

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Awarder and stakeholder surveys on GCSE MFL performance standards

Milja Curcin and Beth Black

ofqual

Contents

Background	3
Method	4
Results	7
<i>Overall results by GCSE grade</i>	7
<i>Views of differences between current and aspirational standards</i>	9
<i>Standards perceptions by language</i>	12
Discussion	14
References	16
Appendix A Survey content	17
Appendix B Analysis by stakeholder sub-group	24
Appendix C Analysis by stakeholder sub-group and language	26

Background

This report presents the results of a survey in which different stakeholders were asked about their perceptions of performance standards in GCSE French, German and Spanish at grades 7 and 4. The respondents were asked both about their views of the current level of performance standards as well as perceptions of what performance standards should be at these grades. The survey asked respondents to select descriptors of language performance accordingly. These descriptors were based on a widely regarded scale of language learning, namely the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). The survey was conducted as a follow-up to a linking study where current performance standards at grades 9, 7 and 4 were linked to the CEFR (Curcin and Black, 2019).

The linking study relating GCSE performances to a commonly understood scale such as the CEFR was useful in helping to succinctly conceptualise and describe complex, multi-dimensional performance standards. This study undoubtedly provides evidence to inform subsequent stakeholder discussions and consideration as to whether the content and performance standards and assessment demands currently associated with the key GCSE grades are appropriate given the purpose of GCSE qualifications, the spirit and nature of the curriculum, and the current context of GCSE MFL learning and teaching. However, the linking study does not in itself tell us the extent to which these performance standards are considered to be appropriate, too low (i.e. too easy) or too high (i.e. too difficult).

Thus, as a first step towards understanding how stakeholder views of performance standards in GCSE MFLs might translate into CEFR level descriptors and thus also relate to the findings of the linking study, we conducted a small-scale survey with several stakeholder groups. The survey sought to understand stakeholder views on 2 key questions:

1. What should students at different grades be able to do in the language that they studied for their GCSE?
2. What can typical students actually do at different grades in the language they studied for their GCSE?

The first question sought stakeholder views of aspirational standards given the current context of GCSE, whereas the second question sought their views of the current GCSE standards at the relevant grades.

Method

The survey was conducted using SmartSurvey tool. The above-mentioned questions were asked for each of grades 7 and 4, using multiple-choice single-response format. The respondents were also able to provide further comments on their responses. The survey questions are presented in Appendix A.

In order to be able to relate the results of the survey to the outcomes of the CEFR linking study, we asked the stakeholders to select the CEFR level that best described their response to the above-mentioned questions. Rather than using traditional CEFR nomenclature (A1, A2, etc.), the descriptors were presented as generic descriptors of linguistic ability reflecting different performance standards, from lower ability (Performance Standard 1 – equivalent to A1) to higher ability (Performance Standard 4 – equivalent to B2). This was because we anticipated that a number of our respondents might not be familiar with the CEFR terminology.

The content of each level descriptor was identical to the CEFR global scale, though we did not include levels higher than B2 – see Figure 1 below. In addition to the 4 main Performance Standards, the standard below Performance standard 1, as well as intermediate points were also given as response options. The latter were intended to describe learners who can perform all aspects of the lower (preceding) performance standard(s), and show some but not all aspects of the higher standard (equivalent to CEFR “plus” levels). It was explained that these descriptors are intended to generalise across speaking, writing, listening and reading comprehension skills, recognising that individual learner profiles in terms of these different skills might be different.

The respondents were asked to consider the language that they primarily teach or examine. When considering the first question in particular, the respondents were asked to take into account the purposes of GCSEs, which are:

- to provide evidence of students’ achievements against demanding and fulfilling content
- to provide a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and for employment; and
- to provide (if required) a basis for schools and colleges to be held accountable for the performance of all of their students.

Alongside the stated purposes of GCSEs, the respondents were asked to assume the following regarding who the qualification is aimed at and how the course should be delivered:

- learners are progressing to GCSE after usually 2-3 years of studying the relevant language at KS3
- the GCSE course should involve the appropriate number of guided learning hours, delivered by a qualified teacher with appropriate linguistic expertise
- the learners’ first language is assumed not to be the subject matter of the MFL

PROFICIENT USER	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
INDEPENDENT USER	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
BASIC USER	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Figure 1 *CEFR global scale*

Two stakeholder groups were included in the survey – see Table 1 below. One respondent group consisted of exam board awarders, involved in setting the grade boundaries in the 2019 examination session for each of the relevant GCSE MFL subjects. This group is referred to as “awarders” in the remainder of the report. Another, wider, respondent group (referred to as “stakeholders”) consisted of the participants in the CEFR linking study (ibid.) alongside 3 additional stakeholders from Higher Education with an interest in performance and grading standards in these subjects who did not take part in the linking study. These 3 respondents were included in the Higher Education group from the CEFR linking study for data analysis.

In a sense, awarders can be seen as the “guardians” of GCSE standards, whereas the other stakeholders could be seen to have quite distinct involvement with the GCSEs, perhaps mostly as users, as well as experts in wider linguistic field. For this

reason, we analysed and report the results for awarders and stakeholders separately. Note that the wider stakeholder group also included awarding organisation (AO) representatives who took part in the CEFR study. These representatives were AO subject specialists or examiners, involved in the development of the assessments or marking, rather than awarders, and are hence not included in the awarder group.

Table 1 *Survey participants*

Respondent group	Respondent sub-group	French	German	Spanish	Total
Awarders	Exam board 1	4	3	3	10
	Exam board 2	2	3	3	8
	Exam board 3	4	3	4	11
Stakeholders	AO representatives	1	1	1	3
	Higher Education	6	2	5	13
	Language institutes	3	1	1	5
	Subject associations	1	1	1	3
	Subject experts	1	1	1	3
	Teachers	3	3	3	9

In data analysis, we prioritised investigating response patterns by GCSE grade rather than language, given that the curricula and specifications for these subjects are aligned in order to fulfil regulatory conditions and major differences in standards would be unexpected. Furthermore, the CEFR linking study has demonstrated that the standards are indeed well-aligned across different languages. However, in order to unpick the data further, we looked at patterns by language and stakeholder sub-group, even though, given small samples, the conclusions from these analyses are more tentative.

Results

Overall results by GCSE grade

For this analysis, the responses are split according to 2 categories: awarders and stakeholders.

