. A possible split might be 10 per cent listening combined with speaking, and 15 per cent external examination of listening.
- Grade descriptions and assessment criteria for speaking should be revised to recognise that different activities will provide evidence of different aspects of speaking skills.
- The feasibility of introducing a system of teacher accreditation for MFL should be explored alongside alternative ways of sampling teacher marking.

Major implications of the recommendations

- Moving from a terminal examination to controlled assessment of speaking would require changes to the draft criteria for MFL to increase significantly the amount of controlled assessment. One possible model might be:
 - 25 per cent speaking – controlled assessment
 - 10 per cent listening – controlled assessment
 - 25 per cent writing – controlled assessment.

Models with a lower percentage of controlled assessment would risk increasing the burden of assessment for students with assessment of speaking and/or writing

through both controlled assessment and final examination. Alternatively, a lower overall weighting might be allocated to speaking, which would not be desirable.

- Implementing these changes would require extensive training for teachers in assessing speaking as an integral part of their teaching. Teachers would also need to be accredited to carry out the assessment.
- Awarding bodies might want to have further interboard/QCA discussions about how they will monitor teacher assessment of speaking, including the introduction of teacher accreditation.

Remit

Lord Dearing's report on languages (March 2007) made a number of recommendations about improving languages GCSEs to make them more interesting and engaging to support the package of proposals to encourage take-up of languages at key stage 4. The revised languages GCSE specifications should reflect these recommendations. The report also suggested that the current method of assessing speaking could be changed to make it less stressful for students and to give a better indication of performance than the current one-off assessment.

Objectives

This investigation had two main objectives:

- to consider whether changing the current method of assessing speaking skills would in fact make it less stressful for students and give a better indication of their performance in this skill (ie increase its validity)
- to investigate whether it is practicable to make this change and what the associated implications would be (ie to consider manageability and reliability).

Methodology

The investigation included the following activities:

- review of any research conducted in this area
- consideration of current approaches to the assessment of speaking in GCSE English (including discussion with teachers of GCSE English) and in other MFL qualifications
- scoping of possible alternative models for assessing speaking in MFL
- discussion of the proposed models with teachers, including teachers from:

- centres with candidates for the pilot Edexcel GCSE in Applied French
- centres with candidates for the AQA GCSE in French B (modular)
- centres with different groups of candidates for both one of the above qualifications and a standard GCSE qualification in French
- discussion with students preparing for these different GCSEs in MFL
- discussion with awarding body subject officers and examiners.

Background

Speaking has a weighting of 25 per cent in GCSE MFL examinations. The current method of assessing speaking skills in MFL has remained more or less unchanged since the first GCSEs in 1988. Candidates are examined individually in a face-to-face examination with their teacher. They have a short, supervised preparation time (10–15 minutes) before the examination itself, which lasts 8–15 minutes. The actual duration depends on the tier of entry (there are different tasks at foundation and higher tiers), how quickly the candidate responds and the efficiency with which the teacher conducts the examination.

The tasks are generally limited in their range and require a restricted amount and range of language from candidates. Typically there is a role-play, a presentation by the candidate and a general conversation covering a specified range of topics. Interactions are between the candidate and the teacher/examiner. Teachers need considerable skill to give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge and skills assessed in the mark scheme.

Speaking examinations are conducted by teachers under examination conditions and must be recorded for external marking or moderation. Some awarding bodies (Edexcel, OCR, WJEC, AQA [modular specification only]) offer centres the option of internal assessment (with external moderation); others (AQA and CCEA) allow only external assessment, where an examiner listens to the recording and marks the candidate's performance. No awarding body currently requires only internal assessment, except Edexcel for those centres piloting its GCSE in Applied French. This means that the majority of teachers of MFL have no experience or training in the formal marking of GCSE speaking, although nearly all have experience of conducting the examination.

