

# GCSE LANGUAGES (SPEAKING)

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

Your questions answered

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# About this resource

This resource booklet collates and summarises the questions asked during the *GCSE languages (Speaking): Guidance in the application of the common assessment criteria for the 2021 exam series* course.

Here you'll find responses to your questions from our subject experts; this information is up to date at the time of publishing. [Sign up for updates](#) and we'll make sure you receive the latest news as it becomes available.

We've grouped related questions into themes to make this resource as clear as possible.

For any questions asked that aren't related to the GCSE MFL 2021 speaking endorsement, or for any further questions, you can get in touch with your [subject team](#).

# General

Question	Answer
<b>Why are students' speaking skills being assessed through an endorsement in 2021?</b>	<p>To reduce pressures on teaching time, the Ofqual consultation outcome in August 2020 confirmed that the spoken language assessment in summer 2021 will be 'an endorsement reported on a 3-point scale (Pass, Merit and Distinction) against common assessment criteria.'<sup>1</sup> <b>The speaking endorsement applies only to the summer 2021 series.</b></p> <p>Students' speaking skills are to be assessed by teachers during the course of study and the endorsement level of Not Classified, Pass, Merit or Distinction will be reported alongside the 9–1 grade.</p>
<b>Where can I find the Ofqual common assessment criteria?</b>	<p>You can find the <a href="#">common assessment criteria</a> (see pages 17–21) as part of the Ofqual <i>GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Modern Foreign Languages and Certificate Requirements (2021)</i> November 2020. These criteria apply to all languages and to all exam boards.</p>
<b>What is the difference between the common assessment criteria and a mark scheme which is what we are used to using?</b>	<p>The common assessment criteria have been produced by Ofqual for the speaking endorsement in this exam series. The criteria are 'not intended to be a mark scheme, but have been devised to provide an overall description of a student's performance'<sup>2</sup>, covering different aspects at a particular level by the end of the course.</p>
<b>Do teachers have to assess speaking in 2021 or is it optional?</b>	<p>Speaking remains an integral part of the MFL GCSE in 2021. On the <i>Centre Declaration Form (CDF)</i>, the head of centre is required to confirm that the centre has taken reasonable steps to secure that each learner has had the opportunity to take a spoken language assessment. A level of Pass, Merit, Distinction or Not Classified for the Speaking endorsement will be shown on each student's certificate, alongside the 9–1 grade which will be based on teacher assessments for the other three skills (listening, reading and writing) in 2021.</p>

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**Will any new resources be made available for us to use for the speaking endorsement, eg role play cards/photo cards, if we have already used the majority of the cards used in past exams?**

We are not producing further speaking exam tasks to support the Speaking endorsement. As explained in the training, you do not need to use exam tasks for the endorsement, although you may do so if you wish. A mixture of any of the tasks mentioned in the training or any other task the teacher feels is appropriate is acceptable, as long as the assessment covers, as a minimum, two different themes and two different activities.

# Submission of levels and Centre Declaration Forms (CDF)

Question	Answer
<p><b>Do we need to record speaking tasks and will they be moderated by AQA?</b></p>	<p>There will be no moderation or verification of endorsed grades by exam boards. There is no requirement for centres to keep recordings/evidence for speaking work and any records kept should not be sent to AQA. Your school/college may ask you to keep records of students' achievements to enable students who wish to do so to request a review through the centre's internal NEA appeals process. We have provided an optional checklist to help you keep a brief record of student achievements. This is available via the AQA website and is included in the <i>Resource booklet</i> for the Speaking endorsement training.</p>
<p><b>Can we tell students what level we have given them for the endorsement?</b></p>	<p>Yes – students must be informed of the endorsement level awarded by their centre prior to submission of this to AQA. This is to enable students who wish to do so to request a review through the centre's internal NEA appeals process.</p>
<p><b>Can we tell students what level they are 'working at'?</b></p>	<p>Yes. Sharing a student's 'working at' level can be useful in terms of motivating a student to work towards improving their endorsement level and also target-setting to achieve a higher level.</p>
<p><b>What are the deadlines to send speaking endorsement levels and Centre Declaration Forms to AQA?</b></p>	<p>The deadline to submit GCSE speaking endorsement levels to AQA is <b>7 May 2021</b>.</p> <p>In 2021 a <a href="#">CDF</a> is required from each centre to confirm that it has taken reasonable steps to secure that each candidate has had the opportunity to take a spoken language assessment. If you are entering candidates for any of the GCSE MFL subjects listed on the form in June 2021, then your head of centre must sign the declaration on this form.</p> <p>The completed <a href="#">form</a> (one form per centre, covering all GCSE languages) must be emailed to <a href="mailto:NEAdeclaration@aqa.org.uk">NEAdeclaration@aqa.org.uk</a> by <b>15 May 2021</b> at the latest.</p> <p>Failure to complete the declaration may lead to a malpractice investigation.</p>

