

GCSE LANGUAGES (SPEAKING)

Guidance in the application of the common assessment criteria for the 2021 series

Resources booklet

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Common criteria for assessment of Speaking in 2021

GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Modern Foreign Languages and Certificate Requirements (2021)

Table 1: The criteria for Pass, Merit and Distinction

Grade	Communication and interaction	Range of language	Accuracy	Pronunciation and intonation
Pass	<p>To be awarded a pass, the learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gives some relevant information in generally short responses. conveys simple opinions. asks some straightforward questions. may not always understand questions asked, but responses to those which are understood are comprehensible. demonstrates a basic level of interaction. 	<p>To be awarded a pass, the learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses mostly simple grammatical structures. uses a limited range of familiar vocabulary and expressions. makes reference to present and past and/or future events with occasional success. 	<p>To be awarded a pass, the learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is mainly correct when using familiar vocabulary and simple grammatical structures. is likely to make errors, which sometimes impede communication. 	<p>To be awarded a pass, the learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses pronunciation that is mostly understandable. makes errors that sometimes impede communication. there may be frequent native language interference.

Merit	<p>To be awarded a merit, the Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conveys mainly relevant information with occasional longer responses. expresses opinions with some simple justification. asks some varied questions to obtain information. responds to questions and develops some answers. demonstrates a good level of interaction. 	<p>To be awarded a merit, the Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> manipulates straightforward grammatical structures with some variation and occasional complex structures. uses relevant and some varied vocabulary and expressions. is generally successful in making reference to present, past and future events. 	<p>To be awarded a merit, the Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a generally good level of accuracy when using straightforward vocabulary and grammatical structures. is likely to make errors, particularly when more complex language is attempted. Such errors sometimes hinder clarity of communication. 	<p>To be awarded a merit, the Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses generally good pronunciation and intonation but with some inconsistency. makes some errors that occasionally impede communication. there may be some native language interference.
Dist.	<p>To be awarded a distinction, the Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicates detailed and relevant information, including extended responses. expresses a variety of opinions with justification. asks a variety of questions using a range of question forms. responds to a variety of questions, often developing their answers. demonstrates a very good level of interaction. 	<p>To be awarded a distinction, the Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> manipulates a variety of grammatical structures including some complex structures. uses a range of relevant vocabulary and a variety of expressions. is mostly successful in making references to present, past and future events. 	<p>To be awarded a distinction, the Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses predominantly accurate language using a range of relevant vocabulary and some complex grammatical structures. is likely to make errors that are usually minor or occur when complex structures and/or less familiar vocabulary are attempted. Such errors rarely hinder clarity of communication. 	<p>To be awarded a distinction, the Learner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses pronunciation and intonation that are overall accurate and intelligible. makes errors which rarely impede communication. there may be only isolated native language interference.

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Student's name: _____ Final level

Communication and interaction

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Information	Some relevant, in short responses	Mainly relevant, occasional longer responses	Detailed, including extended responses
Opinions	Simple	Opinions with simple justification	Variety of opinions with justification
Asking questions	Some, straightforward	Varied	Variety, range of question forms
Responses	Comprehensible when given, at times cannot answer	Develops some answers	To a variety of questions, often developed
Interaction	Basic	Good	Very good

Range of language

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Grammatical structures	Mostly simple	Some variation of straightforward structures and occasionally complex	Variety of structures, including complex structures
Vocabulary and expressions	Limited	Varied	A range of vocab and variety of expressions
Time frames	Present and past and/or future with occasional success	Present, past and future, generally successful	Present, past and future, mostly successful

Accuracy

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall accuracy	Mainly correct in familiar vocab and simple structures	Generally good in straightforward vocab and structures	Predominantly accurate in range of vocab, including in some complex language
Errors	Widespread, sometimes impeding communication	Likely, especially in complex language, when communication is hindered	Usually minor or in complex language. Rarely hinder clarity

Pronunciation and intonation

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall pron and intonation	Mostly understandable	Generally good, but some inconsistency	Accurate and intelligible
Errors	Sometimes impede communication	Occasionally impede communication	Rarely impede communication
Native language interference	Maybe frequent	Some	Isolated

