

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

9280/S Paper 4 Speaking
Report on the examination

November 2022

REPORT ON EXAMINATION: INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE 9280 PAPER 4 SPEAKING NOVEMBER 2022

Introduction

This November's speaking paper saw the reintroduction of the Photo card, followed by the General conversations as the examination returned to the format indicated within the specification.

There were many detailed responses that showed that students were aware of the rigour needed within the three themes of the examination. Students had prepared thoroughly for the two elements of the examination.

Preparation

Centres are reminded that students may have 10 minutes preparation time in order to prepare the photo card. It was clear that many students had prepared the card well. There were some excellent responses which showed that many students had taken note of what was in the picture and paid close attention to the questions within the bullet points.

At other times, there was a good response to the picture but less so to the other two bullet points. Students are encouraged to write notes to prepare the bullet points rather than complete sentences. In some cases, there were full responses to the bullet points but supplementary responses were often lacking in detail.

Conduct of the test

Recordings – Centres are reminded that they must ensure that recordings are clear. There were several occasions where there was background noise and, at other times, quiet recordings where the microphone favoured the examiner rather than the student. Centres are encouraged to test the recording levels before the tests to ensure that the student can be heard easily.

Timing – There are time limits for the test. Although the timings are approximate, centres should ensure that tests are within the limits indicated. The photo card should last approximately 3-4 minutes and the following conversation should last approximately 6-7 minutes. Full marks for the test can be achieved within these time frames. Overlong tests can have a negative effect where the candidate tires and starts to make errors. If a student completes the photo card within a shorter time than indicated, centres should not elongate the conversation to make up for this. The whole test should last no longer than 10 minutes.

Most teacher-examiners kept to the timing of the conversation but there were instances where they were overlong, particularly where the conversation element was too long, and to a lesser extent where the conversation only lasted 4 minutes. This can mean that the student does not have the opportunity to show what they are capable of within the conversation. Teacher-examiners should take note of the time the conversation starts in order to avoid this.

Photo cards

The bullet points were well covered by the majority of students. Where a student did not fully expand upon the bullet point the prompts provided were used well by teachers or adapted appropriately to help students respond positively. Centres are reminded that these prompts are not compulsory, and many centres used their own prompts successfully using the responses of students to ask further questions if they felt they needed more information.

Results show that the individual photocards were found to be of a similar difficulty for students.

All the cards were found to be accessible, and students were clearly well prepared in the format of this task. Most students were able to describe what they could see in the photo. The most able students did not just describe the physical nature of the people and the background, they also described the emotions of the people. Many described the emotions of the mother and son in Card A, the enjoyment of people playing table tennis in card B, and the feelings of those caring for the environment in Card D.

It was clear that the language used in the cards was within the experience of the students and they were able to respond to the three bullet points. The majority of students were able to give understandable replies to most questions offering opinions with many students justifying these opinions convincingly.

The most able students were able to explain opinions easily, showing not only a good grasp of the grammar and accurate use of the language, but also some flair and creativity in their responses. Other students required prompts in order to sustain the task but were still able to show some development within their responses and offer at least one opinion.

Conversation

The conversation is based on the two themes not tested within the Photo card. It should be noted that there should be an equal amount of time spent on each theme. Centres were able to choose topics within these themes which reflected the individual student's personal interests. Where this was the case, students responded enthusiastically, and in great detail, often relating their own personal experience and providing at times some moving accounts. This produced very natural spontaneous conversations with lots of opinions and thoughtful justification of these opinions.

A number of teacher-examiners, however, simply follow or have an over reliance on the questions within the Teacher's Booklet. These questions are a basis for developing a line of conversation not a list of questions that must be asked. Where a teacher-examiner relied on these questions, there was a lack of spontaneity within the conversation since the questions do not follow a topic through but leap from topic to topic. Skilful questioning entailed introducing a topic within the theme and then posing a series of questions, taking note of the responses of the students, and then asking further questions based on these responses to find out more information, or justification for the opinions given.

Centres are reminded that it is in the best interests of students to announce when moving from the first theme of the conversation to the second theme.

Many students were able to offer responses in extended sequences of speech, narrating events using relevant detail. They were able to offer opinions and justify the reasons for these.

There was a range of marks awarded. The most successful students were able to use a wide variety of structures and language confidently, including appropriate idiomatic expressions. There were some students whose marks for Knowledge and Use of language were restricted by not being asked questions in the past or future tenses or even given the opportunity to make any reference to past or future events. It is important to note that for students to reach the higher mark bands they must be given the opportunity to use tenses other than the present. Centres are reminded that syntax is important and for students to reach the highest levels there must be a wide variety of linguistic structures and a wide range of vocabulary – not just a high level of accuracy.

It was pleasing to note that many students displayed good pronunciation, throughout the conversation, however there were some instances where students had pre-learnt responses and consequently the intonation was not always consistent with the pronunciation.

Many students were able to participate in a natural conversation, but some students endured a pre-set list of questions that did not allow them to score highly for Spontaneity and fluency as these also resulted in pre-learnt responses. It is not within the spirit of the examination to ask similar questions to all

students. To reach the higher mark bands the student needs to react naturally to the questions asked and the conversation will have a natural flow to it. This was achieved where students were asked questions which followed on naturally from their previous responses and there was a clear line of questioning within the theme.

In summary, there were many interesting performances from students and teachers are to be congratulated on the preparation of their students for the 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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