

Specification

GCSE

English Language

Cambridge OCR Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1)
in English Language

J351

For first assessment in 2017



About our new name

As of September 2025, our name is Cambridge OCR.

Students who sat an exam **in summer 2025** will receive a Cambridge OCR branded exam certificate (our new brand), which will be the same for all future exam series.

You'll continue to see the OCR or Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations name while we work to update our material to our new name, Cambridge OCR. This will take some time, and you can still access all up-to-date qualification resources and materials via [Teach Cambridge](#).

Important: We'll keep the OCR/Oxford Cambridge and RSA name on existing teaching resources while the content of these remains applicable to the specification being taught. **New and refreshed** resources will be produced using the Cambridge OCR name/logo.

Are you using the latest version of this specification?

The latest version of our specifications will always be on [our website](#) and may differ from printed versions. We will inform centres about changes to specifications.

Tell us what you think

Your feedback plays an important role in how we develop, market, support and resource qualifications now and into the future. We want you and your students to enjoy and get the best out of our qualifications and resources, but to do that we need your honest opinions to tell us whether we're on the right track or not.

You can email your thoughts to support@ocr.org.uk or visit our [feedback page](#) to learn more about how you can help us improve our qualifications.



Designing and testing in [collaboration with teachers](#) and students



Helping young people develop an [ethical view of the world](#)



Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) are [part of everything we do](#)

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Introducing...

GCSE (9–1) English Language (from September 2015)

We've developed a fresh qualification that meets the needs of students of differing abilities and interests and encourages an exploration of communication, culture and creativity through exciting 19th, 20th and 21st century texts.

The syllabus will encourage students to:

- Develop independent and critical thinking
- Engage with the richness of our language and literary heritage
- Experiment in writing across a range of contexts and styles.

Contact the team

We have a dedicated team of English Subject Advisors working on our English qualifications.

If you need specialist advice, guidance or support, get in touch as follows:

- **01223 553998**
- english@ocr.org.uk
- [@OCR_English](https://www.instagram.com/OCR_English)

Teaching and learning resources

We recognise that the introduction of a new specification can bring challenges for implementation and teaching. Our aim is to help you at every stage and we're working hard to provide a practical package of support in close consultation with teachers and other experts, so we can help you to make the change.

Designed to support progression for all

Our resources are designed to provide you with a range of teaching activities and suggestions so you can select the best approach for your particular students. You are the experts on how your students learn and our aim is to support you in the best way we can.

We want to...

- Support you with a body of knowledge that grows throughout the lifetime of the specification
- Provide you with a range of suggestions so you can select the best activity, approach or context for your particular students
- Make it easier for you to explore and interact with our resource materials, in particular to develop your own schemes of work
- Create an ongoing conversation so we can develop materials that work for you.

Plenty of useful resources

You'll have four main types of subject specific teaching and learning resources at your fingertips:

- Delivery Guides
- Transition Guides
- Topic Exploration Packs
- Lesson elements.

Along with subject-specific resources, you'll also have access to a selection of generic resources that focus on skills development and professional guidance for teachers.

Skills Guides – we've produced a set of Skills Guides that are not specific to English Language, but each covers a topic that could be relevant to a range of qualifications – for example, communication, legislation and research. Download the guides at ocr.org.uk/skillsguides

Active Results – a free online results analysis service to help you review the performance of individual students or your whole school. It provides access to detailed results data, enabling more comprehensive analysis of results in order to give you a more accurate measurement of the achievements of your centre and individual students. For more details refer to ocr.org.uk/activeresults

Professional Development

Take advantage of our improved Professional Development Programme, designed with you in mind. Whether you want to look at our new digital training or search for training materials, you can find what you're looking for all in one place at the CPD Hub.

An introduction to the new specifications

We'll be running events to help you get to grips with our GCSE (9–1) English Language qualification.

These events are designed to help prepare you for first teaching and to support your delivery at every stage.

Watch out for details at cpdhub.ocr.org.uk

To receive the latest information about the training we'll be offering, please register for GCSE email updates at ocr.org.uk/updates

1 Why choose an OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Language?

1a. Why choose an OCR qualification?

Choose OCR and you've got the reassurance that you're working with one of the UK's leading exam boards. Our new GCSE (9–1) in English Language course has been developed in consultation with teachers, employers and Higher Education to provide students with a qualification that's relevant to them and meets their needs.

We're part of the Cambridge Assessment Group, Europe's largest assessment agency and a department of the University of Cambridge. Cambridge Assessment plays a leading role in developing and delivering assessments throughout the world, operating in over 150 countries.

We work with teachers, employers, and universities to create qualifications that support the needs of all students and help them prepare for their future. We offer A Levels, GCSEs, vocational qualifications, and other academic options to schools, colleges, workplaces, and other organisations.

Our Specifications

We believe in developing specifications that help you bring the subject to life and inspire your students to achieve more.

We've created teacher-friendly specifications based on extensive research and engagement with the teaching community. They're designed to be straightforward

and accessible so that you can tailor the delivery of the course to suit your needs. We aim to encourage learners to become responsible for their own learning, confident in discussing ideas, innovative and engaged.

