



Department  
for Education

# **Modern foreign languages**

## **GCSE subject content**

**January 2015**

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# The content for modern foreign languages GCSEs

## Introduction

1. The GCSE subject content sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject. Together with the assessment objectives it provides the framework within which the awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications, so ensuring progression from key stage 3 national curriculum requirements and the possibilities for development into A Level.

## Subject aims and learning outcomes

2. Through studying a GCSE in a modern foreign language, students should develop their ability and ambition to communicate with native speakers in speech and writing. The study of a modern foreign language at GCSE should also broaden students' horizons and encourage them to step beyond familiar cultural boundaries and develop new ways of seeing the world.

3. GCSE specifications in a modern foreign language should enable students to:

- develop their ability to communicate confidently and coherently with native speakers in speech and writing, conveying what they want to say with increasing accuracy
- express and develop thoughts and ideas spontaneously and fluently
- listen to and understand clearly articulated, standard speech at near normal speed
- deepen their knowledge about how language works and enrich their vocabulary in order for them to increase their independent use and understanding of extended language in a wide range of contexts
- acquire new knowledge, skills and ways of thinking through the ability to understand and respond to a rich range of authentic spoken and written material, adapted and abridged, as appropriate, including literary texts
- develop awareness and understanding of the culture and identity of the countries and communities where the language is spoken
- be encouraged to make appropriate links to other areas of the curriculum to enable bilingual and deeper learning, where the language may become a medium for constructing and applying knowledge
- develop language learning skills both for immediate use and to prepare them for further language study and use in school, higher education or in employment
- develop language strategies, including repair strategies

## Subject content

4. This content sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in modern foreign languages. Awarding organisations may however use any flexibility to increase depth, breadth or context within the specified topics or to consolidate teaching of the subject content.

5. The content of the GCSE specifications in modern foreign languages must fully reflect the aims and learning outcomes.

### Prior learning

6. GCSE specifications will be cumulative and progressive in content and language. They will take account of the matters, skills and processes specified in the national curriculum programmes of study for key stages 2 and 3. They will also build on the foundation of core grammar and vocabulary outlined in the programmes of study for key stages 2 and 3, increasing the level of linguistic and cognitive demand.

### Context and purposes

- GCSE specifications will require students to understand and use language across a range of contexts, appropriate to their age, interests and maturity levels
- students will be expected to use language for a variety of purposes and with a variety of different audiences, including for personal, academic and employment-related use
- students will make use of appropriate social conventions, including informal and formal address and register, as relevant to the task and language studied
- students will be expected to understand different types of spoken language, including recorded input from one or more speakers in public and social settings and recorded material from authentic sources and the media, appropriate to this level
- students will be expected to understand different types of written language, including relevant personal communication, public information, factual and literary texts, appropriate to this level
- language contexts will be organised in a specified number of broad themes, addressing relevant matters relating to:
  - identity and culture
  - local, national, international and global areas of interest
  - current and future study and employment
- literary texts can include extracts and excerpts, adapted and abridged as appropriate, from poems, letters, short stories, essays, novels or plays from contemporary and historical sources, subject to copyright

- the content, contexts and purposes of a GCSE specification in a modern foreign language will provide an appropriate foundation for A level study and a suitable preparation for higher education or employment

## Scope of study

7. GCSE specifications in modern foreign languages must require students to:

### **Listening: understand and respond to spoken language**

- demonstrate general and specific understanding of different types of spoken language
- follow and understand clear standard speech using familiar language across a range of specified contexts
- identify the overall message, key points, details and opinions in a variety of short and longer spoken passages, involving some more complex language, recognising the relationship between past, present and future events
- deduce meaning from a variety of short and longer spoken texts, involving some complex language and more abstract material, including short narratives and authentic material addressing a wide range of relevant contemporary and cultural themes
- recognise and respond to key information, important themes and ideas in more extended spoken text, including authentic sources, adapted and abridged, as appropriate, by being able to answer questions, extract information, evaluate and draw conclusions.