<p><b>Will the deadlines of 7 May for level submission and 15 May for the CDF submission be reconsidered if schools remain closed?</b></p>	<p>We will advise schools/colleges of any changes to these dates, for example in the event of further disruption caused by the current pandemic.</p>
<p><b>Why isn't there any moderation or verification process for the speaking endorsement?</b></p>	<p>To reduce pressures on teaching time, the Ofqual consultation outcome in August 2020 confirmed that the spoken language assessment in summer 2021 would be 'an endorsement reported on a 3-point scale (Pass, Merit and Distinction) against common assessment criteria.'<sup>3</sup> <b>The speaking endorsement applies only to the summer 2021 series.</b></p> <p>Teachers base their judgements on the accumulation of evidence of a student's speaking performance through everyday classroom activities over time. This means that teachers have scope for various opportunities for students to demonstrate competence against the criteria.</p> <p>Ofqual confirmed that there is no requirement for an awarding organisation to review the evidence for the speaking endorsement, which would require recordings of tasks to be made by schools and colleges and submitted to exam boards. This was not considered realistic during the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic.</p>
<p><b>If a school submits a Distinction level for all students, will questions be asked?</b></p>	<p>This may be appropriate for some centres. Teachers need to award levels in line with the common assessment criteria and also be prepared to justify the levels to any students who may wish to appeal their level prior to submission to AQA, using the school/college's internal NEA appeals process.</p>
<p><b>If students are entered for Foundation tier for the other three skills, is it possible for them to get a Distinction in the speaking endorsement?</b></p>	<p>Yes, if their speaking skills are assessed at this level using the common assessment criteria.</p> <p>The speaking endorsement level is totally separate from the 9–1 grade. In 2021, a student's grade will instead be based on teacher assessments for Listening, Reading and Writing. The endorsement level for Speaking will appear on the student's GCSE certificate alongside the 9–1 grade based on the other three skills.</p>

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<p><b>Will any details of the assessment occasions(s) (eg dates, recordings, tasks etc) be required by the school/college or by the exam board?</b></p>	<p>No. The school/college is not required to provide the exam board with any information to accompany the endorsement levels beyond that required on the <i>Centre Declaration Form</i>.</p>
<p><b>I work in an area where our infection rate is high and am concerned that we may not return to school in time to be able to collect any meaningful evidence, having already been unable to do our mock exams. Many of our students are struggling to take part in live lessons due to lack of technology or shared technology in a large family. How would we then address this?</b></p>	<p>We appreciate the difficulties caused by the pandemic and school/college closures. If online work is difficult for some students, you could also consider recordings of work previously completed in mock exams/tests if you have them and apply the criteria to this work, to supplement more recent tasks.</p> <p>Many aspects of the criteria can be demonstrated through online settings eg asking natural questions as they arise in a class call, answering questions in the context of going through other work, engaging in a conversation at the start of the lesson etc. One-off assessments are also allowed. For students without access to a computer/tablet at home, you might want to consider the use of a mobile phone or conducting activities via a landline, students recording activities and sending them to you.</p> <p>The <a href="#">DfE regulations</a> on school closures during the current stage of the pandemic confirm that students who ‘may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study) may be able attend school alongside key workers’ and vulnerable children<sup>4</sup>. Your senior school staff will be able to advise on the approach to this policy by your school/college. They may also be expecting further laptops to be made available to the school by central government to support student learning, to try to ensure that all students have the best possible opportunity to achieve a speaking endorsement level, in what we fully appreciate are often very difficult circumstances.</p>
<p><b>We are tracking our students in every session with the Foreign Language Assistant using the common assessment criteria. Is it okay to continue like that?</b></p>	<p>Any member of staff (teaching or non-teaching) at the entering school or another school in the same trust can conduct assessments (including determining a level), with the agreement of the head of centre.</p>
<p><b>My understanding is that peer assessment can be used for the Speaking</b></p>	<p>No – the responsibility for assessing students’ speaking skills lies with the members of staff at the entering school. If necessary, a member of staff in another school in the same trust can conduct</p>

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<b>endorsement. Is that true?</b>	assessments (including determining a level), with the agreement of the head of centre. The school/college has to be in a position to justify levels in the event of a student wishing to use the school/college's NEA appeals process.
<b>Are private candidates covered by the same CDF as other students?</b>	Yes, just one CDF per school is required and this covers all MFL GCSE entries from that school.

