

## Contents

[Overview of the new GCSE oral](#) [page 2](#)

[Frequently asked questions](#) [page 5](#)

Click on the links above to access the relevant information

## Overview of the new GCSE oral

GCSE orals (Paper 2) are conducted by centres and marked by Edexcel examiners.

The GCSE oral assesses candidates' ability to communicate and interact effectively for different purposes. Candidates will need to:

- convey information and narrate events
- speak spontaneously
- use a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures accurately
- express and justify points of view
- use accurate pronunciation and intonation

The oral comprises three separate tasks: a role play, a picture-based task and a conversation. There are 70 marks available at both Foundation and Higher Tiers.

### Oral timings

Foundation Tier		Higher Tier	
<b>Preparation time</b>	12 minutes	<b>Preparation time</b>	12 minutes
<b>Task 1 – role play</b>	1–1.5 minutes	<b>Task 1 – role play</b>	2–2.5 minutes
<b>Task 2 – picture-based task</b>	2.5–3 minutes	<b>Task 2 – picture-based task</b>	3–3.5 minutes
<b>Task 3 – conversation</b>	3.5–4.5 minutes	<b>Task 3 – conversation</b>	5–6 minutes
<b>Overall timings</b>	<b>7–9 minutes (+ 12 minutes' preparation)</b>	<b>Overall timings</b>	<b>10–12 minutes (+ 12 minutes' preparation)</b>

### Preparation time

Candidates have 12 minutes of supervised preparation time immediately prior to their oral at both Foundation and Higher Tiers.

During this time, candidates can refer to their allocated stimulus cards for task 1 (role play) and task 2 (picture-based task) only. Students must not have access to a dictionary or any other resources during the preparation time.

Candidates are permitted to make notes relating to tasks 1 and 2. They must not write more than one side of A4 in total. They may refer to their notes during their oral (but should be discouraged from reading whole prepared sentences). Candidates should hand the teacher-examiner the two stimulus cards and their side of notes on completion of task 2 and prior to the commencement of task 3.

### Task 1 – role play

Role plays at both Foundation and Higher Tiers will be based on topics from Themes 1 to 4 only. The role play will not be based on Theme 5 International and global dimension.

The purpose of the role play is to assess the candidate's ability to:

- ask questions
- answer questions
- select the correct register (formal or informal)

All candidates are required to speak in the present tense (or a familiar conditional tense if more natural to do so). No questions will require the use of future time frames. At Higher level, candidates

are additionally required to respond to one question set in a past tense.

Foundation Tier (1–1.5 minutes)	Higher Tier (2–2.5 minutes)
<p>Five bullet points eliciting five utterances from the candidate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● two require candidates to answer straightforward questions within the context of the role play scenario</li> <li>● one requires candidates to give an opinion/reason/description</li> <li>● one (marked ?) requires candidates to ask a question</li> <li>● one (marked !) requires candidates to answer an unpredictable question</li> </ul>	<p>Five bullet points eliciting five utterances from the candidate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● one requires candidates to answer a straightforward question within the context of the role play scenario</li> <li>● one requires candidates to give an opinion/reason/description</li> <li>● two (marked ?) require candidates to ask questions</li> <li>● one (marked !) requires candidates to answer an unpredictable question asked in the past tense</li> </ul>

### Task 2 – picture-based task

Picture-based tasks at both Foundation and Higher Tiers will be based on topics from all five themes.

The purpose of the picture-based task is to assess the candidate’s ability to:

- exchange opinions
- provide descriptions
- narrate events

The set questions must be asked exactly as presented – they must not be rephrased.

To help candidates develop their responses as well as they are able, additional prompts are provided for each question. Where prompts are required, they must be asked exactly as presented – the prompts must not be rephrased or supplemented by a different prompt.

Foundation Tier (2.5–3 minutes)	Higher Tier (3–3.5 minutes)
<p><b>Question 1 (present tense)</b> Will always require the candidate to describe the picture</p> <p><b>Question 2</b> Will require the candidate to give an opinion</p> <p><b>Question 3 (past tense)</b> Will require the candidate to narrate a past event</p> <p><b>Question 4 (future or conditional tense)</b> Will require the candidate to talk about plans or ambitions</p> <p><b>Question 5</b> Will require the candidate to give an opinion/personal response to a more open question related to the topic of the picture</p>	<p><b>Question 1 (present tense)</b> Will always require the candidate to describe the picture</p> <p><b>Question 2</b> Will require the candidate to give an opinion</p> <p><b>Question 3 (past tense)</b> Will require the candidate to narrate a past event</p> <p><b>Question 4 (future or conditional tense)</b> Will require the candidate to talk about plans or ambitions</p> <p><b>Question 5</b> Will require the candidate to give an opinion/personal response to an unexpected question</p>

