



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



Rewarding Learning

Draft GCSE subject criteria for English language

For first teaching from September 2010

June 2008

QCA/08/3722

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Introduction

1. GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in English language. They provide the framework within which an awarding body creates the detail of the specification.
2. Specifications must also meet the regulators' general requirements, including the common and GCSE criteria as defined in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications* (QCA/04/1293).
3. Subject criteria are intended to:
 - help ensure consistent and comparable standards in the same subject across the awarding bodies
 - ensure that the rigour of GCSE is maintained
 - ensure that specifications build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established by the national curricula for England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and facilitate progression to higher level qualifications in English
 - help higher education institutions, employers and other stakeholders, such as learners and parents/guardians, know what has been studied and assessed.
4. Any GCSE specification that contains significant elements of English language must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

Aims and learning outcomes

5. GCSE specifications in English language should encourage learners to be inspired, moved and changed by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study. They should prepare learners to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices.
6. GCSE specifications in English language must enable learners to:
 - develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing necessary to communicate with others confidently, effectively and appropriately, and to support lifelong learning
 - express themselves creatively and imaginatively
 - become critical readers of texts, and develop their own skills as writers

- understand the patterns, structures and conventions of written and spoken English
- understand how variations in spoken and written language relate to identity and cultural diversity
- appreciate the need to choose and adapt speech and writing to different situations
- understand the impact of standard and non-standard forms of spoken language, including regional variations and how language changes over time
- use language to participate effectively in society and employment.

Subject content

7. The content of GCSE specifications in English language must reflect the learning outcomes.
8. GCSE specifications in English language must be designed to support integrated courses leading to assessment in speaking and listening, reading and writing.
9. GCSE specifications in English language must be consistent with the requirements of the programmes of study for English at key stage 4 in England and Wales.

Studying language

10. GCSE specifications in English language for this part of the course must require learners to:
 - understand the detail and gain an overview of texts from a wide range of sources, including those found beyond the classroom
 - engage with and make fresh connections between ideas, texts, words and images
 - analyse and evaluate spoken and written language, exploring impact and how it is achieved
 - understand how spoken and written language evolve in response to changes in society and technology, and how this process relates to identity and cultural diversity.

Studying written language

11. GCSE specifications in English language must require learners to:

- understand how meaning is constructed through words, sentences and whole texts, recognising the effects of language variation
- evaluate the ways in which texts may be interpreted differently according to the perspective of the reader.

Studying spoken language

12. GCSE specifications in English language must require learners to:

- reflect critically on their own and others' uses of language in different contexts and how they adapt language to different listeners and tasks, exploring these experiences in the contexts of wider language use and variation
- engage with real-life uses of talk and audiences beyond the classroom, and consider different aspects of spoken language, for example how language changes over time, attitudes to standard and non-standard forms, and regional variations.

Using language

13. GCSE specifications in English language for this part of the course must require learners to:

- demonstrate a secure understanding of the conventions of written language, including grammar, spelling and punctuation
- experiment with language, using their imagination to create effects and to engage the audience
- express complex ideas and information clearly, precisely, accurately and appropriately in spoken and written communication
- form independent views and challenge what is heard or read on the grounds of logic, evidence or argument.

Writing

14. GCSE specifications in English language must require learners to:

- write accurately and fluently, choosing content and adapting style and language to a wide range of forms, media, contexts, audiences and purposes.

Speaking and listening

15. GCSE specifications in English language must require learners to:

- present and listen to information and ideas
- respond to the questions and views of others, adapting talk appropriately to context and audience
- make a range of effective contributions, using creative approaches to exploring questions, solving problems and developing ideas
- reflect and comment critically on their own and others' uses of language
- participate in a range of contexts, including real-life uses of talk and audiences beyond the classroom.

Assessment objectives

16. All specifications in English language must require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

Assessment objectives		% weighting
AO1	<p>Speaking and listening/spoken language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate clearly and purposefully; structure and sustain talk, adapting it to different situations and audiences; use standard English and a variety of techniques as appropriate. • Listen and respond to speakers' ideas and perspectives, and how they construct and express their meanings. • Interact with others, shaping meanings through suggestions, comments and questions, and drawing ideas together. • Create and sustain different roles. • Explain variations in spoken language; evaluate their own and others' uses. 	30

AO2	<p>Studying written language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and understand texts, selecting material appropriate to purpose, collating from different sources and making comparisons and cross-references as appropriate. • Develop and sustain interpretations of writers' ideas and perspectives, referring closely to the development of narrative, argument, explanation or analysis. • Explain and evaluate how writers use linguistic, grammatical, structural and presentational features to achieve effects and engage and influence the reader, supporting their comments with detailed textual references. 	35
AO3	<p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, using and adapting forms and selecting vocabulary appropriate to task and purpose in ways that engage the reader. • Organise information and ideas into structured and sequenced sentences, paragraphs and whole texts, using a variety of linguistic and structural features to support cohesion and overall coherence. • Use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate punctuation and spelling. <p><i>At least one third of the available credit should be allocated to this last part of AO3.</i></p>	35

Scheme of assessment

17. GCSE specifications in English language must allocate a weighting of 40% to external assessment and a weighting of 60% to controlled assessment in the overall scheme of assessment.
18. Question papers in English language must be targeted at either the foundation or higher tier.
19. In order to qualify for the award of grades A*–C in England, candidates must achieve a functional skills qualification at level 2 in English.

