Mind the gap

Progress checking and tracking through Year 7, 8 and 9

Notes and guidance
for a strong transition into
GCSE English Language (8700)

Contents

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Introduction

We're keen to support progress checking and tracking through Year 7, 8, and 9 to achieve a strong transition in to GCSE English. This resource outlines your options, and the advantages of using AQA assessments with younger learners.

Overview of options

We've created a selection of suitable **Key Stage 3 assessment materials**.

Alternatively our **Step Up to English** qualification, while designed to develop literacy in Key Stage 4, could be the right route for your Key Stage 3 learners too.

Key Stage 3 assessments	Step Up to English
• Use source materials to suit the reading interests of students in Key Stage 3. • Offer insight into how students might perform on similar text genres and time periods. • Allow tracking of progress year-on-year towards GCSE potential.	• Rewards students with a certificate, and build their confidence. • Introduces students to the GCSE assessment objectives in a more teacher-guided format.
Access for free from Secure Key Materials on aqa.org.uk/log-in	This is a chargeable qualification available in January and June.
There is a fixed bank of nine assessment packs (one per term, per year group).	The bank of 5 assessment units and materials will be updated by one piece per year.

Key Stage 3 assessments for Year 7, 8 and 9

Aims:
- to introduce skills development and familiarity with GCSE paper formats
- to promote targeted teaching and learning strategies as a lead-in to developing skills and time management strategies that can benefit students in Key Stage 4
- to provide opportunity to track progress at formative and summative level
- to add to the evidence base for groups of students, helping to inform intervention.

Assessment pack	Contents
1	Y7: *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and beauty pageants Y8: *Boy* and dogs Y9: *Carrie's War* and child labour
2	Y7: *The Fire Eaters* and street musicians. Two versions are available, a 'pure' version and a 'differentiated' version with additional support and scaffolding. Y8: *Kes* and child prisoners Y9: *Propping Up the Line* and ghost hunters
3	Y7: *Don't Ask Jack* and hot-air balloon flights. Two versions are available, a 'pure' version and a 'differentiated' version with additional support and scaffolding. Y8: *Pick Your Poison* and zoos Y9: *White Fang* and animal welfare

'Pure' or 'differentiated'?
To provide for different abilities, particularly in Year 7, we've produced a choice of papers in packs 2 and 3 with additional support and scaffolding.

'Pure' choice	'Differentiated' choice
A paper with no additional scaffolding. Use if your main aims are to: • track progress year-on-year • introduce students to GCSE-style exams.	A paper with additional scaffolding and prompts. Use if your main aim is to provide a stepping-stone towards GCSE-style exams.

How the Key Stage 3 assessments build familiarity with GCSE

Reading
- Reading Assessment Objectives (AOs) are assessed in the same order, with the same weighting as our GCSE exams.
- Reading questions show the degrees of consistency used for questions at GCSE.

Writing
- Paper 1 writing tasks demonstrate the combinations of question type for assessing narrative and descriptive tasks.
- Paper 2 writing tasks demonstrate the range of forms and purposes as set out in the 'Further Insights' resource available here: bit.ly/2mccjJZ.

In the assessment packs
- 5 tasks assess 'writing to argue' for or against a statement.
- 2 tasks assess 'writing to explain' a point of view in relation to a statement.
- 1 task assesses 'writing to persuade' in relation to a statement.
- 1 task assesses 'writing to advise' in relation to a statement.

Key Stage 3 assessments: ideas to get you started

Integrate with schemes of work as 'mini tasks'
Paper topics and themes were selected to appeal to a range of ages, abilities and tastes. You can extract specific questions for assessment, homework or lesson activities.

Use for ongoing formative assessment
Each question assesses a single assessment objective, and the order and format reflects our GCSE English Language exams. This provides an opportunity to record, track and measure student performance on particular questions over a series of assessments, and potentially from year to year. When considered over a number of assessments, the patterns that emerge could add to the evidence base used to develop targeted intervention and personalised learning programmes, as well inform feedback to students and parents. For example:

- for individual students as an aspect of progress when taken alongside broader aspects of their learning
- for groups of students within a class
- for particular classes within a cohort.

Where schools have started this process, this will allow you to determine:
- how within a class, some students are more secure in their achievement on certain questions than others, allowing for peer to peer support and targeted intervention to improve learning
- how within a cohort, some classes are more secure in their achievement on certain questions than others, allowing for sharing of best practice with colleagues in a department.

