
Great assessment: Examples from Listening and Reading

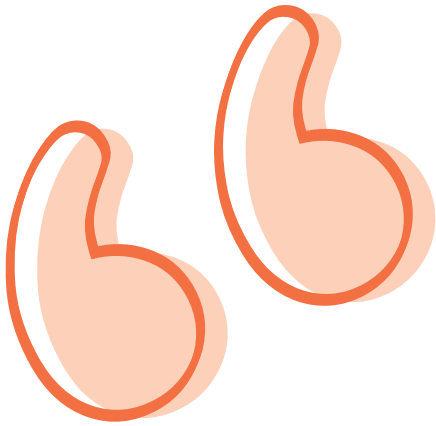


Great assessment
for all students

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Help prepare your GCSE students with confidence

Every year, in GCSE languages exams, students miss out on marks for a variety of reasons. Students often misread questions or don't follow the instructions carefully and so don't always do what the question is asking them to do.



This booklet has been designed by our curriculum experts for you to use with your students to explore and highlight some of these common mistakes. We have included examples of question types where students often miss out on marks, examiner commentaries and top tips to help reinforce fundamental skills, good exam techniques and best practice approaches.

The following examples from the 2019 exam series highlight some of the points made in the webinar presentations and we hope that you find these helpful to use with your students.

Using the information in the questions and any examples

Example 1

Spanish Higher Tier Listening 2019

Questions 20-23

Customs and festivals

You are watching a Spanish TV interview with Alejandro Herrera, the organiser of a famous Spanish festival.

What questions does the interviewer ask him? Answer in **English**.

Transcript

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 20 | M1 | ¿Vale la pena gastar todo ese dinero en la fiesta? |
| 21 | M1 | ¿Cuántos visitantes extranjeros vendrán a la ciudad? |
| 22 | M1 | ¿Qué sectores de la economía se beneficiarán más? |
| 23 | M1 | ¿Cómo va usted a solucionar el problema de la basura? |

Top tips

You should always use the question title, the rubric and any examples given to make the context quite clear. In this way, any educated guesswork can be channelled in the correct direction. Many students didn't score the mark in Question 20 because they referred to a party.

Commentary

This question was targeted at the highest grades. The most common mistake here occurred when students didn't read the scene-setting to introduce the question and didn't notice that the interview was about a **festival**. We are told that an interviewer is talking to the organiser of a festival so when the word *fiesta* is used, it has that meaning and not that of 'a party'.