# Private candidates/non-taught students

Question	Answer
<p><b>What is the situation for private candidates and students who are entering for a language not taught in their school/college?</b></p>	<p>The Ofqual consultation decision document confirms that private candidates or students studying a language outside of school will be able to complete a speaking endorsement in 2021.</p>
<p><b>Can private candidates get a Speaking endorsement?</b></p>	<p>A private candidate must get the agreement of a school/college to submit an endorsement level and authenticate this by signing the Centre Declaration Form. More information is provided directly below.</p>
<p><b>What guidance do you have for private candidates and non-taught candidates?</b></p>	<p>The information below covers situations where a school/college has private candidate entries or students entering for languages not taught at the school/college. It includes the process to be followed in such cases, including which forms need to be completed.</p> <p>As the assessment of spoken language may be based on a one-off performance rather than during normal teaching and learning where necessary (eg in the case of private candidates), we have provided details of the <b>minimum requirements</b> in terms of the range of contexts, themes, activities and purposes.</p> <p>The guidance has been agreed at inter-board level with Ofqual, the regulator and it applies to all exam boards. It covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Private candidates</li> <li>(b) Candidates being entered by their school/college for a qualification in a language for which the school/college does not have a teacher (non-taught learners).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Do schools/colleges need to let AQA know in advance if they are going to be submitting Speaking endorsement levels for private candidates and/or for</b></p>	<p>Yes. Schools/colleges should use the <i>Centre notification form</i> which can be obtained by emailing <a href="mailto:mfl@aqa.org.uk">mfl@aqa.org.uk</a> or it can be located on the NEA pages of our website <a href="#">here</a></p>

<p><b>their own students in a language for which they have no teacher?</b></p>	
<p><b>Who will provide the endorsement level for private candidates and for students where the school/college has no teacher in the language in question?</b></p>	<p>The endorsement level can be provided by a supplementary school or community school, by a private tutor or by a speaker of the language <b>who is not a relative or friend of the student</b> who will act as assessor.</p>
<p><b>Is it up to the school/college to arrange to get an assessor for any private candidates and any students being entered in a language for which it has no teacher?</b></p>	<p>Yes. It is the responsibility of the school/college to liaise with the supplementary/community school or private tutor or find a speaker of the language who is not a relative or friend of the student.</p>
<p><b>What happens if a school can't find a suitable assessor, despite its best efforts?</b></p>	<p>A student who is not able to have the opportunity for an assessment of spoken language will receive a result of 'not classified (NC)'.</p>
<p><b>How can the school/college get the endorsement level from the supplementary/ community school, private tutor or Assessor – what is the process?</b></p>	<p>The school/college must obtain from the assessor a completed <i>Assessor Declaration Form</i> (ADF) which lists the endorsement levels recommended for each student. The assessor must sign the form, confirming that he/she is fully familiar with the common assessment criteria published by Ofqual and has assessed the student(s) against these common criteria. The school/college must complete their sections of the <i>Assessor Declaration Form</i> and keep the <i>Assessor Declaration Form</i> securely until results day. The centre must also complete the <i>Centre Declaration Form</i> and send it to AQA. Full details of how centres submit the endorsement levels will follow in due course.</p>
<p><b>Where can schools/colleges or assessors find a blank <i>Assessor Declaration Form</i>?</b></p>	<p>It is available from <a href="mailto:mfl@aqa.org.uk">mfl@aqa.org.uk</a> or to download from the AQA website <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

