



Pearson  
Edexcel

Monitors' Report

Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In English Language (4EA1)

Spoken Language Endorsement

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## Principal Monitor's Introduction

This is an optional component of the specification but it is encouraging that many centres see it as a means to offer candidates the opportunity to prepare and present their views on a range of contemporary issues and personal interests. Previous reports have highlighted the genuinely stimulating and even inspiring results when this opportunity is grasped with commitment and with the help and guidance of supportive teaching staff. Many such examples were seen this series and, overall, it is clear that a large number of centres are using the Endorsement as a valuable tool for developing the ideas and the confidence of their students.

The purpose of this report is to comment on the performance of candidates this series and to offer examples of good practice in the areas of:

1. Task setting
2. Preparing and Presenting talks
3. Centre assessment and standardisation
4. Administration and submission of samples.

It is realistic to recognise that the practicalities and administration of the Endorsement makes considerable demands on the time and technical resources of centres. Clear guidance on this and on the submission of samples to monitors is detailed in both the **English Language Specification** and in the **Administrative Support Guide for the Spoken Language Endorsement**, which are to be found on the Pearson Edexcel website. Failure to follow this guidance can, and does, lead to further expenditure of time and effort. It is always to be hoped that delays can be avoided and some reminders are provided in this report under section 4.

### 1. Task Setting

As previous reports have pointed out, candidates usually perform better when they have personal investment in the topic which they present. However, given a free choice and without the intervention of teachers, some candidates will select topics with an insufficient degree of challenge, thereby limiting their potential to achieve a Merit or Distinction grade. Presentations about a pet or a hobby or a favourite sports team or celebrity, all in evidence this series, tend towards the 'straightforward' – the key descriptor for a Pass grade. Teachers may well guide candidates to an approach which offers greater scope and potential. Even so, some successful candidates did manage to take a sophisticated or contentious stance on an otherwise straightforward subject, such as a presentation on the importance and significance of rice in different countries and cultures.

Candidates need to 'express challenging ideas/ information/ feelings' if they are to access a Merit grade, or 'sophisticated ideas/information/feelings' for a Distinction. Some candidates were able to achieve these higher grades by talking about personal experience (for example their family circumstances, or the intricacies of learning a new skill) but many more candidates are now choosing topics from current affairs and debates. We live in interesting times, with wide access to all kinds of information, and young people feel strongly about a range of issues. Researching these issues has worthwhile educational value and can open the eyes of young people to all kinds of new ideas. When candidates, therefore, express their views in a presentation, especially if they are attempting to persuade their listeners to accept or adopt those views, challenge and sophistication are much more easily achieved. If those views are genuinely engaging and stimulating, the questions which follow the presentation are also more likely to lead to detailed and perceptive responses. Popular topics of discussion for Distinction candidates this year were topical issues relating to gender equality, climate change, transgender rights and prejudicial behaviour / racism.

## **2. Preparing and presenting talks**

Once a topic has been adopted by the candidate, after negotiation with and the approval of his or her teacher, a period of preparation would seem to be advisable. Many candidates demonstrated that they had carried out research and most showed evidence that they had organised their thoughts. It is clear, from the evidence provided by centres, that some candidates are given the opportunity to rehearse their presentation.

There is also evidence to suggest that some centres allow audiences to know in advance what an individual candidate is going to speak about. The audience, usually the candidates' peers, is then given the opportunity to prepare suitable questions for the candidate at the end of the presentation. This is very good practice. If candidates are asked thoughtful and demanding questions, they are far more likely to think about their answers and respond 'perceptively' – a requirement for the Distinction grade.

The question and answer session of the presentation is a crucial component. It was encouraging to see that very few centres or candidates had omitted the questions entirely – where this occurs, the candidate cannot be awarded a grade – and more centres are placing greater emphasis on preparing for this aspect of the Endorsement. Members of the audience are being taught to avoid closed, limiting questions in favour of open and enabling ones.

Preparation can be taken to extremes, however, especially when a candidate writes out the whole text of their presentation and then proceeds to read it. Reading from a 'script'

or even detailed notes is extraordinarily limiting and was cited by monitors as the practice most likely to prevent a candidate from achieving a higher grade or even any grade at all. One of the Pass criteria is that a candidate 'makes an attempt to meet the needs of the audience'. If a candidate is reading and makes no attempt to even acknowledge that the audience is present, then this criterion cannot be met.

Similarly, 'meeting the needs of the audience' and 'achieving the purpose of his or her presentation' are Merit criteria which cannot be achieved if the candidate makes no effort to engage or interest the audience due to over-reliance on scripts or detailed notes.

