



GCSE

MODERN HEBREW

8678/SH

Report on the Examination

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General comments

It is pleasing to report that the format of the new GCSE Modern Hebrew speaking test appeared to work well and allowed students to demonstrate their level of oral skills.

There were some less able students at Higher Tier who were unable to cope with 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. This report gives a comprehensive overview of the 2019 GCSE Modern Hebrew speaking test, both in terms of teacher-examiner conduct and students' performance. It will highlight best practice as well as signposting areas for improvement for the 2020 and subsequent tests.

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 say clearly 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*.

In the role-play and photo card sections, if a student gave a complete, although incorrect, answer to a question, the mark awarded was zero, even if the teacher-examiner then repeated the question and a correct answer ensued. Some teacher-examiners kept asking the question again several times and this may have affected the confidence of the students concerned.

Below is more guidance on certain tasks, in particular those which students found challenging. Tasks that are not mentioned were generally executed well, especially those requiring opinions and, where appropriate, reasons.

A copy of the Speaking Score Sheet used by examiners can be found at the back of the 2019 mark scheme.

Schools/colleges are reminded that a breakdown of marks for each section of the speaking test per student is available free of charge in ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis). ERA is accessed via eAQA.

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.

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, eg 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 his or her 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 *sound* of a question mark would emphasise that it's indeed a question. Nevertheless, just saying the prompt with a sound of a question at the end will not be credited. There were also instances of completely random questions being asked which were also not credited.

Role-play 7

Task 4 (?) Some students appeared not to understand the task. It should be noted that the question task will not always be at the end of the role play.

Role-play 11

Task 2 (!) 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 חינוך ועבודה.

Role-play 12

Task 2 (!) In some cases students did not pay attention to the first prompt which talked of הופעה, and this made the task about הופעות על במה challenging to fulfil. Students are advised to read the prompts carefully and also listen carefully to the teacher's questions.

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, unless a student speaks for too long on the first

question and runs out of time at the end of this section of the exam. When the fifth question cannot be asked before the two-minute point, it means that a mark in the top band cannot be awarded because all five questions must be answered clearly for a response to be placed in the top mark band. Teachers must stay within the maximum three minutes for this task.

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 possible 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.

As in the Role plays, some teachers did not split two-part unseen questions, whilst others omitted to ask the second part.

In the Teacher's Booklet, it states: *No supplementary questions must be asked*. Despite this clear instruction, a surprising number of additional questions were asked. Students' answers to such questions were not taken into account for assessment and reduced the amount of time available for the student to answer the prescribed questions as fully as possible.

In some cases, it appeared that students were not aware of the extra two unseen questions to be asked in addition to the three prepared questions on their card. As a result, some thought the teacher had moved to the General conversation and this caused confusion.

The cards performed in line with expectation and some additional comment is provided on Card J below.

Photo card J

Task 4/5 Some students gained no marks as they gave a general response as they appeared not to know the meaning of שכונה. Some teachers wasted time trying to explain the student response which is not permitted.

General Conversation

In some schools/colleges, students did not seem to be aware that the specification had changed and there was 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 regurgitating long 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.

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 him/her 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.

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.