



Rewarding Learning

A2 Examinations Summer 2024

Modern Languages

*Instructions and Guidance to
Teachers and Candidates*

Conduct and Administration of A2 Modern
Languages Speaking Tests (Revised)

Publication Date: January 2024

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FOREWORD

This instructions and guidance booklet is intended for centre Examination Officers, Heads of Department, subject teachers and candidates. It is important that all centre staff involved in the arrangements and conduct of the speaking tests for languages are aware of the requirements of these tests and that the appropriate arrangements are made. This is to ensure the smooth, efficient and effective operation of the tests, but more importantly so that candidates will benefit from good organisation and will have a positive experience of the examination.

This booklet is divided into 4 sections. Section A is for teachers and Examination Officers. It sets out the process and its requirements in terms of administration and arrangements expected. Section B is advice for candidates on both good preparation for the tests and the conduct of the tests. This section should be made available to all candidates taking a speaking test. Section C refers to the A2 themes. Section D is a set of appendices, mainly of the paperwork involved.

It is hoped that this booklet will serve as a valuable guide for both staff and candidates and will lead to a positive experience of the examination.

SECTION A – Guidelines for Teachers and Examinations Officers

1. Arrangements for the Speaking Tests - A2

There is an important form which teachers and candidates must be aware of and use appropriately.

The *Summary Sheet* (Appendix 2) which is available on the language area of the CCEA website must be completed by all A2 candidates and a copy **returned to CCEA by post or, alternatively, by email to languagevisits@ccea.org.uk by 23rd February 2024**. Centres must submit only the updated version of this form to CCEA. A copy should be retained by the centre. This sheet should contain the A2 theme and four or five main points that the candidate has researched. This is to ensure that the CCEA Visiting Examiner will have adequate time to prepare suitable questions for discussion with the candidates. It is **vital** that this form is submitted to CCEA by 23rd February 2024 (for the April/May speaking tests). This form will no longer be issued to centres in hard copy. Centres should return the *Summary Sheets* via post or email. Details of return addresses can be found on the document.

It is imperative that the material candidates prepare matches what they have submitted to CCEA (the *Summary Sheet*). Centres must have a complete set of these forms for the CCEA Visiting Examiner when he / she arrives at the centre to conduct the speaking tests, so that if a candidate gets confused or loses his / her place, the Examiner can help him / her get started again.

CCEA Visiting Examiners will contact centres as soon as their schedules are available in order to arrange a suitable date for the visit. They will normally contact centres one week in advance of the examination period. It is recommended that a maximum of 10-12 candidates are examined per day. Where two or more days are required, these should run consecutively. Visits must take place during the examination period. This period will be 4 weeks during the Summer (normally during the months of April/May).

On arrival at centres, the CCEA Visiting Examiner should be met by the appropriate member of staff, for example the Examination Officer or subject teacher who can brief them on the centre arrangements for the day. The Examiners should also be made aware of any candidates who may have particular difficulties. However, if an application is to be made for Special Consideration for a particular candidate, this must be done well in advance by contacting CCEA directly (see Appendix 4).

A list of candidates and the order in which they will be examined must be provided by the centre. See suggested schedule in Appendix 3.

Supervising Examiners may visit a centre to observe a Visiting Examiner conducting a speaking test. This is part of the CCEA process for the supervision of Examiners. It is not something that teachers or candidates should be concerned about as the Supervising Examiner will not participate in the speaking test.

2. Accommodation

Both the Examiner and candidates require appropriate arrangements and suitable conditions for the conduct of the speaking tests. The following are general guidelines:

- A relatively small room that does not have an echo;
- The room should be in a quiet part of the school/centre, away from normal pupil traffic, especially at breaks. If possible, the nearest bell should be switched off;
- Where possible, a room with a glass-panelled door or divide would be preferable. This is in the interests of both candidates and Examiners in relation to child protection issues;
- There should be comfortable chairs for both the Examiner and candidate and a table on which paperwork may be placed. There should be enough space in the room for both the Examiner and candidate to feel comfortable so that the Examiner can make notes without the candidate being able to read them;
- In some cases, where appropriate, candidates are permitted to use a simple piece of realia or picture. However, tools such as PowerPoint presentations are not permitted;
- Suitable arrangements should be established with the Examiner to allow for tea/coffee, lunch and comfort breaks;
- A process should be in place so that the Examiner can easily make contact with a member of staff should the need arise, a mobile number for a member of staff would be convenient;
- If the room is not appropriate for any of the reasons listed above, the Examiner may not be able to conduct the test, or may request that alternative arrangements be made;
- On no account should anyone enter the examination room or interrupt in any way while the speaking test is being conducted, other than for an emergency. This may have a very unsettling effect on the candidate. Steps should be taken to isolate the examination room from normal school traffic where possible.

