

# Modern Foreign Languages

OCR Advanced GCE Units 2654 French/2664 German/2674 Spanish  
 Instructions for Internally Conducted Oral examinations

**Please read these instructions carefully**

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Centres choosing to conduct their own orals must send the tapes to be assessed by an OCR Examiner (Component 01).

## 1. DATES OF EXAMINATIONS

It is essential that all teacher-conducted orals are held during the official examining period:

- **15 March - 15 May for the June series.**

It is desirable, in the interests of confidentiality, that the examinations be conducted over as short a period as possible.

## 2. MATERIAL FOR THE EXAMINATION

With these instructions Centres should receive:

- **supplies\*** of the Candidate's Sheet for the Discussion
- **a booklet\*** containing both the candidate's and the examiner's materials for the Discussion
- Working Marksheets ("2654 FRENCH", "2664 GERMAN", "2674 SPANISH", as appropriate)
- labels for the despatch of material to the Examiner
- envelopes

\* **These items must not be opened until a maximum of THREE working days before the examination and must be stored securely until needed.**

Leaflets containing notes for candidates on the oral examination together with supplies of the oral topic form are despatched to Centres in February for the June session.

## 3. ACCOMMODATION AND EQUIPMENT

### 3.1 Quiet conditions

These are essential. The examination room should be free from any noise and disturbance from outside the building (e.g. lawn-mowers). It should preferably not be close to corridors used by large numbers of students between lessons, but if movement within the building is unavoidable, steps should be taken to keep that noise to a minimum. Notices must be displayed to prevent interruptions from people entering the room unaware that an examination is in progress.

### 3.2 The examination room

The candidate and the examiner should be seated opposite each other across a table. The examiner needs ample table space to arrange his/her documents, but the candidate should be close enough for a rapport to be established and for papers to be passed across the table without difficulty. **No other persons may be present in the examination room without the express permission of OCR.**

### 3.3 Separate preparation room

This is essential. It should be near the examination room, and must not be part of a corridor. Other students should not have access to the area. The room should be equipped with a table where the candidate can prepare the Discussion Task.

### 3.4 Invigilation

Though not essential, it is highly desirable to have an invigilator present while candidates are preparing.

### 3.5 Dictionary

Dictionaries are not allowed during the preparation time or during the examination.

### 3.6 Recording

It is a requirement of the examination that all oral tests are to be recorded, and Centres are responsible for providing equipment of as high a standard as possible for this purpose. If it is at all possible, an external microphone should be used rather than one that is in-built, and it should be placed on a soft surface between examiner and candidate, but nearer to the candidate. Normally it will be necessary to place the microphone nearer to the candidate than to the examiner. Before the start of the examinations the examiner must make sure that the recording level is satisfactory for both candidates and examiner.

## 4. PREPARING THE CANDIDATES

It is in everyone's interests that candidates should be as relaxed and confident as is possible in the circumstances. A number of points should be mentioned here:

### 4.1 Information sheet for candidates

We have prepared a sheet ORAL/INFO/CAND/A2, which Centres may copy and distribute to their candidates in advance of the examination.

### 4.2 Oral Topic Form

Centres should have received sufficient forms to distribute one to each candidate for each language. Candidates should use it to write **in the foreign language** a list of 3 topic areas which they would like to discuss with the examiner. The top copy of the form is to be handed to the examiner at the start of the examination. The bottom copy may be retained and used by the candidate during the test.

### 4.3 Supporting material

**For the General Conversation only**, candidates may bring with them into the examination room **brief** notes limited to one side of A4 paper or a maximum of three postcards. The candidate should also have a copy of the oral topic form. **No other materials are allowed.**

## 5. TIMING

5.1 The examination normally lasts for 15 minutes and must not be longer than 18 minutes, followed by a few minutes' break for the examiner. Candidates should be timetabled to arrive at the preparation room at intervals of 20 minutes. In the interests of both examiner and candidates, no more than 12 candidates should be timetabled on any one day.

At the beginning of the day and after breaks the timetable should allow for the first candidate to prepare the discussion task; allowance is made for this on the timetable form.

## 6. CONDUCT OF THE EXAMINATIONS

### 6.1 Preparation of the Discussion Task

There is no random allocation list for the A2 Speaking test and examiners should aim to use a range of texts across a number of candidates.

**The same text may be used for two, sometimes three, consecutive candidates, providing there is no contact between them.**

The examiner must ensure that the discussion text is not on the same topic area as the conversation topics.

