

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL  
AQA EXAMINATIONS

# INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

9280 Paper 4 Speaking  
Report on the examination

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November 2021

## REPORT ON EXAMINATION : INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE 9280 PAPER 4 SPEAKING NOVEMBER 2021

### Introduction

This November's Speaking paper was similar to that of November 2020 in that there was only one element examined, the general conversation. As the Photocards were not assessed in this series, the total mark for the Speaking paper was 25 (rather than 40). Examiners heard some very impressive responses which showed good preparation for this assessment.

There were many detailed responses that showed that students and teachers were very much aware of the rigour needed within the three themes from the specification.

### Preparation

As there was no Photocard element in the November 2021 paper, there was no preparation time allotted to students before the examination. This is because the preparation time is for Photocard preparation, and Photocards were not assessed in this series. However, centres were able to discuss with students which two themes they would like to talk about in their general conversation prior to the examination to ease the students into the task. This was done by many centres, although there were a minority who indicated that they had chosen the themes to be discussed during the conversation for students.

### Conduct of the examination

**Recordings** – Centres should test the recording levels before the examination to ensure that the student can be heard easily and that the recordings are clear. Unfortunately, in a few centres there was background noise and quiet recordings where it was more difficult to hear the student. Centres are reminded that the microphone should favour the student rather than the examiner. However, it was noted that the clarity of recordings was excellent for most centres.

**Timing** – It should be noted that there are time limits for the examination. Although the timings are approximate, centres should ensure that examinations are within the limits suggested. The general conversation should last approximately 6-7 minutes. Full marks for the general conversation can be achieved within this time frame.

Although there were some overlong general conversations, there were also several which were short. These often lasted under 5 minutes and in some cases meant that the student did not have the opportunity to demonstrate what they are capable of within the conversation. Teacher-examiners should take note of the time the conversation starts to avoid this.

### Conversation

The conversation is based on two themes chosen from the three in the specification. It should be noted that there should be an equal amount of time spent on each theme chosen.

There are suggested questions for each theme within the Teacher's booklet. These questions are a basis for developing a line of conversation, rather than a list of questions that must be asked. Where the teacher-examiner simply followed these questions, jumping from topic to topic within a theme, it became confusing for some students. It did not produce a natural conversation, but rather a question-and-answer scenario.

Centres are able to choose topics within these themes which reflect the individual student's personal interests. Students responded enthusiastically where teacher-examiners chose to do this, often relating their own personal experience, providing in detail some interesting and moving accounts. This entailed skilful questioning, taking note of the answers of the students, and asking further questions based on these responses to find out further information. Very natural spontaneous conversations were the result, and the most successful general conversations included responses in extended sequences of speech, narrating events using relevant detail, offering opinions, and justifying the reasons for these.

Many students were able to use a wide variety of structures and language confidently, including appropriate idiomatic expressions. However, there were some conversations where marks for Knowledge and Use of Language were restricted as they did not refer to past or future events because students were not afforded the opportunity to do so within the questions asked by the teacher-examiner. It is important to note that for students to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme, they must be given the opportunity to use time references other than the present.

Centres are reminded that syntax is important, and for students to reach the highest levels in the mark scheme there must be a wide variety of linguistic structures and a wide range of vocabulary – not just a high level of accuracy.

There were many instances of very good pronunciation and intonation, and it is not expected that pronunciation is that of a native speaker. However, there were also occasions where students offered a series of pre-learnt responses and in doing so the intonation was not consistent with the pronunciation, delaying immediate comprehension, and thus affecting the mark which could be achieved for Pronunciation and Intonation.

Centres are reminded that it is not within the spirit of the examination to ask similar questions to all students. To reach the higher levels of the mark scheme the student needs to react naturally to unexpected questions, enabling spontaneous conversation which has a natural flow to it. This was achieved where teacher-examiners asked questions which followed on naturally from the student's previous responses, and there was a clear line of questioning within the theme. However, some students were presented with a pre-set list of questions that did not allow them to achieve high marks for Spontaneity and Fluency as these also resulted in pre-learnt responses where there was no flow to the conversation and it became a question-and-answer session.

In summary, teacher-examiners are to be congratulated on the preparation of their students and skilful questioning which produced many interesting conversations within this Speaking examination of this specification.

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## FAIR ASSESSMENT PROMISE

In line with OxfordAQA's Fair Assessment promise, the assessment design, marking and awarding of this examination focused on performance in the subject, rather than English language ability.



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