

Summary of the ALL London Webinar: Exploring GCSE Results in French, German & Spanish (27 August 2026)

<https://all-london.org.uk/webinars/webinar-exploring-the-results-in-the-new-gcse-in-french-german-and-spanish/>

Opening & Welcome [Slides 1–6] The webinar begins with a welcome from Helen Myers, noting the date and purpose: exploring results from the new GCSE specifications in French, German and Spanish (ML GCSE). She explains that the chat is closed due to high attendance but questions can be submitted via email.

Housekeeping, Terms & Conditions, Accessing Materials Helen reminds attendees: • Do not record, transcribe or use AI tools to summarise the session (intellectual property). • Materials will be shared via Eventbrite and her blog. • More analysis will follow in coming days. • Warning that the session contains many graphs and tables. • Encouragement to join ALL (Association for Language Learning) with a discount code.

Introductions Speakers introduced: • Helen Myers — ALL trustee, chair of ALL London. • David Blow — ALL Fellow, executive head of SESET, national data specialist. • Adam Lamb — ALL Council member, Director of MFL at United Learning. • Catherine — ALL Council member, Head of Languages (technical difficulties prevented full participation).

Overview of Webinar Structure [Slides 7–8] David outlines the plan: • What happened in June and August (and what had ALL said would happen) • Who decides what re new specifications (DfE, Ofqual, exam boards) • Why was there a new specification + timeline (and not severe grading) • Preparation for the new exams – Sample Assessment Materials, training etc • Why was there expectation that raw marks would be higher? • Impact on grade boundaries and grade outcomes • How are grades calculated, comparable outcomes, severe grading • Advice on “estimating grades” (summer Y10, webinar Dec 25) • Provisional entry and tiering information (publ Jun 26) • “Exam experience” • Information available after the exam (papers, mark schemes, examiners’ reports, statistics from question level upwards) • Looking at the papers in more detail, comparison with the specification and analysing the examiners’ reports and the statistics • Results and marks in more detail (AQA, Pearson)

Grade outcomes [Slides 9–12] He shows predictions from ALL Webinar December 2025 and demonstrates they were accurate due to comparable outcomes i.e. %4+ and %7+ June 2026 very similar to June 2025.

Key Data Concepts [Slide 13] David explains five essential data concepts: • Mona Lisa effect — averages hide detail. • Apples vs pears — avoid invalid comparisons. • Threshold vs average — different metrics. • Relativity — what moved: school or national picture. • Goodhart’s Law — when a measure becomes a target, it stops being a good measure.

National Trends 2019–2026 [Slides 14–16] Graphs show: • French and German uplift in 2024–25 (completing the Ofqual adjustment). • Spanish uplift in 2026 (small, around 1%). • Severe grading remains visible. • Variation from year to year equal to %4+ at centre level is normal: 5–10% swings yearly. Variation at national level has NOT increased from ’25 to ’26 for French.

Comparing French, German & Spanish Using Ofqual Analytics [Slides 17–21] Adam demonstrates how Ofqual Analytics reveals: • % Grade 3 increased significantly in French, German and Spanish in 2026 and % grades 2 and 1 reduced to balance. • Higher-tier entries increased sharply in all. • Differences between languages: o French decrease at grade 5 o German shows a drop at grade 4 o Spanish shows uplift at grade 3 and grade 6

Ability Profiles & Relativity [Slide 22] David shows concurrent attainment (English & maths) helps compare cohorts. • German candidates have the highest concurrent attainment profile. • French slightly higher than Spanish. • Spanish shows a noticeable uplift in 2026 (possibly rebalancing).

Region/district profiles

Reminder: roles of DfE, Ofqual, exam boards [Slides 24–25] Grade outcomes effectively set by Ofqual, not by exam boards.

Why the New Specification Exists [Slides 26–32] Timeline: • 2016: Pedagogy review (Ian Bauckham). • 2019: DfE group reviews subject content. • 2021: DfE publishes new subject content proposals. • 2022: Final guidance issued by DfE and Ofqual, so exam boards start preparing new specifications. • Sep 2024: First teaching of new GCSE. • May/June 2026: First exams.

Key features: • Defined vocabulary lists (85% high-frequency words). • Reduced grammar content. • Phonics lists. • Severe grading was NOT a reason for the new spec.

Why Raw Marks Were Expected to Be Higher [Slides 33–34] Reasons include: • Mastery approach. • Clearer tasks. • English rubrics. • Defined vocabulary. • Better exam experience. But higher raw marks do NOT mean higher grades due to comparable outcomes.

Grade Boundaries Explained [Slides 35–46] David explains: • Grade boundaries cannot be set in advance and it would be unfair to pupils to do so. • Grade 1, 4, 7 are judgmental boundaries linked to comparable outcomes. • Grades 2, 3, 5, 6 are arithmetic boundaries. • Mark histograms show raw marks shifted right in 2026 (higher marks), so boundaries moved accordingly. • Absolute value of grade boundaries does not have intrinsic meaning, so avoid comparisons.

Severe Grading [Slides 47–48] David reminds us about the severe grading in GCSE ML which is a historic anomaly going back to O-level and first identified 50 years ago.

Advice given about predicting grades [Slides 49–51]

Provisional entry and tiering information [Slides 52–53] • Drop of 5% in GCSE French entries after stability since 2019 in overall % studying Fr, Gn, Sp. • Increase in % entered for Higher Tier.

Exam experience [Slide 54] Better this year – positive comments from candidates (many thumbs up from attendees to support this statement).

Sources of data from exam boards [Slides 55–60] AQA data insights, Pearson Results Plus. David urged teachers to use these rich sources of data to inform analysis. Downloads of Question Papers, Mark schemes and Examiner reports available.

Speaking Higher Component Analysis (AQA) [Slides 61–79] Helen and Catherine's section (read by Helen): demonstration of how data, mark schemes and examiner reports can be used to analyse performance and recommend future strategies for teachers and learners. • Read-aloud task. • Mean score nationally was 2.5/5 whereas other questions relatively higher. • Third-person plural endings (silent -ENT) defined as 'major errors' (no surprise, but noted as example of 'most commonly mispronounced'). • Notional component boundaries show French speaking slightly lower relative to other skills.

Writing Higher Component Analysis (Pearson) [Slides 80–102] Adam's section: • Writing had the lowest notional boundary line. • Grammar accuracy is the key differentiator. • Translation accuracy (accents, verb forms) more heavily weighted. • Pearson's examiner reports (59 pages) contain detailed exemplification.

Helen Foundation writing headlines: • Completion rates improved. • Raw marks higher across skills. • Grammar accuracy remains decisive. • Read-aloud needs targeted phonics teaching.

• More webinars planned. • ALL London January event confirmed.

Results and marks in more detail – higher [Slides 104–105] AQA and Edexcel notional component boundaries, Fr Gn and Sp higher. (Foundation will be added to page later.)