The examiner should select the text to be used, and hand it to the candidate before beginning the previous candidate's examination. The candidate will prepare the text in a separate room set aside for this purpose. A number of different tasks are provided for each language. It is recognised that candidates may wish to annotate the stimulus text; for this reason enough sheets are supplied for all candidates.

**In the interests of security, however, examiners must ensure that the Candidate's Sheet is handed back at the end of the Discussion exercise. Notes on separate sheets are not permitted.**

## 6.2 Recording the examination

The cassettes supplied by OCR are 45 minutes per side. One tape should be sufficient for 4 orals, 2 on each side. Each CD will record approximately 700 minutes of sound/30 candidates.

**If for any reason the tape/CD fails to record, the test must be re-recorded as soon as possible with a different discussion text. Details of any instances of non-recording must be sent to the examiner and to OCR.**

At the beginning of each cassette/CD, the teacher/examiner must record an introduction giving the following information:

- Cassette/CD number
- Centre number
- A2 oral examinations in (language)
- Date (e.g. Wednesday, 22 March)
- Examiner (e.g. Mrs. J Smith)

Before the test begins, the examiner must announce the candidate's number and name, **and leave the tape running for the duration of the examination.**

After the last recording on side A the examiner should announce "No more recordings on this side. Recording continues on side B."

After the last candidate on each tape/CD, the examiner must announce 'end of tape/CD no...'; and after the last candidate on the last tape/CD 'end of examination'.

### Tapes

The tape must be wound on to the end before turning over or starting a new tape. As each cassette is used, the labels supplied must be completed with the name of examiner, centre number, candidate numbers, and unit number. The labels must then be inserted in the cassette box, with the thin strip between the 2 lines showing along the spine.

### CDs

- Record the candidates in the order of the attendance register.
- If that is not possible, complete the CD sleeve with candidate details in recording order.
- Each recording should indicate candidate number and name.
- Each recorded **file** on the CD must be clearly named using the following convention:  
Centre number-candidate number-unit number-component number.
- Each CD should be labelled with the centre number and unit number.
- To label CDs use CD friendly marker pens. The use of biro, for example, may make the contents of the CD unreadable.
- Centres should complete each CD sleeve.

## 6.3 Striking a balance

Oral examiners have to choose between two potentially extreme positions. On the one hand, they wish to present themselves as approachable human beings and to conduct the oral in a friendly, relaxed and flexible way. On the other hand, they know that they have the responsibility of administering an agreed standard test which will have national validity and comparability; and that the candidates themselves will expect them to treat

the occasion with the thoroughness and seriousness it deserves. It is difficult for OCR to prescribe the exact balance between these extremes.

#### **6.4 Conversational style**

In conversation with candidates, a warm and friendly manner will encourage good responses, overcoming some of the nervousness and fear felt by many candidates. A brusque or officious manner may frighten or alienate the candidate, often causing him/her to dry up completely.

#### **6.5 Eye contact**

It is also important for examiners to maintain reasonable eye contact with the candidate; body language, often unnoticed in everyday life, plays an important role.

#### **6.6 Question style**

Another temptation is for examiners to prompt too much and to end up by doing all the talking themselves. It is sometimes difficult to strike the right balance between listening and trying to 'bring the candidate out', especially with the weaker candidates who may have little to say. A little help at a critical moment - by supplying a word the candidate is searching for; by reformulating the candidate's own phrase in a more constructive way; or simply by giving approval and encouragement - can have a positive impact. However, the examiner should strive to establish a genuine conversation, with the candidate playing as large a part as possible.

#### **6.7 Dealing with errors on the part of the candidate**

It is not for the examiner to correct errors, nor to express consternation or disapproval.

### **7. COMPONENTS OF THE EXAMINATION**

#### **7.1 Format of the examination**

The examination consists of 2 sections, which must be conducted in the following order:

- (i) Section A: Discussion (20 marks): 5-6 minutes  
(3 minutes – comprehension of text, 2 to 3 minutes on issues)

followed by

- (ii) Section B: General Conversation: topics (40 marks): 10-12 minutes

The oral test lasts for 15-18 minutes, and represents 15% of the total marks for the A2 examination. Centres are asked to timetable candidates every 20 minutes so as to allow the teacher/examiner a short break between candidates.

**NOTE: Tests will not be assessed beyond 18 minutes.**

#### **7.2 Discussion**

Examiners are advised to use the full range of questions supplied but this is not a requirement.

#### **7.3 General Conversation**

- 7.3.6** This part of the examination should last for 10-12 minutes and must follow on without a break from Section A, the Discussion.