Focusing on the information required

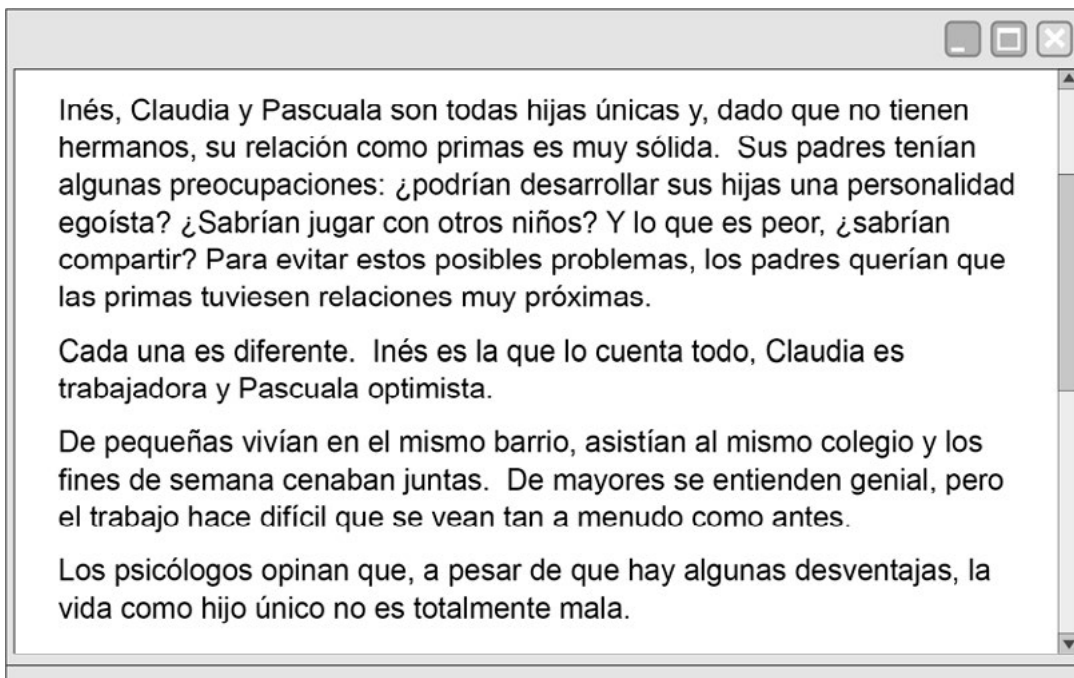
Example 2

Spanish Higher Tier Reading 2019

Question 3

Spanish families

You see this article on a Spanish website.



Inés, Claudia y Pascuala son todas hijas únicas y, dado que no tienen hermanos, su relación como primas es muy sólida. Sus padres tenían algunas preocupaciones: ¿podrían desarrollar sus hijas una personalidad egoísta? ¿Sabrían jugar con otros niños? Y lo que es peor, ¿sabrían compartir? Para evitar estos posibles problemas, los padres querían que las primas tuviesen relaciones muy próximas.

Cada una es diferente. Inés es la que lo cuenta todo, Claudia es trabajadora y Pascuala optimista.

De pequeñas vivían en el mismo barrio, asistían al mismo colegio y los fines de semana cenaban juntas. De mayores se entienden genial, pero el trabajo hace difícil que se vean tan a menudo como antes.

Los psicólogos opinan que, a pesar de que hay algunas desventajas, la vida como hijo único no es totalmente mala.

3.2 What was the parents' greatest concern for their daughters?

[1 mark]

Top tip

Read the question carefully and give **only the information you are asked for**. (The examiner won't just pick out the correct answer and ignore the rest if you provide several answers!)

Commentary

This is a high demand question and the most challenging part was 3.2. When a question asks for the **greatest** concern, examiners are looking for a single answer. Those students who wrote out the list of parental concerns identified by the questions in the text didn't get a mark because they hadn't identified the **key** idea (would/could they (know how to) share?) from the many other ideas in the text.



Knowing the question words

Example 3

German Foundation Tier Reading 2019

Question 13.3

Gesundheit

Ein Reporter spricht mit Jonas über seine Gesundheit.

Lies das Interview und beantworte die Fragen auf **Deutsch**.

Reporter: Was machst du für deine Gesundheit?

Jonas: Als Kind war ich stundenlang an der frischen Luft. Ich war Mitglied eines Segelklubs, obwohl ich nicht so talentiert war. Das hat Spaß gemacht, und ich war fit und gesund. An der Uni hatte ich keine Zeit für Sport und einen sehr ungesunden Lebensstil. Vor kurzem habe ich endlich aufgehört zu rauchen und angefangen, laufen zu gehen. Ich fühle mich jetzt viel besser.

Außerdem versuche ich, während der Woche nicht zu viel Süßes zu essen und trinke meistens Milch. Am Wochenende gehe ich aber oft mit meinen Freunden zum Schnellimbiss.

13.3 Wann isst Jonas gesund?

[1 mark]

Top tip

You need to be really familiar with **question words** in the target language.

Commentary

This question was targeted at the highest grades at Foundation tier. The interrogative form *Wann* (when) clearly challenged many students and those who struggled often wrote eg *Schnellimbiss* (snack bar) which didn't answer the question (When does Jonas eat healthily?).

Using words you know to help with new words

Example 4

French Higher Tier Listening 2019

Question 16

Eating out

On a French website, you find these interviews of people who are reviewing a restaurant.

What **problem** did they have whilst at the restaurant? What was the **reason**?

Complete the boxes in **English**.

1 6

Problem	Reason

[2 marks]

Transcript

16 F3 Et vous, Madame ?

F1 D'après le serveur, j'avais choisi le plat le plus populaire sur la carte. J'ai trouvé ça étonnant car ça n'avait aucun goût. Quand j'ai demandé pourquoi, il a répondu qu'ils cuisinaient avec plus d'épices avant.

