

Getting Started September 2007

GCEs in Modern Foreign Languages

**Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE in
French (8FR01)**

German (8GN01)

Spanish (8SP01)

First examination 2009

**Edexcel Advanced GCE in
French (9FR01)**

German (9GN01)

Spanish (9SP01)

First examination 2010



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Introduction

This Getting Started book will give you an overview of the GCE in French, German or Spanish, and what it means for you and your students. The guidance in this book is intended to help you plan the course in outline and to give you further insight into the principles behind the content, in order to help you and your students succeed in the course.

As well as an overview of the new specification and what it offers, this guide provides specific tips for preparing candidates for the translation, creative/discursive essay and research tasks of the new Unit 4. It provides suggestions for schemes of work and hints are also given on the use of information technology in the modern foreign language classroom.

Key principles

With minimal prescription and maximum choice, this specification aims to engage students so that they enjoy advanced level language learning and achieve their full potential. In order to achieve this, Edexcel have ensured that the specification:

- offers students and teachers a clear learning focus and control of assessment
- has a reduced number of units, revised topic areas and grammar lists
- AS provides a logical progression from GCSE offering:
 - discrete skill-specific testing
 - focus on language.
- A2 provides a realistic progression from AS that:
 - rewards advanced research/reading skills
 - features integrated skills assessment
 - acknowledges importance of knowledge and understanding of the target-language culture
 - facilitates literary study.

Assessment overview

The course will be assessed by examination only and will be externally assessed by Edexcel (though teachers may continue to conduct oral examinations).

| | | Tasks | % of AS / A2 | % of Advanced GCSE | Time |
|---------------|---|--|--------------|--------------------|------------|
| Unit 1 | Spoken expression and response in target language | - Responding to set questions - Discussion | 30% of AS | 15% | 8-10 mins |
| Unit 2 | Understanding and written response in target language | - Listening and understanding - Reading and understanding - Writing task | 70% of AS | 35% | 2½ hrs |
| Unit 3 | Understanding and spoken response in target language | 5 mins speaking on chosen issue, adopting a stance and justifying opinions Discussion | 35% of A2 | 17.5% | 11-13 mins |
| Unit 4 | Research, understanding and written response in target language | Translation into target language Target language essay Research-based essay | 65% of A2 | 32.5% | 2½ hrs |

There is no restriction on the number of times a unit can be attempted prior to a student's claiming certification for the qualification. The best available result for each contributing unit will count towards the final grade. Results of units will be held in Edexcel's unit bank for as many years as this specification remains available. There are no forbidden combinations.

General topic areas

There are now seven General Topic Areas for students to explore, four at AS and an additional three at A2. This section details these and provides some examples of how students with different needs and interests might choose to select within them.

AS students will explore the following General Topic Areas:

Youth culture and concerns

- Music and fashion
- Technology (e.g. MP3/blogs/mobile phones/internet/games)
- Relationships (family/friendships and peer pressure)
- Drink, drugs, sex

Lifestyle, health and fitness

- Sport and exercise
- Food and diet
- Health issues (e.g. smoking, skin cancer, health services)

The world around us: travel, tourism, environmental issues and the target-language speaking world

- Tourist information, travel and transport
- Weather (e.g. natural disasters, climate change)
- Pollution and recycling

Education and employment

- Education (schooling and higher education)
- Education policy and student issues
- The world of work (e.g. the changing work scene, job opportunities and unemployment)

A2 students will explore the same General Topic Areas, plus the following:

Customs, traditions, beliefs and religions

National and international events: past, present and future

Literature and the arts

These new overarching General Topic Areas are designed to give students maximum flexibility and choice, to suit their own needs, for example:

- Business-minded students might choose a business topic for Unit 3.
- Students interested in a career working for international organisations or in the travel industry might choose to discuss a related issue in Unit 3 and then write a discursive essay with an international dimension in Unit 4.
- Students interested in a career in media might choose a media topic for Unit 3, then write a journalistic piece as a creative essay in Unit 4, followed by an in-depth study of a significant target-language film.

Possible Models for Topic Selection: Units 1 and 3

- All candidates study one General Topic Area for Unit 1 and relate their discussion of an issue to this in Unit 3.
- All candidates study one General Topic Area for Unit 1 and relate the discussion of an issue in Unit 3 to a different General Topic Area.
- Each candidate prepares an individually selected General Topic Area for Unit 1 and relates the discussion of an issue to this in Unit 3.
- Each candidate prepares an individually selected General Topic Area for Unit 1 and relates the discussion of an issue in Unit 3 to a different General Topic Area.



Information for current Edexcel centres

Teachers will recognise many popular features from the old specification that have been retained. The following is a summary of the main aspects that are new and of the way in which familiar aspects have been reorganised into the new units:

- There are four units, two at AS and two at A2, replacing the six units of the previous specification.
- There is no coursework component. Instead students can choose to study a specific topic, book, film or play, which they will be assessed on in Unit 4 through a Research-Based Essay (RBE).
- All assessment is externally provided by Edexcel, although teachers may continue to conduct their own oral examinations.
- There are new assessment weightings and revised grammar lists.
- Assessment Objective 4 (knowledge and understanding of the target language country and culture) has been removed, though candidates are required to embed study of the target language and culture into their research and higher-level reading.
- There will be discrete assessment of all four skills at AS, including student-controlled listening.
- Formal, discrete Listening tests now feature at AS in the opening section of Unit 2.
- Formal, discrete Reading tests now feature at AS in the second section of Unit 2.
- The translation/transfer of meaning task popular under the old specification in Unit 6b has been retained. This is a challenging task that affords candidates an opportunity to demonstrate the level and accuracy of the target language.
- The Task-Based Assignment offered in Unit 6c of the former specification has been removed, leaving candidates free to write either a creative or a discursive essay. This facilitates greater comparability across assessments.
- Both the coursework and topics/texts tasks (formerly Units 5/1 and 5/2) have always proved popular. Some candidates will continue to prefer topics, whereas others will prefer to study literature or a film. The new RBE aims to appeal to both sets of candidates. Centres who have experience of teaching 'topics and texts' may continue to do so in line with the new requirements and linked to the new RBE topic areas. The RBE only requires candidates to write about one topic (or book, play or film) in the exam and, like coursework, does not have a prescriptive list of specific set topics, books, plays or films.

