



Welsh Joint Education Committee
Cyd-Bwyllgor Addysg Cymru

GCSE English Speaking and Listening 2004

Guidance for teachers

*Produced by
AQA, CCEA, Edexcel, OCR, WJEC*

December 2002

Introduction

This booklet has been produced by the awarding bodies of England, Wales and Northern Ireland to support teachers of the revised GCSE English and English Literature specifications.

The aim of the booklet is to provide guidance on the three contexts required for the assessment of Speaking and Listening (En1): individual extended contributions, group interaction and drama-focused activities.

For each context, a general introduction is given and a list of suggested tasks is provided. The tasks are suggestions only and teachers should use their knowledge of their own candidates to select tasks and situations which allow viable assessment opportunities for all.

Certain tasks might, however, be used for more than one type of assessment depending on the criteria adopted. For example, a candidate delivering a debate speech could be assessed for an individual contribution. On the other hand, the same or other candidates contributing to the debate, could be assessed for group interaction if the appropriate criteria are adopted. It would not be acceptable, however, for teachers to submit two different assessments for the same candidates in one activity. If two assessments are made, only one should contribute to the final mark.

Some teachers may choose to set candidates tasks which could also be used to contribute towards assessments in other subjects, such as Drama. In this case, teachers must be careful to ensure that for GCSE English the tasks address the assessment objectives provided in the appropriate specification and that candidates' performances are marked against the Speaking and Listening criteria alone.

Individual Extended Contribution

'Individual' implies a solo effort of some kind, a contribution in which attention is centred on the candidate and in which the work is personally created. However, it does not necessarily mean that the material is entirely self-generated. For instance it might be an outcome from a group collaboration, which includes an element of personal contribution like reporting back after a discussion. 'Extended' implies a contribution of some significance, not necessarily defined by time but perhaps by the depth of detail or the extent to which ideas are expanded. It need not be uninterrupted, but could be facilitated by questions or by comments. It does not need to be a set piece; it could be a developed personal contribution to group work.

However, the individual must for a period of time be the centre of the audience's attention. The focus and 'spotlight' must be placed on one candidate and the contribution itself needs to be sustained, and with a group situation, self-contained. A task or contribution will have a natural end, which is to be encouraged, rather than necessarily imposing an arbitrary time limit. As always, there is a need for flexibility in approaching assessment opportunities and teachers should use their own judgement as to how best to allow their own candidates to succeed.

The second paragraph in the General Criteria column provides the key descriptor for individual extended contributions. A hierarchy of skills is presented: from merely showing "a limited awareness of the listeners" for a G grade, through to "managing listeners' attention through sophisticated styles of delivery" for A*. Also the nature of the audience is important; the Grade C descriptor refers to the need "to adapt to different audiences", thus a mix of formal and informal contexts for talk might provide opportunities for candidates to enhance attainment.

Individual extended contributions could fulfil any of the three groups of specific criteria, or range of purposes. In the case of the "explain, describe, narrate" triplet an ability to deal with questions and/or interruptions could be a key discriminator, so the final sentence, which relates to this, might be especially helpful. The nature of the subject matter will also help to define achievement, especially to access B grade, which requires "challenging subject matter" and above.

Suggested tasks

Suitable tasks might include some of the following in order to meet the Specific Criteria. The primary focus for tasks 1-3 are the criteria for "explain, describe, narrate"; for tasks 4 and 5 the criteria for "explore, analyse, imagine"; for tasks 6-8 the criteria for "discuss, argue, persuade". However, it may be that different sections of a large task cover more than one set of triplet criteria. In this case the assessor and the individual being assessed need to be clear which of the range or purposes is the main focus and which specific criteria are being applied, at which stage.

