

# Analysis of Responses to the Consultation on the Proposal to Remove Speaking and Listening Assessment from the GCSE English and GCSE English Language Grade

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This report has been commissioned by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.

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## **Introduction**

### **Consultation context**

Ofqual is responsible for regulating GCSE English and GCSE English language in England. This responsibility includes making sure that GCSEs are of high quality: that they fulfil their purposes, and provide valid and reliable results.

GCSE English and English language results are extremely important to students. They are also important to schools, as results in these subjects are central to how schools are judged. The investigation into GCSE English awarding in summer 2012<sup>1</sup> found that the qualification was poorly designed, with the structure particularly vulnerable to the pressures of the accountability measures for schools.

In the November 2012 report, Ofqual expressed particular concerns about the effectiveness of the moderation of controlled assessment in the speaking and listening component, the subject of this consultation.

Speaking and listening assessments are carried out and marked by teachers, and the marks recorded. There is no requirement to record the assessments themselves. Teacher marking is monitored by awarding organisations through a visit from a moderator, who is present during a sample of live assessments and compares their marks with the marks allocated by the teacher. Most schools did not have their marks adjusted on moderation.

Only a third of schools are visited by exam board moderators in any academic year, which means the majority of schools' teachers are not moderated. Exam boards have put in place some additional controls to identify schools and colleges where marking of speaking and listening appears to be out of line with performances in other units, but this can only be done after results have been issued.

Ofqual stated in the consultation document:

We do not believe that the current arrangements for speaking and listening can produce fair outcomes for students overall. We have considered with exam boards whether more enhanced moderation or other physical controls (such as recording assessments) would ensure valid and manageable assessment of speaking and listening, but there are no practical arrangements that we consider we can make to ensure assessment of speaking and listening is sufficiently resilient. Therefore, we

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ofqual.gov.uk/news/poor-design-gcse-english-exam-grade-variations](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/news/poor-design-gcse-english-exam-grade-variations)

are proposing a different approach – to remove speaking and listening from the pressures of the accountability measures.

## **The consultation**

This consultation was carried out to elicit views on the proposals to change the way that the speaking and listening component of the qualification contributes to a student's overall result, and the way in which achievement in speaking and listening is reported.

The consultation was open for all, publicised in the media and ran from the 25th April 2013 to 7th June 2013 on the Ofqual website. The consultation comprised six closed questions (agree/disagree), each with an option to comment, plus two open-ended questions to gather any remaining comments. The six proposals were:

1. To remove the requirement for speaking and listening marks to count towards the overall GCSE English and GCSE English language grade
2. To re-weight the assessment to 60:40 written paper: controlled assessment
3. a) To require exam boards to report achievement in speaking and listening separately on the GCSE certificate  
b) That students should not be required to achieve at least a 5 in speaking and listening to be awarded a GCSE
4. To put in place these changes for summer 2014 onwards
5. To use the comparable outcomes approach when awarding the first of these revised qualifications

In total, 917 responses to the consultation were received and the findings are presented in this report.

## **Analysis**

Ofqual commissioned a comprehensive, detailed analysis of the consultation responses, summarising the opinions provided. Quantitative data on responses to the six closed questions with rating scales (agree/disagree) were automatically generated by the survey software, and are presented in numerical (percentage) format under the relevant question.

In contrast, the extent and depth of the open-response comments received meant that a methodical qualitative approach to the analysis was necessary in order to ensure a thorough review of the points raised by respondents. Responses were

analysed and categorised against a code frame of the main themes. For the detailed methodology, see Appendix A.

The analysis of the consultation responses was undertaken by Lara Dodd, an independent qualitative researcher.

## **Consultation – summary of findings**

There was a strong response to the public consultation, with 917 separate responses received; some of these covered a number of views from a collective group, for example, teachers in a school or a specialist organisation.

Overall, respondents strongly disagreed with the proposals, with many supporting their views with specific examples. Comments provided were often detailed and extensive, drawing on respondents' experience and wider evidence to exemplify the ways in which speaking and listening skills and their assessment have benefited students and indeed wider society.

It should also be noted that a minority of respondents believed that there was a lack of evidence to support the proposals. This emerged in comments discounting the evidence referred to in the consultation, as well as in more vehement responses refuting the evidence, with some respondents angrily asserting their own integrity and that of the teaching profession. In this respect, it is understandable that many responses were impassioned and defensive.

The issues raised by respondents were frequently mentioned by both those who agreed and those who disagreed with the proposals; the two camps often shared the same concerns, but disagreed on the proposed solution. Further, in response to questions on the proposals, respondents frequently referred back to comments provided at different points of the consultation, or sometimes made points more applicable to proposals other than those where the comments were made.

This summary of findings, therefore, draws on all of the comments made by respondents, regardless of the point in the consultation that they were made. Where appropriate, to provide context to the findings, reference is made to the agree/disagree responses to Proposal 1, given this was the overarching proposal from which the subsequent proposals originated.

### **Key themes**

Throughout the consultation responses, a number of overarching themes emerged. These were:

- **Effects of the proposals on students** – wider benefits of the skills to students; effects of the proposed timing on students
- **Impact of proposals on perceptions of the skills and of the qualification** – wider effects if the skills become less widely valued by students and the qualification less valued by employers or further/higher education

- **The assessment of speaking and listening** – ensuring fairness of assessment; proposed alternative moderation methods
- **Accessibility of the qualification** – specific groups whose achievement may be affected by the proposals

Each of these themes is summarised below.

### **Effects of the proposals on students**

The consultation stated that the proposals ‘reflect the difficulty of assessing these skills securely under the current model’ rather than any question around the value of speaking and listening skills. Perhaps, understandably, many respondents (13 who agreed and 323 who disagreed with Proposal 1) commented on the relevance of these skills, and often stated that the assessment should remain an integral part of the GCSE.

The importance of these skills was also covered in relation to student progression to further and higher education, and to employment, as well as in terms of the benefits to the student socially and to society more widely; these benefits were mentioned by 313 respondents (27 who agreed with Proposal 1 and 278 who disagreed and 8 who responded ‘don’t know’).

A number of respondents (62 in total, including 9 who agreed with Proposal 1 and 52 who disagreed and 1 who responded ‘don’t know’) commented that the speaking and listening element engaged students and increased their confidence, encouraging them to contribute in the classroom.

A particular concern shared by respondents who agreed and those who disagreed related to the effects of the proposed timings of the changes. In total, 807 respondents disagreed that the proposals should be implemented for 2014, affecting the current Year 10 cohort. Of these, 478 respondents reported that the timing would negatively affect this cohort because many of them had spent time developing and in many cases assessing their speaking and listening skills.

These comments usually did not refer to the element of the consultation that states that Ofqual did not ‘envisage that these changes will require any material changes to what is to be taught for the current GCSEs.’ However, those respondents who did comment on this felt that whilst schools may recognise the importance of these skills, in such a high-stakes qualification, teachers would be unlikely to spend time on assessment that did not count towards the grade.

## **Impact of proposals on perceptions of the skills and of the qualification**

A common overarching theme identified in 225 respondents' comments related to a view that the proposals would negatively affect perceptions of speaking and listening skills among teachers and the students themselves, or that the value of the qualification to employers, higher or further education would diminish.

These views run counter to Ofqual's position in the consultation:

In particular, these changes do not imply any downgrading of speaking and listening skills. They remain part of the current Key Stage 4 National Curriculum.

Many respondents (75) felt that the proposals potentially 'devalue' the skills, and that the effect would be to reduce the emphasis placed on teaching, learning and assessing these skills. With regard to the proposal to report achievement in speaking and listening assessment separately on the GCSE certificate, some respondents stated that this would be 'pointless' as the certificates are rarely shown to anyone, and where they are, it tends to happen only after an offer of employment or study has been made.

## **The assessment of speaking and listening**

One of the biggest themes to emerge from 108 respondents' comments relates to ensuring fairness to all students in terms of the assessment. This was stated in the consultation as the principle reason behind the proposals:

We thought it essential to strengthen these qualifications, because otherwise there is a real risk that they will not result in fair outcomes.

Whilst the concern around fair practice was mentioned by respondents who both agreed and disagreed with the proposals, it was referred to by a greater proportion of respondents who agreed with Proposal 1 (32 per cent, or 22 respondents) than of those who disagreed (10 per cent, 85 respondents). Further, 14 per cent of those who agreed with Proposal 1 made reference to inflated marks, which was mentioned by 1 per cent of those who disagreed.

A further theme, related to the assessment itself, was derived from comments referring to other subjects that include the assessment of speaking or performance elements. Here, respondents referred to the assessment of speaking in modern foreign languages both in terms of a potential example that could perhaps be replicated in GCSE English, and in relation to a concern around whether the proposals would extend to include those subjects too.



