



Great assessment: helping your students succeed

Presentation for use with teacher colleagues

Great assessment
for all students



Overview

- Why assessment design is important
- Key principles of assessment design
- Comparable outcomes
- Top tips to share with students

Why assessment design is important

The key features of successful assessment design

- Differentiation
- Reliability
- Validity

Differentiation

- **Differentiation** is achieved when an assessment provides opportunities for students across the ability range to show what they know, understand and can do. This can be achieved:
 - by **outcome** (as with the GCSE MFL Speaking and Writing exams), where different students respond at different identifiable levels to the same task
 - by **task**, where different students succeed on tasks pitched at different levels (as with the GCSE Listening and Reading exams).
- By providing opportunities for **differentiation**, an assessment is likely to distinguish between students, by ensuring the entire mark range is used to separate students who provide strong and weak evidence of their learning, knowledge and skills.

Reliability

- **Short definition** – how dependable, trustworthy and consistent the outcomes (marks) produced by the question are.
- A question is said to be **reliable** if it produces **similar results on different occasions and by different assessors**.
- Reliability can be improved by ensuring that the mark scheme contains sufficient detail to facilitate the standardisation of marking between teachers/assessors.
- If two students give the same answer but are given different scores by different teachers/assessors, then this indicates the mark scheme may be unreliable.

Reliability

BOULANGERIE

What can you buy here? Give **one** detail.

..... (1 mark)

Reliability

Mark scheme

Answer = bread (1 mark)

To achieve **reliability**, what's wrong with this mark scheme?

Reliability

Accept	Reject	Notes	Marks
Bread/cakes/baguette/ bread rolls/bread buns/croissants/ pastries	food	Accept any other valid bread product which demonstrates understanding of 'boulangerie': Eg barm (cakes), batches, flatties, cobs, baps, stotties/stotty cakes, oven bottoms, muffins, bread cakes, nudgers, blaas, fadgies, scufflers [...]	1

Reliability

What about these answers?

- Cream cakes
- Pâtisserie
- Things to eat
- Groceries
- Cooked food
- Loaf of bread
- Loaf

What is the key principle for markers to ensure reliability?

Validity

- **Short definition** – how relevant and meaningful the test scores are. Does the assessment measure what it says it will measure?
- Validity is often described in terms of the **content and design** of the assessment – for example, how valid would a science assessment be if questions requiring knowledge of geography were asked? How is this covering the science specification?
- **You cannot have validity without reliability.**

Why is assessment design important?

- Writing good quality exam questions and mark schemes is at the heart of AQA's purpose as an educational charity. It's a visible means by which AQA is judged by students, their parents, teachers, employers, universities and Ofqual, the exams regulator.
- Understanding the principles of writing high quality assessments is crucial for teachers so they can help students **of all abilities** to show their knowledge, understanding and skills and perform to the best of their ability.
- Well written questions and mark schemes ensure **differentiation between students, reliable marking, maintaining standards and awarding accurate grades** – all of this is fundamental for an exam board.

Key principles of assessment design

Key design principles

When designing assessments, the key principles to take into consideration are:

- the tasks reflect the content you want to test
- students can complete the assessment in the time allowed
- the questions clearly tell the students what they need to do
- the mark scheme rewards students of all abilities for what they know and what they can do.

Key design principles

To ensure that:

- assessments are clear and consistent in language and style
- there is consistency in layout and question style between assessments, meaning that the assessments work in the same way as the ones that students have used previously.

Key design principles

Aim to give students the confidence to attempt as many questions as possible, with the 'peaks and troughs' structure on Listening and Reading assessments, as in the exam papers.

Some useful design tips:

- use clear questions and simple language
- ensure plenty of white space for readability
- use bold text for emphasis
- tailor pauses in Listening assessments
- gloss (translate/explain) words where needed.

Top tips for you and your students

Listening and Reading

- Explain the 'peaks and troughs' approach to students, so they don't give up when they come to a question they find challenging.
- Reassure students that it's absolutely normal to find a number of the questions very challenging and explain why this is.
- Consider key design principles such as increasing white space and using bold text when writing your own questions or resources.



Demand of tasks and accessibility

It's crucial to differentiate between students of different abilities.