1. A talk on an area of interest – the more challenging the topic the more likely the candidate is to access the higher grades. So a talk on a personal hobby might be less demanding than developing an idea. This might involve an informal context e.g. explaining to a friend a part time job, or a formal context e.g. explaining the benefits of a GCSE course to prospective students and their parents at an open evening. This could be extended to more demanding contexts, for instance making a presentation as part of a school assembly or delivering a speech for a public speaking competition. The anecdotal task, the personal narrative of an experience or memory, may allow weaker candidates to achieve, but would not necessarily challenge the stronger.
2. Explanations of a specific process – a journey; rules for a game. These more concrete tasks may allow achievement in the lower grades with those who lack more specific interests or who are less confident.
3. Individual presentation – giving a review or account of a film, book, sporting event or musical event etc. to the rest of the class or as part of a simulated radio/TV programme.
4. Group work in which reporting back to the class is a feature. The individual extended contributions might involve presenting the views of the group **after** a discussion, possibly involving problem solving or summarising the ideas of the group. This type of task is equally successful using literary texts and non-literary material.
5. An individual or pair may introduce an aspect of a topic, or work in hand; be responsible for presenting prepared notes to the rest of the class or whole group. Interpretations of characters, themes, analysis of techniques used, would all be suitable. The nature and complexity of the original material and the individual's response to this, would largely determine achievement in the different grades – from reassembling cut up lines from a single poem or passages of prose, talking through reasons for arranging them in a particular way, to an extended commentary on an aspect of a text for GCSE Literature in preparation for written work or exam revision.
6. Main speeches in debate. These might be relatively brief in terms of time but such speeches are significant in the context of the task.

The list of possible debating motions:
This house believes that.....

is endless and gives multiple opportunities for varying the roles taken by individual class members, and for more formal and sophisticated language and techniques to be used. However, the subjects under debate are often the most successful when linked to issues of current interest.
7. A talk based on a controversial subject would allow candidates to present a strong point of view and develop arguments to achieve the higher grades, whereas presenting the pros and cons of some aspect of life near to their own experiences e.g. part-time work for those still in full-time education, would give assessment opportunities for weaker candidates.
8. Group representative presentations can also be used to "argue" and "persuade", where the brief entails an element of competition with other groups; in these instances, the individual is not simply reporting and summarising, but promoting the group's opinions or solutions to a problem."

General advice

The above are suggestions only and teachers must use their knowledge of their own candidates to select tasks and situations, which will allow viable assessment opportunities for all. Managing a talk to the rest of the group by an individual on a hobby or interest may be problematic or inappropriate in a whole class context, but successful in a different context or situation.

Many of the suggested tasks may involve preparation of written material by the individual to bring to the assessment. Teachers can help their candidates to achieve by encouraging strategies to avoid simply reading the material and so invalidating any assessment. Techniques like the use of brief notes or bullet points on index cards are all allowed, but even here too great a reliance on notes may limit performance and therefore achievement.

Often the more lacking in confidence candidates are, the more likely they are to seek the security of reading their notes aloud. It could be, therefore, that this situation is assessed for the weaker candidates much later in the course, when through maturity and practice, they may have acquired greater confidence. Similarly candidates do not have to perform in front of a large audience. Providing sympathetic and supportive listeners often overcomes the need to read, rather than speak and listen.

If an over reliance on notes is to be discouraged, so too is the over-rehearsal, the "learnt" speech, delivered without audience awareness or spontaneity. The above factors would all act to determine overall achievement in this situation.

Finally it must be remembered that it is not necessary to assess all candidates in one session. This context by its very nature demands that individuals are given both time and scope to make an extended contribution.

Group Interaction

In group interaction, the emphasis of assessment is on the process of engagement in discussion rather than solo performance. Therefore, tasks should provide the candidates with opportunities to show their skills in interaction, debate, negotiation and resolution. This context could include paired discussion, but larger groups may be required to enable candidates to access the higher level skills. For example, at the higher levels, the role of the chairperson in eliciting or prompting contributions to group discussion will be significant. The composition of groups should vary to encourage candidates to engage with a range of personalities, abilities and opinions.

