



GCSE (9-1) MFL

Frequently asked questions

Contents

General FAQs	3
Paper 1 Listening FAQs	4
Paper 2 Speaking FAQs.....	5
Paper 4 Writing FAQs	13

General FAQs

1. Can we make tier decisions on the day of the examination?

No – it is not possible to make tier decisions on the day of the examination. Tier decisions will need to be made at the time of entry.

2. What provisions are available for visually impaired candidates?

We have developed modified papers to cater for students with a range of accessibility requirements, including those with visual impairments.

All access arrangements and reasonable adjustment requests are considered on a case-by-case basis. Centres are advised to request modified papers for relevant candidates [here](#) by **31st January** for the Summer examination series and by **20th September** for the November series.

3. Can candidates re-sit individual papers?

All four papers are compulsory and the written examinations must be sat in one terminal session. Candidates wishing to re-sit the speaking component must re-sit the whole qualification. However, candidates wishing to re-sit only Papers 1, 3 and 4 (i.e. not the speaking component) may carry over the marks from the previous examination series for Paper 2 Speaking, provided this was assessed by formal exam. If the candidate was previously awarded a grade for speaking in the form of a Speaking Endorsement, this cannot be carried over.

Paper 1 Listening FAQs

4. How do I access the recordings and transcripts for the listening examination?

Your centre will need to register for the Secure Download Service in advance of the actual examination date.

Digital (MP3) listening examination recordings will be made available for download from this secure service 24 hours before the scheduled examination, or on the preceding Friday if the examination is scheduled for a Monday. Please refer to the [administrative support guide](#) for more details.

5. My student has been granted 25% extra time. How should this be applied for the listening examination?

Mock examinations should provide a good indication of how the additional time would best serve the candidate. Depending on the candidate's needs, the extra time can be added at the beginning, at the end, or equally distributed across the questions.

Additional recordings will be produced that incorporate the 25% extra time allowance for candidates that formally qualify for this. The recordings must be requested in advance of the examination and downloaded via the Secure Download Service.

Centres may choose to make use of these additional recordings or to add in the extra time at the most appropriate moments for their candidate(s) by manually pausing and playing the original recording. Please remember that in the latter scenario, the invigilator should be the only person pausing and playing the recording.

Please refer to the [administrative support guide](#) for more information on downloading recordings from the Secure Download Service..

6. What do we do if the sound quality of the listening examination recording is unclear?

MP3 files downloaded from the Secure Download Service should not present any sound quality issues. However, if candidates report issues with the sound quality or recording during the examination, then the invigilator must make a note of the time of the issue, how long the issue lasted, and details of the questions impacted by the issue. Furthermore, the invigilator is required to make a full report of the incident in the examination room and of the action taken, and send this information to Pearson Edexcel.

Paper 2 Speaking FAQs

7. How long before the speaking assessments can we open the secure materials received from Pearson Edexcel?

You can open the materials **up to three working days before the start of the prescribed assessment period**. The materials will include stimulus cards, instructions on sequencing and a sequencing grid which you will need to use to plan the assessments.

8. What information do we need to include at the start of each recording?

At the start of the recording, you must include the following information:

Language (e.g. French)

Foundation Tier / Higher Tier

Teacher-examiner name

Candidate name

Candidate number

9. In what order should we assess candidates for the speaking paper?

You are free to assess candidates in whatever order you wish. Candidates do not have to be assessed in any particular order, for example by candidate number or surname.

10. How should we timetable the speaking exams?

It might be easiest to timetable all speaking exams for one tier followed by all speaking exams for the other tier (to avoid confusion regarding sequencing and the stimulus materials), but you are free to timetable the speaking exams however you wish.

11. If the teacher-examiner thinks a stimulus card will cause distress for a particular candidate, does the teacher-examiner need to report this to Pearson Edexcel?

This does not need to be formally reported to Pearson Edexcel. The subject matter of the stimulus cards should not cause distress to the candidate. The teacher-examiner needs to decide in advance of the assessment if any distress might be caused; if it is likely to, then the teacher-examiner must offer the card from the next appropriate row of the sequencing grid.

12. Can the invigilator overseeing the preparation time help if a candidate doesn't understand one of the English words on the role play stimulus cards, e.g. 'excursion'?

If a candidate doesn't understand an English word on their role play stimulus card, the invigilator may give a very simple explanation or alternative word to help the candidate fully understand the context of the role play. Invigilators must not explain or give translations of anything that is written in the target language.