We provide a range of support services designed to help you at every stage, from preparation through to the delivery of our specifications. This includes:

- A wide range of high-quality creative resources including:
 - Delivery Guides
 - Transition Guides
 - Topic Exploration Packs
 - Lesson Elements
 - ...and much more.
- Access to Subject Advisors to support you through the transition and throughout the lifetime of the specifications.
- CPD/Training for teachers to introduce the qualifications and prepare you for first teaching.
- Active Results – our free results analysis service to help you review the performance of individual students or whole schools.

All GCSE (9–1) qualifications offered by OCR are accredited by Ofqual, the Regulator for qualifications offered in England. The accreditation number for OCR's GCSE (9–1) in English Language is QN: 601/4575/4.

1b. Why choose an OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Language?

OCR's GCSE (9–1) in English Language specification is designed to help learners explore communication, culture and creativity, to develop independent and critical thinking and to engage with the richness of our language and literary heritage.

At GCSE, learners will develop the skills to read fluently and write effectively. They are encouraged to engage with a wide variety of high-quality texts both literary and non-fiction, across a range of familiar genres. They will develop the skills to analyse critically and synthesise and evaluate ideas and information across unseen texts.

Learners will be given the opportunity to experiment in their writing across a range of contexts and styles.

Learners will use knowledge gained from wider reading to inform their written work. They will be able to write grammatically correct sentences, with accurate spelling and punctuation and utilise a range of structural devices.

Learners will also develop a confident control of spoken Standard English and demonstrate the ability to use spoken language appropriately in formal settings.

This provides them with a solid grounding, whether going on to Further Education, Higher Education or the workplace.

Aims and learning outcomes

This specification enables learners to:

- read a wide range of texts fluently and with good understanding
- read critically, and use the knowledge they have 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 and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.

In addition, this specification enables learners to:

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

1c. What are the key features of this specification?

This specification encourages learners to read critically and use the knowledge they gain from wide reading to improve their own writing.

The clear distinction between the two components develops learners' awareness of how different types of texts are crafted. Component 01 develops understanding of reading and writing non-fiction texts and component 02 explores literary texts and creative writing. This is designed to support learners' development as critical readers and help them make conscious choices when planning and crafting their own writing.

This qualification will enable learners to develop:

- knowledge and understanding of a wide range of engaging texts drawn from literary and non-

fiction sources; these may include, for example, prose fiction, journalism, travel writing and biographical writing

- critical responses to high-quality unseen texts from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. This provides learners with an enriched curriculum that can be effectively integrated with the OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Literature course
- creative and imaginative writing skills and the ability to write accurately for a range of purposes and audiences, using their understanding of linguistic and literary methods
- confident spoken language and listening skills to communicate clearly and effectively.

1d. How do I find out more information?

If you are already using OCR specifications you can contact us at: www.ocr.org.uk

If you are not already a registered OCR centre then you can find out more information on the benefits of becoming one at: www.ocr.org.uk

Find out more?

Ask a Subject Advisor:

Email: ocrenghish@ocr.org.uk

Customer Contact Centre: 01223 553998

Teacher support: www.ocr.org.uk

2 The specification overview

2a. The Overview of GCSE (9–1) in English Language (J351)

Learners must complete all components (01, 02 and 03 or 04) to be awarded the GCSE (9–1) in English Language.

Content Overview	Assessment Overview	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating information and ideas (component 01) focuses on reading and writing non-fiction texts. Learners read and compare non-fiction texts: one 19th century non-fiction text and one 20th or 21st century non-fiction text. Learners write one piece of original non-fiction. Exploring effects and impact (component 02) focuses on reading literary prose texts and creative writing. Learners read and respond to literary prose texts, one text may be literary non-fiction. Both texts are 20th or 21st century literary prose. There will not be a 19th century text in component 02. Learners write one piece of original creative writing. Spoken language (component 03 or 04) focuses on speaking and listening skills. Learners present information and ideas in a spoken presentation and listen and respond to others appropriately. 	<p>Communicating information and ideas (01)*</p> <p>80 marks</p> <p>2 hour written paper</p>	<p>50%</p> <p>of total GCSE</p>
	<p>Exploring effects and impact (02)*</p> <p>80 marks</p> <p>2 hour written paper</p>	<p>50%</p> <p>of total GCSE</p>
	<p>Spoken language endorsement (03 or 04)</p> <p>Non-exam assessment</p>	<p>Reported Separately</p>

* Indicates synoptic assessment

2b. Content of GCSE (9–1) in English Language (J351)

The OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Language specification aims to encourage learners to:

- read a wide range of texts fluently and critically
- write effectively, accurately and coherently for different audiences and purposes
- speak clearly and confidently in a range of contexts.

Reading

All texts in the examination are unseen, that is, learners will not have studied the examination texts during the course.

The unseen texts will be selected from a range of genres, including prose fiction, literary non-fiction and other non-fiction such as journalism, biography and travel writing.

High-quality texts will be drawn from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. The 19th century text will always be non-fiction.

Drama and poetry are **not** included in the OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Language qualification.

Writing

OCR's GCSE (9–1) in English Language is designed to enable learners to develop expertise in their writing. Learners are encouraged to develop their ability to adapt their writing for a range of different purposes and contexts. The accuracy of grammar, punctuation and spelling is important, as is the ability to use Standard English when appropriate. Learners write creatively and imaginatively, using a wide vocabulary with a clear awareness of audience.

