
GCSE

MODERN HEBREW

8678/SH Speaking: Higher tier
Report on the Examination

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General comments

It is pleasing to report that the GCSE Modern Hebrew speaking test appeared to work well after its absence due to the pandemic. The students demonstrated their good level of oral skills. The average mark was 48/60 (80%).

There were some less able students at Higher tier who were unable to perform on elements of this test and in particular, were not able to access the lower bands in the General Conversation criteria. Schools/colleges are advised to make entry decisions that will allow students to fulfil their potential.

The aim of the following report is to highlight the key issues and show how they can be tackled for the benefit of students' performance.

In order to help students perform to the best of their ability, it is essential that teacher-examiners read the specification thoroughly and familiarise themselves with the requirements of the tests as laid out in the *Instructions for the conduct of the exam* and the speaking test training materials, both available on the AQA website.

In some cases, teacher-examiners conducting the exam did not clearly say the number of role play, the letter of the photo card and the nominated theme for each student. It was also common for the teacher-examiner not to announce when one theme of the conversation had ended, and the next theme started. This is extremely important in order to determine the correct timing. This is clearly laid out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of the exams*.

Teachers need to make sure that the exams are conducted in a quiet area of the school. In many instances this year there was a lot of background noise on the recording which makes it difficult to hear the students clearly, as well as being unsettling for students. Teachers should ensure that mobile phones are switched off as well as email notifications on the computer.

Teacher-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiners with feedback on the conduct of the speaking tests to inform the conduct of future tests. It is not possible to provide more detailed feedback than the information on the TTPR form. Feedback is provided on the basis of need only and therefore is not provided for every teacher-examiner. These documents are completed by the examiners and sent to schools by AQA

Role-plays

Teachers should keep to the script of the role-play because failure to do so may result in a student's response to a particular task not being credited. If students have prepared sufficiently well in the 12-minute preparation period, they should have notes which they can read from. The published mark scheme has more detail as to the kind of responses that were worthy of two, one or zero marks per task.

Students' responses should contain only the detail required by the bullet point on the card, e.g. one detail, one reason etc. Activities will not be rewarded in place of opinions and vice versa. This part of the test is not where students need to develop their responses. The introduction of unconnected material in the role plays must be discouraged as it is not credited and can disadvantage students if they make errors.

At times, teacher-examiners did not split two-part unprepared questions whilst others omitted to ask the second part. If the student unwittingly covered the second part in their utterance, it was, of course, credited.

Some students appeared to find the unprepared task demanding, but not as challenging as the question task. The need for students to practise generating questions in class cannot be stressed enough. Although in Modern Hebrew it is not required to use an accurate 'WH Question' – as even a *intonation* would emphasise that it's indeed a question. Nevertheless, just saying the prompt with the intonation at the end will not be credited. There were also instances of completely random questions being asked which were also not credited.

Students were able to answer all tasks on the role plays successfully.

Role play 8 - students appeared to find this task quite challenging as it was early in the role-play and some students did not connect their response to the introductory prompt on the card which was אינטרנט – עזרה למבוגרים

Photo Cards

This section is designed to allow students to explore a theme more freely. The questions focus on a *specific topic* and invite students to give their ideas and views once they have described the content of the photo. It was clear that many schools/colleges had trained their students to talk about the photo and, in so doing, use several clauses. This is good practice however make sure all sentences describe what they see in the picture. There is no need to refer to students own opinions or experiences in the first question.

In order to achieve a mark in the top band, students needed to answer all questions clearly and develop three ('most') answers by using several clauses. There was no extra credit given in this question, which is marked for Communication only, for complex language. While accuracy and pronunciation are important factors, in order to achieve clarity, the range of language is not. It was in the first three prepared questions that students were able to develop their answers more because of the extra time they have to consider answers.

Teacher-examiners are reminded that repetition of a question is allowed and that the original question can be paraphrased in the second asking; however, a full question must still be asked that retains its original meaning. Moreover, the question should not be repeated if a complete response has been given by the student. In such cases, the student's answer to the repeated question is disregarded for assessment purposes. In some cases, the teacher examiner continued to repeat the question to elicit more information, despite the student already having provided a complete answer. This is not permitted.