- At Foundation tier grades 1–5 are targeted, and at Higher tier, grades 4–9.
- Questions are targeted at low, medium and high demand at each tier:
 - **Higher:** approx **33% each** at grades 4–5, 6–7 and 8–9
 - **Foundation:** **60%** grades 1–3, **40%** 4–5
- Because they're common to both tiers, the high demand questions at Foundation are the low demand questions at Higher.
- Higher demand questions, testing more challenging concepts, are designed to be accessible to a wide range of students.

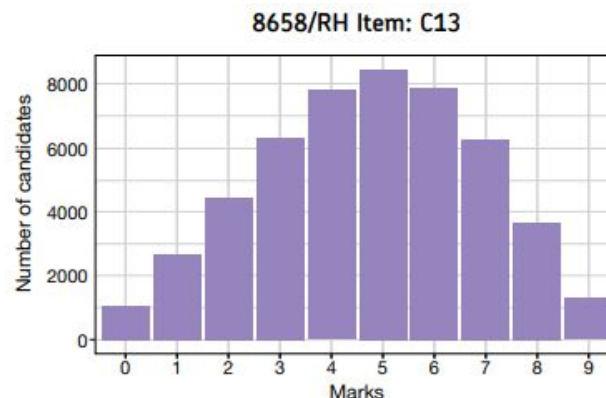
Demand of tasks and accessibility

Extract from the GCSE French 2019 Higher Reading report:

Question 13

'The translation question discriminated well with the whole range of marks applied. Very few students failed to score at all and around 70% scored at least four of the available marks. However, students need to understand that precision is required here, for example, incorrect use of tenses and the omission of key words, such as plus, will prevent students scoring. Pronouns also need to be rendered accurately and paraphrasing should be avoided [...]

Mark distribution – RH translation 2019



Top tips for you and your students

- Encourage students to attempt all questions and to keep going when they find them challenging – there will be less demanding questions later on.
- Make sure students avoid paraphrasing in translation tasks – precision is required.
- Use the reports on the exam published after each exam series with colleagues and with students.



Setting multiple choice questions and getting the level of demand right

Multiple choice questions and distractors

- While there is only one correct answer to a multiple choice question, all the optional answers provided need to be plausible. These plausible but incorrect answers are known as **distractors**.
- Deliberately strong distractors are used on the Higher tier papers in order to differentiate at the very top of the grade scale.

Top tips for you and your students

- When setting multiple choice questions, use **plausible ‘distractors’** to differentiate between students, particularly at higher levels.
- When writing questions, every word counts. Drafting and reviewing questions with your teacher colleagues can be time really well spent.
- Make sure the vocabulary and grammar fits the **level of demand of the question** you’re writing.



Using the **right language**

- It's essential that assessments test the **vocabulary, grammar and subject content** you are focusing on.
- Good assessments ensure that questions testing challenging language structures and skills can be accessible to a wide range of students.

Comparable outcomes

Fair and accurate outcomes in exams each year

- **Comparable outcomes** ensure that standards and student results are not impacted by any change in demand to exam questions.
- Ofqual monitors this process to ensure a 'level playing field' across exam boards.
- [How \(not\) to compare standards between exam boards - The Ofqual blog](#)
- If you want to read more about awarding, a good starting point is [A basic guide to standard setting](#), which is available on the AQA website.

Fair and accurate outcomes in exams each year

- The process for deciding grade boundaries is called **awarding**. Its overall aim is to ensure that standards are maintained from one year to the next.
- Awarding is carried out by senior examiners who are experts in a particular subject and the process is overseen by Ofqual, the qualifications regulator.
- The senior examiners look at scripts on the grade boundary from last year and a range of scripts from the current year. Those awarding committees are guided by the principle of **comparable outcomes** and that's the principle that the student should get the same grade this year that they would have got if they'd sat last year's paper.
- They then compare the scripts to decide the mark for this year's boundary, which represents the same standard as last year. They also use **statistics** to guide their judgment.

Fair and accurate outcomes in exams each year

- These statistics look at how students performed in previous tests. We use **Key Stage 2 data for GCSE** awarding or **GCSE data** for A-level awarding.
- This means that, while we're looking to carry over the standard from last year, if the data shows we have a slightly more able cohort than last year, there will be slightly more top grades available.
- After careful consideration, the senior examiners decide what the **minimum mark** for each grade should be.
- The final result is that **a student who performed at the same level should get the same grade** whether they sat the exam this year or last year.
- As well as being fair to students, this means the qualification will continue to be valued by potential employers, colleges and universities.