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Use for summative assessment

Mix and match assessment packs based on summative assessment needs.

- Assess progress at the end of a year with one of the three packs and be creative with topics or source materials.
- Assess a year group termly, using all three packs across the year.
- Use the packs for an older year group with more able learners, use packs for a younger year group with the less able.

Marking your Key Stage 3 assessments

The same principles of design and progression apply across our Key Stage 3 assessment packs and GCSE mark schemes. Note these key points

- The levels of response and indicative standards are not reinterpreting the standards for a particular year group.
- The wording of indicative standards is not in the 'guise' of a Year 7 student for example, nor is it applicable to say: 'a top level of response for a Year 7 student differs from a top level of response for a Year 8 student – rather the indicative standards set the same expectation.
- Indicative standards are aligned to GCSE standards in this way in order to allow for year on year measures of progress.
- They can help to indicate the extent to which a group of students is making progress to a particular Assessment Objective, question type, or summative outcome.

> If a student is **in level 4 of a mark scheme** in Year 7, 8 and 9, they are meeting that standard for level 4 of a mark scheme at GCSE. This means fewer students in Year 7 than in Year 9 are likely to meet that standard, for example.

Additional support includes:

- more detailed and extended indicative standards content in the mark schemes in order to explore ways that students might approach the questions
- a *Standards Comparison Chart* which sets out, side by side, the indicative standard for every level of response across all currently available Key Stage 3 papers and GCSE specimen papers to help confirm the parity and comparability of standards
- a selection of responses written by Year 9 students under exam conditions, and marked and annotated by senior examiners.
- supporting slides expanding on how marks have been allocated.

To access these, visit: aqa.org.uk/log-in and navigate to *'English Language (new specification)'* then *'Key Stage 3 Test Packs'*.

| aqa.org.uk/ log-in | Secure Key Materials | 'English Language (new specification)' | 'Key Stage 3 Test Packs' |

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Analysing your Key Stage 3 assessments

Centres recording results question-by-question, at individual and class level over time can gain insights in to:

- which questions are being completed more and less successfully
- what progress students and groups have made compared to others

Rank order of raw marks

Each paper is marked out of 80, giving a total of 160 raw marks per student. Enter these into a spreadsheet and rank from high to low:

- highlight the selection and click 'Data'
- then 'sort'
- then select your column and order 'largest to smallest'.

It is then possible to plot each student's progress at raw mark level to see if over time, a student or group of students is on an upward or downward trajectory in-line with their anticipated or projected progress.

P1_Q1	P1_Q2	P1_Q3	P1_Q4	P1_Q5_AO5	P1_Q5_AO6	P2_Q1	P2_Q2	P2_Q3	P2_Q4	P2_Q5_AO5	P2_Q5_AO6	P1_TOT	P2_TOT	TOTAL	rank on TOTAL
4	8	8	19	22	15	3	8	11	15	24	14	76	75	151	1
4	7	7	18	22	14	4	8	12	14	20	14	72	72	144	2
4	7	8	15	21	14	4	6	10	14	22	15	69	71	140	3
4	8	7	18	20	15	4	8	10	12	22	12	72	68	140	3
4	7	6	17	21	14	4	7	10	13	21	14	69	69	138	5
4	7	6	15	21	14	3	6	12	14	21	14	67	70	137	6
4	8	6	17	23	11	3	7	10	14	21	12	69	67	136	7
4	8	8	19	12	12	3	8	9	14	23	14	63	71	134	8
4	4	5	13	22	15	4	7	10	13	21	15	63	70	133	9
4	8	6	15	18	12	2	8	12	13	22	13	63	70	133	9
4	8	6	16	21	14	3	6	12	12	18	12	69	63	132	11
4	6	5	15	21	14	4	5	10	13	21	14	65	67	132	11
4	8	7	18	20	14	2	8	8	13	16	14	71	61	132	11
4	7	8	14	18	12	4	8	11	9	22	14	63	68	131	14
4	7	7	14	21	13	3	8	12	7	21	13	66	64	130	15
4	6	7	16	21	14	4	7	9	10	18	14	68	62	130	15
4	8	7	12	19	13	3	7	10	12	21	14	63	67	130	15
4	7	7	14	22	13	4	8	12	20	14	68	61	129	18	
4	6	7	12	22	13	4	6	11	11	20	14	64	64	128	19
4	7	7	14	17	12	5	8	12	10	20	14	61	67	128	19
4	8	8	15	18	12	0	8	9	14	18	14	65	63	128	19
4	6	8	12	20	15	4	7	10	10	18	14	65	63	128	19
4	8	6	16	13	9	3	8	11	13	24	12	56	71	127	23
4	6	7	16	22	14	4	7	4	9	21	13	69	58	127	23
4	5	6	16	19	13	3	7	7	12	19	14	63	62	125	25
4	7	7	17	19	14	3	7	10	7	15	15	68	57	125	25
4	8	8	15	22	12	4	7	11	0	21	13	69	56	125	25
4	8	6	16	24	14	2	5	8	9	16	12	72	52	124	28
4	8	8	14	15	15	4	8	11	10	13	14	64	60	124	28
3	6	5	14	21	12	3	7	10	12	19	11	61	62	123	30
4	8	4	9	17	12	4	8	10	14	20	13	54	69	123	30