According to the figure below, the majority of awarders thought that students at grade 4 (G4) currently are and should be at around A2/A2+ level. As for grade 7 (G7), the majority thought students are and should be around B1/B1+ level.

The results from a wider pool of stakeholders suggest a somewhat different picture. It can be seen that, while some stakeholders did indicate higher abilities for each grade, the majority seemed to endorse A1+ as the maximum current G4 standard, and A2+ as the maximum current G7 standard. This is about a level lower than what the majority of the awarders endorsed for each grade. A larger proportion of stakeholders than awarders also endorsed A1 and below A1 levels for G4 and A1+ level for G7.

In relation to the CEFR linking study (ibid.), this suggests that the awarders thought current performance standard is about a level higher than the linking suggested, whereas the view of the majority of the other stakeholders was more in line with the linking study. It is possible that the differences between the views of awarders and stakeholders may stem from the awarders not using the CEFR categories appropriately, rather than from a true misalignment in their respective views of GCSE standards. Prior to taking part in the survey, the awarders did not have the exposure to the CEFR that was afforded the participants in the CEFR linking study. Even though CEFR descriptors are intended as a universal “metalanguage” that should aid understanding about linguistic competence between stakeholders and different contexts, a familiarity with the framework and its assumptions and values is necessary for appropriate use.

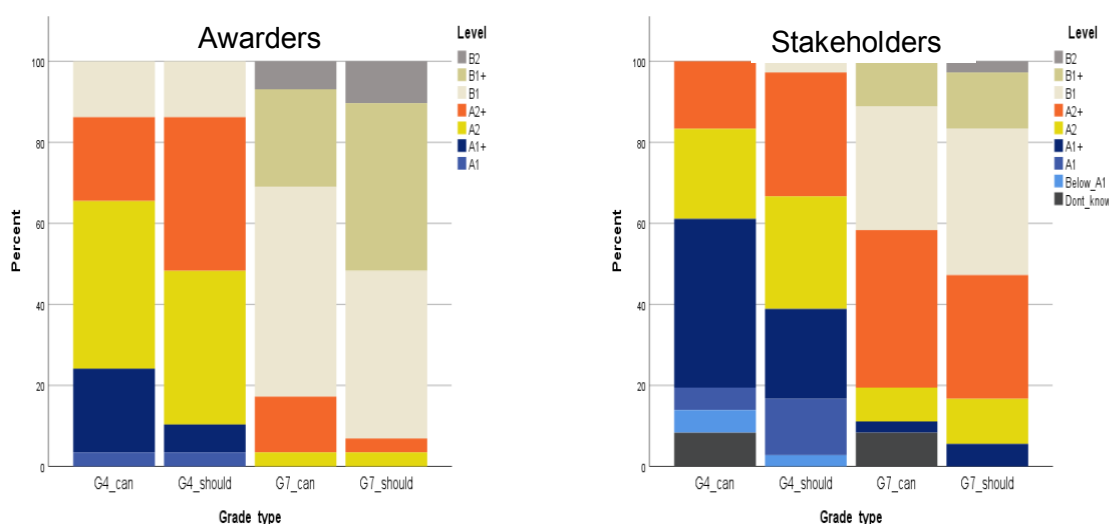


Figure 2 Percentage of CEFR level chosen for current and aspirational GCSE standard for each grade

The fact that some sub-groups of stakeholders do not routinely teach GCSE students (though they might engage with GCSEs in other ways) might also explain

the above-mentioned differences between stakeholders and awarders in terms of perceptions of the current standard. We therefore split the stakeholders into those unlikely to have regular contact with GCSE qualifications and students (HE representatives and representatives from international language institutes), and those who should be intimately familiar with GCSE performance standards (teachers, subject experts, subject associations and AO representatives). Some of the respondents in the former group also responded “Don’t know” to the current standard question, and therefore their responses did not contribute to the overall result.

Figure 3 shows that, for grade 4, the pattern where the wider group of stakeholders perceived both current and aspirational standards in GCSE as lower than awarders repeated itself irrespective of whether the stakeholders had great familiarity with GCSE qualifications or not. For grade 7, those more familiar with GCSEs indicated B1 as the current grade 7 standard, as opposed to those less familiar with GCSE, who tended to indicate A2+. Nevertheless, both of these groups were less likely to indicate standards higher than B1 for grade 7 than the awarders. We, therefore, conclude that it is more likely that the discrepancy between awarders’ and stakeholders’ perceptions of current standards more likely arose from a sub-optimal level of familiarity with the CEFR by the awarders, rather than a lack of familiarity with GCSE standards by the stakeholders.

