

GCSE



Subject Criteria and Requirements
ENGLISH LANGUAGE



December 2015



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The criteria

Introduction

Subject criteria set out for all GCSE specifications the:

- knowledge and understanding, and skills; and
- Assessment Objectives (AOs) and assessment arrangements.

Along with the GCSE Design Principles, they provide the framework to support Awarding Organisations in the development of their GCSE specifications.

Aims and learning outcomes

The GCSE specification in English Language must provide a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study that will motivate learners and enable them to progress with confidence to further study and/or employment. It must enable learners to make appropriate judgements about choice and use of language across the curriculum. The specification must build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established through the Northern Ireland Curriculum at Key Stage 3.

1. The GCSE specification in English Language must enable learners to:
 - demonstrate skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing necessary to communicate with others confidently, effectively, precisely and appropriately, for a range of audiences and purposes using appropriate media;
 - express themselves creatively and imaginatively;
 - become critical readers of a range of texts, including multimodal texts;
 - use reading to develop their own skills as writers;
 - understand the patterns, structures and conventions of written and spoken English;
 - understand the impact of variations in spoken and written language; and
 - select and adapt speech and writing to different situations and audiences.

Subject content

2. The content of GCSE specifications in English Language must reflect the learning outcomes.
3. GCSE specification must specify the content in ways that promote an integrated approach to speaking and listening, reading and writing.
4. The specification must be consistent with the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum at Key Stage 4 and must allow learners to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of language and its use as specified below.

Studying language

5. GCSE specifications in English Language must require learners to:
 - engage with and make fresh connections between ideas, texts, words and images;
 - analyse spoken and written language, exploring impact and how it is achieved; and
 - understand how spoken language and written language evolve in response to changes in society.
6. In studying written language, GCSE specifications must require learners to:
 - understand how meaning is constructed through words, sentences and whole texts, including multimodal texts and at least one extended text, recognising the effects of language choices and patterns;
 - evaluate the ways in which texts may be interpreted differently according to the perspective of the reader;
 - explore language variation and how it varies according to audience and reader.
7. In the study of spoken language, the GCSE specification must require learners to:
 - reflect and comment critically on uses of language in a range of contexts and how language is adapted to different listeners and purposes;
 - understand the reason for, and effect of, choices in use of standard and non-standard forms of language and how these may vary over time and place;
 - analyse the characteristics of, and influences on, spoken language.

Using language

8. The specification must require learners to:
 - demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of written language, including grammar, spelling and punctuation;
 - experiment with language to create effects to engage the audience;
 - express 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 reason, evidence or argument.

9. In writing, the specification 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.
10. In speaking and listening, the specification must require learners to:
- present and listen to information and ideas;
 - respond appropriately to the questions and views of others;
 - make a range of effective contributions, using creative and sensitive approaches to exploring questions, solving problems, developing and challenging ideas;
 - reflect on their own and others' uses of language;
 - participate in a range of real-life contexts in and beyond the classroom, adapting talk appropriately to situation and audience;
 - select and use a range of dramatic techniques and creative approaches to explore ideas, texts and issues in scripted and improvised work.

Assessment Arrangements

11. The assessment arrangements must enable knowledge, understanding and skills in English Language to be reported as an overall grade. There should also be an opportunity to assess the ability of candidates in Functional English and to report this ability as a competence profile¹. In addition, consideration should be given in specification development for GCSE English Language and for GCSE English Literature for texts to be available that could be assessed for both specifications. This will enable candidates to use individual assessment tasks that could contribute to the overall assessment arrangements in both GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature.

Assessment Objectives

12. All specifications in English Language must require learners to demonstrate their ability to:

Assessment Objectives		Weighting
AO1	<p>Speaking and listening</p> <p>Learners should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speak to 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 present meaning; • interact with others, shaping meanings through suggestions, comments and questions and drawing ideas together; and • create and sustain different roles. 	20%

¹ the key competencies that a candidate must demonstrate to show they are competent in a particular area

AO2	<p>Study of spoken language</p> <p>Learners should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand variations in spoken language, explaining why language changes in relation to contexts; and • evaluate the impact of spoken language choices in their own and others' use. 	10%
AO3	<p>Studying written language</p> <p>Learners should be able to:</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; and • explain and evaluate how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational features to achieve effects and engage and influence the reader. 	35%
AO4	<p>Writing</p> <p>Learners should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write to 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; and • use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, employing accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	35%

Scheme of assessment

13. Specifications must allocate a weighting of 60 percent to external assessment and a weighting of 40 per cent to controlled assessment in the overall scheme of assessment.
14. Assessments must allocate an appropriate weighting for the assessment of Functional English.