A minority of GCSE candidates are already assessed in speaking on more than one occasion. Candidates for the AQA modular specifications have two separate speaking assessments (until 2006 there were three). These cover the same tasks as the standard

AQA specification but are not all examined at the same time. Edexcel has piloted a GCSE in Applied French that allows assessment of both speaking and writing over a period of time. For each candidate three speaking tasks must be assessed, and recordings must be available for external moderation purposes. The first award of this pilot qualification was in 2006. QCA has produced an evaluation report.

The current GCSE specifications

Teachers' attitudes to the assessment of speaking

The majority of teachers interviewed during this investigation agree with the views expressed by Lord Dearing in his report. They consider that the current method of assessing oral skills in the standard GCSE is not ideal and does not allow students to demonstrate the full range of oral skills. The one-off external test is an extremely daunting and stressful experience that has a negative impact on students' attitudes to modern language learning. It can also be a tense experience for teachers, who might inadvertently react negatively to student performance, especially at the end of a long day. Particular areas of concern include:

- the impact that the current assessment regime has on teaching and learning; teachers will adopt whatever strategies are necessary to ensure that students achieve the highest marks and there may be a conflict between teaching to communicate and teaching to pass an examination. This may lead to students memorising large amounts of language that they do not necessarily understand and inhibit the development of independence and spontaneity
- the artificiality of many of the tasks and the formulaic responses they generate, together with conversation topics that students do not perceive as relevant or interesting
- the rigidity of the grade descriptions and assessment criteria and their similarity to those for writing. Rather than encouraging fluency and risk taking, these criteria can lead to tasks that are very contrived
- the manageability of the oral assessment: conducting and recording oral examinations, as well as supervising candidates, places a heavy burden on languages teachers and schools.

Teachers who enter students for the GCSE in Applied French tend to be more positive and recognise the benefits for student performance of assessment over a period of time. The speaking interactions are perceived to be more relevant and realistic. Students are assessed on material while it is fresh in their minds. They learn to apply core vocabulary in different contexts, and the size of the assessment makes it more accessible. However, some students do not take the assessments as seriously as a more formal examination and may not prepare sufficiently.

While recognising the strengths of the GCSE in Applied French course, teachers are also concerned about its manageability. Teachers assess students at least three times during

the course and many choose to record the interactions. Few schools offer the course to all students, and class sizes tend to be smaller than for the standard GCSE. Many teachers believe that they would struggle to deliver the specification to a whole year group.

Students' attitudes to the assessment of speaking

Many GCSE students, even the more able, have a very negative attitude to language learning. They perceive that the GCSE in MFL is hard and a lot of work, in particular the preparation that is required for the oral test. While they all recognise the importance of oral communication, they usually lack confidence in this skill, worry about pronunciation and accuracy and feel more confident when writing. Those following the standard GCSE are the most critical. A number of students suggested that 'it is not really a test of how well you speak. It is unrealistic and is a reflection of writing ability and memory.' Students described how they prepare for the various components: they write out their presentations or monologues and responses to questions on all the topics and memorise them. Frequently they do not understand what they have written and feel that much of what they have learnt is irrelevant and will never be assessed.

For many the oral is a stressful experience and very pressurised. Students worry about getting something wrong, not being able to correct it and disappointing their teacher. They may be reluctant to take risks or be more independent and spontaneous, and they may not attempt more complex language for fear of losing marks.

From their comments it is clear that their concerns relate both to the one-off final examination and to the type of tasks and topics currently used to assess speaking and the emphasis on accuracy in the assessment criteria.

Students taking the GCSE in Applied French tend to be more positive about the speaking component even though it can still be a daunting experience. They appreciate the more adult topics and the opportunity to take a number of assessments and select the best three. Many acknowledge that their speaking skills have improved, even if they are not yet confident.

Different approaches to the assessment of speaking

A number of approaches to the assessment of speaking have been reviewed. These include the languages examinations within the International Baccalaureate, a new pilot GCSE in MFL, ESOL tests and speaking and listening in GCSE English. These approaches are summarised in appendix A.