Alternative solutions to moderating speaking and listening assessments were raised by 79 respondents (75 of whom disagreed with Proposal 1). These included general pleas to strengthen or improve moderation, as well as specific suggestions such as to record all assessments or increase the number of moderation visits carried out by awarding organisations.

### **Accessibility of the qualification**

In total, 99 respondents raised concerns about the impact of the proposals on students from specific groups who may be disadvantaged (18 who agreed with Proposal 1 and 77 who disagreed).

These comments included reference to those who may perform better in speaking and listening assessment than in written exams, such as those with certain learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Further concerns were cited in respect of students with speech, language and communication needs who would lose out from any resulting decreased focus on teaching of these skills.

Other respondents considered the impact of the proposals on students from low-income backgrounds, feeling their opportunities for social mobility may be affected by any resulting decreased focus on the skills. Lower-ability students were also considered in terms of fairness and accessibility of assessment, as some respondents stated that assessing comprehension through speaking and listening provides more equal opportunity for students to demonstrate their capabilities.

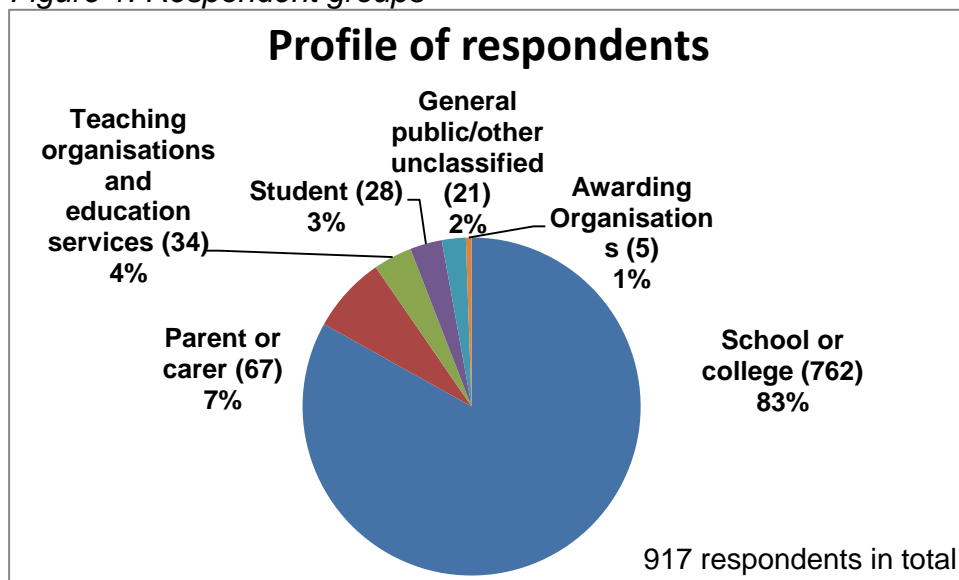
Lastly, some respondents focused on the impacts on broader groups of students, such as girls, who were often mentioned as performing well in speaking and listening and who would therefore be negatively affected by the proposals.

## Presenting the findings

Responses to the closed consultation questions are presented broken into six stakeholder groups: schools and colleges; parents and carers; teaching organisations and education services (including specialist skills organisations); students; general public and other respondents who did not classify themselves; and awarding organisations, which includes representatives from awarding organisations for 14-19 qualifications and two moderators who classified themselves under this code.

These groups make up the following proportions of the total population of 917 respondents:

Figure 1: Respondent groups



Respondents were asked how they found out about the consultation, and a range of sources were mentioned, with Ofqual's communications being most commonly cited (by 31 per cent of all respondents). School and college respondents were often made aware at or through work (10 per cent were made aware at school or through a teacher, with a further 9 per cent mentioning a colleague). Awarding organisation communications and the internet each made 12 per cent of respondents aware.

Figure 2: Source of awareness of consultation

| Response to question 'how did you find out about this consultation?' | School or college (762) | Parent or carer (67) | Teaching org'ns / education services (34) | Student (28) | Other (including general public) (21) | Awarding Organisations (5) | All respondents (917) |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------|---|--------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ofqual newsletter or other Ofqual communications                     | 12%                     | 7%                   | 21%                                       | 7%           | 0%                                    | 20%                        | <b>12%</b>            |
| Ofqual website   | 21%                     | 9%                   | 24%                                       | 0%           | 5%                                    | 20%                        | <b>19%</b>            |
| School or college/teacher  | 10%                     | 28%                  | 3%  | 71%          | 14%                                   | 0%                         | <b>13%</b>            |
| Awarding organisation  | 14%                     | 0%                   | 9%  | 0%           | 5%                                    | 40%                        | <b>12%</b>            |
| Internet search  | 12%                     | 15%                  | 6%  | 7%           | 5%                                    | 20%                        | <b>12%</b>            |
| Colleague (unspecified)  | 9%                      | 1%                   | 3%  | 0%           | 5%                                    | 0%                         | <b>8%</b>             |
| Teaching organisations and education services                        | 7%                      | 1%                   | 12%                                       | 0%           | 0%                                    | 0%                         | <b>7%</b>             |
| Media (including BBC, TES, Guardian, other)                          | 7%                      | 10%                  | 6%  | 4%           | 10%                                   | 0%                         | <b>7%</b>             |
| Twitter/Facebook   | 1%                      | 0%                   | 0%  | 0%           | 0%                                    | 0%                         | <b>1%</b>             |
| Word of mouth (unspecified)  | 1%                      | 1%                   | 0%  | 0%           | 0%                                    | 0%                         | <b>1%</b>             |
| Parent   | 0%                      | 4%                   | 0%  | 0%           | 0%                                    | 0%                         | <b>0%</b>             |
| Other  | 2%                      | 9%                   | 0%  | 0%           | 10%                                   | 0%                         | <b>3%</b>             |
| No response  | 3%                      | 12%                  | 18%                                       | 11%          | 48%                                   | 0%                         | <b>5%</b>             |

In the analysis of open-ended responses there was often little difference across respondent groups, in that the same issues and concerns were raised by the same or very similar proportions.

Similarities and differences in opinions have been presented in relation to each relevant proposal in the body of the report; however, there was also a running theme throughout the consultation comments whereby respondents tended to reflect back

on their comments or their vote (agree/disagree) to Proposal 1 (to remove the contribution of speaking and listening marks from the overall GCSE grade), often repeating the same concerns or points raised earlier, or raising points relevant to Proposal 1 but at later points in the consultation survey. This meant that it was useful to analyse the comments holistically across all questions, as well as in relation to each specific proposal, as presented in this summary of findings.

A key point to note is that in some responses there was evidence of confusion or misunderstanding of the proposals or the consultation questions relating to the proposals. This was evident where a number of respondents mistakenly interpreted the proposals as intending to make speaking and listening assessment a separate qualification, and where some respondents commented that they did not understand the wording of certain questions. Where relevant, this phenomenon has been exemplified, to clarify instances where the agree/disagree responses may not reflect respondents' views on the proposals.

### **Note on generic responses**

As indicated above, a number of comments, in response to proposals after Proposal 1 in the consultation, stated, 'see above', 'see previous response' or similar (for instance, 24 responses at Proposal 5 and 20 responses at Proposal 4, usually all of whom disagreed with the proposal in question). There was also a consistency in respondents' comments and their responses to the closed (agree/disagree) questions, which indicated that their views on the first proposal (to remove the requirement for speaking and listening marks to contribute towards the GCSE grade) were carrying through to the other proposals. In some cases the respondents themselves indicated that this was the case.

In other instances this was evident where the response provided related only to Proposal 1 and not to the question at hand. Further, at Proposal 3b (that 'students should *not* be required to achieve at least a grade 5 in speaking and listening to be awarded a GCSE') there was a degree of contradiction in the agree/disagree votes and the supporting comments provided, which may indicate that respondents were confused by the question including the negative, whereby to vote 'agree' at this question meant respondents did *not* agree with the grade 5 requirement for GCSE achievement.

These findings indicate that at least some respondents were not always considering the question at hand and were in some instances continuing to base their responses on their response to Proposal 1. However, this can only be suggested by the weight and nature of the arguments, as all respondents did not explicitly state this was the case.

## **Confidentiality**

Comments from respondents have been presented throughout the report to illustrate the points being made. From the total 917 respondents, 399 asked for their responses to remain confidential. This report does not quote any comments from those respondents but they have been taken into account in the analysis.

For consistency in presentation, comments presented in the report have not been attributed to individual respondents, although they have been ascribed to the relevant respondent group.

Where comments from respondents are quoted, the text provided has been directly lifted from the data, exactly as provided.