- In the old specification, a piece of coursework (5/2) may have been perceived as more straightforward than a narrow question set externally for the former Unit 5/1. Thus in the interests of comparability, all work is now assessed externally. The new RBE will appeal both to those currently undertaking 'topics and texts' or coursework options. A head of MFL has said, 'as a centre we feel strongly that students benefit greatly from having the opportunity to develop their research skills in MFL. We have had some excellent assignments over the years. Students have always approached this part of the course with enthusiasm and have undoubtedly enjoyed an element of freedom in being able to choose their area of study'. It is to such positive comments that this new specification responds. It invites the students to focus on their own interests, to develop their target language reading and research skills within the context of the target language cultures and societies.

There is little prescription beyond the need to research within one of the four Research-Based General Topic Areas prescribed for A2:

Geographical area (eg region or city)

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, become aware of and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- key people, events and issues (eg. demographic, environmental, economic, social, political) that have impacted or are having an impact on the area
- customs, traditions, beliefs and religions

Historical study

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- a specific period of history of particular relevance to the chosen country
- key people, events and issues from the above period.

Aspects of modern society

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- key current and recent (21st century/late 20th century) events and issues (eg. social, cultural and political) and their impact on target-language society



Literature and the arts

Students would be expected to undertake in-depth study of a substantial target-language text, play or film. They would need to consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- different characters
- key themes/issues
- social and cultural setting
- styles/techniques employed.

In each of these four areas, students are expected to analyse the research that they have undertaken, give their opinions and justify them in response to an Edexcel-set essay title.

Candidates are therefore provided with a very wide choice of research areas.

Information for new Edexcel centres

Edexcel recognises the wide range of students who will choose to study a Modern Foreign Language at advanced level. Not only will their learning styles vary greatly but their ability as they embark on the course may range enormously, from those with very recent GCSE experience to native or near-native speaker standard.

The new GCE specifications for French, German and Spanish have been prepared to offer students and teachers the maximum choice of topic areas to explore and therefore enjoyable and engaging language learning.

Maximum choice

The General Topic Areas are designed to be wide-ranging and up-to-date. Whether a student's interest lies in the arts, in politics or in history, he or she will be able to use and understand a foreign language in different and appealing contexts.

Maximum enjoyment

One of the principle aims of this new specification is to promote enjoyment in language learning. It does this by:

- offering as wide a choice of contexts as possible (via the General Topic Areas) for students to work within, reflecting their own areas of interest.
- offering AS oral assessment that is linked to a candidate's choice of General Topic Area.
- offering the research-based essay in Unit 4, which allows students to choose their own area of study, book, play or film.



Achieving potential

Advanced Subsidiary

In addition to providing a firm foundation for progression to the full Advanced GCE for those students wishing to pursue study of the subject in greater depth, the Advanced Subsidiary examination (which forms a discrete qualification or contributes 50% of the total Advanced GCE marks) is intended to meet the needs of:

- Those who wish to broaden their post-16 studies, for example by taking two or three AS subjects in addition to two full Advanced GCE subjects.
- Those who, initially at least, are prepared to commit themselves only to one more year in full-time education.
- Those who are not yet sure about the areas in which they wish to specialise and who would like to defer their decision until later.
- Those considered not yet able, mature or confident enough to cope with a full Advanced GCE course.
- Adults returning to study (full-time or part-time), for whom a full Advanced GCE examination may, at first, seem a difficult and distant goal.

A2 and beyond

The A2 examination tests the same linguistic skills as at AS but at a higher level – in more demanding and open-ended tasks and using wider language registers.

Unit overviews

This section gives a more detailed idea of the tasks students will need to work towards for successful completion of each of the units.

Teachers are encouraged to study the new specification to see how the assessment objectives and weightings are mapped across the new units, as well as the relationship of assessment objectives to individual units.

Currently, there are no restrictions on candidates exploring the same General Topic Area in Units 1, 3 and 4.

Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response

This unit is more structured than the former Unit 3, resulting in fairer, more standardised assessment.

Students are no longer required to prepare a specific topic dealing with an aspect of culture and/or society in the relevant country of the target language, and to present this topic and discuss it with the examiner. Instead, they choose one of the four General Topic Areas prescribed for AS.

On the day of the examination, students receive a printed stimulus related to this general topic area and have a 15 minute preparation period. They should spend this time studying the stimulus with a view to answering potential questions and considering further discussion points that might ensue.

Teacher examiners will be provided with a standard set of stimulus questions linking to the General Topic Area chosen, thus ensuring comparability and fairness to candidates. Different sets of stimuli are produced for each Area and are issued on a random-allocation basis.

Two set questions will be asked about the general content of the stimulus, followed by two further set questions which invite the students to express their opinions on or give reactions to the stimulus. The conversation will then move away from the stimulus to consider other aspects of the student's chosen General Topic Area.

Knowledge of the General Topic Area in relation to the target-language world will not be assessed, though students are free to demonstrate this if they so choose.

The focus is on the use of language rather than content per se. This unit allows for a mix of response to a stimulus and conversation, both of which are linked to the student's choice of topic. Students should become familiar with the full range of linked prescribed sub-topics and, through regular classroom practice, often participate in formatively-assessed discussions.



Unit 2: Understanding and Written Response

This unit, based on the four General Topic Areas prescribed for AS, consists of listening and reading tasks, eliciting a mixture of different response types. These include:

- non-verbal answers
- short target language answers
- English answers.

The task requiring answers in English now tests transfer of meaning rather than inference.

This unit replaces the listening and reading assessments which formerly featured in Units 1 and 2. The listening section consists of non-verbal responses totalling 12 marks, and target-language responses to questions on one passage totalling 8 marks.