Themes	1	2	3
Activities			

Examples of completed checklists and grades



Student's name: STUDENT 1

Final level

NC

Communication and interaction

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Information	Some relevant, in short responses ✓	Mainly relevant, occasional longer responses	Detailed, including extended responses
Opinions	Simple ✓	Opinions with simple justification	Variety of opinions with justification
Asking questions	Some, straightforward	Varied	Variety, range of question forms
Responses	Comprehensible when given, at times cannot answer ✓	Develops some answers	To a variety of questions, often developed
Interaction	Basic ✓	Good	Very good

Range of language

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Grammatical structures	Mostly simple ✓	Some variation of straightforward structures and occasionally complex	Variety of structures, including complex structures
Vocabulary and expressions	Limited ✓	Varied	A range of vocab and variety of expressions
Time frames	Present and past and/or future with occasional success ✓	Present, past and future, generally successful	Present, past and future, mostly successful

Accuracy

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall accuracy	Mainly correct in familiar vocab and simple structures ✓	Generally good in straightforward vocab and structures	Predominantly accurate in range of vocab, including in some complex language
Errors	Widespread, sometimes impeding communication ✓	Likely, especially in complex language, when communication is hindered	Usually minor or in complex language. Rarely hinder clarity

Pronunciation and intonation

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall pron and intonation	Mostly understandable ✓	Generally good, but some inconsistency	Accurate and intelligible
Errors	Sometimes impede communication ✓	Occasionally impede communication	Rarely impede communication
Native language interference	Maybe frequent ✓	Some	Isolated

Themes	1 ✓	2 ✓	3
Activities	Role-play Conversation		

Student's name: STUDENT 2

Final level

Communication and interaction

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Information	Some relevant, in short responses ✓	Mainly relevant, occasional longer responses ✓	Detailed, including extended responses ✓
Opinions	Simple ✓	Opinions with simple justification ✓	Variety of opinions with justification ✓
Asking questions	Some, straightforward ✓	Varied ✓	Variety, range of question forms ✓
Responses	Comprehensible when given, at times cannot answer ✓	Develops some answers ✓	To a variety of questions, often developed ✓
Interaction	Basic ✓	Good ✓	Very good ✓

Range of language

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Grammatical structures	Mostly simple ✓	Some variation of straightforward structures and occasionally complex ✓	Variety of structures, including complex structures ✓
Vocabulary and expressions	Limited ✓	Varied ✓	A range of vocab and variety of expressions ✓
Time frames	Present and past and/or future with occasional success ✓	Present, past and future, generally successful ✓	Present, past and future, mostly successful ✓

Accuracy

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall accuracy	Mainly correct in familiar vocab and simple structures ✓	Generally good in straightforward vocab and structures ✓	Predominantly accurate in range of vocab, including in some complex language ✓
Errors	Widespread, sometimes impeding communication ✓	Likely, especially in complex language, when communication is hindered ✓	Usually minor or in complex language. Rarely hinder clarity ✓

Pronunciation and intonation

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall pron and intonation	Mostly understandable ✓	Generally good, but some inconsistency ✓	Accurate and intelligible ✓
Errors	Sometimes impede communication ✓	Occasionally impede communication ✓	Rarely impede communication ✓
Native language interference	Maybe frequent ✓	Some ✓	Isolated ✓

Themes	1	2 ✓	3 ✓
Activities	Photo-based task Conversation		
	Presentation		

Student's name: STUDENT 3

Final level

Communication and interaction

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION	
Information	Some relevant, in short responses	✓	Mainly relevant, occasional longer responses	✓	Detailed, including extended responses	✓
Opinions	Simple	✓	Opinions with simple justification	✓	Variety of opinions with justification	✓
Asking questions	Some, straightforward	✓	Varied	✓	Variety, range of question forms	✓
Responses	Comprehensible when given, at times cannot answer	✓	Develops some answers	✓	To a variety of questions, often developed	✓
Interaction	Basic	✓	Good	✓	Very good	✓

Range of language

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION	
Grammatical structures	Mostly simple	✓	Some variation of straightforward structures and occasionally complex	✓	Variety of structures, including complex structures	✓
Vocabulary and expressions	Limited	✓	Varied	✓	A range of vocab and variety of expressions	✓
Time frames	Present and past and/or future with occasional success	✓	Present, past and future, generally successful	✓	Present, past and future, mostly successful	✓

