GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for English Language and Certificate Requirements

Version 4 – July 2015

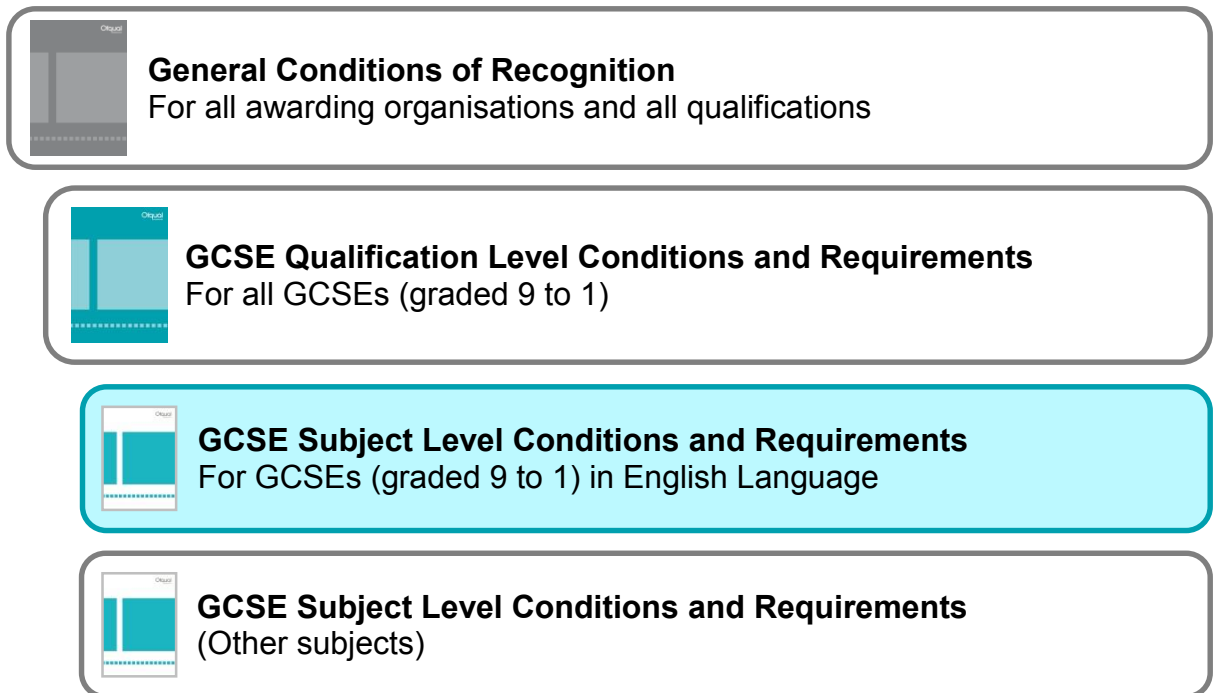# Contents

Introduction

About this document

1. This document (highlighted in the figure below) is part of a suite of documents which sets out the regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1).

General Conditions of Recognition
For all awarding organisations and all qualifications

GCSE Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements
For all GCSEs (graded 9 to 1)

GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements
For GCSEs (graded 9 to 1) in English Language

GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements
(Other subjects)

2. We have developed these requirements with the intention that GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) should fulfil the following purposes:

   □ To provide evidence of students' achievements against demanding and fulfilling content;

   □ To provide a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and for employment; and

   □ To provide (if required) a basis for schools and colleges to be held accountable for the performance of all of their students.

Requirements set out in this document

3. This document sets out the GCSE Subject Level Conditions for English Language. These conditions will come into effect at 28th July 2015 for all GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in English Language.

4. It also sets out our requirements in relation to –

   ☐ the interpretation of the subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE English Language – awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCSE(English Language)1.1(c),

   ☐ spoken language assessments – awarding or awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCSE(English Language)3.3, and

   ☐ certificates for GCSE English Language – awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition I3.1 and Condition GCSE(English Language)4.3.

5. Appendix 1 reproduces the requirements in relation to subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE English Language[1], as published by the Department for Education. Awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCSE(English Language)1.1.

