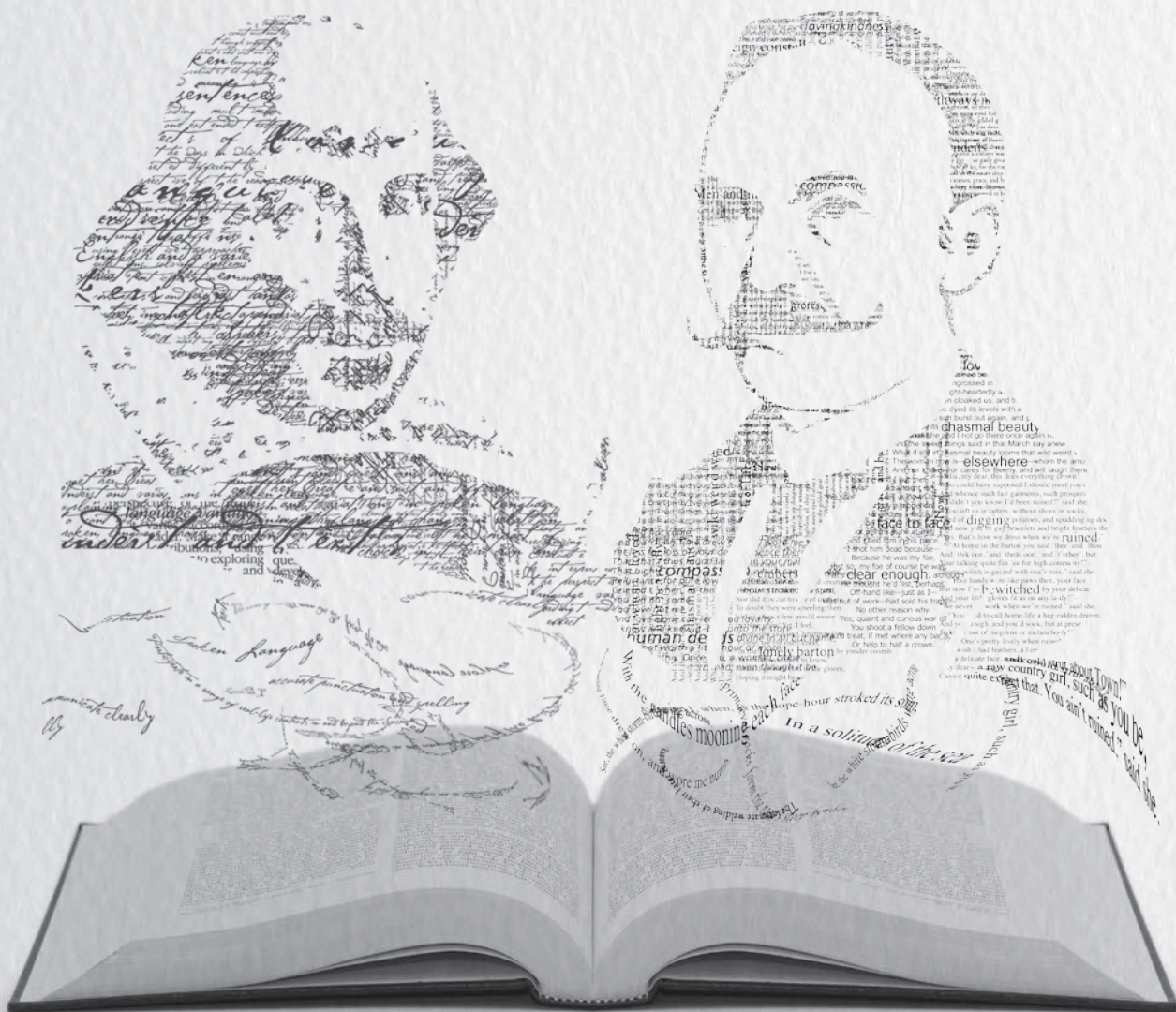


# Important information regarding Ofqual changes to Speaking & Listening in GCSE English J350 and English Language J355



**BRINGING ENGLISH TO LIFE**



Following Ofqual's announcement on 29 August 2013 that Speaking & Listening will no longer contribute to GCSE English grades, there has been confusion as to the implications for schools already halfway through teaching the GCSEs, and planning for future teaching.