Spoken Language

Learners will have the opportunity to prepare spoken presentations, planning effectively for different audiences and purposes. They will listen and respond to others and express themselves using spoken Standard English when appropriate.

2c. Content of Communicating information and ideas (01)

Component 01 has two sections:

- Section A: Reading information and ideas
- Section B: Writing for audience, impact and purpose.

For Section A, learners read and respond to unseen non-fiction texts, one of which is a 19th century text.

For Section B, they produce a piece of non-fiction writing.

Learners develop knowledge and understanding of how writers communicate for different audiences, purposes and contexts.

The following tables set out the content of GCSE (9–1) in English Language, component 01, Section A and Section B. These provide details on the required knowledge, understanding and skills for each section.

Content of Reading information and ideas (01)		
Section A	Content	Learners should be able to:
<p>Read unseen non-fiction texts from the 19th century and either the 20th or 21st century.</p> <p>One text will always be drawn from the 19th century.</p>	<p>Learners read a wide range of high-quality non-fiction texts drawn from the 19th and either the 20th or 21st century. This may include for example, essays, journalism (both printed and online), travel writing, speeches and biographical writing.</p> <p>Learners are required to read in different ways for different purposes. They read and analyse texts that are designed, for example, to persuade, inform, instruct or advise.</p> <p>They explore how effectively texts achieve their purposes by comparing and evaluating the usefulness, relevance and presentation of ideas and information.</p> <p>Learners engage with texts, developing independent viewpoints and recognising different interpretations.</p> <p>They develop knowledge and understanding of linguistic and literary terminology to support their analysis of texts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and interpret key ideas and information from texts • comment on writers' choices of vocabulary, form and grammatical features, paying attention to detail • explore the effects of writing for particular audiences and purposes • summarise ideas and information from a single text and synthesise from more than one text • draw inferences and justify points of view by referring closely to evidence from the text • use appropriate linguistic terminology to support their analysis • evaluate the usefulness of a text by identifying bias and misuse of evidence • use a broad understanding of the text's context to inform their reading. Contexts could include, for example, the given historical setting, the mode or genre • explore connections across texts to develop their understanding of the ideas, attitudes and values presented in them.

Content of Writing for audience, impact and purpose (01)

Section B	Content	Learners should be able to:
<p>Writing original non-fiction for different audiences and purposes.</p>	<p>Learners produce clear and coherent non-fiction pieces, including writing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe • explain • inform • instruct • argue • persuade. <p>Learners produce original texts in a range of non-fiction forms, for example, articles, speeches and letters.</p> <p>They develop skills to adapt their writing for different purposes, audiences and contexts.</p> <p>Learners explore how vocabulary and grammatical features can be used to achieve particular effects.</p> <p>They use techniques identified from their wide reading of non-fiction texts to achieve specific effects.</p> <p>Learners apply their knowledge and understanding of appropriate linguistic conventions and use rhetorical devices effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organise ideas and information clearly and coherently • select and emphasise key ideas and information to influence readers and reflect the purpose of the writing • maintain a consistent viewpoint across a non-fiction piece of writing • make considered choices of vocabulary and grammar to reflect particular audiences, purposes and contexts • adapt tone, style and register as appropriate • use the knowledge gained from wider reading of non-fiction to inform language choices and techniques • make appropriate use of information provided by others to write in different forms • cite evidence and quotation effectively to support views • write to create emotional impact • use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate punctuation and spelling.

2c. Content of Exploring effects and impact (02)

Component 02 has two sections:

- Section A: Reading meaning and effects
- Section B: Writing imaginatively and creatively.

For Section A, learners read and respond to unseen prose fiction texts drawn from the 20th and/or 21st century. One text may be literary non-fiction.

For Section B, they produce a piece of original creative writing.

Learners develop knowledge and understanding of writers' use of language and techniques to create meaning and effects in narrative fiction and literary non-fiction.

The following tables set out the content of GCSE (9–1) in English Language, component 02, Section A and Section B. These provide details on the required knowledge, understanding and skills for each section.

Content of Reading meaning and effects (02)		
Section A	Content	Learners should be able to:
<p>Reading unseen prose fiction texts from the 20th and/or 21st century.</p> <p>One text may be literary non-fiction.</p>	<p>Learners read a wide range of high-quality prose fiction texts drawn from the 20th and/or 21st century. This may include, for example, extracts from novels, short stories or literary non-fiction such as autobiography.</p> <p>Learners engage with the detail in texts to draw inferences and recognise the possibility of different reactions.</p> <p>They explore the impact of writers' uses of language, structure and grammatical features on the reader.</p> <p>Learners support their ideas about texts with carefully selected evidence.</p> <p>They develop knowledge and understanding of linguistic and literary terminology to support their analysis of texts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comment on writers' choices of vocabulary, form and grammatical features and how these create meaning • analyse and compare writers' use of language, paying attention to detail • draw inferences and justify points of view by referring closely to evidence from the text • interpret writers' meanings and effects in single texts and across two texts • identify the main themes and ideas in texts • use appropriate linguistic and literary terminology to support their analysis • evaluate how form and structure contribute to the effectiveness and impact of a text • use a broad understanding of the text's context to inform their reading. Contexts could include for example, the setting or genre • explore connections across texts to develop their understanding of the ideas, attitudes and values presented in them.