13. Can more than one candidate prepare for the speaking assessment in the same room at the same time?

The preparation time is supervised and must be overseen by an invigilator. Therefore, as long as candidates are seated at an appropriate distance from each other (as per standard examination conditions) and the invigilator ensures no interaction between candidates, then it is acceptable for multiple candidates to prepare for the oral in the same room. The invigilator must ensure that individual candidates do not exceed the total time allowed to them for preparation, and that the preparation time for each candidate takes place immediately prior to their speaking assessment.

14. What sort of notes can candidates make during their supervised preparation time?

Candidates are permitted to make notes relating to Tasks 1 and 2 (but not Task 3). They must not write more than one side of A4 in total. All candidates must use the [CN2 form](#) to record their notes. Candidate notes should be in bullet point format and may include full sentences. Candidates may refer to their notes during their assessment (but should be discouraged from reading whole prepared sentences). They must hand in to the teacher-examiner the two stimulus cards and their CN2 form on completion of Task 2 and prior to the commencement of Task 3.

15. Should the whole speaking assessment be conducted in the target language?

All languages except Chinese and Japanese:

The entire speaking assessment, including transitions between tasks, should be conducted in the target language. Transitions between tasks can be very simple, e.g. *Maintenant, on va faire la conversation*. For French, German and Spanish, you might find this [crib sheet](#) helpful.

Chinese and Japanese:

The role play introduction is presented in English in the teacher booklet for these two languages only. **The teacher-examiner should read it out verbatim, in English.** Transitions between tasks should also be conducted in English. Everything else should be conducted in the target language.

16. When do we start timing? When the teacher-examiner speaks for the first time or when the candidate speaks for the first time?

You should start timing from the moment the **candidate** speaks for the first time.

17. How strictly do we have to adhere to the recommended timings for the different tasks?

The recommended timings for each task are given as a guide. Candidates are assessed on the quality of their responses, not the length of the assessment. However, it is important that candidates are given enough time to demonstrate their speaking skills.

Please note the following:

- If given significantly less than the minimum recommended time for each task or for the assessment as a whole, it's unlikely that the candidate will have sufficient opportunity to access the full range of marks available.
- Similarly, we do not recommend going significantly over the maximum recommended time for each task or for the assessment as a whole. If allowed to spend too much time on one task, other tasks may suffer as a result.
- Where conversation tasks are too long, examiners will stop listening when the maximum recommended time is reached, unless a candidate has just started a sentence, in which case they will listen to the end of that sentence.

If the role play and picture-based task do not last the minimum recommended time, it is not necessary to add extra time to the candidate's conversation to compensate for this. In this scenario, the conversation must not last longer than the maximum recommended time (4.5 minutes at Foundation Tier and 6 minutes at Higher Tier), and the whole speaking assessment should be completed without being significantly under or over the recommended timings.

18. How should the teacher-examiner respond if the candidate asks a question other than the one required by the role play?

In the Foundation Tier role play, candidates are required to produce one question. In the Higher Tier role play, candidates are required to produce two questions. If a candidate produces a question other than the one required, we recommend teacher-examiners respond to the question the candidate actually asks, giving an appropriate brief response, so that the response doesn't put the candidate off.

19. Can a teacher-examiner prompt a candidate if the candidate doesn't spontaneously produce the required question(s) in the role play?

Yes. As part of the [amendments we have made to our assessments](#), from 2021 onwards the teacher script includes a prompt for teacher-examiners to ask students if they have a question. Teacher-examiners should not deviate from the wording of the question in the script. If the candidate asks a question without prompting, the prompt in the teacher script need not be read out.

20. What if the teacher-examiner says something other than the questions or prompts in the role play or picture-based task, for example ‘Ah oui?’

The teacher should keep to the wording of both the questions and prompts on the stimulus cards wherever possible. Failure to adhere to the prescribed wording will result in candidates not being credited for their response. However, expressions such as ‘Ah oui’ in response to what the candidate is saying are fine, because they do not give candidates any advantage.

21. Can the teacher-examiner repeat or rephrase a question?

At any point in the exam, the teacher-examiner may repeat a question (or prompt in the picture-based task) twice, meaning that the teacher-examiner can ask any question/prompt a maximum of three times. A teacher-examiner may repeat a question or prompt whether or not a candidate has requested this.

