

INTERNATIONAL GCSE

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

(9280)

SPEAKING TEST GUIDANCE

For International GCSE exams

Version 2

Updated to include use of Digital Media Portal from November 2023 series

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SPEAKING TESTS

These tests will be conducted by the teacher-examiner and marked by examiners.

Students may have only one attempt at the speaking test before certification.

Please note: We do not supply any media for centres to record speaking tests.

RECORDING SPEAKING TESTS ON PC/VOICE RECORDER

All speaking tests must be recorded and a complete and unedited mp3 audio recording for each student must be made available to examiners. Please be aware, there are changes to the submission of previous tests and USB memory sticks will not be accepted. Instead, you will upload files to the Digital Media Portal. Schools must be sure to check that all recordings have been saved as mp3 files before submitting them for marking.

The following must accompany the recordings when they are sent for marking:

- Completed attendance register (scanned and sent with recordings via Digital Media Portal)

Individual student recordings should be saved as .mp3 files. The filename must contain the component code, centre number and candidate number, e.g., 9280/S_74107_0041.mp3.

REQUIREMENTS

- 1 Materials required for each test:
 - recording device with microphone
 - additional answer sheets (for notes on photocards)
 - Teacher's booklet
 - two sets of photocards
 - a copy of these instructions.
- 2 These tests will be conducted by the teacher. Speaking tests cannot be conducted by a relative of a student without prior permission. To request this permission schools must contact:
Performance Standards
Irregularities and Malpractice Section
AQA
Devas Street
Manchester
M15 6EX
Email: info@oxfordaqa.com
- 3 The speaking tests must be conducted in the five-week period timetabled in each exam series. Please refer to the [published timetable](#) in each exam series for the dates. All tests must be recorded and a complete and unedited audio recording for each student uploaded to be shared with the examiner.

It is essential that the confidentiality of the exam material is strictly maintained before and throughout the period of the tests. Its content must not be disclosed, and the material must be kept on the

school premises, under secure storage. The exam material must not be photocopied or duplicated by any other means during the period of the tests.

The school must ensure that the exam material is logged in and out of secure storage both during the preparation period and during the period of the tests. It is essential that it remains on the premises at all times and is treated as confidential material until the end of the five-week test period.

OxfordAQA relies on the professional integrity of teachers during this period, but teachers are reminded that if we are not satisfied that a breach of confidentiality has occurred, it reserves the right to take such action as it deems necessary in the circumstances.

Schools should display in the conduct and preparation rooms the English as a Second Language speaking tests: '*warning to students*' poster during the conduct of the speaking tests. A copy of this is included at the end of this document.

The content of the photocard must not be revealed to the students before the start of the preparation period on the day of their exam. Students must not know which questions they will be asked during the general conversation.

The teacher-examiner should study the photocards and topics for the general conversation. It is most important that teachers are thoroughly conversant with these materials. The teacher-examiner should also prepare material/questions for the general conversation which can be adapted both to the ability of the student and to the content of the student's utterances. This cannot be achieved by the rigid use of a list of prepared questions. The suggested general conversation questions provided at the back of the Teacher's booklet are for guidance only and are targeted at different levels of ability. Teachers can use their own questions if they prefer.

- 4 Checks should be made to find the most suitable rooms for conducting the tests. The following points should be considered:
 - the layout and arrangement of the rooms to be used for the preparation and conduct of the tests
 - no outside noise
 - use of a small room, with curtains and/or carpet, for a high-quality recording
 - adequate space to set out the materials for the test
 - the positioning of the recording equipment to ensure maximum recording quality of both teacher-examiner and student
 - the recording equipment should be set up and tested at least 30 minutes before the start of the test
 - the removal of posters/wall charts etc. if these provide additional resources in both the preparation and conduct rooms.
- 5 Extreme care needs to be taken in all technical aspects of the recording of the tests to ensure that student performances are not wholly or partially inaudible. Centres are responsible for ensuring that an audible recording is available for each student. Poor quality recordings can result in students being disadvantaged.
- 6 Teachers should remind students that they must not have access to any unauthorised material, books, papers, mobile phones or any electronic devices during the test - this includes the 10 minutes' preparation time.
- 7 Students must not have access to a dictionary during any part of the test. This includes 10 minutes' preparation time.

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS

- 8 The tests are conducted in accordance with the sequence chart provided in the Teachers booklet. Students must be supervised during the 10-minute preparation period as this marks the start of test conditions.
- 9 Teachers should refer to the sequence chart to determine which cards each student is to be tested upon. Any failure but the teacher/examiner to follow the sequence chart correctly will be subject to investigation by OxfordAQA.

The photocard should be handed to the student at the start of the supervised preparation period.
- 10 The student should then study the photocard and prepare their responses. 10 minutes is required for each student in preparation for the test.
- 11 During the preparation period, the student is under supervised exam conditions.