<p><b>How and where are private candidates and non-taught students' speaking skills assessed?</b></p>	<p>Students' speaking skills can be assessed in person eg in a registered centre or supplementary/community school or with a private tutor, or remotely via online technology if required.</p>
<p><b>For private candidates and students taking a language not taught at the school, do we need to use the centre notification and Assessor Declaration Forms if the assessment is being carried out by a non-teaching member of staff at the school (or at another school in the same trust), or a teacher of a different subject (eg science) who is a native speaker of the language being assessed (either at the school entering the student or at another school in the same trust)?</b></p>	<p>No. In the above cases the centre notification and <i>Assessor Declaration Forms</i> are not needed. Any member of staff (teaching or non-teaching) at the entering school or another school in the same trust can conduct assessments (including determining a level), with the agreement of the head of centre.</p>
<p><b>Would the Assessor Declaration Form signed by their home language teacher be valid?</b></p>	<p>Yes, the <i>Assessor Declaration Form</i> is signed by the person assessing the student(s) but the <i>Centre Declaration Form</i> (CDF) must be signed by the head of the entering centre. The assessor cannot be a relative or friend of the student.</p>
<p><b>Can students be assessed via a one-off performance?</b></p>	<p>Yes, the endorsement does allow for assessment via a one-off performance where this is deemed to be the most appropriate, including via remote assessment by centres. In this circumstance, teachers must ensure that any one-off assessment covers all of the requirements of the assessment criteria (see the next question for some suggestions on how this can be achieved). In addition, teachers should make themselves familiar with the requirements in relation to spoken language assessments, included on pages 17 to 21 of <i>Ofqual's GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Modern Foreign Languages and Certificate Requirements (2021)</i>.</p>
<p><b>If students are entered for their home language,</b></p>	<p>The assessor cannot be a relative or friend of the student. The school/college must obtain from the assessor a completed</p>

<p><b>is the person carrying out the speaking task with them expected to be a teacher or member of staff? Could it be an outsider with no teaching qualification as long as it's not a family member or friend?</b></p>	<p><i>Assessor Declaration Form</i> which lists the endorsement levels recommended for each student. The assessor must sign the form, confirming that he/she is fully familiar with the common assessment criteria published by Ofqual and has assessed the student(s) against these common criteria. The school/college must complete their sections of the <i>Assessor Declaration Form</i> and keep the <i>Assessor Declaration Form</i> securely until results day. The centre must also complete the <i>Centre Declaration Form</i> and send it to AQA. It is available from <a href="mailto:mfl@aqa.org.uk">mfl@aqa.org.uk</a> or to download from the AQA website <a href="#">here</a></p>
<p><b>How much speaking would need to be assessed in a one-off performance?</b></p> <p><b>Do you have any examples of possible one-off assessments?</b></p>	<p>These could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A description/interview/narration based on a picture, photo* or object, (possibly even brought in by the students themselves), based on one theme plus a conversation covering at least another different theme. The requirement to ask questions could be covered in the picture/photo/object task or in the conversation. Teachers could decide to give their students some preparation time if using stimulus materials for this task.</li> <li>• Role play task* on one theme, plus a conversation covering at least another different theme. The requirement to ask questions could be covered in the role-play or the conversation. Teachers could decide to give their students some preparation time if using stimulus materials for the role-play. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation and discussion on one theme, plus a conversation on at least another different theme. The requirement to ask questions could be covered in the presentation and discussion task or in the conversation. Teachers could allow students to prepare a presentation in advance.</li> <li>• A description/interview/narration based on a book or a film of the student's choice (based on one of the themes), plus a conversation on at least another different theme. The requirement to ask questions could be covered in the book/film task or the conversation.</li> <li>• A mixture of any of these tasks <b>or any other task</b> the teacher feels is appropriate, <b>as long as the assessment covers as a minimum two different themes, two different tasks, and two different purposes.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>*The photo/role-play tasks could be based on materials that have formed part of previous formal assessments produced by the awarding organisation or any other kinds of materials.</p>

**How do native speakers fit into this eg students who are entered for French without being taught by us?**

If they are entered by your school then you can assess their speaking skills by using a single assessment, in a similar way to a private candidate scenario, if this works best.