Please note:

- Questions in the role play and picture-based task must only be asked exactly as written, and must not be rephrased or supplemented by a different question.
- In the picture-based task, teachers may only use the permitted prompts exactly as written to encourage the candidate to give a more thorough response. These prompts must not be rephrased or supplemented by a different prompt.

22. Can teachers provide any feedback on the content prepared by the candidate for Task 3 – Conversation Part 1?

No, teachers must not provide any feedback to candidates on the content they have prepared on their selected topic for Task 3 – Conversation Part 1.

23. What should I do if a candidate strays from their chosen topic in part 1 of the conversation?

Prepare candidates in advance by making sure they have a strong grasp of the themes and the different topics within them. If you feel a candidate is straying from their chosen topic in part 1 of the conversation, you must try to steer them back to it.

24. What would happen if all candidates were set the same topic for part 1 of the conversation?

Centres must not set topics for candidates for the first part of the conversation. Centres must encourage each candidate to choose a topic of personal interest from those available.

25. When must a candidate select their topic for part 1 of the conversation?

The choice of topic must be selected and agreed between the candidate and the teacher no later than two weeks before the assessment takes place.

26. What must I do if a candidate announces just before their scheduled exam that they have chosen a different topic for the first part of the conversation, and not the one agreed previously?

You must agree the conversation topic with the student no later than two weeks prior to their scheduled exam. If, however, the student announces a change immediately prior to their scheduled exam, then you must allocate them new stimulus cards using the sequencing grid. This will ensure that the student still covers four of the five themes in their speaking exam.

27. Should the candidate announce their chosen topic?

Yes – at the start of the conversation, the candidate should state their chosen aspect(s) from their nominated topic and talk about it for up to 1 minute.

28. For how long must the candidate talk about their chosen topic?

The candidate must be prepared to talk about the chosen aspect(s) from their nominated topic for up to 1 minute. After that time (or before, if the candidate comes to a natural end or runs out of things to say) the teacher-examiner should move into the Q and A section of the assessment.

29. Can the candidate memorise a minute's worth of content for part 1 of the conversation?

Candidates are allowed to memorise this content but should be encouraged not to deliver it in a mechanical way.

30. Can the candidate memorise answers to the teacher-examiner's questions for parts 1 and 2 of the conversation?

Candidates must not be given the teacher-examiner's questions in advance of the speaking assessment. In order to ensure interaction and spontaneity in the conversation it is not appropriate for candidates to memorise answers to pre-set teacher-examiner questions.

31. For Task 3 – Conversation, can the teacher-examiner ask the same questions of each candidate?

We would strongly recommend that you ask different questions of each candidate, listening carefully to the answers the candidate gives and developing the conversation accordingly. The questions you ask should give candidates the opportunity to use past, present and future tenses/timeframes, and to express and justify opinions.

32. How long should we spend on the two parts of the conversation?

You must allocate an equal amount of time to both parts of the conversation.

33. How can candidates add spontaneity to the conversation?

The conversation must give candidates the opportunity to provide relevant impromptu responses based on the questions they have been asked. Candidates should be encouraged, wherever possible, to initiate and develop the conversation independently. They could do this in many ways, including by offering their own opinion on something they have heard or asking questions (on the theme or about the teacher-examiner's opinion on the theme).

34. Does a candidate have to ask questions to reach the top band in the conversation for interaction and spontaneity?

Not necessarily—to reach the top band for interaction and spontaneity, candidates will be expected to take the lead in the conversation. However, this could be through means other than asking direct questions. For example, candidates could initiate a change of topic, sense check something that's been said or talk about something related to the original topic.

35. Can the teacher-examiner repeat a question when they realise a candidate has responded incorrectly?

No – if a candidate answers a question incorrectly, the teacher must not repeat the question.

36. When do speaking assessments have to be completed?

All speaking assessments must be conducted by centres within the five-week assessment period in April/May set by Pearson. The assessment period will be confirmed and communicated each year in the UK Information Manual. 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.

37. Under what circumstances can a speaking assessment/recording be abandoned and restarted?

Examinations must not be stopped or abandoned unless there is an unavoidable emergency. In the event of an emergency, please ensure the relevant JCQ guidance is followed.

Where the candidate is eligible for access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, the centre is advised to contact Pearson Edexcel directly at languagesassessment@pearson.com for further guidance.

