

Examiners' Report /
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCSE Greek (5GK02) Paper 01

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Examiner Report

Performance

This year's examining team was pleased to note that performance was once again of a high standard with many candidates demonstrating a broad range of higher level skills in Greek and some excellent examining on display. Most of the candidates performed best in circumstances where teacher-examiners asked specifically targeted questions that ensured that their candidates were given precise opportunities to communicate to the best of their ability. However, in some cases teacher-examiners who did not examine well put some candidates at a disadvantage.

The most popular choice of assessment model for the first task was the presentation with follow-up questions on a subject that the candidates found interesting and exciting. The majority of them were well prepared and displayed a high level of competence when presenting in Greek. Similarly, those who chose to bring a picture and discuss about it were able to describe a past experience or talk about someone they admire (eg a singer or an athlete) and at the same time show that they can interact naturally on a subject of their preference. The majority of candidates performed very well in the second task, illustrating their familiarity with the two themes of the new specification and the possible questions related to them.

The majority of candidates demonstrated the ability to refer to past and future events and to express opinions and ideas. Most teacher examiners appeared to be aware that this is a very important criterion for assessing candidates' performance. Candidates aiming at the higher grades were able to respond in some detail to a wide range of questions and to convey opinions and justifications in longer, more complex sentences. They were also able to use a range of time frames and to employ more complex linguistic structures and sophisticated items of vocabulary.

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. "School", for example, is no longer an appropriate topic area in its own right,

although examiners accept that a brief discussion of school might be an appropriate lead-in to a discussion of future plans.

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.

In some cases, candidates underperformed when teacher examiners did not allow the candidates to finish their presentation, but interrupted them with a question before 1-2 minutes have passed, which subsequently affected the candidates' concentration. The importance of the role of the teacher-examiner is instrumental to good performances. To this extent, candidates should not mainly be asked questions which can be answered with one word, nor with a list, but should be provided with opportunities to demonstrate their language abilities.

A number of 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 disadvantaged when teacher-examiners moved to the next task immediately after the follow-up questions and before the 4 minutes limit. Also there were a few teacher-examiners that failed to announce the end of task 1 and the beginning of task 2. 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. Then they should announce the end of task 1 and the beginning of task 2.

Generally, teacher-examiners were disciplined in allocating an equal and appropriate amount of time to each task. However, as in previous years, timing of the speaking test is still an issue. 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 were too long or there was a lack of balance between the time allocated to each task. Tasks which are longer than 5 minutes might contain rewardable material which cannot be taken into account due to their length.

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/USBs and the relevant paperwork within the timeframe allowed. Examiners were very pleased to receive a number of recordings on a CD or memory stick. These formats are very welcome and all centers are encouraged to adopt one or the other, in preference to cassettes.

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

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).

Centres are also 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

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