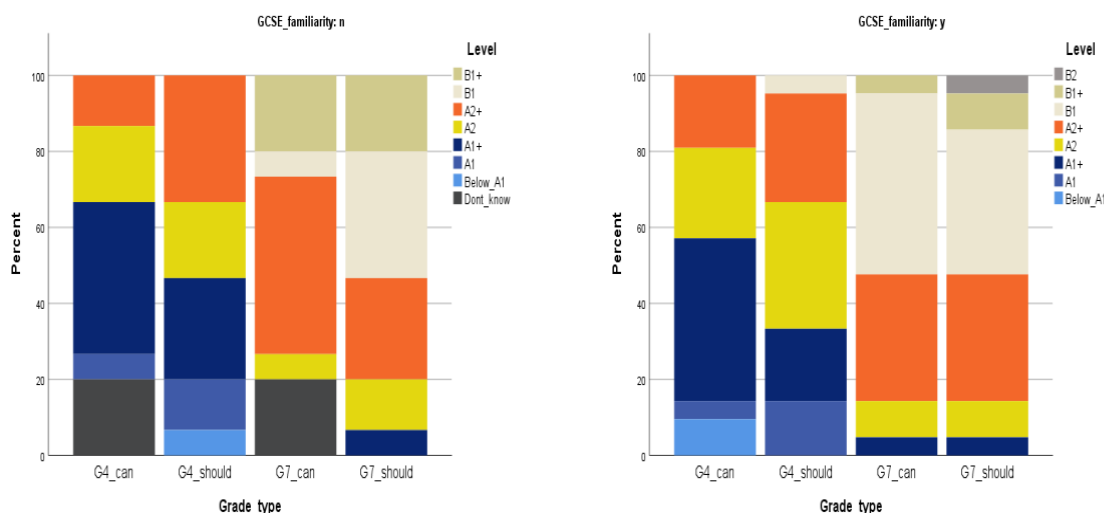


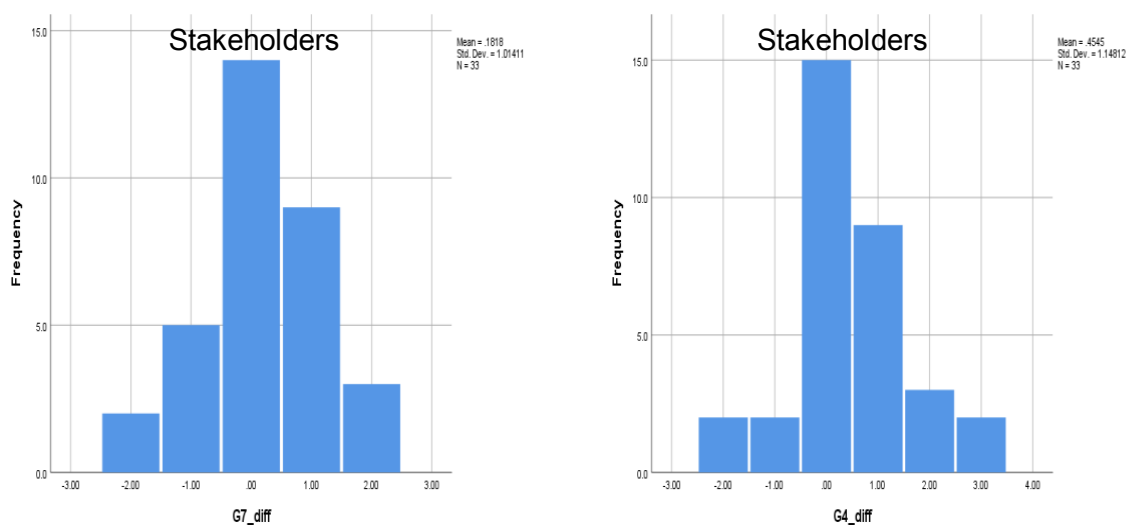
Figure 3 Percentage of CEFR level chosen for current and aspirational standard by grade and GCSE familiarity level

Given that a great deal of discussion in relation to MFL grading standards comes from specific stakeholder groups, some of which hold quite strong views about the situation in GCSE MFLs, in Appendix B we present an analysis of responses by stakeholder sub-group. However, it should be borne in mind that some of the sub-groups consisted of only 3 respondents, and so the views expressed may not represent the views of other stakeholders in any individual sub-group presented here.

Views of differences between current and aspirational standards

Views of differences between perceived current and aspirational standards for each grade are presented in Figure 4 in terms of mean perceived differences between these standards. To calculate these, we recoded each performance standard level used in the survey into a number from 0 (below performance standard 1) to 7 (performance standard 4), then calculated the difference between the responses for the current standard and aspirational standard (subtracting the current standard from the aspirational standard) for each respondent and averaged these. The positive numbers show where the responses tended to give a higher level for the aspirational than the current standard, while the negative numbers show where the responses gave a higher level to the current than the aspirational standard.

On average, the perceived current standard was about half a level lower than the aspirational standard, with the exception of grade 7 in the stakeholder group, where there was no difference. However, it can be seen that there was quite a wide spread of views across the stakeholders, although it is worth noting there was a high degree of homogeneity amongst awarders. Furthermore, some of the stakeholders indicated the opposite i.e., that the perceived current standard was higher than the aspirational standard, whereas no such responses were given by any of the awarders. The results by stakeholder group and language are presented in Appendix C, though it should be borne in mind that some of the groups when broken down in this way consist of one respondent only.



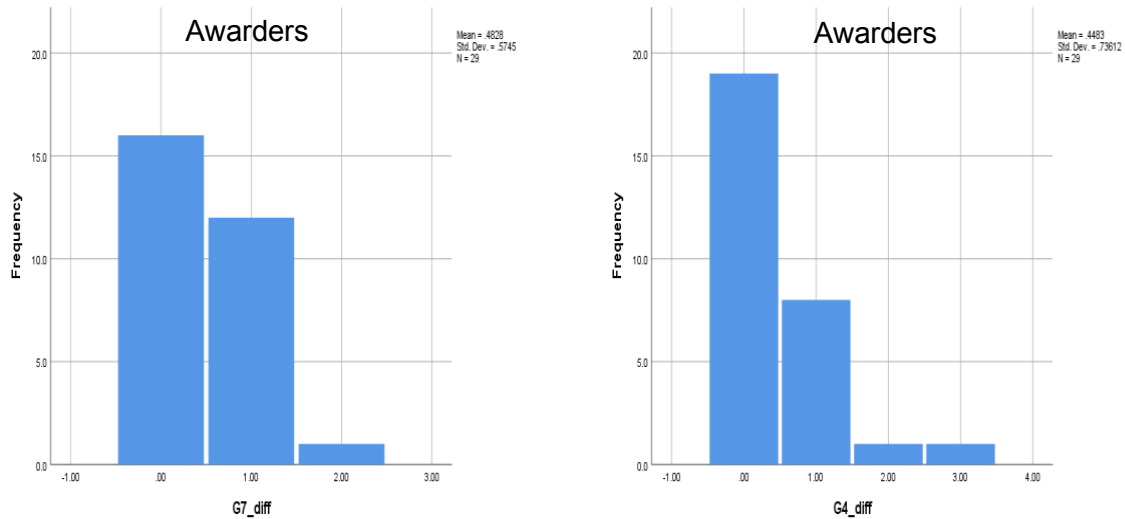
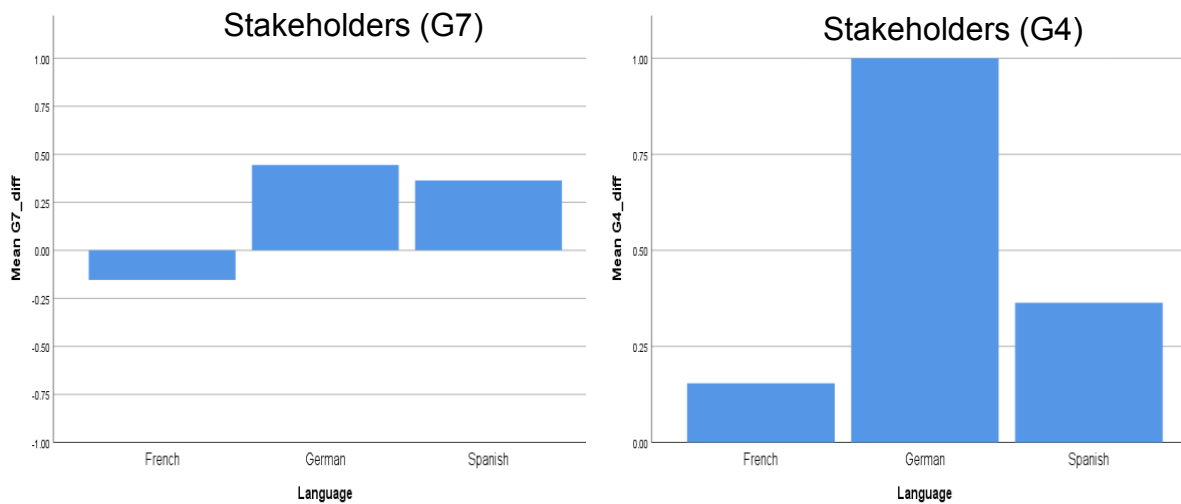