Top tips to share with students for each skill

Paper 1 Listening – advice to students

- Maximise the 5 minutes' reading time by highlighting key words in the rubrics and questions, identifying questions which have two parts to be answered from the same utterance, signposting Section B where answers are in the target language.
- Read the rubric introduction to the question carefully. This will help you to give sensible answers.
- Answer every question, especially where you have to write a letter. If in doubt, have a guess!
- Listen carefully to the whole utterance – don't base your answer on the first thing you hear. There will be distractors in some questions.
- Don't give up if you find a question difficult – some more accessible questions will come up later in the test.
- Look carefully at the wording of the question – are you giving the **specific** information required?
- If you are asked to give **one** reason or **one** detail, only give one.

Paper 2 Speaking: advice for students (role play)

- Read the introduction carefully – it's there to help you understand the scenario.
- You can write down exactly what you are going to say for each of the bullet points if you want to.
- Prepare **only** the information required by each bullet point – if it says 'one detail', only prepare one detail.
- Listen carefully to the question that your teacher asks you for the unprepared task – it might be in two parts.
- Make sure you know common question words such as *when, what, how, where*.
- You can ask for repetition of a question, but make sure it is in the target language. Practise how to do this.

Paper 2 Speaking: advice for students (photo card)

- Prepare answers of at least three sentences for each of the three questions on the card, using a verb in each one.
- One of the prepared questions at Foundation tier will require an answer in a time frame other than the present. At Higher, one question will require an answer which refers to a future event and one question will require an answer which refers to a past event.
- Listen carefully to the unseen questions your teacher asks you.
- If your teacher interrupts you during any of your answers to the first three questions, it's to make sure there is time for the two unprepared questions so don't be put off if this happens.
- Keep to language you understand – there are no marks in this part of the test for complex language, only for communication, so keep it simple and clear.
- You can ask for repetition of a question, but make sure it is in the target language. Practise how to do this.

Paper 2 Speaking: advice for students (conversation)

- Ask your teacher a question during the discussion of your nominated Theme to make sure you don't forget.
- Try to vary the language you use, for example:
 - learn different ways of expressing opinions
 - have a bank of different adjectives
 - try and use connectives to make your sentences longer/more complex where possible.
- Try to remember to give and justify your opinions without always being prompted by your teacher.
- Don't worry if you can't answer a question – your teacher will move on to something else.
- Work hard on your pronunciation.
- You can ask for repetition of a question, but make sure it is in the target language. Practise how to do this.

Paper 3 Reading: advice for students

- Read the rubric introduction to the question carefully.
- Answer every question, especially where you have to write a letter. If in doubt, have a guess!
- Read the whole of the sentence so that you can check that your first reaction is right. If you think the answer is 'P' (positive) for example, read on in the text to make sure that the correct answer is not in fact 'P&N' (positive and negative).
- Don't copy whole chunks of the text because you might include the wrong answer as well as the right answer.
- If you are asked to give **one** reason or **one** detail, only give one.
- Make sure you leave enough time to complete the translation – manage your time across the different sections of the paper.
- Make sure you attempt the translation as some elements will be more accessible than other questions on the paper.
- Precision is essential and the precise meaning of the whole phrase must be translated so check your work carefully to ensure nothing is **missed out**.

Paper 4 Writing: advice for students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words.
- Plan your answer before starting to write.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames.
- Mention all of the bullet points. Attempt to write something about them rather than omitting them.
- Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been addressed.
- Make sure you include opinions/justifications as required by the task.
- Read your piece of writing carefully and check that your verb formation is accurate.
- In some cases, the language of the bullet points can be manipulated to help you write a successful response. For example, in French 2018 paper Question 4.1, the first bullet point '*votre destination de vacances préférée*' is easily adapted to produce '*ma destination de vacances préférée est... .*'

Resources

Free AQA recorded webinars on MFL assessment design:

- [Webinar 1](#) – *What makes great assessment?*

Webinar 1 also includes:

- an example booklet showing how we ensure our assessment design meets your students' needs.

- [Webinar 2](#) – *Great assessment: helping students succeed*

Webinar 2 also includes:

- Examples from Listening and Reading booklet showing how students often miss out on marks in exams
- Exam tips classroom posters and handouts for your students.

You can also find our webinar resources our MFL Teaching resources pages.

Thank you

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