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# GCSE

# POLISH

8688/SH: Speaking (Higher)  
Report on the Examination

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## General comments

Centres managed well with the requirements of the new specification, which resulted in many well conducted tests.

The following report provides a comprehensive overview of the 2019 GCSE Polish Higher tier speaking test, both in terms of teacher conduct and student performance.

## Tier of entry

There were some less able students entered at Higher tier who were unable to cope with some elements of the test. In particular, they struggled with the Role play or certain questions on the Photo cards. It is recognised that the unavailability of a mixed-tier entry means that such decisions are complex. It is important that centres recognise the complexity of such decisions and make adequate choices, allowing students to perform to their full potential.

## Quality of Recording

Generally, tests were well administered but some centres submitted inadequate recordings. The problem was usually caused by the tests being recorded at a very low volume such that they were virtually inaudible. In other cases, the teacher-examiner could be heard clearly but not the student. Please remember that teachers are used to projecting their voice and therefore are likely to be louder; the microphone should be positioned closer to the student and the sound level should be set according to the student's output. On other occasions, there was extremely intrusive electronic noise from the recorder which made marking challenging for the examiner. There were also USB/CD recordings that were empty and many that were not encrypted, despite the requirement for password protection.

## Teacher Conduct

### Test routine procedures

It is pleasing to note that many teachers conducted the tests in a highly professional way, strictly following the guidelines set out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations*. This allowed for efficient testing, something which puts the student at ease and helps the examiner at a later stage. The prescribed combination of Role play, Photo card and General conversation in the AQA sequencing chart was followed by the vast majority of teachers. Unfortunately, there were a few instances of the wrong combination being used, resulting in the theme of the Photo card being duplicated in the General conversation. In such cases, the maximum mark for Communication in the General conversation that can be awarded is five out of a possible ten.

Unfortunately, there were also a few teacher-examiners who did not follow the speaking test procedures as laid out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations*. First of all, the introduction to each student must include the number of the Role play, Photo card letter and nominated theme of General conversation. After starting the test, procedural issues should be announced succinctly in Polish, eg *Scenka numer siedem*.

It is particularly important to announce a change of theme during the General conversation and under no circumstances should themes be mixed up or random/irrelevant questions on unrelated topics asked by the teacher-examiner.

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. There were cases of irregularities in the conduct of the exam that impacted adversely on students' marks.

It is essential that teacher-examiners are sufficiently prepared and have the appropriate level of language to conduct the test.

### **Timings**

Most students completed the Photo card task comfortably within the time limit at both tiers. At Higher tier, where the time limit is three minutes, there were some cases in which all five questions were not asked within the time allowed. This was occasionally due to a very slow delivery by the student, but more often the result of too long and repetitive type of answers to the first three questions, especially the first question eliciting a description of the photo.

At both tiers, many General conversations adhered to the minimum and maximum timings. On the other hand, there were some centres that had problems with timing this part of the exam. As a result, one of the themes in General conversation or sometimes even both, did not meet the minimum time requirement of two and a half minutes on each theme. This had an impact on the mark awarded for Communication in that there was a reduction of two marks. There were a number of performances, especially at Higher tier, that exceeded the seven minute maximum time limit. The centres are advised to make sure the time is spread evenly between two themes and note that the timing of the second General Conversation theme starts immediately the first question on that theme is asked. All time used up to this point is allocated to coverage of the first theme. Centres are also reminded that anything said by the student beyond the time limit is disregarded for assessment purposes.

### **Conducting the Role play**

In the Role play, the prescribed role in the Teacher's Booklet was adhered to by most teachers. There were cases however, where teacher-examiners reworded the Role play teacher script and any subsequent response by the student was invalidated. Teacher-examiners are reminded that the Polish phrases provided can only be changed if a student's response makes them inappropriate. Some teacher-examiners also asked questions which were not part of the script, asked the tasks in the wrong order or even omitted some of them, causing confusion for the student. In some Role plays, if a student gave a complete though incorrect answer to a question, the mark given was zero, even if the teacher-examiner then repeated the question and a correct answer followed. Some teacher-examiners pursued a correct answer in this way and at times it seemed to affect the student's confidence. However, when a teacher-examiner recognised that a student was starting to give a wrong answer and interjected by repeating the question, any subsequent correct answer was rewarded.