Figure 4 Distribution of differences between perceived aspirational and current standard by respondent group

When looking at the patterns by language in Figure 5, averaging across stakeholder groups (top 2 panels) and awarders from different boards (bottom 2 panels), it can be seen that, with the exception of grade 7 French as perceived by stakeholders, the current standards for other languages and grades were seen as lower than they should be across the board. Stakeholders appear to perceive the greatest discrepancy in German, whereas awarders perceived the greatest discrepancies to be in French at grade 7 and Spanish at grade 4.



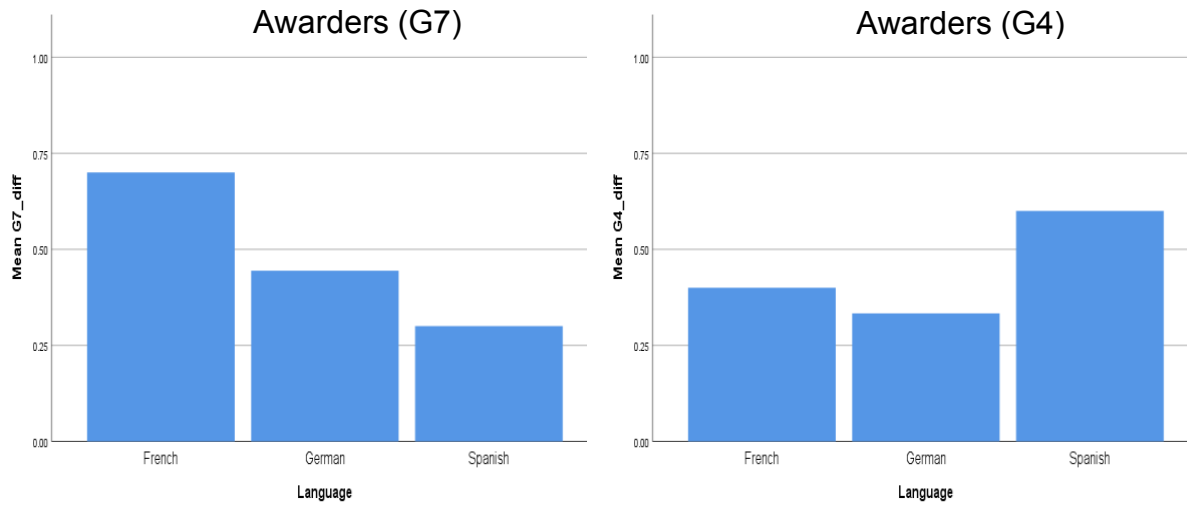


Figure 5 Mean differences between perceived aspirational and current standard by language

Standards perceptions by language

With the caveat that there were some potentially significant differences between stakeholder sub-groups in their views of both current and aspirational standards, below we present a summary of views by language.

With respect to current standards (Figure 6), these appear to be perceived as higher for French and Spanish for both grades, among both wider stakeholder group and awarders.