3. Briefing Meeting for Candidates

CCEA Visiting Examiners always hold a Briefing Meeting in the centre in which they are examining before the first test. Centres should allow time for this meeting on the schedule and should ensure that all candidates who are to be examined attend this meeting. There will be one Briefing Meeting per day and it will normally be organised for the morning before the first examination. In the case of FE colleges where candidates may be adults with work commitments, an afternoon or evening briefing may be arranged by contacting the Visiting Examiner in advance of the examination. Where more than one day is required each day's group of candidates should receive a separate briefing.

4. Preparing Candidates for A2 Speaking Tests

Teachers should photocopy Section B of this document - Advice for Candidates - and give a copy to all candidates who intend to take the A2 speaking test. They should also make clear to candidates what is being assessed and what they will be expected to do in their speaking test.

The A2 topic should be selected early in the year and the summary sheets completed and returned to CCEA by the required date.

The speaking tests are conducted by CCEA's Visiting Examiners, who are all teachers and are very familiar with the level of language that candidates can produce at A2. They are all trained by CCEA to apply the mark scheme consistently and accurately and to conduct the speaking tests in such a manner as to allow the candidates to do their best. However, the speaking tests are still exams and candidates should expect to be tested. When Visiting Examiners arrive at the school to conduct the speaking tests they will hold a Briefing Meeting and all candidates taking the test should attend this meeting.

Visiting Examiners will use the Briefing Meeting to:

- explain to candidates the format of the test;
- establish their credentials as a sympathetic Examiner;
- put candidates at their ease; and
- give candidates the opportunity to hear them speaking in the target language before the speaking test - (although the briefing will be conducted in English).

During the Speaking Test, Visiting Examiners will:

- steer candidates towards the highest level of language they can attain, making sure that they are able to vary tenses and use a range of vocabulary and idiom;
- act as a facilitator, allowing candidates to show their manipulation of the language;
- maintain as much eye contact as possible;
- be prepared to help candidates out with occasional promptings of vocabulary;
- make every effort to keep the conversation free-flowing;
- allow candidates to develop a theme or topic for a short period, but will move them on to another theme to ensure the speaking test is an unscripted conversation between the Examiner and candidate; and
- try to help candidates get started again should they become confused.

The A2 Speaking Test

The A2 speaking test is split into 2 parts – an Introduction (1 minute) and Discussion (5 minutes) based on an individual research project, and a General Conversation (9 minutes) that focuses on the A level themes at a level appropriate to A2.

Candidates should also prepare a *Summary Sheet* with up to 5 bullet points on it so that the Visiting Examiner knows in advance what the candidate has researched.

It may be that the candidate selects one of the themes, for example a region, and researches five main points about the region. Candidates should understand that the bullet points are to help the Visiting Examiner prepare for the discussion, they are not a list of questions that will be asked.

The Introduction and Discussion will be assessed by AO4, 'showing knowledge and understanding of the chosen topic' and AO3 'command of idiom and vocabulary'.

The General Conversation will be assessed by AO1 and AO3. AO1 requires candidates to show that they have "a very good degree of comprehension" and can respond "readily and fluently to the Examiner's questions" and can "take the initiative to develop answers" and that there is "evidence of the ability to argue points of view and develop ideas". AO3 is assessing their use of the language and requires the manipulation of the language accurately and appropriately, in spoken forms, using a range of lexis and structure.

Throughout the A2 speaking test, Examiners will act as facilitators, guiding candidates towards using the best language that they are capable of. Candidates have some control over this part of their A2 exam as they can direct the conversation to some extent towards topics/themes that they find interesting. However, it is still an exam and Examiners are assessing candidates' ability to engage in a conversation so they will interject and ask questions, moving candidates on to other topics/themes.

