



ASSESSMENT and  
QUALIFICATIONS  
ALLIANCE

# **General Certificate of Education NEW SPECIFICATION**

***FRENCH FRE2T***

***GERMAN GER2T***

***SPANISH SPA2T***

## **SPEAKING TESTS**

***ADVICE FOR TEACHERS CONDUCTING THEIR  
OWN TESTS IN SUMMER 2009***

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*Dr Michael Cresswell, Director General.*

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The following information has been put together following the January 2009 examination session. The points mentioned below are issues of conduct raised by the senior examiners for Speaking for French, German and Spanish. Teachers are advised to consider the points raised in advance of the Summer 2009 examination session.

In most centres, the requirement of the specification to cover all four topic areas as well as the guidelines for the timing of the two parts of the test were observed. There were a few cases of tests being either significantly longer or shorter than 15 minutes and teachers are reminded that close adherence to the prescribed times is in the interest of the candidates as examiners stop marking at the 15 minute point.

Centres are asked to pay particular attention to the quality of their recordings as examiners cannot mark what they cannot hear. Clear recordings with no background hissing and with candidates well-positioned in relation to the microphone so that their responses are audible are essential.

### **Part 1            Discussion of the stimulus card**

The assessment of this first part of the test is divided between the candidate's performance in response to the five printed questions – worth 5 marks – and the candidate's response in the more general discussion of the sub-topic given on the stimulus card – also worth 5 marks. It follows that the time taken for these two sections should be as evenly balanced as possible. Unfortunately in January 2009, this was often not achieved because many candidates gave only brief answers to the printed questions and failed to 'develop relevant points', as the mark scheme envisages. It was therefore often not possible to award the higher marks of 4 or 5 for this section even if candidates proved themselves to be quite eloquent in the ensuing discussion.

Teachers preparing candidates should therefore be aware of the importance of the development of points in response to the printed questions and candidates should be encouraged to look for every opportunity to develop such points in their preparation time. It is anticipated that the first question will still prompt a fairly brief answer but thereafter each question should be seen as an opportunity for candidates to develop as many relevant points as possible. There is a significant difference between making a point and developing a point and a candidate will only access the highest mark in this first part if he/she uses the questions to sustain a conversation for approximately two and a half minutes. The candidate who gives only the briefest of responses to the printed questions will achieve only a low score. It is essential, therefore, that candidates are well practised in maximising their use of preparation time so that they can respond as necessary. There is no opportunity for the examiner to "draw out" more from the candidate in this section as the mark awarded is based on the response to the printed questions. Candidates should also be discouraged from giving detailed descriptions of what is on the stimulus card.

The second part of Part 1 requires the teacher-examiner to develop the discussion but **within the confines of the sub-topic specified on the stimulus card**. This is an important aspect of the correct conduct of Part 1. If the stated sub-topic is, for example, Music, there should be no drifting into the sub-topics of Cinema and Fashion/Trends within the Popular Culture topic. There may well be instances where this is the candidate's doing rather than the teacher-examiner's and in such cases the teacher-examiner should tactfully steer the candidate back to the sub-topic under discussion.

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## **Part 2            General Conversation**

The nominated topic must be treated as an integral part of the conversation and not as a presentation. In January 2009, there were a few instances where teachers allowed candidates to give an uninterrupted talk on the first topic.

Most centres fulfilled the requirement of covering the remaining two topics of the specification in the remainder of the general conversation. Timing was an issue in some cases and centres are reminded that the aim in this second part of the test must be for a fairly even allocation of time to each of the three topics, approximately three minutes per topic. During the discussion of a topic area, the discussion may cover any or all three of the sub-topics. As is the case in Part 1, it is important that candidates are given the opportunity to develop ideas and this can best be done if teacher-examiners follow up on candidates' responses and pursue a few points in more depth rather than covering many aspects superficially. Candidates should also be steered away from delivering chunks of pre-learnt material as this will have an adverse effect on the mark awarded for Interaction.

Responsive questioning that ensures natural interaction and engages the candidate in some degree of spontaneous exchanges rather than questions picked off from a set list with little or no follow-up on what a candidate actually says is of the utmost importance. It is also important for teacher-examiners to differentiate questions according to levels of ability, so that less able candidates are not left struggling to respond to questions that are clearly beyond their level of proficiency.

Although some sample questions are provided by AQA, these should be used as guidance as to the type of question which should be asked. Starter questions should be asked but then further questions should be based on what the candidate has said in response. An examiner who uses a set list of questions without reference to what the candidate is saying will prevent the candidate from achieving high marks for Interaction.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

With effect from Summer 2009, the following ruling will apply to the marks which can be awarded for Interaction in the Part 2 Conversation.

The *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations* state that approximately 3 minutes must be allocated to each of the three topics to be covered in Part 2. Therefore, a candidate who spends less than 2 minutes on any topic in Part 2 will have their mark for Interaction reduced by one band, eg a candidate who is judged at 8 marks would have the mark reduced to 6. A candidate judged at 9 marks would have their mark reduced to 7. This same ruling will apply to candidates who do not meet the requirement of the specification for the test to cover all four AS topics. This may occur if the teacher-examiner covers a topic in Part 2 which has already been covered in Part 1.

All teacher-examiners should be made aware of this information in advance of conducting the tests.

Centres are reminded that language-specific Teacher Support Meetings for the Conduct of the Speaking Tests will be held in Autumn 2009 covering both Unit 2 and Unit 4. These meetings will be full day meetings and free of charge. Further details can be obtained from the AQA website in due course.