

## GCSE CRITERIA FOR ENGLISH

### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These criteria define the subject-specific essentials for GCSE in English. Specifications must also meet the requirements of the appropriate national curriculum order for English and the regulatory authorities' general requirements, including the Common and GCSE Criteria.
- 1.2 A specification that meets the English requirements of the appropriate national curriculum order must use the title English.
- 1.3 In their specifications, awarding bodies must state explicitly which elements are common to specifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and which options meet particular criteria requirements for England or Wales or Northern Ireland.
- 1.4 Any specification that contains significant elements of the subject English must be consistent with the relevant parts of these criteria.
- 1.5 Specifications must be designed to support unified courses leading to assessment in speaking and listening, reading and writing.

### 2 AIMS

- 2.1 The aims of all specifications must be consistent with national curriculum requirements.

### 3 SPECIFICATION CONTENT

- 3.1 A specification must require the range of speaking and listening assessed to include:
  - i explain, describe, narrate;
  - i explore, analyse, imagine;
  - i discuss, argue, persuade;in a variety of formal and informal contexts. Assessment should focus on extended individual contributions, group discussion and interaction, and drama-focussed activities.
- 3.2 Specifications must clearly state the range of reading that must be undertaken by candidates in England/Wales/Northern Ireland to meet the curriculum requirements of their respective country.

For England this means the range of reading assessed will include prose, poetry and drama. Within this, the range must include:

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- a play by Shakespeare;
- work from the English literary heritage by at least one major writer with a well-established critical reputation (para 8a of the Reading programme of study)
- texts from different cultures and traditions.

The reading assessed should also include:

- non-fiction texts
- media texts

For Northern Ireland this means the range of reading assessed will include prose, poetry and drama. Within this, the range must include:

- work by at least one author published before 1914;
- work by at least one major Irish author with a well established critical reputation whose work was published after 1914.
- texts from other cultures and traditions.

The reading assessed should also include:

- non-fiction texts
- media texts

For Wales this means the range of reading assessed will include prose, poetry and drama. Within this, the range must include:

- work from the English literary heritage by at least one major writer with a well-established critical reputation;
- work by a Welsh author writing in English or that has a Welsh setting or special relevance to Wales;
- texts from other cultures and traditions.

The reading assessed should also include:

- non-fiction texts
- media texts.

3.3 A specification must require the range of writing assessed to include writing to:

- i explore, imagine, entertain;
  - i inform, explain, describe;
  - i argue, persuade, advise;
  - i analyse, review, comment;
- in a variety of forms and genres.

## 4 KEY SKILLS

4.1 GCSE specifications in English should provide opportunities for developing and generating evidence for assessing the key skills listed below. Where appropriate, these opportunities should be directly cross-referenced at specified level(s), to the criteria listed in part B of the Key Skills specifications.

- application of number
- communication
- information technology
- improving own learning and performance
- problem solving
- working with others

## 5. ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

5.1 AO1 A specification must include objectives for speaking and listening which require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

- i. communicate clearly and imaginatively, structuring and sustaining their talk and adapting it to different situations, using standard English appropriately;
- ii. participate in discussion by both speaking and listening, judging the nature and purposes of contributions and the roles of participants;
- iii. adopt roles and communicate with audiences using a range of techniques.

5.2 AO2 A specification must include objectives for reading which require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

- i. read, with insight and engagement, making appropriate references to texts and developing and sustaining interpretations of them;
- ii. distinguish between fact and opinion and evaluate how information is presented;
- iii. follow an argument, identifying implications and recognising inconsistencies;
- iv. select material appropriate to their purpose, collate material from different sources, and make cross references;
- v. understand and evaluate how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational devices to achieve their effects, and comment on ways language varies and changes.

5.3 AO3 A specification must include objectives for writing which require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

- i. communicate clearly and imaginatively, using and adapting forms for different readers and purposes;
- ii. organise ideas into sentences, paragraphs and whole texts using a variety of linguistic and structural features;
- iii. use a range of sentence structures effectively with accurate punctuation and spelling.