The reading section consists of:

- non-verbal responses to questions on one text (5 marks)
- English responses to questions on one text (5 marks)
- target language responses to questions on one text (10 marks)

The writing task asks students to write in response to a given stimulus. This gives them the opportunity to demonstrate imagination and accuracy. In order to achieve high marks in this task, students need to make sure they do the following:

- Address each point of the stimulus carefully. The strongest answers will flow through the bullet points.
- Approach the task creatively. The ability to do that is part of the task. 'Truth' is not assessed but content can only be rewarded if it relates clearly to the task set.
- Write within the prescribed word limit. Only points made within the prescribed word limit can be rewarded (200-220 words).
- Write with grammatical accuracy.
- Use appropriate register.
- Avoid anglicisms.

Students control the pace of assessment throughout Unit 2, the only stipulation being that they must complete the listening section within the first 45 minutes.

Recordings will relate to countries and communities within which the target language is spoken, and will exploit contemporary sources. These may include telephone messages, announcements, advertisements, interviews, radio talks, reviews, conversation, discussions, broadcasts and the internet. Sources used for the reading sections will likewise be contemporary and will include magazines, newspapers, the internet, reports and books.

Students can prepare for the assessments in this unit by regularly consulting a wide variety of target-language reading and listening materials. They should undertake regular listening, reading and writing activities.

Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response

Students are invited to present, discuss and take a clear stance on any issue of their choice. They may take into the examination a brief written statement to which they may refer during the test.

The issue does not need to relate directly to the target-language countries, or even to the prescribed General Topic Areas, though the majority of candidates may well choose to do so.

This task will appeal to those who like to express their ideas and points of view as well as those who enjoy undertaking research.

The student will be expected to interact effectively, defend a particular point of view, and sustain discussion, especially as the conversation moves away from the chosen issue.

This examination has been reduced to 11-13 minutes (formerly 15 minutes).

Unit 4: Research, Understanding and Written Response

This unit is based on the seven General Topic Areas prescribed for A2.

It requires students to demonstrate their skills in writing at an advanced level in the target language by means of a piece of translation from English into the target language, as well as a discursive or creative essay.

The unit also requires students to demonstrate evidence of target-language reading/research at an advanced level, linked to an area of particular interest to them and embedded within the culture and/or society of a target-language-speaking country, countries or community.

The unit opens with a translation task, worth 10 marks, whereby candidates transfer meaning from English into the target language. This task is similar to that included in Unit 6b Question 2 in the old specification, though the passage is not accompanied by a linked reading text. For further details, please refer to the section below entitled The Translation Task.

The student is then asked to write either one discursive or one creative essay of 240-270 words from a choice of three creative titles and four discursive titles. 45 marks are available for this task. For further details, please see the section entitled The Creative or Discursive Essay Task.

The unit concludes with a research-based essay of 240-270 words to be marked by Edexcel. This gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to organise and develop their ideas on their chosen area of study, book, play or film, and to show an ability to write accurately and effectively in the target language. This task is worth 45 marks. For further details, teachers are directed to the section entitled The Research-Based Essay.



Possible Models for the Research Component of Unit 4

- All candidates study the same literary text for the research essay in Unit 4. Intensive reading of the text in class is followed by appropriate discussion and written work. Students prepare for assessment by undertaking research and/or higher-level reading linked to the target-language, culture and society.
- In consultation with their teacher, each candidate chooses a historical, society-based or geographical topic which may involve the use of skills and knowledge acquired in other GCE subjects (especially History, Economics, and Geography) as well as those gained from the Modern Foreign Language course. Alternatively, they could choose to study a target language book, play or film in depth.

A teacher's endorsement for Unit 4

A teacher who has been trialling the new Unit 4 has found plenty in it to reassure her. Teachers who teach the current Edexcel specification will find this particularly helpful, as she explains how the two relate:

'The new Unit 4 with its three sections gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their different skills and competencies at A2.

For teachers there is a sense of continuity with the translation exercise. Students apply the wide range of structures they have learnt at GCE, and are assessed in accessible chunks.

Similarly, the unseen target-language essay on one of seven titles inviting either discursive or creative writing represents little change for us as teachers. The tasks continue to require different styles: students choose to discuss a general issue or write imaginatively, according to their strengths and interests. Again, students demonstrate their ability to use a range of structures and vocabulary and manipulate language at their own level.

The Research-Based Essay brings together the best elements of Units 5.1 and 5.2 from the 'old' specification. For those who have been teaching Topics and Texts (5.1), you will be able to use the same materials with minimal change. Our Schemes of Work will need tweaking only slightly.

The RBE gives us the freedom to choose topics and texts which really engage our students. It is great that there are no set texts because this lack of prescription means maximum choice for our students to research an area of particular interest to them.

The RBE really does afford both teachers and students greater control of the specification, giving us the autonomy to decide which areas to research and investigate. As teachers we can still choose which text(s) or topic to study together with our students. The RBE enables students to choose a topic, book, play or film in advance and this helps them to focus their research more accurately and present their findings from their own perspective. In general terms, students undoubtedly benefit enormously from having the opportunity to develop their research skills in MFL.

I believe it is essential that students of MFL at GCE Advanced level have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of contemporary society and the cultural background and heritage of those countries and communities where the target language is spoken. It is therefore very reassuring that Unit 4 also acknowledges the importance of target-language culture in the same way that the old 5.1 and 5.2 do and that students' areas of research must therefore relate to the target-language culture and society.'

The transition to the new Unit 4 should be very straightforward indeed.



Progression

Who will benefit from the specification?

In designing the new specification, Edexcel has assumed that students embarking on the AS/A course will normally have a level of competence equivalent to Level 2 of the National Framework.

The specification aims to be inclusive and is suitable for traditional students in sixth-forms in secondary schools and Sixth Form Colleges; adults in evening classes; and private candidates. Native speakers are welcome to take the examinations, though it must be remembered that the specification has been prepared specifically for English-speaking candidates and this is taken into careful consideration at the awarding.