They:

MAY

- make notes, on a clean sheet of paper

MUST NOT

- be unsupervised
 - have access to any material other than the photocard
 - write on the photocard
 - be allowed to communicate with anyone
 - be able to hear another student being tested
- 12 The student who has completed the 10 minutes' preparation period should move to the exam room, remaining under supervision and retaining their copy of the photocard. Any notes about the photocard made by the student on a clean sheet of paper should be taken into the exam room to be used during the first part of the test.

FORMAT OF THE TESTS

- 13 The format of the test consists of two parts which must be conducted in this order:

PART 1 – PHOTOCARD

This part of the test consists of a photocard which has been prepared by the student in the preparation time. The teacher-examiner will ask three prescribed questions; these questions are printed on the student's card and will have been prepared during the preparation time. After each question, you may also ask the prompt questions printed on the Teacher's notes. These prompts are designed to aid the teacher, they are not a compulsory part of the test. This conversation will last 3 to 4 minutes.

PART 2 – GENERAL CONVERSATION

The general conversation will cover the two themes not covered on the photocard. This conversation will last between 6 and 7 minutes. A similar amount of time must be spent on each theme.

CONDUCT OF THE TESTS

14 The teacher-examiner conducting the test must ensure that everything which is said to the student during the test is clearly audible on the recording. Nothing should be whispered. If the teacher-examiner feels that a student requires a prompt or explanation of any kind, including the provision of an item of obviously unknown vocabulary, this must be given clearly and audibly without stopping the recording. At no time should any other communication, apart from that involved in the test itself, take place between the teacher-examiner and the student.

16 The teacher-examiner should record the introduction (student details – name, candidate number and photocard letter), make sure that the student is settled, check that the equipment is still on 'record' and then begin the test.

The recording equipment must not be stopped or paused during the recording of the test except in an emergency. Non-compliance with this instruction may result in an investigation by OxfordAQA.

17 Part 1 - photocard

The teacher-examiner must ask the student the three questions in the Teacher's Booklet, beginning with the first question. After each question, there are a series of prompts which you could use depending on the response to the prescribed question. These prompts are designed to aid the

teacher; they are not a compulsory part of the test. Ask the remaining questions in order. You may paraphrase the questions provided the same meaning is maintained, and you may repeat or paraphrase a question that the student does not understand. You should allow the students to develop their responses as well as they are able. Do not go over the maximum time of four minutes for the questions and answers on the photocard.

Students can use any notes they have made during the preparation period. There is no restriction on the number of words or the material (e.g., conjugated verbs or full sentences) which the notes may contain. The notes may be in any language and will not be assessed.

It is strongly recommended that teacher-examiners use a stopwatch at the start of this section of the test to ensure that they adhere to the timings. Timing begins when the teacher-examiner asks, 'can you tell me what you see in the photo?' If the teacher-examiner is asking a question, or if the student is still answering a question when the maximum time allowed has been reached, the student is allowed to give his/her full response even if this takes him/her beyond the maximum time and this will be credited as appropriate. No additional questions can be asked after that.

18 The teacher-examiner must collect in the photocard, and any notes made by the student as soon as the photocard section of the test is completed. Such notes must be stored in secure conditions in the centre until results day, after which they must be disposed of.

The photocards must be replaced in the appropriate set as soon as the test is over. All confidential materials must be accounted for during the test window.

19 Part 2 - general conversation

The general conversation is based on the two themes not covered in the photocard. Teacher-examiners can choose any topics and sub-topics on which to base the questions for each theme. There is no requirement to cover a specific number of topics or sub-topics. This is at the discretion of the teacher-examiner.

The teacher-examiner should indicate the start of the conversation by saying “Now, the general conversation beginning with the theme”

In this section of the test, if the teacher-examiner feels that a student requires a prompt or explanation of any kind, including the provision of an item of obviously unknown vocabulary, this must be given clearly and audibly without stopping the recording. At no time should any other communication, apart from that involved in the test itself, take place between the teacher-examiner and the student. No marks will be awarded for vocabulary supplied by the teacher-examiner.

The conversation should develop as naturally as possible, within the specified themes only. A similar amount of time must be spent on each theme and the teacher-examiner should introduce the second theme, when this starts.

This section of the test should take between 6 and 7 minutes.

It is strongly recommended that teacher-examiners use a stopwatch at the start of this section of the test to ensure that they adhere to these timings. Timing begins when the teacher-examiner asks the first question. If the teacher-examiner is asking a question, or if the student is still answering a question, when the maximum time of the test including the photocard (10 minutes) has been reached, the student is allowed to give his/her full response even if this takes him/her beyond the maximum time. No additional questions can be asked after that.

During the conversation, the teacher-examiner should ask questions and direct the conversation to encourage each student to demonstrate as wide a range of conversational and linguistic skills as possible within his/her capabilities.