Content of Writing imaginatively and creatively (02)

Section B	Content	Learners should be able to:
Producing original creative writing.	<p>Learners produce imaginative, original texts in a range of forms, including, for example, short stories and autobiographical writing.</p> <p>They use narrative techniques identified from their wide reading of prose fiction texts to achieve deliberate effects in their own writing.</p> <p>Learners explore how vocabulary and grammatical features can be used to achieve particular effects.</p> <p>They develop skills to adapt their writing for different purposes and contexts.</p> <p>Learners apply their knowledge and understanding of linguistic and literary conventions to create impact in their own writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organise and structure ideas in narrative writing to create deliberate effects • maintain a consistent viewpoint across a piece of writing, making conscious decisions, for example, about narrative point of view • make considered choices of vocabulary and grammar to create deliberate effects • use the knowledge gained from wide reading of prose fiction and literary non-fiction to inform language choices and techniques • use language creatively and imaginatively • adapt tone, style and register as appropriate • select and emphasise key ideas to create meaning and influence readers • use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate punctuation and spelling.

2d. Content of non-exam assessment in GCSE (9–1) in English Language

Content: Spoken language (Component 03 or 04)

The preparation and assessment of the Spoken language endorsement (component 03 or 04) is a compulsory requirement of the course of study.

Learners develop their spoken language skills by planning and preparing presentations for different purposes and audiences. They will listen and respond to others and express their ideas using spoken Standard English when appropriate.

The following table sets out the content of GCSE (9–1) in English Language, component 03 or 04. This provides details on the required knowledge, understanding and skills for the Spoken language endorsement. Further guidance on content and task setting can be found in the ‘Planning and teaching’ section of the OCR website: www.ocr.org.uk/spoken-language-guidance.

Content of non-exam assessment of GCSE (9–1) in English Language		
	Content	Learners should be able to:
Presenting information and ideas Responding to spoken language Using spoken Standard English	<p>Learners plan and organise a spoken presentation. They identify the subject for their presentation in advance.</p> <p>Learners should have previously agreed the subject of their presentation with their teacher.</p> <p>Learners give a prepared spoken presentation to an audience which must include the teacher.</p> <p>Presentations may take a wide variety of forms, including talks, debates, speeches and dialogues.</p> <p>As part of, or following, the presentation, learners must listen to and respond appropriately to questions and feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> select information and ideas for prepared spoken presentations organise information and ideas effectively and persuasively plan effectively for different purposes and audiences give presentations and speeches in a formal setting listen carefully to questions and feedback and respond appropriately express ideas effectively using spoken Standard English.

2e. Prior knowledge, learning and progression

Learners in England who are beginning a GCSE (9–1) course are likely to have followed a Key Stage 3 programme of study. No prior knowledge of this subject is required.

GCSEs are qualifications that enable learners to progress to further qualifications either Vocational or General.

This qualification provides the ideal foundation for learners to progress to OCR AS Level and A Level English qualifications: English Language, English Literature or English Language and Literature (EMC).

Find out more at www.ocr.org.uk

3 Assessment of OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Language

3a. Forms of assessment

The OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Language (J351) is a linear qualification with 100% external assessment.

This qualification consists of two examined components, externally assessed by OCR. Both examinations are of two hours duration, each with a 50% weighting. The Spoken language component is a separate compulsory endorsement which is internally

assessed by the centre and externally monitored by OCR.

All texts in the examination will be unseen, that is, learners will not have studied the examination texts during the course. These unseen texts will be drawn from each of the following three centuries; the 19th century; the 20th and the 21st century.

Communicating information and ideas (01)

This component is worth 80 marks: 40 marks for Section A and 40 marks for Section B.

Learners answer **all** the questions in Section A. Learners read and respond to two unseen authentic non-fiction texts. One text is from the 19th century; the other is from either the 20th or 21st century. There are four reading questions – two lower tariff and two higher tariff questions. (40 marks, 25% of total GCSE (9–1)).

Learners answer **one** of two extended writing tasks in Section B. The writing tasks will have a clear audience and purpose and be written in a non-fiction form. There will be links between the theme or idea in the reading texts and the writing task. (40 marks, 25% of total GCSE (9–1)).

Exploring effects and impact (02)

This component is worth 80 marks: 40 marks for Section A and 40 marks for Section B.

Learners answer **all** the questions in Section A. Learners read and respond to two unseen authentic prose fiction texts or a prose fiction and literary non-fiction text. Both texts will be either 20th or 21st century prose. There are four reading questions – two

lower tariff and two higher tariff questions. (40 marks, 25% of total GCSE (9–1)).

Learners answer **one** of two extended writing tasks in Section B. The focus is on creative writing. There will be links between the theme or idea in the reading texts and the writing task. (40 marks, 25% of total GCSE (9–1)).

Spoken language (03 or 04)

The preparation and assessment of the Spoken language endorsement is a compulsory requirement of the course of study. This component is internally assessed by the centre and externally monitored by OCR.

The assessment criteria and arrangements for Spoken language are consistent across all exam boards. See Section 3f for details.

The outcome of this assessment will not contribute to the overall GCSE grade and will appear on all learners' certificates as a separately reported grade, alongside the overall GCSE grade issued.