The third paragraph in the General Criteria column provides the key descriptors. The two main skills exhibited in this context are the ability to listen and engage with other members of the group and the ability to engage with the purpose of the task. A hierarchy of skills indicates that at Grade G candidates “listen and make some contribution to discussion” while at Grade C they “participate fully, sustaining their listening and making significant contributions”. At Grade A, a more dynamic involvement is evident where candidates “initiate, develop and shape discussion” through their own sensitive contributions and through encouraging the participation of others.

In group interaction, candidates can be assessed using any of the specific criteria. For example, an open forum debate may lend itself most naturally to the triplet “discuss, argue, persuade”. In the case of this triplet, Grade E candidates will “express opinions and occasionally make decisive points to good effect”.

On the other hand, the discussion of a poem might be assessed under the triplet “explore, analyse, imagine” where Grade C candidates will “promote a point of view” and show the ability to respond with understanding to ideas varying complexity. At Grade A, candidates will manage “complex ideas and situations” through “identifying priorities”, “synthesising essential points and resolving outcomes through a considered response”. At the highest levels, candidates will be able to command and manage both task and group with sophistication and flair.

Suggested tasks

1. Problem solving activities which encourage the group to explore different options or points of view and negotiate an outcome. These tasks could be assessed under the triplet “discuss, argue, persuade” as they require candidates to promote a point of view and engage with the opinions of others. An example task might be:

Candidates are asked to imagine they live in a small community and their local hospital is to be closed down and all services moved to a newly built hospital in the city 50 miles away. A public meeting has been called to discuss this issue. Each member of the group could choose to be one of the following:
a Government spokesperson proposing the change; the Director of the new hospital;
a patient on a long waiting list for heart surgery; a representative of hospital workers against the closure;
a member of a local sports club; a local old age pensioner.

Equally, candidates adopting less partisan viewpoints could be assessed under the triplet “explore, analyse, imagine” for their ability to respond to ideas and, at the higher levels, to identify priorities and resolve outcomes.

2. Discussions which require the group to prepare a presentation or report back to a third party may also be suitable as they involve negotiation to achieve a specific outcome. Example tasks include:

Candidates are asked to choose one of the products listed below and draw up the group's advertising campaign to sell it. They might like to consider the product's name, poster, TV advertisement, radio jingle, slogan etc.

- A range of make-up for the 'real' man
- Edible cutlery for use at parties, on air flights etc
- A miniature portable TV which can be attached to customised head gear

The group has been asked to draw up a programme of six lessons on Life Skills for their age group. They could consider: the topics which they think are essential; which Departments in their school/college should be involved and why; which outside organisations should be asked to help.

When assessing candidates' performances in tasks such as these, teachers must be careful to distinguish between the discussion, which is group interaction, and the reporting back or making a presentation which is an individual extended contribution.

3. Discussions of controversial issues allow candidates to engage with the ideas of others and promote a point of view (“discuss, argue, persuade”). They may also present an opportunity to use varied vocabulary and expression and to respond to questions (“explain, describe, narrate”). These may include more formal open forum debates which may allow candidates at the higher levels to demonstrate ‘irony and detachment’ or ‘sophistication and originality’. However, the focus should be on significant interaction rather than individual performance. Topics could include:

- Is marriage an outdated institution?
- Has the Press become too powerful?
- Are females discriminated against from an early age? In their discussion they might consider: the division of household jobs; the choices in careers and promotion possibilities; role models; the way women are viewed by society.

4. Discussion of literary texts and preparation for drama could come under this category, where candidates are encouraged to interpret information and respond to complex ideas under the triplet “explore, analyse, imagine”. e.g.: Discussion on how to stage Act 4, Scene 1 of *The Merchant of Venice* (the trial scene).

Drama-focused Activities

Drama-focused activities have, at their heart, the necessity for the individual candidate to assume a role. This should be a character other than him or herself. Often this will be in the form of a role-play where individuals take on a specific role in a collaborative effort. The material may be improvised or have been prepared, even scripted, by the group beforehand. It may be that literary-based stimulus will have been used. The overriding criterion to be applied when assessing the candidate is their attempt to project a role or character.