In addition to providing a firm foundation for progression to the full Advanced GCE for those students wishing to pursue study of the subject in greater depth, the Advanced Subsidiary examination (which forms a discrete qualification or contributes 50% of the total Advanced GCE marks) is intended to meet the needs of:

- Those who wish to broaden their post-16 studies, for example by taking two or three AS subjects in addition to two full Advanced GCE subjects.
- Those who, initially at least, are prepared to commit themselves only to one more year in full-time education.
- Those who are not yet sure about the areas in which they wish to specialise and who would like to defer their decision until later.
- Those considered not yet able, mature or confident enough to cope with a full Advanced GCE course.
- Adults returning to study (full-time or part-time), for whom a full Advanced GCE examination may, at first, seem a difficult and distant goal.

Pathways through the specification

Students may prepare for and be examined for the A-level award in a variety of ways. The course of study can be taught and assessed either as distinct modules of teaching and learning, related to units of assessment taken at appropriate stages during the course, or as a linear course which is assessed in its entirety at the end.

The majority of students will choose to sit the two AS units after one year, and the two A2 units after two years, bearing in mind that they can repeat and replace AS units at the end of the second year should they so wish. High flyers, able native speakers, or those on intensive or accelerated courses may choose to be examined in all four units after one year, while some candidates may take the qualification by means of terminal examinations after two years.

Thus Advanced GCE students commencing their course in September 2008 may choose one of the following suggested pathways through the specification, though other permutations might be possible. Please bear in mind that there are also January examinations for AS units in the new specification.

| | Pathway 1 | Pathway 2 | Pathway 3 | Pathway 4 |
|--------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Unit 1 | Summer 2009 | Summer 2009 | Summer 2009 | Summer 2010 |
| Unit 2 | Summer 2009 | Summer 2010 | Summer 2009 | Summer 2010 |
| Unit 3 | Summer 2010 | Summer 2009 | Summer 2009 | Summer 2010 |
| Unit 4 | Summer 2010 | Summer 2010 | Summer 2009 | Summer 2010 |

Whilst the majority will follow Pathway 1, native speakers, or candidates planning to take part in an exchange programme or town-twinning programme, might follow Pathway 2, whereby they can complete the spoken tests at the end of the first year. Candidates who would prefer to sit all four units as a terminal examination would select Pathway 3 (after one year) or Pathway 4 (after two years).

Bridging the gap

Students can sometimes find the transition from GCSE to AS (and A2) demanding, as they move from a transactional use of the target language to being expected to function with confidence within a more abstract and conceptual use of language. In particular, they need to develop confidence in:

- producing more extended and complex responses in both speaking and writing
- dealing with the unexpected in speech
- converting receptive knowledge into productive language
- using language outside controlled situations
- using grammatical terminology and manipulating language accurately.

Edexcel recommends the following to help students:

- Revise carefully all the vocabulary and grammar requirements for GCSE Higher Level.
- Increase vocabulary, adding abstract words and phrases to the more concrete vocabulary already learned for GCSE.
- Practise applying previously learned structures and vocabulary to new situations.
- Try to avoid anglicisms by exploring in greater depth the idiom of the target language.
- Become immersed in the target language and its culture by subscribing to newspapers and magazines; watching television programmes, films and DVDs; listening to radio broadcasts; and exploring the internet for appropriate materials in the target language.
- Use the language assistant for intensive practice.
- Learn to argue a case – if necessary, and at an early stage, developing ideas and arguments in general English conversation if this is alien. These skills can then be transferred into discussion in another language.
- Learn to structure a piece of written work appropriately, whether a letter, an e-mail, an argument, a report or a piece of research.
- Explore and develop further an understanding of the culture, society and heritage of one or more countries in which the language is used.
- Understand and apply the grammatical system and a range of structures as listed in the AS/A2 specifications.
- Ensure that any self-study time is closely directed at first, keeping a log of independent reading and listening.

Course planning

The preparation of schemes of work will, of course, depend greatly on the kind of course undertaken, the type of student in the class, and of course the nature of the language itself.

In planning their schemes of work, teachers should bear in mind the Ofsted statement (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/2963.pdf>) that those inspecting Modern Foreign Languages at post-16 are encouraged to concentrate on the extent to which students:

- Demonstrate their understanding of material written in the foreign language, drawn from a wide range of everyday, topical, technical, business, literary, social and historical sources, and can respond appropriately to it.
- Understand language spoken at speed on radio, television, cassette or film, by native speakers or others on a variety of themes and in a range of styles.
- Can translate or interpret from one language to another effectively, accurately and idiomatically.
- Speak the language accurately, confidently and fluently, and react spontaneously to complex questions and unfamiliar language.
- Speak with good pronunciation and intonation and use different registers appropriate to the context of the discussion or dialogue.
- Engage readily in conversation, discussion or debate, and present, develop or sustain a logical argument in the foreign language, while taking account of the views of others.
- Show extensive knowledge of the countries, customs and culture of the people whose language they are learning.
- Have detailed knowledge and understanding of the themes and topics they have studied and the issues facing contemporary society.
- Have developed mature and well-informed views on topical or controversial issues, and can present these in a logical, coherent and accurate way in speech or writing.
- Write accurately in a variety of styles appropriate to context, using an increasingly wide range of complex, sophisticated and topic-specific language.
- Demonstrate a high level of grammatical accuracy.

The specifications for French, German and Spanish have been devised by Edexcel to offer centres as much flexibility as possible. The following represents only one possible way in which centres might devise their own scheme of work for a two-year GCE course.