3b. Assessment Objectives (AO)

There are six assessment objectives for OCR's GCSE (9–1) in English Language: Communicating information and ideas and Exploring effects and impact. These are detailed in the table below:

Learners are expected to demonstrate their ability to:

	Assessment Objective
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.
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.

There are three assessment objectives for GCSE (9–1) English Language: Spoken language. Performance is assessed against common assessment criteria issued by all exam boards (see Section 3f).

The criteria will assess the following objectives holistically:

	Assessment Objective
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.

AO weightings in GCSE (9–1) English Language

The relationship between the assessment objectives and the components are shown in the following table:

Component	GCSE (9–1) External Assessment						
	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	AO5	AO6	Total
Communicating information and ideas (J351/01)	6.25%	7.5%	3.75%	7.5%	15%	10%	50%
Exploring effects and impact (J351/02)	2.5%	11.25%	3.75%	7.5%	15%	10%	50%
	8.75%	18.75%	7.5%	15%	30%	20%	100%

Component	Non-exam assessment			
	AO7	AO8	AO9	Total
Spoken language (J351/03 or J351/04)	Assessed holistically through competency based assessment			100% of endorsement

3c. Total qualification time

Total qualification time (TQT) is the total amount of time, in hours, expected to be spent by a learner to achieve a qualification. It includes both guided learning hours and hours spent in preparation, study,

and assessment. The total qualification time for GCSE English Language is 140 hours. The total guided learning time is 120-140 hours.

3d. Qualification availability outside of England

This qualification is available in England. For Wales and Northern Ireland please check the Qualifications in Wales Portal (QIW) or the Northern Ireland Department of Education Performance Measures/

Northern Ireland Entitlement Framework Qualifications Accreditation Number (NIEFQAN) list to see current availability.

3e. Language

This qualification is available in English only. All assessment materials are available in English only and all candidate work must be in English.

3f. Assessment availability

There will be:

- one examination series available each year in June to **all** learners
- one examination series in November each year available **only** to learners who have reached at least the age of 16 on or before 31st August of that calendar year.

This specification will be certificated from the June 2017 examination series onwards.

3g. Retaking the qualification

Learners can retake the qualification as many times as they wish. Learners must retake all examined components but they can choose to either retake the Spoken Language practical endorsement or carry forward (re-use) their most recent result (see Section 4d).

To carry forward the result, learners must use the carry forward entry option (see table in Section 4a). The result for the endorsement may be carried forward for the lifetime of the specification.

Learners must decide at the point of exam entry whether they are going to carry forward the Spoken language endorsement or if they are going to retake it.

A learner who is retaking GCSE (9–1) in English Language may reuse a previous result for the Spoken language endorsement, even if it was awarded by another awarding organisation.

If a learner moves to an OCR centre after his/her Spoken language assessment has been carried out, the result of that assessment remains valid. The new centre should contact OCR for details regarding the administrative arrangements.

3h. Assessment of extended responses

The assessment materials for this qualification provide learners with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning and marks for extended responses are integrated into the marking criteria.

Learners will be assessed on the use of a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose

and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation (AO6) in Section B of each examined component.

AO6 will carry a 20% weighting in this GCSE (9–1) in English Language qualification.

3i. Non-exam assessment: Spoken language (03 or 04)

Details on the administration of non-exam assessment can be found in Section 4c.

The preparation and assessment of the Spoken language endorsement is a compulsory requirement of the course of study. This component is internally assessed by the centre and externally monitored by OCR.

All centres are required to complete and submit an NEA Centre Declaration Form confirming that they have taken reasonable steps to ensure that a spoken language assessment has been completed by each candidate. This form can be found on the OCR website at www.ocr.org.uk/formsfinder.

Centres should keep a record of the Spoken language assessment outcomes for all learners. These should be kept until the deadline has passed for centres to request a review of results.

The Spoken language endorsement will be graded as Pass, Merit, Distinction. Learners who do not meet the Pass criteria will be graded as Not Classified. This grade will appear on all learners' certificates as a separately reported grade, alongside the overall GCSE grade issued. The outcome of the Spoken language assessment will not contribute to the GCSE grade.

Further guidance on assessment arrangements and preparing learners for the Spoken language assessment can be found in the 'Planning and teaching' section of the OCR website: www.ocr.org.uk/spoken-language-guidance.

3

3j. Non-exam assessment: Spoken language – Assessment criteria

No marks will be assigned to a learner’s performance in the non-exam assessment. The Spoken language endorsement will be assessed holistically as a grade, using a ‘competency’ basis on the criteria below. Competency means that a learner must meet all the criteria in one grade before moving on to the next. Learners who do not reach the Pass standard must be recorded as Not Classified.

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
<p>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 –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 straightforward manner. 	<p>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 –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>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 –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

3k. Synoptic assessment

This GCSE (9–1) in English Language specification focuses on skills-based learning. The ability to acquire and apply knowledge and understanding within frameworks of analysis is transferable to other subjects. Close reading, the exploration of referential and inferential meanings and the summarising and synthesising of information are essential skills developed through this qualification. The unseen nature of the assessment encourages independent thought and response and requires a selective application of the analytical tools necessary for critical evaluation in other subjects.

The ability to communicate using an accurate application of Standard English is essential to express ideas in all subjects.