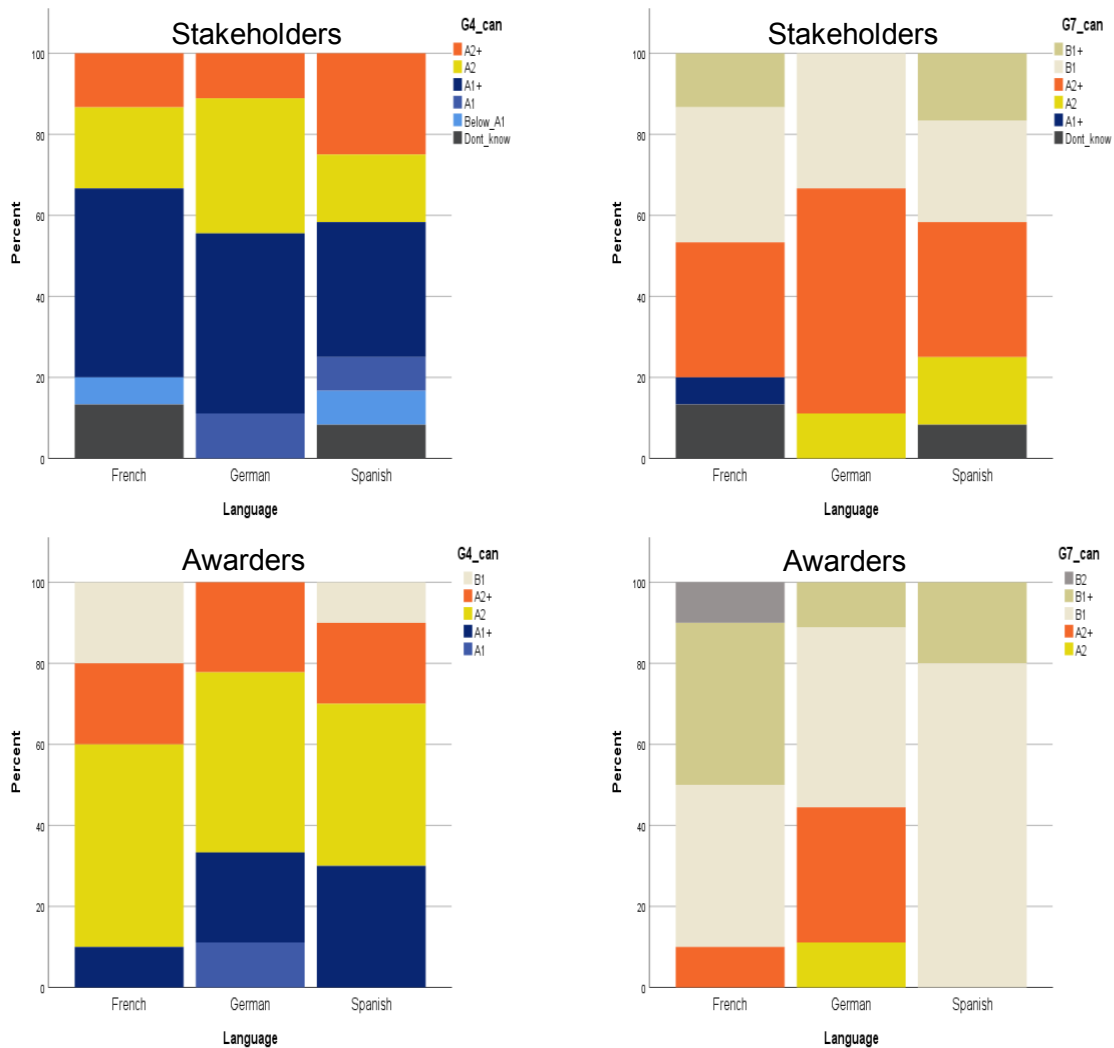


Figure 6 Current standards by language

Consistent with the perceptions of differences between current and aspirational standards discussed in the previous section, the aspirational standard endorsements presented in Figure 7 tend to be higher than the current standard ones from Figure 6. Broadly speaking, the aspirational standards in French and Spanish appear to be higher than those in German, except for grade 4 stakeholder group.

Awarder and stakeholder surveys on GCSE MFL performance standards

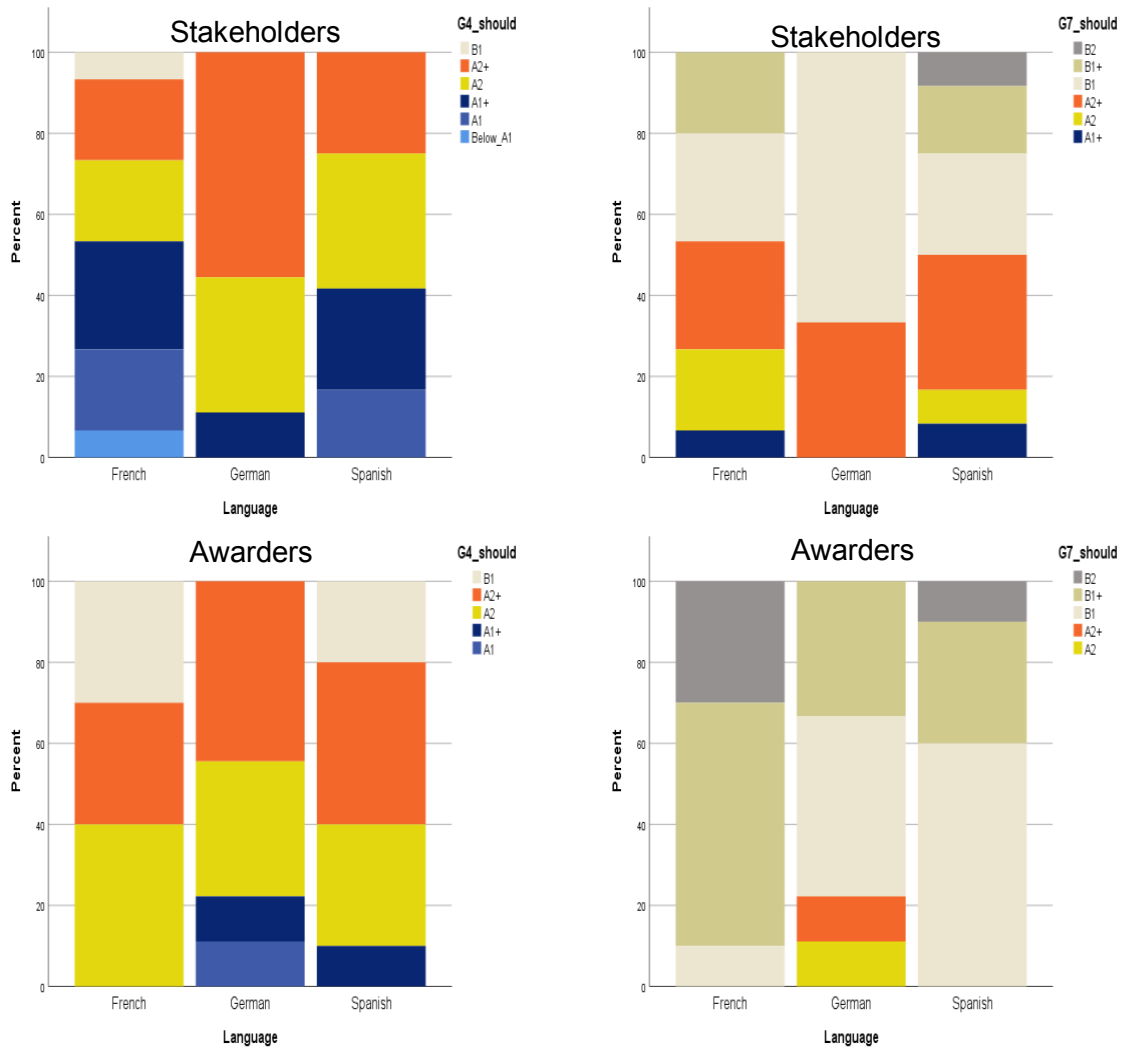


Figure 7 Aspirational standards by language

Discussion

There are several limitations with this survey and its results. The samples of respondents were opportunistic, as well as small and unrepresentative in the traditional sense. However, it should be noted that some of the stakeholder sub-groups (e.g. AO representatives, subject associations, language institute representatives), as well as awarders, likely responded in ways that represent the views of their institutions rather than their personal views. In matters such as performance standards in school qualifications this is likely inevitable, and suggests that forums other than surveys (for instance, focus groups or discussion panels involving representative groups of stakeholders) should be used to collect and make the best use of sometimes opposing views to agree on the most appropriate standards in the relevant context.