### Task 3 – conversation

The conversation is made up of two parts, each covering a different specification theme:

- Part 1 – on a topic from a theme chosen by the candidate in advance
- Part 2 – on a different theme allocated using a sequencing grid provided by Pearson

Foundation Tier (3.5–4.5 minutes)	Higher Tier (5–6 minutes)
Conversation part 1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● On a topic chosen by the candidate from one of the five themes in the specification</li><li>● The candidate must choose this topic no later than 2 weeks before the date of assessment</li><li>● The candidate may focus on any aspect of the chosen topic</li><li>● The candidate should state the chosen topic and then talk about it for up to 1 minute</li><li>● The subsequent conversation should be about the chosen topic and may extend to other topics within the same theme if necessary</li></ul>	
Conversation part 2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● For each candidate there is a choice of two themes on the sequencing grid</li><li>● The teacher must use the sequencing grid to determine the theme for part 2 of the conversation (which must be different from the theme discussed in part 1 of the conversation)</li><li>● The conversation may focus on one or more topics within the theme</li></ul>	

In both parts of the conversation, candidates must:

- answer questions freely and produce extended sequences of speech
- develop conversations and discussions
- give and justify their own thoughts and opinions
- refer to past, present and future events, using a range of tenses and timeframes

### Assessment

The GCSE oral (Paper 2) assesses AO2:

*Speaking – communicate and interact effectively in speech*

At both Foundation and Higher Tiers there are 70 marks available, as follows:

#### Task 1 (10 marks)

There are 2 marks available for communication for each of the five utterances.

#### Task 2 (24 marks)

There are 16 marks available for Communication and Content, and 8 marks available for Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy.

#### Task 3 (36 marks)

There are 12 marks available for Communication and Content, 12 marks available for Interaction and Spontaneity, and 12 marks available for Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy.

## Frequently asked questions

### 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?

Where the assessment has a photograph element, e.g. the picture-based task (Paper 2) or Question 1 of the Foundation Tier writing paper (Paper 4), it may be appropriate for visually impaired candidate to disregard the photo description aspect of the assessment.

All access arrangements and reasonable adjustment requests are considered on a case-by-case basis. In the first instance, centres are advised to follow the procedure to apply for access arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments for visually impaired candidates.

## Paper 1 Listening

### 3. How do I access the transcript for the listening examination?

Your centre will need to register for the Secure Download Service in advance of the actual examination date. Please refer to pages 10–11 of the [administrative support guide](#) for details.

### 4. 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.

Please remember that where the CD is manually paused/played to provide the extra time, the invigilator should be the only person pausing/playing the CD.

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

If there is an issue noted with the sound quality when the CD is being checked prior to the examination then, where available, the spare or second CD should be used. Alternatively, the centre should download the MP3 recording via the Secure Download Service and use this instead.

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

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

You can open the materials **three working days** before the speaking assessments are due to take place at your centre, in order to give you time to prepare. The materials will include stimulus cards, instructions on sequencing and a sequencing grid which you will need to use to plan the assessments.

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

Details of the information you will need to give at the start of each recording are included on page 21 of the [administrative support guide](#).

**8. 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.

**9. 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.

**10. 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 any of the cards are likely to cause distress to the candidate, then the teacher-examiner must offer the card from the next appropriate row of the sequencing grid.

**11. 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 then 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.

**12. 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 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.

**13. 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. They may refer to their notes during their assessment (but should be discouraged from reading whole prepared sentences). Candidates must hand the teacher-examiner the two stimulus cards and their CN2 form on completion of Task 2 and prior to the commencement of Task 3.

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

Yes – 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.*

**15. 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.

**16. 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.

**17. 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, and 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.

**18. What happens if a candidate uses the wrong register in the role play?**

It is important that candidates are able to recognise and use the different registers correctly, and that they understand that they will be required to use a particular register in the role play. Candidates will always be addressed in the formal register when required to use it themselves. However, candidates will not be penalised for using the incorrect register, as long as meaning is conveyed.

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

No – you must not deviate from the wording of the questions on the role play stimulus card. If you do use a prompt that isn't written on the stimulus card to move the conversation on, the candidate can receive no credit for that particular utterance.

**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 all 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 first available row in 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. 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 mechanistic 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, 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. In 2018, the assessment period is 9 April to 15 May 2018.

**37. Can candidates resit the speaking assessment?**

The new language GCSEs are fully linear qualifications. Candidates will not be able to resit individual papers. If a candidate wishes to resit the speaking assessment, they will have to enter for the whole qualification again.

**38. 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](mailto:languagesassessment@pearson.com) for further guidance.

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

## Paper 4 Writing

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

For Question 3 of the Foundation Tier paper, and Questions 1 and 2 of the Higher Tier paper, students 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.