

FAQs - Conducting the Speaking Exam AS Paper 3 (French, Spanish and German)

The following FAQs were asked at our 2017 'Conducting the AS Speaking Exam' online events across French, Spanish and German and have been collated here to support you.

All languages

Task 1

1. How long should the candidate spend on summarising? Do they need to make a specific amount of points?

For question 1 of Task 1 the emphasis is on the candidate's ability to 'summarise', which requires them to extract **a few key points** from the text. If a candidate speaks at length in response to question 1, they are unlikely to be exhibiting the skill of summarising. As there are three other questions in Task 1, with a maximum of 9 minutes in total, the teacher-examiner should be prepared to interrupt the candidate and move on to question 2, if the response is becoming too long.

The indicative content in the mark scheme (see SAMs) suggests a range of points that the candidate might make in their summary, but highlights that these are not exhaustive, and the best fit mark criteria will be applied.

2. If a candidate answers question 2 during their summary response to question 1, does the teacher/examiner still need to ask it?

During preparation for Paper 3, students should be reminded that for question 1, a 'summary' should give a general overview of main points, which is different from question 2 where specific detail is required. They should also be reminded that the teacher/examiner must ask all questions as presented. If a candidate does provide the answer to question 2 during their summary, the teacher/examiner must still ask the question as it is presented on the task card and the candidate should respond to all questions, even if it seems like they are repeating themselves.

3. Can a candidate give their opinion in response to question 2?

Question 2 is a comprehension question, checking understanding of the passage. If a candidate starts to move into their opinion, the teacher/examiner should acknowledge their ideas and move them on quickly to question 3 to ensure there's enough time to cover all the questions. Candidates are able to give their 'opinions' in response to questions 3 and 4.

4. Can candidates lift phrases/sentences directly from the texts?

The mark criteria for AO2 (responding to written language in speech) highlights that 'over-reliance on indiscriminate repetition of source material' is at the lower end of the mark scheme. A candidate that 'avoids indiscriminate repetition of source material' would be more likely to achieve at the higher end of the mark scheme, depending on their performance against other aspects of AO2.

5. Can candidates ask questions during the first 3 questions? How many questions can a candidate ask? How long should the teacher's response be?

These concerns seem to stem from the idea that AO1 (Interaction) is primarily assessed against the candidate's level of questioning. Questioning is **one** of the skills that suggest 'interaction', but other types of interaction are detailed in the Sample Assessment Materials mark schemes.

In both tasks, students are expected to ask questions that elicit opinions as part of the natural discourse, to confirm that their own points of view have been understood, and to take lead in the discussions. However, to be credited against AO1, candidates are not expected to ask contrived questions that would make the interaction inauthentic or that would require the examiner to give a full answer, thus taking crucial assessment time away from the candidate to express themselves. For example, they would not be expected to ask questions such as, 'What role do you think the media plays in French society?' If a candidate were to ask such a question, the teacher/examiner should not ignore the question, but their responses should be brief.

AO1/Interaction can be in the form of pause fillers to make the conversation more natural - eg "don't you agree", "isn't that right" etc. The student should take a lead in the conversation at times, sense check opinions, create a natural-sounding interaction, engage with the teacher/examiner etc

Task 1, question 4 then widens the topic into a discussion and as part of natural conversation the candidates might choose to ask questions. Again, the teacher/examiner should give brief responses so as not to take up the candidate's assessment time. There is no limit on the number of questions a candidate can ask, although it should be highlighted to candidates that 'interaction' is not assessed against the number of questions they ask, but against many other aspects of their speaking.

6. Can I prepare follow up sub-theme questions for after question 4 on task 1? Could I share a bank of questions with my candidates?

The task cards are available from your exams officer from Thursday 6th of April (three working days before the day scheduled for the start of the oral examination), so a teacher/examiner can familiarise themselves with the tasks in order to be fully prepared for the assessment.

However, a teacher/examiner **must not** share banks of specific follow-up questions with their candidates. This would be considered malpractice. It could lead to rote learning and limit the candidate's spontaneity.

Below is some guidance on good questioning that will help candidates meet the requirements of the mark criteria for interaction and spontaneity:

- listen to what the candidate says and base the next question on something they have said i.e. asking them to explain or develop their point(s);
- ask unpredictable questions, based on listening and responding to what the candidate says;
- ask questions which ensure that candidates' responses are discussed, not just stated i.e. require them to justify, give examples and provide evidence.