Average score per question (column highlighted) will be shown in the bottom right hand corner.

You could calibrate averages by question, student, and by teaching groups. You could even establish percentiles, and work on averages within those.

Colour-coding to chart progress

Colour coding may offer an immediate visual cue:

- green for students significantly above average for the question.
- red for students significantly below average for the question.

	1.1 AO 1	1.2 AO 2	1.3 AO 2	1.4 AO 4	1.5 AO 5	1.5 AO 6	P1 total	21 AO 1	2.2 AO 2	2.3 AO 2	2.4 AO 3	2.5 AO 5	2.5 AO 6	P2 total	P1 + P2 total
Stu 1	4	5	5	7	12	6	39	3	4	4	5	10	8	34	73
Stu 2	3	4	4	8	10	5	34	4	3	5	3	9	7	31	65
etc							0							0	0
							0							0	0
							0							0	0
							0							0	0
							0							0	0
							0							0	0
							0							0	0
							0							0	0
							0							0	0

Visualise student distribution

To easily identify possible changes over time, add marks from a paper 1 and paper 2, rank them, and present as a 'bell-shape' curve.
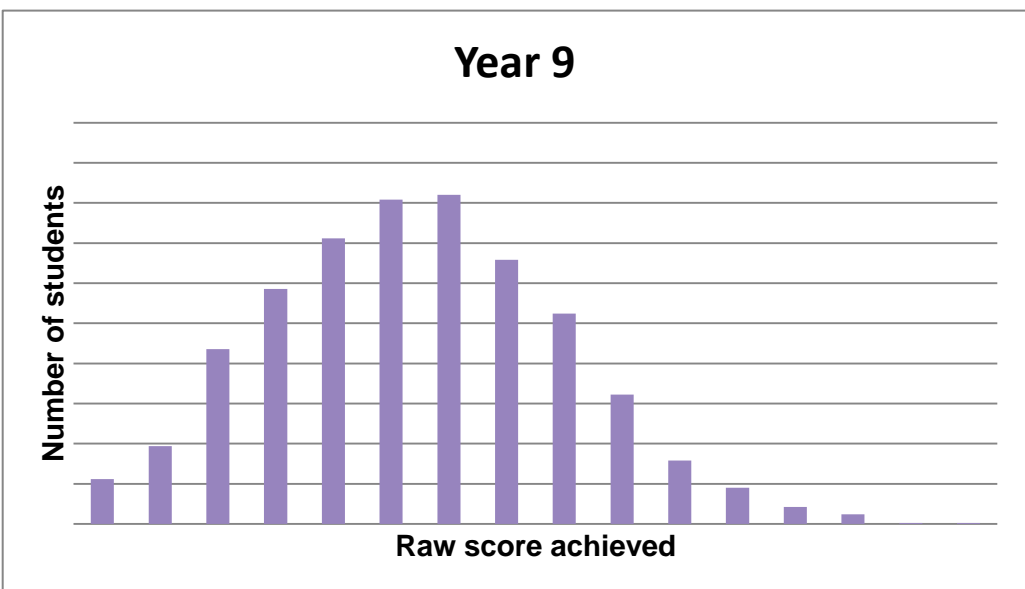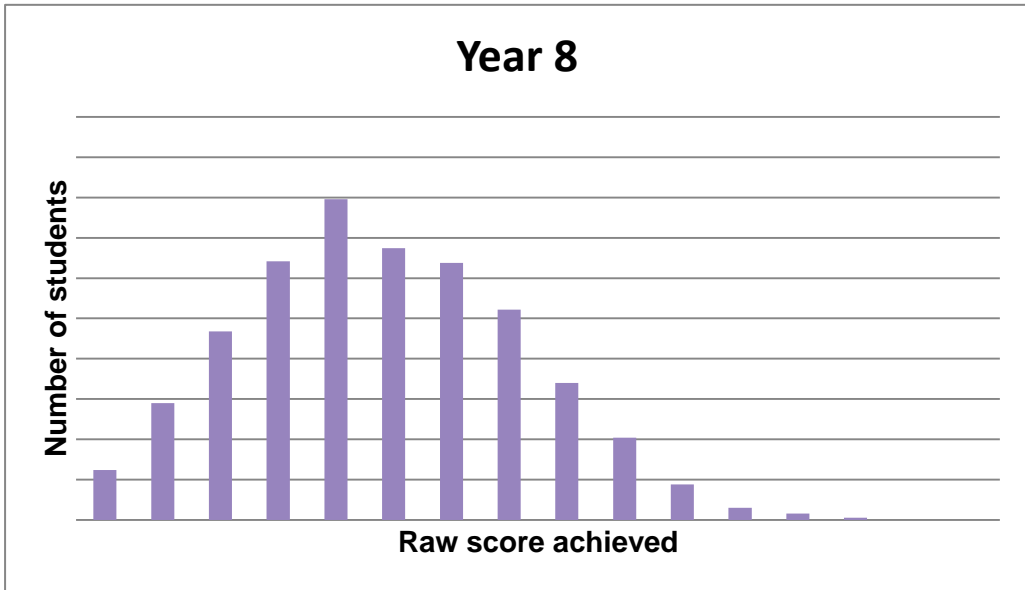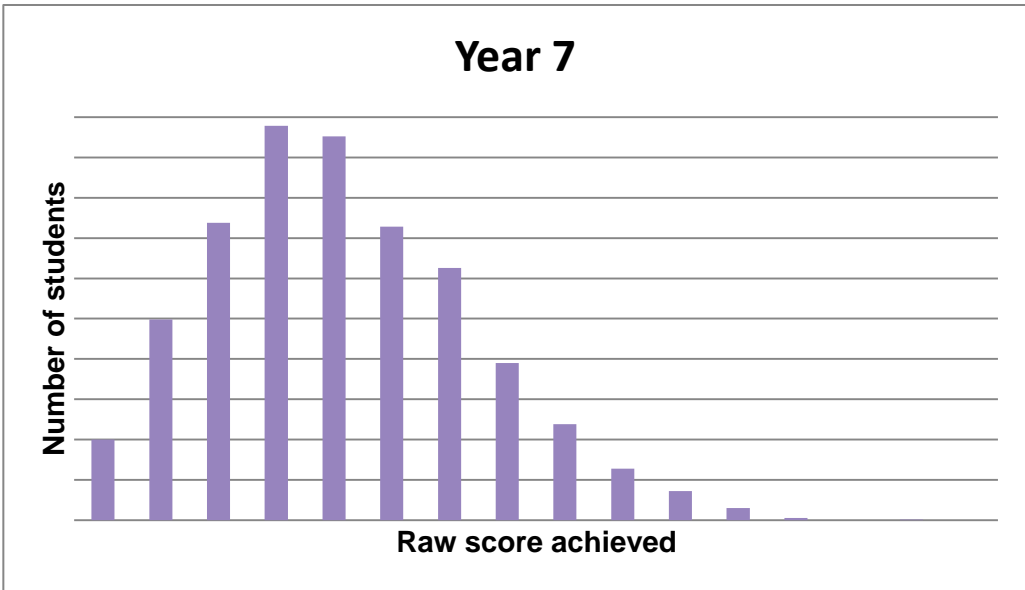
See examples overleaf.

Drawing conclusions

What a change over time may indicate

- In the early stages of Key Stage 3, the distribution is skewed to the left because more students achieve marks in lower bands.
- In the later stages of Key Stage 3, the distribution has moved right because more students are achieving marks in higher bands.

If this distribution is achieved by the same class or cohort over a three year period, it can be a progress indicator.

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Year 7

Year 8

Year 9

Alternatively: Step Up to English in Key Stage 3

Suitable for any age, Step Up to English is a chargeable Entry Level Certificate that bridges the demand gap between Key Stage 3 and GCSE.

It assesses Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3, and as a standalone qualification can offer a confidence boost for students looking to develop these skills needed for GCSE progression:
- reading and understanding a range of texts
- writing clearly, coherently and accurately using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures.