AS

Term 1

- Using a bilingual dictionary
- Learning and recording vocabulary
- Organising work
- Writing a brief description
- Expressing opinions
- Reading for gist
- Pronunciation
- Taking notes in English and in the target language when listening
- Writing summaries in English and in the target language
- Speaking from notes

Half-term

- Understanding and interpreting statistics
- Pronunciation of more difficult sounds
- Structuring a debate
- Adapting a text
- Translating into English
- Structuring an oral presentation

Term 2

- Writing a newspaper report or email
- Structuring a written response
- Checking and correcting written work

Half-term

- Strategies for extending vocabulary
- Revision of vocabulary
- General revision techniques
- Continued pronunciation and spelling practice

Term 3

- Examination practice
- Past papers
- Revision of tenses
- Recognition of more difficult structures

Half-term

- Checking students have understood, learned and practised all the grammatical structures laid down in the AS grammar lists.
- Last-minute revision
- AS examinations

A2

Term 1

- Revision of structures and vocabulary learned at AS
- Further development of grammar, syntax and lexis at an advanced level
- Selection of topics for presentation in Unit 3 and for research in Unit 4
- Ongoing development of the skills of analysis and argument
- Practice in writing discursive and creative essays
- Practice in translating from and to the target language, with special emphasis on the latter

Half-term

- Continuing to build up a bank of useful phrases and idioms
- Development of topics for presentation in Unit 3 and for research in Unit 4
- Ongoing development of the skills of analysis and argument
- Further practice in writing discursive and creative essays
- Further practice in translating from and to the target language, with special emphasis on the latter

Term 2

- Examination practice
- Past papers
- Further developing and enhancing of all skills, ensuring that the grammatical structures laid down in the A2 grammar lists have been understood, learned and practised

Term 3

- Ensuring that students are prepared in all aspects of the specification.
- Last-minute revision
- The AS (if there are any resits) and A2 examinations

The Translation Task

This section explains in more detail what this task involves and how students can best prepare for it.

Section A of Unit 4 (Research, Understanding and Written Response) consists of a passage in English of about 80 words which the students translate into the target language. The translation will be set as a discrete passage within one of the prescribed General Topic Areas.

The task enables students to demonstrate an ability to manipulate complex language at an advanced level.

Here are Ten Top Tips for working towards this task.

- 1** As well as being accurate, the translation should be natural and idiomatic. During their course, students should therefore spend as much time as they can translating as many phrases and sentences as possible into idiomatic, accurate French, German or Spanish.
- 2** Many students relish the challenge to transfer meaning accurately and confidently. The mark scheme illustrates the need for accuracy, as it divides the passage into 30 discrete assessable elements, each worth one mark. In the interests of standardisation, an element is considered to be fully correct or incorrect. There are no half-marks. Spelling, syntax and grammar must therefore be completely accurate. In German, for example, if an umlaut is missing or is wrongly added, no mark is awarded. Similarly, if the verb is in the wrong place, or the case ending is incorrect, there will be no mark.
- 3** Translate only what is conveyed by the English, rather than writing creatively.
- 4** Do not try to paraphrase the text into (even fluent and accurate) French, German or Spanish, as this is an exercise in accurate translation from English into the target language. For example, 'three quarters of an hour' cannot be rewarded if rendered merely as '45 minutes/Minuten/minutos'.
- 5** Look for obvious phrases which require a knowledge of idiomatic expressions, thus avoiding word-for-word anglicised renderings. A study of past mark schemes will demonstrate that a wide variety of alternative renderings is accepted as long as the student does not stray from the meaning of the original passage.
- 6** Don't leave gaps by omitting words, phrases or even whole sentences.
- 7** Develop confidence by practising with short pieces of English, perhaps based on familiar topics or texts. Gradually lengthen the extracts and venture into less familiar linguistic territory.
- 8** Read the passage through carefully. Students should not begin to translate it until they have studied it closely and considered the implications of the vocabulary and structures which feature in it.
- 9** Ideally write a draft answer, and write the final answer on alternate lines. This gives the opportunity to cross out errors and insert corrections (as well as providing ease of marking for the examiners!).
- 10** Check carefully for the obvious pitfalls such as adjectival endings, agreement, concord, spelling, gender, case, tenses and verb forms – all basic errors. It is a good idea for students to devise their own checklist based on the kinds of error they have made during their course.

Remember that, in this task more than any other, practice makes perfect!

Bearing in mind that some of the problems highlighted below may be common to all languages, typical errors in recent translations have included:

FRENCH

Adjectival agreements

Nouns such as area, beauty, properties

Determiners such as many, most, their, le Canada/du Canada, several

Adjectives such as delighted, old, other, harsh, attractive, discouraged

Verbs such as know, discover, make friends

Past historic, perfect and conditional

Connectives such as even if, after all, perhaps, however

Pronouns such as myself

Reflexive verbs

Use of depuis

GERMAN

Past perfect

Conditional perfect – eg 'if she had planned ..., she would have ...'

Guesswork as to the three genders

Word order – especially in subordinate clauses

Names of countries and common cities

Reflexive verbs

Das/dass

Als/wenn

Plurals of nouns

Seit/seitdem



SPANISH

Lack of capital letters for Europa and Tercer Mundo

Poor use and position of negatives

Use of su(s) instead of nuestro(s)

Use of campaña for 'country'

Más, jóvenes etc. used without an accent

No infinitive used after a preposition

Problems with phrases such as tener la oportunidad de, sin admitir

Personal use of 'a' – eg los que conocen a estas personas

La gente plus a plural verb

Incorrect use of darse cuenta de, lo que, es esencial que etc.

Use of subjunctive after para que etc.

Spellings of dignidad, gubernamentales, fenómenos, sustancias etc.