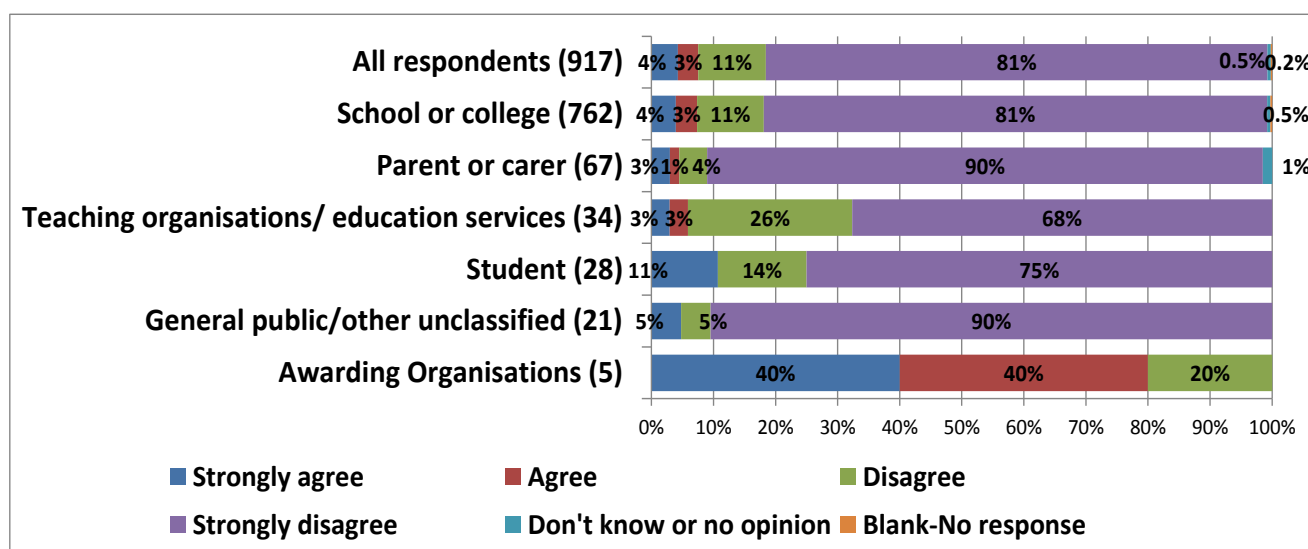
## Responses to proposals

The following sections detail the responses to each proposal, first presenting the responses to the closed questions (agree/disagree) in relation to each proposal, then summarising the thematically coded open-ended responses.

### Proposal 1: Removal of the requirement for speaking and listening marks to contribute to the overall GCSE English/English language grade

Most respondents, (92 per cent or 841 respondents), disagreed with Proposal 1, whilst 8 per cent (69 respondents) agreed. In addition to the closed-response question, respondents were given the opportunity to make comments and 733 of the 917 respondents chose to do so. These give an insight into the reasons for individual voting decisions. A summary of these key points and concerns has been presented below, as well as a breakdown of these themes by respondent groups.

Figure 3: Proposal 1: Removal of the requirement for speaking and listening marks to contribute to the overall GCSE English/English language grade



As illustrated in the chart, the majority of all respondent groups disagreed (and most often strongly disagreed) with the proposal. Parents and the general public in particular were most likely to strongly disagree (90 per cent of each of these groups), whilst the small group of awarding organisation representatives were most likely of all the groups to agree with the proposal (40 per cent strongly agreed and 40 per cent agreed).

Analysis of the comments provided here show a number of key shared themes amongst respondents who agreed and those who disagreed with this proposal.

## **Effects of the proposals on students**

### **Value of speaking and listening skills to students**

In total, 329 respondents (36 per cent) made reference to speaking and listening as a vital or important skill, including those who agreed and those who disagreed with the proposal (6 and 323 respondents respectively) and respondents from all stakeholder groups.

Many respondents who commented on the importance of the skills mentioned their value in relation to progression (287 respondents, of whom 280 disagreed with the proposal), citing examples of their relevance to Higher Education, employment, and in terms of personal and social development:

These comments highlighted the importance of speaking and listening in the world of work and to universities and employers:

- School or college: 'Speaking and Listening is a vital skill in general life situations and in the world of work which we are preparing students for. Therefore, it should be assessed within the GCSE rather than as a separate entity.'
- School or college: 'The skills taught and developed through this component of the course are vital for many careers. Students are taught how to successfully adapt their language to different audiences, to present information to a group of people and how to properly and effectively discuss an issue.'
- School or college: 'Such skills, which promote shaping talk and crafting speech, are vital in preparation for the workplace, university seminars and other viva voce, such as that conducted at PHD level.'

These respondents commented on the softer benefits to the individual in terms of their ability to succeed socially and become an active and beneficial member of society:

- School or college: 'Development of communication skills is vital. Oral literacy is a key element of functioning and adapting to situations in a modern social environment.'
- School or college: 'Spoken language is a fundamental part of how people communicate. Helping students to develop those skills is an important part

of helping them to become responsible citizens. It should remain as one of the three assessment objectives that comprise GCSE English.'

This respondent from an awarding organisation also recognises the importance of the skills, yet, perhaps reluctantly, agreed with the proposal given the difficulties in the current assessment:

- Awarding organisation: 'We agree that this is a sensible way forward given the issues associated with the current qualification structures. Research with UK stakeholders has confirmed the importance attributed to speaking and listening in teaching and learning, but there is no consensus regarding the most appropriate assessment method.'

### **Student motivation and confidence**

A total of 54 of all consultation respondents (including 2 that agreed with the proposals) mentioned that speaking and listening engaged students and that they found it motivating and increased their confidence.

- School or college: 'Employers value oral skills of young people – they are LIFE skills. Students who may be weaker in a traditional academic sense can be stronger in S&L elements, which, in turn, increases their confidence and self-esteem.'

### **Effects of the proposed timing**

There were 95 respondents who thought that the new proposals should not be implemented for the current Year 10 cohort. This was primarily mentioned in terms of the effects on current Year 10 students (90 responses), but also, to a lesser degree, their teachers (17 responses, with 12 respondents referring to both).

The timing concern was shared to an extent across respondents, regardless of whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal, (mentioned by 10 per cent of both groups). The majority of comments from both of these groups appeared to disregard the proposal to report speaking and listening marks separately on the GCSE certificate, voicing concerns about time spent on work already completed almost as if this constituted time wasted.

Of those in support of the proposal:

- School or college: 'Although I think that speaking and listening could be removed I think that it should to effect one year later than your proposal. I have already spent some considerable time with my present Year 10 students with the speaking and listening assessed pieces.'



- School or college: 'I agree, but feel it is very unfair to apply this to current Year 10 students who may have already put time and effort into this aspect of their English GCSE.'

Of those who disagreed with the proposal:

- School or college: '...You should not make these changes midway through a course when teachers are preparing students in one way already.'
- School or college: 'I agree there are issues with assessment but to change in the middle of a cohort of students is very wrong.'
- School or college: 'If this needs to happen, then surely not half-way through a cohort...'

### **Perceptions of speaking and listening skills**

From the 917 consultation respondents, 225 (including those who agreed and disagreed with the proposal) were concerned that the proposal would devalue speaking and listening skills in the eyes of teachers and wider stakeholders.

Respondents frequently cited the fear that if the speaking and listening component did not contribute to the final grade then it would ultimately result in teachers not giving it the time it deserves in the classroom and that stakeholders (including employers, parents, students and teachers) would not perceive it as having the same importance.

- School or college: 'Speaking and listening is a vital part of English and, by removing it, you are inevitably going to see a drastic reduction in the amount of time teachers spend on this skill. In addition, by removing it as part of the overall grade, pupils are going to take any speaking and listening activity far less seriously than they ought.'
- School or college: 'Removing the speaking and listening component as an assessed piece completely devalues the qualification, and will clearly result in many schools not teaching this valuable life skill.'

There were also 112 comments that raised concerns surrounding the message to students that would result from a perceived devaluing of speaking and listening skills.

- Consultation respondent<sup>2</sup>: 'Removing this component gives the impression that these skills are not important, when in fact they are essential to most

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<sup>2</sup> Stakeholder group not specified

jobs. It will put our children at a severe disadvantage in the work place, and lessen their confidence in social and professional situations of all kinds.'

## **Assessment of speaking and listening**

### **Fair assessment**

Overall, 112 consultation respondents mentioned fairness; however, the argument differed depending on the context and whether they were in support of or against the proposal.

For those in support of removing speaking and listening, ensuring fairness was the most frequently cited motive. From the 69 respondents who agreed with the proposal there were 22 comments in reference to fairness, cheating and/or the strength of the assessment, and an additional 10 references to the issue of inflated marks (32 per cent and 14 per cent of those who agreed, respectively). Typically these concerns were in relation to a greater desire for consistent practice across schools, with one examiner also concerned that practices may be of increasing concern:

- School or college: 'I do not believe that some schools are being truthful about marks and this is very frustrating for those of us who mark properly.'
- School or college: 'I believe that it will produce a fairer and better policed qualification that is more standardised across the board.'
- Awarding organisation: 'I am a Speaking and Listening moderator and I have been very concerned that significant numbers of centres have been inflating pupils' marks. This has been of particular concern since last summer when, in November, it seemed clear that some centres were upping the Unit 2 marks to compensate for the Unit 1 (exam) mark etc.'