# Appeals process

Question	Answer
<p><b>You said in the presentation that as the Speaking endorsement was non-exam assessment (NEA), the students will need to be told their endorsement levels in advance so they have a chance to appeal. The Ofqual consultation released in January proposed that ‘teachers should not tell students the grade they have submitted to the exam boards on their behalf’<sup>5</sup>. Can you explain?</b></p>	<p>In a normal exam series, students who have taken a non-exam assessment (NEA) marked by their teacher can ask for that marking to be reviewed. The review is undertaken by the school or college. Students are told the teacher’s mark before it is submitted to the exam board, so they can decide whether to ask for a review.</p> <p>The DfE-Ofqual consultation proposes that teachers do not tell students what <b>9–1 teacher assessed grade</b> for GCSE has been submitted. However, as you know, the GCSE Speaking endorsement level in 2021 will be reported on students’ certificates separately from the 9–1 GCSE grade. A student’s 9–1 grade will be based on teachers’ assessment of each student’s listening, reading and writing skills, the format of which will be determined by the outcome of the consultation due very shortly.</p> <p>As an (NEA) the speaking endorsement for 2021 is subject to the <a href="#">JCQ rules</a> on internally-assessed NEA which were referred to in the presentation, which require students to be informed of the level teachers are intending to submit for the Speaking endorsement. This allows them to appeal the level using the school/college’s NEA appeals process which is used for NEA work for subjects such as Art and Design, for example. The proposal is that there will be an external appeals process for the 9–1 grades and this is what the text on pages 22–23 of the DfE/Ofqual consultation proposals refers to.</p>
<p><b>Our exams officer has asked for grades by 26 March in order to allow for appeals. Does this sound right?</b></p>	<p>The date by which students need to be informed of their Speaking endorsement level (Pass, Merit, Distinction or Not Classified) will need to be agreed with your exams officer and other staff involved in the school’s NEA appeals process to ensure that enough time is built in to allow for the final levels to be submitted to AQA by the deadline of 7 May (referred to in the training presentation) either through Centre Services (formerly e-AQA) centre mark submissions (e-Subs) or EDI (electronic data interchange). This is normally done by the school/college’s exams officer.</p>

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	<p>The <i>Centre Declaration Form</i> (CDF) needs to be sent to AQA by 15 May 2021.</p>
<p><b>Does the Speaking checklist you have provided need to be filled out for each student and will it need to be submitted with the level?</b></p>	<p>You don't submit any documentation to AQA other than the CDF (one per school/college) – your exams officer will send the levels to AQA.</p> <p>The use of the checklist is optional but is a good way of keeping a record of each student's coverage of the aspects in the criteria. We produced the checklist as a helpful way for teachers to keep a record of all student activities and levels over a period of time. You will need to be able to justify levels awarded to any student who wants to appeal the level you plan to award, via the school/college NEA appeals process – see <a href="#">JCQ rules</a> on this.</p>
<p><b>If students want to appeal, what type of documents can we provide apart the checklist?</b></p>	<p>Whatever evidence you have based the levels on. The checklist is optional – if you, in your school, feel you want to keep more detailed records, you're free to do so. See <a href="#">JCQ rules</a> on the requirement for a school/college internal appeals procedure for NEA.</p>

# Common assessment criteria

Question	Answer
<b>Where can I find the Ofqual common assessment criteria?</b>	The common assessment criteria can be found <a href="#">here</a> (see pages 17–21 of the criteria for the speaking endorsement details – this applies to all exam boards).
<b>Will there be sample audio performances for the examples in the <i>Resources</i> booklet?</b>	No, you need to use the criteria and apply these to your own students' speaking activities.
<b>Is there any language-specific guidance?</b>	There is language-specific additional guidance for range of language (common to all exam boards) in the Assess tab on the <a href="#">AQA web page</a> for each language. This guidance should be used alongside the Ofqual common criteria for assessment when deciding on a level for range of language. The exemplification of grammatical structures should not be seen as a checklist, but rather as an indication of the type of grammatical structures required to fulfil the requirements of the level.