### **Speaking: communicate and interact in speech**

- communicate and interact effectively in speech for a variety of purposes across a range of specified contexts
- take part in a short conversation, asking and answering questions, and exchanging opinions
- convey information and narrate events coherently and confidently, using and adapting language for new purposes
- speak spontaneously, responding to unexpected questions, points of view or situations, sustaining communication by using rephrasing or repair strategies, as appropriate
- initiate and develop conversations and discussion, producing extended sequences of speech

- make appropriate and accurate use of a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures, including some more complex forms, with reference to past, present and future events
- make creative and more complex use of the language, as appropriate, to express and justify their own thoughts and points of view
- use accurate pronunciation and intonation such as to be understood by a native speaker

### **Reading: understand and respond to written language**

- understand and respond to different types of written language
- understand general and specific details within texts using high frequency familiar language across a range of contexts
- identify the overall message, key points, details and opinions in a variety of short and longer written passages, involving some more complex language, recognising the relationship between past, present and future events
- deduce meaning from a variety of short and longer written texts from a range of specified contexts, including authentic sources involving some complex language and unfamiliar material, as well as short narratives and authentic material addressing a wide range of relevant contemporary and cultural themes
- recognise and respond to key information, important themes and ideas in more extended written text and authentic sources, including some extracts from relevant abridged or adapted literary texts
- demonstrate understanding by being able to scan for particular information, organise and present relevant details, draw inferences in context and recognise implicit meaning where appropriate
- translate a short passage from the assessed language into English

### **Writing: communicate in writing**

- communicate effectively in writing for a variety of purposes across a range of specified contexts
- write short texts, using simple sentences and familiar language accurately to convey meaning and exchange information

- produce clear and coherent text of extended length to present facts and express ideas and opinions appropriately for different purposes and in different settings
- make accurate use of a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures, including some more complex forms, to describe and narrate with reference to past, present and future events
- manipulate the language, using and adapting a variety of structures and vocabulary with increasing accuracy and fluency for new purposes, including using appropriate style and register
- make independent, creative and more complex use of the language, as appropriate, to note down key points, express and justify individual thoughts and points of view, in order to interest, inform or convince
- translate sentences and short texts from English into the assessed language to convey key messages accurately and to apply grammatical knowledge of language and structures in context

### **Use of the assessed language in questions and rubrics**

The overall rubrics containing instructions to students may continue to be in English, as at present. Questions for the majority of modern foreign languages may be set in the assessed language or English, as appropriate to the task. They should be set in the language in which the candidate is expected to respond.

In listening (AO1) 20 - 30% of the marks must be awarded for responses to questions set in the assessed language.

In speaking (AO2) students will be required to express themselves solely in the assessed language.

In reading (AO3) 30 - 40% of the marks must be awarded for responses to questions set in the assessed language.

In writing (AO4) students will be required to express themselves solely in the assessed language. Questions may be asked in English where translation into the assessed language is required or where the context of the questions is detailed or complex.

Languages using logographic systems such as Mandarin Chinese and Japanese must set all questions and task instructions in English, as the sole use of *hanzi* or *kanji* is deemed too challenging for this level.

## **Grammar requirements for French, German and Spanish**

GCSE students will be expected to develop and use their knowledge and understanding of grammar progressively throughout their course. The grammar requirements for GCSE are set out in two tiers: foundation and higher.

Students will be required to apply their knowledge and understanding of grammar, appropriate to the language studied and to the relevant tier of entry, drawing on the lists outlined in the Appendix. The examples in brackets are indicative and are not exclusive. Structures marked by (R) signify that only receptive knowledge is required.

Students entering higher tier assessments will be required to apply all grammar and structures listed for foundation tier in addition to the new grammar and structures listed for higher tier.

# Appendix: Grammar requirements

## French

GCSE students will be expected to have acquired knowledge and understanding of French grammar during their course. In the examination they will be required to apply their knowledge and understanding, drawing from the following lists. The examples in brackets are indicative, not exclusive. For structures marked (R), only receptive knowledge is required.

### French (foundation tier)

Nouns:

- gender;
- singular and plural forms.

Articles:

- definite, indefinite and partitive, including use of *de* after negatives.

Adjectives:

- agreement;
- position;
- comparative and superlative: regular and *meilleur*;
- demonstrative (*ce, cet, cette, ces*);
- indefinite (*chaque, quelque*);
- possessive;
- interrogative (*quel, quelle*).

### Adverbs:

- comparative and superlative;
- regular;
- interrogative (*comment, quand*);
- adverbs of time and place (*aujourd'hui, demain, ici, là-bas*);
- common adverbial phrases.

### Quantifiers/Intensifiers:

- *très, assez, beaucoup, peu, trop.*

### Pronouns:

- personal: all subjects, including *on*;
- reflexive;
- relative: *qui*;
- relative: *que* (R);
- object: direct (R) and indirect (R);
- position and order of object pronouns (R);
- disjunctive/emphatic;
- demonstrative (*ça, cela*);
- indefinite (*quelqu'un*);
- interrogative (*qui, que*);
- use of *y, en* (R).