The review of these qualifications informed discussions with teachers, students and awarding bodies on alternative models for the assessment of speaking in GCSE MFL in the future (see appendices B, C and D for discussion questions). In contrast to MFL, in GCSE English both listening and speaking are assessed together by the teacher on a number of occasions during class time and no audio recordings are made. In International Baccalaureate language examinations at an equivalent level to GCSE, speaking and listening are combined and a significant percentage of the marks are available for activities such as group and pair work that takes place in class. These activities are not recorded.

Oral assessment in the future: the teachers' view

Teachers would welcome changes to the way speaking is assessed in GCSE MFL examinations, although some indicated that they were quite happy with the current situation as it delivers good results for their students. They stressed that any changes should be manageable for both teachers and students and not create additional administration.

Teachers suggested that key changes should include a move away from recorded individual assessments at the end of the course to assessment over a period of time that relies more on teachers' professional judgement. More frequent assessment of speaking skills would enable students to build up evidence as they progressed through the course and to develop greater independence in their speaking. Such an approach would encourage assessment for learning and promote self- and peer-assessment.

Teachers would also like to see listening formally assessed together with speaking, although this would not be instead of the final listening examination. The latter would then have a lower weighting than at present. This change would develop listening skills in more realistic contexts and put more emphasis on understanding as integral to communication.

Teachers discussed the types of activity that might be appropriate and agreed that, as in GCSE English speaking and listening, the assessment requirements of controlled

assessment should be specified. Types of activity might include role-play, interactions such as those in the GCSE in Applied French, a formal presentation defending a viewpoint, watching a video clip and answering questions on it, questions and answers in different registers – conversations could involve two or more students. Activities would assess particular skills, for example a presentation could assess pronunciation. The range of activities could be expanded when more students come through the system with experience of languages in primary school. Awarding bodies should provide exemplar tasks and guidance but there should be enough flexibility to enable teachers to tailor tasks to the abilities and interests of their students.

Teachers differ in their views as to whether there should also be a final examination and how work should be moderated; some favour a final examination as they see it as the way to standardise assessment across centres. However, the majority feel that a combination of continuous assessment and final examination would create a double burden for teachers and might not alleviate the pressure felt by students at present. Teachers have developed a range of strategies for assessing and recording pupils' national curriculum levels in speaking at key stage 3 and would be comfortable assessing students at key stage 4. However, they are worried that the system might be open to abuse. Clear guidance and monitoring by the awarding bodies would be essential, in particular if they were not required to record all candidates. A system of accredited teacher status, as has been developed for the applied GCEs, might be appropriate. The process of accreditation need not be too onerous and would be good professional development. However, awarding bodies would need to provide regular updating and refresher activities.

Oral assessment in the future: the students' view

Students believe that the best way to assess their ability to speak in the target language is through ongoing assessment during the course by the teacher in class, as he/she has a good understanding of their level of ability. Many follow a modular science GCSE and acknowledge its positive impact on their learning. Ongoing assessment would allow them to learn from their mistakes, take risks and develop greater independence. Students made a number of suggestions as to how they might be assessed and how their experience could be improved. They would like to have proper conversations on topics they care about, to do more pair work and have more opportunities to speak to pupils in a country where the target language is spoken, perhaps through video links. Several students indicated that they frequently used internet messaging systems to communicate in the target language with exchange partners. Students on the GCSE in Applied French course described an activity where they gave a presentation to their class using

presentational software and then responded to questions. However, students recognise the potential risks of continuous assessment and the need for standardisation of marking.