This is a general conversation and therefore candidates should be able to talk about a range of topics, including their own lives and interests and the topics listed in the CCEA specification.

It may be that an Examiner asks a question on a topic that the candidate does not have much interest in. Thorough preparation should include giving candidates advice as to how to deal with these sorts of situations.

Candidates may also not have the opportunity to use all the material that they prepared in advance of the speaking test. This should not give them undue cause for concern.

SECTION B - *Advice for Candidates*

Teachers should make sure that A2 candidates have access (hard copy or electronic) to this section.

5. Introduction

Throughout the year, your teacher will have helped you to prepare for all aspects of the A2 exam - including the speaking tests. You will be aware of the administrative requirements and the mark schemes that CCEA Examiners will use to assess you during the speaking test (Mark schemes are available on the Modern Languages subject areas of the CCEA website, using the SAMs document).

The speaking tests often cause a lot of anxiety among students, more so even than the written papers. However, experience would indicate that there is often over-anxiety about the tests, which can actually impede a good performance. In reality, most students will find this a positive experience. With thorough preparation it is possible to exercise a level of control over the speaking tests.

All speaking tests are conducted by CCEA Visiting Examiners who are experienced teachers, familiar with the level of language that A2 students can produce. They are trained to act as facilitators, allowing you to show what you can do in the language, while applying the mark scheme. While you can exert some control over the speaking test, you must remember that you are being assessed by the Visiting Examiner who may move you on from a particular topic to assess you in another area. The CCEA Visiting Examiner may ask you a question that you have not anticipated, but with thorough preparation you should be able to deal with this situation. It may also happen that you do not get an opportunity to use all the material you have prepared, which again, should not give you undue cause for concern - it could be an indication of thorough preparation.

6. Preparing for the A2 Speaking Test

The A2 speaking test has 2 separate parts to it: an Introduction (1 minute) and Discussion (5 minutes) based on an individual research project, and a General Conversation (9 minutes) that focuses on the A level themes at a level appropriate to A2.

6.1. Preparing for the Discussion

You should select one of the themes for discussion listed in the CCEA specification - and in Section C of this document.

The following steps could be taken:

- start considering your choice at an early stage in the year;
- check with your teacher that it is an appropriate topic;

- begin to plan and research as soon as possible;
- ensure that material collected is relevant to your chosen topic; and
- prepare a Summary Sheet, with up to 5 points that you have researched.

Summary Sheets must be submitted to CCEA 23rd February 2024 for the Summer speaking tests.

You will take part in a discussion with the CCEA Visiting Examiner and should therefore prepare for this part of the speaking tests by practising listening and responding to questions, rather than trying to predict what questions will be asked. You must remember that the CCEA Visiting Examiner may not ask you questions on all of the bullet points that you have included on your *Summary Sheet*, and the questions may not occur in the order in which you wrote them.

6.2. Preparing for the Conversation

Examiners will expect A2 candidates to have a higher level of ability in the language than AS candidates. While A2 Examiners will still ask about your interests and lives, you should also be prepared to talk about the topics you have studied for AS and A2 should they come up in the conversation.

7. Assessing the A2 Speaking Tests

There are 75 marks available for the A2 speaking test.

The discussion will last approximately 5 minutes for which there are 40 marks available under AO4 (30 marks) and AO3 (10 marks). AO4 requires candidates to show an excellent knowledge and understanding of the chosen topic with detailed knowledge, views, arguments and insights. AO3 will require an excellent command of idiom and vocabulary appropriate to this level with clarity of pronunciation and intonation.

The conversation will last approximately 9 minutes for which there are 35 marks available under AO1 (25 marks) and AO3 (10 marks). AO1 requires candidates to display comprehension; to respond readily and fluently to questions; to develop answers and the ability to argue points of view and develop ideas. AO3 requires candidates to display a command of idiom and vocabulary appropriate to A2 level. Pronunciation, intonation and accuracy are also being assessed.

8. Conduct of the Speaking Tests

8.1. The Briefing Meeting

On the day of the speaking test, your teacher will arrange a Briefing Meeting at which the CCEA Visiting Examiner will meet with all the students in your school who are to be examined that day. It is important that you attend this meeting, at which the Examiner will:

- explain in detail the structure of the speaking test, his / her expectations and general approach;
- try to reduce tension and put you at ease; and
- conduct the Briefing Meeting in English but will also give you an opportunity to hear him / her speaking in the language before you go into the speaking test.