Studying language (45%)

Studying written language (35%)

20. Assessment must include:
 - reading and responding to a range of non-fiction texts that present information, events and ideas, including media, digital and multimodal forms; analysing and evaluating words, images and structures, exploring how they are adapted to create meaning, viewpoint and effect
 - reading and making a sustained response to an extended literary text, for example a novel, auto/biography, literary non-fiction or a play; analysing and evaluating how characters, events, ideas and settings are crafted, how language and style shape meaning, and how texts engage readers.

Studying spoken language (10%)

21. Assessment must include:
 - exploring, analysing and evaluating reasons for variations and changes in spoken language, and what influences the choices made by speakers.

Using language (55%)

Writing (35%)

22. Assessment must include:

- presenting information and ideas on complex subjects concisely, logically and persuasively in more than one non-fiction text, showing understanding of adaptation to purpose, audience and context
- writing creatively and thoughtfully, producing more than one text varied in form and style, to interest and engage the reader through imaginative choices of content, language and structure.

Speaking and listening (20%)

23. Assessment must include:

- giving individual presentations, for example arguments, explanations, storytelling
- participating in group discussions and interactions
- engaging in role play and simulations.

Grade descriptions

24. Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.

25. The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of candidates' performance in the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.

Grade	Description
A	Candidates select suitable styles and registers of spoken English for a range of situations and contexts, showing assured use of standard English where appropriate. They confidently vary sentence structures and choose from a broad repertoire of vocabulary to express information, ideas and feelings in an engaging manner. They explain expertly, and evaluate persuasively, how they and others use and adapt spoken language for specific purposes. They initiate conversations and demonstrate sensitive listening through

	<p>contributions that sustain and develop discussion. They recognise and fulfil the demands of different roles, whether in formal settings or creative activities.</p> <p>Candidates respond personally and persuasively to a variety of texts, developing interpretations and evaluating how details of language, grammar, structure and presentation engage and affect the reader. They identify and discuss writers' perspectives in narrative, argument, explanation or analysis. They choose apt quotations and make telling comparisons and cross-references that illuminate the purpose and meanings of texts.</p> <p>Candidates' writing shows confident, assured control of a range of forms and styles appropriate to task and purpose. Texts engage and hold the reader's interest through logical argument, persuasive force or creative delight. Linguistic and structural features are used skilfully to sequence texts and achieve coherence. A wide range of accurate sentence structures ensures clarity; choices of vocabulary, punctuation and spelling are ambitious, imaginative and correct.</p>
C	<p>Candidates adapt their talk to the demands of different situations and contexts. They recognise when standard English is required and use it confidently. They use different sentence structures and select vocabulary so that information, ideas and feelings are communicated clearly and the listener's interest is engaged. They explain and evaluate how they and others use and adapt spoken language for specific purposes. Through careful listening and by developing their own and others' ideas, they make significant contributions to discussion and participate effectively in creative activities.</p> <p>Candidates understand and demonstrate how meaning and information are conveyed in a range of texts. They make personal and critical responses, referring to specific aspects of language, grammar, structure and presentational devices to justify their views. They successfully compare and cross-reference aspects of texts, and explain convincingly how they may vary in purpose and how they achieve different effects.</p>

	<p>Candidates' writing shows successful adaptation of form and style to different tasks and for various purposes. They use a range of sentence structures and varied vocabulary to create different effects and engage the reader's interest. Paragraphing is used effectively to make the sequence of events or development of ideas coherent and clear to the reader. Sentence structures are varied; punctuation and spelling are accurate and sometimes bold.</p>
F	<p>Candidates talk confidently in familiar situations, showing some awareness of purpose and of listeners' needs. They convey information, develop ideas and describe feelings clearly, using the main features of standard English as appropriate. They listen with concentration and make relevant responses to others' ideas and opinions. They show some awareness of how they and others use and adapt spoken language for specific purposes. In formal and creative activities, they attempt to meet the demands of different roles.</p> <p>Candidates describe the main ideas, themes or argument in a range of texts, and refer to specific aspects or details when justifying their views. They make simple comparisons and cross-references that show some awareness of how texts achieve their effects through writers' use of linguistic, grammatical, structural and presentational devices.</p> <p>Candidates' writing shows some adaptation of form and style for different tasks and purposes. It communicates simply and clearly with the reader. Sentences sequence events or ideas logically; vocabulary is sometimes chosen for variety and interest. Paragraphing is straightforward but effective. The structure of sentences, including some that are complex, is usually correct. Spelling and basic punctuation are mostly accurate.</p>

External/controlled assessment

26. Regulations now specify the proportions of credit available for GCSE external and controlled assessments. These are:

Content	External assessment weighting	Controlled assessment weighting
Studying written language Non-fiction texts Extended literary text	20%	15%
Studying spoken language		10%
Using language Writing information and ideas Creative writing Speaking and listening	20%	15% 20%