

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations

in collaboration with

Cambridge ESOL

ASSET LANGUAGES PRELIMINARY STAGE LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING AND WRITING

in

**ARABIC, BENGALI, CHINESE, CORNISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, MODERN GREEK,
GUJARATI, HINDI, IRISH, ITALIAN, JAPANESE, PANJABI, POLISH, PORTUGUESE,
RUSSIAN, SOMALI, SPANISH, SWEDISH, TAMIL, TURKISH, URDU, WELSH AND
YORUBA**

including the World of Work context for French¹, German¹ and Spanish

For assessment from September 2007

¹ French and German will be available from September 2008

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ASSET LANGUAGES – PRELIMINARY STAGE

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1 The Asset Languages Scheme

1.1 RATIONALE

Introduction

The Languages Ladder, part of the DfES' National Languages Strategy (NLS), is a multi-stage learning programme designed to extend the opportunities for learning languages.

The Languages Ladder is designed to endorse competence in language learning. It allows learners to progress in one or more of the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) in one or more languages and also offers the opportunity for people to assess their own levels of language competence. Each stage comprises different grades which use a 'can do' statement to describe typical behavior of a learner at that stage. Within each, stage the grades are progressive but may address different aspects of each skill. The complete 'can do' statements are given in the appendix and include, for example:

Speaking Grade 5: I can give a short prepared talk, on a topic of my choice, including expressing simple opinions.

The NLS aims to increase the teaching and learning of languages in England. Asset Languages is a voluntary assessment scheme designed to support the NLS by providing recognition of attainment and associated accreditation options against the Languages Ladder. It is suitable for all ages and abilities. The scheme is designed as a measure of proficiency and thus is not associated with any particular programme of study. It can sit alongside Entry Level, GCSE, vocationally related or NVQ qualifications. By being portable it supports lifelong learning of languages from primary school through secondary to further, higher and adult education.

The scheme will ultimately be available in six stages – Breakthrough, Preliminary, Intermediate, Advanced, Proficiency and Mastery. Learners can be assessed in one or more of the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) through Teacher Assessment and/or External Assessment. The former leads to a locally issued Grade Award, whilst the latter leads to an OCR Certificate.

This specification relates to the Preliminary Stage. Each of the other stages is covered by separate specifications.

The first four stages relate to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels as follows.

Languages Ladder Stages	NQF
Breakthrough: Grades 1–3	Entry Level
Preliminary: Grades 4–6	Level 1
Intermediate: Grades 7–9	Level 2
Advanced: Grades 10–12	Level 3

These specifications will comply in every respect with the requirements of *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*.

OCR has taken great care in the preparation of these specifications and associated assessment material to avoid bias of any kind.

Languages Available

From September 2007 the following languages are available at the Preliminary stage:

Arabic, Bengali, Chinese*, Cornish, French, German, Modern Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swedish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu, Welsh and Yoruba.

* Chinese includes: Chinese (Mandarin) Listening and Speaking
Chinese (Simplified) Reading and Writing
Chinese (Cantonese) Listening and Speaking
Chinese (Traditional) Reading and Writing

The terms Chinese (Mandarin) and Chinese (Cantonese) may be used in support documentation to cover these qualifications.

For Spanish the assessments are also available in the context of the World of Work. French and German will be made available from September 2008.

The principles described in this specification are applicable to all languages. OCR publishes short language-specific supplements which include grammar and linguistic structures and defined vocabulary lists where appropriate.

Asset Languages as a proficiency framework

The Asset Languages project requires a framework which links coherently across a wide range of absolute language proficiency levels, different languages, contexts of learning and modes of assessment delivery. A strong theoretical and measurement model is necessary in order to construct this framework. The following are important features of the approach.

Asset Languages grades constitute a proficiency scale. That is, they reflect a view that learners acquiring language skills follow a roughly similar path through a number of levels, which can be described. The task of assessment is to locate the level that a learner is currently at. The predictable nature of progression means that proficiency-oriented assessments need not be closely associated with any particular programme of study. This distinguishes them from achievement tests. Notwithstanding this, language use and language testing are necessarily situated in specific contexts, and different

language systems pose specific problems for learners. For this reason general guidance has been provided as to the range of topics, and hence vocabulary, in the form of functional areas and aspects of the language system that will be included in assessments.

How test performance relates to real-world abilities

The Languages Ladder ‘can do’ statements are to be taken as short descriptions of the meaning of a level in terms which are accessible and useful to end-users. They are examples of the likely observable outcomes of achieving a certain level of proficiency. They are not definitions of proficiency to a level of detail that would meet the needs of teachers to develop classroom schemes of work, of test constructors to write suitable tasks to achieve coverage of the level, or of raters to judge performance in relation to a level. Each of these purposes would require different and fuller specification.

All assessments bear an indirect relationship to the real world, because it is not possible to recreate authentically within the test all aspects of target language use. Performance on test tasks may not directly equate to real-world ‘can do’s. However, through validation studies, we attempt to provide the evidence that supports interpretation in terms of the skills typically displayed by a learner at a given level.