Division of the sentences into assessable elements and indicating what response would have merited a mark:

FRENCH

| Original text | One mark | Mark withheld |
|---------------------|---|--|
| However, some | Cependant, quelques-uns | Mais |
| were disappointed, | étaient déçus | tristes |
| that there were | qu'il y ait, parce qu'il y avait | qu'il fut |
| so many | tant de | de nombreuses |
| old properties | vieilles propriétés | vieux |
| bought | achetées | achetés – though accepted consequentially if noun given as masculine |
| by English speakers | par des anglophones par des gens qui parlent anglais | par des Anglais |
| nearby. | dans la région. | tout près d'ici. |

GERMAN

| Original text | One mark | Mark withheld |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Every month she sent | Jeden Monat schickte sie | Einmal im Monat |
| money to her relatives | Geld für ihre Verwandten Geld zu ihren Verwandten | für ihre Verwandte zu Ihren Verwandten |
| in Greece | in Griechenland, | in Greichenland, |
| where she had grown up. | wo sie aufgewachsen war wo sie groß geworden war. | wo sie aufgewachsen ist. wo sie aufwuchs. wo sie groß geworden ist. |

SPANISH

| Original text | One mark | Mark withheld |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Because of | A causa de | Gracias de |
| their support | su apoyo | su ayuda |
| children have | los niños tienen | niños tienen |
| more hope | más esperanza | mas |
| of escaping | de escaparse de | escapase |
| the poverty | la pobreza | del pobreza |
| in which they live. | en la que viven. | en que viven. |



The Creative or Discursive Essay Task

Here are Top Ten Tips on how students can best prepare for this particular task in Unit 4.

- 1** Choose the right essay! Given that one third of the available marks is awarded for understanding and response, as well as a further third for organisation and development of the answer, this is vital.
- 2** Make sure that you fully understand the title and all its implications.
- 3** Consider very carefully how best to approach the topic/task. Then draw up a plan, outlining the salient points of the essay in a clear structure.
- 4** Pay particular attention to the relevance of the answer and consider the wording of the question very carefully indeed. Wholly irrelevant essays score no marks at all.
- 5** If choosing to write a creative essay, make sure that you write imaginatively, but avoid writing essays that are totally implausible or surreal.
- 6** In order to score high marks, the lexical range must be well beyond GCSE.
- 7** If writing a discursive essay, make sure your answer is balanced in approach and that it reaches a clear conclusion.
- 8** Using pre-learned essay phrases is good for confidence, but they should be used deftly. Essays that consist almost entirely of these phrases fail to address the question satisfactorily.
- 9** Keep to the prescribed word limits. Answers that are too long will lose marks for content (defective structure/organisation); answers that are too short are self-penalising.
- 10** In the exam, take care to fill out the answer booklet correctly, remembering to indicate on the script which question you are attempting. Rough work should be crossed out neatly – a single line will suffice – and as the work is marked online, it is essential to avoid using gel pen and correction fluid. Writing on alternate lines is a good idea; not only is it easier for the examiner to read the answer, but it allows corrections/amendments to be inserted clearly. The use of footnotes, arrows, asterisks and other symbols should be avoided where possible, as they can be difficult to decipher at times.

The Research-Based Essay

The final section of Unit 4 features a research-based essay directly linked to the culture and/or society of a target-language country or community and to one of the four RBE topic areas given below.

Geographical area (eg region or city)

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, become aware of and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- key people, events and issues (eg. demographic, environmental, economic, social, political) that have impacted or are having an impact on the area
- customs, traditions, beliefs and religions.

Historical study

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- a specific period of history of particular relevance to the chosen country
- key people, events and issues from the above period.

Aspects of modern society

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- key current and recent (21st century/late 20th century) events and issues (eg. social, cultural and political) and their impact on target-language society.

Literature and the arts

Students would be expected to undertake in-depth study of a substantial target-language text, play or film. They would need to consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- different characters
- key themes/issues
- social and cultural setting
- styles/techniques employed.



The RBE offers teachers a logical and smooth transition from either the former Unit 5/1 Topics and Texts or Unit 5/2 Coursework options. It encourages higher-level reading and research skills. Students choose their topic, book, play or film and are able to present and summarise their understanding of this from their own personal perspective.

The two essential differences between the new RBE and the previous coursework assessment are that the essay is written under exam conditions and that the length is less than 300 words, i.e. much shorter. This means that students need to be very focused in their research. It also means that students of different ability can tackle the research at their own level.

It is important that students are aware of the following guidelines for this essay.

- The essay must reflect their views and opinions and have an analytical or evaluative dimension.
- A question will be set for each of the four prescribed areas of research.
- They must answer the essay question set as fully as possible.
- Students should beware of relying too heavily on English sources which inevitably will lead to a distortion of the foreign language.
- The best work will show evidence of individual research and reflection, and will convey the candidates' enthusiasm for their subject.
- Students are encouraged to identify challenging topics, research them thoroughly, select and discard material as appropriate, understand the key issues, reflect upon them, use their material to illustrate an argument or a creative development, and reach a sustainable conclusion derived from the material. Candidates who settle for factual treatments of perennial topics tend not to produce purposeful and analytical essays.

General Teaching Guidance

The following is a collection of hints for teachers about how best to implement their chosen course.

- Monitor current affairs throughout the course, so that students are aware of current issues and build up the relevant language to be able to discuss them in the target language. If necessary, discuss issues in English at an early stage before moving on to discussion in the target language. This is particularly important for those wishing to undertake an RBE linked to the 'Modern Society' area of research.
- If time pressures start to impinge, consider carefully which General Topic Areas may be jettisoned, weighing up any possible disadvantage to the students. They must decide whether some Areas need more time than others.
- Consideration may be given to schemes of work lending themselves easily to being taught by a number of different teachers.
- Each unit in a scheme of work may list objectives or learning outcomes, stating what the students will be able to do by the end of the unit.
- Make sure that ICT is appropriately integrated into the scheme of work, thus making teaching and learning practical as well as fun. Hints are provided below.

Making the most of Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Language learning should be fun and up-to-date, and the use of information technology should be incorporated into the scheme of work throughout.

Students should be given the opportunity to use resources such as:

- interactive whiteboards
- PowerPoint
- email
- podcasts
- online dictionaries
- grammar references
- image searches via search engines such as *www.google.fr*, *www.google.de* and *www.google.es*
- satellite television
- radio broadcasts
- instant messaging
- MP3
- video
- CDRoms
- animations
- DVDs.

Students can develop their writing skills by using photo-story creation. The use of video via television or internet can immerse students in the target-language country and culture. Students can use 'dynamic' websites designed especially for language learning. In a classroom with an interactive whiteboard, a wireless keyboard is particularly useful as it can be passed around the class.