38. If a candidate is severely distressed, what action should be taken?

To minimise the potential for candidates becoming nervous or stressed during the speaking assessment, teachers are encouraged to build in regular classroom opportunities to practise the different task-types that will be assessed. Increased familiarity with these tasks, experience of at least one ‘mock’ speaking assessment in examination conditions and a good grounding in grammar and vocabulary should help to alleviate their concerns. Candidates must be aware that the speaking assessment has been designed to allow them to show that they can communicate and interact spontaneously in the spoken target language and, to some extent, cope with unpredictable content.

However, in rare situations where a candidate is severely stressed (e.g. bursting out crying), the teacher-examiner should allow a short, supervised rest break for the candidate to compose themselves and then continue the assessment. If unable to do this, the recording must be stopped, and all assessment materials collected in from the candidate at this time. The candidate may be allowed time to recover, with supervision, and restart the test if the assessment can be restarted on the same day of the scheduled assessment. It is at the centre’s discretion as to how to proceed in these circumstances:

- If most of the assessment had been completed prior to the candidate’s distress (minimum of 5 minutes for Foundation Tier and 8 minutes for Higher Tier), the centre may consider submitting the recording for marking. In addition, the centre may consider applying for special consideration for the candidate if there is a clear and justifiable reason for the distress.
- If only a partial recording of the assessment has been undertaken at the time of the candidate’s distress (under 5 minutes for Foundation Tier and 8 minutes for Higher Tier), the candidate must be encouraged to re-sit the assessment. If re-sitting, candidates must be provided with different stimulus cards for Tasks 1 and 2, and their second conversation topic must be reallocated, following the order prescribed in the sequencing grid.
- Only in cases where the distress occurred at the very start of the assessment (or within 2 minutes of the recording being started) would we allow for the candidate to continue with the same stimulus cards.

39. If a candidate has severe anxiety and needs to leave the room during the speaking assessment, what action should be taken?

If the candidate is eligible for supervised breaks due to their specific special requirements, the teacher-examiner must pause the recording when the candidate exits the room. An invigilator must accompany the candidate at all times until the candidate returns to the examination room to re-commence the assessment. The teacher-examiner should keep a record of the supervised break, and ensure that the candidate has the opportunity to utilise the allowable time remaining.

40. What process should be followed if a candidate is absent for the scheduled speaking assessment?

You should note this formally (e.g. on centre-headed paper) but continue to adhere to the sequencing arrangements already planned in line with the grid supplied in your assessment pack. Any absent candidates can be assessed at a later date but this must be within the assessment window. If the candidate does not sit the speaking assessment component at all within the assessment window, then you must mark the candidate as absent.

41. How can we arrange a speaking assessment for a candidate who wishes to enter for a language not taught in our centre?

Candidates should only be entered for a language qualification if arrangements for assessing the speaking component have been made. For support with arranging speaking assessments for non-taught languages, please see [this guide](#).

42. Would a candidate's use of gender-neutral language in speaking assessments be considered correct?

We are inclusive and support learners' use of their preferred ways of referring to themselves within the confines of the target language. If native speakers of a language support gender neutrality in a particular way, through the use of new pronouns for example, then our examiners will accept these when used by a candidate correctly – even though this usage may not always be recognised by some of the languages 'Academies' in certain countries.

Please see our [guidance on the use of gender-neutral language](#) for more details and examples.

Paper 4 Writing FAQs

43. Can candidates answer both optional questions in the writing paper, instead of choosing one?

In 2022 only, Question 2 in the Foundation Tier writing paper will present candidates with an additional optional question. This means that for Questions 2 and 3 of the Foundation Tier paper and Questions 1 and 2 of the Higher Tier paper, candidates are required to answer one of two optional questions. Candidates must follow the instructions in the paper and answer the correct number of questions. We strongly discourage candidates from answering both questions: quality of response is key, and candidates are likely to produce lower quality responses if answering too many questions in the time available.

44. Do examiners stop marking after the word count limit is reached?

Our word counts are recommendations and candidates should be guided by these. We do not recommend that candidates significantly exceed the word count as this can often prove counterproductive; time may be better spent checking work. However, if candidates do exceed the word count guidance, all work produced will be marked and no automatic cut off or penalty will be imposed.

45. Would a candidate's use of gender-neutral language in the writing paper be considered correct?

We are inclusive and support learners' use of their preferred ways of referring to themselves within the confines of the target language. If native speakers of a language support gender neutrality in a particular way, through the use of new pronouns for example, then our examiners will accept these when used by a candidate correctly – even though this usage may not always be recognised by some of the languages 'Academies' in certain countries.

Please see our [guidance on the use of gender-neutral language](#) for more details and examples.