Candidates can employ notes of course: referring to brief prompts on cards is helpful and, clearly, is sometimes taught as a useful skill. Some very confident candidates were able to speak for seven or eight minutes, delivering a well-organised and sophisticated presentation, with no notes at all.

For a Distinction, centres are reminded that a candidate must use 'an effective range of strategies to engage the audience'. These strategies are many and varied, as an increasing number of candidates are demonstrating, and can include the more obvious rhetorical devices such as repetition and questions to the audience. They can also include the careful modulation of tone and volume, and non-verbal communication such as gestures, eye-contact and facial expression. Some excellent examples were witnessed this series.

It was very pleasing to see that there were far fewer examples of group or pair presentations. Such a format rarely, if ever, allows each candidate the opportunity to speak for a meaningful amount of time. Neither is each candidate given an equal opportunity to answer questions in sufficient detail, or to elaborate on their ideas.

Centres are reminded that every candidate should introduce him or herself, or be introduced, at the very start of the presentation with name and candidate number. Name and number labels should also be worn and it is very helpful if candidates announce the subject of their presentation at the beginning.

A level of formality should be observed. Candidates do not have to stand but they should face their audience, and the camera, and avoid distracting behaviour such as chewing.

Powerpoint slides can be used but monitors reported that they were rarely used in a way which enhanced a presentation and could often be a distraction. Candidates would often turn to look at slides and the quality of light sometimes made it difficult to see the candidate. In the least acceptable cases, candidates read their slides to the audience.

Candidates need not face the camera directly but can be filmed in half profile. There were instances, this series, of candidates not being heard very clearly. On one occasion, someone placed a cover over the microphone mid-way through a presentation. More commonly, audience questions could not be heard. This can be a technical and resource issue but teachers sometimes repeated the question to the microphone and this can help a great deal.

### **3. Centre Assessment and Standardisation**

It is pleasing to report that the vast majority of centres graded their candidates accurately. However, monitors have reported some inaccuracy and generosity in the awarding of Distinction grades in some centres. In addition, some candidates were over-rewarded for presentations which were far too short for all criteria to be met, or in cases where only one question was asked of them. Conversely, in a small number of cases, centres were so conscious of being rigorous in both the format of the SLE and accurately applying standards, it resulted in some severe marking.

Centres should have access to the GCSE 1EN0 E video standardisation sets available on the Edexcel website. There are two sets available (A and B) and it must be noted that these videos are produced by the joint examination boards. Additional standardising material using clips from iGCSE centres may be developed by Edexcel. Centres should carry out internal standardisation based on the GCSE standardisation clips and it is clear that teachers in many centres jointly moderate the work of their own candidates before grades are awarded and samples sent to monitors.

Monitors' reports on each centre are available online from results day and should be read in conjunction with this Principal Monitor's report. Useful advice is often given in these reports and it is to be hoped that centres respond positively in making any relevant adjustments to their assessment.

Where a centre is deemed to be significantly inaccurate in the awarding of grades, a senior monitor will make a supportive visit or arrange an online meeting with that centre between October and April following results day. These visits/meetings have been very successful and positively received by the centres involved, who often welcome the opportunity to discuss the Endorsement with an experienced monitor.

### **4. Administration and the submission of samples**

As mentioned in the introduction, clear instructions are given in the **Specification** and in the **Administrative Support Guide for the Spoken Language Endorsement**.

In order to facilitate the accurate and timely monitoring of samples, it is essential that centres follow these instructions assiduously. In particular, all video recordings must be accessible to monitors, clearly labelled and of good quality. There were some instances this series of samples that could not be opened by monitors and it is very good practice for teachers to check that they can open files, and that they are of good quality, before sending to the monitor.

Increasingly, some centres are choosing to encrypt files and this practice caused severe problems this series. As the **Administrative Support Guide** points out, the password **must** be sent under separate cover to the centre's individual monitor at the same time that the samples are sent.

Samples can be recorded on DVD or on USB, although USB is preferable. This is for two reasons:

1. DVDs can be more easily damaged in transit (there were several examples of this during the June 2019 series)
2. Fewer computers have the capacity to play DVDs

Some centres include individual assessment sheets for the candidates in the sample and, though not obligatory, monitors find these extremely useful as they often show how centres reached decisions about the awarding of grades.

## **Conclusion**

I would like to thank teachers for the expertise, professionalism, care and concern they show in making sure that the Endorsement is a valuable part of their students' education.

Principal Monitor

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