

A-level Speaking tests in French, German and Spanish

Guide to the conduct of tests 7652/3T
7662/3T and 7692/3T

Objectives

- To look briefly at some key administrative points regarding the A-level speaking test.
- To understand how the A-level speaking test functions.
- To understand how the student's performance in this test is assessed.
- To understand how this affects the examiner's role in the conduct of this test.
- To identify aspects of best practice that will enable the optimum performance by the student.

Key administrative points

- Tests are to be conducted during a five-week window during April and May. The dates each year will be published in the our [exam timetable](#).
- Tests are to be recorded as MP3 files and may be submitted on either CD or USB memory stick.
- Confidential materials can be opened up to two working days before the start of the assessment window.

Key administrative points

- Confidential materials must be checked in and out of secure storage and must remain within the centre at all times.
- These materials must remain confidential until the end of the assessment window.
- Please ensure that all necessary information and instruction posters are displayed in the room where tests are conducted.

Key administrative points

- For the A-level speaking test one room is required for the conduct of the tests and a room or area for students awaiting their test.
- This is not a preparation room as students prepare in the conduct room under the supervision of the examiner.
- It is recommended that the waiting area is supervised to ensure students are quiet and remain calm.

Key administrative points

- The conduct room should be in a quiet part of the school or college.
- The space should be adequate for examiner and student to be comfortable and for materials for the test to be set out.
- Carpets and curtains improve the acoustics and thus the quality of the recording.
- Recording equipment should be positioned and tested to ensure optimum quality.

Key administrative points

- The examiner will have collected in completed Candidate Record Forms (CRF) which are the only material the student can have during the Individual Research Project (IRP) presentation and discussion.
- The CRF should be given to the student together with the stimulus cards for the Part 1 discussion of a sub-theme at the start of the 5 minutes preparation time.

Key administrative points

- Tests are marked by AQA.
- When submitting tests, schools and colleges must ensure that they provide all the information required as set out in the Instructions for the conduct of exams: A-level French, German and Spanish (Sections on 7652/3T, 7662/3T and 7692/3T).

The A-level speaking test

The A-level speaking test is in two parts:

- Part 1: Discussion of a sub-theme based on a stimulus card
- Part 2: Presentation and discussion of the student's IRP.

For the purpose of this training we will keep separate the outline presentation and the discussion of the IRP.

The A-level speaking test

Timings for each part of the test:

- Part 1 sub-theme discussion 5 to 6 minutes
- Part 2 student presentation of IRP 2 minutes
- Part 2 discussion of IRP 9 to 10 minutes

It is important that these timings are adhered to as the marking of the test will be strictly in line with the above timings.

The A-level speaking test

- Marking for the Part 1 discussion will stop at 6 minutes.
- Marking for the student IRP presentation will stop at 2 minutes.
- Marking for the IRP discussion will stop at 10 minutes.

The A-level speaking test

- Allowing for 5 minutes preparation time, the total time needed for the A-level speaking test is 23 minutes.
- Tests should therefore be scheduled for every 30 minutes to allow the examiner time to prepare calmly and efficiently for the next student.
- It is recommended that breaks are built into the schedule at least every fourth student.

Part 1 stimulus card discussion

- The student will be given two cards according to the sequence provided with the confidential materials.
- The student must choose **one** card to prepare.
- The time allowed for the preparation is 5 minutes and this preparation takes place in the room where the test will take place and is supervised by the examiner.

Preparation time

- The 5 minutes preparation time is for preparing responses to the printed questions on the stimulus card and for preparing two questions to put to the examiner.
- There will not be time for students to script lengthy responses.
- Encourage them to use bullet points in the target language.

How the Part 1 discussion is assessed

- The total marks available for the Part 1 sub-theme is 25 marks.
- These are allocated across all four assessment objectives (AOs).

AOs and marks available

- AO1 Understand and respond in speech to spoken language including face to face interaction (5 marks).
- AO2 Understand and respond in speech to written language drawn from a variety of sources (5 marks).
- AO3 Manipulate the language accurately, in spoken form, using a range of lexis and structure (10 marks).
- AO4 Show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken (5 marks).