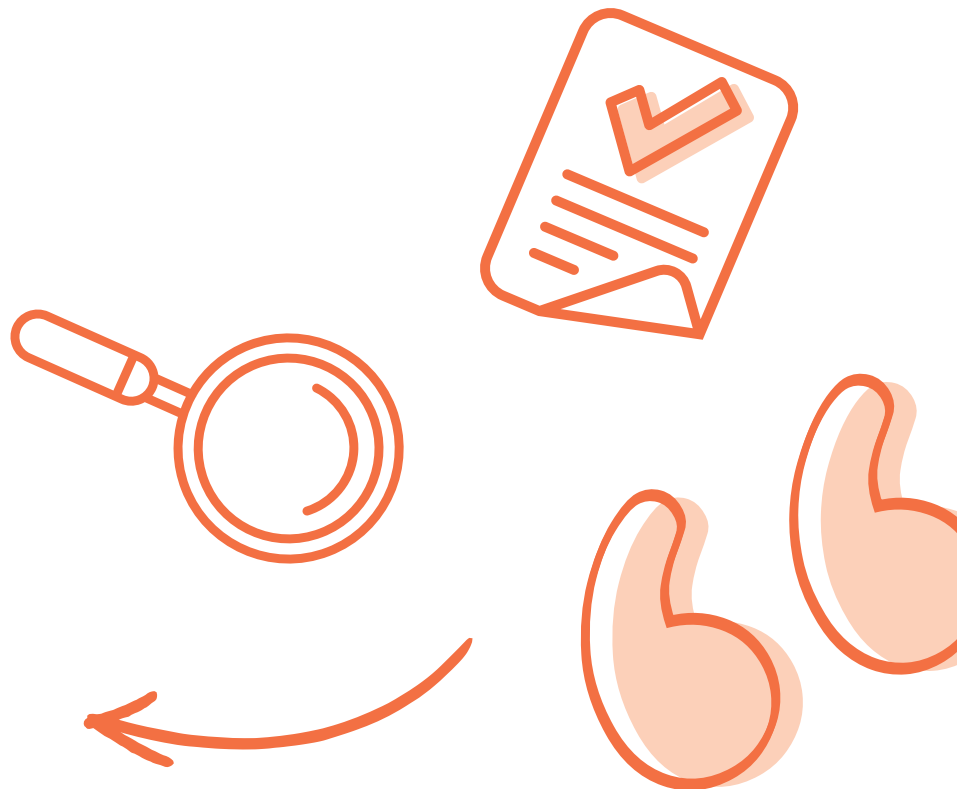
Top tip

Be prepared to use words you do know to work out the meaning of other similar ones which you may not have seen before.

Commentary

This question was targeted at the highest grades and performed in line with expectation in that only the most able students were able to convey the key idea successfully. The vocabulary tested here was either not known (*goût*) or not identified via communication strategies (*épices*). For example, the word *épices* was often mistaken for 'pieces'.

As stated in the specification, students are required at Higher tier to understand and respond to words and/or forms of words that aren't on the vocabulary list and which are less common or familiar than those used in relation to Foundation tier assessments. While *épices* doesn't feature in the vocabulary list, the adjective *épicé* does appear in the Free-time activities list of vocabulary and so students could be expected to recognise it.



Precision when translating

Example 5

French Higher Tier Reading 2019

Section C: Translation

Your sister has seen this comment on an online forum and asks you to translate it for her into **English**.

Je voudrais sortir plus mais il n'y a rien à faire dans ma ville. C'était une région industrielle qui est toujours polluée. On rencontre souvent des sans-abris dans les rues. J'ai décidé de partir après avoir fini mes études. Il me faudra trouver un boulot car je pense voyager à l'étranger.

[9 marks]

Top tips

Remember that a translation is **not** a rough summary of what is going on – it needs to transfer the **exact meaning** from one language to the other.

- Think carefully about the exact meaning of each phrase.
- Make sure that your translation conveys every aspect of the meaning of the original text.
- Make sure that your translation makes sense and reads properly in English.
- Leaving a gap guarantees no mark for that section, so have an intelligent guess for any words you are not sure about.

Commentary

Precision is required in this task. Correct translation of tenses and inclusion of key words, such as plus in *Je voudrais sortir plus*, is needed to gain the mark for each section. Pronouns also need to be rendered accurately.

Il n'y a rien à faire – 'There's not much to do' wasn't credited.

car je pense voyager à l'étranger – 'as I want to travel abroad' wasn't credited.