The two externally assessed components in OCR's GCSE (9–1) in English Language provide an integrated focus. In each component, texts are linked thematically through stimulating reading tasks, to provide a foundation for the writing section. The assessment model has a straightforward design, mirrored in both components.

Both the OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Language and the OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Literature include the study of literary texts. The inclusion of 19th century non-fiction texts in English Language helps to contextualise the study of the 19th century novel in English Literature.

Both OCR GCSE (9–1) English specifications assess learners' ability to make connections between texts. In some cases these connections may be obvious, in others the connection will be more implicit. In both specifications, there is no predetermined set of ways in which the texts relate, leaving learners free to explore a range of possibilities. Learners can begin to discover how understanding of one text is illuminated by its relationship with another.

The use of unseen material in all GCSE (9–1) English examinations allows learners to draw on analytical skills developed in both OCR GCSE (9–1) English Language and GCSE (9–1) English Literature and offers the potential to stretch learners to produce fresh and sophisticated responses to texts encountered for the first time.

3l. Calculating qualification results

A learner's overall qualification grade for GCSE (9–1) in English Language will be calculated by adding together their marks from the two examined components taken to give their total weighted mark.

This mark will then be compared to the qualification level grade boundaries for the relevant exam series to determine the learner's overall qualification grade.

A learner will receive a separate grade for the Spoken language endorsement (non-exam assessment). This grade will not contribute to their overall qualification grade.

4 Admin: What you need to know

The information in this section is designed to give an overview of the processes involved in administering this qualification so that you can speak to your exams officer. All of the following processes require you to submit something to OCR by a specific deadline.

More information about the processes and deadlines involved at each stage of the assessment cycle can be found in the Administration area of the OCR website.

OCR's *Admin overview* is available on the OCR website at <http://www.ocr.org.uk/administration>

4a. Pre-assessment

Estimated entries

Estimated entries are your best projection of the number of candidates who will be entered for a qualification in a particular series.

Estimated entries should be submitted to OCR by the specified deadline. They are free and do not commit your centre in any way.

Final entries

Final entries provide OCR with detailed data for each learner, showing each assessment to be taken. It is essential that you use the correct entry code, considering the relevant entry rules and ensuring that you choose the entry option for the moderation you intend to use.

Final entries must be submitted to OCR by the published deadlines or late entry fees will apply.

All learners taking GCSE (9–1) in English Language must be entered for one of the entry options shown on the following table:

Entry code	Title	Component code	Component title	Assessment type
J351A	English Language	01	Communicating information and ideas	External Assessment
		02	Exploring effects and impact	External Assessment
		03	Spoken language	Non exam Assessment (OCR Repository)
J351B	English Language	01	Communicating information and ideas	External Assessment
		02	Exploring effects and impact	External Assessment
		04	Spoken language	Non exam Assessment (Postal moderation)
J351C*	English Language	01	Communicating information and ideas	External Assessment
		02	Exploring effects and impact	External Assessment
		80	Spoken language	Non exam Assessment (Carried forward)

*Entry option J351C should only be selected for learners who are retaking the qualification who want to carry forward their result for the non-exam assessment.

Collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system

Regulators have published guidance on collecting evidence of student performance as part of long-term contingency arrangements to improve the resilience of the qualifications system. You should review and consider this guidance when delivering this qualification to students at your centre.

For more detailed information on collecting evidence of student performance please visit our website at: <https://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/general-qualifications/assessment/>

4b. Accessibility and special consideration

Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements allow learners with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do, without changing the demands of the assessment. Applications for these should be made before the examination series. Detailed information about eligibility for access arrangements can be found in the *JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*.

Special consideration is a post-assessment adjustment to marks or grades to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time the assessment was taken. Detailed information about eligibility for special consideration can be found in the *JCQ A guide to the special consideration process*.

4c. External assessment arrangements

Regulations governing examination arrangements are contained in the *JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations*.

Head of Centre Declaration

The Head of Centre is required to provide a declaration to the JCQ as part of the annual NCN update, conducted in the autumn term, to confirm that the centre is meeting all of the requirements detailed in the specification, including that they have provided all candidates the opportunity to undertake the prescribed practical activities.

Any failure by a centre to provide the Head of Centre Annual Declaration will result in your centre status being suspended and could lead to the withdrawal of our approval for you to operate as a centre.

Private candidates

Private candidates may enter for OCR assessments.

A private candidate is someone who pursues a course of study independently but takes an examination or assessment at an approved examination centre. A private candidate may be a part-time student, someone taking a distance learning course, or someone being tutored privately. They must be based in the UK.

GCSE (9–1) English Language requires learners to complete a Spoken Language Endorsement which develops speaking, listening and presentation skills. The Spoken Language Endorsement is an essential part

of the course and will allow learners to develop skills for further study and employment, as well as imparting important knowledge that is part of the specification.

Private candidates need to contact OCR approved centres to establish whether they are prepared to host them as a private candidate. The centre may charge for this facility and OCR recommends that the arrangement is made early in the course.

Further guidance for private candidates may be found on the OCR website: <http://www.ocr.org.uk>.

4d. Non-exam assessment

Regulations governing non-exam assessment arrangements are contained in the *JCQ Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments*. Appendix 2 of this document gives specific details for the Spoken language endorsement for GCSE English Language designed for use in England.

The Spoken language endorsement is internally assessed by centres and externally monitored by OCR.

