

GCSE French/German/Spanish

Looking back at 2022 and forward to 2023

Presented by

Spring 2023

Overview of presentation

- National entry picture for French, German, Spanish – 2022 compared to 2019
- Overview of 2022 outcomes and grade boundaries
- Key messages across the skills from the 2022 exams
- Areas of focus for 2023 exams
- GCSE reform update
- Support from AQA

2022, 2021 and 2019 GCSE national entry data

	Entry No	% 7+	% 4+	% 1+
2022 French	129419	32.1	78.8	98.6
2021 French	131887	33.8	83.6	99.6
2019 French	130831	24.3	70.4	98.6
2022 German	36327	35.6	83.8	99.1
2021 German	38272	38.6	87.8	99.8
2019 German	42791	24.7	76.0	98.7
2022 Spanish	112845	32.1	78.0	98.8
2021 Spanish	114795	35.1	83.8	99.5
2019 Spanish	102242	27.7	71.1	98.2

Data extracted from the 2022 JCQ GCSE data for all UK candidates

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GCSE-Full-Course-Results-Summer-2022.xlsx>

2022, 2021 and 2019 GCSE AQA entry data

	Entry No	Change
2022 French	96374	+ 2
2021 French	96372	+ 1,721
2019 French	94651	
2022 German	28330	- 896
2021 German	29226	- 2,936
2019 German	32162	
2022 Spanish	90037	+ 4,558
2021 Spanish	85479	+ 10,916
2019 Spanish	74563	

2022 AQA entry pattern and awarding outcomes

AQA 2022 entries by tier compared to 2021 and 2019

Tier	French			German			Spanish		
	2022	2021	2019	2022	2021	2019	2022	2021	2019
F	48%	45%	48%	38%	35%	38%	48%	43%	44%
H	52%	55%	52%	62%	65%	62%	52%	57%	56%

2022 percentage outcomes for AQA candidates compared to 2021 and 2019

	2019 7+	2021 7+	2022 7+	2019 4+	2021 4+	2022 4+
French	24.0%	33.2%	31.8%	70.1%	83.7%	78.3%
German	24.2%	38.4%	35.1%	76.0%	87.7%	83.5%
Spanish	27.6%	35.0%	32.1%	71.1%	84.0%	77.7%

Grade boundaries – how are they set?

- Grade boundaries are set using a mix of statistics and expert judgement. Our Research colleagues use a range of statistics to make predictions to suggest the most appropriate grade boundaries. The statistical evidence is based on the prior attainment of the given cohort as well as on the distribution of marks. Senior examiners review a script sample to confirm the statistically recommended marks are appropriate for the grade.
- Grade boundary setting is overseen by Ofqual. To learn how they are set, visit [aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/results-days/grade-boundaries-and-ums](https://www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/results-days/grade-boundaries-and-ums)
- A guide to setting, marking and grading exams can be found here on the AQA website:
<https://www.aqa.org.uk/news/a-whistle-stop-guide-to-setting,-marking-and-grading-exams>

What impacts on the positioning of grade boundaries, in a normal year?

- Statistical information about the ability of this year's cohort in comparison with previous series, including KS2 data.
- How the papers in this series have performed in comparison with previous series, eg movement in mean marks, standard deviations, accessibility of tasks.
- Expert judgements of the senior examiners in the awarding meeting who compare scripts from this series with scripts from the previous series.
- **Remember:** grade boundaries can only be set **after** the scripts for those students taking the examination in that exam series have been marked. They **can go up or down**, depending upon the performance of the students in that particular year, on those particular papers.

Setting grade boundaries in 2022

In 2022 Ofqual policy for all subjects was that the proportion of students getting the grades should be between the 2019 and the 2021 outcomes, as well as taking into account the statistics regarding the cohort's ability and the actual demand after marking of the 2022 papers.

In addition, a grading adjustment to GCSE French and German to bring them into line with Spanish (originally planned for 2020) saw an additional +2% increase in the proportion of candidates at grades 7 and 9, and an additional +1% at grade 4, in both French and German.