Watching out for negative expressions

Example 6

French Foundation Tier Listening 2019

Question 24 – Testing negatives

Future plans

Whilst in a café in Montreal, you hear this girl talking on her phone.

Why is she happy? Choose the correct answer and write the letter in the box.

A	She has got a new job.
B	She is going travelling.
C	She is starting university.

[1 mark]

Transcript

*Je suis totalement libre ! Pas de boulot, pas d'études... juste le temps de voyager.
Génial !*

Top tip

Make sure you are familiar with negative expressions and listen/watch out for them to avoid missing out on marks.

Commentary

This question was low demand. To access the correct answer (B), students need to take account of the negatives (*pas de*).

Watching out for comparative expressions

Example 7

French Higher Tier Listening 2019

Question 1

Ideal partners

On a French reality TV programme about dating, you hear these contestants describe their ideal partners.

What is the **most** important thing for each person when choosing an ideal partner?

Write the correct letter in the box.

A	Common interests
B	Personality
C	Physical appearance
D	Qualifications
E	Sense of style

Transcript

L'aspect physique est moins important que la personnalité. Un partenaire beau mais qui n'a pas le sens de l'humour, non merci !

0 1

[1 mark]

Top tip

Make sure you are familiar with **comparative expressions** (more than, less than, bigger than, smaller than etc) and watch out for these in exams.

Commentary

This question was low demand. To access the correct answer (B), students have to understand the comparative *moins ... que* (less than).

Watching out for superlative expressions

Example 8

German Higher Tier Listening 2019

Question 9

Tourism

A student is asking people in a Swiss town about their opinions of tourism.

Answer the questions in **English**.

What does the first person say is the **most** important advantage of tourism?

[1 mark]

Transcript

Entschuldigen Sie. Was halten Sie von Tourismus in der Schweiz?

Der Tourismus ist sehr wichtig für uns, weil er viel Arbeit mit sich bringt, aber für mich ist die Chance, neue Leute und neue Kulturen kennenzulernen das Wichtigste. Ich finde es sehr schön, dass Ausländer unser Land besuchen wollen.

Top tip

Make sure you are familiar with **superlative expressions** (the biggest, the most important, the smallest, etc) and watch out for these in exams.

Commentary

This question was low demand at Higher tier. To gain the mark, students must recognise the superlative form (*das Wichtigste* – the most important).

Reading/listening to the whole extract before answering

Example 9

French Foundation Tier Reading 2019

Question 5

A train journey

Read this extract from the novel '*Autour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*' by Jules Verne.

Après trois jours en prison, Phileas Fogg remarque le fidèle Passepartout, qui entre dans sa cellule.

Passepartout, souriant, lui annonce d'une voix joyeuse : « Monsieur, vous êtes libre ! Il y a eu une erreur. »

Tout de suite, Fogg et Passepartout vont à la gare de Liverpool. Cinq minutes plus tard, ils prennent le train pour Londres, qui part à l'heure.

Malheureusement, il y a des délais en route.

Fogg, après son long voyage, arrive avec un retard de quelques minutes !

Après tant de dangers, tant de difficultés, il a perdu tout son argent ! Il n'a plus rien.

Decide if the statements are true (T), false (F) or not mentioned (NM). Write T, F or NM in the boxes.

0 5 . 4 The train for London leaves at 5 o'clock.

[1 mark]

Top tip

Read the whole of the sentence so that you can check that your first reaction is right. If you think the answer is 'T' (True) for example, read on in the text to make sure that the correct answer isn't in fact 'NM' (Not mentioned) before writing your answer.

The same applies with Listening exams. Listen carefully to the whole utterance – don't base your answer on the first thing you hear.

Commentary

This question was high demand at Foundation tier. To access the correct answer (NM) students need to do close reading and not link *cinq* in *cinq minutes* with 5 o'clock.



Reading the question carefully

Example 10

German Foundation Tier Reading 2019

Question 3.2

Technology

Your Swiss exchange partner has sent you an email.

From...

Reply Subject:

Hallo!

Du kennst Max, meinen besten Freund. Er geht mir auf die Nerven! Ich habe ihn gestern dreimal angerufen und habe die Mailbox bekommen. Er spielt immer am Computer und geht nie an sein Handy!