### Verbs:

- regular and irregular verbs, including reflexive verbs;

- all persons of the verb, singular and plural;
- negative forms;
- interrogative forms;
- modes of address: *tu, vous*;
- impersonal verbs (*il faut*);
- verbs followed by an infinitive, with or without a preposition;
- tenses;
- present;
- perfect;
- imperfect: *avoir, être* and *faire*;
- other common verbs in the imperfect tense (R);
- immediate future;
- future (R);
- conditional: *vouloir* and *aimer*;
- pluperfect (R);
- passive voice: present tense (R);
- imperative;
- present participle (R).

## Prepositions

- common prepositions e.g. *à, au, à l', à la, aux; de, du, de l', de la, des; après; avant; avec; chez; contre; dans; depuis; derrière; devant; entre; pendant; pour; sans; sur; sous; vers.*
- common compound prepositions e.g. *à côté de; près de; en face de, à cause de; au lieu de.*

## Conjunctions

- common coordinating conjunctions e.g. *car; donc; ensuite; et; mais; ou; ou bien; puis.*
- common subordinating conjunctions e.g. *comme; lorsque; parce que; puisque; quand; que; si.*

## Number, quantity, dates and time

- including use of *depuis* with present tense

## French (higher tier)

All grammar and structures listed for foundation tier, as well as:

### Adjectives:

- comparative and superlative, including *meilleur, pire.*

### Adverbs:

- comparative and superlative, including *mieux, le mieux.*

### Pronouns:

- use of *y, en;*
- relative: *que;*
- relative: *dont* (R);
- object: direct and indirect;
- position and order of object pronouns;
- demonstrative (*celui*) (R);

- possessive (*le mien*) (R).

Verbs:

- tenses;
- future;
- imperfect;
- conditional;
- pluperfect;
- passive voice: future, imperfect and perfect tenses (R);
- perfect infinitive;
- present participle, including use after *en*;
- subjunctive mood: present, in commonly used expressions (R).

Time:

- including use of *depuis* with imperfect tense.

## German

GCSE students will be expected to have acquired knowledge and understanding of German grammar during their course. In the examination they will be required to apply their knowledge and understanding, drawing from the following lists. The examples in brackets are indicative, not exclusive. For structures marked (R), only receptive knowledge is required.

### German (foundation tier)

The case system Nouns:

- gender;
- singular and plural forms, including genitive singular and dative plural;
- weak nouns: nominative and accusative singular (*Herr, Junge, Mensch, Name*) (R);
- adjectives used as nouns (*ein Deutscher*).

Articles:

- definite and indefinite;
- *kein*.

Adjectives:

- adjectival endings: predicative and attributive usage, singular and plural, used after definite and indefinite articles, demonstrative and possessive adjectives;
- adjectival endings after *etwas, nichts, viel, wenig, alles* (R);
- comparative and superlative, including common irregular forms (*besser, höher, näher*);
- demonstrative (*dieser, jeder*);
- possessive;

- interrogative (*welcher*).

#### Adverbs:

- comparative and superlative, including common irregular forms (*besser, lieber, mehr*);
- interrogative (*wann, warum, wo, wie, wie viel*);
- adverbs of time and place (*manchmal, oft, hier, dort*);
- common adverbial phrases (*ab und zu, dann und wann, letzte Woche, nächstes; Wochenende, so bald wie möglich*).

#### Quantifiers/intensifiers

- *sehr, zu, viel, ganz, ziemlich, ein wenig, ein bisschen*.

#### Pronouns:

- personal, including *man*;
- reflexive: accusative;
- reflexive: dative (R);
- relative: nominative;
- relative: other cases (R) and use of *was* (R);
- indefinite: *jemand, niemand*;
- interrogative: *wer, was, was für*;
- interrogative: *wen, wem* (R).

#### Verbs:

- regular and irregular verbs;

- reflexive;
- modes of address: *du, Sie*;
- mode of address: *ihr* (R);
- impersonal (most common only, *eg es gibt, es geht, es tut weh*);
- separable/inseparable;
- modal: present and imperfect tenses, imperfect subjunctive of *mögen*;
- infinitive constructions (*um ... zu ...*; verbs with *zu ...*) (R);
- negative forms;
- interrogative forms;
- tenses;
- present;
- perfect: excluding modals;
- imperfect/simple past: *haben, sein* and modals;
- imperfect/simple past: other common verbs (R);
- future; ■ pluperfect (R);
- imperative forms.

#### Prepositions:

- fixed case and dual case with accusative and/or dative;
- with genitive (R).

#### Clause structures:

- main clause word order;
- subordinate clauses, including relative clauses.

Conjunctions:

- coordinating (most common, *eg aber, oder, und*);
- subordinating (most common, *eg als, obwohl, weil, wenn*).

