

# ASSET LANGUAGES:

GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS/INTERLOCUTORS

PROFICIENCY STAGE SPEAKING TESTS



# Asset Languages Proficiency Stage Speaking Tests

This booklet is for teachers who will act as interlocutors for Asset Proficiency Stage Speaking tests. The following pages provide guidelines on preparing for and conducting the tests.

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## Confidentiality and security

Material for Asset Languages Proficiency Stage Speaking tests is strictly confidential. Please respect the following requirements:

- Keep the Teacher/Interlocutor Booklet and Candidate's Sheet secure at all times.
- Do not leave the Teacher/Interlocutor Booklet and Candidate's Sheet unattended under any circumstances.
- Do not photocopy any part of this material.

- Use this material exclusively for Asset Languages Speaking tests.

## Overview of Proficiency Stage Speaking

### *Speaking test arrangements*

#### **Key points**

- Speaking tests can be conducted by any teacher, or other interlocutor competent at an appropriate level of language, appointed by the centre.
- Speaking test materials are despatched on the basis of final entries.
- Speaking tests must be conducted within the testing period specified by OCR.
- Speaking tests are conducted by the centre, but marked externally by an OCR assessor.
- At Proficiency Stage, centres must submit recordings of the entire test.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that adequate planning has taken place for Proficiency Stage tests so that Candidate Presentation Topics leaflets are made available to candidates at the appropriate time, and that tests are conducted within the specified period.

The Speaking Test Candidate's Sheet, containing the pictures for Part 1B of the Speaking test, must not be shown to candidates before their tests. However, the Candidate Presentation Topics leaflet (used for preparation of Part 2A of the Speaking test) must be made available to candidates not less than one week and not more than two weeks before the test.

### *Speaking test dates*

The Speaking tests for Proficiency Stage must be conducted within a testing window lasting approximately four weeks. Details of this testing window are published on the Asset Languages website at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/UserFiles/File/dates/AssetJu09f.pdf](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/UserFiles/File/dates/AssetJu09f.pdf).

## The structure of Proficiency Speaking tests

The following tables show the overall structure and the activities that make up a Speaking test.

Part	Activity	Format	Assessment	Test time	Weighting
1A	General conversation	Candidate and teacher only	Externally assessed. Recorded and submitted to OCR for marking	3 minutes	50%
1B	Unprepared picture-based task			4 minutes	
2A	Presentation			2 to 3 minutes	50%
2B	Discussion			5 minutes	

Part	Task Focus	Length	Task Format
1A	General interactional and social language on topics of personal information and opinion.	3 minutes	The interlocutor encourages the candidate to give information about him/herself and to express personal opinions.
1B	Two short turns (c. 1min. each) in response to visual stimulus and verbal rubrics, and answers to supplementary questions. Speculating, evaluating, comparing, giving opinions, decision making etc.	4 minutes	The candidate is given a visual stimulus sheet containing 3-5 photographs, and spoken prompts within a defined context, to stimulate the two short turns. He/she is then asked questions to follow-up his /her comments.
2A	Prepared presentation	2-3 minutes	The candidate speaks uninterruptedly in response to one of a choice of 3 topics made available not less than one week and not more than 2 weeks before the test.
2B	Discussion with Interlocutor on topics related to the presentation	5 minutes	The candidate engages in a discussion with the interlocutor to explore further the opinions and issues arising from the presentation.
	Total	15 minutes	

## *Understanding the Proficiency Stage standard - the Languages Ladder*

Before conducting a Speaking test, it is useful to ensure that you are familiar with the standard of the Proficiency stage as described by the Languages Ladder statements. Although you will not assess the candidates (the entire test must be recorded and submitted to OCR for marking), an awareness of the standard will allow you to help candidates to perform to their best ability. The information given on pages 4 - 8 is intended to help you to gain this awareness.

### **Languages Ladder Statements – Speaking**

- Grade 13** I can sustain a conversation and can find ways of expressing myself with relative ease.
- Grade 14** I can play a pro-active role in discussions on a range of topics in an appropriate register and can make myself understood with relative ease.
- Grade 15** I can take a leading role in discussions speaking coherently in a wide variety of situations.

On completing this stage you should be able to communicate confidently and express yourself with relative ease with appropriate interventions. Your pronunciation and intonation will be accurate – any inaccuracies would not impede communication.

