Oxford Cambridge and RSA

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# GCSE (9-1)

*Moderators' report*

# *ENGLISH LANGUAGE*

**J351**
For first teaching in 2015

# J351/03/04 Summer 2019 series
Version 1

# Contents

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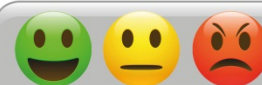
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# Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by our moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements; identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation and comments on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. This report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost to other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

OCR completes moderation of centre-assessed work in order to quality assure the internal assessment judgements made by assessors within a centre. Where OCR cannot confirm the centre's marks, we may adjust them in order to align them to the national standard. Any adjustments to centre marks are detailed on the Moderation Adjustments report, which can be downloaded from Interchange when results are issued. Centres should also refer to their individual centre report provided after moderation has been completed. In combination, these centre-specific documents and this overall report should help to support centres' internal assessment and moderation practice for future series.

# General overview

The spoken language endorsement is a compulsory component of GCSE English Language. The endorsement is to be reported as a separate grade (Pass, Merit, Distinction or Not Classified) and does not contribute to the result of the overall GCSE English Language qualification.

Candidates must undertake a prepared spoken presentation on a specific topic following which they must listen to and respond appropriately to questions and feedback. Presentations must be formal but may take a wide variety of forms.

The spoken language endorsement is assessed holistically as a grade, using competency-based marking criteria. Competency means that a student must meet all the criteria in a grade to achieve it. If they only meet some of the criteria, they cannot be given that grade.

Centres are responsible for internal standardisation of assessments across all teaching groups. Standardisation materials are available on the OCR website and should be used to train all teaching staff involved in the assessments.

In this session the vast majority of centres embraced the opportunities offered by the new Spoken Language component and monitors reported seeing some excellent work in centres of all sizes, with the full range of ability able to access and pass the assessment. The topics chosen were mostly appropriate and engaged candidates fully, and the questioning was generally helpful in helping candidates to achieve their potential.

## Administration

Centres were required to submit recorded evidence of the assessments, sending up to 30 recordings to the monitor to allow the centre's grading to be monitored. Up to ten recordings of assessments on all three grades, distinction, merit and pass, were required where appropriate. Some centres chose to upload their recordings onto the OCR repository; others sent their recordings to the monitor on USB sticks or DVDs. The majority of centres sent the correct number of recordings on each grade, however a small number of centres did not send 30 recordings where they had fewer than ten candidates on a particular grade. Centres are reminded that where this occurs, they should make the total number of recordings in the sample up to 30 by sending more recordings of the grades that they do have available.

Centres are also required to send the monitor a copy of the centre mark sheet detailing the grades of all candidates, not just those in the sample, but the majority of centres did not fulfil this requirement and had to be contacted. This session there was also a new requirement for centres to send details of the teaching sets. A large number of centres did not include the appropriate forms and had to be contacted by the monitor.

Monitors reported that the vast majority of centres submitted their recordings by the deadline and the USB sticks/DVDs were clearly and helpfully labelled with candidate numbers, names and the grade given. A small number of centres did not label them fully and had to be contacted to provide more details, usually the grade given to individual candidates.

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### Key point - Documentation

Centres should make sure that they have sent all necessary documentation to the monitor:

- Video recordings of ten candidates on each grade, clearly labelled with candidate name, number and grade given
- A copy of the centre grade sheet submitted to OCR
- Teaching set details on the appropriate form.

For centres using the OCR repository, the grades sheets and teaching set forms should be uploaded under the Admin tab.

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## Assessment preparation and procedures in centres

Centres are required to agree a topic with the candidates and offer them sufficient preparation and guidance for the assessment. The filmed assessments should take place in a suitable setting, which can be during a lesson. The camera should remain focused on the candidate, offering a clear view, and the sound quality should make sure that every word can be heard clearly, including the questions. Questions can come from other candidates or the teacher, but it is the teacher's responsibility to make sure that all questions are appropriate and helpful in terms of inviting the candidate to extend their talk.

This session the topics chosen varied widely and it was clear in the majority of centres that students had made choices which were judiciously guided by the teacher allowing for personal engagement with the subject-matter as well as an appropriate level of complexity for the grade given. In a small number of centres, monitors reported seeing topics which were too heavily based on literature texts, where candidates had clearly not had much choice in their subject-matter. The standard of these presentations was often lower as a result, and there was often little sense of purpose or genuine engagement. For any candidates aiming for merit or distinction grades, the topics need to have a level of complexity and interpretation. Less complex topics, such as work-experience, or my favourite hobby, should be reserved for candidates aiming for a pass grade.

> ### Key point – Subject-matter choice
>
> Centres are reminded that candidates should have some control over their choice of subject-matter. Literature topics should only be used where they have been chosen by the candidate.

