



ALL Briefing No. 31

Date : February 2022

Theme: DfE / OFQUAL announcement on GCSE Content for French, German and Spanish from 2024

Background: The DfE and OFQUAL consulted on content for GCSE in these languages in 2020 (Briefing 29). There is an archive of responses, consultation events and think pieces at

<https://www.all-languages.org.uk/secondary-old/features-secondary-2/>

The outcome was announced on 14 January 2022.:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-french-german-and-spanish-subject-content>

Key messages:

These requirements apply to specifications for French, German and Spanish GCSE only. Main changes include:

- Subject content described in terms of **knowing vocabulary, grammar** and principles by which **spelling represents sound**
- **Defined vocabulary** lists: 85% to be from **top 2000 High Frequency** words
- **No** prescribed themes.
- Specified **grammatical elements** included in vocabulary lists
- All vocabulary and grammar to be known **receptively and productively**
- Assessment requirements include **dictation** and **reading aloud a text**
- Comprehension questions **in English**

The Contents page of the document gives an overview of the detailed nature of the publication :

Introduction
Subject aims
Subject content
Composition of vocabulary content
Grammar content

Annexes for the grammar and sound-symbol correspondences (foundation and higher tier) for all three languages
Annex for families of regular inflected words for each language
Annex for required and optional vocabulary which the grammar annexes require for each of the languages.

Some quotations (our emboldened text) :

'Linguistic content for GCSE in French, German and Spanish will focus largely but not exclusively on the most commonly occurring vocabulary of each language. Vocabulary and grammatical requirements for each tier will be clearly defined in the specification'.

'Students will be expected to know and use the linguistic content specified **receptively** and **productively**, in the oral and written modalities, with an approximately equal emphasis on each.'

'GCSE specifications ... should enable students to:

- a. Learn and use the range of **vocabulary** required for the level at which they are studying...
- b. Learn and use the **grammar** specified to understand and produce meaning in written and oral modalities...
- c. Learn and apply the principles by which **spelling represents sounds** in standard or widely used forms of the language, and use clear and comprehensible pronunciation when speaking the language.'

'GCSE specifications in French, German and Spanish must require students to:

- a. understand written texts in the language. Texts will predominantly focus on the defined vocabulary and grammar for each tier and will be of limited complexity at foundation tier.
- b. understand spoken extracts comprising the defined vocabulary and grammar for each tier which are delivered at a pace which is no faster than a **moderate pace**, where each word is clearly discernible (as appropriate to pronunciation norms for each language), and which do not contain extraneous distractions or interruptions;
- c. Undertake **dictation** of short, spoken extracts (including some vocabulary from outside the vocabulary list) with credit for accurate spelling.
- d. write text in the language in a lexically and grammatically **accurate** way in response to simple and familiar stimuli.
- e. **translate** in writing short sentences or texts, **from the language to English and vice versa**, using a range of the vocabulary and grammar specified for each tier. In this context, translation means an appropriate and sufficient rendering of the meaning of the original language.
- f. **infer**, by using knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar specified for each tier, plausible meanings of single words from outside the Vocabulary List when they are embedded in the context of written sentences.
- g. speak using clear and comprehensible language to:

- i. **read aloud** a short written text and undertake a short **unprepared conversation relating to the text**;
- ii. undertake **role play(s)**, including asking and answering questions, simulating a context such as a social conversation, where instructions about what to say are unambiguous;
- iii. talk about one or more **visual stimulus/stimuli**, such as (connected) photographs or pictures, and extend this conversation into a short unprepared interaction.'

'Where questions are designed to test comprehension of written and spoken texts in the assessed language, these comprehension questions will be **in English**. Other types of question may be in English or the assessed language as appropriate to the task. Rubrics will be in English.'

'Specifications should identify a limited number of broad **themes or topics** with relevance to the countries or communities where the language is spoken. These could cover, for example, cultural, geographical, political, contemporary, historical or employment-related aspects, as appropriate to the themes and level of learning. These themes and topics are not intended to be specifically reflected in texts selected for terminal assessment. To illustrate the themes and topics set out, specifications may identify some vocabulary (drawn from the defined list) which may be relevant to each.'

'Students will be expected to know **1,200** lexical items for foundation tier, and a further **500** lexical items for higher tier. Students will also be required to know words which can be regularly inflected and (for reading only) regularly derived from listed lexical items using the grammar specified in the grammar annex ... Because no vocabulary is specified for KS2 or KS3, the Vocabulary List proposed for GCSE must be **comprehensive** and should make no assumptions about vocabulary previously taught.'

'**Vocabulary lists must include**, as part of the 1,200 or 1,700 items, the words listed at Annex E. These are the words which are referenced in the grammar annex for each language and so need to be included. They include irregular forms of high frequency verbs and other parts of speech.'

'The grammar requirements for GCSE are set out in two tiers: foundation and higher.... Students will be required to demonstrate both receptive and productive knowledge of the grammar from the list.....'

References:

The announcement and documentation is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-french-german-and-spanish-subject-content>

An analysis and extended summary of changes prepared by ALL Trustee Helen Myers is available here :

<https://helenmyers.blogspot.com/2022/02/overview-of-key-changes-to-gcse-french.html>

The National Curriculum Programme of Study (KS2 and KS3 is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-languages-programmes-of-study>

Points for reflection / action:

ALL members and their Departments will wish to analyse the DfE document in detail and identify any implications for planning.

These requirements apply to the GCSE course beginning in Y10 in 2024 and examined in 2026.

As the document says: ... *'no vocabulary is specified for KS2 or KS3, the Vocabulary List proposed for GCSE must be comprehensive and should make no assumptions about vocabulary previously taught.'* ALL Members will wish to consider

- how well the curriculum in KS2 and KS3 delivers the aims of the National Curriculum Programme of Study which remains the legal requirement for those stages (link above)
- how the progression into KS4 and the GCSE course is effected.

ALL will be exploring the implications in events and publications, which will be announced in ALLNet.

This Briefing has been prepared by volunteers from the ALL Council and is for the benefit of ALL members.

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