In particular, with the commencement of this academic year's round of advisory visits, it has become apparent that a number of schools are under the impression that such visits – and indeed the assessment of Speaking & Listening itself – are no longer required. This is not the case.

To quote Ofqual's statement: "Many teachers rightly say that speaking and listening skills are of vital importance. We agree, which is why we will still require them to be reported". As the assessment is still a requirement, this document will provide clarification on how it should now be approached, and answer as many recent queries as is presently possible.

The confusion is understandable, as the detailed implementation of the change was not announced at the same time. This is because all UK Awarding Bodies will have to approach the change in a consistent manner that is acceptable to the regulator. Regular meetings have been occurring between OCR, other Awarding Bodies and Ofqual since the announcement. As a result, more concrete detail is now available on some of the issues which have been queried most frequently.

The purpose of this document is to clarify these areas of uncertainty where decisions have been made and implications have been clarified. However, some details have yet to be finalised, and this is noted where applicable.

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## KEY POINTS

- Speaking & Listening must still be assessed.
- It must be assessed in the same way as it is currently, including marking, moderation and Advisory Visits.
- As Speaking and Listening will no longer contribute to the assessment of the GCSE, the written paper (A680) will now be worth 60% of the assessment (not 40% as is currently the case).
- Weightings of the remaining Controlled Assessments will remain unchanged, at 40% of each GCSE in total.
- As all elements of the original qualifications are still required to be taught and assessed (albeit reported differently in the case of Speaking & Listening), any changes made in terms of future teaching plans should be minimised. The altered weighting of the examined unit A680 may change the prioritisation of each unit, but what is taught presently for GCSE English and English Language should continue to be taught while the current qualifications remain valid.

**Q. When does this change start?**

A. As per Ofqual's stated decision, Speaking & Listening will still count towards the GCSE grade for English and English Language in November 2013. It will not count towards the GCSE grade in June 2014 and all subsequent examination series.

**Q. Since Speaking & Listening will no longer count towards the GCSE grade, do schools still have to do it?**

A. Yes. Both Ofqual's initial statement on 29 August and further clarifications from its director Glenys Stacey confirm that the assessment of Speaking & Listening is still mandatory for schools, even though it no longer contributes to the overall GCSE grade.

**Q. How will it be assessed?**

A. In line with Ofqual's statements, Speaking & Listening must be assessed, marked and moderated in exactly the same way as is presently the case. The tasks, mark ranges and band descriptors for what is currently GCSE English unit A643 and GCSE English Language unit A652 (components 3 & 4) will remain valid and unaltered. However, the method by which the result is reported will change, and they will become one separate mandatory unit with the code A640, simply entitled 'Speaking & Listening'. The other section of unit A652 (components 1 & 2), the Spoken Language Study, will now be a unit in its own right, with the code A650.

**Q. How will results be reported?**

A. Ofqual has confirmed that the grading system will be from 5 (the highest) to 1 (the lowest), with U for those who fail to achieve the minimum criteria. The result will likely be displayed on a separate line below the GCSE English / English Language grade on the candidate's certificate, though this is not yet confirmed.

**Q. What happens if my school does not assess Speaking & Listening?**

A. As previously stated, Ofqual still considers Speaking & Listening a compulsory assessment for all GCSE English students. They have indicated that any student who does not enter for Speaking & Listening cannot get a GCSE grade.

**Q. Will students get their GCSE grades if they enter Speaking & Listening but don't pass?**

A. Yes, Ofqual has confirmed that, while it is necessary to attempt the assessment, it is not necessary to pass it to secure a GCSE grade.

**Q. Can we continue to submit our marks on the present CA cover sheets?**

A. Yes. As the assessment is to remain unchanged, the format of the cover sheets need not change. It will be amended to reflect the new unit code of A640; however this will be the only likely change, and cover sheets featuring the old unit codes will still be valid.

**Q. Do schools still have to have Advisory Visits from Moderators?**

A. Yes. In line with the assertion that Speaking & Listening must be assessed in the same way as presently, it is still a requirement that every school must receive an Advisory Visit from an experienced Speaking & Listening Moderator at least every three years.