Monitors reported that the filming of the assessments was mostly very helpful and with appropriate levels of visual and sound quality. However, some centres did not provide a recording of the whole assessment, including the questions. Centres are reminded that the whole assessment must be filmed with the candidate clearly in view. There is no need to film the person asking the questions or to scan the audience. Occasionally the sound quality on the recording was poor, sometimes due to extraneous noise in the background and sometimes due to the camera being positioned too far from the candidate where projection was poor and could not be picked up fully by the camera's microphone. It is crucial that monitors can hear every word of the presentation and the questions for effective monitoring to take place. It is also fairer to candidates if background noise and disturbances are kept to a minimum during these assessments. A few centres only sent audio recordings which were not sufficient for full monitoring to take place.

Monitors reported that some films were difficult to access where they were too large for monitors to upload or saved in an unusual format, although there was further improvement in this area this year. Centres should check their submissions carefully to make sure that they can be accessed easily.

Monitors reported seeing a great deal of good practice, where candidates had planned their presentation carefully and used a wide variety of presentational skills and rhetorical devices to engage their audience, judiciously using a PowerPoint or short notes to assist them.

Unfortunately, there was far too much reliance on whole scripts in many centres where candidates were simply reading a pre-prepared script, sometimes with very little emphasis and often far too quickly. This led to ineffective talks with no communication established between the presenter and the audience. Often these candidates had been given higher grades that seemed to be based on the content of the script rather than how effectively the content was delivered. These higher grades could not be justified, as the requirement to engage the audience had not been met. Other candidates used PowerPoint slides which contained far too much information and were read aloud by the candidate.

The presentations and questions should last 8 – 10 minutes. Monitors reported seeing a number of presentations that were very short – between 1 and 2 minutes at times. Some of these presentations had been given distinctions and merits. Although at times the questions allowed candidates to expand their talk through extended answers enabling a higher grade, this was not always the case. Centres are reminded that candidates aiming for higher grades should present an extended talk on their topic, allowing them to fulfil all the criteria for these grades. Conversely, some presentations were far too long, and some monitors reported seeing individual presentations and questions lasting up to 40 minutes. This is not helpful for either the candidate or the monitoring process and centres are reminded that 10 minutes is the maximum time recommended. Teachers should work closely with candidates to make sure that their presentations are an appropriate length.

The questions asked should help candidates to extend their talk rather than repeat information. Monitors reported seeing some excellent examples of pertinent questions which enabled candidates to achieve a higher grade in many cases; these questions tended to probe and challenge using precise language. Other questions were less helpful and sometimes far too long, sometimes leaving the candidates with little to add, or they were asked closed questions which invited very perfunctory responses. It is essential that the questions are teacher-led rather than allowing other students to freely ask questions, as often student-led questions were far less helpful to the candidates. Candidates should not be told the questions in advance.

Some centres adopted a format where the teacher used questions to structure the candidate's talk for them. This is a supportive format, but it is one that should be reserved for candidates aiming to achieve a pass grade.

The majority of centres used the competency-based mark scheme accurately and put candidates in the correct grade band. As the marking criteria for the Spoken Language component is competency-based, candidates must fulfil all the criteria in the appropriate grade descriptor to achieve that grade. There was some evidence in a few centres that a 'best-fit' approach was being taken and candidates were given a higher grade based on fulfilling one of the descriptors in the grade above. Centres are reminded that internal moderation must take place to make sure that the mark scheme has been applied fairly and consistently across all teaching sets.

### Key point – Over marking

Where candidates had been over-marked, it was usually for one of the following reasons:

- the presentation was too short and undeveloped
- the candidate read aloud a pre-prepared essay with no attempt to engage the audience or meet the needs of the audience
- the candidate did not use the range of strategies required for a distinction grade.

Where centres had enthusiastically embraced the demands and challenges of this new Spoken Language component, candidates had produced some outstanding work. Monitors reported seeing a great deal of excellent presentations where the candidates were enthusiastic about their subject and fully engaged the audience. It is hoped that as centres get more used to the requirements of this component, all candidates will be given opportunities across the course to develop a range of oracy skills in preparation for this final assessment.

## Avoiding potential malpractice

Monitors could consider the following to be potential malpractice

- not sending a full range of filmed samples

- not covering a range of teaching groups in the filmed sample

- recordings that are missing sound or video

- no questions asked or scripted responses to questions

- a speech that is clearly plagiarised from another source

To avoid potential malpractice, centres should follow the guidance and instructions given by OCR.

## Helpful resources

OCR's guide to the spoken language assessment is available on the OCR website and offers a complete scheme of work to prepare students for their final assessed presentation.

## Additional comments

Working on the skills required for the Spoken Language component is essential throughout the course, to help candidates to develop effective strategies for this final assessment. It was clear that many candidates were not aware of the need to engage with their audience using gesture, eye-contact and body language to make their presentations effective. Spoken language skills can be developed through group and paired presentations when studying literature texts or developing ideas for non-fictional writing tasks. They should be built into the GCSE Language and Literature schemes of work to develop the students' skills and confidence gradually.

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## Supporting you

For further details of this qualification please visit the subject webpage.

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