

TEACHER BRIEFINGS

Briefing 2/ September 2017

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THE NEW GCSE FOR LANGUAGES

Key messages

The new examination specifications have major implications not only for students, for language teachers and for departments, but also for those involved in planning timetables and schedules for mock examinations.

Many parents will be confused by the changes, not least those to do with grading, and may well welcome an overview.

For the time being there are few resources available from the accrediting boards; it will be challenging for departments to create mock examination papers confidently.

It is recommended (as in OfSTED and ASCL advice to Headteachers) that schools do not ask teachers for predicted grades in a context where nobody has yet taken the examination, but that feedback on progress, skills and achievement should be focused more on language progress.

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Changes at GCSE include:

- No more controlled assessment
- No mixing of tiers. This will impact on middle ability students on the F/H borderline. See also [Ofqual](#) reference to evidence from English and maths results in Summer 2017 examination.
- New grading system 9-1, alongside new exam and consequent difficulty of predicting grades.
- Lengthier and more spontaneous speaking exam (with more cover needed as speaking is now under more tightly controlled conditions).
- Writing under exam conditions is a 'new' challenge.
- Increased weighting of reading and listening to 25%.
- The inclusion of literature texts and of translation tasks create new challenges.

References

ASCL:

<https://www.ascl.org.uk/download.33399CEA-AFAC-429B-854779EEF497B442.html>

OfSTED:

<https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2017/03/02/inspection-and-the-use-of-grade-predictions/>

OFQUAL issued this statement in February 2018:

<https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2018/02/06/new-gcses-in-french-german-and-spanish/>

Points for reflection/action

Key issues: You may wish to clarify with colleagues, especially those in SLT with curriculum and pastoral overview, the key issues raised above.

Issues for speaking: You may wish to discuss with colleagues how the following issues impact on your work and requirements for support. (They will be different between schools.)

Which points should your department take forward with senior leaders etc.?

- The change from the previous model of controlled assessment requires careful handling as time will be needed to build up the skills of long-term recall and the confidence students need for spontaneous speaking. Is there a need in your school to revise elements of the previous scheme of work, in order to develop areas of vocabulary and grammatical manipulation earlier on?
- Is there a need for more oral work in lessons?
- In respect to **spontaneity**; the new photo task and 'new' role-play section – are there resourcing / training needs?
- Does the raised profile of cultural aspects (e.g. literature) and accompanying technology have any resource implications?
- For exam trial runs, especially in early days, how can teachers and students get as much practice as possible?
- Might it be necessary to have an invigilator in the exam room and in the preparation room for safeguarding reasons?

Practical issues around exams: you may wish to discuss these matters within your school.

- Accommodation for the **listening** tests requires a room with good acoustics to give students the best conditions for success
- It is often considered good practice to hold mock examinations at the end of Y10 as well as in the Winter of Y11, and many teachers offer catch-up/preparation sessions after the Easter break also. These may require support/rooming or invigilation.



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Suggestions for effective practice in developing independent learners

The new requirements place value on long-term memory and extended learning opportunities (beyond lessons).

What strategies could you/your department propose to motivated learners in the area of vocabulary, extended reading, speaking or listening?

- Memorisation activities?
- Personalized word-lists?
- On-line language activities?
- Access to authentic resources?

What strategies could you propose to supportive parents who ask how they can help their children with the new examinations?

- Supporting the way you plan to build up vocabulary?
- Encouraging contact with native speakers through travel opportunities or school links you may have?
- Encouraging good habits of reading widely?
- Recommending useful websites from your own list? (especially in relation to developing listening skills)
- Exploring the school revision booklet with the student? Or a commercial one? Or the departmental textbook's digital resources?

Supporting progression

How would you characterize and describe the experience of language learning in key stage 3 and 4 to illustrate progression to primary colleagues, pupils arriving in Year 7 and their parents, Governors etc.?