Accuracy

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION	
Overall accuracy	Mainly correct in familiar vocab and simple structures	✓	Generally good in straightforward vocab and structures	✓	Predominantly accurate in range of vocab, including in some complex language	✓
Errors	Widespread, sometimes impeding communication	✓	Likely, especially in complex language, when communication is hindered	✓	Usually minor or in complex language. Rarely hinder clarity	✓

Pronunciation and intonation

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION	
Overall pron and intonation	Mostly understandable	✓	Generally good, but some inconsistency	✓	Accurate and intelligible	✓
Errors	Sometimes impede communication	✓	Occasionally impede communication	✓	Rarely impede communication	✓
Native language interference	Maybe frequent	✓	Some	✓	Isolated	✓

Themes	1 ✓	2 ✓	3 ✓
Activities	Presentation + discussion Conversation		
	Role-play		

Student's name: STUDENT 4

Final level

M

Communication and interaction

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Information	Some relevant, in short responses ✓	Mainly relevant, occasional longer responses ✓	Detailed, including extended responses ✓
Opinions	Simple ✓	Opinions with simple justification ✓	Variety of opinions with justification ✓
Asking questions	Some, straightforward ✓	Varied ✓	Variety, range of question forms ✓
Responses	Comprehensible when given, at times cannot answer ✓	Develops some answers ✓	To a variety of questions, often developed ✓
Interaction	Basic ✓	Good ✓	Very good ✓

Range of language

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Grammatical structures	Mostly simple ✓	Some variation of straightforward structures and occasionally complex ✓	Variety of structures, including complex structures ✓
Vocabulary and expressions	Limited ✓	Varied ✓	A range of vocab and variety of expressions ✓
Time frames	Present and past and/or future with occasional success ✓	Present, past and future, generally successful ✓	Present, past and future, mostly successful ✓

Accuracy

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall accuracy	Mainly correct in familiar vocab and simple structures ✓	Generally good in straightforward vocab and structures ✓	Predominantly accurate in range of vocab, including in some complex language ✓
Errors	Widespread, sometimes impeding communication ✓	Likely, especially in complex language, when communication is hindered ✓	Usually minor or in complex language. Rarely hinder clarity ✓

Pronunciation and intonation

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall pron and intonation	Mostly understandable ✓	Generally good, but some inconsistency ✓	Accurate and intelligible ✓
Errors	Sometimes impede communication ✓	Occasionally impede communication ✓	Rarely impede communication ✓
Native language interference	Maybe frequent ✓	Some ✓	Isolated ✓

Themes	1 ✓	2	3 ✓
Activities	Conversation Photo-based task		

Student's name: STUDENT 5

Final level

P

Communication and interaction

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION
Information	Some relevant, in short responses	✓	Mainly relevant, occasional longer responses	✓	Detailed, including extended responses
Opinions	Simple	✓	Opinions with simple justification	✓	Variety of opinions with justification
Asking questions	Some, straightforward	✓	Varied	✓	Variety, range of question forms
Responses	Comprehensible when given, at times cannot answer	✓	Develops some answers	✓	To a variety of questions, often developed
Interaction	Basic	✓	Good	✓	Very good

Range of language

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION
Grammatical structures	Mostly simple	✓	Some variation of straightforward structures and occasionally complex	✓	Variety of structures, including complex structures
Vocabulary and expressions	Limited	✓	Varied	✓	A range of vocab and variety of expressions
Time frames	Present and past and/or future with occasional success	✓	Present, past and future, generally successful	✓	Present, past and future, mostly successful

Accuracy

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION
Overall accuracy	Mainly correct in familiar vocab and simple structures	✓	Generally good in straightforward vocab and structures	✓	Predominantly accurate in range of vocab, including in some complex language
Errors	Widespread, sometimes impeding communication	✓	Likely, especially in complex language, when communication is hindered	✓	Usually minor or in complex language. Rarely hinder clarity

Pronunciation and intonation

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION
Overall pron and intonation	Mostly understandable	✓	Generally good, but some inconsistency	✓	Accurate and intelligible
Errors	Sometimes impede communication	✓	Occasionally impede communication	✓	Rarely impede communication
Native language interference	Maybe frequent	✓	Some	✓	Isolated