Another limitation is that using CEFR descriptors to capture the views of awarders in particular may be less justified as they did not have the exposure and understanding of it that was afforded the participants in the CEFR linking study (ibid.) prior to taking part in the survey. Even though CEFR descriptors are intended to help understanding about linguistic competence between stakeholders and users of qualifications, a familiarity with the framework and its context and assumptions would certainly be beneficial for appropriate engagement and use. This could partly explain why awarders tended to endorse standards about a level higher than the majority of other stakeholders, whereas the results based on stakeholder responses to some extent corroborated the findings from the CEFR linking study.

The key finding from this survey is that the majority of the respondents perceived current performance standards at grades 7 and 4 to be lower than where they thought it should be. This is in the opposite direction to what we might have expected given all the stakeholder evidence gathered from elsewhere, which suggests that MFLs should be made 'easier'. It is difficult to readily reconcile how it might be possible to both increase performance standards as well as lowering grading standards. While this could be an artefact of our survey sample or survey design, other explanations for this apparent paradox are also possible.

When people talk about (grading) standards and difficulty there are multiple concepts and dimensions they may be referring to or thinking of and these need untangling. Much of the stakeholder evidence and perceptions stem from the statistical outputs and interpretation of these (for instance, proportion of cohort achieving different grades) and value added models. From this "statistical" point of view, the grading standards are perceived to be "severe".

However, this survey very much focuses on performance standards, arguably the key output of GCSE MFL qualifications, i.e., what students achieving different grades are able to do with language and what the GCSE should equip them to be able to do. The majority of the responses from our survey would suggest that performance standards should be higher.

To increase the performance standards of GCSE MFL students whilst simultaneously lowering grading standards (i.e., decreasing difficulty), seems counter-intuitive. However, theoretically, this is possible, though it would require some other changes as well. Such changes might be in the nature and focus of aspects of the assessment, and/or the focus of curriculum content. This ties in with

the results of the content mapping and some of the qualitative findings of the CEFR linking study (ibid.) which suggest that some aspects of current assessment practices as well as curriculum content may be at odds with best practices of the communicative approach to acquiring linguistic competence.

This survey also suggests that there are a range of different perceptions of performance standards amongst different stakeholders. It may be beneficial to create a forum where a more unanimous position could be achieved regarding both current, and, in particular, aspirational, standards amongst key stakeholders.

References

Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <http://assets.cambridge.org/052180/3136/sample/0521803136ws.pdf>

Curcin, M. & Black, B. (2019). *Investigating standards in GCSE French, German and Spanish through the lens of the CEFR*. (Report No. Ofqual/19/6559/1). Coventry, UK: Ofqual.

Appendix A Survey content

GCSE MFL performance standards

1. The purpose of this survey

In this short survey we will ask you about the linguistic ability of GCSE students at grades 7 and 4 (equivalent to grades A and C pre-reform respectively). We will offer you some generic brief descriptors of overall language competence to choose from for each grade.

We would like to understand your views about the following 2 questions:

1. What should students at different grades be able to do in the language that they studied for their GCSE?
2. What can typical students actually do at different grades in the language they studied for their GCSE?

When considering the first question in particular, we would like you to take into account the purposes of GCSEs, which are:

- to provide evidence of students' achievements against demanding and fulfilling content
- to provide a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and for employment; and
- to provide (if required) a basis for schools and colleges to be held accountable for the performance of all of their students

You should consider students' linguistic abilities in the language that you primarily teach or examine.

Please be assured that all information and views you provide will be treated as confidential and we will ensure full anonymisation in any reporting.

You can save your responses at any point and return to the survey later. Please use your personal email address for this. Check your junk mail in the first instance if you do not receive the email with the link to continue the survey. Please do get in touch if you have any issues accessing the survey (GCSE.MFL@ofqual.gov.uk). You can go backwards through the survey if you like for any reason.

2. Background information

Please state your name. *

First name: *

Last name: *

3. GCSE MFL linguistic standard - what should it be for grade 7?

We would like to understand your views about the appropriate linguistic standard for GCSE grade 7 (equivalent to previous grade A).

When deciding on the appropriate linguistic standard for the grade, consider the stated purposes of GCSEs as well as the following assumptions regarding who the qualification is aimed at and how the course should be delivered:

- learners are progressing to GCSE after usually 2-3 years of studying the relevant language at KS3
- the GCSE course should involve the appropriate number of guided learning hours, delivered by a qualified teacher with appropriate linguistic expertise
- the learners' first language is assumed not to be the subject matter of the MFL

Below are some descriptors of linguistic ability reflecting different performance standards, from lower ability (Performance Standard 1) to higher ability (Performance Standard 4). They are intended to generalise across speaking, writing, listening comprehension and reading comprehension skills. While different learners are likely to have different profiles across these skills, we ask you to choose the most appropriate descriptor that could broadly apply to the qualification grade rather than sub-skill grades.

You can assume that the descriptors of higher ability subsume the lower ability descriptors (e.g., students showing all of the aspects of Performance Standard 3 can be assumed to have all of the abilities described at Performance Standards 1 and 2).

In addition to the 4 main Performance Standards, there are intermediate points intended for learners who can perform all aspect of the lower performance standard(s), and show some but not all aspects of the higher standard.

What should learners achieving grade 7 at the end of their GCSE MFL be able to do with language? Tick one. *



Can perform some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 1.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 1: Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 1 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 2.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 2: Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 2 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 3.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 3: Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 3 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 4.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 4: Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Comments:

4. GCSE MFL linguistic standard - what is it actually for grade 7?

Below are some descriptors of linguistic ability reflecting different performance standards, from lower ability (Performance Standard 1) to higher ability (Performance Standard 4). They are intended to generalise across speaking, writing, listening comprehension and reading comprehension skills. While different learners are likely to have different profiles across these skills, we ask you to choose the most appropriate descriptor that could broadly apply to the qualification grade rather than sub-skill grades.

You can assume that the descriptors of higher ability subsume the lower ability descriptors (e.g., students showing all of the aspects of Performance Standard 3 can be assumed to have all of the abilities described at Performance Standards 1 and 2).