# Theme coverage and activities

Question	Answer
<p><b>Are pupils allowed to have the questions and their prepared answers in front of them, basically conversing with another person whilst reading from their notes?</b></p>	<p>There are no restrictions outlined in the criteria about the use of reference notes. How you structure the range of tasks is at your discretion – the key issue is that the tasks need to enable students to generate spoken language, which allows you to allocate a level to the students according to the criteria (and to be confident that you can justify this level to the student if the level is queried).</p> <p>Any notes used must of course be the student’s own work because it is their skills which are being assessed. It is also important to be mindful of the possible effect of reading aloud from pre-prepared notes on the pronunciation and intonation aspect of the common assessment criteria.</p>
<p><b>Can they have prompts/cue cards with key words to help them?</b></p>	<p>Yes, as speaking skills are assessed through classroom activities rather than a formal exam, the use of notes, cue cards, dictionaries, resources etc is entirely at the discretion of the teacher.</p>
<p><b>Can students look words up in a dictionary while they are being assessed?</b></p>	<p>No, dictionaries can only be used for preparation carried out as part of classroom activities.</p>
<p><b>How long should each task be?</b></p>	<p>There is no time requirement, it's all about covering the criteria via a suitable range of activities/task types. <b>The minimum number of activities to achieve a level is two, on different themes.</b> For example, a presentation given to the whole class on one theme and a role-play on a different theme, or alternatively, a photo-based activity on one theme and a conversation on a different theme.</p> <p>For all three endorsement levels, students must have the opportunity to ask at least two questions in total across the assessed activities to meet this requirement, so tasks chosen must facilitate this. If a student only asks one question, then they cannot achieve a Pass for Communication and interaction.</p>
<p><b>Are the criteria applied to each task individually or to all activities?</b></p>	<p>The criteria are applied holistically across however many activities the students complete – the checklist in the <i>Resources</i> booklet (also available via the Assess tab on the AQA web page for each</p>

	GCSE language) may be helpful in logging the activities of each student and in deciding the level.
<b>Can you do a task where students solely ask questions, eg they interview you?</b>	Yes, an activity where students solely ask questions such as an interview could count towards the endorsement level. Two different activity/task types are required as a minimum, on different themes, so you'd need at least one further activity as well.
<b>Could you do two conversation tasks?</b>	Only if you do at least one other different task as well – the assessment needs to include a minimum of two different themes, two different tasks and two different purposes.
<b>What do you mean by 'different purposes'?</b>	Different purposes may cover, for example, conversations, presentations, transactions, formal and informal settings, descriptions and narrations. These suggestions are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. Students can demonstrate their speaking skills in relation to different purposes in a whole class context, working in pairs and groups or in a one-to-one interaction with the teacher.
<b>Can students see the tasks beforehand, eg photo card?</b>	As speaking skills are assessed through classroom activities rather than a formal exam, the use of notes, cue cards, dictionaries, resources etc and any preparation time is entirely at the discretion of the teacher. The focus is on providing students with opportunities to demonstrate the aspects of the criteria at the different levels.
<b>If we use a past speaking paper for the activities, does it matter if it was a Higher or Foundation paper?</b>	The criteria apply to both tiers so you can select suitable tasks/activities for each student according to their ability – the key thing is that the activities chosen cover the assessment criteria.
<b>Can all students in the class do the same task, if adjusted to their ability?</b>	This is a matter for you to decide – it is clearly crucial that you are thinking about tailoring tasks to suit students so they perform at their best.
<b>What exactly are the themes and how many do we have to cover?</b>	<p>The themes are those in the specification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identity and culture</li> <li>• local, national, international and global areas of interest</li> <li>• current and future study and employment.</li> </ul> <p>Each theme is divided into topics and, in some cases, sub-topics.</p> <p>Each student has to cover at least <b>one topic or sub-topic in two different themes</b>. For example, one activity on mobile technology (Theme 1) and a different activity on travel and tourism (Theme 2).</p>

<p><b>If you do a task on one theme and a student gets a Merit and then you do a second task on a different theme and the student achieves a Distinction, do they get a Distinction overall, or do they need a Distinction for both tasks?</b></p>	<p>The evidence needs to be considered as a whole, so you look at the overall performance over the two or more tasks when you are working out whether they have achieved a level (eg Merit) in each aspect. Please see the examples from the training session.</p>
<p><b>Can the same checklist be used over multiple speaking sessions? Can the 'results'/ticks be cumulative?</b></p>	<p>Yes, we would suggest using one checklist per student to create a cumulative record of a student's speaking achievements against the criteria.</p>
<p><b>Can we still remind students to ask us questions if they forget in a general conversation?</b></p>	<p>Yes, absolutely.</p>
<p><b>Do students have to ask different types of questions or can they ask questions of a similar type, eg eliciting opinions?</b></p>	<p>There is more information on examples of question types and other speaking activity for each level in the language-specific guidance on the AQA website in the Assess tab on each <a href="#">GCSE language</a> page.</p> <p>Our interpretation of the criteria regarding asking questions is as follows. For Pass, 'straightforward' questions could be single word questions and the same one could be asked more than once. For Merit 'varied' questions could be the same stem, but questions eliciting different information eg 'What do you think about sport?' and 'What do you think about music?' (just 'What do you think?' used twice would not however meet the requirement for Merit). For Distinction it's clear that different question forms have to be used.</p>
<p><b>Can a question be '<i>Et vous?</i>' '<i>Und Sie?</i>' etc?</b></p>	<p>Yes, as long as it works in context. Straightforward questions such as these would meet our interpretation of the requirements of the Pass criteria but not for Merit or Distinction – see the answer to the question above.</p>
<p><b>What counts as variety and range of question form for Distinction?</b></p>	<p>There are language-specific examples for all the aspects of the criteria on the AQA website – see the Assess tab for each GCSE language.</p>