## 6. SCHEMES OF ASSESSMENT AND ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

6.1 The weightings for the objectives given in 5.1-5.3 are:

AO1	Speaking and Listening	20%
AO2	Reading	40%
AO3	Writing	40%.

6.2 Each scheme of assessment must include a terminal examination with a minimum weighting of 60% in non-modular schemes and 50% in modular schemes.

- 6.3 The weighting allocated to internal assessment must not exceed 40% in any scheme of assessment; up to 20% can be allocated to speaking and listening and up to 30% can be allocated to reading and writing. Reading and writing should be equally weighted and separate pieces presented for each.
- 6.4 Question papers must be targeted at two tiers of grades: A\*-D<sup>1</sup> and C-G.
- 6.5 In markschemes for writing the weighting of marks for assessment objectives 5.3 (i) and (ii) combined should be twice that for assessment objectives 5.3 (iii).
- 6.6 Where texts are taken into examinations they should not contain handwritten annotations, or marking. Editions which may be taken into examinations should be specified. This is effective from examinations in 2005.

## **7. GRADE DESCRIPTIONS**

- 7.1 Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content specified by the specification; they are not designed to define that content. The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.

### **Grade F**

Candidates talk and listen in a range of contexts. Their talk is adapted to the purpose; developing ideas, describing events and conveying their opinions clearly. In discussion, they listen with concentration and make contributions, which are responsive to others' ideas and views. They use some of the core features of standard English vocabulary and grammar appropriately.

In responding to a range of texts, candidates show understanding of key ideas, themes, events and characters, using inference and deduction. They refer to aspects of texts when explaining their views. They locate and retrieve ideas and information from different sources.

Candidates' writing communicates clearly, shows liveliness and is organised. The main features of different forms are used appropriately, beginning to be adapted to different readers. Sequences of sentences extend ideas logically and words are chosen for variety and interest. The grammatical structure of simple and some complex sentences is usually correct. Spelling is usually accurate. Full stops, capital letters and question marks are used correctly and other punctuation is also used, mostly accurately. Handwriting is legible.

### **Grade C**

Candidates match their talk to the demands of different contexts. They use varied vocabulary and organise their talk to communicate clearly, engaging the interest of the listener. In discussion, candidates make significant contributions, varying how

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<sup>1</sup> A safety net for candidates entered for the higher tier in these specifications is provided. In these specifications, an allowed Grade E is awarded on the higher tier. Candidates failing to achieve Grade E are reported as Unclassified.

and when they participate. They show confident use of standard English in situations which require it.

Candidates show understanding of the ways in which meaning and information are conveyed in a range of literary and non-literary texts. They give personal and critical responses to literary texts, referring to aspects of language, structure and themes in justifying their views. They select and summarise a range of information from different sources.

Candidates' writing engages and sustains the reader's interest. It shows adaptation of style and register to different forms, including using an impersonal style where appropriate. Candidates use a range of sentence structures and varied vocabulary to create effects. Paragraphing and correct punctuation are used to make the sequence of events or ideas coherent and clear to the reader. Spelling is accurate and handwriting is neat and legible.

### **Grade A**

In a range of contexts, candidates select and use appropriate styles and registers. They vary their sentence structure, vocabulary and expression confidently for a range of purposes. They sustain discussion through the use of a variety of contributions, listening with sensitivity. They show assured use of standard English in a range of situations and for a variety of purposes.

Candidates articulate and sustain their responses to texts, developing their ideas and referring in detail to aspects of language, structure and presentation. They identify and analyse argument, opinion and alternative interpretations, making cross references where appropriate. They make apt and careful comparison within and between texts.

Candidates' writing has shape and assured control of a range of styles. Narratives use structure as well as vocabulary for a range of effects and non-fiction is coherent, logical and persuasive. A wide range of grammatical constructions is used accurately. Punctuation and spelling are correct; paragraphs are well constructed and linked to clarify the organisation of the writing as a whole.