2022 Grade boundaries

Subject	Max mark	Summer 2022 grade boundaries								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
French 8658F	240	24	59	95	131	143				
French 8658H	240			81	89	104	120	136	159	183
German 8668F	240	24	59	94	130	145				
German 8668H	240			76	86	105	124	143	166	189
Spanish 8698F	240	24	60	97	134	147				
Spanish 8698H	240			80	89	106	123	140	166	192

General comments

- Students and teachers are to be congratulated on dealing so well with the papers after such challenging circumstances.
- Students had been very well prepared for the variety of task types used across the languages, with very little evidence of students not understanding the tasks.
- One thing which was noticeable this year was the increased frequency of barely legible handwriting. If an examiner was unable to read properly what a student had written, no credit could be given.

Feedback from schools/colleges: common themes

- Feedback from centres mainly related to the removal for 2022 of the requirement to include vocabulary not listed in the specification. Our statement to centres explained that we had reviewed all our papers in the light of that adaptation, and any unlisted vocabulary would be confined to basic words and cognates. However, we still were required to ensure that question papers differentiated appropriately between students of different abilities.
- A number of centres contacted us in relation to unlisted words which were included in relation to GCSE French. We were able to show that, though included, these items weren't tested.

Feedback from schools/colleges: common themes

- A small number of centres contacted us to say they felt the Higher Tier Reading papers were unduly demanding following the COVID disruption, and specifically that the poems set as the literary passages in French and German were challenging. The mean mark in French was lower (39 in 2019 and 35.9 in 2022) but higher in German (31.5 in 2019 and 34.2 in 2022). This was taken into account in the positioning of the grade boundaries in these papers.
- Ofqual had made clear that the intention in MFL was not to narrow specification coverage and that as in any year, papers must still differentiate across the full range of performance in order to avoid bunching of marks and grade boundaries which are too close together. Accordingly only a small proportion of students should be able to gain marks on questions targeting grades 8-9 in the Listening and Reading Higher tier papers.
- Speaking submission portal worked well but improvements will be made for 2023 based on feedback received from users.

Changes for GCSE MFL in 2023

Ofqual has now [confirmed the outcome of the consultation](#) relating to the inclusion of vocabulary outside the specification in question papers. The requirement for assessments to use words outside of vocabulary lists has been removed for the remaining lifetime of the specifications. We are amending our approach to the vocabulary included in our question papers from the 2023 exam series as follows:

- we will still include and target some vocabulary items (eg primary colours, cognates/near cognates, derived words and other commonly used items) not listed in the specification because our published vocabulary lists assume some prior knowledge from KS3 and do not contain many of these items. These vocabulary items will not be glossed and students may need to understand them in order to answer the questions. This is because excluding such items from the assessments would increase the demand of the tasks
- there may be a very small number of words not listed in the vocabulary lists and which are outside of the categories mentioned above, but whose inclusion is integral to the question. Any such words will be glossed and will not be targeted in the questions.

Changes for GCSE MFL in 2023

- For the 2022 exam series for Paper 4 Writing, Ofqual permitted exam boards to add additional optional questions where they existed already, and so we added an additional option to the overlap question (Foundation tier Question 4 / Higher tier Question 1) and to Higher tier Question 2. This change gave students a choice of one question from each theme.
- **This additional optionality was an Ofqual adaptation for the 2022 exam series only and is not in place for the 2023 exam series for any exam board so papers will revert to the format used in the 2018 and 2019 papers with a choice from two questions.**

Level of demand

- It is important to remember that the Speaking and Writing tests largely test active language use rather than passive knowledge - students deal with the questions set 'at their own level'. **Differentiation is by outcome.**
- The Listening and Reading papers at both tiers are structured in peaks and troughs within a steady incline of difficulty and students should be made aware of this in advance of the exams.
- In both Listening and Reading papers, distractors are used to differentiate between students of different abilities. The strength of the distractors plays a significant part in the demand of the individual question and questions are designed to test and reward different levels of understanding.
Differentiation is by task.