Controlled assessment of speaking: the awarding body perspective

Awarding bodies are willing to look at different ways of assessing speaking and appreciate the negative impact of the current system on teaching and learning. However, they will need assurance that assessment is reliable. Any system of teacher accreditation would need to be supported by quality-assurance checks. These could include sampling of different activities of a number of students across the ability range to check the reliability of the centre's marking. Alternatively, awarding bodies might look at centres' marking of controlled assessment of writing and the degree of reliability and adjust the marks for controlled assessment of speaking accordingly. Whatever system is adopted, new ways of gathering evidence from centres are needed that reflect technological developments and the gradual disappearance of tape recorders and cassettes. However, the system must not place too a heavy burden on teachers.

Recommendations for the assessment of speaking in revised GCSE MFL specifications

The recommendations draw on the discussions with teachers, students and awarding bodies and are designed to meet the following objectives:

- to increase the take-up of languages at key stage 4
- to change perceptions of GCSEs in MFL and motivate and enthuse learners
- to develop assessment models that promote innovative teaching and learning that builds on language learning in primary schools and at key stage 3
- to enable students to develop independence and to communicate on topics that are realistic and relevant to their interests.

Recommendations

- Successful assessment of speaking should build on good classroom practice and allow students to demonstrate a wider range of skills in a variety of contexts, including the ability:
 - to give a talk in the target language
 - to respond appropriately to questions or comments
 - to engage in spontaneous discussion or debate of topics of interest to the age group in pairs or as a member of a group
 - to demonstrate independent and creative use of language.
- Appropriate recognition of achievement in these skills requires assessment on more than one occasion. Assessing speaking over a period of time would produce a variety of evidence and allow students to work in a range of contexts. In all GCSE examinations the assessment of speaking should therefore move from a one-off examination at the end of the course to controlled assessment on several occasions during the course.
- Controlled assessment in speaking should not be an alternative to controlled assessment of writing. (In the past, when given a choice between oral or written coursework, teachers have opted for written coursework.)

- Consideration should be given to including some assessment of listening during the controlled assessment of speaking to extend the range of listening activities and make them more realistic. A possible split might be 10 per cent listening combined with speaking, and 15 per cent external examination of listening.
- Grade descriptions and assessment criteria for speaking should be revised to encourage a more holistic approach that recognises that different activities will provide evidence of different aspects of speaking skills.
- The feasibility of introducing a system of teacher accreditation for MFL should be explored alongside alternative ways of sampling teacher marking.

Implications of the recommendations

Implications for QCA

- QCA should review the draft criteria for MFL and, in particular, the proposed weighting for controlled assessment. One possible model might be:
 - 25 per cent speaking – controlled assessment
 - 10 per cent listening – controlled assessment
 - 25 per cent writing – controlled assessment.

Models with a lower percentage of controlled assessment would risk increasing the burden of assessment for students with assessment of speaking and/or writing through both controlled assessment and final examination. Alternatively, a lower overall weighting might be allocated to speaking, which would not be desirable.

- QCA has done work to explore controlled assessment but this has not included any consideration of the assessment of speaking, only of writing. A possible model based on this work could be as follows.

Task setting

Teachers set the tasks following awarding body guidelines and criteria. The awarding body provides a bank of exemplar tasks and skeleton tasks that may be used or adapted.

Task taking

Teachers directly supervise one or more tasks, for example one-to-one interaction with the teacher; they supervise a range of other tasks, for example students working in pairs or small groups in the classroom.

Task marking

Teachers are trained (through distance learning or regional courses) and accredited by the awarding body to mark the tasks. The work is not externally moderated but there is light monitoring of teachers' marking as part of the awarding bodies' quality assurance procedures.

- The GCSE subject criteria for MFL should clearly specify the skills to be assessed through controlled assessment. Many teachers may be reluctant to embrace change and there is a risk that awarding bodies might retain the current method of assessing speaking to satisfy this customer base. Such a situation would

perpetuate the current perceptions of the oral examination, disadvantage some students and continue to have a negative impact on teaching and learning.

- QCA should work with awarding bodies to develop grade descriptions and marking criteria that support more flexible assessment of speaking and listening.