## *Understanding Proficiency Stage - Language purposes and functions*

At Proficiency Stage, the functional exponents expected from candidates

a) include the specifications at the Advanced Stage and build on them through more sustained, complex and precise use of language:

b) occur within a wider range of topics and contexts, as follows:

- presenting a point of view and persuading
- defending, opposing and evaluating arguments
- summarising arguments
- making propositions and recommendations
- evaluating options
- comparing and contrasting options and ideas
- expressing priorities
- analysing
- justifying opinions
- drawing conclusions
- managing ideas (e.g. ordering, presenting, connecting and summarising)
- highlighting information
- expressing degrees of certainty and doubt
- developing topics
- expanding on and clarifying responses
- paraphrasing
- responding to and commenting on opinions
- hypothesising and speculating
- talk about conditions and consequences
- maintaining and managing communication
- using conversational techniques (e.g. turn taking, initiating and responding appropriately)

## *Understanding Proficiency Stage - Grammar and linguistic structures*

### **Productive tasks**

At Proficiency Stage candidates are required to show knowledge of grammar and linguistic structures to express the language purposes and functions described above, and to employ a broad range of grammatical structures with ease and fluency. Differentiation will occur less on the basis of accuracy than of the range, clarity and communicative effect of language in dealing with feelings, opinions and abstract ideas.

## *Understanding Proficiency Stage - Vocabulary*

### **Productive tasks**

Candidates are required to demonstrate control of a broad range of language, in terms of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, connectors and linking devices, allowing communication with little obvious searching or restriction of content.

## *Proficiency Stage assessment criteria*

The following criteria are included for information only. Proficiency Speaking tests are assessed externally by OCR. However, it may be useful to Teacher/Interlocutors to see the criteria which will be applied by external assessors to candidates' performance.

This mark scheme is to be interpreted at Proficiency standard.

Language	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displays a ready command of a broad and appropriate range of language, including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, with very few noticeable vocabulary errors</li> <li>Does not need to restrict what he/she wants to say, reformulating language effortlessly with little or no apparent searching for expressions.</li> <li>Maintains a consistently high level of grammatical accuracy: errors are rare and difficult to spot.</li> </ul>	<b>Band 3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes free use of a broad and appropriate range of language, including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, with occasional noticeable but not significant vocabulary errors</li> <li>There is little apparent restriction of what he/she wants to say: reformulates language freely, with occasional searching for expressions.</li> <li>Maintains a high level of grammatical accuracy: errors are usually self-corrected and have little or no effect on communication.</li> </ul>	<b>Band 2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes use of a broad and appropriate range of language, including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, with occasional significant vocabulary errors which have little effect on communication.</li> <li>Sometimes has to restrict what he/she wants to say: can reformulate language when necessary with some obvious searching for expressions.</li> <li>Maintains a generally high level of grammatical accuracy: errors may be noticeable but are often self-corrected, and the effect on communication is limited.</li> </ul>	<b>Band 1</b>
Response below Proficiency (grade 13) level.	<b>Band 0</b>
Communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly, on all but conceptually difficult subjects.</li> <li>Can present ideas in a clear, smoothly flowing and well-structured manner on complex subjects. Fully develops a point of view, supporting it with reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.</li> <li>Uses language to communicate flexibly and effectively, including emotional, allusive or joking usage.</li> <li>Can use initiative to get or to keep the floor, to relate contributions skillfully to those of the other speaker, and to respond spontaneously and almost effortlessly to interjections and comments.</li> </ul>	<b>Band 3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, on a variety of subjects.</li> <li>Can present ideas in a generally clear, smoothly flowing and well-structured manner on complex subjects. Develops a point of view, supporting it with reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.</li> <li>Is able for the most part to use language to communicate flexibly and effectively, including emotional, allusive or joking usage.</li> <li>Can use initiative to get or to keep the floor, to relate contributions to those of the other speaker, and respond readily to interjections and comments.</li> </ul>	<b>Band 2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, on familiar or prepared subjects.</li> <li>Can give presentations on complex subjects that are in part clear, smoothly flowing and well-structured. Attempts to develop a point of view, supporting it with reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.</li> <li>Attempts to use language flexibly and to communicate effectively, including emotional, allusive or joking usage.</li> <li>Can use initiative to get or to keep the floor, to relate contributions to those of the other speaker, and respond to interjections and comments.</li> </ul>	<b>Band 1</b>
Response below Proficiency (grade 13)level.	<b>Band 0</b>

# Preparing Proficiency Speaking tests

Proficiency Speaking tests must be conducted by a centre-appointed teacher/interlocutor, who is responsible for ensuring that the test is conducted correctly. Before conducting the Speaking test, please read through this booklet to familiarise yourself with the test structure, the test topics and the part played by the teacher/interlocutor.

