

# **ASSET LANGUAGES:**

**GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS/INTERLOCUTORS**

**MASTERY STAGE SPEAKING TESTS**



# Asset Languages Mastery Stage Speaking Tests

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

## Contents

Confidentiality and security .....	3
<b>Overview of Mastery Stage Speaking</b> .....	4
Speaking test arrangements .....	4
The structure of Mastery Speaking tests.....	5
Understanding the Mastery Stage standard - the Languages Ladder .....	6
Understanding Mastery Stage - Language purposes and functions .....	7
Understanding Mastery Stage - Grammar and linguistic structures.....	8
Understanding Mastery Stage - Vocabulary .....	8
Mastery Stage assessment criteria .....	8
<b>Preparing Mastery Speaking tests</b> .....	10
Candidate Presentation Topics leaflet .....	10
Managing time .....	10
Using questions correctly.....	10
Avoiding malpractice .....	11
Choosing a suitable location for conducting tests .....	11
Controlling the quality of recordings.....	11
Labelling cassettes and cassette boxes.....	12
<b>Conducting Mastery Speaking tests</b> .....	13
Requirements for recording .....	13
Conducting part 1A – General conversation .....	13
Conducting part 1B – Picture-based task.....	14
Conducting part 2A – Presentation .....	14
Conducting part 2B – Discussion .....	15
What to do after completing tests .....	16
Support documents. ....	16

## Confidentiality and security

Material for Asset Languages Mastery 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 Mastery 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 Mastery Stage, centres must submit recordings of the entire test.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that adequate planning has taken place for Mastery 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 Mastery 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 Mastery 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 Mastery Stage standard - the Languages Ladder*

Before conducting a Speaking test, it is useful to ensure that you are familiar with the standard of the Mastery 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 16** I can communicate with ease in both formal and informal situations, using a wide range and variety of language appropriately.

**Grade 17** I can communicate effortlessly and confidently in most situations, showing a command of language which enables me to express finer shades of meaning.

On completing this stage, you should be able to communicate effortlessly and confidently and express yourself with ease, using appropriate interventions and backtracking when necessary. Your pronunciation and intonation will be accurate.

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

At Mastery Stage, the functional exponents expected from candidates

a) include the language purposes and functions of the Proficiency Stage and build on them through more sustained, complex and precise use of language, dealing with finer shades of meaning:

b) occur within a wider range of topics and contexts and serve a generally persuasive purpose, :

- defending, opposing and evaluating arguments
- summarising and reconstructing arguments and information
- expressing and evaluating priorities
- analysing
- justifying opinions
- structuring conclusions
- responding to and using non-verbal and intonational cues
- expressing degrees of emphasis
- differentiating
- highlighting and eliminating ambiguity
- qualifying opinions and statements
- expressing limitations
- expressing degrees of belief, doubt, likelihood etc.
- employing idiom and colloquialisms for effect
- handling challenging questions appropriately
- conveying opinion through connotative levels of meaning

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

### **Productive tasks**

At Mastery Stage candidates are required to show knowledge of grammar and linguistic structures to express the language purposes and functions described in section 4.1 of the specification, and to make natural use of a full range of grammatical structures to express ideas with precision and convey finer shades of meaning. Differentiation will occur less on the basis of accuracy than that of the range, clarity, precision, appropriacy, and communicative and persuasive effect of language in dealing with feelings, opinions and complex abstract ideas.

## *Understanding Mastery 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.

## *Mastery Stage assessment criteria*

The following criteria are included for information only. Mastery 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 Mastery standard.

Language	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Makes consistently precise and appropriate use of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms for appropriate effect; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.</li><li>• Consistently shows flexibility, reformulating complex ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity.</li><li>• Consistently maintains grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged.</li></ul>	<b>Band 2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Makes generally precise and appropriate use of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms for appropriate effect; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.</li><li>• Generally shows flexibility, reformulating complex ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity.</li><li>• Is able overall to maintain grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged.</li></ul>	<b>Band 1</b>
Response below Mastery (grade 16) level.	<b>Band 0</b>
Communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interacts with fully natural turn taking, referencing, allusion making, intonation and sentence stress. Picks up and uses non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly.</li><li>• Can express him/herself at length with a natural, effortless, unhesitating flow, almost always avoiding or backtracking smoothly and naturally around any difficulty.</li><li>• Produces clear, well-structured speech with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.</li><li>• Presents articulate and persuasive arguments on complex issues, at no disadvantage when interacting with native speakers. Can handle challenging questions with ease and give extended responses.</li></ul>	<b>Band 2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interacts with mostly natural turn taking, referencing, allusion making, intonation and sentence stress. Picks up and uses non-verbal and intonational cues.</li><li>• Can express him/herself at length with a mostly natural, effortless, unhesitating flow. Is often able to avoid or backtrack smoothly and naturally around difficulties.</li><li>• Shows evidence of being able to produce clear, well-structured speech with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.</li><li>• Is able for the most part for the most part to present articulate and persuasive arguments on complex issues, at little disadvantage when interacting with native speakers. Can handle challenging questions with ease.</li></ul>	<b>Band 1</b>
Response below Mastery (grade 16) level.	<b>Band 0</b>

# Preparing Mastery Speaking tests

Mastery 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 Mastery 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 Mastery 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 this 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.