AOs and marks available

- Look in more detail at the mark bands and descriptors for each AO.
- Consider how this information impacts on how the examiner conducts the test.

A01

Mark	Descriptors
5	Delivery is fluent throughout. The ideas and opinions expressed are nearly always developed, independently of prompts. Students give an appropriate response to nearly all unpredictable elements.
4	Delivery is mainly fluent. The ideas and opinions expressed are mostly developed, independently of prompts. Students give an appropriate response to most unpredictable elements.
3	Delivery is sometimes fluent. The ideas and opinions expressed are sometimes developed, independently of prompts. Students give an appropriate response to some unpredictable elements.
2	Delivery is occasionally fluent. The ideas and opinions expressed are occasionally developed, independently of prompts. Students give an appropriate response to a few unpredictable elements.
1	Delivery is rarely fluent. The ideas and opinions expressed are rarely developed, independently of prompts. Students give an appropriate response to very few unpredictable elements.
0	Nothing in the performance is worthy of a mark.

A01: key messages

- Pace of delivery and how easy or otherwise this is to follow.
- Development of ideas and opinions.
- Response to unpredictable elements.

From key messages to aspects of conduct: A01

- Model in the asking of questions the sort of pace we want in the delivery of responses.
- A calm, relaxed but purposeful manner in the conduct of the test will help the student.
- Use questions that elicit views and opinions and that invite the student to develop points made.
- Make sure there are regular unpredictable elements.

Mark	Description
5	Students' responses show that they have a very good understanding of the material on the card.
4	Students' responses show that they have a good understanding of the material on the card.
3	Students' responses show that they have some understanding of the material on the card.
2	Students' responses show that they have a limited understanding of the material on the card.
1	Students' responses show that they have a very limited understanding of the material on the card.
0	Nothing in the performance is worthy of a mark.

A02: key messages

- Link between student responses and what these show of their understanding of the material on the card.
- Material on the card means the text containing target language headings, any statement of opinion, any factual or statistical information and the printed questions.
- The questions asked by the student come within A02.

From key messages to aspects of conduct: A02

- Remember to prompt the student to ask two questions or a penalty will be applied in A02.
- Don't leave misinterpreted or misunderstood material unchallenged.
- Guide the student towards reviewing and rethinking the wrong interpretation or misunderstanding.
- Keep as close as possible to the phrasing of the printed questions as it appears on the card.
- Don't use explicit comprehension test style questions.

A03

Mark	Description
9–10	A wide range of varied vocabulary and complex language and a good knowledge of appropriate idiom are demonstrated. Highly accurate application of grammar with occasional minor errors. Pronunciation and intonation are very good.
7–8	A good range of vocabulary and complex language and some knowledge of appropriate idiom are demonstrated. Mostly accurate application of grammar with some minor errors. Pronunciation and intonation are good.
5–6	Some variety of vocabulary and complex language is demonstrated. Accurate application of grammar is uneven. Pronunciation and intonation are fairly good.
3–4	Little variety of vocabulary and is demonstrated. Accurate application of grammar is limited. Pronunciation and intonation are mostly intelligible.
1–2	Very little variety of vocabulary and structures is demonstrated. Accurate application of grammar is very limited. Pronunciation and intonation are poor.
0	Nothing in the performance is worthy of a mark.

A03: key messages

- Variety of vocabulary, complexity of language and appropriateness of idiom – idiom refers to a form of expression particular to the target language.
- Accurate application of grammar: serious errors are defined as those which adversely affect communication.
- Pronunciation and intonation – not expected to be of native speaker standard.

From key messages to aspects of conduct: A03

- Use questions that provide opportunities for complex language to be demonstrated.
- Encourage the student to explain points in ways that can show more varied vocabulary.
- Distinguish between idiom and idioms and discourage responses peppered with the latter.
- Emphasise good and very good pronunciation and intonation in practising speaking skills.

Mark	Description
5	Very good critical and analytical response. Very good knowledge and understanding of those aspects of the sub-theme covered in the discussion. Students consistently select relevant information to support their arguments. They consistently use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating a very good evaluation of the sub-theme.
4	Good critical and analytical response. Good knowledge and understanding of those aspects of the sub-theme covered in the discussion. Students often select relevant information to support their arguments. They often use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating a good evaluation of the sub-theme.
3	Reasonable critical and analytical response. Reasonable knowledge and understanding of those aspects of the sub-theme covered in the discussion. Students sometimes select relevant information to support their arguments. They sometimes use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating a reasonable evaluation of the sub-theme.