These are not moderation visits in which Moderators adjust centre marks. They are intended to advise schools on the processes by which they assess Speaking & Listening, and offer constructive criticism and help.



**Q. Speaking & Listening is currently worth 20% of the overall marks for both GCSE English J350 and English Language J355. With it removed, how will the remaining components be weighted?**

A. Ofqual has stated that those Controlled Assessments remaining will continue to contribute to the overall mark at their present weightings. Examined unit A680 (Information & Ideas) will, however, now constitute 60% of the qualification rather than the present 40%. The weightings will therefore be:

- For GCSE English J350:
  - o A641 (Reading Literary Texts, Controlled Assessment) – 20% (unchanged)
  - o A642 (Imaginative Writing, Controlled Assessment) – 20% (unchanged)
  - o A680 (information & Ideas, examined) – 60% (increased from the previous 40%).
- For GCSE English Language J355:
  - o A650 (Formerly A652/01&02, Spoken Language Study, Controlled Assessment) – 10% (unchanged)
  - o A651 (Extended Literary Text and Imaginative Writing, Controlled Assessment) – 30% (unchanged)
  - o A680 (information & Ideas, examined) – 60% (increased from the previous 40%).
- For both GCSE English J350 and GCSE English Language J355:
  - o A640 (Speaking & Listening, Controlled Assessment) – 0% (reported separately as grades 5–1).

**Q. Will the Spoken Language Study still form part of the GCSE grade?**

A. Yes, as noted above. The Spoken Language Study will continue to contribute 10% of the overall marks for GCSE English Language J355. Its unit code will change to A650.

**Q. Will it be a unit in its own right, now that the Speaking & Listening element has been removed from GCSE English Language unit A652?**

A. Yes. Ofqual has confirmed that it is acceptable for the Spoken Language Study to be a separate unit worth 10% of the qualification. Its unit code will change from A652 to A650 as a result.

**Q. Now that it is worth 60% of the marks for the GCSE, will the format of examined unit A680 (Information & Ideas) change?**

A. No. The format, structure and range of raw marks available (80) for examined unit A680 (Information & Ideas) will remain unaltered.

**Q. How will the weighting of A680 (Information & Ideas) be adjusted within the overall qualification from 40% to 60%?**

A. The adjustment will be made at uniform mark level for the examined unit A680, as the raw marks available remain unchanged. The total uniform marks available for each GCSE remains unchanged.



Therefore, from June 2014 onwards:

- The 80 raw marks for A680 (Information & Ideas) will become worth:
  - o 180 uniform marks for the Higher tier (rather than the present 120)
  - o 125 uniform marks for the Foundation tier (rather than the present 83)
- The uniform marks available for the controlled assessment units will remain unchanged, as their weighting is not being altered.

The raw and uniform marks will break down as follows, with the present shown in black and the future in red:

	Unit	Present weighting	Future weighting	Present Raw	Future Raw	Present UMS	Future UMS
<b>GCSE English J350</b> Max UMS F - 263(present)/ <b>245 (future)</b> H - 300	<b>A641</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>
	<b>A642</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>
	<b>A643/A640</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>A680F</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>125</b>
	<b>A680H</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>GCSE English Language J355</b> Max UMS F - 263 (present)/ <b>245 (future)</b> H - 300	<b>A651</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>
	<b>A652/03&amp;04/ A640</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>A652/01&amp;02/ A650</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>
	<b>A680F</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>125</b>
	<b>A680H</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>180</b>

**Q. Will the qualification and unit codes for GCSE English and English Language change?**

A. Yes. Speaking & Listening will now be a separate unit, with the code A640.

For GCSE English Language J355, the Spoken Language Study will also now be a separate unit, with the code A650.

Schools will be notified when these changes have been implemented.

**Q. Will it be possible to 'Carry Forward' CA marks for Speaking & Listening in the same way as other Controlled Assessment units when the Terminal Rule is changed to 100% of the qualification in June 2014?**

A. Yes. Ofqual has confirmed that it will be possible to Carry Forward Speaking & Listening marks when entering for a GCSE resit. In the case of unit A652 (Speaking & Listening and Spoken Language Study) for GCSE English Language J355, the UMS marks for the Spoken Language Study will be available to be Carried Forward.



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