In the case of two-part unprepared questions, often ones requiring opinions and reasons, it is good practice to elicit the two elements separately. This was not done enough by teacher-examiners. Also, many teacher-examiners prompted students to ask them the question task, but unfortunately some teacher-examiners provided key vocabulary at the same time which meant that students could not be credited.

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## Conducting the Photo Card Task

There were some occasions that an entire question was paraphrased in a permissible way, eg *Co myślisz o mediach społecznościowych?* was replaced with *Co sądzisz o mediach społecznościowych?*, or *Jak osoby w Twoim wieku mogą dbać o środowisko?* – instead *Jak Twoi rówieśnicy mogą dbać o środowisko?* Alongside this, there were many cases where attempts at paraphrasing did not retain the original meaning of the question and therefore invalidated any subsequent response by the student. Quite often, some teacher-examiners introduced their own questions or added supplementary ones. As a result, students did not gain credit. There were also instances in which teacher-examiners asked only three questions instead of five which impacted on the mark which could be awarded.

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.

Some teacher-examiners interrupted students when they were developing their responses and timing of this part of the test revealed that further development of the answer from the student would have been possible within the time allowed.

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.

## Conducting the General Conversation

In some centres, teacher-examiners covered only one theme in the General conversation or mixed up two themes, which impacted on student marks. There were regular instances of duplicating the theme from the Photo card in the General conversation, which reduced the marks available for Communication. For a large number of students, there was also an imbalance between the coverage of their nominated theme and that of the second theme. Teacher-examiners should ensure that at least a minute and a half is spent on each theme.

The style of questioning for less able students did not always allow them to perform to their full potential. Most teacher-examiners used the suggested questions in the Teacher's Booklet without consideration of the ability of a particular student. Many teacher-examiners used the same questions for each student, without using supplementary questions or requesting further clarification from the student. There were also teachers using closed questions that have very limited usefulness, as they do not enable students to show their skills and knowledge of the Polish language.

In order to give the student the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to respond spontaneously, teacher-examiners should intervene and follow up what has been said, for example by seeking further detail, clarification, opinions or, for lower ability students, simple queries or requests for

further detail. There were instances when teacher-examiners asked a question that students had already discussed earlier in their responses.

Teacher-examiners are advised that there is no need to announce the full title of themes in the General conversation. In fact, this reduces the overall time available and limits the opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability and skills.

Another new aspect of the General conversation is the need to ask a question by the student. Most students either asked the question at a time of their choice, or it was elicited by the teacher at the end of the test. Unfortunately, this led to some questions not being asked within the maximum time limit and therefore the one-mark penalty being applied to the mark for Communication as outlined in the mark scheme. Teachers should encourage students to accomplish this routine task early in the General conversation to ensure it does not go beyond the time allowed. Teachers should also remember that they are allowed to prompt the student to ask a question by saying, eg *Masz jakieś pytanie?* or *Czy chciałbyś/ chciałabyś mnie o coś spytać?* Some teacher-examiners did it well, even though the students declared *Nie*, at the first instance, but other teacher-examiners did not. Failure by the student to ask a question leads to a one mark reduction.

Questions were consistently asked that allowed students to give and explain opinions, necessary to gain access to the highest tier top band for Communication. At Higher tier, most students were given the opportunity to use all three time frames, thereby gaining access to the 9-10 band for Range and accuracy of language. There were a small number of tests where students did not get opportunities to use different time frames through the questions they were asked, which meant they were unable to gain higher than the 1-2 band.

Probably the biggest challenge in the new style of speaking test for teacher-examiners is the need to use a questioning technique that allows students to clearly demonstrate spontaneity. Not all teacher-examiners created opportunities for a spontaneous conversation.

### **Student performance in the Role play**

The Role plays tended to be done at least reasonably well. Most students were able to access the target language bullet points and were able to formulate an appropriate and concise response.

On occasions, students gave far more information than was necessary to accomplish the task, which should be discouraged.