6. With respect to GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in English Language, awarding organisations must also comply with:

   ☐ our *General Conditions of Recognition*,[2] which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications; and

   ☐ our *GCSE Qualification Level Conditions*;[3] and

   ☐ all relevant Regulatory Documents.

7. With respect to GCSE qualifications graded from A* to G, awarding organisations must continue to comply with the General Conditions of Recognition, and the relevant Regulatory Documents.[4]

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[1] www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-english-language-and-gcse-english-literature-new-content

[2] www.ofqual.gov.uk/documents/general-conditions-of-recognition

[3] www.ofqual.gov.uk/documents/gcse-9-1-qualification-level-conditions

[4] www.ofqual.gov.uk/documents/list-of-additional-regulatory-documents

Revisions to this document

8.   This document was originally published in April 2014. We have subsequently revised this document (see Appendix 2 for details), most recently on 27th July 2015.

9.   The version of this document published on 27th July 2015 replaces all previous versions, and comes into effect at 12.01am on 28th July 2015 for all GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in English Language.

Summary of requirements

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Interpretation of subject content and assessment objectives
[Requirements in relation to subject content for GCSE Qualifications in English Language](#)

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Certificate requirements
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Appendix 1 – Subject content and assessment objectives (published by Department for Education)
GCSE English language: subject content and assessment objectives

Subject Level Conditions

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GCSE Subject Level Conditions for English Language

Condition GCSE(English Language)1   Compliance with content requirements

GCSE(English Language)1.1

In respect of each GCSE Qualification in English Language which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must –

(a) comply with the requirements relating to that qualification set out in the document published by the Secretary of State entitled 'GCSE English language: subject content and assessment objectives'[5], document reference DFE-00232-2013,

(b) have regard to any recommendations or guidelines relating to that qualification set out in that document, and

(c) interpret that document in accordance with any requirements, and having regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

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[5]

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254497/GCSE_English_language.pdf

Condition GCSE(English Language)2   Timing of assessments

GCSE(English Language)2.1	Condition GCSE6.1 does not apply to any GCSE English Language qualification which an awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available.
GCSE(English Language)2.2	An awarding organisation must ensure that in respect of each GCSE English Language qualification which it makes available each Learner completes the Assessments by Examination to be taken for that qualification during the months of –
	(a) May and/or June, or
	(b) November,
	in any single year.
GCSE(English Language)2.3	In respect of each GCSE English Language qualification that an awarding organisation makes available the awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that each Learner who takes an Assessment by Examination during the month of November has reached at least the age of 16 on or before 31 August in the same calendar year as that assessment.

Condition GCSE(English Language)3   Spoken Language Assessments

GCSE(English Language)3.1   In respect of a spoken language assessment for a GCSE English Language qualification that an awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available –

(a) Condition H2 does not apply,

(b) Condition GCSE4.1 does not apply, and

(c) that assessment must not be an Assessment by Examination.

GCSE(English Language)3.2   In respect of each assessment cycle for a GCSE English Language qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must –

(a) require each Centre to provide a spoken language statement to the awarding organisation, and

(b) treat any failure by a Centre to provide a spoken language statement to the awarding organisation in a timely manner as malpractice and/or maladministration (under General Condition A8 (Malpractice and maladministration)).

GCSE(English Language)3.3   An awarding organisation must ensure that in respect of each spoken language assessment for a GCSE English Language qualification which it makes available it complies with any requirements, and has regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

GCSE(English Language)3.4   For the purposes of this condition, a 'spoken language assessment' is an assessment, set by an awarding organisation, of a Learner's ability to –

(a) demonstrate presentation skills in a formal setting,

(b) listen and respond appropriately to spoken language, including to questions and feedback to presentations, and

          (c) use spoken standard English effectively in speeches and presentations.

GCSE(English Language)3.5   For the purposes of this condition, a 'spoken language statement' is a true and accurate written statement made by a Centre to an awarding organisation which confirms that it has taken reasonable steps to secure that each Learner to whom that Centre has delivered the assessments to be taken in a particular assessment cycle for a GCSE English Language qualification which the awarding organisation makes available has completed a spoken language assessment.

Condition GCSE(English Language)4   Marking and results

GCSE(English Language)4.1   In respect of each GCSE English Language qualification which it makes available an awarding organisation must calculate and publish the following two separate results for each Learner –

  (a) a result for the Assessments by Examination to be taken for that qualification, and

  (b) a result for the spoken language assessment.

GCSE(English Language)4.2   In respect of each GCSE English Language qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must ensure that an Assessor does not have any regard to a Learner's -

  (a) result for the spoken language assessment in calculating that Learner's final mark and result for the Assessments by Examination, and/or

  (b) final mark or result for the Assessments by Examination in determining that Learner's result for the spoken language assessment.

GCSE(English Language)4.3   In respect of each spoken language assessment an awarding organisation must ensure that it complies with any Certificate Requirements which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

GCSE(English Language)4.4   In respect of each GCSE English Language qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must ensure that –

  (a) a Learner may use the result for a spoken language assessment which he or she has taken for a GSCE English Language qualification made available by the awarding organisation or another awarding organisation, and

  (a) that Learner is not required to take a further spoken language assessment before being awarded the qualification.

GCSE(English Language)4.5   For the purposes of this condition, a 'spoken language assessment' has the same meaning as in Condition GCSE(English Language)3.4.

Condition GCSE(English Language)5   Texts used in National Reference Tests

GCSE(English Language)5.1   In respect of each GCSE English Language qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must ensure that the assessments for that qualification do not include questions or tasks which use texts or extracts from texts contained in any list specified by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

GCSE(English Language)5.2   An awarding organisation must agree to Ofqual's reasonable terms and conditions as to –

(a) the maintenance of confidentiality in the list of texts and extracts from texts specified by Ofqual under Condition GCSE(English Language)5.1, and

(b) the awarding organisation's liability should it fail to maintain such confidentiality.

Interpretation of subject content and assessment objectives

Requirements in relation to subject content for GCSE qualifications in English Language

The subject content for GCSE Qualifications (graded 9 to 1) in English Language is set out in the Department for Education's publication *GCSE English Language: subject content and assessment objectives* (the 'Content Document').

Condition GCSE(English Language)1.1(c) requires awarding organisations to interpret the Content Document in line with any requirements published by Ofqual.

We set out our requirements for the purposes of Condition GCSE(English Language)1.1(c) below.

Unseen texts

The Content Document states:

> 'All texts in the examination will be 'unseen', that is, students will not have studied the examination texts during the course. These unseen texts will be drawn from each of the three centuries referred to below.
>
> GCSE English language is designed on the basis that students should read and be assessed on high-quality, challenging texts from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. Each text studied must represent a substantial piece of writing, making significant demands on students in terms of content, structure and the quality of language. The texts, across a range of genres and types, should support students in developing their own writing by providing effective models. The texts must include literature and extended literary non-fiction, and other writing such as essays, reviews and journalism (both printed and online). Texts that are essentially transient, such as instant news feeds, must not be included. The number and types of texts, and their length, are not prescribed.'

This means the following.

- In designing and setting the Assessments by Examination for a GCSE Qualification in English Language an awarding organisation must ensure that those assessments include questions or tasks relating to at least three unseen texts.

- One of those unseen texts must have been first published in the 19th Century (between the years 1800 and 1899), one must have been first published in the 20th Century (between the years 1900 and 1999) and one must have been first published in the 21st Century (during or after the year 2000).

- One of those unseen texts must be a literary fiction text, one must be a literary non-fiction text and one must be a text comprising another type of writing (such as essays, reviews and journalism).

- There is no requirement in relation to the type of text that must be drawn from each time period.

- So long as the above requirements are met, an awarding organisation may include questions or tasks in its assessments relating to more than three unseen texts. Those additional unseen texts may be of any type and published within any time period.

Synthesis

For the purposes of interpreting the Content Document the following definition shall apply and all related expressions must be interpreted accordingly.

'Synthesis' – bringing material together from more than one text to create new material.

Requirements in relation to spoken language assessments

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Requirements in relation to spoken language assessments

Condition GCSE(English Language)3.3 allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to spoken language assessments (as defined in Condition GCSE (English Language)3.4) for GCSE English Language qualifications.

We set out our requirements for the purposes of Condition GCSE(English Language)3.3 below.

Form of the spoken language assessment

An awarding organisation must ensure that each spoken language assessment is designed and set –

(a) to ensure that the only evidence that will be admissible in the assessment is a presentation by each Learner which –

(i) takes place in a formal setting,

(ii) takes place before an audience, and

(iii) requires the Learner to have undertaken preparation prior to the assessment, and

(b) in such a way as to –

(i) allow each Learner to demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the content outlined in the Content Document,

(ii) allow each of the specified levels of attainment set out below to be reached by a Learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding, and

(iii) facilitate the comparability of such assessments.

Marking of spoken language assessments

Evidence generated by a Learner in a spoken language assessment may be marked –

(a) by a Centre

(b) by the awarding organisation or a person connected to the awarding organisation, or

(c) through a combination of (a) and (b).

In any event, the awarding organisation must demonstrate to Ofqual's satisfaction in its assessment strategy that –

(a) it has taken all reasonable steps to identify the risk of any Adverse Effect which may result from its approach to marking spoken language assessments, and

(b) where such a risk is identified, it has taken all reasonable steps to prevent that Adverse Effect or, where it cannot be prevented, to mitigate that Adverse Effect.

Specified levels of attainment in spoken language assessments

In relation to each spoken language assessment, an awarding organisation must ensure that –

(a) the specified levels of attainment are Pass, Merit and Distinction,

(b) the criteria used by Assessors to determine whether each Learner will be awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction are those set out in Table 1 below, and

(c) a Learner who does not meet the criteria to be awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction, or who has not been exempted on grounds of disability from the assessment but who does not take it, is issued a result of 'not classified' .

Under Condition H1.1, an awarding organisation must have in place arrangements to ensure that, as far as possible, the criteria set out in Table 1 are –

(a) understood by Assessors and accurately applied, and

(b) applied consistently by Assessors, regardless of the identity of the Assessor, Learner or Centre.

Table 1: The criteria for Pass, Merit and Distinction

General criteria
To be awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction a Learner must -   ■   be audible, and   ■   use Spoken Standard English which, for the purposes of the spoken language assessment, means that a Learner must –

□   be intelligible, and

□   generally use language appropriate to the formal setting of the presentation.

Pass	Merit	Distinction
In addition to the general criteria, to be awarded a Pass a Learner's performance in his or her spoken language assessment must meet all of the following criteria – • expresses straightforward ideas/information/ feelings, • makes an attempt to organise and structure his or her presentation, • makes an attempt to meet the needs of the audience, and • listens to questions/feedback and provides an appropriate response in a straight forward manner.	In addition to the general criteria, to be awarded a Merit a Learner's performance in his or her spoken language assessment must meet all of the following criteria – • expresses challenging ideas/information/ feelings using a range of vocabulary, • organises and structures his or her presentation clearly and appropriately to meet the needs of the audience, • achieves the purpose of his or her presentation, and • listens to questions/feedback responding formally and in some detail.	In addition to the general criteria, to be awarded a Distinction a Learner's performance in his or her spoken language assessment must meet all of the following criteria – • expresses sophisticated ideas/information/feelings using a sophisticated repertoire of vocabulary, • organises and structures his or her presentation using an effective range of strategies to engage the audience, • achieves the purpose of his or her presentation, and • listens to questions/feedback, responds perceptively and if appropriate elaborates with further ideas and information.

Monitoring of spoken language assessments

Where evidence generated by a Learner in a spoken language assessment for a GCSE English Language qualification made available by an awarding organisation is marked by Centres, the awarding organisation must have in place clear and effective arrangements to monitor that marking by Centres.

As part of those arrangements, in respect of each assessment cycle for a GCSE English Language qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must ensure that –

(a) each Centre which delivers spoken language assessments provides the awarding organisation with a complete and unedited audiovisual recording of the evidence generated in that assessment by a sample of Learners,

(b) it uses those recordings as part of the means by which it determines whether or not –

(i) the spoken language assessment remains fit for purpose, and

(ii) the criteria against which Learners' performance is differentiated are being applied accurately and consistently by Assessors in different Centres and by Assessors in the same Centre.

An awarding organisation must set out its approach to monitoring, and in particular how it will meet the above requirements, in its assessment strategy for a GCSE English Language qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available.

Certificate Requirements

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Certificate Requirements

Condition GCSE(English Language)4.3 allows us to specify Certificate Requirements in relation to the way in which a Learner's attainment in a spoken language assessment is reflected on that Learner's certificate for the qualification.

In addition, under Condition I3.1, an awarding organisation is required to ensure that the design of each certificate in relation to a qualification which it makes available complies with the Certificate Requirements which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

We set out our Certificate Requirements for the purposes of Condition GCSE(English Language)4.3 and Condition I3.1 below.

These requirements must be followed in addition to the *Additional Certificate Requirements*[6] which apply to all qualifications.

Certificate requirements for spoken language assessments

A certificate will only be issued for a GCSE English Language qualification where a Learner has been awarded a grade 9-1 in respect of the level of attainment he or she has demonstrated in the Assessments by Examination to be taken for that qualification.

Where a Learner has not been awarded a grade 9-1 in respect of those Assessments by Examination, an awarding organisation must ensure that no certificate is issued in respect of that Learner's spoken language assessment, regardless of the result of that assessment.

For clarity, the result for that Learner's spoken language assessment must still be issued, together with the Learner's result in respect of the Assessments by Examination, under Condition H6.1.

Where a certificate will be issued to a Learner in respect of the Assessments by Examination, an awarding organisation must ensure that it meets the following requirements in recording the outcome of the spoken language assessment on that certificate –

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[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371129/2011-09-12-additional_certificate_requirements.pdf

(a) Where the Learner has been awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction, that outcome must be recorded on the certificate.

(b) Where the Learner –

   (i) has taken the spoken language assessment but has not been awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction, or

   (ii) has not been granted an exemption on grounds of disability from taking the spoken language assessment, but has not taken that assessment,

the outcome reported on the certificate must be 'not classified'.

(c) Where the Learner has been granted an exemption from taking the spoken language assessment under Condition G6, the outcome reported on the certificate must be in line with any requirements which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

(d) In all cases an awarding organisation must ensure that it is clear that the above outcomes are in relation to the spoken language assessment.

Appendix 1: Subject content and assessment objectives (published by Department for Education)

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English language

GCSE subject content and assessment objectives

Contents

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

This document sets out the learning outcomes and content coverage required for GCSE specifications in English language. In subjects such as English language, where topics are taught in progressively greater depth over the course of key stage 3 and key stage 4, GCSE outcomes may reflect or build upon subject content which is typically taught at key stage 3. There is no expectation that teaching of such content should be repeated during the GCSE course where it has already been covered at an earlier stage.

GCSE specifications in English language should ensure students can read fluently and write effectively. They should be able to demonstrate a confident control of Standard English and they should be able to write grammatically correct sentences, deploy figurative language and analyse texts.

GCSE specifications in English language should enable students to:

- read a wide range of texts, fluently and with good understanding
- read critically, and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- write effectively and coherently using Standard English appropriately
- use grammar correctly, punctuate and spell accurately
- acquire and apply a wide vocabulary, alongside a knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology[1], and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.

In addition, GCSE specifications in English language must enable students to:

- listen to and understand spoken language, and use spoken Standard English effectively.

Spoken language will be reported on as part of the qualification, but it will not form part of the final mark and grade.

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[1] See also the glossary of grammatical terms that supports the national curriculum programmes of study for English.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244218/English_Appendix_2_-_Vocabulary_grammar_and_punctuation.pdf

Subject content

This document sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in English language. 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.

All texts in the examination will be 'unseen', that is, students will not have studied the examination texts during the course. These unseen texts will be drawn from each of the three centuries referred to below.

GCSE English language is designed on the basis that students should read and be assessed on high-quality, challenging texts from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. Each text studied must represent a substantial piece of writing, making significant demands on students in terms of content, structure and the quality of language. The texts, across a range of genres and types, should support students in developing their own writing by providing effective models. The texts must include literature and extended literary non-fiction, and other writing such as essays, reviews and journalism (both printed and online). Texts that are essentially transient, such as instant news feeds, must not be included. The number and types of texts, and their length, are not prescribed.

Scope of study

GCSE specifications in English language should require students to study the following content:

Critical reading and comprehension

- *critical reading and comprehension:* identifying and interpreting themes, ideas and information in a range of literature and other high-quality writing; reading in different ways for different purposes, and comparing and evaluating the usefulness, relevance and presentation of content for these purposes; drawing inferences and justifying these with evidence; supporting a point of view by referring to evidence within the text; identifying bias and misuse of evidence, including distinguishing between statements that are supported by evidence and those that are not; reflecting critically and evaluatively on text, using the context of the text and drawing on knowledge and skills gained from wider reading; recognising the possibility of different responses to a text
- *summary and synthesis:* identifying the main theme or themes; summarising ideas and information from a single text; synthesising from more than one text
- *evaluation of a writer's choice of vocabulary, form, grammatical and structural features:* explaining and illustrating how vocabulary and grammar contribute to effectiveness and impact, using linguistic and literary terminology accurately to do

so and paying attention to detail; analysing and evaluating how form and structure contribute to the effectiveness and impact of a text

- *comparing texts:* comparing two or more texts critically with respect to the above.

Writing

- *producing clear and coherent text:* writing effectively for different purposes and audiences: to describe, narrate, explain, instruct, give and respond to information, and argue; selecting vocabulary, grammar, form, and structural and organisational features judiciously to reflect audience, purpose and context; using language imaginatively and creatively; using information provided by others to write in different forms; maintaining a consistent point of view; maintaining coherence and consistency across a text

- *writing for impact*: selecting, organising and emphasising facts, ideas and key points; citing evidence and quotation effectively and pertinently to support views; creating emotional impact; using language creatively, imaginatively and persuasively, including rhetorical devices (such as rhetorical questions, antithesis, parenthesis).

Spoken language

- *presenting information and ideas:* selecting and organising information and ideas effectively and persuasively for prepared spoken presentations; planning effectively for different purposes and audiences; making presentations and speeches

- *responding to spoken language:* listening to and responding appropriately to any questions and feedback

- *spoken Standard English:* expressing ideas using Standard English whenever and wherever appropriate.

Assessment objectives

READING *(50%)*	
Read and understand a range of texts to:	
AO1	▪ Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas ▪ Select and synthesise evidence from different texts
AO2	Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views
AO3	Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts
AO4	Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references
WRITING *(50%)*	
AO5	▪ Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences ▪ Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts
AO6	Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation. (This requirement must constitute 20% of the marks for each specification as a whole.)
SPOKEN LANGUAGE *(Unweighted)*	
AO7	Demonstrate presentation skills in a formal setting
AO8	Listen and respond appropriately to spoken language, including to questions and feedback to presentations
AO9	Use spoken Standard English effectively in speeches and presentations.

Appendix 2: Revisions to this document

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The table below sets out when the *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for English Language and Certificate Requirements* initially came into force and when they were subsequently revised.

Revisions	Date in force
Requirements in relation to texts used in National Reference Tests	28th July 2015
Republished as *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for English Language and Certificate Requirements* ▪ GCSE(English Language)3 (Spoken language assessments) (amendment) ▪ GCSE(English Language)4 (Marking and results) ▪ Requirements in relation to spoken language assessments ▪ Certificate Requirements	20th July 2015
Requirements in relation to subject content for GCSE qualifications in English Language	23rd May 2014
First edition (published as *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for English Language*)	9th April 2014

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