Teachers are advised to use the various websites listed in the back of the specification. Other useful sites include Partners in Excellence (*www.pie.org.uk*) and the BBC (see especially *http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/tutors/internet/index.shtml*, which includes a large number of suggestions, exercises and tasks for teachers and students via the use of interactive whiteboards and computers).



Oral Training Guide

The following guidelines will advise teachers on how best to prepare students for examination in Units 1 and 3, and how to conduct the oral exam.

In Unit 1, students will participate in a dialogue lasting 8-10 minutes on a general topic area which they have chosen in advance. (See detailed notes on Unit 1.) They are advised to choose a topic area which is of interest to them so that they are enthusiastic enough to do the relevant research. The following points should be borne in mind:

- There are four general topic areas.
- Students may prepare for more than one General Topic Area.
- Students must demonstrate research and understanding.
- Students must expect to be taken beyond the prescribed questions (Section A) but to remain within the general topic area in order to discuss subtopics (Section B).
- Students may make notes in the preparation period and refer to these in the examination (maximum one side of A4 paper).
- Students will keep the stimulus card in front of them throughout the oral test.
- The test is designed to assess the manipulation and understanding of the spoken language. Although reference to the target-language country/culture is likely, this is not an assessment objective for this test.

Unit 3 requires the students to take a definite stance on a controversial issue of their choice, and to use the language of justification and debate to discuss the issue with the examiner. They introduce their issue and present their stance on it at the beginning of the test. This may take up to 1 minute, but no longer.

A debate on the issue lasts for a further 4 minutes during which the student must defend and justify the stance taken. In the subsequent 6-8 minutes at least two further unpredictable areas will be discussed. Subsequent issues are general and do not necessarily relate to the target-language country. Factual knowledge is not being tested here; the test is about the ability to argue, justify and debate. Students are expected to interact effectively with the examiner and sustain a discussion. They will be assessed for understanding as well as communication and quality of spoken language.

Students should choose a genuinely provocative issue and take a clear stance on it. It does not need to relate to the target-language country.

They should consider whether there is enough material for an opposing view and should also consider what opinions are likely to be expressed. If an opposing view is difficult to sustain, particularly on moral grounds, then the choice of subject is probably unwise.

Students are inclined to rely on the internet for research; this is undoubtedly valuable and of current interest but they should also consider other sources, such as books, magazines, newspapers, television and radio programmes. The language of some websites is sometimes too difficult for the average student to access.

Examining technique checklist (Units 1 and 3)

The following guidelines will be helpful for teacher examiners in preparing to administer the oral tests.

- The examiner's opening should put the candidate at ease.
- The examiner should remain friendly and encouraging throughout.
- The examiner should keep input to a minimum.
- There should be a predominance of open questions and encouragement.
- The examiner should refrain from proffering anecdotes, opinions, advice or information.
- The conversation/discussion should flow naturally.
- The examiner should elicit from the candidate a range of functions e.g. narrate, explain, clarify, hypothesise, justify, speculate, describe.
- The examiner should take the candidate beyond learned or prepared material.
- The examiner should interrupt any pre-rehearsed sections.
- The interventions should be sufficiently demanding.
- In Unit 1, the candidate should be given the opportunity to react to the stimulus and express opinions.
- In Unit 3, the examiner should oblige the candidate to maintain his/her stance on the chosen issue.
- In Unit 3, the examiner should cover at least two further genuinely unpredictable areas.
- The examiner should take the candidate to his/her linguistic ceiling.
- The closing should be upbeat but not effusive.
- The examiner should keep to time.

Benefits of the A2 Edexcel oral exam

- Freedom to choose own topic
- Can show knowledge of various subjects

Students from one large sixth form college prepared the following advice about Unit 3:

How to choose your topic

- Use topics studied through the two years
- Research further into areas that were not covered in class
- Choose an area of general interest and then narrow it down through research
- Speak to language assistant to get ideas
- Use library and internet resources



Student Guide

What do I need to know, or be able to do, before taking this course?

This is an advanced level course in French, German or Spanish, so you will be expected to have already undertaken some study of the language you have chosen. Most students who take this course will have a GCSE (usually at grade C or above) or an equivalent qualification. You will be interested in different cultures and keen to use a different language to understand and to communicate your own ideas and opinions to others on different topics and issues. You will enjoy reading, speaking, writing and listening. You will need to acquire an increased knowledge and understanding of language structures in your chosen language and show that you can apply these effectively when speaking or writing in the language.

To gain an AS qualification, you will need to satisfactorily complete Units 1 and 2, which follow on from GCSE. If you want to continue to the A2, you will usually need to have passed the AS first. You will also need to be interested in learning about other cultures.

What will I learn?

During this course you will read and listen to authentic foreign language materials and will study aspects of the contemporary society, cultural background and heritage of a country where the language is spoken. You will have opportunities to develop your understanding and awareness of spiritual, moral, ethical, environmental, health and European issues.

You will extend and develop your knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the foreign language and will use this to speak, write, read and listen to the language.

In addition, you will learn how to:

- be an effective communicator
- speak and write the language in a range of different situations and for different purposes
- use the language to express facts and ideas
- use the language to present explanations, opinions and information.

At A2 you will also learn how to develop an argument and to analyse and evaluate, in speech and in writing.

All these skills will be practised using material based on several General Topic Areas.

General Topic Areas for AS and A2

Youth culture and concerns

- Music and fashion
- Technology (e.g. MP3, blogs, mobile phones, internet, games)
- Relationships (family, friendships and peer pressure)
- Drink, drugs, sex

Lifestyle: health and fitness

- Sport and exercise
- Food and diet
- Health issues (e.g. smoking, skin cancer, health services)

The world around us:

travel, tourism, environmental issues and the target-language speaking world

- Tourist information, travel and transport
- Weather (e.g. natural disasters, climate change)
- Pollution and recycling

Education and employment

- Education (schooling and higher education)
- Education policy and student issues
- The world of work (e.g. the changing work scene, job opportunities and unemployment)

Additional General Topic Areas for A2 only

Customs, traditions, beliefs and religion

National and international events: past, present and future

Literature and the arts

Is this the right subject for me?