<p><b>Our school uses two different exam boards – has this been agreed across the boards?</b></p>	<p>Yes, the common assessment criteria and the additional guidance for range of language are common to all exam boards.</p>
<p><b>If students were set a task for homework (eg writing a paragraph about their family), they could present it to us and then ask us a question at the end – could this be one of our two activities?</b></p>	<p>Yes – questions and other aspects of the criteria are assessed across more than one task and at least two questions have to be asked by a student across the range of activities they carry out. So, one question in this activity would be credited, but you would need to provide another opportunity for students to ask a question in a different activity. Any preparatory notes must be the student's own work because it's their skills which are being assessed.</p>
<p><b>As the students have to cover two different themes, is it OK to allow the students to pick a topic from a theme to prepare?</b></p>	<p>Yes, it's up to you which parts of the theme are covered, as long as at least two themes are covered overall. If you want to offer students the chance to choose particular topics, eg to do a presentation on something of their choice from a theme, that's fine.</p>
<p><b>Can students re-do the same task? So if they forget to ask a question during a general conversation activity, can they do it again, so they can have another go at remembering to ask a question?</b></p>	<p>You wouldn't have to do the same task again, just do further speaking activities which provide another opportunity for the student to ask a question. You can also prompt them to ask a question or questions during any speaking activity.</p>
<p><b>With large classes and Covid regulations and now closed schools, we are finding it difficult to get the Communication and interaction evidence. Any suggestions?</b></p>	<p>It's a difficult issue but hopefully schools will be back in March as planned. You could set some activities, eg a presentation for them to work on remotely and then deliver this when you are back in school. If you have online platforms, they can be used but we appreciate this isn't always the case. If you are struggling for time then a one-off assessment is fine, as long as the assessment covers as a minimum two different themes, two different tasks, and two different purposes. You could also assess during pair or group work if that fitted better with the set-up in your school.</p>
<p><b>How can we be sure when we are doing online speaking activities that the students are not just</b></p>	<p>The activities can be carried out remotely using online technology if this is what you decide on (eg because students aren't in school). There are no limits on the notes that students can have access to, either in online or face-to-face contexts. Any preparatory notes must be the student's own work because it's their skills which are being assessed. It is also important to be</p>

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<b>reading pre-prepared answers?</b>	mindful of the possible effect of reading aloud from notes on the pronunciation and intonation aspect of the common criteria.
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# Additional guidance on range of language

Question	Answer
<b>Is there some language-specific support to help teachers decide on the levels for the endorsement?</b>	There is language-specific guidance on range of language (see the <i>Assess</i> tab on the web page for each language) to help teachers to apply the common assessment criteria. This guidance is common to all exam boards.



# Applying the criteria in practice

Question	Answer
<b>Do questions have to be actually answered by the teacher, eg in a presentation online?</b>	No, if the student has formulated the question themselves then this is valid without a response from the teacher, eg in a presentation.
<b>How can we assess students' speaking skills when they are out of the classroom and working remotely?</b>	<p>The students' speaking skills will not normally be assessed at the same time and, where possible, should be part of classroom activities. You may want to do some tasks which could work well online such as presentations, role plays etc and other tasks could be done when students are back in school. If this is not possible for any reason, you could also consider recordings of work previously completed in mock exams/tests and apply the criteria to this work to supplement more recent tasks.</p> <p>Many aspects of the criteria can be demonstrated through target language interaction in a class setting, or online setting such as asking natural questions as they arise in class, answering questions in the context of going through other work (eg preparing a writing task aloud), engaging in a conversation at the start of the lesson about what they did at the weekend/what they are planning to do next year etc.</p>
<b>What can we do if our students don't have access to laptops/tablets/mobile phones for online lessons?</b>	The <a href="#">DfE regulations</a> on school closures during the current stage of the pandemic confirm that 'students who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study) may be able attend school alongside key workers' and vulnerable children' <sup>6</sup> . Your senior school staff will be able to advise on the approach to this policy by your school/college – they may also be expecting further laptops to be made available to the school by central government to support student learning.
<b>Asking questions: if a minimum of two are required at all three levels, what distinguishes the criteria for Merit and Distinction?</b>	Our interpretation of the criteria regarding asking questions is as follows: for Pass, 'straightforward' questions could be single-word questions and the same one could be asked more than once; for Merit 'varied' questions could be the same stem but questions eliciting different information, eg 'What do you think about sport?' and 'What do you think about music?' (just 'What do you think?')