From some of those who supported the proposal (10 respondents), there was also evidence of support for the speaking and listening element and/or concern about the impact of its removal. However, due to concerns surrounding the integrity of the assessment and fairness in schools/colleges, they were ultimately in support of its removal.

- School or college: 'Removing it, would disadvantage many but if there really is evidence that the award is being abused then I would have to support its removal.'
- School or college: 'only if oracy was assessed in another way – or as subskills within reading and writing (e.g give a powerpoint presentation on

an essay, dramatise a script) But do think at present the three tasks assessed are not necessarily consistent across schools'

Conversely, for those who disagreed with the proposal, the strength of the assessment was less widely mentioned, by 84 respondents (10 per cent of those disagreed); and those referencing inflated marks were very much in the minority (1). Where these respondents referred to issues of fairness and the strength of the assessment it was predominantly that they agreed with principle behind the proposal, showing a level of appreciation for the rationale behind the proposals and the difficulties involved in ensuring the integrity of the qualification. However, they still disagreed on the basis that they thought speaking and listening was an integral element of English that was too important to lose:

- School or college: 'I appreciate the difficulty in ensuring fairness across different centres, and have been frustrated about the lack of accountability of centres towards seemingly inflated S&L marks. However, this is not the fault of the students involved, many of whom get a chance to shine in S&L assessments. The confidence boost from achieving a good grade in these assessments can inspire students to try harder in other elements. It seems a shame that a system cannot be devised which ensures equity across centres whilst also enabling S&L to be counted in the final grade of a student.'

The second common position in relation to concerns of ensuring fair practice and the integrity of the assessment was a view from some that the proposal was in some way suggesting that teachers were at fault and/or could not be trusted. This notion of mistrust in their profession and/or ability to carry out assessments ranged from those who sought to reinforce their personal sense of professional integrity against this perceived slight through to some who felt this unfairly blamed teachers, with some disputing whether teachers ever unfairly mark assessments.

- School or college: 'Removing speaking & listening is another way of saying you don't trust teachers.'
- School or college: 'Speaking and listening is a very important skill for life and work. It is not true to imply that teachers do not mark it fairly.'
- School or college: 'I understand the case for tightening up on moderation, though in my experience as a teacher and an AST working in different schools, I believe it's an element taken very seriously and professionally.'

## **Reference to other subjects**

A total of 21 consultation respondents (all of whom disagreed with the proposal) made comments in relation to the concepts of fairness and the strength of the assessment with practices that were taking place in other subjects. Here, the concern around the resilience of the speaking and listening assessment in English was compared to similar practices in modern foreign languages and/or drama that also have spoken or performance elements. For instance, respondents queried why English should be alone in its issues with ensuring fair and consistent practice and whether the proposed changes would subsequently spread to these other subjects.

- School or college: 'If Ofqual do not feel that schools are assessing correctly why not move to address this? Increase moderation visits; include some recording of assessments as there is at MFL and in the IB.'
- School or college: 'Speaking and Listening is a vital part of English alongside Reading and Writing. MFL qualifications have an oral communication element as part of their assessment; why shouldn't English?'

## **Moderation**

There were 75 respondents who disagreed with the proposals for reasons related to the assessment resilience and who felt that removing speaking and listening was the wrong response. Rather they suggested implementing additional/more stringent means of moderation. In total, 41 of the 112 who mentioned the strength of the assessment discussed strengthening moderation.

- School or college: 'It is obvious that certain schools inflate speaking and listening. There is a very obvious solution. Why don't you just get schools to RECORD speaking and listening like CIE do. Then the assessment would be subject to moderation like a piece of written coursework.'
- School or college: 'If marking of the Speaking and Listening component is a problem, then why not require a video sample be submitted. Virtually all schools will have the technology and this will enable the board to check the validity of Speaking and Listening marks. We are not cheats, we mark fairly and justly.'

## **Accessibility considerations**

Student subgroups were mentioned in a total of 80 responses (3 respondents agreed with the proposal and 77 disagreed), and were frequently mentioned in connection with lowering achievement or creating perceived hurdles for particular student groups. A total of 56 of the 77 respondents mentioned demographic factors and talked about a negative impact on achievement.

It is important to note here that many of the concerns raised did not provide specific examples of how students may be negatively affected by the proposals. Further, many comments demonstrated a degree of confusion about what was being proposed, as evident in comments relating to a separate qualification or removing assessment of the skills entirely.

A range of student specific considerations was mentioned, including:

- SEN/SLCN. Concerns were raised around the effects on some students with Special Educational Needs and certain learning difficulties/Speech, Language and Communication Needs. For instance, respondents mentioned dyslexic students who might be far stronger and perform better in speaking and listening than in written exams.
  - School or college: 'Speaking and Listening is an important skill in preparing young people for the future. It also allows pupils who have specific learning needs (i.e. Dyslexia) to access the higher grades.'
  - Teaching organisations and education services: 'NDCS believes that the removal of speaking and listening marks from the overall GCSE English/English Language grade will have a detrimental effect on the ability of deaf young people to develop their skills in these areas.'
  - Teaching organisations and education services: '...severely disadvantage the vast majority of the estimated 10% of students with recognised speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) because it will increase the emphasis on written assessment when there is an established link between children with SLCN and written ability, which will particularly disadvantage children in areas of social deprivation where there are high levels of SLCN.'
- Gender. Respondents' general interpretation was that girls are stronger at elements such as speaking and listening whilst boys favour exams, although this was not universally the case.

- School or college: 'S&L is an integral part of English Language as a subject and as a skill. More and more these skills are necessary in higher education and employment. In addition it is an area of strength for boys and its removal could therefore widen the gap in gender performance.'
- School or college: 'Speaking and Listening is an area in which boys can achieve highly. It is a valid and marketable skill for the future and stimulates much interesting and rewarding work.'
- EFL/EAL students. For those students who spoke English as a foreign or additional language.
  - School or college: 'Oral literacy is a fundamental part of life skills. Provides students with confidence when communicating. Making it a separate qualification devalues speaking and listening as it may lead to a more focussed approach to exam skills (teaching to test). It will be detrimental to EAL students.'
- Students from low-income backgrounds. Concerns that students from less privileged backgrounds, who did not have access to the same facilities or the same level of support, would be among those affected, potentially affecting opportunities for social mobility.
  - School or college: '...If you take it out, the students who will suffer will be those from less privileged backgrounds who may not get the support from home.'
  - School or college: '...The gap would be more evident in pupils from less privileged backgrounds, who may not develop these skills as much outside of the school setting. The net result would therefore be to increase the risk of pupils leaving school as part of an 'underclass', ill-equipped to find meaningful work and condemned to a life of low expectations.'
  - Parent or carer: 'Speaking and listening are vital skills needed for both progression in education and employment. Unless these are taught formally, we will put in a further barrier to social mobility, as it is children at the bottom of the social hierarchy that benefit most from this.'
- Equal opportunity of assessment. Some respondents mentioned that the current assessment of speaking and listening skills was fair and accessible to students of all ability levels:

*Analysis of Responses to the Consultation on the Proposal to Remove Speaking and Listening Assessment from the GCSE English and GCSE English Language Grade*

- School or college: ‘...The change would have a disproportional impact on vulnerable groups, which are over represented amongst lower achievers. Speaking and listening are often their stronger areas.’
- School or college: ‘Speaking and Listening plays a key role in English assessment. It assesses comprehension in a way that is accessible to more students and it allows for all students to achieve in English...’