## *Candidate Presentation Topics*

The Candidate Presentation Topics leaflet allows the candidate to prepare for Part 2A (Presentation), and must be made available by the centre to the candidate not less than one week and not more than two weeks before the test. The candidate will choose one of the three topics offered, and prepare a presentation of between 2 and 3 minutes on the chosen topic. In advance of the test the teacher/interlocutor should familiarise him/herself with the three topics and with possible lines of development in Part 2B (Discussion).

## *Managing time*

The total duration of all the assessed activities in a test should be 15 minutes. This allowance does not include the time required to introduce a candidate or for any administrative activities

## *Using questions correctly*

When you act as an interlocutor, please be aware that your technique can significantly influence how well a candidate can demonstrate their ability to speak a language.

- Try not to “feed” language to candidates: allow them time to think and respond, encouraging them by using body language neutral statements such as *ok* and *thank you*.
- Avoid interrupting candidates, correcting or repeating what they say.
  - Where applicable, questions should be adapted to use the appropriate form of address for the situation.
  - Initially only use the questions provided in this booklet. However, you can subsequently rephrase a question to assist a candidate who is struggling, or use your own follow-up questions where time is still available.
  - When rephrasing questions, please use either open questions or when using closed questions, ask for justification of their answer.
- Ensure that there is as much opportunity as possible for the candidates to express their own opinions and ideas.
- For part 2B, please ask questions which explore the content of the presentation as well as allowing the candidate to express and justify opinions both on the subject of

the presentation and related areas in as spontaneous and unrehearsed a manner as possible.

### *Avoiding malpractice*

When you conduct Speaking tests, take care to follow the guidelines in this booklet and to be consistent and impartial in your dealings with candidates. If you deviate significantly from recommended practice, you risk arousing suspicions of 'malpractice'. We consider malpractice to be any attempt to give an unfair advantage or any breach of the regulations governing the conduct of assessment that may threaten the integrity of Asset Languages. So remember:

- although as a class teacher it is allowable to prepare candidates for a Speaking test, you must not coach them to the point where questions are rehearsed
- to ensure fairness to all candidates, take care to respect the timings for each task.

### *Choosing a suitable location for conducting tests*

Before conducting the Speaking test, find and reserve a room that is suitable both for assessing candidates and for recording the test sessions. It is not appropriate for any part of the Proficiency Speaking test to be conducted in the classroom in front of other students. Please look for a room that:

- can accommodate yourself and a candidate in reasonable comfort
- is equipped with two chairs and a table or desk suitable for placing a cassette recorder and microphone
- is sufficiently quiet to avoid distractions and to permit you to make good quality recordings
- provides suitable conditions for a test: acceptable air temperature, ventilation, lighting and cleanliness
- does not display any materials that might help candidates during tests.

Later when conducting tests, please ensure that you maintain an ordered and quiet atmosphere.

If you designate another location as a waiting area, it should be some distance from the test room. Also, it should ideally contain enough chairs for candidates to sit while they wait.

### *Controlling the quality of recordings*

Before conducting any Speaking tests, make a brief test recording in the test room. Listen to the recording to check that the microphone is suitably positioned on the table or desk to capture clearly the voices of both yourself and candidates. Also, after recording the first

candidate, listen to the quality of the recorded sound to confirm that it is clear and comprehensible.

From time to time during a task, check the cassette recorder to confirm that it is still recording.

### *Labelling cassettes and cassette boxes*

After completing the tests, you must clearly and securely label each cassette and its box with the assessment title, assessment code, centre name and centre number.

While you conduct tests, keep accurate lists of the sequence in which you record candidates. Then, in each cassette box, provide a list of candidates recorded on the relevant cassette (in the order you have recorded them) and all their candidate numbers. Also, distinguish between candidates recorded on side A and on side B. This information is to enable the External Moderator to identify which candidates appear on any particular cassette.

# Conducting Proficiency Speaking tests

## *Requirements for recording*

For every candidate, record the entire Speaking test. Record no more than 3 candidates on each side of a 90-minute cassette. During the tests, use a watch or alarm clock to keep track of time.