It is not, for example, in students’ interests:

- to restrict them to a simpler level than that at which they are capable of performing, or
- to ask students questions which are too difficult for them.

The suggested questions in the Teacher’s booklet are, therefore, examples of the type of questions the teacher-examiner may ask; they are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. When asked questions on a particular theme, some students may be able to hold an excellent conversation on just one topic or even sub-topic within that theme, sharing development of ideas in a specific area. Other students may not have such in-depth knowledge and/or the linguistic ability to be able to concentrate on such a specific area and so will take part in a conversation on a wider range of topics or sub-topics within each of the two themes.

OTHER ISSUES

20 Preparation time

If the student is given the wrong preparation time, an application for special consideration should be submitted in line with the instructions contained in the [policies and procedures for special consideration](#) document.

21 Student details

If the student details have not been recorded and the omission is discovered during or immediately after the test, the teacher must record the student’s details at the end of the test with the words ‘That was the test of candidate number ... (include name of candidate)’.

- 22 Photocard
If the student does not understand a question in the photocard, the teacher-examiner should phrase the question more simply, ensuring that the same meaning is retained, and that key vocabulary is not provided. Failing that, the teacher should move to the next question. The recording must not be stopped.
- 23 General conversation
If the student is unable to answer a question in the general conversation, the teacher-examiner should phrase the question more simply or try a related, though different, question. Failing that, the teacher should move to a simpler question on another topic or sub-topic of the theme.
- 24 General
The recording must not be stopped, paused, or interrupted until the end of the student's test, except in an emergency. If an emergency arises which makes it necessary to interrupt a test, a note of explanation must be sent to the examiner with the recordings.
- If the test is interrupted by external factors, such as noise or someone entering the room, the teacher-examiner must continue with the test if the interruption is unlikely to obscure the student's recording. Otherwise, the recording should be allowed to run but the test should not be continued until the interruption has ceased. The recording must not be stopped unless the interruption is lengthy or very disruptive. If the recording is stopped, a note explaining the circumstances must be sent to the examiner with the recordings.
- 25 If the student appears too upset to continue the test, he/she should nevertheless be encouraged to continue. The recording must not be stopped unless it is absolutely essential to do so, in which case a note explaining the circumstances must be sent to the examiner with the recordings. The student must not be re-tested on another occasion. If there are medical reasons for the student's inability to continue, an application for special consideration should be submitted via the Exams
- 26 Any student who is eligible for extra time in their exams because of difficulties with reading and/or writing can only use this extra time, in speaking tests, for the preparation time. If a student is eligible for extra time because of a learning difficulty which will affect the speed of their spoken communication in the speaking test, they may be eligible for extra time during the speaking test. A separate application must be made by contacting info@oxfordaqa.com
- 27 The only circumstances in which a student can be re-tested are if:
- the test has not been recorded or is inaudible
 - a student's test is lost through over-recording
 - there is a technical malfunction during the test.

The student concerned should be re-tested as soon as possible after the end of the particular session, ensuring that a different photocard is used. A note stating the circumstances must be sent to the examiner with the recordings. If the teacher-examiner feels that the student has been disadvantaged by these circumstances, an application for special consideration should be submitted for the student concerned.

OxfordAQA will not normally consider an error in the conduct of the test on the part of the teacher-examiner as justifying an application for special consideration.

AFTER THE TESTS

- 28 Once all the tests are completed for the school, the recordings must be returned via the [Digital Media Portal](#). This must be done within one working day of the last date of the timetabled five-week period at the latest.
- Tests conducted face to face should be recorded and saved as mp3 files
 - Centres must ensure that they check all recordings have been saved as mp3 files before uploading them for marking.
 - The file name of the student must contain the component code, centre number and candidate number e.g., 9280_12345_0001.mp3
 - Save the files to your PC
 - You will upload speaking test recordings to the Digital Media Portal which you will need to log into. You can access this through Centre Services.
 - Detailed guidance on using the portal can be found [here](#)
 - Once the recordings are submitted to OxfordAQA for marking, they become the property of OxfordAQA and are not returned.
- 29 Centres are strongly advised to retain a copy of the recordings in case of loss.

WARNING TO STUDENTS

You must **not**:

- become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice in any part of this assessment
- discuss this assessment with anyone who has not yet taken the assessment
- share information about this assessment in any way, including on the internet.

Sharing information about speaking tests can create an unfair assessment and could impact on your grades in this exam. It may also lead to a malpractice investigation which could lead to:

- a loss of marks for this component
- a disqualification from this component or the entire qualification
- a ban from sitting exams for a set period of time.

OxfordAQA International Examinations monitors social media and student websites for evidence of malpractice.

Remember: treat the speaking tests as confidential. Keep the assessment fair for everyone.

GET HELP AND SUPPORT

Visit our website for information, guidance, support, and resources at oxfordaqa.com



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