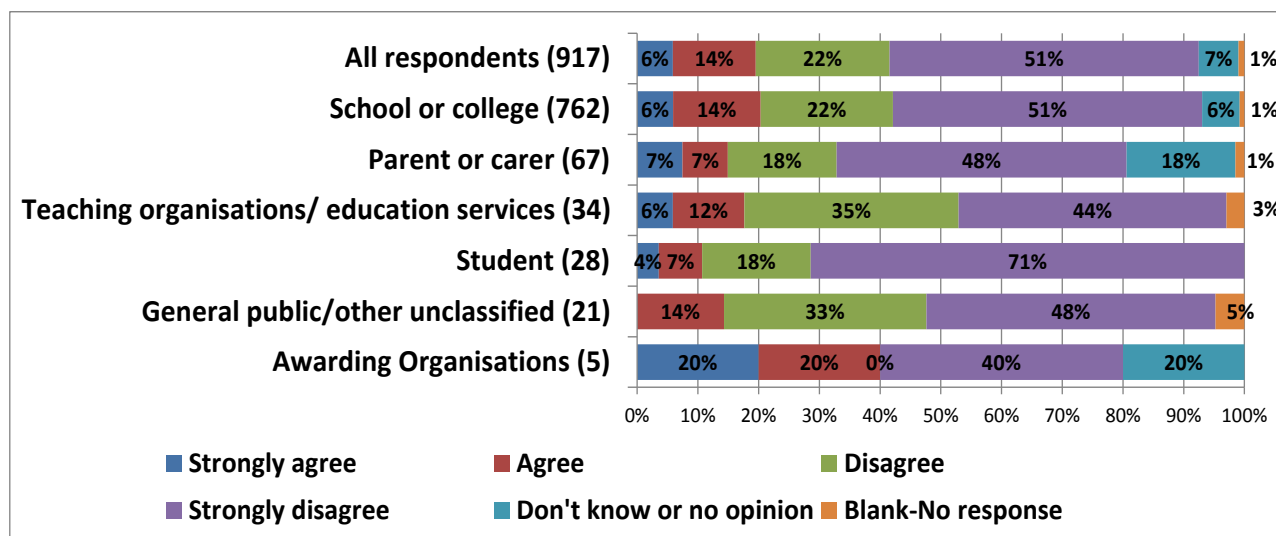
Conversely there was only one reference to the removal of speaking and listening as potentially being an advantage for any group.

- Teaching organisations and education services: ‘Many deaf candidates would benefit from this change.’

## **Proposal 2: Re-weighting the assessment to 60:40 written paper: controlled assessment**

The majority of respondents, 669 (73 per cent), disagreed with this proposal, compared with 179 (20 per cent) who were in favour of the proposal.

*Figure 4: Proposal 2: Re-weighting the assessment to 60:40 written paper: controlled assessment*



Analysis of respondent groups' views on this proposal reveals more variance than in relation to Proposal 1, although given the small numbers for some subgroups these figures should be viewed with caution. Students are most likely to strongly oppose this proposal (71 per cent strongly disagree, 11 per cent agree). Awarding organisations are most likely to support the proposal (40 per cent in favour), whilst of schools and colleges, 6 per cent strongly agree and 14 per cent agree.

A significant number of respondents (312 in total, 34 per cent) chose not to make any additional comments.

Compared with the responses to the other proposals, the responses to this proposal were far more varied and there was a wide range of differing and unique responses. Further, where a respondent disagreed they tended to give a reason for their choice but then naturally follow it up with a remedial suggestion of their own. For instance, a 50:50 weighting was suggested by 58 respondents who disagreed with the proposed 60:40 weighting.

### **Effects of the proposals on students**

The impact on students of the proposed increased weighting on the written exam was mentioned in 173 of respondents' comments, all of whom disagreed with the proposal. This was frequently mentioned in terms of affecting student performance,



as discussed by 81 respondents, with around half of these (42) raising concerns that performance would be affected by increased exam pressure.

- School or college: 'Many students' nerves get the better of them during examinations and changing the weighting will seriously handicap many students particularly with your proposal not to include speaking and listening grades in the final outcome.'
- Student: 'This proposal is greatly unfair on those who perform well in controlled assessments, but less so in formal written papers. With the added stress of that written exam being worth 60%, candidates are likely to become stressed and perform at a much lower standard than normal.'
- School or college: 'Some pupils struggle in the pressure of exams; it would be extremely unfair on them. As result of this they may get lower than they deserve.'

### **Accessibility of the qualification**

The 23 consultation respondents who disagreed with the proposal felt that re-weighting the assessment would affect student achievement for specific student subgroups.

- School or college: 'Final exams put excessive pressure on students and disadvantage particular groups, including SEN students and girls.'
- School or college: 'I feel that students with learning difficulties are already going to be penalised by the removal of S&L from the assessment. They struggle hugely with the exam questions, even with extra time, and often cannot communicate their knowledge effectively. This could also disadvantage girls.'

## **Assessment of speaking and listening**

### **Fair assessment**

Of the 179 respondents who agreed with this proposal, 16 stated that they agreed because they thought that the proposals would increase fairness, robustness and the resilience of the qualification.

- School or college: 'This sounds promising in terms of fairness and rigour.'
- School or college: 'As long as the exam boards mark and award fairly, this would be a fairer way to award GCSEs.'

Of the 179 (19 per cent) respondents who agreed with the proposal to re-weight the assessment, 49 (5 per cent) reaffirmed in their comments that they were in support of the proposed weighting of 60:40 written paper: controlled assessment.

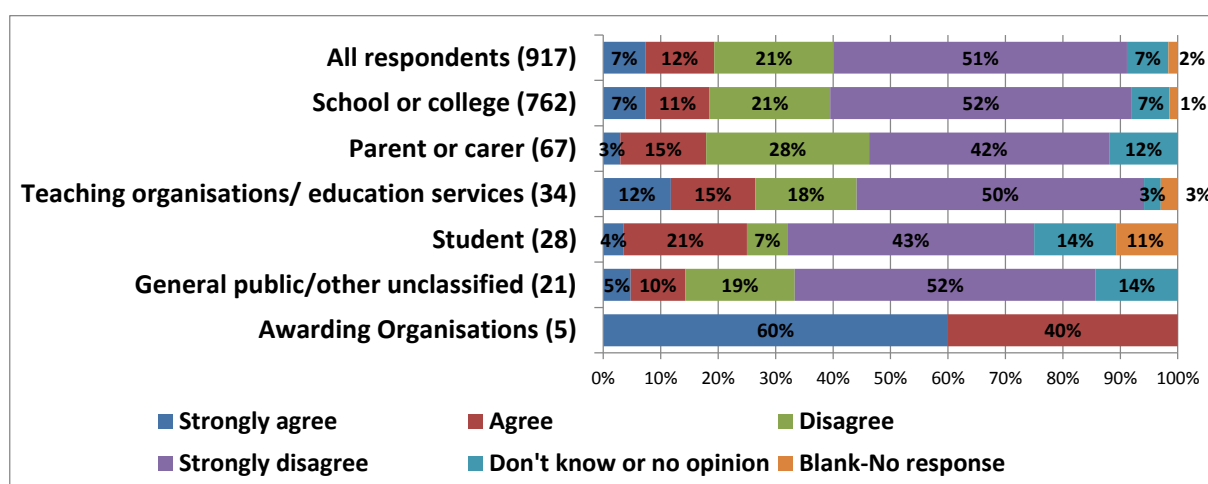
Of those 670 respondents who disagreed with this proposal, four indicated in their comments that they would agree with the proposed weighting if the proposals were to go ahead, and 61 others instead suggested what they perceived to be a fair weighting. Respondents gave a wide range of suggestions for alternative weighting proposals, with the most popular being a 50:50 split (suggested by 60 respondents, 58 of whom had voted to disagree with the proposal). A small number of respondents (7) indicated that they would prefer a 100 per cent exam.

- School or college: '50/50 – so students who don't like exams aren't unfairly penalised.'
- School or college: 'The 50/50 option would seem to offer the best compromise for students, as those who do not perform as confidently in exam conditions are compensated for the lack of the speaking and listening unit.'

### Proposal 3a: Require exam boards to report achievement in speaking and listening separately on the certificate

The majority of consultation respondents, 659 in total (72 per cent), disagreed with the proposal to report achievement in speaking and listening separately on the certificate, whilst 177 (19 per cent) agreed with the proposal. Around one in ten (9 per cent) were unsure, either answering ‘don’t know/no opinion’ or declining to respond.

Figure 5: Proposal 3a: To what extent do you agree that we should require exam boards to report achievement in speaking and listening separately on the certificate?



Responses to this proposal were relatively consistent across most respondent groups.

The small group of awarding organisation respondents was most likely to agree with this proposal (three out of the five strongly agreed and two agreed), followed by teaching organisations and education services (12 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively), and students (4 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively).

Students were also the least likely of all groups to have a view (with 25 per cent either responding ‘Don’t know/no opinion’ or not responding at all).

Nearly a third of all respondents did not provide comments at this question, and subsequently there were a smaller number of common themes, which may be less representative of the overall views.

### **Effects of the proposals on students**

In total, 98 respondents mentioned concerns surrounding students' progression in connection with separate reporting of speaking and listening. There was a consensus in these concerns in that at least 47 of the total of 63 respondents who disagreed made comments in direct relation to employers (though more were indirectly implied). Common references highlighted respondents' concerns that employers would not refer to the GCSE certificate to see the speaking and listening achievement, and instead would only be concerned with the final grade.

- School or college: 'What's the point? Employers are interested in the final English grade not separate components.'
- School or college: '...A grade that is not counted within the full GCSE grade will be discounted by FE institutions and employers as insignificant...'