Mark	Description
2	Limited critical and analytical response. Some knowledge and understanding of those aspects of the sub-theme covered in the discussion. Students occasionally select relevant information to support their arguments. They occasionally use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating a limited evaluation of the sub-theme.
1	Very limited critical and analytical response. A little knowledge and understanding of those aspects of the sub-theme covered in the discussion. Students rarely select relevant information to support their arguments. They rarely use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating a very limited evaluation of the sub-theme.
0	Nothing in the performance is worthy of a mark.

A04: key messages

- Quality of critical and analytical response.
- Quality of knowledge and understanding of aspects of sub-theme covered.
- Frequency with which relevant information is selected to support arguments.
- Frequency with which appropriate evidence is used to justify conclusions.
- Overall quality of the evaluation of the sub-theme.

From key messages to aspects of conduct: A04

- Factual knowledge per se is not what is required.
- Relevant knowledge and understanding of the sub-theme that support arguments and relevant evidence to justify conclusions.
- Encourage student led knowledge ... 'from what you've learned in your studies/as far as you are aware/in the country or communities you've studied'.
- Remember the knowledge and understanding are about target language countries or communities.

From key messages to aspects of conduct: A04

- If appropriate, draw on student's first hand knowledge gained from a visit abroad or contact with pen friends.
- If the student's responses focus too much on factual knowledge, work in some opinion questions.
- Keep the balance between knowledge and understanding and the purposes these are for (supporting arguments, justifying conclusions and evaluating the sub-theme).

The structured dialogue approach

- The Part 1 discussion is supported by a stimulus card.
- The card has three printed questions.
- Stagger the asking of the printed questions across about the first two minutes of the test.
- Focus on and follow up student responses to the questions and use supplementary questions.
- Explore aspects of the stimulus card that the student may have overlooked.
- This will create the unpredictable elements you need.
- Having explored the printed questions through follow-up questions and discussion, focus on wider aspects of the sub-theme.

Concluding Part 1 and introducing Part 2

- Collect in the stimulus cards and the notes from the student.
- Explain that you are now moving to the IRP and invite the student to give a 2 minute (maximum) outline of the IRP topic.
- If necessary at the end of 2 minutes, interrupt to explain to the student that you must now move to a discussion of the IRP topic.

IRP presentation – assessment

- The 2 minute presentation is assessed only for AO4.
- Show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken (5 marks).

IRP presentation mark scheme

Mark	Descriptor
5	Thorough knowledge and understanding of the area of study are evident in the presentation.
4	Good knowledge and understanding of the area of study are evident in the presentation.
3	Reasonable knowledge and understanding of the area of study are evident in the presentation.
2	Limited knowledge and understanding of the area of study are evident in the presentation.
1	Very limited knowledge and understanding of the area of study are evident in the presentation.
0	Nothing in the presentation is worthy of a mark.

More specifically

Knowledge	Descriptor
Thorough	A presentation that demonstrates that the student has fully understood and assimilated research-based knowledge through the development, in the time available, of key findings.
Good	A presentation that demonstrates that the student has mostly understood and assimilated research-based knowledge through the development, in the time available, of key findings.
Reasonable	A presentation that demonstrates that the student has understood and assimilated some research-based knowledge through the development, in the time available, of key findings.
Limited	A brief outline of key findings with little development and showing little understanding and assimilation of research-based knowledge
Very limited	The briefest outline of key findings with very little development and showing very little understanding and assimilation of research-based knowledge

Key messages

- This is an opportunity for the student to demonstrate what they have learned from their research.
- It will be better to focus on a number of key findings with some development of each rather than deal in depth with only one or two aspects.
- This presentation will form the basis of the ensuing discussion.

Key messages

- Though it's assessed only for AO4, delivery needs to be considered to make sure the examiner can understand the presentation.
- Students should bear in mind that the person listening to and marking their test will be hearing the material for the first time and will listen to it only once.
- Pace and clarity are therefore important.

