



Department  
for Education

# Modern languages

**GCSE subject content and assessment  
objectives**

**June 2013**

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## Introduction

GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject. They provide the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications, so ensuring progression from key stage 3 national curriculum requirements and the possibilities for progression to A level.

## Subject aims and learning outcomes

Through studying a GCSE in a modern language, students should develop their ability and desire to communicate confidently and coherently with native speakers in speech and writing. The study of a modern language at GCSE should also broaden students' horizons and encourage them to step beyond familiar cultural boundaries and develop new ways of seeing the world.

GCSE specifications in a modern language should enable students to:

- develop their ability to communicate coherently with native speakers in speech and writing, conveying what they want to say with increasing accuracy
- express and develop thoughts and ideas spontaneously and fluently
- deepen their knowledge about how language works and enrich their vocabulary in order for them to increase their independent use and understanding of extended language in a wide range of contexts
- acquire new knowledge, skills and ways of thinking through their ability to understand and respond to a rich range of authentic spoken and written material, including literary texts
- develop awareness and understanding of the culture and identity of the countries and communities where the language is spoken
- make appropriate links to other areas of the curriculum to enable bilingual and deeper learning, where the language may become a medium for constructing and applying knowledge
- develop language learning skills to prepare them for further language study and use in school, higher education or employment.

## Subject content

This content sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in modern languages. Awarding organisations may, however, use any flexibility to increase depth, breadth or context within the specified topics or to consolidate teaching of the subject content.

The content of the GCSE specifications in modern languages must fully reflect the aims and learning outcomes.

## Prior learning

GCSE specifications will be cumulative and progressive in content and language. They will take account of the matters, skills and processes specified in the national curriculum programmes of study for key stages 2 and 3. They will also build on the foundation of core grammar and vocabulary outlined in the programmes of study for key stages 2 and 3, increasing the level of linguistic and cognitive demand.

## Contexts and purposes

- GCSE specifications will require students to understand and use language across a range of contexts, appropriate to their age, interests and maturity levels
- students will be expected to use language for a variety of purposes and with a variety of different audiences, including for personal, academic and employment-related use
- students will be expected to understand different types of spoken language, including recorded input from one or more speakers in public and social settings and recorded material from authentic sources and the media, appropriate to this level
- students will be expected to understand different types of written language, including relevant personal communication, public information, factual and literary texts, appropriate to this level
- language contexts will be organised in a specified number of broad themes, addressing relevant matters relating to:
  - identity and culture, lifestyle, values and beliefs
  - environment, local, international and global areas of interest
  - current and future study and employment
- literary texts can include poems, letters, short stories, extracts and excerpts from abridged and adapted essays, novels or plays from contemporary and historical sources

- the content, contexts and purposes of a GCSE specification in a modern language will provide an appropriate foundation for A level study and a suitable preparation for higher education or employment.

## **Scope of study**

GCSE specifications in modern languages should require students to:

### **Listening: understand and respond to spoken language**

- demonstrate general and specific understanding of different types of spoken language
- follow and understand clear standard speech at normal speed, using familiar language across a range of specified contexts
- identify the overall message, key points, details and opinions in a variety of short and longer spoken passages, involving some more complex language, recognising the relationship between past, present and future events
- deduce meaning from a variety of short and longer spoken texts, involving some complex language and more abstract material, including short narratives and authentic material addressing a wide range of relevant contemporary and cultural themes
- recognise and respond to key information, important themes and ideas in more extended spoken text, including authentic sources, adapted and abridged, as appropriate, by being able to answer questions, extract information, summarise, evaluate and draw conclusions.

### **Speaking: communicate and interact in speech**

- communicate and interact effectively in speech for a variety of purposes across a range of specified contexts
- take part in a short conversation, asking and answering questions, and exchanging opinions
- present information and narrate events coherently and confidently, using and adapting language for new purposes to convey meaning
- speak spontaneously, responding to unexpected questions, points of view or situations, sustaining communication by using rephrasing or repair strategies, as appropriate
- initiate and develop conversations and discussion, producing extended sequences of speech
- make appropriate and accurate use of a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures, including some more complex forms, with reference to past, present and future events

- make more creative and complex use of the language, as appropriate, to express and justify their own thoughts and points of view
- make confident use of important social conventions, such as formal and informal address and register
- use accurate pronunciation and intonation so as to be understood by a native speaker.

### **Reading: understand and respond to written language**

- understand and respond to different types of written language
- understand general and specific details within texts using high frequency familiar language across a range of contexts
- identify the overall message, key points, details and opinions in a variety of short and longer written passages, involving some more complex language, recognising the relationship between past, present and future events
- deduce meaning from a variety of short and longer written texts from a range of specified contexts, including authentic sources involving some complex language and unfamiliar material, as well as short narratives and authentic material addressing a wide range of relevant contemporary and cultural themes
- recognise and respond to key information, important themes and ideas in more extended written text and authentic sources, including extracts from relevant abridged or adapted literary texts
- demonstrate understanding by being able to scan for particular information, organise and present relevant details, summarise, draw inferences in context and recognise implicit meaning.

### **Writing: communicate and interact through the written word**

- communicate and interact effectively in writing for a variety of purposes across a range of specified contexts
- write short texts, using simple sentences and familiar language accurately to convey meaning, ask and answer questions and exchange information
- produce clear and coherent text of extended length to present facts and express ideas and opinions appropriately for different purposes and in different settings
- make accurate use of a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures, including some more complex forms, to describe and narrate with reference to past, present and future events
- manipulate the language, using and adapting a variety of structures and vocabulary with increasing accuracy and fluency for new purposes, including using appropriate style and register for formal and informal use

- make more independent, creative and complex use of the language, as appropriate, to note down key points, summarise information, express and justify individual thoughts and points of view, in order to interest, inform or convince
- translate sentences and short texts from English into the assessed language to convey key messages accurately and to apply grammatical knowledge of language and structures in context.

## Assessment objectives

	Assessment objectives	Weighting
AO1	<i>Listening</i> : understand and respond to different types of spoken language	25%
AO2	<i>Speaking</i> : communicate and interact effectively in speech	25%
AO3	<i>Reading</i> : understand and respond to different types of written language	25%
AO4	<i>Writing</i> : communicate and interact effectively in writing	25%

In AO2 and AO4 at least 10% of the marks available must be allocated to knowledge and accurate application of the grammar and structures of the language prescribed in the specification.

Assessment objectives will be fully assessed through external assessment: awarding organisations can require teachers to conduct the oral exams, and then send recordings to the awarding organisations for marking. They are internally *conducted*, but not internally *assessed*.

### Use of the assessed language in questions and rubrics

It is the expectation that questions and rubrics for the majority of modern languages will be set in the assessed language, except where tasks focus on assessing the candidate's understanding of the use of the language (grammatical and lexical knowledge) or in tasks where the candidate is translating from the assessed language into English or from English into the assessed language. It is more appropriate that the instructions for these tasks should be set in English.

Languages using logographic systems or characters such as Mandarin Chinese and Japanese may set all questions and task instructions in English, as the sole use of *hanzi* or *kanji* is deemed too challenging for this level.

### Grammatical expectations for French, German and Spanish

Lists of grammar requirements will be drawn from the existing lists produced in the Ofqual GCSE Subject Criteria. There will be some relevant categorisation according to core and more complex language use. There will also be an indication of structures that students will be expected to recognise only and not produce independently.







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