This question elicited a high number of responses that reflected back on Proposal 1, about removing the requirement for speaking and listening assessment to contribute to the final grade. There were 261 responses here that indicated support for maintaining the contribution of speaking and listening assessment towards the grade. These responses ranged from a resolute view that no changes should be made whatsoever to GCSE English, through to the view that speaking and listening should still be allowed to contribute to the grade, at least to some degree.

- School or college: 'Speaking and listening should remain part of the requirement for GCSE English assessment.'
- School or college: 'The status quo is fair.'
- School or college: 'Achievement in Speaking & Listening is an essential part of English GCSE, and should remain part of the GCSE grade.'

### **Impact of proposals on perceptions of the skills**

This was cited as a concern by 185 respondents, 155 of whom disagreed with the proposal. These responses were in general agreement that, despite intentions, speaking and listening skills would be seen to be less important if the marks or grades were to be reported separately. This was reported both in terms of their perceived importance by students, parents and employers, and in that having no contribution to the final grade meant that it would lose its importance in the classroom.

- School or college: 'A certificate will have no value to students and will be 'tagged' on as an unimportant unit in many schools.'

- School or college: 'Again this would become a meaningless qualification, with many schools not dedicating appropriate time to this aspect of English.'
- General public: '*As speaking and listening is no longer going to be an attainment target in Curriculum 2014 at KS1, 2 and 3, as well as KS4 now it seems, the status of talk in classrooms will fall further...*'

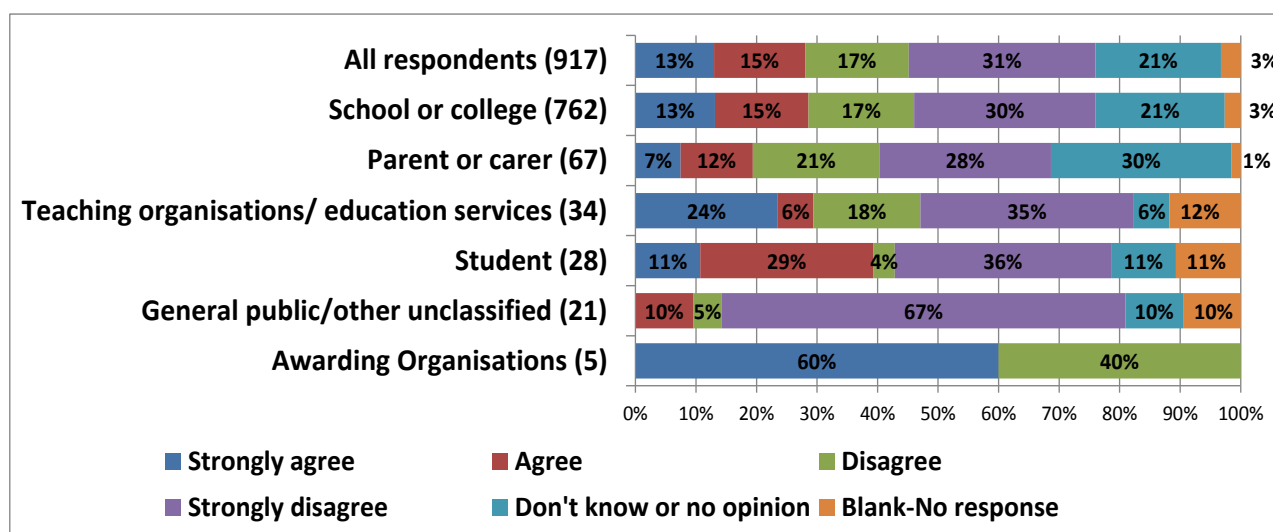
Further, 43 respondents felt more strongly in that rather than just undermining the perceived value of the skills, the proposal would render speaking and listening and/or the exercise of reporting it pointless.

- Parent or carer: 'Given that GCSE certificates are rarely shown to anyone, and if they are it is after a decision as been made (eg after a job offer or college place), putting this on the certificate is pointless.'

### Proposal 3b: Students should not be required to achieve at least a grade 5 in speaking and listening to be awarded a GCSE

In total, 440 consultation respondents disagreed with the proposal, compared with 257 who agreed. It was notable, however, that in comparison with prior questions there was a greater number of respondents who chose to respond ‘Don’t know/no response’: 190 in total, with a further 30 respondents (3 per cent) not responding.

Figure 6: Proposal 3b: To what extent do you agree that students should **not** be required to achieve at least a 5 in speaking and listening to be awarded a GCSE?



Responses to this proposal varied among the various groups of respondents to a greater extent than in relation to earlier proposals. The small group of general public and unclassified respondents was most likely to disagree with the proposal (67 per cent strongly disagreed and 5 per cent disagreed, compared with 31 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively, of all respondents).

Student respondents were equally likely to agree as to disagree with the proposal to remove the grade 5 requirement: 40 per cent agreed or strongly agreed, and 40 per cent disagreed with the proposal. Around one in five students were unsure, with 11 per cent opting for the ‘Don’t know/no opinion’ option, and a further 11 per cent not providing a response.

Parents and carers, on the other hand, were least likely to respond, with 30 per cent opting for the ‘Don’t know/no opinion’ option, and 1 per cent not providing a response.

The higher number of respondents who opted for ‘Don’t know/no opinion’ can, at least to a degree, be explained by a number of respondents who clearly stated that they either did not understand what a grade ‘5’ was or they did not understand the

question. Of the 79 respondents who stated that they did not understand the question, 57 of whom had chosen to respond 'Don't know/no opinion'.

- School or college: 'What do you mean by "a 5"? A mark of 5? A band 5?...'
- School or college: 'I have read this question three times and I do not understand it.'
- School or college: 'What is a '5'? What is the criteria and does this remain consistent?'

The consultation states:

We are proposing to remove the speaking and listening marks from the overall qualification and instead to require exam boards to report speaking and listening achievement separately on the certificate, on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest, and ungraded below this). This is the same grading scale that was used when oral communication was reported separately from GCSE English grades 20 years ago.

A total of 445 of respondents declined to comment.

Given that comments were only provided by just over half of respondents, only two common themes were mentioned by 50 or more respondents. These have been explored below. However, as each represents no more than 18 per cent of respondents, they do not represent a significant proportion of respondents and it cannot be assumed that these views are universally shared.

### **Effects on student achievement**

The achievement of students was referred to by both those who chose to agree and disagree with the proposal (166 respondents). Comments indicated that some respondents may have been confused by the question asked about the proposal, as those agreeing and disagreeing in response to the closed question sometimes provided the same argument in their open-response comments.

There were two key arguments. The main argument in relation to the grade 5 proposal (shared by 45 respondents who agreed with the proposal and 59 who disagreed) was that the requirement to pass speaking and listening would only act as an unfair hurdle for students. This concern differed from prior questions, however, as it was not solely in relation to demographic or special needs but also with reference

to student abilities and the confidence to be able to speak publicly to their peers. It was noted that for less confident and shy students, who might otherwise be excellent reader/writers, it would be unfair for them not to be able to attain their English GCSE as a whole based purely on one area of weakness.

- School or college: 'lower ability students need to be able to show what they are capable of but may not be confident enough in their abilities to do well'
- School or college: 'I would worry about shy, yet diligent students who are very good at English in general, not gaining a GCSE certificate.'
- School or college: 'Penalise students for not being confident? Similar premise to changing weighting of exam.'

Conversely, the argument made by fewer respondents was that there should be a minimum functional level of speaking and listening and that those not capable of reaching this most basic of hurdles should not be allowed to pass because for employers, for instance, the GCSE should represent a certain level of competency. This view was shared by 6 respondents who agreed with the proposal and 14 who disagreed.

