

## Centre Support Update

Issue 9: November 2008

Welcome to the latest edition of the Asset Languages *Centre Support Update*. We hope you have all had a good half-term.



*Primary pupils celebrate success with Asset Languages*

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### *Highlights of 2007/8*

- Almost **600** centres used Asset Languages for external assessment, a rise of 64%.
- Breakthrough was the most popular stage for assessment with **53%** of the awards issued.
- **14%** of all entries from primary candidates are at Preliminary Stage.
- Orders for Teacher Assessment Packs increased by more than **200%**.

### *Report to centres now online*

The report to centres which provides useful feedback on external assessment in 2007/8 is now available for downloading via the website at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/support.aspx](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/support.aspx)

This annual report, only available online, contains examiners' feedback on tests for each language as well as tips on improving performance in different skills. Statistics include the number of awards issued over 12 grades, (up **85%** overall on last year), the distribution of entries across the year as well as the percentage of entries per sector.

## Making Entries - External Assessment in 2008/09

Information on making entries is found at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/examsofficers/entries.aspx](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/examsofficers/entries.aspx)

### Why estimated entries are important

The first step is to make estimated entries - your best estimate of the number of candidates that will be entered for a particular assessment during the whole academic year. This does not commit you to exact numbers or involve costs. If you are planning to enter learners for speaking tests, making estimated entries is **essential** for the despatch of the materials you need to conduct those tests. And it is extremely helpful for us to have an overview of the assessment demands over the year ahead. Estimated entries should have been made by the deadline below or, if your centre has just registered for Asset Languages, please return your estimated entry form within three weeks of receipt. **NB You still have to make final entries, as well as estimated entries, in all skills by the deadlines given below.**

### Dates and deadlines

The external assessment dates for **2008/09** are:

Series	Estimated entry deadline	Final entry deadline	Speaking test return deadline	Testing window begins (Listening, Reading and Writing)	Testing window ends	Results issue (all skills)	Certificate issue (all skills)
November 2008	(or within 3 weeks of receipt)	20/10/08	17/11/08	17/11/08	12/12/08	29/01/09	12/02/09
January 2009		08/12/08	21/01/09	21/01/09	11/02/09	12/03/09	02/04/09
March 2009		26/01/09	02/03/09	02/03/09	25/03/09	30/04/09	21/05/09
May 2009		23/03/09	29/04/09	29/04/09	20/05/09	25/06/09	09/07/09
June 2009		04/05/09	15/06/09	15/06/09	10/07/09	27/08/09	24/09/09

A printable version of these dates is provided on our website at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/examsofficers/scheduling.aspx](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/examsofficers/scheduling.aspx)

Please note there is a separate timetable for assessment of **Proficiency** and **Mastery Stages** which will take place in the June 2009 series only.



## Success with speaking

### Keeping a record

As a sensible precaution against loss, you are now required to keep a record of your learners' performances in speaking tests. We've designed a new internal mark form for this purpose. You will receive this form, with the official mark sheets (OMRs), after making your estimated entries for speaking tests. The same document can also be downloaded from the bottom of the relevant page on the website (see [what's available online](#) below).

### Despatches 1, 2, and 3

In response to your estimated entries, we send out the OMRs and internal mark forms during the Autumn Term in one despatch, closely followed by the candidate and examiner booklets, blank cassettes and return envelopes in a separate despatch. This gives you greater flexibility in timing your tests over the year ahead. When you make your final entries for speaking for a particular series, we then send you an attendance register and the return labels so that the material can be sent off to be moderated by OCR.

### What's available online

Resources to help you conduct successful speaking tests are now on a single page; [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/speakingtests.aspx](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/speakingtests.aspx) As well as the new internal mark form, guides on applying speaking criteria and the introductions to the examiner booklets are also available for downloading.

### A successful user

Margaret Peaty has been using Asset Languages to reward pupils studying German at King Edward VI School, Morpeth since 2005. The school's MFL department has used Asset Languages in place of GCSEs to boost its A\* to C GCSE equivalent ratings at KS4. At a recent meeting of Cluster Group Co-ordinators, Margaret explained how she organises speaking tests for her German Intermediate Stage students.

*"Taking advantage of the five testing windows, I enter my pupils for speaking only in the March series. I concentrate on this skill with students during the first half term after Christmas. The conversation element (Part 1) and presentation element (Part 2) of Asset speaking tests may be carried out separately so I conduct Part 1 of the speaking test immediately before February half term. My pupils are encouraged to prepare their presentations over their holiday and they take the second part of the test in the first week back. The students receive their results in April, boosting confidence for the rest of the tests which they take in May. Results for 2007/8 show that Asset Languages contributed to a 96.2% A\* to C GCSE equivalent score in German at the school."*

## What's happening with clusters?

Margaret Peaty joined 20 other Cluster Co-ordinators and most of the Asset Team for a Co-ordinators' meeting in Stockport in late October, as part of the rolling out of Cluster Groups around the country. As well as finding out how local groups were progressing, the Co-ordinators (language teachers and advisors across the primary, secondary and adult sectors) listened to presentations on topics of interest to many language teachers: the role of Asset in supporting community languages, taking Asset Languages into primary schools, maximising points at KS4 and how to decide what to teach with Asset.

Themes that emerged from the speakers were the motivational benefits of the scheme with all ages and the ease of introducing Asset Languages alongside existing schemes of work throughout KS2, KS3 and KS4. Thanks to **Margaret, Simon Brass** of Brigshaw Language College, **Siân Moore** of the Cedars School and **Feroza Basu** of the Asset Team for sharing their expertise in a series of excellent presentations.

