

Post-16 Curriculum - English Language

Subject Curriculum Overview

Subject	English Language
Qualification / Specification	Edexcel
Awarding Body	Click or type here
Level	3
Curriculum Lead	Matt Thorne
Teaching Staff	Mark Saunders, Joe Cody, Frances Carroll
Guided Learning Hours	360
Year(s) Delivered	12 & 13
Last Review Date	June 2026
Next Review Date	June 2027

1. Curriculum Intent

The purpose of Edexcel A Level English Language is to develop students' ability to analyse, understand, and evaluate how language is used in a range of contexts. It encourages exploration of spoken, written, and digital communication, focusing on how language constructs identity, reflects society, and conveys meaning. Students learn to apply linguistic frameworks and theories to real data, becoming critical and reflective users of language. The subject also develops independent thinking, research skills, and the ability to construct well-evidenced arguments about language in use.

The curriculum builds a clear progression from foundational linguistic knowledge to independent analysis and research. Students move from guided text analysis to applying theories in complex, synoptic responses and coursework investigations. This supports progression to university study in English Language, linguistics, media, journalism, law, and social sciences. It also develops transferable academic skills such as critical reading, essay writing, and research methods, preparing learners for higher education demands and independent study in a wide range of disciplines.

The course develops highly valued skills such as analytical thinking, communication, data interpretation, and research. Employers and universities value students who can evaluate information critically, construct coherent arguments, and adapt language for different audiences and purposes. The study of real-world language use also links to industries such as media, marketing, publishing, education, and

communication. By engaging with contemporary and historical language data, students gain insight into how language operates in professional and social contexts.

Success in A Level English Language is demonstrated by the ability to confidently analyse unseen texts using accurate linguistic terminology and relevant theories. High-achieving students can integrate ideas across topics, evaluate language critically, and support arguments with precise evidence. In coursework, success involves independent research, effective data analysis, and clear, reflective commentary. Ultimately, successful learners show curiosity about language, think critically about communication in society, and can apply their understanding flexibly in both academic and real-world contexts.

2. Foundational Knowledge

Area	Essential Knowledge / Skills	Why It Matters
Grammar and language structure:	You should be able to identify how writers and speakers construct meaning, shape tone, and influence audiences.	Strong analytical terminology helps you explain language choices clearly and accurately in essays and exams.
Language variation and change:	Learn how English differs across regions, social groups, genders, occupations, and contexts. Study accents, dialects, sociolects, and historical language development.	Understanding why language changes over time and how social factors affect communication is a core foundation for many A-Level topics.
Text and discourse analysis:	Develop skills in closely analysing spoken, written, and digital texts. Focus on audience, purpose, genre, structure, and linguistic features.	You should be able to compare texts, evaluate effectiveness, and support interpretations with precise evidence while constructing coherent analytical arguments.
Research and critical thinking:	Build confidence in interpreting data, evaluating theories, and applying linguistic frameworks. Familiarity with key language studies, terminology, and evidence-based reasoning is essential.	A-Level English Language rewards independent investigation, critical evaluation, and the ability to connect language features with wider contexts.

3. Powerful Knowledge

Powerful Knowledge Area	Why It Matters	Evidence of Understanding
Language shapes identity and social relationships: People use language to express who they are and signal membership of social groups.	Understanding concepts such as dialect, accent, sociolect, and idiolect helps students analyse communication more deeply. This develops cultural awareness and explains how language influences perception and belonging.	Students show understanding by analysing texts using concepts like dialect, sociolect, and idiolect, explaining how language choices construct identity and group membership with clear linguistic evidence.
Language changes because society changes: English constantly evolves through technology, migration, media, and cultural contact. Students	This helps students understand contemporary communication, evaluate language debates critically, and	Students demonstrate this by comparing historical and contemporary texts, using examples of lexical, grammatical, and semantic change, and linking these to social and technological influences. They also apply theoretical concepts to evaluate the data.

learn that language is not fixed but adapts to new needs and influences.	recognise historical patterns of change.	
Language can influence thoughts, attitudes, and behaviour: Word choice, structure, and framing affect how audiences interpret messages.	Studying persuasive techniques and discourse reveals how power operates through communication. This encourages students to become more critical consumers of media, advertising, politics, and online content, strengthening informed decision-making skills.	Students show understanding by evaluating persuasive language in society and across a range of concepts, identifying discourse strategies, and explaining how linguistic choices shape audience responses and viewpoints.
Meaning depends on context, not just words: The same language can produce different meanings depending on audience, purpose, setting, and cultural expectations.	Students explore pragmatics, discourse, and interaction. This matters because it improves communication skills, analytical thinking, and the ability to adapt language effectively for academic, professional, and social situations.	Students demonstrate this by analysing how audience, purpose, and situation affect meaning, using pragmatics and discourse analysis to interpret texts in different contexts accurately.