8.2. The A2 Speaking Test

The discussion on the topic is an interaction between you and the CCEA Visiting Examiner. You will have submitted a *Summary Sheet* with up to 5 main points on it before the speaking test. This is to help the CCEA Visiting Examiner prepare for your speaking test, so that he/she knows what sort of themes you have concentrated on. While he/she will use this as a basis for the discussion, it is not a list of questions that will be asked, it may be that he/she only asks questions on one or two of the bullet points. Rather than trying to predict questions that may come up during the discussion, concentrate on listening and responding to the CCEA Visiting Examiner's questions.

The format of the A2 general conversation is quite similar to that of the AS general conversation, although the CCEA Visiting Examiner will expect a more advanced level of language at A2. The CCEA Visiting Examiner will try and elicit areas of particular interest from you and the conversation will focus mainly on your lives and interests, however you may also have an opportunity to discuss some of the AS / A2 topics that you have studied.

As with the AS conversation, the CCEA Visiting Examiner will:

- give you an opportunity to develop a theme or topic, while ensuring that the conversation is a genuine interaction, covering a range of topics;
- try to steer you towards the highest level of language you can attain, allowing you to show that you are able to vary tenses and to use a range of vocabulary and idiom;
- try to maintain as much eye contact as possible; however this may not be possible all the time;
- be prepared to help you out with occasional promptings of vocabulary;
- make every effort to keep the conversation as open-ended and free-flowing as possible; and
- at the end of the test, indicate that it is over. However, he/she will not give any indication of your performance.

And finally . . .

Remember that at A2 CCEA Visiting Examiners are there to facilitate your speaking tests; their role is to conduct the test in a way that allows you to perform to the best of your ability. You are advised to understand what is being assessed in the speaking test and to prepare thoroughly for this throughout the year.

If you are unsure about any aspect of the A2 speaking test, you should ask your teacher.

SECTION C - *The A2 themes*

Selecting a Theme

At A2 two broad areas of study are available;

- **Young People in Society**
- **Our Place in a Changing World**

Young People and Society

Students have the opportunity to understand and explore these topics/issues in target language:

- part-time jobs;
- education and employment;
- career planning – aspirations and / or intentions;
- young people and democracy;
- European citizenship – advantages, disadvantages and opportunities; and
- societal attitudes and young people.

Our Place in a Changing World

Students have the opportunity to understand and explore these topics/issues in target language:

- equality / inequality and discrimination / prejudice
- poverty at home and abroad – causes, consequences and measures to combat it;
- immigration and emigration – causes, benefits and related issues;
- multicultural society and cultural identity – benefits and challenges;
- causes, consequences and resolution of conflict; and
- sustainable living and environmental issues.

Unit A2 1 Content for Introduction and Discussion

The introduction and discussion elements of the A2 Speaking examination are based on an individual research project on an aspect of the target language country or community. This must not relate to the topic for AS 1 or the set works for AS 3 and A2 3. The options for the introduction and discussion elements are:

Culture

Candidates study a cultural aspect of the target language country or community, for example the arts, music, sport, folklore, festivals or traditions;

or

Historical period

Candidates study a historical period from the twentieth century of the target language country or community;

or

Region

Candidates study a region of the target language country or community.

Additional Guidance

As the term Culture has a broad range of interpretation it is necessary to give some additional guidance on this matter. The discussion should be on a general theme and should not focus on a single film, text or individual. Set works should not be used in the discussion section at A2. It is possible, however, for a candidate to use a theme from a set work but not use the set works themselves. Texts and films can be used to illustrate a cultural aspect but the discussion must have a broader focus. In addition to this, it must contain a cultural aspect not one singular entity.

Using the Summary Sheet

Before completing the *Summary Sheet*, students should have studied the theme in detail.

Students should complete the *Summary Sheet*, making clear what theme they have chosen. Students should write up to 5 headings on the *Summary Sheet*, clarifying the main points that they have researched within the theme.