Wir wollten zusammen ins Sportzentrum gehen, konnten aber nicht. Ich finde es sehr stressig, dass Max lieber vor dem Computer sitzt.

Nächstes Wochenende gehe ich mit meinen Eltern in die Stadt. Sie werden für mich neue Sportschuhe kaufen.

Schreib bald zurück!

Noah

. Max ...

A	has lost his mobile phone.
B	never answers Noah's phone calls.
C	spoke to Noah three times yesterday.

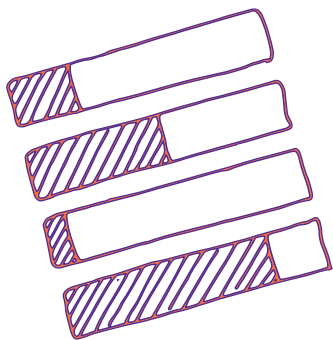
[1 mark]

Top tip

It's really important to read the whole extract carefully and not rely on picking out odd words (like *Handy* or *dreimal* in this example) and hoping they provide the answer.

Commentary

This question was of medium level of demand. To access the correct answer (B), students need to read for detail, not immediately choosing the answer that mentions a mobile phone because *Handy* is in the text and not immediately choosing the answer that mentions 'three times' (*dreimal*), since the text states that Noah called three times but these calls went unanswered by Max.



Example 11

Spanish Foundation/Higher Tier Reading 2019

Questions 8 Foundation Tier/Question 1 Higher Tier

0 8

Vegans in Spain

You are reading about vegans in a Spanish magazine.

Un vegano es una persona que está totalmente en contra de la explotación animal. Hoy es más fácil encontrar restaurantes y bares veganos en España, sobre todo en las grandes ciudades, debido al aumento en el número de veganos en el país.

Ana, vegana desde la edad de 15 años, dice que se siente más sana desde que cambió su dieta. No obstante, Ana no se hizo vegana por motivos de salud. Ana decidió ser vegana porque quería ayudar al medio ambiente. Aunque no le importa no comer huevos y queso, Ana echa de menos la leche.

Which **three** statements are true? Write the correct letters in the boxes.

A	Restaurants in Spain do not serve vegan food.
B	The number of vegans in Spain is growing.
C	Ana has been a vegan for 15 years.
D	Ana feels healthier since becoming vegan.
E	Ana became a vegan for environmental reasons.
F	Ana misses eating cheese.

[3 marks]

Top tip

It's really important to read the whole extract carefully and not rely on picking out odd words (like *15 años* in this example) and hoping they provide the answer.

Commentary

This question was an overlap question targeted at the higher grades at Foundation tier and the lower grades at Higher tier. It is an extended text and a topical subject (veganism). Many students gave C as an (incorrect) answer ('Anna has been a vegan for 15 years') as they were distracted by the reference to *15 años* in the text without understanding *desde la edad de ...*

Example 12

Spanish Higher Tier Reading 2019

Question 14.1

Problemas

Ves esta página en una revista española sobre los problemas de salud de unos españoles.

Tengo un problema y necesito ir al médico para solucionarlo. Tengo una dieta equilibrada; tomo poca comida basura, mucha verdura y no bebo alcohol. Sin embargo no consigo perder peso y por eso busco la ayuda del médico.

Rafa

Siempre estoy muy cansada porque, aunque duermo, me es imposible dormir bien. Mis amigos me mandan mensajes durante la noche y me molestan. Mi madre dice que debo apagar el portátil, pero es difícil desconectar.

Carmen

Completa las frases en **español**.

Ejemplo Para solucionar su problema, Rafa debe ...

ir al medico.

1 4 . 1 Rafa **no** come mucha ...

[1 mark]

Top tip

Remember that the correct answer can come **after** a key word in the question but it can also come **before** the key word as well. Again, it's really important to read the whole sentence/section of the text carefully before writing your answer.

Commentary

This question was low demand at Higher tier. Some students copied the words that came after *mucho*, eg *mucha verdura*. This was incorrect. Those who understood the word *poca* got to the correct answer but this did mean reading back from the word *mucho*. Only the more able students did this and they were rewarded with the mark.

Example 13

Spanish Higher Tier Reading 2019

Question 4.2 – Testing reading for detail

Christmas

You are on holiday in Spain for Christmas and read this article in a magazine.