This course is suitable for you if you:

- enjoy language learning
- enjoy learning about other cultures
- want to communicate with speakers of a foreign language
- want to use a language for further study (e.g. at university)
- want to work abroad
- want to work for companies with international links
- want to broaden an otherwise narrow choice of AS subjects
- want to develop opinions about current issues (e.g. climate change, immigration)
- have a good memory and a logical mind.

How will I be assessed?

The final examinations test you in the four skills of speaking, listening, writing and reading. There are two units at the end of each year. The two AS units can be taken on their own or used with the A2 units as part of the full GCE.

AS

Unit 1 – Expression and Response

Unit 2 – Understanding and Written Response

A2

Unit 3 – Understanding and Spoken Response

Unit 4 – Research, Understanding and Written

Unit 1

In this unit you will choose one of the General Topic Areas in advance of the exam and practise speaking about it. Fifteen minutes before the exam itself you will be given a stimulus (a picture and short text in the language) that relates to your chosen General Topic Area. You will then answer questions on the stimulus and the broader issues that arise from it. The test will last between 8 and 10 minutes and may be conducted by your teacher or by a visiting examiner.

Unit 2

This paper has three sections and takes 2 hours 30 minutes in total. The first section is a listening test. You will listen to authentic recorded material and have to answer questions in the foreign language. You will have a maximum of 45 minutes to complete this part, but if you have finished sooner, you can move straight on to the second section. Section B is a reading test where you will have to read several authentic texts and answer a range of questions. There will be some questions that require only a cross or a single word, some that require a longer answer in the language and some that will be asked and answered in English. The final part of this paper is a writing test. Here you will have to write a 200-220 word letter, report or article based on a short printed stimulus in the target language. Although the listening test must be finished within the first 45 minutes, you are free to organise your time between the rest of the exam as you wish.

Unit 3

This is another speaking exam and will last between 11-13 minutes. In advance of the exam you will choose a General Topic Area that interests you and do some research on it. This should relate to an issue on which you have a definite point of view (e.g. being for or against animal testing). In the exam you will have about one minute to outline your issue and your point of view. Then the examiner (who may be your teacher) will begin a conversation with you on your topic. During the test at least two other topics, which you have not researched, will also be covered. You will not be expected to have specialised knowledge of these, but you should be able to speak sensibly about them. This exam is testing your research skills, your speaking skills and your listening skills.

Unit 4

This is a writing test that is in three parts:

- Section A is a translation from English into the target language. It will be about 80 words long and is designed to test your accuracy in writing the foreign language.
- Section B is an essay of 240-270 words from a choice of seven titles. Some of the essays will be discursive (i.e. will require you to write a factual essay, such as arguing the pros and cons of a certain issue) and some creative (e.g. a magazine article or a diary entry). The titles will all be linked to one of the seven general topic areas.
- Section C is a research-based essay. Prior to the day of the exam you will choose a topic that interests you and that relates to the culture or society of a country where the language is spoken. The essay should be 240-270 words and link to one of the following 4 RBE areas of research:

Geographical area (eg region or city)

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, become aware of and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- key people, events and issues (eg. demographic, environmental, economic, social, political) that have impacted or are having an impact on the area
- customs, traditions, beliefs and religions.

Historical study

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- a specific period of history of particular relevance to the chosen country
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Aspects of modern society

Students would be expected to undertake wide research, consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- key current and recent (21st century/late 20th century) events and issues (eg. social, cultural and political) and their impact on target-language society

Literature and the arts

Students would be expected to undertake in-depth study of a substantial target-language text, play or film. They would need to consider and demonstrate understanding of the following:

- different characters
- key themes/issues
- social and cultural setting
- styles/techniques employed.

All elements of the exam are important, but it can be helpful to know how each paper is judged against the others (how it is 'weighted'). The following table should explain this and show how each paper is used to build up a final grade.

| Unit | Unit title | Level | AS / A2 weighting | Full GCE weighting |
|------|--|-------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Spoken Expression and Response | AS | 30% | 15% |
| 2 | Understanding and Written Response | AS | 70% | 35% |
| 3 | Understanding and Spoken Response | A2 | 35% | 17.5% |
| 4 | Research, Understanding and Written Response | A2 | 65% | 32.5% |

What happens if I don't do as well as I hoped in the exam?

If your result in one or more of the papers is not as good as you had hoped, it is possible to resit any paper as many times as you like. The best result for each unit will be held in a 'bank' until you decide you wish to use it to get a certificate for the qualification. This means that you cannot do worse if you resit a unit. Since grades are awarded on the basis of the total of all points scored in all the units, it can be a good idea to retake a particular unit of the exam to increase this total if you think there is a chance that you could do better.

What can I do after I have completed the course?

With an AS you can:

- move on to study the A2 course
- communicate with people from other countries
- work abroad
- work for a company with international links
- have more fun when travelling abroad
- improve your UCAS application for any subject.

With an AS and an A2 you can:

- apply to university to study the language
- study this language and take up a second language ab initio at university
- combine a language with another subject (e.g. business) at university
- communicate with people from other countries
- work abroad
- work for a company with international links
- have more fun when travelling abroad
- improve your UCAS application for any subject.

Throughout the course you will also be practising your Key Skills (Communication, ICT, improving your own learning and performance, working with others) which will help you both personally and professionally.

What do I do next?

- Talk to your teacher about the AS
- Talk to students who are already doing or have done an AS
- Visit a school or College's AS Open Evening
- Visit the Edexcel website: www.edexcelonline.co.uk
- Talk to Careers staff about university and job requirements
- Work hard on your GCSEs or other current studies!

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We will inform centres of any changes to this issue. The latest issue can be found on the Edexcel website: www.edexcel.org.uk.

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