**N.B. There no longer is a requirement to ask questions on the candidate's background and interests.**

- 7.3.7** The oral topic form, listing the 3 topic areas which the candidate wishes to discuss, serves a dual purpose: it acts as a prompt to the candidate and it provides a framework for the examiner giving a series of 'pegs' on which to hang questions. The examiner must be guided largely by this, but this does not mean that questions on other aspects should not be asked.

**The examiner should ask the candidate which topic he/she would prefer to discuss first; the examiner will then select one of the remaining two topics, if required.**

**7.3.6** It must be stressed that examiners are not expected to be experts on any or all of the topic areas which may be offered by candidates. Even if he/she is very familiar with the subject matter which is being discussed, the examiner should at all times adopt the position of the intelligent layman, and ask a series of general, open-ended questions, designed to allow candidates to talk freely about the aspects of the topic which have particularly interested or engaged them during the course. Whilst candidates must of course be given the chance to show what they know and can do, they must not be allowed to give a series of highly prepared mini-presentations.

Many teachers/examiners will obviously be fully conversant with the topics to be discussed by candidates. The danger here lies (consciously or unconsciously) in expecting the candidates to produce in the examination a known body of knowledge and in limiting the questioning style to triggers which will bring forth this knowledge.

**Teacher/examiners have a particular responsibility in this respect to ensure that they do not pitch all their questions at a level which they know candidates are able easily to handle, but seek to approach the topic from an unexpected angle, and to include questions which stretch and provoke thought in the candidates, allowing them access to the higher range assessment criteria, in particular Grid 4C.**

**7.3.7** This section of the examination is intended to be a conversation. Although the candidate must lead to some extent, this part of the examination should not be allowed to develop into a monologue on the candidate's part. **Frequent questions should be asked.** The precise balance between candidate and examiner is obviously at the discretion of the examiner, and will probably vary from candidate to candidate.

**The examiner should be sensitive to the needs of the individual candidate in terms of his/her own contribution, but should ensure that the candidate is given the opportunity to open up the topic and to perform at the top range of the factual knowledge criteria (Grid 4E) offering ideas and opinions.**

**7.3.5** Examiners should not expect candidates to speak in the form of complete sentences, as this would be unrealistic in natural conversation, but of course candidates whose conversation consists largely of monosyllabic or disjointed replies cannot get much credit for such a performance. A great measure of responsibility rests here with the examiner, who should design the questions and guide the conversation in such a way that the candidate is obliged to be articulate and encouraged to express his/her ideas in extended form, using, for example, a variety of verb forms and tenses. The conversational nature of the exercise should at all times be borne in mind. Candidates will in many cases have prepared their topic areas thoroughly, and may attempt to give a series of 'mini-presentations.' Whilst they must of course be given the chance to show what they know and can do, they must not be allowed to reel off set pieces unchallenged by questions which make them think 'on their feet' and provide access to the higher level assessment criteria. Candidates may, if they wish, bring into the examination notes to support the discussion of the topic (such notes must be limited to one side of A4 paper or a maximum of 3 postcards). They should not, however, be penalised if they do not do this. Candidates may refer to this material during the conversation, but must not be allowed to read out sections (apart from e.g. statistics, quotations). If they attempt to do this, the examiner should interject with questions. Examiners should bear in mind that the aim of the examination is to test candidates' speaking ability.

**7.3.6** Occasionally with some candidates the conversation may dry up completely. In such cases, the examiner must ask if the candidate wishes to say anything else about any of the topic areas; if not, recourse may be made to additional general conversation questions to fill up the remaining time.

## **8. ASSESSMENT**

All orals are to be assessed in accordance with the criteria printed in the specification. Teachers are expected to conduct the examination and send the tapes to an OCR Examiner for assessment (Component 01).

## **9. AFTER THE EXAMINATION**

### **9.1 Marking (Component 01 only)**

Oral Examiners will be appointed by OCR. Centres must send **all** their work to the Examiner.

**9.1.1** Centres will be notified of the name and address of their Oral Examiner when the confidential examining material is issued.

**9.1.2** All cassettes/CDs, Working Marksheets (completed according to the instructions provided) and copies of the oral topic form must be sent to the Oral Examiner. Labels will be supplied for this purpose. Tapes/CDs must be carefully packed. All material must be sent by to arrive no later than 15 May.

## **10. SECURITY**

At all times during the examination, the tapes/CDs, confidential material and marksheets must be kept under conditions of security similar to those in force for examination materials before a written examination. The Discussion Tasks must be treated as confidential until the conclusion of the examining period i.e. 15 May.