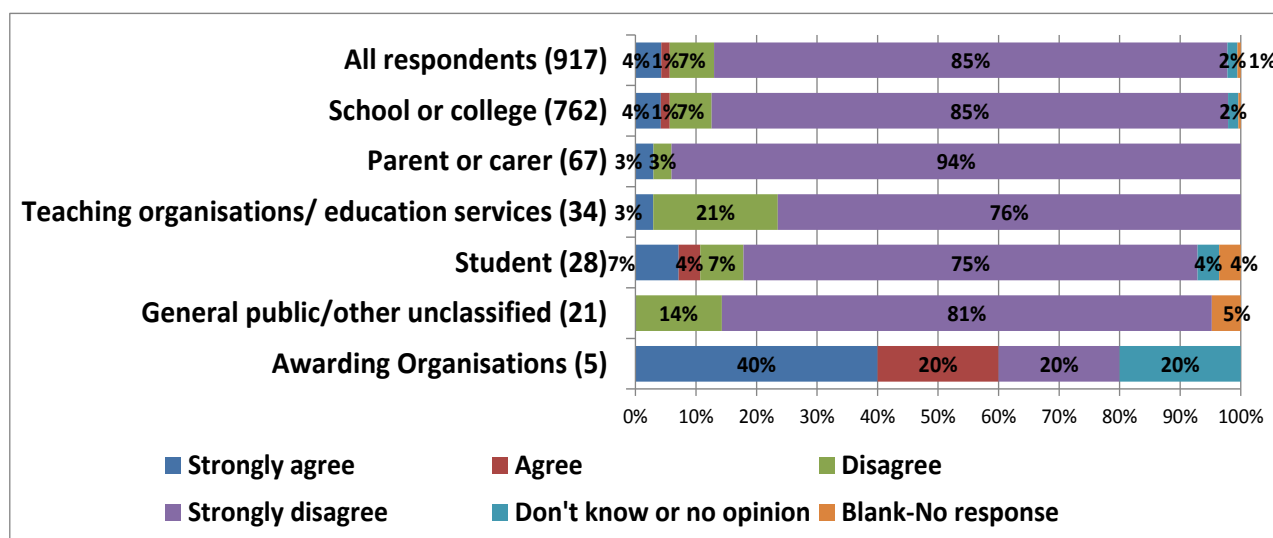
- School or college: 'If they can't speak to a competent level I don't think they should be awarded a GCSE in English.'
- School or college: 'A student should be required to pass the Speaking & Listening if s-he is to pass the GCSE.'



## Proposal 4: To put in place these changes for summer 2014 onwards

Of all the questions asked, this proposal received the highest number of respondents who disagreed overall (846 or 92 per cent), and 684 of the 917 consultation respondents made comments.

Figure 7: Proposal 4: To what extent do you agree that we should put in place these changes for summer 2014 onwards?



Responses to this proposal were very uniform across all groups, with the most notable exception to the view of all respondents being that awarding organisations were most likely to agree that the proposals should be put in place for summer 2014 (60 per cent agreed or strongly agreed).

### Effects of the proposals on students

The biggest concern was that the proposals should not affect the current cohort as it would be unfair to students. A total of 475 respondents voiced this concern, the majority of whom (456) disagreed with the proposal. However, the timings of the proposed changes were still a concern for 18 of those who agreed.

Of the 456 respondents who cited this as a reason for disagreeing, this was generally a straightforward concern and there was a consensus that it was not fair to change the goal posts for those who had already started their course.

- School or college: 'It is fundamentally unjust to chance the goalposts part way through a course.'

- School or college: 'For September for cohorts sitting in summer 15 fine but not in the middle of a course – Very unfair to change the goal posts half way through.'
- School or college: 'Current Y10 students are now half way through a GCSE course. It is unfair to change things at this stage.'

Further, 104 respondents had concerns that all the work, effort and grades that students had already invested and earned would be lost if the proposals were to affect the current cohort. Therefore, their grades would not be as anticipated, as the proportion of their grade that many had already earned would count for nothing.

- School or college: 'It is unfair to change the way students are being assessed when they are half way through their qualification. This will unfairly disadvantage ALL students who are currently due to sit their exam in 2014.'

### **Effects of the proposals on teachers**

This was mentioned by 245 consultation respondents. Whilst unfairness was primarily mentioned in relation to teachers, there were also references to schools/colleges and their staff as a whole. This concern was evident most strongly among those who disagreed (235 respondents), but was also a concern among 9 of those who agreed.

The concern was generally in reference to and in recognition of the time already invested by teachers, and that to move the goal posts now was unfair when many of them had already organised work plans.

- School or college: 'Teachers of Year 10 have already spent considerable time teaching and assessing speaking and listening'
- School or college: 'My year 10 students have already completed part of their assessment. This proposal means that I will have wasted hours of lesson time on something which will make difference to my student's overall grade.'
- School or college: 'The timing is unfair for teachers and students who start courses in good faith that the assessment arrangements and weightings that are explicitly being worked to will last for the duration of the course.'

### **Student motivation and confidence**

This was mentioned by 53 respondents, of whom 50 voted to disagree with the proposal. Respondents feared that the proposal would have a negative impact on

students' motivation and confidence, mainly for the current cohort as they were already well into their course and had undertaken a notable amount of work. To find out that it did not count would affect their drive/ambition and trust/confidence, both in themselves and in the system.

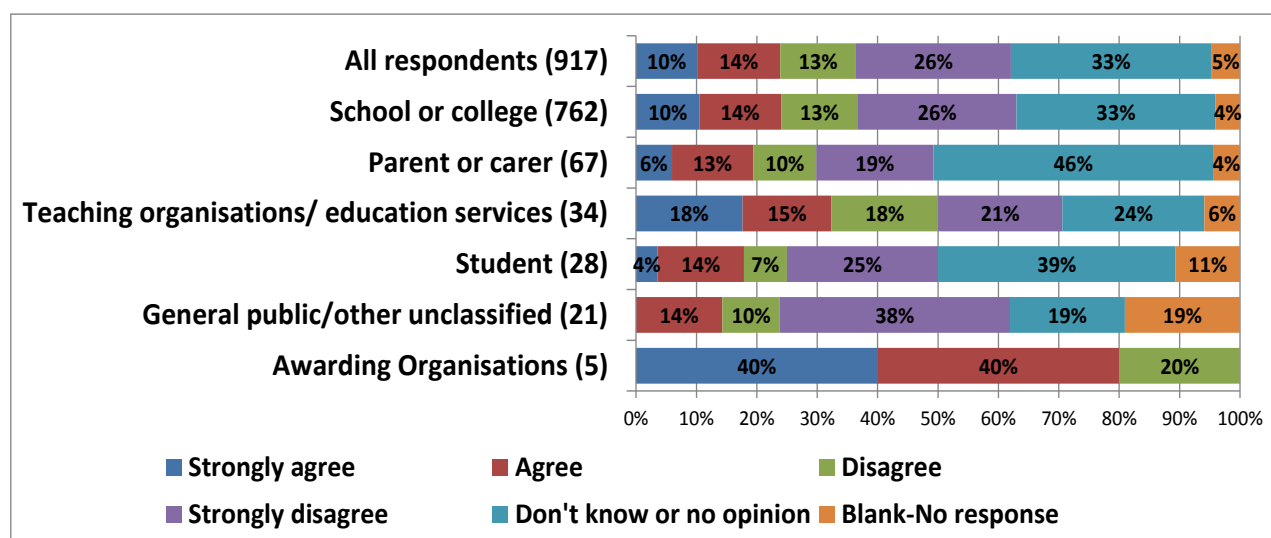
- School or college: 'Moving the goalposts for courses that have already started is unfair and demotivating'
- School or college: 'You cannot change a course half way through! The pupils have already been assessed in Speaking and Listening. Confidence would be lost.'
- School or college: 'Current Year 10 students will be demotivated if their efforts have been in vain.'

## Proposal 5: To use a comparable outcomes approach to the first awards of these revised qualifications

The most common response, by 305 consultation respondents (33 per cent), was the ‘Don’t know/no opinion’ option. This response was higher here than in any of the other questions, as was the 5 per cent response for the 43 respondents who did not vote at all, instead leaving a blank response.

The remaining responses were more commonly to disagree than agree, with 39 per cent opposing the proposed comparable outcomes approach, whilst 24 per cent were in favour.

Figure 8: Proposal 5: To what extent do you agree that we should use a comparable outcomes approach to the first awards of these revised qualifications?



Of the respondent subgroups, students and parents/carers were least sure of their views on the proposal, with 50 per cent of each group responding either ‘Don’t know/no opinion’ or not providing any response.

Awarding organisations were the group most likely to agree or strongly agree with this proposal, as 80 per cent were in favour (40 per cent strongly).

From the total of 917 respondents, only 398 chose to provide a comment. It is worth noting that there were 40 respondents who stated that they did not understand the question and/or they were uncertain as to what ‘comparable outcomes’ were. Of these 40, 34 selected the ‘Don’t know/ no opinion’ option.

## **Fair assessment**

Of the 219 respondents who agreed with the proposal, the most common reason cited was that of fairness. There were 24 respondents who thought the comparable outcomes approach to awarding would be the best way to ensure fairness and consistency for students.

- School or college: 'IF the changes do go ahead then this seems the fairest approach.'
- School or college: 'If instituted, that would only be fair.'
- School or college: 'Yes otherwise you are not treating all students fairly.'

Among the 350 respondents who disagreed, fairness was also one of the key themes identified in the comments provided (as mentioned by 36 respondents). These took the opposite view, however, that a comparable outcomes approach would be unfair and/or detrimental to students' achievement, with some comments suggesting respondents mistakenly thought the approach would affect marking rather than (or perhaps as well as) grading.

- School or college: 'Exams should be marked fairly (as last year's were not), so that a C grade is worth a C grade, not tweaked so that it reflects a bell curve.'
- School or college: 'It would be unfair for a pupil to receive a grade one year and have a sibling who achieves the same mark and get a different grade the following year.'