The *Summary Sheet* must be submitted to CCEA by 23rd February 2024 to give the CCEA Visiting Examiner adequate time to prepare for the discussion. Students should remember that the *Summary Sheet* is to help the CCEA Visiting Examiner understand what areas the student has focused on in his/her research. CCEA Visiting Examiners may not address all the bullet points on the *Summary Sheet* and may not address them in the order in which they appear. They may in fact only get to address one of the bullet points, depending on the way the discussion develops. Students should be assured that the discussion will focus on the theme they have selected, even if all the bullet points are not addressed.

Appendix 1(a) – Contact Details

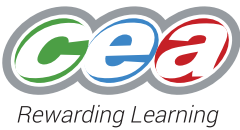
CONTACT	REASON
<p>CCEA Subject Officer (A2 French & German) <i>Barbara Laffitte-Fitou</i> blaffittefitou@ccea.org.uk</p>	
<p>CCEA Subject Officer (A2 Irish) <i>Philip Cummings</i> pcummings@ccea.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queries regarding the moderation procedures
<p>CCEA Subject Officer (A2 Spanish) <i>Claire Fitzsimons</i> cfitzsimons@ccea.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specification/assessment criteria queries and support
<p>GCE Languages Specification Support Officer <i>Joan Jennings</i> jjennings@ccea.org.uk</p>	
<p>CCEA (General Queries) CCEA, Clarendon Dock, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast, BT1 3BG (028) 9026 1200 info@ccea.org.uk http://www.ccea.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other queries

Appendix 1(b) – Useful Links

WEBPAGE	REASON
<p>GCE French Webpage https://ceea.org.uk/post-16/qce/subjects/qce-french-2016</p>	
<p>GCE German https://ceea.org.uk/post-16/qce/subjects/qce-german-2016</p>	
<p>GCE Irish https://ceea.org.uk/post-16/qce/subjects/qce-irish-2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specification/assessment criteria support and materials
<p>GCE Spanish https://ceea.org.uk/post-16/qce/subjects/qce-spanish-2016</p>	
<p>CCEA Examiner/Centre Support Timetables GCE Timetables https://ceea.org.uk/post-16/qce/timetables</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting Examination Dates
<p>JCQ Exams Office 'ICE' – Instructions for Conducting Examinations https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JCQ instructions for conducting examinations

Appendix 2 – Summary Sheet

A2	GCE A2: Modern Languages
	Summer 20
	Summary Sheet: Speaking
	Subject: _____



This form MUST be completed and emailed to CCEA Moderation (languagevisits@ccea.org.uk) by 23rd February. Another copy of this form must be retained in the Centre until after Issue of Results.

SECTION A: To be completed by teacher

Centre Name:		Centre Number:					
Candidate Name:		Candidate Number:					

Is this candidate to be examined at an alternative Centre? YES NO

Name of Centre: _____ Centre Number:

SECTION B: To be completed by candidate

Areas of Interest:	
Title:	

This form should include the main themes that you have prepared, split into not more than 5 headings.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

I can confirm that this topic does not relate to work which has been studied for AS 1 Speaking, AS 3 nor A2 3 Extended Writing.

Candidate's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Teacher's Signature: _____ Print Name: _____

Moderation Team, CCEA, 29 Clarendon Road, Clarendon Dock, Belfast BT1 3BG Tel: (028) 9026 1200

Appendix 3 – *Suggested Schedule*

TIME	CANDIDATE (Taking Test)
9.40	-
10.00	1
10.20	2
10.40	3
11.00	4
11.20	BREAK
11.40	5
12.00	6
12.20	7
12.40	8
13.00	BREAK
13.40	-
14.00	9
14.20	10
14.40	11
15.00	12

Appendix 4 - Special Consideration Application

CCEA has developed the SPC Online Application to allow centres to submit applications for SPC.

Please note - paper forms will no longer be accepted unless prior agreement has been approved through CCEA's Centre and Examiner Support Team. Enquiries should be forwarded to specialconsideration@ccea.org.uk.

Teachers are asked to contact their Examination Officer, who will have access to the secure online application, for further details on how to submit an application for SPC online.

The SPC application can be accessed from the Central Login portal on the CCEA website.

This booklet has been drawn up to comply with the relevant regulatory requirements.

Teachers, centres and candidates should note that CCEA may, with prior permission, use extracts from examination scripts/internally assessed material on an anonymous basis in educational presentations, materials and products.