A significant number of students did not take into account the scenario from the introductory rubric which is there to help them. Students should be advised to read the scenario introduction carefully at the start of the Role play in their preparation time. Overall though students found the formal Role plays more demanding than the informal scenarios.

Most students were able to effectively formulate the question from the prompt words provided in the ? task, but in some cases used the inappropriate form of address. They had difficulties in addressing the teacher as *Pan/ Pani* in the formal role plays. This was taken into account when awarding the mark for KUL (Knowledge and use of Language). There were occasions when students asked a totally random question, sometimes relating to the previous task, but not linked to the given cue which could not be credited.

The majority of students were able to respond appropriately to the unpredictable task which demonstrated their ability to deal with language in a spontaneous way.

All students need to familiarise themselves with the format and demands of the role plays and the meaning of ? and ! symbols in particular.

### Specific Higher Tier Role play comments

Tasks that are not mentioned below were generally answered very well. The following tasks caused the most problems for students at Higher tier.

#### Role Play 7

Failure to give two details in the first task led to some students only being awarded one mark. In some cases students did not specify where they want to sit; for the part *gdzie* students were sometimes saying *Poproszę stolik numer cztery*.

#### Role Play 8

Many students were unable to phrase a question correctly in the question task *Ulubiona uroczystość*. Students tended to ask about the wedding and whether the teachers liked it. Many students struggled with the last task – they had problems with identifying advantages and disadvantages. Some of them referred to positive and negative sides of parties, instead of the task of organising them (this was the task which was most frequently misunderstood).

#### Role Play 9

Some students failed to recognise the plural form within the prompt words *Problem z pokojem – dwa szczegóły* and responded accordingly giving only one detail. There were some instances when students did not understand the word *życzyć* in the ! task.

#### Role Play 10

Only a few students managed to answer all questions correctly. Many students were unable to respond to the first and second task (about *dobra kondycja* and *Twoja dieta*). Some students were unfamiliar with the meaning of *nadwaga* and for that reason unable to respond to the ? task.

#### Role Play 12

Some students reduced their marks for giving only one detail in the first task (*studia – jakie i gdzie*) or only advantage or disadvantage of studying in the second task. Some students misunderstood the word *studiowanie* in the second task as the equivalent of the learning process. There were also some misconceptions with the ! task, because students understood the noun *studia* in similar way.

### Student Performance in the Photo card

Generally, students seemed well prepared for this part of the test. Most students gave a reasonably well-developed response to the first prepared question *Co widzisz na fotografii?* Their replies were reinforced when the students used a set of phrases that can be used to describe any places, such as *Na tym zdjęciu widzę...*, *Na fotografii znajduje się...* On regular occasions, the effect of the second structure was undermined by the anglicised version *W tej fotografii...*

Although development of responses is to be welcomed, students need to make sure that what they say still addresses the question of what can be seen in the photo. It is perfectly acceptable to give

a personal opinion about an aspect of the picture, eg *Dziewczynka jest bardzo szczęśliwa, bo się uśmiecha.*

In order to score in the top band, students had to answer all questions clearly and develop at least three responses by using several clauses. The lack of development of answers in some cases made it impossible for some students to score high marks. There were a number of students who gave only short answers to the majority of questions, including a very brief description of the photo. It is understandable that the answers to the three prepared questions were usually more developed than those to the two unseen questions.

Most students were able to give and explain opinions. However, there were still a few students who could not access the 10-12 band because no opinion was justified.

### **Specific Higher Tier Photo card comments**

Students usually found most photo stimuli and sets of questions to be equally accessible. The Photo cards that students found the most challenging were Photo Card I on the sub-theme of global issues, and Photo card H about customs and festivals. Such tasks present some linguistic and conceptual challenges. However, teacher-examiners must be aware that these topics are in this specification and students must be prepared to encounter them in the speaking test.

Aside from this, common issues were:

#### **Photo Card G**

Some students duplicated their answers to the third and fifth question, about the internet and social media. Quite a few of them missed marks for not eliciting both details in the third task and mentioning only advantages or disadvantages of the Internet.