## **Effects on students' achievement**

There were 72 responses regarding effects on student achievement, with respondents arguing that a comparable outcomes approach would lead to students not being awarded the grades they deserve. Comments here often indicated that respondents mistakenly believed that the achievement of the individual student would not be marked and/or rewarded in its own right, but rather the performance of the individual would be compared with that of their cohort.

- School or college: 'If a student, any student, has met the required criteria for a certain, then they should be awarded that grade, regardless of how the rest of the cohort has performed.'
- School or college: 'Student should be rewarded on their own merit, not on the merit of the overall cohort.'

- School or college: 'Comparable outcomes negate the effects of good teaching. If we educate children better, they will perform better than previous cohorts. Using comparable outcomes assumes that this will not happen which renders good teaching almost pointless other than as an end in itself.'

With respect to the comparable outcomes<sup>3</sup> approach, the consultation states:

Since 2009, we have adopted a comparable outcomes approach when setting grade standards in new qualifications. This approach means that if the cohort of students taking the qualification is similar in terms of ability, then we would expect the outcomes – the proportions of students achieving each grade – to be similar. The aim of this approach is to minimise any advantage or disadvantage for students who are the first to sit a new qualification, given the difficulty of maintaining standards through a period of change.

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<sup>3</sup> For further information, see: <http://ofqual.gov.uk/standards/summer-exams-2013/setting-standards>

## **Further comments about the proposed wording of the draft General Condition**

A high proportion of consultation respondents did not respond to this question. Of the 917 respondents only 109 made comments (12 per cent). Whilst common themes in comments have been identified, they did not represent a large proportion of respondents and, as such, should be viewed with caution.

It should be noted that where respondents did comment, it was not necessarily in relation to the question being asked, with views on the Proposal 1, to remove speaking and listening assessment from the GCSE grade, again being provided at this question. Further, 17 respondents made comments around a concern that the changes were inevitable, and would go ahead regardless of the consultation. All of these disagreed with Proposal 1.

### **Wording on the draft General Condition**

Of the 109 comments here, 41 related to the wording of the draft General Condition. Of these, 7 respondents thought that the wording was acceptable as it was, even if they did not agree with the proposals. A further 24 respondents responded that they thought that the wording was confusing and needed further clarification or to be simpler.

Lastly, 10 respondents displayed a degree of indifference to the wording of the General Condition, instead reiterating that they took issue with the content.

- School or college: 'It's not the wording that I take issue with.'
- School or college: 'The wording is irrelevant. It is the content that needs changing.'

## **Other comments about other aspects of these proposals**

### **Do you have any other comments you would like to make about any other aspects of these proposals?**

Of all 917 consultation respondents, 439 made additional comments, with the majority re-stating their views on the proposals rather than on other aspects of the proposals not already covered. Two concerns that were not fully drawn out in relation to specific proposals have been outlined below, although as these views were only held by a minority of all respondents they should be viewed with caution.

### **Resilience of the assessment/ensuring fairness**

Concerns surrounding fairness, cheating and consistent practice in schools/colleges were mentioned by 86 consultation respondents in this question. Respondents often commented on their own integrity and what they perceived as a lack of trust, rather than in reference to inflated marks or cheating in other schools/colleges, which was frequently raised at other questions. Comments ranged from respondents who sought to highlight their own good and fair practice through to those who felt that the proposals were an insult to their professional integrity.

- School or college: ‘...I work extremely hard and am dedicated to doing the best I can for my students and my department; I always have in my 22 years of teaching. I feel that you don't trust me to do my job properly.’
- School or college: ‘...It suggests that teachers are not trusted to deliver centre assessed components of GCSE, which is unfair, and undermines confidence and morale in English teachers. It feels insulting.’

### **Lack of evidence to support proposals**

A total of 67 respondents made reference to a perceived lack of evidence supporting the proposals and/or a proposal from the respondent as to how research or a consultation should be carried out. Frequently the suggestion being put forward was to consult with teaching professionals.

- School or college: ‘They seem to be ill-informed, and based on a totally false premise.’
- School or college: ‘I feel that there has been inadequate time for consultation.’
- School or college: ‘When are teachers going to be consulted first on new proposals rather than invited to react in a very short time period to something that is going to affect how and what they teach in four months time?’



## **Appendix A: Methodology**

The consultation responses were analysed in a three-stage process, detailed below.

1. Quantitative review. A basic statistical analysis was carried out of the responses received to the closed-response questions within the consultation, which allowed an initial high-level overview of responses to questions 1 to 6.
2. Qualitative review. The open-ended responses were coded and analysed following a thematic approach using NVivo software. This process has been outlined below.
3. The quantitative and qualitative analyses have been brought together and form the body of the report.

### **Qualitative methodology**

1. The open-ended responses for each question were imported into NVivo alongside details of stakeholder type (school, awarding organisation and so on).
2. The coding framework was developed, building a thematic framework tree against which to code the responses, which involved several elements:
  - Evidence from consultation respondents – It is vital that a framework accurately reflects the evidence. Therefore an initial coding trial was conducted where nodes were organically created as they occurred in the responses of the consultation respondents.
  - In addition to the original coding tree, as new themes and issues developed through the analysis, these were captured to form new nodes.
3. Each individual survey response was coded, with quality control checks conducted at regular intervals to ensure coherence within each code and to make sure that no evidence was missed.
4. The data for each question was reviewed, as illustrated below:
  - Review of individual themes/nodes. Each node relating to known themes was opened and reviewed. From the evidence in each node it was possible to see the particular theme/issue in isolation and in the context of the question. It was also possible to see how many respondents commented on each theme, which then identified the main points.
  - Review of developing/previously unidentified themes. Where any new themes emerged, including odd one-off themes coded and captured under

an ‘Other’ category, they were reviewed and included in existing themes, or categorised into a new theme.

- Cross-referencing. Respondents frequently made more than one point in their comments, and the relationships between themes raised were explored. These were identified using two approaches. First, each theme was critically assessed to identify causes, relationships and influential factors. For popular themes, queries and matrices were used in NVivo to explore relationships and connections to other issues. Then, a series of matrices was run and mapped across all data to identify any areas that may have been overlooked. For instance, when a response cited an increase in ‘pressure on teachers’ there was often a strong relationship to ‘administrative burden’, which could help to identify it as a potential cause.
- Review by stakeholder group. For each individual question the responses across stakeholder groups were compared to see whether there were any similarities and/or differences in responses.

## **Consultation respondents**

In total there were 917 respondents to the online consultation on the removal of speaking and listening assessment from GCSE English and GCSE English Language.

*Figure 9: Breakdown of respondents by stakeholder group*

| <b>Respondents</b>  | <b>Number of Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage of Respondents</b> |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| School or College (See Figure 10)                             | 762                          | 83%                              |
| Parent or Carer   | 67                           | 7%                               |
| Teaching organisations and education services (See Figure 11) | 34                           | 4%                               |
| Student   | 28                           | 3%                               |
| General public/unclassified respondents                       | 21                           | 2%                               |
| Awarding organisations  | 5                            | 0.4%                             |
| <b>Total: All respondents</b>                                 | <b>917</b>                   | <b>100%</b>                      |

### **School and college respondents**

A total of 762 respondents identified themselves as a 'school or college' but not all of them gave further details to indicate type. Specific school/college types are provided for 568 out of the total 762 school and college respondents.

*Figure 11: Breakdown of respondents by school or college type*

| <b>School and/or College Type</b>                 | <b>Number of Schools/Colleges</b> | <b>Percentage of Schools/Colleges</b> |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Comprehensive                                     | 284                               | 37%                                   |
| Academy or free school                            | 201                               | 26%                                   |
| Independent                                       | 27                                | 4%                                    |
| State selective                                   | 21                                | 3%                                    |
| Further education                                 | 8                                 | 1%                                    |
| Sixth form  | 8                                 | 1%                                    |
| Special school                                    | 6                                 | 1%                                    |
| Primary or early years setting                    | 2                                 | 0%                                    |
| PRU or Secure Unit                                | 2                                 | 0%                                    |
| Other   | 9                                 | 1%                                    |
| No answer/respondents who gave no further details | 194                               | 25%                                   |
| <b>Total: All schools and colleges</b>            | <b>762</b>                        | <b>100%</b>                           |

### **Teaching organisations and education services**

A total of 34 respondents identified themselves in the following categories, which were grouped together under 'Teaching organisations and education services' for the purpose of the analysis.

*Figure 10: Teaching organisations and education services*

|   | <b>Number of respondents</b> |
|---|------------------------------|
| Teaching and skills organisations                               | 18                           |
| Government body or organisation                                 | 9                            |
| Private training provider                                       | 5                            |
| Higher Education Institute                                      | 2                            |
| <b>Total: All teaching organisations and education services</b> | <b>34</b>                    |

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