

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCSE Greek (5GK02) Paper 01

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Publications Code UG028470

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Speaking

Performance

Continuing the trend of previous years, performance was of a high standard with the majority of candidates displaying a broad range of higher level skills. Most of the candidates were effectively and sympathetically guided through the exam and were given plenty of opportunities to perform to the best of their ability. Unfortunately, in some cases, the candidates were put at a disadvantage by teacher-examiners who left these opportunities to chance.

Most candidates were well prepared for the new specification and were ready to deliver a presentation or take part in a discussion based on a picture for the first task. The majority of them chose a picture that related to something they were interested or involved in (e.g. a picture of a holiday place) and that enabled them to take some ownership of their assessment and settled nerves before the questions began. Similarly, the candidates who chose to make a presentation had prepared it in advance and those who made a clever choice of theme for this presentation were able to use a wide variety of complex vocabulary and structures, as opposed to simply describe a beach scene or a family photograph, which was more limiting. Candidates' performance in the second task was also of a high standard indicating their familiarity with the two themes of the new specification and the possible questions related to them.

This year's examination team was pleased to note that the majority of candidates and teacher-examiners seemed to be more aware of the importance of using the past, present and future tenses, as well as expressing and justifying opinions, in terms of allowing access to the upper bands of the mark scheme. Examiners identified the best teacher-examiners as being those who allowed their candidates time to expand and develop their answers, while being ready with structured questions to avoid the production of a monologue. Equally, the best teacher-examiners re-phrased questions when candidates were struggling or unsure, or simply moved on swiftly to a different question.

The expression and justification of attitudes and opinions was usually evident in higher-level performing candidates. However, even some of these more able candidates were unable to perform to the best of their ability when teacher-examiners did not ask questions designed to facilitate responses beyond the factual or when the candidates were regularly interrupted and subsequently not given the chance to express opinions or to convey attitudes.

Conduct

It must be noted that a significant number of teacher-examiners conducted the speaking test using mainly questions from the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) and in some cases in the same order as they appear in the SAMs. These are intended for guidance only and strict adherence to both the order and the content of these questions does not allow for natural conversation. Teacher-examiners who ask questions relevant to the candidate's responses allow for individual communicative competence to be demonstrated. Moreover, the candidates must be given the opportunity to respond to unpredictable language and the teacher-examiners should generally ensure that they provide adequate opportunities for candidates to perform at their optimal level.

In some cases, the candidates were asked questions from the previous specification which are not linked to the two themes prescribed by Edexcel for the speaking test, i.e. 1) Media, Travel and Culture, 2) Sports, Leisure and Work. Teacher-examiners are strictly advised to conduct the speaking test following the guidelines of the new specification and ask questions related to the subtopics of the themes provided.

The two speaking tasks should be recorded simultaneously without a break in between. However, teacher-examiners should make it clear when one task has finished and the next is beginning.

In some cases, candidates underperformed when teacher-examiners did not ask any follow-up questions after the candidates' presentation and moved to the next task or spent too long making lengthy comments of their own or asking the same questions twice during the test, causing confusion and depriving the candidates of showing further language skills. Furthermore, candidates who chose the picture-based discussion were penalised when teacher-examiners moved to the next task immediately after the follow-up questions and before the 4 minutes limit. **It must be noted that when the follow-up questions to the presentation finish or the discussion on a picture comes to an end before the time that should be allocated to the task (i.e. minimum 4 minutes), teacher-examiners are advised to ask other questions from the same theme for the remaining time.**

Generally, teacher-examiners were disciplined in allocating an equal and appropriate amount of time to each task. Unfortunately, a number of centres did not observe the requirements relating to the timing of the two conversations and either the conversations were too brief (less than 4 minutes each) or there was a lack of balance between the time allocated to each task. **Please ensure that each task lasts for 4-5 minutes and that the timing of each task is set when the candidate starts talking and not while teacher-examiners read out the centre and candidate details. If this is not observed, the result is that the candidate actually speaks for less time than the teacher-examiner believes, which can result in too short a test. Centres should note that the total time for the exam (maximum 10 minutes) should be split evenly across the two tasks. When the candidate has chosen to make a presentation, this should last between 1-2 minutes maximum, and then it must be followed by follow-up questions and answers.**

Administration

Administrative guidelines were followed by the majority of centres and examiners received the examined tapes/CDs and the relevant paperwork within the timeframe allowed.

A few centres did not download and send a Mark Record Sheet for each candidate, which resulted in unnecessary work for the examination team and a delay in marking.

Please send one mark record sheet per candidate.

There were a few centres which sent faulty or blank CDs. Centres should ensure that the Speaking test has indeed been recorded onto the CD before dismissing the candidate from the examination. Even more worrying was the fact that several centres had not kept a master copy of the CD (as advised by Edexcel).

Finally, centres are reminded of the importance of labelling both the tape (or CD) and the box and of rewinding the tape to the beginning of side A. Teacher-examiners have an important part to play, ensuring that the recording equipment is in good working order, that candidates are not sitting too far from the microphone and that all involved in the conduct of the tests are fully aware of the procedure to follow. This is essential in the case of candidates who are not tested in the centre entering them, or are examined by a native speaker who is not a teacher at their centre. Centres need to be reminded of the need to check that the speaking test has been recorded correctly before dismissing the candidate from the examination.

Finally, the examiners would like to thank the vast majority of centres and teacher-examiners for conducting the exam effectively and according to the instructions of the conduct of the examination, as well as efficiently completing their administration.

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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Order Code UG028470 June 2011

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