Implications for teachers

- Teachers may need to be convinced of the benefits of significant changes to the way speaking is assessed, and reassured that they will be given support while these changes are implemented. They will also be concerned at any potential increase in workload.
- Teachers will need extensive training in assessment to prepare them for the changes. Training could be carried out on a regional basis, perhaps through an extension of the key stage 3 networks.

Implications for awarding bodies

- Awarding bodies might want to have further interboard/QCA discussions about how they will monitor teacher assessment of speaking, including the introduction of teacher accreditation. Awarding bodies might consider producing a DVD that exemplifies national standards.
- Awarding bodies will need to produce extensive guidance and exemplification of a wide range of activities that could form the basis for controlled assessment of speaking.

Appendix A: Review of assessment of speaking (and listening) in different qualifications

Qualification title and level	Component weighting	Scheme of assessment	Marking/moderation arrangements	Assessment evidence	Comments
GCSE English	Speaking and listening 20%	Three contexts: individual extended contribution, group interaction and drama-focused activity	Teachers award candidates one overall mark on a best-fit basis. Teachers make a broad judgement using the general criteria. This initial judgement is refined using the specific criteria Interboard video sent out to teachers to enable them to standardise their marking; boards make a small number of centre visits each year on a rolling programme	Teachers' marks (nothing is recorded) supported by commentary All work takes place in the presence of the teacher	Enables teachers to pick students' best work; assessment is ongoing. Some concerns about the standard of commentaries on record sheets. Marks may be inflated – marks for this component are usually higher than for other components
Cambridge ESOL – Key English Test	25%	8–10 minutes per pair of candidates with two examiners Test is in two parts: part 1 is about giving personal information when meeting someone for the first time; in part 2 candidates talk to each other – each candidate is given a	Tests are conducted by examiners appointed by the awarding body After initial training of examiners, standardisation of marking is maintained by both examiner coordination sessions and monitoring visits to centres by team leaders. During coordination sessions, examiners watch	Examiner awards a global mark for all components	Awarding body–appointed examiners would not be feasible for an examination on the scale of GCSE. However, there are some interesting ideas for pair work

Qualification title and level	Component weighting	Scheme of assessment	Marking/moderation arrangements	Assessment evidence	Comments
		prompt sheet; candidates take it in turns to ask and answer questions	and discuss sample speaking tests recorded on video and then conduct practice tests with volunteer candidates to establish a common standard of assessment		
Cambridge ESOL – Preliminary English Test	25%	Test is in four parts – 10–12 minutes per pair of candidates (requires two examiners) 1. General conversation – one examiner talks to each candidate in turn; 2. simulated situation with other candidate – examiner gives out a prompt sheet and instructions; 3. each candidate is given a photo to describe; 4. discussion with partner based on photos	Tests are conducted by examiners appointed by the awarding body See above for details	Examiner awards a global mark for all components	As above, but greater variety of assessment activities
London Tests of English	25%	At levels 1 and 2 the oral is conducted by an interviewer and an assessor. Candidates are assessed in pairs and are expected to ask and respond to questions from their partner, as well as to questions and prompts from the interviewer. At	Assessment is carried out by a local assessor approved and trained by Pearson Language Assessments, or by external examiners who listen to the recording. Recordings are then moderated using standard awarding body procedures	All oral tests are recorded	Training of assessors is through a DVD of candidates' performances Assessor may not be the candidate's teacher Theme of oral test