Level of demand

- Around **one third** of the marks at Higher tier are targeted at grades 6 and 7 and **a further third** at grades 8 and 9, the final third being the overlap questions aimed at grades 4 and 5. (At Foundation tier, 60% of the marks are targeted at grades 1-3 and 40% at grades 4 and 5.)
- In questions targeted at Grades 8 and 9, the distractors are deliberately strong and only a very small percentage of the candidature should be getting these marks, otherwise the paper has failed to discriminate between the able students and those at the very top of the scale.
- It is really important that you make students aware of the reality that there are a number of questions on the Higher tier Listening and Reading papers which even able students (eg those aiming at grades 7 or even 8) are not expected to get correct.

Paper 1 Listening: what went well?

- Students had been very well prepared for the variety of task types used across the languages, with very little evidence of students not understanding the tasks.
- No feedback on the length of the pauses or speed of the recording.
- At Higher tier, the questions requiring written answers discriminated well across all three languages.
- There were far fewer examples of non-attempted questions, particularly multiple choice tasks, which is pleasing.
- In most papers, there were fewer instances of students answering in the wrong language in Section B.

Paper 1 Listening: areas of focus for 2023 exams

- Use clues in the utterance or questions to help you understand what is being asked for, eg students unfamiliar with the word *commissariat* were able to get to its meaning thanks to the clue 'police'.
- Some students listened to single words or just the first part of the utterance rather than taking stock of the whole utterance and hints provided.
- Some questions were misread, eg explaining **when** something happened rather than **how**).
- Listen carefully for negative expressions, eg in the P, N, P+N question type, with answers that were P+N, some pupils identified the positive but failed to identify the negative.
- Occasionally students answered in the wrong way, eg using A, B, C or D when 1, 2, 3 or 4 was required.

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 which is answers 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: what went well?

- Only a small number of students appeared to be entered for the wrong tier.
- Opinions and justifications were done well in all three languages.
- Role plays performed as expected and students coped well with the target language prompts.
- Some really excellent natural conversations at Higher tier were a pleasure to listen to in all three languages.

Paper 2 Speaking: areas of focus for 2023 exams

- Students need to be trained to make good use of their preparation time for the role play and the photo card.
- Knowledge of question words was sometimes lacking again in the role plays.
- Care should be taken that the second theme in the general conversation meets the minimum time (impacts Communication mark).
- Practise describing common actions featured in pictures or photos so students become accustomed to generating sentences using common verbs.
- In the General conversation, teacher-examiners need to tailor their questions to the interests and ability of their individual students.
- In the role play, students should not give more info than required by the task.
- Opportunities to demonstrate spontaneity in the GC should be given by teacher-examiners through follow-up questions eg seeking clarification, extra detail etc.

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: what went well?

- Papers differentiated well at both tiers across the three languages.
- There were very few unattempted questions, which was pleasing.
- Not many instances of students answering in the wrong language in Section B.
- There were many precise and accurate translations this year across the languages.
- Particularly at higher tier, students showed good knowledge of required structures and vocabulary.
- Most students appeared to have read to the end of each text to confirm their answers, showing good exam technique.

Paper 3 Reading: areas of focus for 2023 exams

- Some issues with unclear handwriting and some unclear changes to multiple choice letters made marking difficult at times so students need to write their answers clearly.
- Students should be discouraged from giving additional or alternative information in their answers as this could negate the correct answer.
- Some students did not adhere closely enough to the original text in the translation, in particular ensuring the little words which are key to the meaning are not missed out.
- Translation tasks contain phrases targeting all grades from 1-5 at Foundation and 4-9 at Higher. It's therefore really important to allow time for this question as there are some straightforward marks to be scored as well as some more demanding parts.
- Students should limit the information that they include in longer answers to avoid creating ambiguity.

Paper 3 Reading: advice to students

- Read the rubric introduction to the question carefully.
- 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).
- Do not 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: what went well?

- Papers in all three languages were well received and students handled the topics and tasks well at both tiers.
- Translations at both tiers and in all languages discriminated well across the ability range with the full range of marks awarded.
- Very few students did not attempt the translation which was pleasing.
- A wide variety of adjectives and ways of expressing opinions were seen.
- Some excellent use of verb forms and a wide range of tenses were pleasing to see.