There are well over 50 Cluster Groups around the country. If you would like to join a group and share in this growing expertise on key issues, please email your centre details to [assetlanguagesclustersupport@ocr.org.uk](mailto:assetlanguagesclustersupport@ocr.org.uk) giving permission for your contact details to be passed on to the relevant Co-ordinator. To discuss any aspect of joining this network, ring Jenny Jones on 01223 556185. Further information can also be found at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/partnerships.aspx](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/partnerships.aspx)



## On the fast track

We are delighted to hear more about the varied use of Asset Languages at KS4 from centres around the country. While the Intermediate Stage qualifications are suiting some students in Year 11 more than GCSEs, schools are also using Asset Languages with pupils fast-tracked through MFL GCSEs in Year 10. Whether a school has a sixth form or not, teachers are interested in ways of challenging language learners in Year 11 and entering pupils for Asset at Advanced Stage is a route some schools are taking. In May 2008, Heckmondwike Grammar School in West Yorkshire entered over a hundred Year 11 pupils who had already taken GCSEs in French, German or Spanish in Year 10, for Asset tests in the same languages in all skills. Some took tests in Advanced Stage, others took Intermediate. According to HOD Kirstie Moat, the results were excellent with many of the Intermediate candidates improving on their equivalent grade at GCSE.

*“These results really helped to boost confidence in studying languages and the numbers opting to take languages in the sixth form went up.”*

## Centre Co-ordinator Training

There are opportunities to attend Centre Co-ordinator Training Days in November and December. The dates and locations are as follows:

10 November - <b>Liverpool</b>	02 December - <b>Bristol</b>
14 November - <b>London</b>	05 December - <b>Birmingham</b>
14 November - <b>Manchester</b>	08 December - <b>Cambridge</b>
24 November - <b>Birmingham</b>	10 December - <b>London</b>
28 November - <b>York</b>	12 December - <b>Nottingham</b>

The full-day course provides a detailed introduction to using Asset Languages and is recommended for all centres. It outlines the philosophy behind the assessment scheme and the different assessment options available. It also offers practical guidance on aspects such as administration and the roles and responsibilities of Centre Co-ordinators. If you need a copy of the booking form, just let us know via [assetlanguages@ocr.org.uk](mailto:assetlanguages@ocr.org.uk) (stating your centre number).

Please note that from January 2009, there will be a charge for this type of training day.

## On the road

Watch out for Asset Languages 'on the road' over the next few months. Having recently attended the SSAT Conference in Stratford and the Languages Show at Olympia, we are looking forward to welcoming visitors to our stand on **5 December** at the **CILT 14 – 19 Conference** in **Nottingham**.



As part of the teaching and learning languages conference held at the NCSL centre, there will be a presentation by Jo McGowan, product manager for Asset Languages and Bruno Sturmel, HOD at Astor of Hever Community School in Kent. Bruno will be describing his school's use of Asset Languages in KS4 as an alternative to GCSE. A case study on Astor of Hever's use of Asset Languages can be viewed on the CILT website by clicking on the following link;

[www.cilt.org.uk/14to19/alt\\_accred/asset/astor\\_hever.htm](http://www.cilt.org.uk/14to19/alt_accred/asset/astor_hever.htm)

## ***What's new on the website?***

There's lots of updated material on the website:

### ***Look out for***

- Updated specifications for the new World of Work qualifications for Spanish can be found at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/about/specs.aspx](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/about/specs.aspx) External assessments have been available for Spanish World of Work at Preliminary and Intermediate Stages since June 2008. The same assessments for French and German will be available from May 2009.
- Updated specifications for Cantonese and Mandarin at Breakthrough, Preliminary, Intermediate and Advanced are available via the webpage above.
- The list of Teacher Assessment Packs has been revised, incorporating the newly updated French, Spanish and German Preliminary Packs. See [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/about/availability.aspx](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/about/availability.aspx)
- A new Introductory Guide designed to support users of the first four stages of Asset is available at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/support.aspx](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/support.aspx) It replaces the individual stage guides and teacher handbooks.

## ***Latest FAQs***

### ***Why can't we keep exam papers?***

All unused question papers, answer sheets and CDs/cassettes must be securely destroyed. Asset Languages uses an item banking approach in which individual questions are pre-tested and statistically analysed before being added to a bank of questions that are then used in live tests. If teachers hold on to unused question papers containing questions which may be used in future live tests, this is regarded as malpractice. To get a clear picture of the type of question papers your learners can expect, we recommend that you look at the sample materials available on our website.

### ***What's the difference between **simplified and traditional Chinese?*****

The terms simplified and traditional Chinese refer to the skills of reading and writing only, as they apply to the Chinese script. There is no difference in standard between the two. Also, the terms Mandarin and Cantonese apply to listening and speaking only as they refer to the spoken Chinese

language. The flexibility of the Asset scheme offers the opportunity for learners to be tested on exactly what they are studying, for example they could combine external assessment of simplified reading with Cantonese speaking. For practical reasons, we have limited the production of Teacher Assessment Packs to the following combinations: Mandarin with simplified script and Cantonese with traditional script.

### ***When will we have a decision about UCAS points?***

We had a meeting with UCAS in July and are hopeful that final ratification of Asset's points will take place before the end of 2008.

If you have FAQs or content suggestions for the next edition of *Centre Support Update*, please let us know via [assetlanguages@ocr.org.uk](mailto:assetlanguages@ocr.org.uk) Earlier editions can be found at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/support.aspx](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/centres/support.aspx)

**Regards from**  
**The Asset Languages Team**