The use of scripted material (such as a Shakespeare play) does raise issues concerning the 'creation of a complex role' which is one of the general criteria at Grade A and A*. However, if the candidate has brought their own interpretation of the role to their performance, the fact that it has not been independently **written** should not be an issue. Generally, it is recognised that the majority of assessment opportunities may well emerge from simulated situations and hot-seating of characters. It is also possible that within a drama-focused group activity, candidates may be assessed for their contribution to group interaction rather than for the drama-focused activity.

The fourth paragraph in the General Criteria column provides the key descriptors relating to the drama-focused activities. A hierarchy of skills is presented, from merely showing ability "to adopt a simple role" for a G grade, through to being able to "independently create a complex role, making inventive use of a range of appropriate techniques to direct the response of the audience" for A*. The ability to communicate with the audience is central to the assessment, with the skill of engaging with the audience emerging at grade D.

Using the specific criteria in assessment – "explain, describe, narrate" – would be suited to role-play, with the grade C candidate able to "use varied and appropriate vocabulary and expression" and "answer questions using relevant and effective detail". The "explore, analyse, imagine" triplet may lend itself more to pre-presentation discussion, although a character in a role-play might well show ability to "present an interpretation of central ideas and issues". The final triplet, "discuss, argue, persuade" could again be applied to characters in role and their ability to "challenge and build on points made by others".

Suggested tasks

Typical tasks might include some of the following:

1. Exploring an issue from different points of view. Small groups of students could be given an issue such as homelessness and given the task of presenting a piece of drama which explores causes, effects and solutions. Different roles could include the police, parents, the homeless themselves, politicians. To enable candidates to meet higher grade criteria, they would need to engage with challenging and complex ideas, and to meet grade C criteria the role would need to be developed and sustained. It would be appropriate in such dramatic presentations to invite candidates to remain in role to respond to questions from an audience. Appropriate issues could arise from candidates' work on a range of non-fiction, media and literary texts. It is also possible for candidates to approach this as an individual task: a dramatic monologue could be used to explore an issue. A candidate could, for example, adopt the role of a young person agonising about abortion: that could clearly match the general criteria at A: "create a complex role".
2. Simulations are a feature of the work of many English departments. These could be used as the basis for Group Interaction assessments, but they are also suitable for drama-focused activities as long as there is an emphasis on creating a role. If, for example, the simulation was based on a public meeting in response to a proposed road-building programme, or the siting of a new young offenders' institution, then it is important that candidates consider more than just the arguments, they need to develop roles appropriate to their level of ability. They need to consider such things as gesture and intonation to "engage the interest of the audience". (grade D)
3. Various possibilities for drama-focused activities arise from candidates' study of pre and post 1914 drama texts:

Candidates could assume the roles of characters from the play and develop ideas from the play in additional scenes. The focus here is likely to be on "explain and describe" though it could also focus on the "explore, analyse, imagine" triplet. To achieve high grades, candidates would need to illustrate some depth of understanding of the character they are playing and the ability to convey that depth to an audience. In response to a pre-1914 text, candidates would not have to use historically accurate language: finding a suitable contemporary register, for example for Caliban, would be part of creating a challenging role.

Individual candidates could assume the role of a character from a play and explore ideas and themes through dramatic monologue. This could be followed by a question and answer session involving the audience.

Rather than adopting roles from the play they have studied, candidates might adapt a situation from the text. For example, after studying *A View from the Bridge*, pairs of candidates could develop dramatic situations in which a parent figure finds it difficult to give his or her child freedom.

Candidates working in small groups might perform scenes from a studied play in two or more different ways, providing an audience with alternative interpretations of characters. Candidates may, additionally, come out of role to explain their interpretations and offer an analysis of the text they have enacted.



Welsh Joint Education Committee
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff
CF5 2YX

<http://www.wjec.co.uk>

Subject Clerk Mike Williams 029 2026 5129 mike.williams@wjec.co.uk
Subject Officer Hugh Lester 029 2026 5023 hugh.lester@wjec.co.uk

*To subscribe to the email bulletin, please send a blank email to hugh.lester@wjec.co.uk with this subject line:
subscribe gcse english*