Themes	1 ✓	2 ✓	3
Activities	Conversation Role-play	Presentation	

Student's name: STUDENT 6

Final level

P

Communication and interaction

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Information	Some relevant, in short responses ✓	Mainly relevant, occasional longer responses ✓	Detailed, including extended responses ✓
Opinions	Simple ✓	Opinions with simple justification ✓	Variety of opinions with justification ✓
Asking questions	Some, straightforward ✓	Varied ✓	Variety, range of question forms ✓
Responses	Comprehensible when given, at times cannot answer ✓	Develops some answers ✓	To a variety of questions, often developed ✓
Interaction	Basic ✓	Good ✓	Very good ✓

Range of language

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Grammatical structures	Mostly simple ✓	Some variation of straightforward structures and occasionally complex ✓	Variety of structures, including complex structures ✓
Vocabulary and expressions	Limited ✓	Varied ✓	A range of vocab and variety of expressions ✓
Time frames	Present and past and/or future with occasional success ✓	Present, past and future, generally successful ✓	Present, past and future, mostly successful ✓

Accuracy

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall accuracy	Mainly correct in familiar vocab and simple structures ✓	Generally good in straightforward vocab and structures ✓	Predominantly accurate in range of vocab, including in some complex language ✓
Errors	Widespread, sometimes impeding communication ✓	Likely, especially in complex language, when communication is hindered ✓	Usually minor or in complex language. Rarely hinder clarity ✓

Pronunciation and intonation

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall pron and intonation	Mostly understandable ✓	Generally good, but some inconsistency ✓	Accurate and intelligible ✓
Errors	Sometimes impede communication ✓	Occasionally impede communication ✓	Rarely impede communication ✓
Native language interference	Maybe frequent ✓	Some ✓	Isolated ✓

Themes	1 ✓	2 ✓	3 ✓
Activities	Presentation + discussion Role-play		Conversation

Students 2 and 3 with final levels



Student's name: STUDENT 2

Final level

M

Communication and interaction

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Information	Some relevant, in short responses ✓	Mainly relevant, occasional longer responses ✓	Detailed, including extended responses ✓
Opinions	Simple ✓	Opinions with simple justification ✓	Variety of opinions with justification ✓
Asking questions	Some, straightforward ✓	Varied ✓	Variety, range of question forms ✓
Responses	Comprehensible when given, at times cannot answer ✓	Develops some answers ✓	To a variety of questions, often developed ✓
Interaction	Basic ✓	Good ✓	Very good ✓

Range of language

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Grammatical structures	Mostly simple ✓	Some variation of straightforward structures and occasionally complex ✓	Variety of structures, including complex structures ✓
Vocabulary and expressions	Limited ✓	Varied ✓	A range of vocab and variety of expressions ✓
Time frames	Present and past and/or future with occasional success ✓	Present, past and future, generally successful ✓	Present, past and future, mostly successful ✓

Accuracy

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall accuracy	Mainly correct in familiar vocab and simple structures ✓	Generally good in straightforward vocab and structures ✓	Predominantly accurate in range of vocab, including in some complex language ✓
Errors	Widespread, sometimes impeding communication ✓	Likely, especially in complex language, when communication is hindered ✓	Usually minor or in complex language. Rarely hinder clarity ✓

Pronunciation and intonation

	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Overall pron and intonation	Mostly understandable ✓	Generally good, but some inconsistency ✓	Accurate and intelligible ✓
Errors	Sometimes impede communication ✓	Occasionally impede communication ✓	Rarely impede communication ✓
Native language interference	Maybe frequent ✓	Some ✓	Isolated ✓

Themes	1	2 ✓	3 ✓
Activities	Photo-based task Conversation		
	Presentation		

Student's name: STUDENT 3

Final level

D

Communication and interaction

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION	
Information	Some relevant, in short responses	✓	Mainly relevant, occasional longer responses	✓	Detailed, including extended responses	✓
Opinions	Simple	✓	Opinions with simple justification	✓	Variety of opinions with justification	✓
Asking questions	Some, straightforward	✓	Varied	✓	Variety, range of question forms	✓
Responses	Comprehensible when given, at times cannot answer	✓	Develops some answers	✓	To a variety of questions, often developed	✓
Interaction	Basic	✓	Good	✓	Very good	✓

Range of language

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION	
Grammatical structures	Mostly simple	✓	Some variation of straightforward structures and occasionally complex	✓	Variety of structures, including complex structures	✓
Vocabulary and expressions	Limited	✓	Varied	✓	A range of vocab and variety of expressions	✓
Time frames	Present and past and/or future with occasional success	✓	Present, past and future, generally successful	✓	Present, past and future, mostly successful	✓