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	used twice would not however meet the requirement for Merit); for Distinction it's clear that different question forms have to be used.
<b>Is it acceptable for a student to demonstrate an aspect of the criteria on one occasion only as a minimum and for this to be ticked as 'achieved'?</b>	Any requirements about covering things more than once are already built into the criteria, eg requirement to ask more than one question because of the use of 'questions' in the descriptor. It is of course good practice for teachers to offer more than one opportunity to demonstrate something in case a student doesn't succeed on a given occasion, especially as this is being assessed over time as part of teaching and learning in the majority of cases.
<b>When carrying out speaking activities remotely, there's no requirement for students to declare the conditions under which the preparation is taken. The presentation says that teachers can determine what notes support students can use, so do teachers just assess what they say remotely according to the criteria?</b>	The activities can be carried out remotely using online technology if this is what you decide on (eg because students aren't in school). There are no limits on the notes that students can have access to, either in online or face to face contexts. You would assess the student's performance against the criteria, either in a live performance (face-to-face or online) or from a recording the student has provided.
<b>Must all speaking tasks be done in exam conditions, or can they be done in normal classroom conditions?</b>	There's no requirement for exam conditions or supervised conditions for speaking activities for the endorsement.
<b>Can speaking exams that have been conducted and recorded in Years 9 and 10 be used towards the speaking endorsement level?</b>	Yes, as long as you have the recordings, you can then assess these using the common assessment criteria.

# AQA checklist

Question	Answer
<p><b>Do we have to use the checklist? Can it be given to parents/students along with the criteria?</b></p>	<p>Yes – use of the checklist is optional. Teachers may share the <a href="#">common assessment criteria</a> as well as the checklist with their students. Teachers can also share a student’s ‘working at’ level, if they wish, to enable them to discuss, monitor and assess their own progress and to identify strengths and areas for improvement.</p>
<p><b>How many bullet points/elements need to be ticked in order to award the level for each individual aspect?</b></p>	<p>All bullet points/elements must be ticked in order to be awarded the level for the individual aspect.</p>
<p><b>If I use the checklist and a student has ticks for all but two bullet points in one aspect at Merit (not Communication and Interaction), does the student get Merit overall or go down to a Pass, where all bullet points are ticked?</b></p>	<p>In this scenario, the student can still be awarded a Merit overall because one aspect can be at the level below the one to be awarded, as long as the aspect where the ticks are missing is not Communication and Interaction (C&amp;I).</p> <p>Key principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet a level for any aspect, the elements must be met in full (ie in the checklist <b>all</b> the elements must be ticked for the given level).</li> <li>• To combine the levels from the four aspects to reach an overall level, the C&amp;I is mandatory and limiting – you cannot award a higher level overall than you award for C&amp;I.</li> <li>• There must also be <b>at least two</b> of the other three aspects at the same or higher level, and if below, must not be more than one level below.</li> </ul> <p>Please refer to the various examples used in the training and in the <i>Resources</i> booklet for further illustrations of how the levels are awarded, using the AQA checklist, the Ofqual criteria and the language-specific additional guidance for range of language (common to all exam boards) in the <i>Assess</i> tab on the <a href="#">AQA web page</a> for each language.</p> <p>This guidance should be used alongside the Ofqual common criteria for assessment when deciding on a level for Range of Language. The exemplification of grammatical structures should <b>not</b> be seen as a checklist, but rather as an indication of the type</p>

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	of grammatical structures required to fulfil the requirements of the level.
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## Contact us

Our friendly team will be happy to support you between 8am and 4pm, Monday to Friday.

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