Qualification title and level	Component weighting	Scheme of assessment	Marking/moderation arrangements	Assessment evidence	Comments
		both levels tests are in three parts: introductions and conversation, conversation based on a visual stimulus, and development based on a visual stimulus			is linked to theme of written test
Asset Languages	N/A (each skill is a separate qualification)	Intermediate – test is in two parts: part 1 (60%) includes personal questions on a topic and a picture-based task; part 2 (40%) is a prepared talk followed by questions Materials are provided by the awarding body for both tasks	Part 1 is conducted and assessed by the teacher and moderated by OCR; part 2 is conducted and assessed by the teacher	Part 1 is recorded; for part 2 the only evidence is the teacher's mark	Teachers were originally required to become accredited teachers before conducting the oral. From September 2007 this is no longer the case; centres only need to have an accredited teacher if they wish to purchase Grade award certificates.
International Baccalaureate – ab initio language for the Diploma Programme (similar structure)	Oral component 30%; comprises listening and speaking (includes individual oral 15% and	Individual oral: two parts, duration approx 10 minutes. Part 1: presentation based on visual stimulus with follow-up questions; part 2: general conversation between teacher and	Candidates awarded two marks by the teacher, one for the individual oral and one mark for the best interactive activity; the two marks are averaged and one mark is then submitted for external moderation	Individual oral is recorded; for interactive oral, teacher keeps record of at least three assessed oral activities; the mark of one of these activities (normally	Potential for greater range of oral activities; teachers do not have to record oral activities during the course

Qualification title and level	Component weighting	Scheme of assessment	Marking/moderation arrangements	Assessment evidence	Comments
for language B)	interactive oral activities 15%)	candidate Interactive oral activities should include a balance of speaking and listening. Activities could include group and pair work; one of the activities must be in response to a recorded stimulus, eg interview or a scene from a film		the best) contributes to the overall mark submitted for moderation	No other assessment of listening, therefore the weighting of the specification is heavily slanted towards assessing reading and writing (70%)
GCSE AQA B (modular)	25% Module 1: 12.5% Module 4: 12.5%	Module 1: Candidates produce a short, prepared tape-recorded monologue. The monologue should last a maximum of five minutes. Candidates may bring notes into the exam (max 60 words) and may pause the tape Module 4: Role plays and conversation; the material is provided by the awarding body	Module 1 is centre assessed and sent to the board for postal moderation Module 4 is conducted and recorded by the teacher and marked by the board	Everything is recorded	Module 1 is taken in year 10 and can be retaken in year 11
GCSE in Applied French	Speaking 30%	Three interactions (15%) plus one presentation with follow-up questions (15%) Teachers may devise their	Presentations of all candidates are marked and recorded by the teacher. A sample is sent to the awarding body for moderation	Recording of one spoken interaction if the teacher is an accredited teacher. This recording is kept by the school	Teachers regard recording all three interactions as an administrative burden, particularly if they

Qualification title and level	Component weighting	Scheme of assessment	Marking/moderation arrangements	Assessment evidence	Comments
		<p>own interactions or use those provided by the awarding body. Candidates are given three days' preparation time</p> <p>Candidates select presentation in consultation with the teacher</p>	<p>Non-accredited teachers are required to mark and record all interactions, and to send a sample to the awarding body for moderation</p> <p>Accredited teachers mark all three interactions but are required to record only one. This recording is kept by the school but may be requested by the awarding body</p>	<p>and may be requested by the awarding body. Teachers who are not accredited are required to record all three interactions. All presentations are recorded</p>	<p>have a large class. However, many welcome the greater flexibility of the tasks</p>
GCSE – standard course	Speaking 25%	Usually set by the awarding body. Normally consists of initial presentation, role plays and conversation	Either marked by the awarding body or marked by the teacher and moderated by the awarding body	Every candidate is recorded for the entire test	Majority of centres send tapes to awarding body to mark
Cambridge IGCSE	Either 25% or 33% depending on specification	Role-play tasks set by the awarding body, topic conversation and general conversation	Centres responsible for initial assessment followed by moderation by the awarding body	Only some of the candidates are recorded for moderation	

Appendix B: Questions for discussion – teachers

(Seminar for teachers at QCA on 28 September 2007. These questions were also used as the basis for discussion with teachers during visits to schools)