#### **Photo Card H**

Some students gave quite broad responses to the second task. They talked about their recent family celebration in detail and as a result they could not answer the last question within the allocated time. The word *bożonarodzeniowe* in the third question caused problems for some students. Many students found it difficult to respond to the fourth question about *tradycje kulturowe*.

#### **Photo Card I**

Students found it difficult to list the causes of environmental degradation (in the second task) and described the state of nature instead.

#### **Photo Card J**

Of particular challenge for students was the fourth question, because the phrase *aktywny wypoczynek* was sometimes unknown.

#### **Photo Card K**

Some students found it challenging to respond to the second question, because they confused the concepts of *pracownik* and *pracodawca*. The fourth question, targeting advantages and



disadvantages of remote work, proved conceptually challenging for many students. As a result, it was often interpreted as a question about the internet.

### Photo Card L

Some students did not seem to understand the difference between *zalety* and *wady* in the fourth question and they confused the meaning of these two opposing concepts. In some cases, they listed only advantages or only disadvantages of the school uniforms.

### General conversation

For most students, the General conversation element of the test was where they performed best. This was to be expected as it is the section with the greatest continuity from the previous specification. On the other hand, there were centres in which the exam was conducted in the wrong format and as a result the students continued to give the short presentation at the beginning of this part of the exam.

Generally, students managed to maintain a conversation for the minimum amount of time across two themes. Most students tried to develop their responses, particularly to questions from the nominated theme. Students often gave and explained opinions in addition to basic information. Many students used complex structures and vocabulary, which gave them access to the top marks for Range and accuracy of language. Overall students' vocabulary was mostly good, but some colloquial words were used, which were not appropriate during a formal exam and reflect the process of learning of the Polish language which students undergo, eg *matma*, *ciuchy*, *gadać*. There were lots of English words conjugated in Polish, resulting in incorrect forms like *progresować*, *grejdować*, *zainfluowani*, *uniform*, *juniversity*. English influence is obvious in collocations like *spędzać* (in a meaning of *wydawać pieniądze* or *dobra kondycja* (instead of *dobre warunki*). The most common influence was visible though in the usage of the noun *student* in place of *uczeń*, or some words (mainly connected with the school life and education) used in their English form; most commonly *Sixth Form*, *Science*, *Art*, *level*, *interview*, *grade*. It is pleasing to note that some students did elaborate and explain their meaning in detail in Polish.

There were also students with more limited vocabulary and their language was sometimes repetitive and conveyed only basic information. These students often mixed different time frames, noun cases and verb endings.

Finally, in some cases there was a noticeable issue with language accuracy when Polish sentence structure becomes an issue. Some unnatural word combinations or word order are common, which are direct copies from English.

Some students demonstrated the ability to incorporate a greater range of structure, including modal verbs and common subordinating conjunctions. However, in some cases, the potential mark for both Communication and Range and accuracy of language was lowered significantly by the frequency of serious errors that impeded the intended meaning.

The standard of pronunciation and intonation was usually very good or excellent and students often received high marks.

## Advice to teachers

### 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. Examiners cannot mark what they cannot hear.
- The *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations* document is available on the AQA website for each exam series. 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 student: GCSE Polish examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number \_\_\_\_, student number \_\_\_\_, student name \_\_\_\_. Role Play number \_\_\_\_, Photo Card letter \_\_\_\_, General Conversation theme chosen by student Theme (1, 2 or 3).
- Use Polish 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 the 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 your 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 zero 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 zero 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.

### Photo card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be aware that if the meaning is changed, the student's reply will not be credited. Examples of appropriate paraphrasing are provided in the published mark scheme.
- 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 two minute maximum time, it may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next question.

### General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on – not everything has to be described as *interesujące* or *nudne* and there are other ways to say *lubię to*. In order to introduce some variety of language, ensure that students have a bank of adjectives such as *zabawne, niesamowite, wspaniałe, świetne, nieprzyjemne*; and verbs such as *uwielbiam, interesuję się, znajduję to, nienawidzę tego, to mnie niepokoi*.

- 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, eg 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 Polish: *Przejdźmy teraz do tematu rozmowy numer jeden*, etc.
- 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.
- 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.
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Polish. You can say *Proszę powtórzyć*, for example.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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