Paper 4 Writing: areas of focus for 2023 exams

- Keep responses simple in Foundation Question 1 to avoid any ambiguity. Avoid giving opinions on the photo.
- Handwriting was difficult to read in some instances.
- Practise frequency and time expressions in the target language e.g usually, today, tomorrow, yesterday, last, next etc. and practise writing sentences using them.
- Practise manipulation of possessive adjectives from bullet points.
- There is no requirement of complexity in 40 word questions. Instead, show variety of structures through different verbs and adjectives.

Paper 4 Writing: advice to 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 2022 paper Question 4.2, the second bullet point '**votre** transport préféré pour aller en ville' is easily adapted to produce '**mon** transport préféré pour aller en ville **est... .**'

GCSE reform: update on progress

- French market testing took place in June/July 2022. 16 sessions were held nationally with over 500 teachers attending and submitting their feedback which was extremely useful. German and Spanish market testing took place last term with 13 sessions and approximately 300 teachers attended.
- Specification and SAMS for French were submitted to Ofqual in November 2022 for French. They are published as 'draft' on the AQA website and remain as draft until the specification is accredited.
- Staggered submission so German and Spanish are submitted only when French has been accredited. All three languages follow the same model.
- Ofqual feedback on French submission is due in January 2023, after which French can be re-submitted if required.

GCSE reform: update on progress

- Vocabulary lists are published on the website when the draft specification and SAMs are submitted to Ofqual.
- [Excel interactive vocab resource](#) is available to teachers to create own lists – available for French now but will be available for all three languages.
- We have worked closely with practising teachers to develop the vocabulary lists and we have worked with a teacher panel to plan a comprehensive resource package for the new specifications.
- We know that teachers want support with the new task types in particular, ie dictation and reading aloud and this will be a key element.
- There will be new textbooks and OUP has been selected for AQA's official Approval Process, to supply textbooks for both Foundation and Higher French, German and Spanish specifications.
- [View our webinar on-demand and download the presentation slides](#) to give you a detailed overview of the AQA draft specification. FAQ document to follow shortly.

Our teacher support: GCSE MFL

AQA offer for GCSE MFL: expertise, guidance and support

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specification• Scheme(s) of work• Digital vocab list• Summary of changes• Specification comparison guide• Launch events and prepare to teach events | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SAMs and item commentary for SAMs• Mark schemes• Additional SAMs and item commentaries• Tiering guidance and poster• Additional questions; answers and commentary: new tasks• Conduct for the speaking tests training• Examiner reports (from 2026)• Effective exam prep (2026) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to scripts• Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)• Exampro• Progress tests• Vocab and grammar tests• Hints and tips posters• Training focused on key themes and topics• Feedback meetings (from 2026)• Virtual communities and links with other teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher Services• Key dates calendar |

Timeline and key dates

Key dates	Key milestones
10 November 2022	First submission of French to Ofqual
Mid-January 2023	Feedback from Ofqual on first submission of French
Spring 2023	Further submissions of French if necessary until accreditation is successful
Spring 2023	Once French is accredited, German and Spanish are submitted to Ofqual, taking into account any feedback on French
September 2023	All three languages are accredited and final specifications and SAMs in schools, one year in advance of first teaching
September 2024	First teaching of a two year GCSE
June 2025	Final sitting of the current GCSE
June 2026	First exam of the new GCSE

[AQA GCSE Languages timeline](#) available for the new specifications.

Support from AQA

- Examiner's reports and published mark schemes are available in Centre Services.
- Training materials for conduct of speaking tests for all languages available on the subject pages under Paper 2 in the Assessment tab.
- 2023 Instructions for the Conduct of the exams available on AQA website on subject pages in Assess tab.
- Materials from Feedback meetings for GCSE French, German and Spanish held in autumn term will be available in Centre Services later this half term.
- Supporting student exam preparation for MFL in 2023 – free online courses available now to book [AQA | Professional development | Course finder](#)
- Exampro Question Bank www.exampro.co.uk – 2021 GCSE and A level exam questions now added; 2022 questions to be added in Spring 2023
- Please remember that materials on Centre Services are securely protected for the benefit of all AQA schools and do not share them in any form.

Contact details

- Keep up to date with all the latest information and sign up for email updates from the languages page on [aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk)
- This is especially important for GCSE reform updates.

Connect with us

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Thank you – any questions?