Accuracy

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION	
Overall accuracy	Mainly correct in familiar vocab and simple structures	✓	Generally good in straightforward vocab and structures	✓	Predominantly accurate in range of vocab, including in some complex language	✓
Errors	Widespread, sometimes impeding communication	✓	Likely, especially in complex language, when communication is hindered	✓	Usually minor or in complex language. Rarely hinder clarity	✓

Pronunciation and intonation

	PASS		MERIT		DISTINCTION	
Overall pron and intonation	Mostly understandable	✓	Generally good, but some inconsistency	✓	Accurate and intelligible	✓
Errors	Sometimes impede communication	✓	Occasionally impede communication	✓	Rarely impede communication	✓
Native language interference	Maybe frequent	✓	Some	✓	Isolated	✓

Themes	1 ✓	2 ✓	3 ✓
Activities	Presentation + discussion Conversation		Role-play

Award of level commentaries for completed checklists

Student 1

This student has fulfilled all but one of the criteria needed for the award of Pass in the Communication and interaction aspect. However, for the award of any level, all of the criteria for Communication and interaction must be met at that level. This student has been unable to ask questions, or may only have been able to ask one question (at least two are needed for this part of the criteria to be accomplished). This means that the student cannot be awarded a Pass level for Communication and interaction.

Level awarded: Not classified

Student 2

The student fulfilled all of the criteria for Merit as far as Communication and interaction are concerned and then, towards the end of the course, began to show some features of the Distinction criteria. However, only two of the criteria for Distinction for the Communication and interaction aspect were accomplished and so Distinction for Communication and interaction is not possible. The student has frequent problems with native language interference which means that the Pronunciation and intonation level is Pass. In this case, Distinction overall cannot be awarded as the student has not met all of the criteria for Communication and interaction at Distinction. Merit can be awarded as the final level, because only one aspect is one level lower than that achieved for Communication and interaction (Range of language and Accuracy both achieve Merit level). If this had been true of two aspects, then the award would have been Pass.

Level awarded: Merit

Student 3

The student is working at Distinction for Communication and interaction and in two of the other three aspects. For Range of language, the range of vocabulary is not wide enough for Distinction; however, this aspect is the only one that is one level below the level awarded for Communication and interaction, and so Distinction is the overall award.

Level awarded: Distinction

Student 4

This student is working at Distinction level for all aspects apart from Communication and interaction, where the interaction element is good, rather than very good. This means that Distinction cannot be awarded, because all of the criteria in this key aspect of Communication and interaction have to be met at Distinction for an overall level of Distinction to be awarded.

Level awarded: Merit

Student 5

This student meets all of the criteria for Merit in Communication and interaction and in Accuracy. Although some elements of the Merit criteria are achieved for Range of language and for Pronunciation and intonation, they are not met in full. This means that the student is working at Pass level in those two aspects, since all the criteria have to be met for a student to be awarded the level for the aspect under consideration. Only **one** aspect may be **one** level below the level for Communication and interaction for the overall award of that level, and so Pass has to be given here.

Level awarded: Pass

Student 6

This student has fulfilled all of the criteria for Distinction in the two aspects of Communication and interaction and Range and Accuracy. However, none of the criteria for Distinction has been met in the other two aspects. Even at Merit, not all of the criteria have been met for the aspects of Accuracy or for Pronunciation and intonation, which means that the student has a Pass level in those two aspects. This is two levels below the award for Communication and interaction. Only **one** aspect can be **one** level below the level for Communication and interaction for the overall award of the Communication and interaction level. The student cannot be awarded Merit, as only one aspect is permissible at the level below and here this is the case in two aspects. This means that the award is a Pass.

Level awarded: Pass

Resources

- JCQ's Notice to Centres: Informing candidates of their centre assessed marks
[jqc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Notice-to-Centres-Informing-candidates-of-their-centre-assessed-marks.pdf](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Notice-to-Centres-Informing-candidates-of-their-centre-assessed-marks.pdf)
- Centre Declaration Form for 2021
[aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/coursework-controlled-assessment-nea/202021-record-forms/centre-declaration-sheets](https://www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/coursework-controlled-assessment-nea/202021-record-forms/centre-declaration-sheets)
- Our guide for assessment insights and practical examples
bit.ly/3moDpvZ

Contact us

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