Centres must keep a record of all learners' assessment outcomes for Spoken language. It is recommended that centres use the proformas that are available on the OCR website.

Centres will need to provide audio-visual recordings of the presentations of a sample of learners. Table 1 below gives guidance on sample size. The sample

submitted must be representative of all teaching groups and assessors within the centre who are studying GCSE English Language.

Using their knowledge of learners' likely performance, centres should select the sample following the guidance shown in the table below. Centres are recommended to record slightly more than the minimum number at each grade to allow for learners whose performance is awarded a higher or lower grade than the centre had anticipated.

The recording of each presentation, including questions and feedback from the audience, must be complete and unedited.

The deadline for the receipt of learner outcomes for the Spoken language endorsement is 15 May on an annual basis.

Table 1 Sample Sizes

No. of candidates at centre	No. of candidates whose presentations must be recorded	Minimum no. of candidates at each grade (Pass, Merit, Distinction)
30 or fewer	All candidates	10 ⁺
Over 30	30	10 ⁺

⁺ If a centre has fewer candidates at a particular grade than the stated minimum, all candidates at that particular grade should be recorded. Candidates assessed as Not Classified should not be included.

Full details of sample size can be found in Appendix 2 of the JCQ *Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments*.

Internal standardisation

4

Centres must carry out internal standardisation including all teachers involved in the Spoken language assessment to ensure that grades awarded by different teachers are accurate and consistent across all learners entered for the Spoken language endorsement from that centre.

Internal standardisation should include a preliminary trial session using exemplar material provided by

OCR, in order to ensure that there is a common understanding of the assessment criteria.

The Spoken language exemplar material can be found in the 'candidate exemplars' section on the GCSE (9–1) English Language webpage: www.ocr.org.uk/gcseenglishlanguage.

Monitoring arrangements

Common monitoring arrangements are in place, as agreed by the awarding bodies, to ensure that centres are using appropriate tasks and are applying the assessment criteria accurately and consistently.

For the assessment of Spoken language (component 03 or 04), centres are required to submit audio-visual recordings of the presentations of a sample of learners.

Where the sample of Spoken language presentations is submitted via the OCR Repository (component 03), centres must upload the audio-visual recordings to the OCR Repository in a digital format.

Where the sample of Spoken language presentations is submitted for postal monitoring (component 04), centres should provide **either** a DVD or a USB memory stick with their learners' presentations. Audio-visual recordings submitted on DVD or USB memory stick must contain each presentation as a separate file.

Audio-visual recordings for Spoken language should be submitted in an organised and structured way. The file name for each recording must contain the following information:

- centre number
- candidate number
- candidate name (forename and surname)
- topic area or title of the spoken presentation
- proposed grade: Pass, Merit, Distinction.

Audio-visual recordings should be stored in a secure area on the centre's network before submission.

In order to minimise software and hardware compatibility issues, it is necessary to save learners' work using an appropriate file format. To ensure compatibility, all audio-visual recordings submitted must be in the formats listed below.

The recorded sample of unedited presentations must be submitted to OCR by 15 May on an annual basis.

An OCR monitor will view a centre's recorded sample and check that the assessment criteria have been applied consistently and accurately. There may also be a statistical analysis of the centre's assessments.

If there are concerns as a result of monitoring, the centre will be provided with additional support (which may include a visit by a monitor). There may be enhanced monitoring arrangements which may

include an earlier deadline for submission of Spoken language assessments or a requirement to record the presentations of all learners at the centre.

Digital audio-visual evidence formats	
MPEG (*.mpg)	Windows Media File (*.wmf)
QuickTime movie (*.mov)	MPEG Video Layer 4 (*.mp4)

Carrying Forward the Spoken Language Endorsement

Learners who are retaking the qualification can choose to either retake the endorsement or carry forward their most recent result for that component (even if it was awarded by another awarding organisation).

To carry forward the result, you must use the carry forward entry option (see table in Section 4a).

Learners must decide at the point of entry whether they are going to carry forward the endorsement or not.

The result for the endorsement may be carried forward for the lifetime of the specification and there is no restriction on the number of times the result may be carried forward. However, only the most recent non-absent result may be carried forward.

4

4e. AI Use in the NEA

Teachers delivering NEA components **must** follow the JCQ guidelines: [AI Use in Assessments: Your role in protecting the integrity of qualifications](#).

Teachers are responsible for monitoring students' progress to ensure that:

- work meets the NEA marking criteria
- work can be confidently authenticated as the student's own
- the student is **not** rewarded if they have used AI tools in such a way that mean they have not **independently** met the marking criteria.

Teachers must provide sufficient supervision to be able to confidently authenticate that the work submitted is the student's independent work.

You can access the forms here on our [Assessment](#) page or from our Forms finder tool when selecting a qualification and subject with moderated units or components. They are also available in the Assessment > Forms section on Teach Cambridge.

For further information on AI, please see the following guidance on our website: [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) support](#).

4f. Results and certificates

Grade scale

GCSE (9–1) qualifications are graded on the scale: 9–1, where 9 is the highest. Learners who fail to reach the minimum standard of 1 will be Unclassified (U). Only subjects in which grades 9 to 1 are attained will be recorded on certificates.