1. What major changes would you like to see in the assessment of speaking at GCSE? In particular, what type of assessment of speaking would promote good teaching and learning and follow on well from modern language developments in primary schools and at key stage 3?
2. How do you reach a decision on a pupil's national curriculum level in MFL at key stage 3?
3. Should speaking in GCSE MFL be assessed throughout the course as, for example, in GCSE English?
4. Should there be a combination of assessment throughout the course and final external assessment? If such a model were introduced, what weighting should be given to each component?
5. Should the various elements of the internal assessment of speaking be specified as in GCSE English, for example individual activities, group and pair work? If activities were specified, what type of activities should these be?
6. Should awarding bodies set tasks or should they delegate this to teachers and provide guidance?
7. Would teachers be confident recording candidates' marks throughout the course?
8. What evidence should be provided for moderation? Would a teacher's record sheet be sufficient or should some or all oral tests/interactions be recorded?
9. If teachers internally assess speaking, how should the marks be moderated? Would a system of teacher accreditation such as that recently introduced for the applied A level specifications or for the GCSE in Applied French be practical?

10. Many teachers comment that they find it difficult to conduct and mark an oral examination at the same time. In ESOL examinations pupils are examined in pairs with an interviewer and an assessor. If an external examination was retained, is this a model that could be considered for GCSE MFL?

11. Should listening be assessed during the assessment of speaking? If so, what percentage should be allocated to listening during the oral component and what percentage should be allocated to a listening test based on a recording?

12. If significant changes were made to the assessment of the oral, what format might be adopted for those languages that currently do not conform to the traditional GCSE MFL model?

Appendix C: Questions for students interviewed during visits to schools

1. Why did you choose to study a language?
2. What do you like best about your course?
3. What do you like least?
4. What skills do you think are the most important to develop when studying a language?
5. How confident do you feel when speaking?
6. What do you think would be the best way of assessing your ability to speak in [language]?
7. Do you take part in group or pair work? If yes, what type of activities do you like best?
8. How do you prepare for oral assessments, for example how much do you memorise or write down?

Appendix D: Questions for discussion – awarding bodies

(Seminar for awarding bodies at QCA on 28 September 2007)

1. What major changes would you like to see in the assessment of speaking at GCSE?
2. Should speaking in GCSE MFL be assessed throughout the course as, for example, in GCSE English?
3. Should there be a combination of assessment throughout the course and final external assessment? If such a model were introduced, what weighting should be given to each component?
4. Should the various elements of the internal assessment of speaking be specified as in GCSE English, for example individual activities, group and pair work? If activities were specified, what type of activities should these be?
5. Should awarding bodies set tasks or should they delegate this to teachers and provide guidance?
6. If teachers internally assessed speaking, how would the marks be moderated? Would a system of teacher accreditation such as that introduced for the applied A level specifications be necessary or practical?
7. What evidence should be provided for moderation? Would a teacher's record sheet be sufficient or should all oral tests/interactions be recorded?
8. In ESOL examinations pupils are examined in pairs with two examiners. If an external examination was retained, is this a model that should be considered for GCSE MFL? Would this make the assessment more manageable and reliable?
9. Should listening be assessed during the assessment of speaking? If so, what percentage should be allocated to listening during the oral component and what percentage should be allocated to a listening test based on a recording?

10. If significant changes were made to the assessment of the oral, what format might be adopted for those languages that currently do not conform to the traditional GCSE MFL model?

Appendix E: References

AQA GCSE French (B) modular specification

AQA GCSE English chief examiner's report, June 2006

Controlled assessments, QCA/07/3208

Draft GCSE subject criteria for modern foreign languages, QCA, June 2007

Edexcel GCSE English chief examiner's report, June 2007

Edexcel GCSE in Applied French specification

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International Baccalaureate Organisation Diploma ab initio and Language B specifications

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University of Cambridge International Examinations: IGCSE

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