Card G 4/5 some students were not able to answer the question מה לדעתך עדיף: להזמין חופשה דרך או דרך סוכן נסיעות? הסברתי as they did not understand the meaning.

General Conversation

In some schools/colleges, students did not seem to be aware that the specification has changed some years ago and there is no longer a presentation and discussion. This section of the test is a general conversation where students are required to respond to questions from a variety of topics. They are also being assessed on spontaneity which requires them to respond to follow up questions rather than repeating long pre-learned monologues. Teachers are advised to look

carefully at the new assessment criteria in the specification and the *Instructions for the conduct of the exams*, available on the AQA website.

Unfortunately, some teacher-examiners asked the same questions of all of their students on the three different themes. When this happened, the spontaneous feel tended to disappear because of a total lack of follow-up questions. It also tended to be the case that not all of the questions were suited to the ability of all the students and on some occasions this also had an adverse effect on the marks.

Best practice is for teachers to ask questions aimed at the ability of the individual student and following up with additional questions after an extended response. A mixture of more open with some more closed questions worked best because usually this meant the student was on familiar ground with the open questions and could extend answers, whereas the closed questions, following up on what the student had just said, gave a more natural feel to the conversation. The required length of the general conversation is between five and seven minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of two and a half minutes and, if one or both are under that time, there is a penalty of two marks for Communication. Timing of the first theme begins when the teacher starts to ask the first question relating to that theme. The timing of that theme ends, and the second one begins, when the teacher-examiner asks the first question relating to the second theme. In other words, the changeover time between themes is added on to the first theme. Timing of the second theme ends when the teacher-examiner says 'End of test.'

It is a requirement for students to ask an understandable question of the teacher-examiner. If this does not happen, there is a deduction of one mark for Communication. It is advisable to try and get the student to ask a question during the first theme. In this way, if the question makes no coherent sense, the teacher-examiner can prompt another question later in the conversation. If the question is asked at the end of the conversation, time may be up, and it is therefore too late.

It is important to remember that students are not permitted to say which aspects of a theme they wish to cover in the General conversation and must not know in advance which questions will be asked by the teacher-examiner. Students should be prepared to respond to a range of questions on each theme and the conversation should be developed by the teacher-examiner, asking relevant follow up questions in response to what the student has said. This will enable students to access the marks for spontaneity.

Advice to teacher-examiners

General

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.
- The *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* document is available via the AQA website. It is *essential* that you follow the instructions in that document.
- In the *Instructions* document, you are told how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every candidate:

GCSE Modern Hebrew examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number ____, candidate number ____, candidate name _____. Role-play number ____, photo card letter ____, general conversation

theme chosen by candidate Theme (1, 2 or 3).

- Everything said by the teacher-examiner must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to AQA.
- Use Modern Hebrew throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her role-play and photo card combinations and the nominated theme for the general conversation in English.
- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not very good. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.
- Practise pronunciation as often as possible.

Ask students to hand over their written answers to the Role play and photo card before you start the general conversation.

Role-play

- Keep to the script as laid out in the Teacher's Role. Not to do so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.
- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop them and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.
- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.
- If there is a two-part question in an unprepared task, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so often leads to the student having to ask for repetition.

Photo card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be careful that that is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.
- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any follow-up questions.
- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question in the three-minute maximum time, you may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next one.

Remind students to pay attention to the tenses of the questions and respond in the correct tense.

General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on.
- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.
- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town is not going to be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Do not ask all students identical questions.
- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.
- Announce the change of theme in Modern Hebrew.
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 2'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
- The maximum length of the general conversation is seven minutes. Everything after that will **not** be marked.
- Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they do not do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you do not forget to do it later on.
- If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.

Advice to students

- Use the 12 minutes' preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the role-play tasks and in response to the three prepared questions on the photo card.
- For the photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one.
- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the role-play and photo card and to all questions in the General conversation.
- Make sure you know common question words.
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Modern Hebrew.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.