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GCSE

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Non-examination Assessment: Spoken Language  
Report on the Examination

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8700  
June 2018

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## Introduction

This was the second year of the Spoken Language Endorsement, forming a part of the English Language GCSE (8700). In many ways this second year built on the success of the first, and the Principal Verifier and his team thank the majority of centres who recorded samples and made them available for verification, all with a minimum of fuss. It is reassuring to see that Speaking and Listening remains an important part of the English curriculum.

In many cases it was a real pleasure to see students talking with enthusiasm and expertise on a wide range of topics. Their use of rhetorical skills and their engagement with their audiences suggested that English remains a subject in which young people can explore ideas and express them creatively.

## Recording the sample

The vast majority of centres submitted their recorded samples without any problems. The following points are a reminder for those whose submission this time was not as clear as it should be.

- Please label files in a way which includes centre number, candidate number, candidate name (forename and surname), component number (8700) and outcome of the spoken presentation, eg 12345\_0001\_Joe Bloggs\_8700\_Pass. The candidate name and the level awarded are vital for the verifier.
- Unless special circumstances are reported to AQA before the examination, then student performances must be visible and audible.
- When checking sound quality you should, where possible, play the performances on a computer which was not the one involved in the recording. This will allow you to check whether others will be able to hear it.
- Please do not require a password to access the files.

## Sending the sample

Samples should be sent by first class post. Attaching a cardboard label, supplied in the stationery pack, to the USB memory allows it to be stored easily.

Centres are reminded that they must send the right number of students at each level, depending of course on the total entry and the numbers awarded at each level.

Some centres used DVDs. A single DVD is acceptable, but multiple ones are not helpful.

For full details of how to record and dispatch the sample, please refer to the document [Instructions for conducting and recording audio-visual evidence for the Spoken Language endorsement](#), which can be found on the AQA website.

## Tasks

As with all work that is teacher assessed, suitable tasks/topics lead to best practice and performance. Verifiers saw many examples of students selecting their own topics from a whole range of topic areas. Where students chose the topic that affected their own lives, on a personal and political level, they were able to express interesting ideas. Especially popular this year were Donald Trump, Brexit, young people and mental health, gender fluidity and many types of

inequality. At all levels of ability these topics, supported by helpful questioning (including from the teacher), led to engaging work.

Much less successful was a single task done by a whole class, or even in a few cases by a whole centre. The material seemed stale, the enthusiasm muted, and not surprisingly, the audience seemed less than interested.

Centres who use literature, especially GCSE English Literature set texts, as a source for presentations should consider whether students' abilities, and the criteria requirements, are best shown in such work. It is especially hard to ask meaningful, challenging and open questions to a student about a poem that they have just 'gone through' in class, or about a theme that they have replayed from class notes.

One or two centres are still submitting work from students working in groups. This should be discouraged as it makes it very hard for students to be assessed on individual extended contributions.

### **Assessment**

Most centres were accurate enough in their assessment for their levels to be verified. There was some evidence, though, of variable assessment within a centre. Some form of internal standardising within a centre should take place.

In some centres there was some generosity at the distinction/merit and the merit/pass boundaries. Centres are reminded that all the criteria for each level must be met for that level to be awarded. It is therefore highly unlikely, for example, that a Distinction can be awarded to a very short presentation (*organises and structures his or her presentation using an effective range of strategies*), one on a very straightforward topic (*expresses sophisticated ideas*), or one where minimal questions are asked (*listens to questions / feedback, responds perceptively and if appropriate elaborates*).

One particular problem noted by verifiers last year, and much in evidence again this year, was the over-reliance by some students on written scripts. Most presenters use notes, but a head down, monotone reading of a full speech cannot achieve the criterion *meets the needs of the audience*, and so at best can only be awarded a Pass. Teachers should also be aware that, where a student substantially relies on written material, it is vital that they are then asked a range of challenging questions which make them present in a different way.

Questions are a required part of the overall presentation. They should arise spontaneously out of what has been said in the first part of the presentation rather than being pre-scripted.

### **Further Support**

Each year some centres will receive a visit from an AQA verifier to help them with their future submissions. Centres will be informed of these visits in the Autumn, and recordings made in the previous year should be available to be reviewed.

Centres are reminded that the standardising examples are an inter-board resource. There are no plans at this stage to issue any more examples. All necessary information about this endorsement can be obtained from the [Spoken language endorsement page](#) of the AQA website

## **Conclusion**

It is pleasing to note how well, in most cases, teachers and their students responded to the challenges of this component.

It would be helpful if all teachers of the 8700 specification could be given access to this report.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.