The IRP discussion

The discussion is assessed for:

- AO1 – Understand and respond in speech to spoken language including face to face interaction (10 marks).
- AO3 – Manipulate the language accurately, in spoken form, using a range of lexis and structure (10 marks).
- AO4 – Show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken (10 marks)

A01

Mark	Descriptors
5	Delivery is fluent throughout. The ideas and opinions expressed are nearly always developed, independently of prompts. Students engage very well in the discussion and give an appropriate response to nearly all questions.
4	Delivery is mainly fluent. The ideas and opinions expressed are mostly developed, independently of prompts. Students engage well in the discussion and give an appropriate response to most questions.
3	Delivery is sometimes fluent. The ideas and opinions expressed are sometimes developed, independently of prompts. Students engage reasonably well in the discussion and give an appropriate response to some questions.
2	Delivery is occasionally fluent. The ideas and opinions expressed are occasionally developed, independently of prompts. Students engage to a limited extent in the discussion and give an appropriate response to a few questions.
1	Delivery is rarely fluent. The ideas and opinions expressed are rarely developed, independently of prompts. Students engage to a very limited extent in the discussion and give an appropriate response to very few questions.
0	Nothing in the performance is worthy of a mark.

Key messages

- Pace of delivery and how easy or otherwise this is to follow.
- Development of ideas and opinions independently of prompts.
- Quality of the student's engagement with the discussion.
- Response to questions.

From key messages to aspects of conduct

- Model in the asking of questions the sort of pace we want in the delivery of responses.
- A calm, relaxed but purposeful manner in the conduct of the test will help the student.
- Use questions and prompts that elicit views and opinions and that leave the way open for points to be developed.
- Keep the discussion relevant to the sources and headings on the Candidate Record Form.

A03

Mark	Descriptors
9–10	A wide range of vocabulary and complex language and a good knowledge of appropriate idiom are demonstrated. Highly accurate application of grammar with occasional minor errors. Pronunciation and intonation are very good.
7–8	A good range of vocabulary and complex language and some knowledge of appropriate idiom are demonstrated. Mostly accurate application of grammar with some minor errors. Pronunciation and intonation are good.
5–6	Some variety of vocabulary and complex language is demonstrated. Accurate application of grammar is uneven. Pronunciation and intonation are fairly good.
3–4	Little variety of vocabulary and structures is demonstrated. Accurate application of grammar is limited. Pronunciation and intonation are mostly intelligible.
12	Very little variety of vocabulary and structures is demonstrated. Accurate application of grammar is very limited. Pronunciation and intonation are poor.
0	Nothing in the performance is worthy of a mark.

A03: key messages

- Variety of vocabulary, complexity of language and appropriateness of idiom – idiom refers to a form of expression particular to the target language.
- Accurate application of grammar: serious errors are defined as those which adversely affect communication.
- Pronunciation and intonation – not expected to be of native speaker standard.

From key messages to aspects of conduct: A03

- Use questions that provide opportunities for complex language to be demonstrated.
- Encourage the student to explain points in ways that can show more varied vocabulary.
- Distinguish between idiom and idioms and discourage responses peppered with the latter.
- Emphasise good and very good pronunciation and intonation in practising speaking skills.

Mark	Descriptors
9–10	Excellent critical and analytical response. From the research carried out, the student has acquired thorough knowledge and understanding of the culture and society relevant to the chosen topic. Students consistently select relevant information to support their arguments. They consistently use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating an excellent evaluation of their chosen topic.
7–8	Good critical and analytical response. From the research carried out, the student has acquired good knowledge and understanding of the culture and society relevant to the chosen topic. Students often select relevant information to support their arguments. They often use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating a good evaluation of their chosen topic.
5–6	Reasonable critical and analytical response. From the research carried out, the student has acquired reasonable knowledge and understanding of the culture and society relevant to the chosen topic. Students sometimes select relevant information to support their arguments. They sometimes use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating a reasonable evaluation of their chosen topic.