A diferencia de la mayoría de los españoles, que piensan que lo más importante de las fiestas navideñas son las cenas y los regalos, Mónica opina que estas fiestas religiosas son perfectas para ayudar a personas sin recursos, ya que no pueden asistir a reuniones familiares.

La Navidad es una época dura para los sin techo. Además de comida, Mónica les da un regalo: una bufanda o unos guantes. Otros voluntarios les dan bebidas calientes y mantas.

Si quieres ayudar de otras maneras, la organización ofrece plazas de voluntariado para cocineros, repartidores de alimentos y animadores infantiles para hospitales.

Se puede hacer voluntariado online traduciendo documentos a otros idiomas. Puedes también ayudar poniendo tus habilidades al servicio de familias sin recursos, por ejemplo un corte de pelo.

Mónica dice que la experiencia puede ser transformadora y cambiarte por dentro. Trabajar como voluntario es gratificante porque das mucho más de lo que recibes.

0 4 . 2 What does Mónica give to the homeless at Christmas time?

A	Something to eat and drink
B	Something to eat and something to keep them warm
C	Something to drink and a blanket

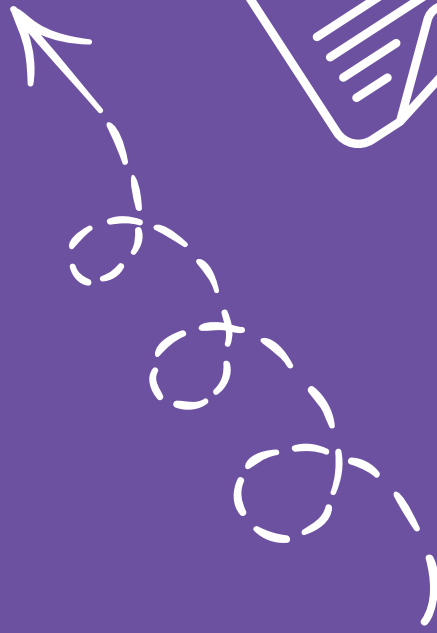
[1 mark]

Top tip

Always read the question really carefully and make sure you provide the **exact information** you are asked for from the text.

Commentary

This question is medium demand at Higher tier. Many students answered with option C which was what the other volunteers gave to the homeless, when the question asked what **Mónica** gave them.



Inferring and deducing meaning

Example 14

French Higher Tier Reading 2019

Question 8.4

Poverty

While on holiday in France, you see a blog on people's attitude to poverty.

Pourquoi est-ce que certaines personnes vivent dans la rue ?

Quel parent ne s'est jamais senti gêné et mal à l'aise face aux questions de son enfant sur la pauvreté ? Il est évident que la pauvreté rend les enfants anxieux.

Comment combattre les idées fausses des enfants ? Par exemple, on entend souvent « les SDF n'ont pas bien travaillé à l'école en dépit de leur talent. » Plein de gens (pas la majorité mais un nombre important, quand même) nourrissent au moins une idée fausse sur la pauvreté comme « les aides monétaires découragent les gens de travailler. »

Il faut expliquer aux enfants les vraies causes de la pauvreté, telles que le divorce, les effets de l'usage de l'alcool et des drogues et, en première ligne, la dépression et les troubles de la personnalité.

Write the correct letter in the box.

0 8 . 4 What is the main cause of poverty?

A	Divorce
B	Drug addiction
C	Mental health issues

[1 mark]

Top tip

It's really important to read the text carefully for detail so that you are clear about the **sense** of the text as well as the meaning of the individual words. Marks for inference of meaning are easily missed if you rely on picking out a few key words for your answer.

All exam boards are required to test and reward the ability to infer/deduce meaning in some MFL exam texts (rather than simply understanding individual words), at Foundation tier and particularly at Higher tier.

Commentary

This question was of medium demand at Higher tier. To access the correct answer (C), students must understand the phrase *en premier ligne* and must infer that *la dépression* and/or *troubles de la personnalité* are mental health issues.



Contact us

Our team of subject experts are here to help and support you as you deliver our specifications.

We're here to provide advice when you need it and respond to queries you might have to make sure you feel confident about guiding your students to fulfil their potential.

We understand the trust you put in us to provide great assessments for your students and we are committed to delivering on this.

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