

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL
AQA EXAMINATIONS

INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

(9280/S) Speaking

Report on the examination

June 2022

REPORT ON EXAMINATION: INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE 9280/S SPEAKING JUNE 2022

INTRODUCTION

This June's speaking paper was similar to that of November 2021 in that there was only one element examined, the conversation. There were some very impressive responses which showed good preparation for this task.

There were many detailed responses that showed that students and teachers were very much aware of the rigour needed within the examination.

PREPARATION

As there was no Photocard element in the paper, there was no preparation time allotted to students before the examination. However, centres were able to discuss with students which two themes they would like to talk about prior to the examination to ease the students into the task. Whereas this was done by many centres, there were a minority who indicated that they had chosen the themes to be discussed during the conversation.

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. Centres are reminded that the microphone should favour the student rather than the examiner. Unfortunately, in a few centres there was background noise and quiet recordings where it was more difficult to hear the student. However, it was noted that the clarity of recordings was excellent for most centres.

Timing

There are time limits for the examination. Although the timings are approximate, centres should ensure that examinations are within the limits suggested. The conversation should last approximately 6-7 minutes. Full marks for the test can be achieved within these time frames.

There were some over-long conversations, but there were also several short examinations. These often lasted under 5 minutes and in some cases meant that the student did not have the opportunity to demonstrate what they were capable of within the task. Teacher-examiners should take note of the time the conversation starts in order to avoid this.

Conversation

The conversation is based on two themes chosen from the three in the specification and an equal amount of time should be spent on each theme as the conversation is marked globally.

Although there are suggested questions for each theme within the Teacher's booklet, these are just a basis for developing a line of conversation, not a list of questions that must be asked. Where the teacher-examiner just followed these, jumping from topic to topic within a theme, it was confusing for some students. It did not produce a natural conversation, but rather a question-and-answer scenario. It should also be noted that it is good practice to inform the student when moving from the first theme to the second theme of the conversation.

Centres are able to choose topics within the two themes being examined, which reflect an individual student's personal interests. Where centres opted to do this, the students responded enthusiastically, often relating their own personal experience, providing in detail interesting and, at times, thought provoking accounts. Within these

conversations there was often extremely skilful questioning based on the student's previous responses, eliciting further information to justify opinions. This produced very natural spontaneous conversations and the most successful students were able to offer responses in extended sequences of speech, narrating events using relevant detail, offering opinions, and justifying their reasoning for these.

Many students were able to use a wide variety of structures and language confidently, including appropriate idiomatic expressions. However, there were some students whose marks for Knowledge and Use of Language were restricted as they were not given the opportunity to show that they could refer to past or future events by the teacher-examiner. It is important to note that for students to reach the higher mark bands 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 mark bands there must be a wide variety of linguistic structures and a wide range of vocabulary – not just a high level of accuracy within simple language.

There were many instances of very good pronunciation and intonation, and it is not expected that pronunciation is that of a native speaker. Indeed, examiners take into consideration that there are idiosyncrasies within the pronunciation of English by speakers in different countries. 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 awarded.

To reach the higher mark bands, students need to react naturally to unexpected questions, thus enabling a spontaneous conversation which has a natural flow to it. This was achieved where teacher-examiners asked questions which followed on naturally from their previous responses, and there was a clear line of questioning within the theme. Centres are reminded that it is not within the spirit of the examination to ask similar questions to all students. 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 responses where there was no flow to the conversation, and it became a question-and-answer session.

Overall, teacher-examiners are to be congratulated on the preparation of their students and skilful questioning which provided for many interesting conversations within 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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