7. Where can I find the additional generic questions provided by Pearson?

The additional generic questions are supplied in the 'General instructions to the teacher/examiner', which are provided with the task cards. Examples of these can be seen on page 97 of the AS sample assessment materials for German and Spanish and page 93 of the French AS sample assessment materials.

Task 2

8. When the candidates are quoting facts/figures, would we expect them to say where they found these facts? Could they just not make them up on the spot otherwise?

The teacher/examiner has to take the facts and figures at face value. This query also relates to the third bullet in the advice on good question technique above. Teachers could ask follow up questions that require candidates to justify and give evidence to support their statements.

9. Could the examiner open up the possibility of a comparisons with other areas of the world (including countries which do not use the target language) in order to give a candidate the opportunity to access higher level grammatical structures/analysis?

Using questioning that encourages a candidate to make comparisons with other countries, for example the UK, is one method for opening up discussions. However, the teacher/examiner should ensure that the focus of the comparison is to inform the candidate's response about the culture of the target language country, on which they are being assessed, and that they do not begin talking at length about the British culture, for example.

10. How much do candidates need to talk about the wider French/German/Spanish speaking world in this task? If they only used examples from France/Spain/Germany, would that limit the mark they can achieve?

Task 2 is based on Theme 2 - which focusses on target language speaking countries and communities. The countries of France, Germany and Spain, for the respective subjects, are included in the target-language speaking countries or communities.

Candidates should show their knowledge of **at least one** country or community during Task 2, through use of clear examples. If a candidate only referenced Spain, for example, in their responses, they would still be capable of achieving full marks, as they would have shown knowledge of **at least one** target-language speaking country. Student marks would be limited if they made general points or gave opinions based upon little or no specific cultural knowledge.

The indicative content in the Sample Assessment Materials provides examples, which are not exhaustive, of the type of content candidates might consider.

11. If we run out of time, and they have not used past/future tenses, would they be penalised?

Candidates are never penalised, but they can only be credited for the language they have used. The teacher/examiner should ensure they develop questioning that would allow candidates to access the full range of grammatical structures, of which they are capable, within the time allowed for the assessment.

12. What happens if a candidate speaks for less than the minimum time?

It is the teacher/examiner's responsibility to ask the candidate questions that allow them to speak for at least the minimum time. If a candidate does not do this, they will be assessed on what they have produced.

French and German Only

13. Do they have to use 'vous/Sie', as written in the task questions? Is it okay for the teacher examiner to then begin using 'tu/du' in the follow up questions? Would candidates be penalized if they are using the 'tu/du' form?

Candidates would not be penalised if the teacher changes the form of the verbs from formal to informal. Teacher/examiners should read the questions exactly as they are printed on the task cards. How the teacher/examiner phrases the follow up questions is up to them. However, if the wording of the content of a question is changed, this will be raised with our regulatory team and flagged to the centre.

Administrative

14. When is the window for orals?

Assessments will be conducted by teachers/examiners in centres in one session within a prescribed five-week assessment period. This will take place in April and May in any single year. Dates for the assessment period will be confirmed in our UK Information Manual at the start of each academic year (11th April 2017 - 15th May 2017). The assessment period will not always be continuous or be the same period each year, for example it will need to accommodate the Easter break, which changes each year.

15. What order should candidates be assessed in eg candidate number?

There is no prescribed order in which candidates should be assessed; the centre can schedule this in the most suitable way for the teacher/examiner and candidates. However, it is important that centres randomly allocate the cards, using the structure prescribed by Pearson and that the teacher/examiner does not choose the order of the cards.

16. What does the teacher/examiner need to say at the beginning of the recording? Do they need to read the full Task 2 details?

The Centre number and the name of the teacher/examiner should be announced at the beginning of the recording on each CD/USB. The language and unit, name and number of each candidate should be announced **at the beginning** of the test e.g. "French Unit 3, Joe Bloggs, 1234, and each Task introduced respectively by stating "Task 1" and "Task 2". There is no need to read theme, sub-theme or the statement on the Task 2 card. Please ensure that you **do not** use the pause button or stop the recording during the test.

If you have any further questions, please contact our Subject Advisor, Alistair Drewery, at teachinglanguages@pearson.com.

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