

OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL  
AQA EXAMINATIONS

# INTERNATIONAL GCSE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

(9280/S) Speaking

Report on the examination

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June 2019

## **REPORT ON EXAMINATION: INTERNATIONAL GCSE English as a Second Language 9280/S 9280 JUNE 2019**

### **INTRODUCTION**

There were some very impressive responses to this June's Speaking examination which showed that students had prepared very well for the two tasks that are assessed within the examination.

There were many detailed responses that showed that teachers were very much aware of the rigour of the examination and there was clear evidence that students had engaged with the three themes examined in this specification.

### **PREPARATION**

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

### **CONDUCT OF THE TEST**

#### **Recordings**

Centres are reminded that they must ensure that recordings are clear. Where possible, tests should take place in areas where there is minimal background noise. There were also some recordings where students were difficult to hear as the microphone favoured the teacher-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 and, although the instructions detail approximate timings, centres should ensure that tests are within the limits. The photo card should last approximately 3-4 minutes and the following conversation should last approximately 6-7 minutes. Centres should be aware that full marks for the test can be achieved within these time frames. Overlong tests can impact on the overall performance level where the student starts to make errors. Centres are reminded that if a student completes the photo card within a shorter timeframe, they should not elongate the conversation to make up for this.

Most teacher-examiners kept to the timing of the conversation but there were instances where there were overlong tests. Teacher-examiners should take note of the time the conversation starts in order to avoid this. In addition, there were some occasions where there was an imbalance between the timing of two themes covered. Centres are reminded that an equal amount of time should be spent on the two themes, covered within the element.

#### **Photo cards**

The bullet points were well covered by students in most centres, although on a few occasions not all of the prescribed questions were asked. Centres are reminded that the bullet points should be asked in the order that they occur in the paper. The questions may be rephrased as long as the same message is conveyed. They also may be repeated if a student does not offer a response.

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 to the bullet points.

The marks awarded show that the students found the individual photo cards to be of a similar level of demand, although Card D had slightly fewer students who scored the highest marks for Communication.

All the cards were found to be accessible and students were clearly well prepared in the format of this question. Most students were able to describe what they could see in the photo. The most successful responses did not just describe the physical nature of the people and the background, they also described the emotions of the people. Many described the happiness of the family as they celebrated a birthday in photo card A or the attitude of those working while using mobile technology in photo card C.

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. Students were able to give understandable replies to most questions offering opinions.

The most successful responses explained opinions easily, showing not only a good grasp of the grammar and accurate use of the language but some flair and creativity in their responses. Some 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. However, these students were often only able to show a reasonable knowledge and use of language and for many this consisted of incorrect subject-verb agreements and poor sentence structure, thus scoring a maximum of 3 of the 5 marks available for Knowledge and use of Language.

## Conversation

The conversation is based on two themes: Local, national, international and global areas of interest and Current and further study and employment. It should be noted that there should be an equal amount of time spent on each theme.

In some centres, teachers chose to closely follow the suggested questions within the Teacher's Booklet, which did not allow the student to offer in-depth responses, or for the teacher to follow up the responses of the student on a particular topic within the theme. Just asking the questions in the order they appeared also tended to confuse the student as the conversation jumped from topic to topic within the theme and the student was not able to follow a particular line of questioning. The suggested questions are a basis for developing a line of conversation, not a prescribed list of questions.

Where centres chose topics within the themes which reflected the individual student's personal interests, students responded enthusiastically. Often their responses were in great detail, related to their own personal experience, and provided at times some moving accounts. This produced very natural spontaneous conversations with lots of opinions and thoughtful justification of these opinions.

Skillful questioning entailed introducing a topic within the theme and following a series of questions, taking note of the responses of the students and asking questions based on these responses. This enabled the student to offer further information before moving on.

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 opinions.

The most successful responses demonstrated a wide variety of structures and language confidently and related past, present and future events confidently. This is essential for students to reach the highest mark bands for Knowledge and use of Language, and students must be given the opportunity to use tenses other than the present. There were some students whose marks for Knowledge and use of Language were restricted by not being asked questions with any reference to past or future events.

It is important that students have as natural a conversation as possible, and the pre-set list of questions that some students were asked did not allow them to score highly for Spontaneity and Fluency as these also resulted in pre-learned responses. To reach the higher mark bands the student needs to react naturally to the questions asked, usually responding to a line of questioning based on the student's responses, enabling the conversation to have a natural flow to it.

There were many interesting performances from students and teachers are to be congratulated on the preparation of their students for the Speaking examination element of this specification.

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