

Consultation on the Removal of Speaking and Listening Assessment from GCSE English and GCSE English Language

April 2013

Ofqual/13/5274

Information pages: your details

Your name* Lesley Davies

Your organisation's name* Pearson Education Ltd.

Organisation*

- Awarding organisation for 14 to 19 general qualifications
- Awarding organisation for 14 to 19 vocational qualifications
- Awarding organisation for vocational and/or professional qualifications
- Awarding organisation for other kinds of qualifications
- School/college
- Private training provider
- Higher education institute
- Student
- Parent/carer
- Employer
- Other representative group/interest group
- Government body/organisation (national and local)
- Other (including general public)

School/college type

- Academy and/or free school
- Comprehensive
- State selective
- Independent
- Special school
- Further education
- Sixth form
- None of the above (please state what) _____

How many staff does your organisation employ (full or part time)?

- Fewer than 50
- 50 to 249
- 250 or more

Representative group/interest group type

- Group of awarding organizations
- Union
- Sector skills council
- Employer/business representative group

- Equality group
- Other voluntary or community group
- None of the above

Representative group/interest group name**

Nation*

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Other EU country (please state which) _____
- Non-EU country (please state which) _____

Email address* lesley.davies@pearson.com

How did you find out about this consultation?

- Our newsletters or other communications
- Via internet search
- From our website
- Via another organisation (please state which) _____
- Other (please state how) _____

May we contact you for more information?

- Yes No

Would you like us to treat your response as confidential?

- Yes No

We want to write clearly, directly and put the reader first. Overall, do you think we have got this right in this document?

- Yes
- No

Do you have any comments or suggestions about the style of writing? No

*Denotes mandatory fields

**Please state name of group, if you are responding from a representative group

Questions

Proposal 1

1. To what extent do you agree that we should remove the requirement for speaking and listening marks to contribute to the overall GCSE English/English language grade?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Any comments or suggestions?

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. Our research with leading international jurisdictions has confirmed that those with English as a first language do not usually assess speaking and listening formally. Speaking and listening is assessed using formal assessment in jurisdictions where English is a second language e.g. Hong Kong, but assessments follow the modern foreign languages model which does not account for the diversity of communication required from native speakers.

Proposal 2

2. To what extent do you agree that we should re-weight the assessment so that the weighting for the written paper(s) is 60 per cent and the weighting for the controlled assessment is 40 per cent (option 1)?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Any comments or suggestions?

We agree overall with the proposal but we have some concerns with the reweighting of the current qualification. The examinations and controlled assessments were originally designed for the 40% examination/60% controlled assessment model. Changing the examination to 60% would require a revision to assessment objective weightings in subject criteria and would also require amendment to the grade

descriptions. Additionally the use of 5 levels for speaking and listening assessment implies that mark schemes should also be reviewed. If this is the case then the changes will need time for implementation and teachers will need guidance and support.

Proposal 3

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

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Any comments or suggestions?

We agree that speaking and listening should be reported separately. Our research has highlighted the importance that speaking and listening skills have for stakeholders and employers. It should also be noted that although it is not formally assessed in leading native-speaking jurisdictions, speaking and listening remains at the core of the curriculum and often has a cross curricular status. In recognition of this, we therefore propose that all students should be required to complete the endorsement and that entry for the speaking and listening component be required for English Language curriculum points.

4. 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?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Any comments or suggestions?

We agree that there should not be a hurdle on achievement of speaking and listening prior to the reform of the GCSE for first teaching in 2015. However, we do think that all students should be required to take the speaking and listening endorsement. Our consultation has confirmed the importance that speaking and listening skills have for stakeholders. We believe that a requirement to take the endorsement will ensure consistency of approach and standards across cohorts.

Proposal 4

5. To what extent do you agree that we should put in place these changes for summer 2014 awards?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Any comments or suggestions?

We think that implementation for 2014 is possible but we recognise that this would need to be appropriately communicated to students who have been assessed for speaking and listening with the understanding that marks would contribute to the GCSE grade. We also draw attention to the need to review assessment objective weightings in subject criteria and amend grade descriptions.

Additionally the use of 5 levels for speaking and listening assessment implies that mark schemes should also be reviewed. If this is the case then the changes will need time for implementation and teachers will need guidance and support.

Proposal 5

6. To what extent do you agree that we should use a comparable outcomes approach to the first awards of these revised qualifications?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Any comments or suggestions?

We agree that it is sensible to use the comparable outcomes approach, particularly if this measure is implemented on a shortened timescale. However, we advise consideration of the impact of a change in standards of the redeveloped GCSE qualification which will be assessed in 2017. Use of a comparable outcomes approach from 2014-2016 will result in a noticeable impact in 2017 if a new standard is deployed.

7. Do you have any comments you would like to make about the proposed wording of the draft General Condition?

We propose that the criteria revisions include the requirement that awarding

organisations should ensure that **all** students complete the speaking and listening endorsement.

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

Timescales for implementation:

We draw attention to issues raised regarding the implementation of the proposal. The examinations and controlled assessments were originally designed for the 40% examination / 60% controlled assessment model. Changing the examination to 60% would require a revision to assessment objective weightings in subject criteria and would also require amendment to the grade descriptions. Additionally the use of 5 levels for speaking and listening assessment implies that mark schemes should also be reviewed. If this is the case then the changes will need time for implementation and teachers will need guidance and support.

Concerning speaking and listening levels:

Our research has suggested that changes should be made to speaking and listening assessment to make this more appropriate to curriculum aims. This includes a greater focus on student skills and behaviours, which are more evident in jurisdictions that successfully assess speaking and listening, and a clearer relationship between skills and assessment. The reintroduction of levels presupposes that assessment of speaking and listening requires review and we will therefore welcome the opportunity to redevelop the assessment model for speaking and listening for first assessment 2017 drawing on international and stakeholder research so that student outcomes are more valid.

About us

We regulate all academic and vocational qualifications in England, together with vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland, where those qualifications are provided by a body that is recognised by us to provide them.

We are a statutory body, created by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, as amended by the Education Act 2011. These Acts set out the legal framework within which we operate, they give us certain duties and powers to take specific forms of regulatory action, and they define the objectives that we must seek to achieve when we exercise those powers.

We regulate to secure standards of, and public confidence in, regulated qualifications. We also regulate to secure efficiency in the provision of regulated qualifications and to raise awareness of the range and benefits of regulated qualifications.

How GCSEs are regulated

All regulated qualifications must meet our *General Conditions of Recognition*¹. These demand some overarching requirements of qualifications and awarding organisations (exam boards) that offer them. For instance, qualifications must be fit for purpose and manageable, and exam boards must have in place clear and effective moderation arrangements.

As well as meeting the *General Conditions of Recognition*, GCSEs in English and English language must also meet the requirements of the *GCSE Qualification Criteria*², the *GCSE Subject Criteria for English*³ and the *GCSE Subject Criteria for English Language*⁴, and the relevant sections of the *GCSE Controlled Assessment Regulations*⁵. These regulations were put in place in 2007 and 2008 by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), our predecessor body. They reflect the joint regulatory and development roles that QCA had.

¹ www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-11-20-general-conditions-of-recognition-november-2012.pdf

² www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-01-13-criteria-for-gcse-qualifications.pdf

³ www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/11-10-19-gcse-subject-criteria-english.pdf

⁴ www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/11-10-19-gcse-subject-criteria-english-language.pdf

⁵ www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/11-10-06-gcse-controlled-assessments-regulations.pdf