Number, quantity, dates and time

- including use of *seit* with present tense.

### **German (higher tier)**

All grammar and structures listed for foundation tier, as well as:

Nouns:

- weak nouns.

Adjectives:

- adjectival endings after *etwas, nichts, viel, wenig, alles*.

Pronouns:

- reflexive: dative;
- relative: all cases, and use of *was*;
- interrogative: *wen, wem*.

Verbs:

- mode of address: *ihr*;
- impersonal;

- infinitive constructions (*ohne ... zu ...; um ... zu ...*; verbs with *zu ...*, eg *beginnen, hoffen, versuchen*;
- modal: imperfect subjunctive of *können, sollen*;
- tenses: imperfect/simple past of common verbs;
- future;
- conditional: *würde* with infinitive;
- pluperfect;
- imperfect subjunctive in conditional clauses: *haben* and *sein*.

#### Prepositions:

- with genitive (most common, eg *außerhalb, statt, trotz, während, wegen*).

#### Conjunctions:

- coordinating and subordinating.

#### Time:

- use of *seit* with imperfect tense.

## Spanish

GCSE students will be expected to have acquired knowledge and understanding of Spanish grammar during their course. In the examination they will be required to apply their knowledge and understanding, drawing from the following lists. The examples in brackets are indicative, not exclusive. For structures marked (R), only receptive knowledge is required.

### Spanish (foundation tier)

Nouns:

- gender;
- singular and plural forms.

Articles:

- definite and indefinite;
- *lo* plus adjective (R).

Adjectives:

- agreement;
- position;
- comparative and superlative: regular and *mayor, menor, mejor, peor*;
- demonstrative (*este, ese, aquel*);
- indefinite (*cada, otro, todo, mismo, alguno*);
- possessive, short form (*mi*);
- possessive, long form (*mío*) (R);
- interrogative (*cuánto, qué*).

### Adverbs:

- formation;
- comparative and superlative: regular;
- interrogative (*cómo, cuándo, dónde*);
- adverbs of time and place (*aquí, allí, ahora, ya*);
- common adverbial phrases.

### Quantifiers/intensifiers (*muy, bastante, demasiado, poco, mucho*)

### Pronouns:

- subject;
- object (R);
- position and order of object pronouns (R);
- reflexive;
- relative: *que*;
- relative: *quien, lo que* (R);
- disjunctive (*conmigo, para mí*);
- demonstrative (*éste, ése, aquél, esto, eso, aquello*); indefinite (*algo, alguien*);
- interrogative (*cuál, qué, quién*).

### Verbs:

- regular and irregular verbs, including reflexive verbs;
- all persons of the verb, singular and plural;
- modes of address: *tú* and *usted*;
- radical-changing verbs;

- negative forms;
- interrogative forms;
- reflexive constructions (*se puede, se necesita, se habla*);
- uses of *ser* and *estar*;
- tenses;
- present indicative;
- present continuous;
- preterite;
- imperfect: in weather expressions with *estar, hacer*;
- imperfect (R);
- immediate future;
- future (R);
- perfect: most common verbs only;
- conditional: *gustar* only in set phrases;
- pluperfect (R);
- gerund (R);
- imperative: common forms including negative;
- subjunctive, present: (R) in certain exclamatory phrases (*¡Viva! ¡Dígame!*);
- subjunctive, imperfect: *quisiera*;
- impersonal verbs: most common only.

#### Prepositions:

- common, including personal *a*;
- *por* and *para*.

Conjunctions: common, including *y, pero, o, porque, como, cuando*

Number, quantity, dates

Time:

- use of *desde hace* with present tense (R).

### **Spanish (higher tier)**

All grammar and structures listed for foundation tier, as well as:

Articles:

- *lo plus* adjective.

Adjectives:

- comparative and superlative;  
possessive, short and long forms (*mi, mío*); relative (*cuyo*).

Adverbs:

- comparative and superlative.

Pronouns:

- object;
- position and order of object pronouns;
- relative: all other uses including *quien, lo que, el que, cual*;
- possessive (*el mío, la mía*).

Verbs: tenses:

- future;
- imperfect;
- imperfect continuous;
- perfect;
- pluperfect;
- conditional;
- passive voice (R);
- gerund;
- present subjunctive: imperative, affirmation and negation, future after conjunctions of time;
- (*cuando*), after verbs of wishing, command, request, emotion, to express purpose (*para que*);
- imperfect subjunctive (R).

Time:

- use of *desde hace* with present tense;
- use of *desde hace* with imperfect tense (R).



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Reference: DFE-00348-2014



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