The Spoken language component will be graded on the scale: Distinction, Merit, Pass, where Distinction is the highest grade. Learners who fail to reach the standard of Pass will receive a Not Classified (NC) result for the endorsement. The grade for the Spoken language endorsement will be recorded on the certificate alongside the learner’s qualification grade.

Results

Results are released to centres and learners for information and to allow any queries to be resolved before certificates are issued.

Centres will have access to the following results information for each learner:

- the grade for the qualification
- the grade for the Spoken language endorsement
- the raw mark for each component
- the total weighted mark for the qualification.

The following supporting information will be available:

- raw mark grade boundaries for each component
- weighted mark grade boundaries for each entry option.

Until certificates are issued, results are deemed to be provisional and may be subject to amendment.

4g. Post-results services

A number of post-results services are available:

- **Review of results** – If you are not happy with the outcome of a learner’s results, centres may request a review of their moderation and/or marking.
- **Missing and incomplete results** – This service should be used if an individual subject result for a learner is missing, or the learner has been omitted entirely from the results supplied.
- **Access to scripts** – Centres can request access to marked scripts.

4h. Malpractice

Any breach of the regulations for the conduct of examinations and non-exam assessment may constitute malpractice (which includes maladministration) and must be reported to OCR

as soon as it is detected. Detailed information on malpractice can be found in the *Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments: Policies and Procedures* published by JCQ.

5 Appendices

5a. Grade descriptors

Grade 8

Critical reading and comprehension

In relation to a range of texts, to achieve grade 8, candidates will be able to:

- summarise and critically evaluate with detailed and perceptive understanding
- understand and respond with insight to explicit and implicit meanings and viewpoints
- analyse and critically evaluate, with insight, detailed aspects of language, grammar and structure
- substantiate their understanding and opinions with illuminating references to texts and contexts
- make convincing and apt links and comparisons within and between texts.

Writing

To achieve grade 8, candidates will be able to:

- communicate with impact and influence
- produce ambitious, accomplished and effectively-structured texts
- use a wide range of well-selected sentence types and structures and precise vocabulary to enhance impact
- spell, punctuate and use grammar accurately so that writing is virtually error-free.

Grade 5

Critical reading and comprehension

In relation to a range of texts, to achieve grade 5, candidates will be able to:

- summarise and evaluate with accuracy and clear understanding
- understand and make valid responses to explicit and implicit meanings and viewpoints
- analyse and evaluate relevant aspects of language, grammar and structure
- support their understanding and opinions with apt references to texts, informed by their wider reading
- make credible links and comparisons between texts.

Writing

To achieve grade 5, candidates will be able to:

- communicate effectively, sustaining the reader's interest
- produce coherent, well-structured and purposeful texts
- vary sentence types and structures and use vocabulary appropriate to purpose and effect
- spell, punctuate and use grammar accurately with occasional errors

Grade 2

Critical reading and comprehension

In relation to a range of texts, to achieve grade 2, candidates will be able to:

- describe and summarise with some accuracy and understanding
- respond in a straightforward way to most explicit information and viewpoints
- make some relevant comments about language and structure
- support their comments and opinions with some general references
- make straightforward links between texts.

Writing

To achieve grade 2, candidates will be able to:

- communicate simply with some clarity for the reader
- produce texts with basic structures and some awareness of purpose
- show some control over sentence type and structure and use familiar vocabulary to some effect
- spell, punctuate and use grammar with limited accuracy.

5

5b. Overlap with other qualifications

There is some overlap between the content of this specification and that of specifications in OCR's GCSE (9–1) in English Literature.

5c. Avoidance of bias

The GCSE (9–1) qualification and subject criteria have been reviewed in order to identify any feature which could disadvantage learners who share a protected Characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

All reasonable steps have been taken to minimise any such disadvantage.

Summary of updates

Date	Version	Section	Title of section	Change
March 2018	1.1	i) Front Cover ii) 4d	i) Disclaimer ii) Results and Certificates: Results	i) Addition of Disclaimer ii) Amend to Certification Titling
May 2018	1.2	2d, 3f	Content of non-exam assessment in GCSE (9–1) in English Language, Non-exam assessment: Spoken language (03 or 04)	Update in line with new NEA Centre Declaration form and links to guidance.
August 2018	1.3	3d 4c	Retaking the qualification Non-exam assessment	Update to the wording for carry forward rules.
March 2019	1.4	4c	Non-exam assessment	Update to the wording of the Spoken language endorsement.
January 2020	1.5	3f 4e	Non-exam assessment: Spoken language (03 or 04) Post-results services	Enquiry about results changed to Review of results. Update to specification covers to meet digital accessibility standards.
January 2023	1.6	2a	The Overview of GCSE (9–1) in English Language (J351)	Correction of spelling error.
February 2024	1.7	3c 3d, 3e 4a 4c Checklist	Total qualification time Qualification availability, Language Pre-assessment External assessment arrangements	Inclusion of TQT Inclusion of disclaimer regarding availability and language Update to include resilience guidance Inclusion of reference to JCQ Inclusion of Teach Cambridge
March 2026	2.0	Covers, page footers, and section 1a and 4f New section 4e added	AI use in the NEA	Updated covers, footers and certificate title to reflect the new Cambridge OCR brand. Inside cover includes statement: 'About our new name'. Minor rewording in generic section 1a. Instructions added for centres on the use of AI in the NEA.

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