4. Curriculum Implementation

Term / Unit	Key Content	Foundational Knowledge	Powerful Knowledge	Assessment Opportunities
Individual Variation	Investigate how individuals use language differently, considering age, gender, occupation, region, ethnicity, identity, and personal style in spoken, written, and digital communication.	Understand key terminology including idiolect, sociolect, accent, dialect, register, audience, purpose, context, and linguistic frameworks for analysing language variation.	Language choices help construct identity and relationships; variation is systematic rather than random, reflecting social influences, personal experiences, and communicative goals.	Analyse unseen texts and data, apply linguistic terminology, evaluate theories, compare language use between individuals, and construct evidence-based written arguments.
Variation Over Time	Explore how English has changed from earlier periods to the present, examining shifts in vocabulary, grammar, spelling, pronunciation,	Understand language change processes, historical contexts, corpus data, key terminology, and factors driving change,	Language change is natural and inevitable; English evolves to meet users' needs, reflecting cultural, social, political, and technological developments across time.	Analyse historical and contemporary texts, interpret language data, evaluate theories of change, compare language features across periods, and construct evidence-based arguments.

	technology, and social influences.	including innovation, contact, standardisation, and technological developments.		
Child Speech and Writing	Study how children acquire spoken and written language, including phonology, lexis, grammar, interaction, literacy development, and theories explaining language acquisition.	Understand developmental stages, key theorists, transcription conventions, language frameworks, and terminology used to analyse children's speech, writing, and interaction.	Language acquisition is influenced by both innate abilities and social interaction; children's language develops systematically through cognitive, social, and environmental experiences.	Analyse children's spoken or written data, apply acquisition theories, identify developmental features, evaluate explanations, and construct evidence-based analytical responses.
Language Investigation	Conduct an independent investigation into topics. Choose from a sub-topic such as Global English, Language and Gender Identity, Language and Journalism, Language and Power or Regional Variation.	Understand research methods, data collection, linguistic terminology, analytical frameworks, relevant theories, ethical considerations, and topic-specific concepts linked to your chosen investigation.	Language reflects identity, power, culture, and global influence; systematic investigation reveals patterns that challenge assumptions and deepen understanding of communication in society.	Formulate research questions, collect and analyse data, apply linguistic theories, evaluate findings critically, and produce an evidence-based investigative report with relevant interpretations and conclusions.
Coursework - Genre Studies	Complete two original writing pieces in a specific genre and an analytical commentary, demonstrating understanding of audience, purpose, genre, language choices, and linguistic concepts from the course.	Understand language frameworks, genre conventions, crafting techniques, linguistic terminology, drafting processes, and methods for analysing and evaluating language choices.	Writers consciously manipulate language to shape meaning, identity, relationships, and audience responses; effective communication depends on purposeful linguistic choices.	Produce original writing for a specific audience and purpose, apply linguistic knowledge creatively, analyse decisions critically, and evaluate effectiveness in a reflective commentary.

5. Assessment Strategy

Assessment Type	Purpose	Frequency
Diagnostic: Baseline language analysis task where students analyse a short unseen text and identify linguistic features.	To assess prior knowledge, identify strengths and misconceptions, and inform planning, differentiation, and support before beginning A-Level English Language content.	Beginning of each unit. Students share their analysis and build on prior knowledge from GCSE English Language.

Formative: Students complete an unseen text analysis, then take part in class discussion to compare interpretations and refine ideas. The teacher provides targeted feedback on annotations and written response.	To develop analytical skills, clarify misunderstandings, improve use of linguistic terminology, and guide progress before summative assessment.	When key material, ideas or concepts are introduced to check students can apply the knowledge and skills gained.
Summative Timed examination-style essay analysing unseen texts, such as comparing language variation or evaluating language use in context, marked against A-Level criteria.	To measure overall understanding, application of linguistic theory, analytical accuracy, and exam readiness at the end of a topic or unit.	At the end of each unit. During assessment periods at the end of Year 12 and at scheduled exam periods in Year 13.
Synoptic: Students undertake a language investigation comparing multiple texts within a chosen genre (e.g., advertising, a regional dialect, or an aspect of gendered language), supported by qualitative and quantitative corpus analysis, and using frameworks for discourse, representation, and audience while integrating ideas from variation, power, and language change.	To assess ability to synthesise course knowledge, analyse genre conventions across contexts, interpret corpus data, and apply linguistic theories holistically in an independent investigation.	In Year 13 students complete the Language Investigation based on published topics from the exam board released on 1st December. They prepare their own data, analysis and conclusions to use in the final exam paper.