Mark	Descriptors
3–4	Limited critical and analytical response. From the research carried out, the student has acquired some knowledge and understanding of the culture and society relevant to the chosen topic. Students occasionally select relevant information to support their arguments. They occasionally use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating a limited evaluation of their chosen topic.
1–2	Very limited critical and analytical response. From the research carried out, the student has acquired a little knowledge and understanding of the culture and society relevant to the chosen topic. Students rarely select relevant information to support their arguments. They rarely use appropriate evidence to justify their conclusions, demonstrating a very limited evaluation of their chosen topic.
0	The student fails completely to engage with the discussion.

Characteristics of different levels of performance

Level of performance	Descriptors
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The student will respond readily to all opportunities to explain, develop further, justify and defend opinions and views expressed about the topic under discussion.• Response to questions inviting the student to evaluate critically aspects of what has been researched will be supported by relevant factual knowledge.• Knowledge of the topic under discussion will be used consistently and effectively to support views and opinions.• Challenges from the examiner that perhaps call into question the validity of the student's findings or the conclusions they are offering will consistently be responded to with a confident and effective marshalling of knowledge.

Characteristics of different levels of performance

Level of performance	Descriptors
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The student will respond well to most opportunities to explain, develop further, justify and defend opinions and views expressed about the topic under discussion.• Response to questions inviting the student to evaluate critically aspects of what has been researched will be supported by some relevant factual knowledge but at times the student may provide information that is not directly relevant to the discussion.• Challenges from the examiner that perhaps call into question the validity of the student's findings or the conclusions they are offering will not always be responded to with a confident and effective marshalling of knowledge.

Characteristics of different levels of performance

Level of performance	Descriptors
Reasonable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The student will respond well to some opportunities to explain, develop further, justify and defend opinions and views expressed about the topic under discussion.• Response to questions inviting the student to evaluate critically aspects of what has been researched will not generally be supported by some relevant factual knowledge and the student may provide much information that is not directly relevant to the discussion.• Challenges from the examiner that perhaps call into question the validity of the student's findings or the conclusions they are offering will not usually be responded to with a confident and effective marshalling of knowledge.

Characteristics of different levels of performance

Level of performance	Descriptors
Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The student may attempt some response to opportunities to explain, develop further, justify and defend opinions and views expressed about the topic under discussion but these will not always be successful.• The nature of these responses will mean that the discussion largely avoids questions inviting the student to evaluate critically aspects of what has been researched in favour of a more factual line of questioning.• There will be few if any challenges from the examiner that perhaps call into question the validity of the student's findings or the conclusions they are offering.

Characteristics of different levels of performance

Level of performance	Descriptors
Very limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The examiner will be hard pushed to find opportunities to which the student can respond effectively to explain, develop further, justify and defend opinions and views expressed about the topic under discussion.• Questions will be designed to elicit very simple responses both in terms of language and content and there will be little awareness of linking factual information about the topic under discussion to a broader context.

Key messages

- Mark scheme rewards explanation, further development, justification and defending of opinions and views expressed about the topic under discussion.
- It rewards evidence of critical evaluation of what has been researched supported consistently and effectively by knowledge of the topic.
- It rewards responses to challenges from the examiner questioning the validity of the student's findings that show students can refer to their knowledge confidently and effectively.

From key messages to aspects of conduct

- We have to use questions that elicit views and opinions.
- We have to invite students to explain, develop further, justify and defend their views and opinions.
- We have to ensure we challenge students to evaluate critically what they have researched.
- We have to invite them to support their views with evidence, with research-based knowledge.
- We have to be very quick in reacting to what students are saying.

General conclusions

- Teacher-examiner's role is more crucial than ever in ensuring questions asked of students are providing the right opportunities.
- AO4: Knowledge and understanding counts for 20 out of the 60 marks available for the speaking test.
- Teacher-examiner questions have to draw out that AO4 knowledge not in isolation but in the context of student views and opinions.
- Students need to be challenged to support, defend and justify the views expressed with evidence from their studies.

Further guidance and support

Please visit our subject pages for [French](#), [German](#) and [Spanish](#) to find a range of resources including:

- assessment guide
- *Instructions for the conduct of the exam: A-level French, German and Spanish*
- example assessment recordings
- example assessment commentaries and marks
- guide to the individual research project.

Thank you
