



Focus on Home Heritage and Community Languages (HHCL) – GCSE and A Level Accreditation

There are many reasons for pupils to be entered for HHCL exams: it is an extra qualification often taken early and therefore providing valuable transferable exam skills. It makes a link to culture and identity which are intrinsically connected to the languages one speaks. It can raise pupils' self-esteem; and a GCSE has a currency that is understood by educators, parents, the community and future employers alike. Qualifications in HHCL can also support new arrivals.

What is happening around the country to support the accreditation of HHCL?

Some schools act as host centres, facilitating speaking exams in the local area for one or several languages. In other areas, such as Doncaster and Portsmouth, the Local Authority takes the lead, linking expert speakers (e.g. interpreters and support assistants) with schools so speaking exams can be at the pupil's school. Sometimes a school builds a relationship with a particular linguistic community. Some also offer mock exams.

What happens if I need to find an expert speaker to conduct a speaking exam?

If you do not have any of the options above, you are going to have to find potential speaking examiners.

Remember: a speaking examiner does not need to be a trained teacher. Languages teachers in mainstream schools will probably know how to conduct a speaking exam (whatever the language) and can **share this expertise** with others. Currently, no 'new' GCSE is planned beyond French, German and Spanish, so speaking exams are the same as for Year 11 pupils in 2025 .

Look for potential examiners in your own educational setting and your local network of schools. Don't forget you can share an examiner between schools.

Second, look at your local area. The most linguistically diverse employer in your local area is likely to be your local university. Is there a degree in Mandarin or Russian? A languages teaching centre offering classes for the public? Any international organisations or businesses? Places of worship linked to a particular linguistic community?

Another great source is in your local complementary / supplementary schools.

What are complementary / supplementary schools?

Sometimes referred to as community language schools or Saturday schools, they are community-

based organisations, often set up by parents wanting to maintain the language and heritage of their linguistic community. There are an estimated 3000-5000 such schools in England so it is likely there is one very close to you. You could ask pupils in your setting if they attend a community language school and where it meets. Many mainstream schools host a community language school in the evenings or weekends.

National organisations who can help include the exam boards, and some embassies and cultural institutes. For example, the Polish Embassy has mapped out all Polish Community Schools and has a database of contacts.

What if I have identified someone who could potentially conduct the exam but they need training?

As mentioned above you can likely share your existing expertise, or ask for help from colleagues who conduct speaking exams. Specifications and past papers are available on the relevant exam board website.

Top tip: read previous examiner reports for different languages to see common mistakes that examiners can avoid this time.

What if no GCSE or A Level is available in my pupils' language?

Try the ASDAN Short Language course, suitable for any language and developed in partnership with ALL. Additionally, AQA's Extended Project Qualification is worth 50% of an A Level and pupils can choose to do it in any language, including the HHCL.

Get in touch

To connect NCLE about HHCL accreditation and qualifications, tell us about your work in this area and find out about the our work, please contact clare.allison@ucl.ac.uk Development Officer for HHCL at NCLE: <https://ncle-language-hubs.ucl.ac.uk/>