In addition to the 4 main Performance Standards, there are intermediate points intended for learners who can perform all aspect of the lower performance standard(s), and show some but not all aspects of the higher standard.

What can typical learners achieving grade 7 at the end of their GCSE MFL actually do with language? Tick one. *



Not sure - I am not familiar with performance standards of GCSE students.



Can perform some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 1.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 1: Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as

where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 1 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 2.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 2: Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 2 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 3.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 3: Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 3 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 4.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 4: Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Comments:

5. GCSE MFL linguistic standard - what should it be for grade 4?

We would like to understand your views about the appropriate linguistic standard for GCSE grade 4 (equivalent to previous grade C).

When deciding on the appropriate linguistic standard for the grade, consider the stated purposes of GCSEs as well as the following assumptions regarding who the qualification is aimed at and how the course should be delivered:

- learners are progressing to GCSE after usually 2-3 years of studying the relevant language at KS3
- the GCSE course should involve the appropriate number of guided learning hours, delivered by a qualified teacher with appropriate linguistic expertise
- the learners' first language is assumed not to be the subject matter of the MFL

Below are some descriptors of linguistic ability reflecting different performance standards, from lower ability (Performance Standard 1) to higher ability (Performance Standard 4). They are intended to generalise across speaking, writing, listening comprehension and reading

comprehension skills. While different learners are likely to have different profiles across these skills, we ask you to choose the most appropriate descriptor that could broadly apply to the qualification grade rather than sub-skill grades.

You can assume that the descriptors of higher ability subsume the lower ability descriptors (e.g., students showing all of the aspects of Performance Standard 3 can be assumed to have all of the abilities described at Performance Standards 1 and 2).

In addition to the four main Performance Standards, there are intermediate points intended for learners who can perform all aspect of the lower performance standard(s), and show some but not all aspects of the higher standard.

What should learners achieving grade 4 at the end of their GCSE MFL be able to do with language? Tick one. *



Can perform some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 1.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 1: Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 1 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 2.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 2: Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 2 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 3.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 3: Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 3 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 4.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 4: Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Comments:

6. GCSE MFL linguistic standard - what is it actually for grade 4?

Below are some descriptors of linguistic ability reflecting different performance standards, from lower ability (Performance Standard 1) to higher ability (Performance Standard 4). They are intended to generalise across speaking, writing, listening comprehension and reading comprehension skills. While different learners are likely to have different profiles across these skills, we ask you to choose the most appropriate descriptor that could broadly apply to the qualification grade rather than sub-skill grades.

You can assume that the descriptors of higher ability subsume the lower ability descriptors (e.g., students showing all of the aspects of Performance Standard 3 can be assumed to have all of the abilities described at Performance Standards 1 and 2).

In addition to the 4 main Performance Standards, there are intermediate points intended for learners who can perform all aspect of the lower performance standard(s), and show some but not all aspects of the higher standard.

What can typical learners achieving grade 4 at the end of their GCSE MFL actually do with language? Tick one. *



Not sure - I am not familiar with performance standards of GCSE students.



Can perform some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 1.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 1: Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 1 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 2.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 2: Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 2 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 3.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 3: Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.



Can perform fully at Performance Standard 3 and show some but not all aspects of Performance Standard 4.



PERFORMANCE STANDARD 4: Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Comments:

Appendix B Analysis by stakeholder sub-group

The charts below show the responses of the stakeholders broken down by their primary role in the panels conducted for the linking study (ibid.).

AO representatives, 3 of them in total, gave very consistent responses – A2 for G4 and B1 for G7 for both current and aspirational standard. These responses are in line with awarders’ responses presented previously. The responses within other sub-groups were quite mixed. The majority of HE representatives, subject associations and subject experts indicated that the current performance standard at G7 to be up to A2+. The representatives of international language institutes and teachers thought that the current G7 standards to be up to B1+ and B1 respectively. As for G4, the majority of stakeholders thought that the current performance standard to be up to A1+, with the exception of language institute representatives, who were split between A1+ and A2+.

Furthermore, while the majority of respondent groups thought that the performance standards should be higher than they currently are, AO representatives thought that there was no difference between current and aspirational performance standards, whereas the representatives of subject associations thought that current performance standards are higher than they should be, particularly for grade 7.

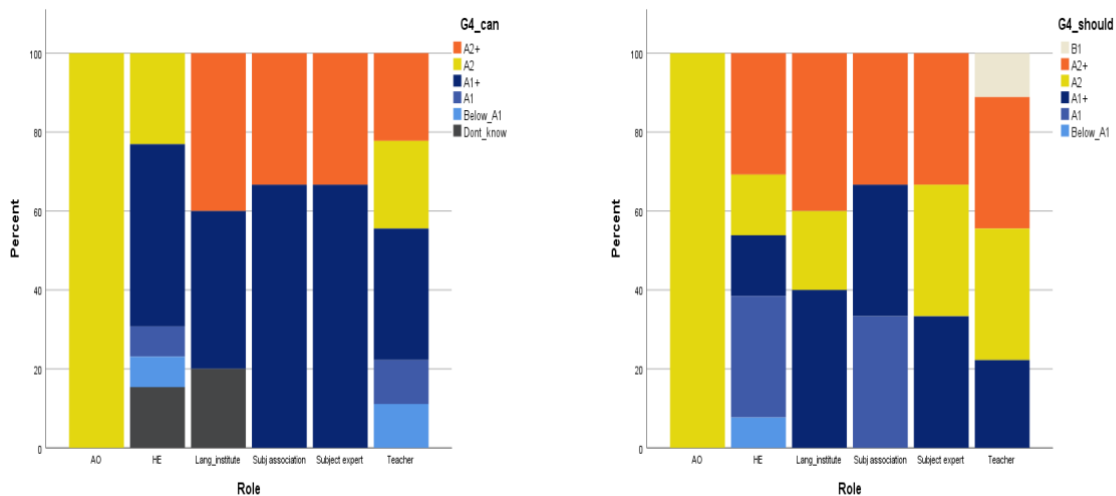


Figure 8 Percentage of CEFR level chosen for perceived current and aspirational standard for grade 4 by panellist sub-group