### **Materials needed:**

- the Teacher/Interlocutor Booklet
- the Candidate's Sheet
- a cassette recorder
- cassettes (provided by OCR)
- an external microphone
- a watch or clock, preferably with a second hand, suitable for timing the test.

## *Conducting part 1A – General conversation*

The aims of part 1A are:

- i) to give the candidate the opportunity to establish communication with the teacher/interlocutor
- ii) to move as soon as possible from introductory questions, focused on the experience of the candidate, to the interpretation of experience and the expression of opinions.



Duration: 3 minutes.

Before you begin the task, ensure that the cassette recorder is recording.

### **To conduct part 1A**

- 1 At the beginning of each recording, state clearly:  
'Centre [number], [language], [stage] Asset Speaking Tests.'
- 2 Before you begin your assessment of each candidate, state clearly:  
'Candidate [number], [candidate name].'
- 3 Read the opening greeting.
- 4 As far as possible, follow the sequence of questions provided, selecting where necessary to fit with the direction of candidate responses.

Part 1A should last up to 3 minutes.

## Conducting part 1B – *Picture-based task*

The aim of part 1B is to allow candidates to respond to a picture stimulus in relation to a theme and context by:

- i) giving a monologue reaction to the pictures in terms of the theme (duration: 1 min.)
- ii) selecting one picture and giving a monologue justification of the choice in relation to the task and context (duration: 1 min.)
- iii) developing the theme in response to further questions



Total duration: 4 minutes.

### **To conduct part 1B**

- 5 Pass the *Candidate's Sheet*, turned over to the side displaying pictures, to the candidate.
- 6 Read the Introduction in the target language to the candidate.
- 7 Wait 10 seconds to allow the candidate to look at the pictures.
- 8 Read the Focus question 1 to the candidate and allow 1 minute for a response.
- 9 Read the Focus question 2 to the candidate and again allow 1 minute for a response.
- 10 Ask at least one of the Supplementary questions, allowing the candidate to respond at length.
- 11 Ask further Supplementary questions, to the limit of the time available for this part.

## Conducting part 2A – *Presentation*

The aim of Part 2A is to give each candidate the opportunity to demonstrate his/her ability to speak uninterrupted about a prepared topic.



Duration: 2 to 3 minutes.

### **Preparation**

In advance of the test, please familiarise yourself with the three topics in the Candidate Presentation Topics leaflet.

### **Content of the presentation**

- The topic of the presentation must be one of the three topics specified in the Candidate Presentation Topics leaflet.

- The candidate is free to interpret the topic in whatever way he/she wishes. The three bullet points supplied for each topic in the Candidate Presentation Topics leaflet are not compulsory.
- A candidate must not bring any written notes or supporting material into the presentation.

### **To conduct a part 2A assessment**

- 12 Introduce the part in the target language by reading from the 'Presentation' section in the Teacher/Interlocutor Booklet.
- 13 Ask for the title and check that it is a topic from the Candidate Presentation Topics leaflet.
- 14 Listen to the candidate and only intervene if communication breaks down completely. In such a case, prompt the candidate.

### *Conducting part 2B – Discussion*

The aim of part 2B is to give the candidate the opportunity to take part in a discussion about the content of the presentation, and to

- a) clarify and develop the points made in the presentation;
- b) justify and defend the opinions expressed in the presentation and in the conversation;
- c) react to other opinions related to the subject and to the presentation.



Duration: 5 minutes.

### **To conduct a part 2B assessment**

- 1 When the candidate has finished the presentation, ask questions relating to the content of the presentation or to related issues, bearing in mind the aims stated above.
- 2 End the test after 5 minutes of discussion.

### *After completing tests*

Ensure that you have completed the test register and labelled all the cassettes correctly.

Hand the register and cassettes to the Examinations Officer for despatch to OCR for marking.

### *Support documents.*

For more support with conducting Speaking tests, the following documents are available.

#### ***External Assessment Reference Guide***

Ask your Examinations Officer for this guide, or download it from

<http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/examsOfficers/default.aspx>.

#### ***External Assessment Reference Guide*** – Appendix for Proficiency and Mastery

Download it from

[http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/UserFiles/File/centre\\_coordinators/supporting\\_docs/PM\\_appendix\\_final.pdf](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/UserFiles/File/centre_coordinators/supporting_docs/PM_appendix_final.pdf)

The guide provides more information on administration, when you can conduct Speaking tests, the equipment needed, and recording candidates.