It can be tailored to students' needs through two options:

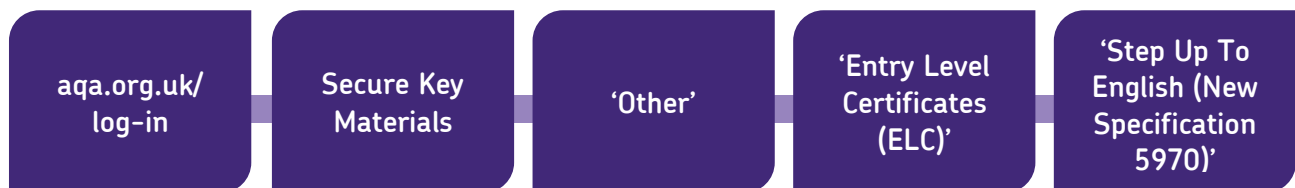| Silver Step	Entry 1 and 2 students
Gold Step	Entry 3 students looking to progress to GCSE.

Clear progression markers and GCSE-ready descriptors make it easier to identify students ready to attempt GCSE English Language.

Each step has two components, and five externally-set tasks for each. These appeal to different interests so you can pick one that best suits your students.

Access
The qualification is chargeable, but access to the assessment papers is free.

Download throughout the year from aqa.org.uk/log-in. Navigate to 'Other', then '*Entry Level Certificates (ELC)*', then '*Step Up To English (New Specification 5970*)'.

aqa.org.uk/log-in → Secure Key Materials → 'Other' → 'Entry Level Certificates (ELC)' → 'Step Up To English (New Specification 5970)'

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Step Up to English specification at a glance
Silver step

Component 1: Literacy topics	+	Component 2; Creative reading and writing
What's assessed: **Spoken language task** • Presenting • Responding to questions and feedback **Reading tasks** Three transactional texts **Writing task** Transactional writing		**What's assessed:** **Section A Reading** Two literary texts **Section B Writing** Creative writing
How it's assessed • Students should complete and submit two topics • Externally set non-exam assessment❶: up to 1 hour and 30 minutes • 60 marks per topic, 120 marks per component • 50% of Step up to English		**How it's assessed** • Students should complete one paper • Externally set non-exam assessment❹: up to 1 hour and 30 minutes • 60 marks • 50% of Step up to English
Tasks **Spoken language❷ (12 marks)** One task **Reading❸ (24 marks)** • Three linked reading tasks • Short form questions **Writing (24 marks)** One longer form writing task		**Tasks** **Reading❺ (30 marks)** • Two linked texts • Short form questions **Writing (30 marks)** One longer form writing task
Notes		Notes
Component 1 is 'transactional' in nature ❶ A more engaging and supportive form of assessment ❷ Speech is an ideal starting point for building skills to tackle reading and writing ❸ The reading sources are taken from real life contexts, ie emails, webpages, letters etc		Component 2 is 'literary' in nature ❹ Can be taken in one, or broken down as needed ❺ Literary or literary non-fiction reading tasks

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Step Up to English specification at a glance
Gold step

Component 1: Literacy topics	+	Component 2: Creative reading and writing
What's assessed: **Spoken language task** • Presenting • Responding to questions and feedback **Reading tasks** Three transactional texts **Writing task** Transactional writing		**What's assessed:** **Section A Reading** Two literary texts (from 19th❹, 20th, 21st century) **Section B Writing** Creative writing
How it's assessed • Students should complete and submit two topics • Externally set non-exam assessment ❶: up to 1 hour and 30 minutes • 60 marks per topic, 120 marks per component • 50% of Step up to English		**How it's assessed** • Students should complete one paper • Externally set non-exam assessment❺: up to 1 hour and 30 minutes • 60 marks • 50% of Step up to English
Tasks **Spoken language❷ (12 marks)** One task **Reading❸ (24 marks)** • Three linked reading tasks • Short form questions **Writing (24 marks)** One extended writing task		**Tasks** **Reading (30 marks)** • Two linked texts • Short form questions **Writing (30 marks)** One extended writing task
Notes		Notes
Component 1 is 'transactional' in nature ❶ A more engaging and supportive form of assessment ❷Speech is an ideal starting point for building skills to tackle reading and writing ❸ The reading sources are taken from real life contexts, ie emails, webpages, letters etc		Component 2 is 'literary' in nature ❹ Introduces 19thC texts supportively and accessibly: breaks 19thC texts into chunks and uses true/false and table completions ❺ Can be taken in one go, or broken down as needed

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