Awarder and stakeholder surveys on GCSE MFL performance standards

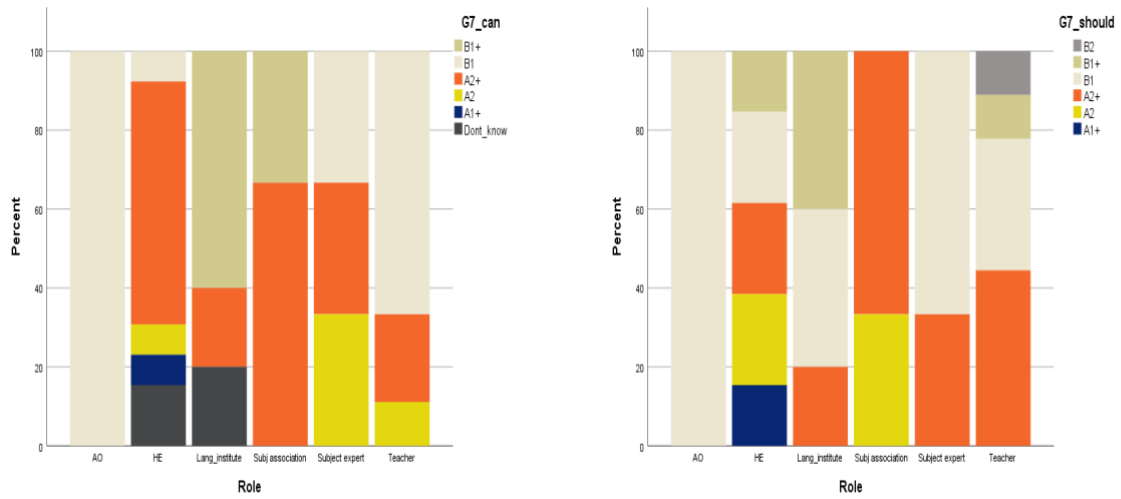


Figure 9 Percentage of CEFR level chosen for perceived current and aspirational standard for grade 7 by panellist sub-group

Appendix C Analysis by stakeholder sub-group and language

When responses are broken down by sub-group and language as shown in Figure 10, it can be seen that awarders either saw no difference between aspirational and current standards, or thought that the current standards were lower than they should be for most languages. However, a few stakeholder groups thought the opposite. In particular, subject associations representatives thought that the current standard was notably higher than it should be for both grade 7 and grade 4 French and for grade 7 Spanish. This latter pattern would also explain the small mean difference overall as the positive and negative difference cancelled out.

Again, it should be borne in mind that some of the sub-groups, when broken down by language, consist of just one respondent.

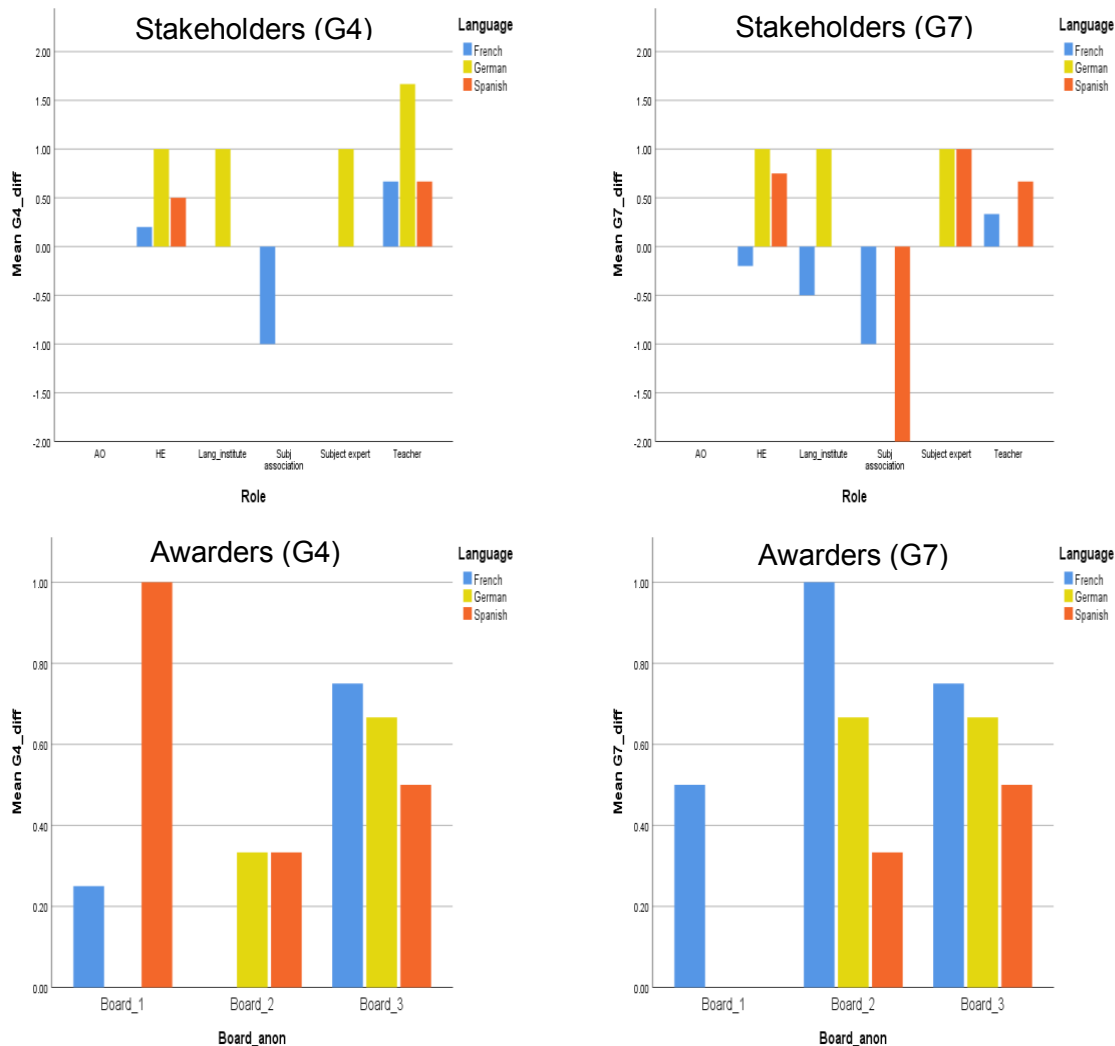


Figure 10 Mean difference between perceived aspirational and current by respondent sub-group and language



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Published by:

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Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

0300 303 3344
public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofqual