

# **Analysis of Consultation on the Conduct, Marking and Grading of Spoken Language Skills in GCSE English Language**



June 2015

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## **Executive summary**

This consultation about the conduct, marking and grading of the spoken language component of the new GCSE in English language took place between July 2014 and September 2014.

There were 105 responses to the consultation from individuals and organisations; 103 in a form that matched or broadly followed the layout of the online consultation and two written submissions which were not included in the quantitative data analysis but were reflected upon within the qualitative sections. Of the total responses, 74 per cent were from individuals – mostly teachers – while 26 per cent were from organisations.<sup>1</sup>

The consultation exercise generated a broad range of responses. The responses did not come from a representative sample of the population (for example, 75<sup>2</sup> of the responses came from teachers), and you are therefore encouraged to look past the headline figures in each section and consider the more detailed breakdown of results by the different respondent groups.

### **The key points from the consultation**

In general, the responses to this consultation were very mixed, with almost as many of the respondents agreeing with proposals as disagreeing with them. There was one specific point in relation to the consultation which met with a level of disagreement (see below).

**Views on whether students who do not take the spoken language assessment, other than because they were given an exemption because of their disability, should have the same outcome on their certificate as a student who attempted the assessment but did not demonstrate the minimum required level of performance. (Question 6)**

Respondents raised a number of arguments against reporting non-attempts in the same way as those who attempted but did not demonstrate the minimum required level of performance. They stated that:

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<sup>1</sup> These percentages include the two written responses which were not in a form that matched or broadly followed the layout of the online consultation.

<sup>2</sup> This figure includes two written responses which were not in a form that matched or broadly followed the layout of the online consultation.

- those who attempt the assessment should gain more recognition than those who did not
- the proposed course of action would not make it clear whether the student took part in the assessment or not to employers and colleges. This will only encourage schools not to enter their students for the assessment, thereby devaluing it and depriving their students of learning opportunities
- employers should be able to see who failed because they did not have the necessary skills, and who failed because they simply did not take the assessment
- it may not be the student's choice not to take the assessment and it would be unfair to penalise them
- there should be an expectation that all students sit the assessment, and appropriate repercussions should they not – this should not merely be aimed at giving the students a 'fail' grade'; there should be a penalty for the centre concerned
- those who were exempted for other reasons (for example as a result of bereavement) should be afforded the same status as those exempted because of a disability.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 The Consultation on the Conduct, Marking and Grading of Spoken Language Skills in GCSE English Language**

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our recent consultation on the conduct, marking and grading of spoken language skills in GCSE English Language which took place between July 2014 and September 2014.

### **1.2 Background**

GCSEs taken by students in England are being reformed. New GCSEs in English language, English literature and maths are being introduced for first teaching in September 2015. The Government<sup>3</sup> has already consulted on, and has published, the final content<sup>4</sup> for these new GCSEs.

We have already consulted on and announced our decisions<sup>5</sup> on the assessment arrangements and format for the new GCSEs in English language. All of the new GCSE English language specifications have now been accredited. This consultation was on the conduct, marking and grading arrangements for the spoken-language component of the new GCSE English language, which is to be reported on separately but alongside the main grade for GCSE English language.

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<sup>3</sup> This consultation considered proposals for the reform of GCSE English Language qualifications in England. Where we refer to 'GCSEs', we mean GCSEs taken in England; by 'Government' and 'ministers' we mean Westminster Government and Westminster ministers.

<sup>4</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/collections/gcse-subject-content](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/gcse-subject-content)

<sup>5</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://ofqual.gov.uk/news/design-details-of-new-gcses-in-england/>

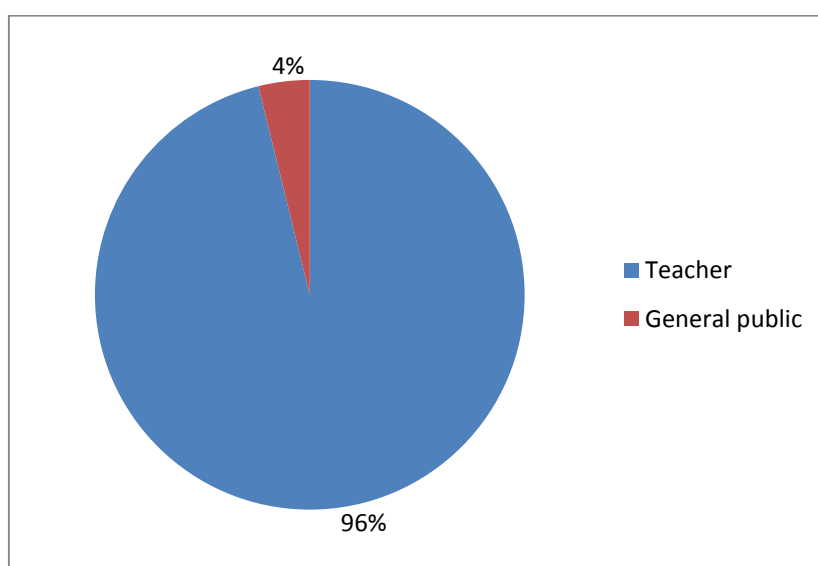
## 2. Who responded?

We received a total of 105 responses to our consultation. There were 103 responses to the consultation questions<sup>6</sup> and two written submissions which did not fit the format of the consultation and were considered separately.<sup>7</sup>

Of those which followed the format of the consultation 78 (76 per cent) were responding as individuals and 25 (24 per cent) were organisational responses.

The breakdown of individual responses can be seen in figure 1.

**Figure1:** Breakdown of consultation responses from individuals



Organisational responses were either from schools (44 per cent of all organisational responses) or other types of organisation, including exam boards and representative or interest groups (56 per cent). For the purposes of clarity we have separated out the two in figures 2a and 2b.

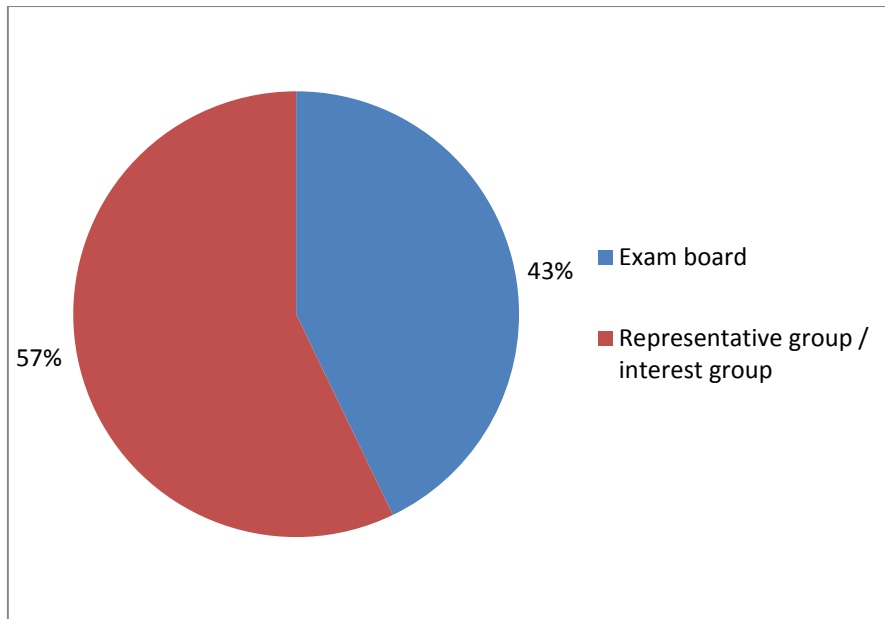
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<sup>6</sup> Where responses which followed the format of the consultation were received in hard copy we entered them into the online platform.

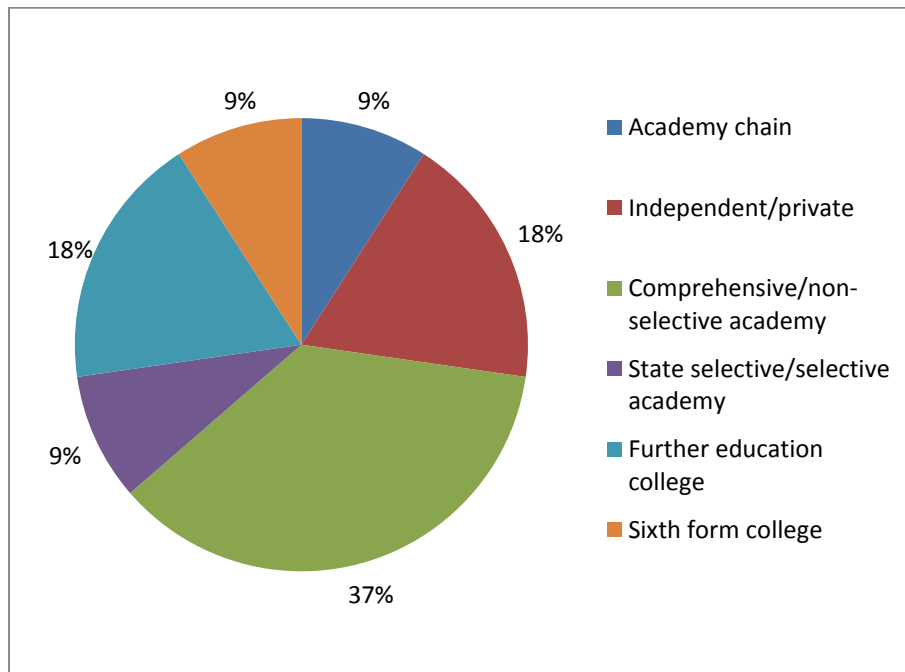
<sup>7</sup> These 13 responses are not included in the quantitative analysis that follows. See section 3 on our approach to analysis

**Figure 2:** Breakdown of consultation responses from organisations

**2a:** Excluding schools



**2b:** Schools



*Analysis of Consultation on the Conduct, Marking and Grading of  
Spoken Language Skills in GCSE English Language*

The consultation was divided into three sections:

1. the conduct of the spoken language assessment
2. reporting the outcomes of the spoken language assessment
3. equality analysis.

All of the responses received were from individuals or organisations based in England.



### **3. Approach to analysis**

The consultation was published on our website. Respondents could choose to respond using an online form. The consultation included ten questions. Nine of the questions were closed (quantitative), but beneath each of these questions, respondents were invited to provide a more detailed, open (qualitative) response. One of the questions was an open question, inviting respondents to provide a narrative response. Respondents were also able to email or post copies of the consultation questions or provide a solely narrative response to the consultation (for example via letter).

This was a consultation on the views of those who wished to participate and while we made every effort to ensure that as many respondents as possible had the opportunity to reply, it cannot be considered as a representative sample of the general public or any specific group.

#### **3.1 Data presentation**

We present the responses to the consultation questions in the order in which they were asked. Each section of the consultation, and therefore of this report, included a number of agree/disagree or yes/no (quantitative) questions. Below each quantitative question there was the option for respondents to provide a more detailed, open (qualitative) response, giving an opportunity for those who wanted to expand on a point to do so.

The quantitative and qualitative responses are presented separately. We only summarise the main findings of the quantitative questions in the text, as the tables provide a clearer and more concise view of the evidence. In contrast, the open-response data requires much more analysis and explanation to provide context and deeper insight into the issues raised.

Note that the qualitative summaries provided in the analysis include the two narrative responses to the consultation, but the quantitative summaries do not.

#### **3.2 Quantitative data / closed-question responses**

The consultation asked a large number of questions across a broad range of subjects. Respondents could choose to answer all or just a selection of the questions.

In the report we refer to percentages of respondents who either agreed or disagreed with a proposal. We have arrived at these percentages by adding together the numbers who agreed and strongly agreed or who disagreed and strongly disagreed. We have expressed these figures as a percentage of everyone who answered a question on each proposal, including those who selected the 'do not know' or 'no

opinion' options. We have discounted respondents who did not reply to the question at all.

The total percentage of those who agree or disagree will not add up to 100 per cent. The shortfall represents the number who offered a 'don't know' or 'no opinion' or 'other' response, and can be a large proportion of respondents.

We present the data using pie charts and tables. In each case, the pie chart reflects the overall proportion of responses (corresponding with the top row in the accompanying table). Within the tables, we have separated out the responses into personal and organisational responses, and then split them down further into groups. The majority of responses to the consultation came from teachers, and so the overall figures tend to reflect their views.

### **3.3 Qualitative data / open-question responses**

During the analysis phase every response to each question was reviewed, including the two narrative responses to the consultation. The main arguments were identified and then summarised in the qualitative-analysis sections of this report.

### **3.4 Consultation events**

We offered to meet with stakeholder groups and alerted them to the consultation when it was launched.

## **4. Views expressed – outcomes from the consultation responses**

In this section we report the views, in broad terms, of those who responded to the consultation, either by submitting an electronic response or via a separate written submission. We have structured this section according to the main sections covered in the consultation, and provide analysis of the quantitative data broken down by stakeholder.

A consultation is not the same as a survey and only reflects the views of those who chose to respond. Typically these will be those with strong views and/or particular experience or interest in a topic. What follows is a fair reflection of the views expressed by respondents to the consultation.

A list of the organisations that responded to the consultation is included in Appendix A.

## **4.1 The conduct of the spoken language assessment**

### **Background**

In current English and English language GCSEs, students do a speaking and listening assessment that is assessed by their own teachers. Exam board representatives visit a small sample of schools each year to observe the conduct of assessments and to moderate teacher assessments. The exam board will assume that the marking observed was typical of all marking done by the teacher. If any adjustment is needed, this is applied to all marking of the assessments the teacher has done, typically using a regression approach. Students whose performance was not observed by the exam board moderator may nevertheless have their marks reduced or increased.

In current English and English language GCSEs, there is no evidence of students' performance, and it is therefore difficult for schools to challenge an exam board's review of the grades awarded, and similarly for individual students to seek a review of a teacher's assessment.

For new English language GCSEs, we proposed that:

- students' performance should be digitally recorded
- the recording should be audio-visual.

Question 1 of our consultation document was aimed at exploring respondents' views on whether the spoken language assessment should be recorded. Question 2 was aimed at exploring respondents' views about whether that recording should be audio only or audio-visual. Question 3 asked for the effects on schools, teachers and exam boards should the proposal to record every speaking assessment be adopted.

### **Key messages**

- The responses to question 1 were very mixed, with almost as many of the respondents agreeing with the proposal as disagreeing with it.
- The responses to question 2 were evenly split over whether the recording should be audio only or audiovisual.

**Views on the whether the benefits for marking, moderation and review of the spoken language assessments being recorded would outweigh the costs. (Question 1)**

Views were fairly evenly split, with 48 per cent of respondents agreeing with the statement and 51 per cent disagreeing.

Those who agreed with the proposal commented as follows.

- Recording the performances will aid teachers in their marking and moderation activities, as the performance can be revisited to ensure marking was accurate.
- Recording the performances would lead to fairer marking and moderation, as a quality assurance procedure would be in place.
- Recording the performances will prevent schools from 'gaming the system', as there will be clear evidence of the standard of the performance for the exam boards to see.
- Recording the performances will help to maintain the status of this component of the qualification in the eyes of stakeholders.
- A formal assessment, even if it does not count towards the final grade, will help to improve performance in speaking and listening (both very important skills for employers to see).
- Most schools have access to the equipment necessary to record performances, and it would take little more time than it does currently to copy the performances and forward them on to the awarding organisation(s).

Five of the six exam boards agreed with the proposal. AQA commented that the benefits in terms of reliability and fairness outweigh the cost involved for centres, and that, additionally, centres will benefit from having the evidence needed to allow them to challenge any awarding organisation moderation decision, as they can with other non-exam assessments.

Those who disagreed made the following points.

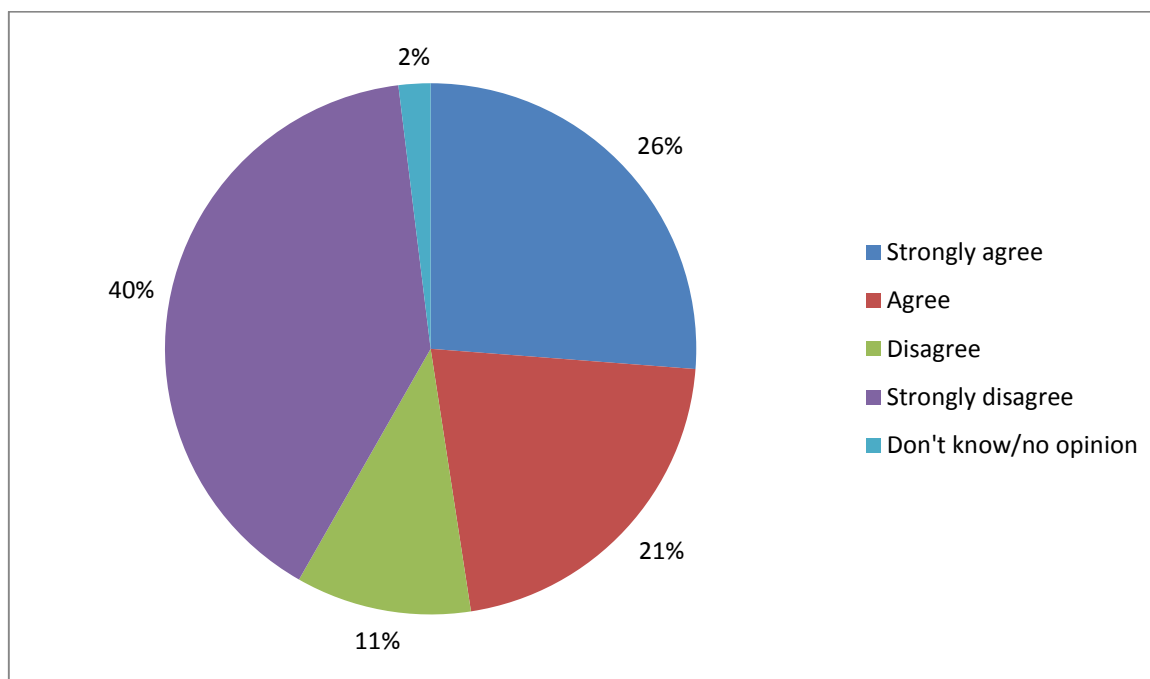
- Students will be negatively affected by the recording of their performances, increasing the stress and embarrassment they will suffer as part of the process.
- Some parents may refuse their permission for their children to be recorded in this way.

- As the assessment of speaking and listening no longer counts towards the final grade, it would be a waste of time and resources to record the performances.
- Recordings are not necessary for teachers to be able to mark the performances.
- The marks for speaking and listening will not be valuable as they will not count towards the grade, and so adding in extra administrative activities is unnecessary.
- Those schools that have large cohorts will have to spend a great deal of time and resources recording performances, and storing those recordings.
- English department budgets will already be stretched with the need to buy resources for teaching the new GCSE courses, and the need to purchase the equipment necessary to record performances will be a further cost that many schools will not be able to afford.
- Moderation visits were preferred over external moderation in the way that is envisaged through this proposal.
- Impromptu spoken tasks would be impossible to record, though for some students they would be the best evidence of their spoken English ability.

OCR commented that although the recording of spoken language assessments would support effective external moderation and increase the validity of the current process, the burden on centres would be unmanageable. OCR proposed that centres should record only an agreed sample which would increase the validity of the present process, whilst not being unmanageable for centres.

Many respondents reflected the view that the speaking-and-listening element is an important part of the English language qualification and that it should still count towards the final grade.

**Figure 3:** Question 1 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the benefits for marking, moderation and review of the spoken language assessments being recorded would outweigh the costs.



**Figure 4:** Breakdown of question 1 by respondent type

	Don't know / no opinion	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total agree	Total disagree
All	2	27	22	11	41	103	47.6%	50.5%
Individuals	1	19	17	7	34	78	46.2%	52.6%
Organisations	1	8	5	4	7	25	52.0%	44.0%
Exam boards	0	3	2	1	0	6	83.3%	16.7%
Other representative / special-interest groups	1	1	2	1	3	8	37.5%	50.0%
Schools/colleges	0	4	1	2	4	11	45.5%	54.5%
Teachers	1	17	16	7	34	75	44.0%	54.7%
General public	0	2	1	0	0	3	100.0%	0.0%

**Views on whether, if the assessments are recorded, the recording should be audio only or audio and visual. (Question 2)**

The responses to this question are evenly split, with 47 per cent of respondents saying that the recording should be audio-only and 47 per cent stating that the recording should be audio-visual.

Comments in support of audio-only recordings were as follows.

- Listening should be enough to validate teachers' marks.
- Students could find a video recording distracting, threatening, embarrassing or stressful.
- Video recordings can lead to less natural performances.
- The cost of making video recordings would be higher in terms of equipment costs and time.
- Making audio recordings is easier than making audio-visual recordings.
- Schools all have access to devices that make audio recordings, but may have to purchase devices to make audio-visual recordings.
- Students are not being examined on the visual element of the presentation, as this would make it a drama/media piece, it is the voice, words and intonation that matter and this can be recorded without the need for a video camera.
- Some parents may refuse permission for audio-visual recordings to be made of their child, but could be happier with audio-only recordings.
- The process of making audio recordings of students is tried and tested.
- Audio recording is sufficient to ensure that evidence of candidate performance is provided, especially when weighed against the negative issues surrounding the use of audio-visual recordings.

Comments in support of audio and visual recordings are as follows.

- Depending on the nature of the assessment, students could benefit from having their gestures, facial expressions and body language recorded as part of the assessment (for example where students are performing a role play). This would be lost on an audio-only recording.

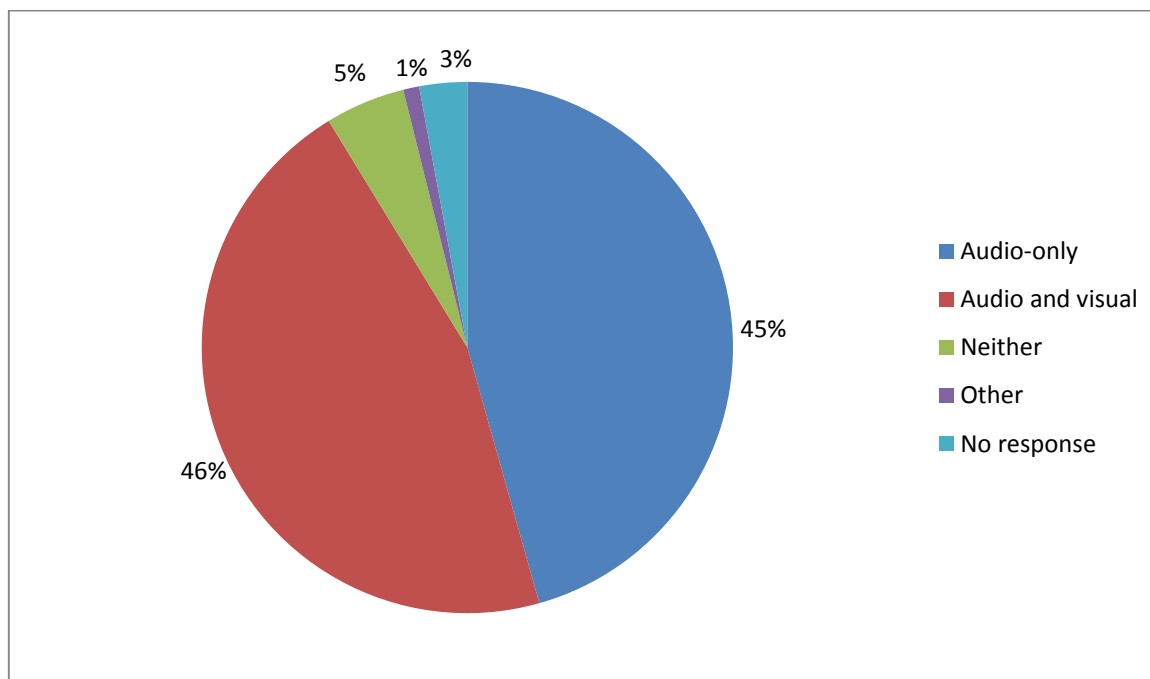


- Facial expressions, body language and gestures are a part of speech, and should form a part of the marking of the assessment, and should therefore be recorded.
- Distinguishing disembodied voices from one another on an audio-only recording can be difficult for examining purposes.
- An audio-visual recording would ensure that students are not reading from a script, or that certain types of malpractice are not taking place.
- The technology to make audio-visual recordings is now simple and accessible to all schools, and making audio-visual recordings can be done as easily as audio-only recordings.

The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD), the National Deaf Children's Society and The Communication Trust all commented that for deaf students, an audio-visual recording would be particularly helpful. They commented that although they may have advanced spoken English skills, some deaf students may have speech which is not initially intelligible to the unfamiliar listener. For this reason an audio-visual recording would assist any moderator to follow what is being said and how the student is responding. This would not be possible through audio alone and would therefore disadvantage such students. Additionally, an audio-visual recording would show whether or not they were having any difficulty in hearing the questions and comments being made in the feedback session.

Most of the exam boards indicated that they would prefer audio-visual recordings over audio recordings alone, as they are the most reliable way of ensuring that individuals are recorded and assessed properly.

**Figure 5:** Question 2 – If assessments are recorded should the recording be:  
 audio only  
 audio and visual



**Figure 6:** Breakdown of question 2 by respondent type

	No response	Audio only	Audio and visual	Neither	Other	Total	Total audio	Total audio and visual
All	3	47	47	5	1	103	47.0%	47.0%
Individuals	3	42	32	1	0	78	56.0%	42.7%
Organisations	0	5	15	4	1	25	20.0%	60.0%
Exam boards	0	1	4	0	1	6	16.7%	66.7%
Other representative / special-interest groups	0	1	5	2	0	8	12.5%	62.5%
Schools/colleges	0	3	6	2	0	11	27.3%	54.5%
Teachers	3	42	29	1	0	75	58.3%	40.3%
General public	0	0	3	0	0	3	0.0%	100.0%

Views on the impacts (both positive and negative) on schools/colleges, teachers and exam boards, if all spoken language assessments were recorded. (Question 3)

All but one of the respondents answered this question.

The negative impacts identified are as follows.

- The technology required to record speaking assessments could be costly if schools do not already have the equipment.
- The administrative aspect of recording all assessments would have a negative impact on staff time.
- A stressful assessment experience would be made worse for students by its recording.
- There is no need for the recordings to be made as the speaking assessment no longer contributes to the overall GCSE mark.
- The impacts will vary depending on the size of the schools concerned, but for larger schools, the impacts will be more severe.
- Potential child protection issues, and issues around storage of images of children.

The positive impacts identified are as follows.

- The recording would lead to the speaking assessment being seen as a valid and valued aspect of the GCSE.
- Recording will lead to less abuse of a centre-examined part of the GCSE.
- Marking will be made easier for teachers as they will not have to rush to mark the assessment as the student is speaking.
- Recording will enable moderation to be carried out effectively.
- There would be evidence to support the assessed level of performance.

## **4.2 Reporting the outcomes of the spoken language assessment**

### **Background**

In relation to how the outcomes of the spoken language assessment in new GCSEs in English language should be reported, we proposed the following.

- Student performance in the speaking assessment should be differentiated using three positive grades and a separate outcome showing that the required level has not been demonstrated.
- Students who do not take the spoken language assessment (other than those given an exemption because of their disability) should have the same outcome reported on their certificates as a student who attempted the assessment but did not demonstrate the required level of performance.
- Teachers should grade students using descriptions only, without also using marks.

We also sought views on how the grades should be described, and whether the draft assessment criteria appropriately describe the different levels of performance that students might demonstrate.

Question 4 of our consultation was aimed at exploring respondents' views on whether performance in the speaking assessment should be differentiated using three positive grades and a separate outcome showing that the required level has not been demonstrated. Question 5 was aimed at exploring respondents' views on how the grades should be described. Question 6 explored respondents' views on whether students who do not take the assessment should receive the same outcomes on their certificates as students who do not meet the required performance standard. Question 7 asked for views on whether the draft assessment criteria appropriately describe the different levels of performance a student might demonstrate. Question 8 asked for views on whether teachers should grade students using descriptions only, without also using marks. Question 9 asked for views on whether teachers should differentiate performance within description bands by allocating marks.

### **Key messages**

- The responses to most of the questions were mostly balanced, with almost as many of the respondents agreeing with proposals as disagreeing with them.
- The responses to question 6, however, were more unevenly split, with many respondents arguing that a different outcome should be provided for a student who does not take the spoken language assessment, though differing views

**Views on whether the performance in the speaking assessment should be differentiated using three positive grades and a separate outcome showing that the required level has not been demonstrated. (Question 4)**

Fifty per cent of respondents agreed that performance should be differentiated in this way, while 37 per cent of respondents disagreed with the proposal.

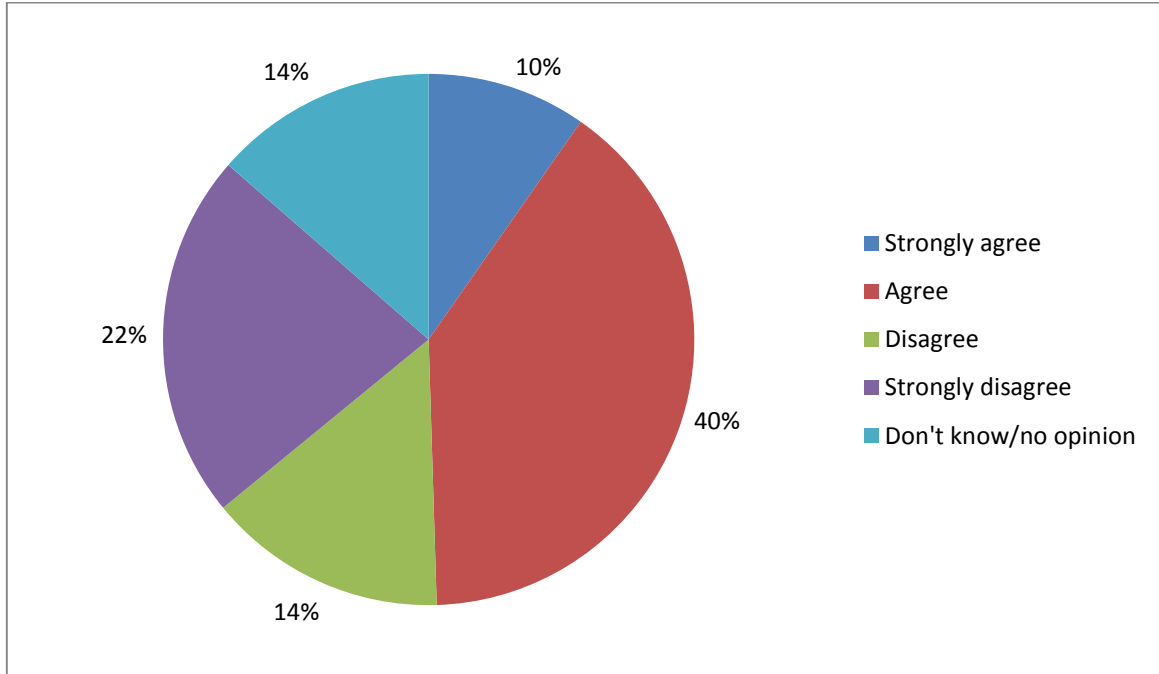
Those who agreed with the proposal made the following statements.

- This was a straightforward way of differentiating students, and would be easy for students, parents, colleges and employers to understand.
- It would be difficult to differentiate further between students as the evidence of attainment is more limited.

Comments made by those who disagreed with the proposal included the following.

- The 9 to 1 grading structure should be adopted for the speaking assessment.
- Failing to use the same grading structure as for the rest of the GCSEs further divorces the spoken language assessment from the rest of the GCSE assessments, and devalues this part of the qualification.
- A different grading structure for this assessment will cause confusion to students, parents, colleges and employers.
- The three grades are not specific enough for assessment purposes.
- Given the argument previously put forward for the reforms to English related to the desire to have “greater transparency” between the abilities of students, particularly at the higher levels, this proposal seems limits the potential outcomes for performance.
- There should be no fail grade.
- The Cambridge IGCSE grading system for speaking and listening should be adopted.
- There should only be pass or fail on the certificate, as the assessment does not count towards the final grade, and marking and moderating beyond would be a waste of time.

**Figure 7:** Question 4 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that students’ performance in the speaking assessment should be differentiated using three positive grades and a separate outcome showing that the required level has not been demonstrated?



**Figure 8:** Breakdown of question 4 by respondent type

	Don't know / no opinion	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total agree	Total disagree
All	14	10	41	15	23	103	49.5%	36.9%
Individuals	12	7	29	14	16	78	46.2%	38.5%
Organisations	2	3	12	1	7	25	60.0%	32.0%
Exam boards	0	1	3	1	1	6	66.7%	33.3%
Other representative / special-interest groups	0	1	3	0	4	8	50.0%	50.0%
Schools/colleges	2	1	6	0	2	11	63.6%	18.1%
Teachers	12	7	27	14	15	75	45.3%	38.7%
General public	0	0	2	0	1	3	66.7%	33.3%

**Views on how, if three positive grades and an outcome showing the required level has not been demonstrated are used, the grades should be described. (Question 5)**

Forty per cent of respondents thought that the grades should be described as 'pass, merit, distinction and fail', whereas only 24 per cent thought that 'satisfactory, good, excellent and unsatisfactory' would be better.

Those who proposed an alternative suggested:

- pass, merit, distinction, and below standard.
- satisfactory, good, excellent, and unclassified.
- a numerical scale of 9 to 1 In line with requirements, meeting expectations, exceeding expectations and working towards expectations.
- grades should be given with descriptors attached; for example, A, B, C, D
- that a different description should be used instead of 'fail' (respondents suggested 'below standard', 'requires improvement' or 'required standard not met').
- that separate outcomes were not necessary for the spoken language assessment, as it will not count towards the GCSE grade anyway.
- that there should only be a pass or fail on the certificate. Marking beyond would be a waste of time, as the assessment will not count towards the final grade.

Other respondents suggested that there should not be a 'fail' grade, as all students will demonstrate some level of proficiency and this could be graded.

The English Speaking Board stated that in an equivalent qualification they have five defined grade bands from Entry Level to Level 5 – pass, good, merit, merit plus and distinction.

Although five of the six exam boards stated that they would prefer an 'alternative' naming structure, four of them suggested that, out of the options given, pass, merit and distinction was the preferred wording and has the benefit of being well understood by end users, particularly employers. However, there was concern over the use of a 'fail' grade.

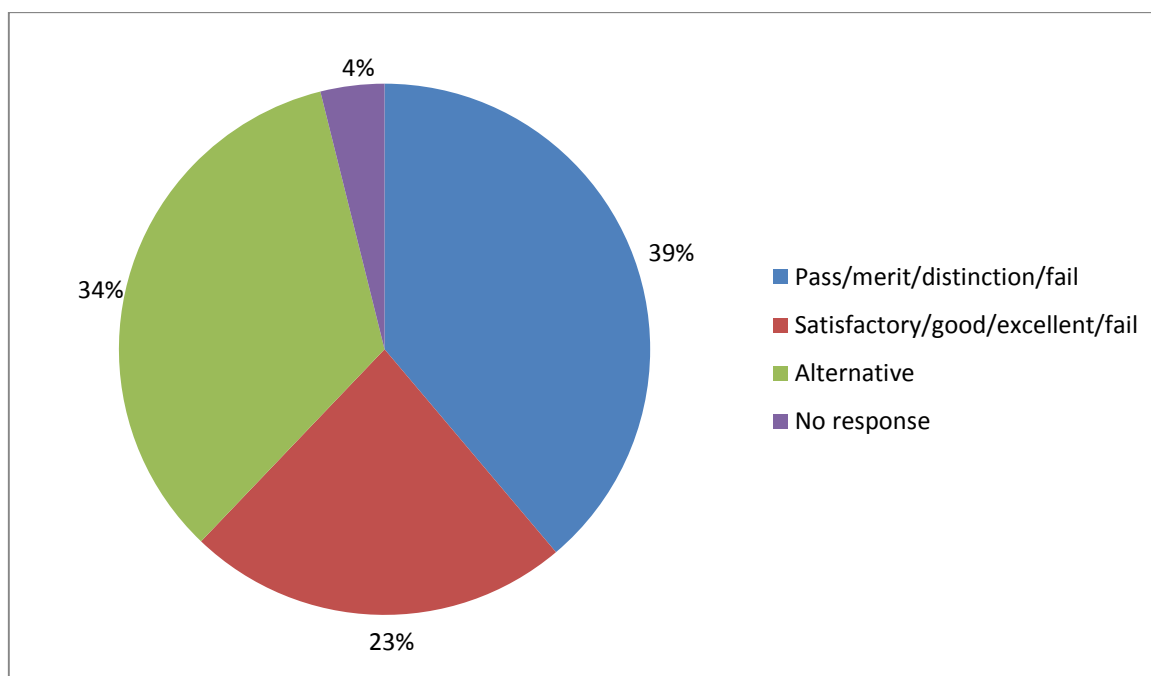
AQA pointed out that for GCSEs generally almost all students across the entire attainment spectrum are awarded a grade. Grade G (or 1 in the future) represents a very low level of performance, but nonetheless positively rewards what the student has managed to achieve. They suggested a similar approach may be appropriate for

separately graded components of GCSEs, including the spoken language assessment in GCSE English Language.

Pearson and OCR both thought that 'fail' was not the appropriate wording and preferred 'unsatisfactory' and 'did not meet the required standard' respectively.

**Figure 9:** Question 5 – If three positive grades, and an outcome showing the required level has not been demonstrated, are used, should these grades be described as:

- ( ) pass, merit, distinction and fail?
- ( ) satisfactory, good, excellent and unsatisfactory?
- ( ) an alternative? Please indicate what this should be.





**Figure 10:** Breakdown of question 5 by respondent type

	No response	Pass / merit / distinction / fail	Satisfactory / good / excellent / fail	Alternative	Total	Total pass / merit/ distinction / fail	Total
All	4	40	24	35	103	40.4%	24.2%
Individuals	3	36	16	23	78	48.0%	21.3%
Organisations	1	4	8	12	25	16.7%	33.3%
Exam boards	0	0	1	5	6	0.0%	16.7%
Other representative / special-interest groups	0	0	3	5	8	0.0%	37.5%
Schools/colleges	1	4	4	2	11	40.0%	40.0%
Teachers	3	36	15	21	75	50.0%	20.8%
General public	0	0	1	2	3	0.0%	33.3%

Views on whether students who do not take the spoken language assessment, other than because they were given an exemption because of their disability, should have the same outcome on their certificate as students who attempted the assessment but did not demonstrate the minimum required level of performance. (Question 6)

The majority of respondents (62 per cent) disagreed with the proposal. Only 25 per cent of respondents agreed.

Respondents who disagreed with the proposal made the following points.

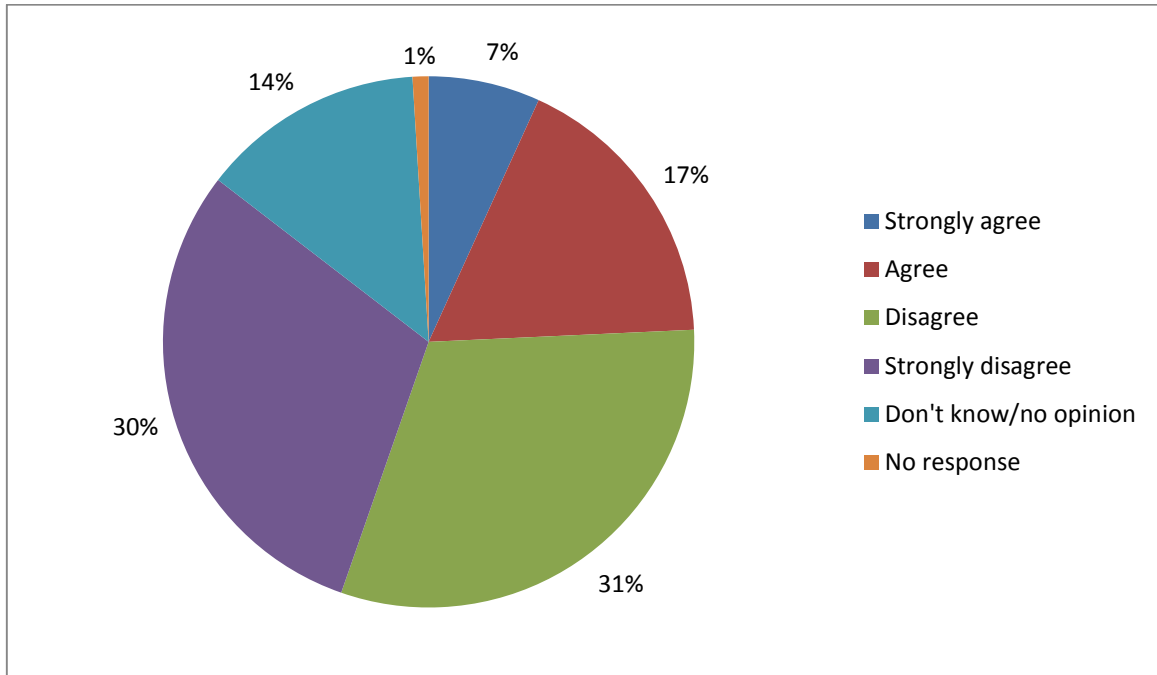
- Those who attempt the assessment should gain more recognition than those who did not.
- The proposed course of action would not make it clear to employers and colleges whether the student took part in the assessment or not. This would encourage schools not to enter their students for the assessment, thereby devaluing it and depriving their students of learning opportunities.
- Employers should be able to see who failed because they did not have the necessary skills, and those who failed because they simply did not take the assessment.

- It may not be the student's choice not to take the assessment and it would be unfair to penalise them.
- Those who were exempted for other reasons (for example as a result of bereavement) should be afforded the same status as those exempted because of a disability.
- There should be an expectation that all students sit the assessment, and appropriate repercussions should they not. This should not merely be aimed at giving the students a 'fail' grade'; there should be a penalty for the centre concerned.
- A 'no show' grade would speak for itself.

Respondents who agreed with the proposal made the following points.

- Non-attendance should be treated as not meeting the minimum required level of performance.
- It would encourage centres to enter their students, as they would not want them to have 'fail' on their certificates.
- The alternative of a 'no show' grade would lead to centres choosing not to enter their students, as the 'no show' grade would not reflect on the student's ability to use spoken English.

**Figure 11:** Question 6 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that students who do not take the spoken language assessment, other than because they were given an exemption because of their disability, should have the same outcome on their certificate as those who attempted the assessment but did not demonstrate the minimum required level of performance?



**Figure 12:** Breakdown of question 6 by respondent type

	No response	Don't know / no opinion	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total agree	Total disagree
All	1	14	7	18	32	31	103	24.5%	61.8%
Individuals	0	12	5	14	25	22	78	24.4%	60.3%
Organisations	1	2	2	4	7	9	25	25.0%	66.7%
Exam boards	0	0	1	1	2	2	6	33.3%	66.7%
Other representative / special-interest groups	1	0	0	1	2	4	8	14.3%	85.7%
Schools/colleges	0	2	1	2	3	3	11	27.3%	54.5%
Teachers	0	12	5	13	24	21	75	24.0%	60.0%
General public	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	33.3%	66.7%

**Views on whether the draft assessment criteria appropriately describe the different levels of performance that students might demonstrate. (Question 7)**

Twenty-two per cent of respondents stated that they did not know, or had no opinion, about the draft assessment criteria. Fifty-five per cent of respondents stated that they agreed that the draft assessment criteria appropriately described the different levels of performance that students might demonstrate, with 24 per cent disagreeing.

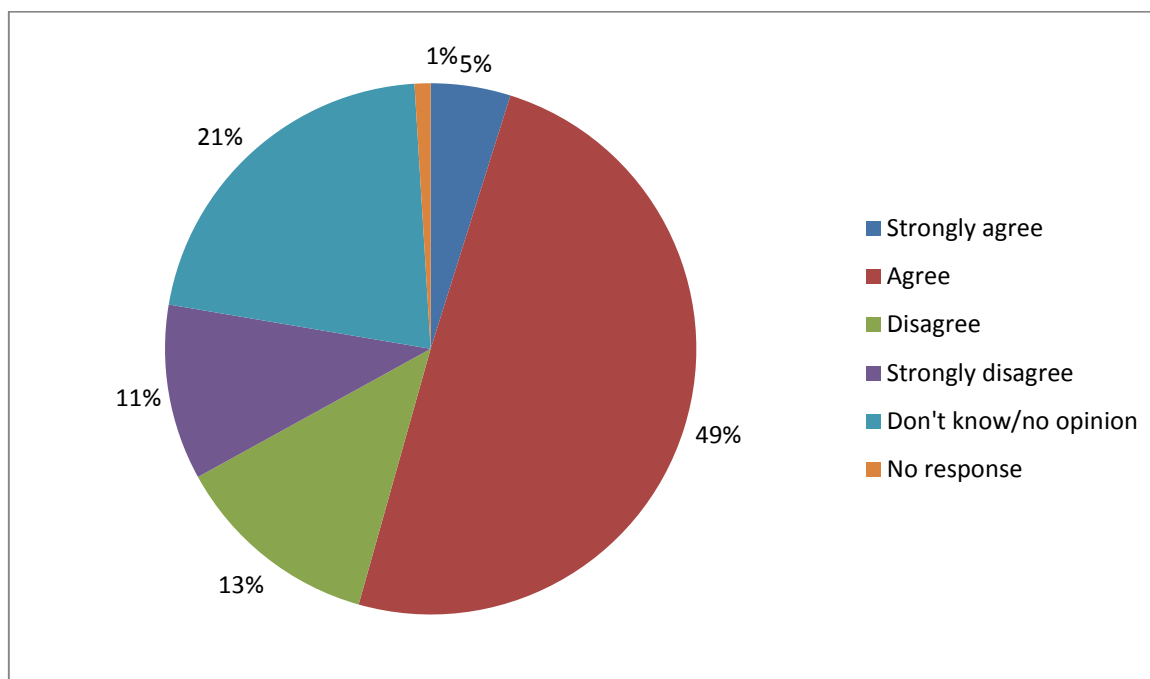
Those who agreed made the following comments.

- The draft assessment criteria were clear and straightforward and were open enough to allow a range of activities from students.
- They were stepped logically and would be user-friendly for teachers.
- They were similar to existing criteria, which work well.
- Although they seemed clear, further guidance / training/moderation materials would be needed for teachers.

Those who disagreed made the following comments.

- The criteria seemed vague, difficult to measure and subjective.
- The criteria did not fully reflect the graduations of attainment One respondent expressed disappointment over the fact that the skill of discussion appeared to have been downgraded in the criteria.
- It is not clear how students with stammers, pragmatic language difficulties and audibility issues would be treated if they decided to take part in the assessment rather than seeking or being given an exemption.

**Figure 13:** Question 7 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft assessment criteria appropriately describe the different levels of performance that students might demonstrate?



**Figure 14:** Breakdown of question 7 by respondent type

	No response	Don't know / no opinion	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total agree	Total disagree
All	1	22	5	51	13	11	103	54.9%	23.5%
Individuals	1	20	4	39	9	5	78	55.8%	18.2%
Organisations	0	2	1	12	4	6	25	52.0%	40.0%
Exam boards	0	0	1	2	1	2	6	50.0%	50.0%
Other representative / special-interest groups	0	1	0	4	2	1	8	50.0%	37.5%
Schools/colleges	0	1	0	6	1	3	11	54.5%	36.4%
Teachers	1	20	3	39	9	3	75	56.8%	16.2%
General public	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	33.3%	66.7%

**Views on whether teachers should grade students using the descriptions only, without also using marks. (Question 8)**

Fifty per cent of respondents agreed with the proposal. Forty-one per cent of respondents disagreed.

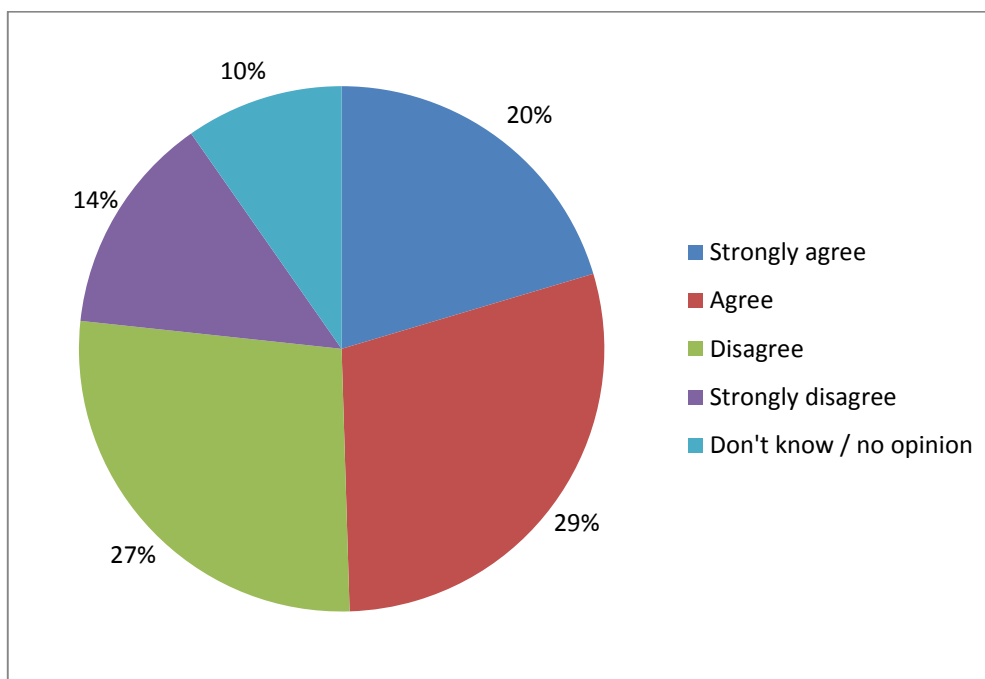
Those who agreed made the following comments.

- Just having to decide between three levels will reduce the bureaucracy in relation to the spoken language assessment which will not count towards the overall GCSE mark in any case.
- The suggested descriptors work better than a mark, as they give students a greater understanding of what they have achieved.
- Giving students more than the overall GCSE grade 9 to 1 and the three descriptors would just be confusing.
- Marks for this component will not count towards the main grade anyway, and it would therefore be a waste of teachers' time to use marks as well as grades
- AQA commented that it will be impossible to meaningfully differentiate students' performance at the level of precision of marks. They also believed that it will be impossible to ensure that the consistency of marking is reliable across centres at this level of precision.

Those who disagreed made the following comments.

- Marks would allow better differentiation between students, and aid with the moderation process.
- Marks are present in every other type of assessment, and there is a need for consistency. This would also help to prevent the speaking assessment from being undervalued.
- Marks are less subjective, as they focus the minds of teachers who are marking, to check that students have indeed met the relevant criteria.
- Both Cambridge International Examinations and Pearson commented that it would be important for centres to use both descriptors and marks, otherwise it would be very difficult to understand the differentiation in performance or, during moderation processes, to adjust the marks where required.

**Figure 15:** Question 8 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should grade students using the descriptions only, without also using marks?



**Figure 16:** Breakdown of question 8 by respondent type

	Don't know / no opinion	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total agree	Total disagree
All	10	21	30	28	14	103	49.5%	40.8%
Individuals	9	15	25	21	8	78	51.3%	37.2%
Organisations	1	6	5	7	6	25	44.0%	52.0%
Exam boards	0	1	2	2	1	6	50.0%	50.0%
Other representative / special-interest groups	0	3	1	3	1	8	50.0%	50.0%
Schools/colleges	1	2	2	2	4	11	36.4%	54.5%
Teachers	8	15	25	21	6	75	53.3%	36.0%
General public	1	0	0	0	2	3	0.0%	66.7%

**Views on whether teachers should, in addition to identifying the description that best matches a performance, also differentiate performance within that description band by allocating marks. (Question 9)**

Forty-seven per cent of respondents agreed with the proposal; 43 per cent of respondents disagreed.

Those who agreed with the proposal made the following comments.

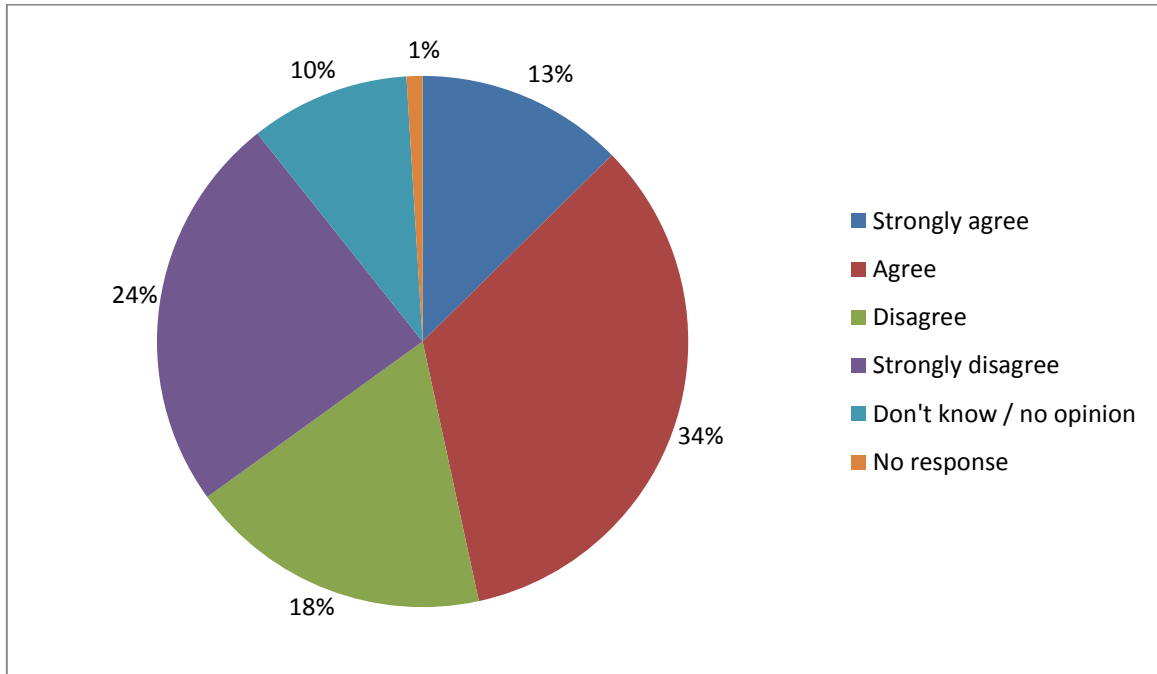
- There should always be an opportunity to define nuances between performance. Allocating marks would make it easier to mark and moderate work.
- Teachers should be able to rank-order their students, allowing for ease of moderation.
- It allows the exam board to see a range of marks during their moderation exercise.
- This would avoid lazy marking and ‘blurring around the edges’.

Those who disagreed with the proposal made the following comments.

- This would increase the amount of administration without there being any real benefit.
- This would make the marking process more difficult and time consuming.
- The descriptors are sufficient without the need for marks.
- Although there may be some difference between students in each category, they either perform in line with the criteria or do not.
- Teachers should not provide both marks and grades. They should provide one or the other, otherwise mark bands will be worked out over time.



**Figure 17:** Question 9 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should, in addition to identifying the description that best matches a performance, also differentiate performance within that description band by allocating marks?



**Figure 18:** Breakdown of question 9 by respondent type

	No response	Don't know / no opinion	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total agree	Total disagree
All	1	10	13	35	19	25	103	47.1%	43.1%
Individuals	0	10	6	29	14	19	78	44.9%	42.3%
Organisations	1	0	7	6	5	6	25	54.2%	45.8%
Exam boards	0	0	1	2	1	2	6	50.0%	50.0%
Other representative / special-interest groups	0	0	1	3	1	3	8	50.0%	50.0%
Schools/colleges	1	0	5	1	3	1	11	60.0%	40.0%
Teachers	0	9	6	28	14	18	75	45.3%	42.7%
General public	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	33.3%	33.3%

### **4.3 Equality analysis**

#### **Background**

We have identified a number of impacts (positive and negative) of the proposed requirements for the spoken language assessment in new GCSEs in English language on persons who share a protected characteristic. Question 10 sought respondents' views on whether they identified any further impacts.

#### **Key messages**

- Forty-one respondents stated that there they had identified potential impacts on persons who share a protected characteristic that had not been identified in the consultation.

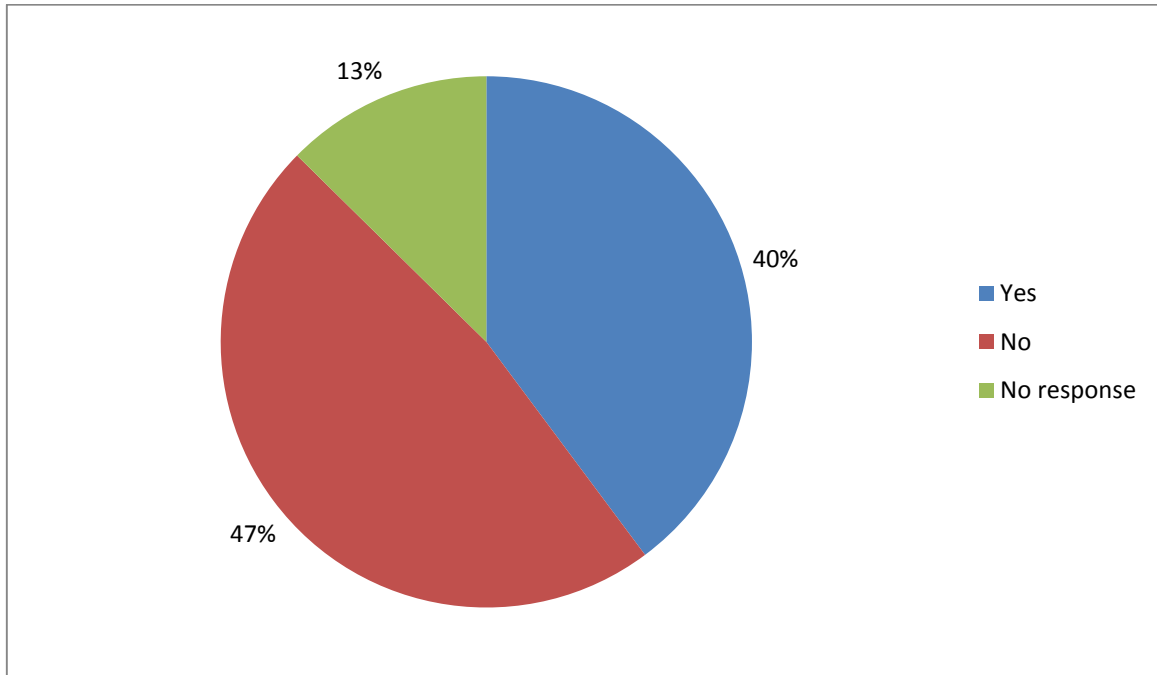
#### **Views on whether there are any ways by which decisions on the conduct, marking and grading of the assessment may have a positive or negative impact on persons who share protected characteristics. (Question 10)**

Forty-one respondents stated that they had identified further positive or negative impacts on those sharing protected characteristics. Thirteen respondents did not respond to this question.

Impacts that were identified were as follows.

- Some cultures may have issues with being filmed. (There was a suggestion that students should be allowed to opt out of filming, but they should first understand that by doing so they would lose the right to challenge their marks).
- Filming students could impact on those with acute anxiety disorders, or those with speech disorders which are made worse by pressurised situations.
- Reporting those who are exempted from taking the spoken language assessment as a result of disabilities as 'blank' may disadvantage them.
- Terms such as 'sophisticated feelings' may alienate those students with autism spectrum disorders.
- All students must have an equal opportunity to take the assessment (e.g. students using Dragon Speech).

**Figure 19:** Question 10 – Are there any ways by which decisions on the conduct, marking and grading of the assessment may have a positive or negative impact on persons who share protected characteristics?  
 ( ) Yes ( ) No  
 If yes, what are they, and what steps could be taken to mitigate any negative impacts?



**Figure 20:** Breakdown of question 10 by respondent type

	No response	Yes	No	Total	Total Yes	Total No
All	13	41	49	103	45.6%	54.4%
Individuals	11	25	42	78	37.3%	62.7%
Organisations	2	16	7	25	69.6%	30.4%
Exam boards	0	4	2	6	66.7%	33.3%
Other representative / special-interest groups	0	7	1	8	87.5%	12.5%
Schools/colleges	2	5	4	11	55.6%	44.4%
Teachers	11	22	42	75	34.4%	65.6%
General public	0	3	0	3	100.0%	0.0%

## **Appendix A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation**

When completing the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.

In the table below we list those organisations that submitted a response to the consultation.<sup>8</sup> We have not included a list of those responding as individuals. However, all responses were given equal status in the analysis.

AQA	Independent Schools Association
Ash Manor School, Surrey	Kings School, Chester
Association of Colleges	Myerscough College, Lancashire
Association of School and College Leaders	National Deaf Children's Society
Association of Teachers and Lecturers	OCR Examinations
Beaumont Leys School, Leicester	Pearson
Blackpool Sixth Form College, Blackpool	Surrey Secondary Heads' Phase Council
British Association of Teachers of the Deaf	The Communication Trust
Cambridge International Examinations	The English Speaking Board International Ltd
City College, Coventry	Thomas Knyvett College, Middlesex
Farringtons School, Kent	Voice: the union for education professionals
Hebburn Comprehensive School, Tyne and Wear	

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<sup>8</sup> Some organisations requested that their responses be treated anonymously and so the names of their organisations do not appear on this list.

## **Appendix B: Consultation details**

The consultation questions were available to either complete online or to download.

A copy of the consultation is available on the website.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/spoken-language-skills-in-gcse-english-language>

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