Assessment Methodology

The assessment methodology for the receptive skills is based on an item-banking approach and is designed to provide a rigorous basis for comparison across languages and levels. It relies on pretesting of tasks to ensure that papers are statistically comparable. This has the additional advantage that it supports the multiple versions of tests needed for on-demand assessment and enables parallel versions of computer-based and paper-based tests to be offered during the development of the scheme. Productive skills are assessed on a criteria-based approach. Wherever possible, tasks are trialled for suitability prior to final question paper construction. For small-entry languages, full pretesting is not always possible and a variety of techniques is used to determine levels.

Specification Aims

The specifications are designed to give students opportunities to:

- develop an understanding of standard spoken and written forms of their chosen language relating to a range of everyday matters;
- develop the ability to communicate effectively about a range of everyday matters in standard written and spoken language;
- develop positive attitudes towards language learning.

Assessment Objectives

There are four assessment objectives, each corresponding to the appropriate qualification.

Listening

Understand standard speech, spoken clearly and directly, and relating to a range of everyday matters.
Recognise the difference between past, present and future tenses or time references.

Speaking

Communicate in and respond to standard spoken language relating to a range of everyday matters.

Reading

Understand written texts on familiar matters or situations.
Recognise the difference between past, present and future tenses or time references.

Writing

Write simple texts relating to a range of predictable everyday matters by using and adapting learned language.

The four assessment objectives are tested separately and form the basis of separate qualifications.

1.2 CERTIFICATION TITLES

These specifications will be shown on a certificate as:

OCR Level 1 Certificate in *Language* Listening (Preliminary) (Asset Languages)

OCR Level 1 Certificate in *Language* Speaking (Preliminary) (Asset Languages)

OCR Level 1 Certificate in *Language* Reading (Preliminary) (Asset Languages)

OCR Level 1 Certificate in *Language* Writing (Preliminary) (Asset Languages)

The World of Work option will be shown on a certificate as:

OCR Level 1 Certificate in *Language* Listening (Preliminary) (World of Work) (Asset Languages)

OCR Level 1 Certificate in *Language* Speaking (Preliminary) (World of Work) (Asset Languages)

OCR Level 1 Certificate in *Language* Reading (Preliminary) (World of Work) (Asset Languages)

OCR Level 1 Certificate in *Language* Writing (Preliminary) (World of Work) (Asset Languages)

1.3 LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION

This qualification is approved by the regulatory authorities (QCA, DCELLS and CCEA) as part of the National Qualifications Framework.

Level 1 specifications are designed to recognise the achievement of candidates who are basic users of the language. Candidates who have achieved the qualification in all four skills should be able to understand sentences and basic information of personal relevance, communicate using a simple and direct exchange of information and describe in simple terms aspects of their immediate environment.

1.4 RECOMMENDED PRIOR LEARNING AND PROGRESSION

Asset Languages provides a measurement of language proficiency and is independent of any specific course of study.

Candidates who are studying a language for Preliminary stage should normally have attained the level represented by achievement of the Breakthrough stage in the appropriate skill. This may be achieved through the generic study of any Entry Level qualification in the language.

These Level 1 qualifications may be studied as part of lifelong learning for many reasons both recreational and/or vocational. They serve as an end in themselves for candidates who wish for a basic understanding of the language or may be used as a basis for progression up the Languages Ladder to Intermediate stage and beyond.

1.5 GUIDED LEARNING HOURS

Each qualification requires a nominal 40 guided learning hours.

This figure is based on a learner studying the language from an Entry Level (Breakthrough stage) base. In practice, learners will bring very different experiences to bear and there will be a wide variety of learning hours. Where languages present particular issues in script-acquisition, additional guided learning hours may be necessary for progress in reading and writing.

1.6 OVERLAP WITH OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

These qualifications have considerable overlap with Foundation GCSEs in Modern Foreign Languages and the OCR Level 1 Certificate in Business Language Competence. Unlike these qualifications, however, each skill may be certificated separately.

1.7 RESTRICTIONS ON CANDIDATE ENTRIES

There is no restriction on candidate entries.

Every specification is assigned to a national classification code indicating the subject area to which it belongs.

Centres should be aware that candidates who enter for more than one qualification with the same classification code will have only one grade (the highest) counted for the purpose of the School and College Achievement and Attainment Tables.

1.8 LANGUAGE OF SPECIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

OCR will provide specifications, assessments and supporting documentation in English only, with the exception of French, which will also be provided through the medium of Welsh. Additional languages may be supplied through the medium of Welsh if there is sufficient demand.

SECTION B: SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

2 The Nature of Assessment

2.1 TEACHER ASSESSMENT

A feature of the scheme is its use of Teacher Assessment, which enables a centre to issue a Grade Award directly to its students. It is motivational and, by working through a series of short term goals, provides an excellent preparation for External Assessment.

Teacher Assessment is work that is set by OCR but marked by the teacher according to mark schemes supplied by OCR. Teacher Assessment is available at each of the three Grades 4, 5 and 6 in all four skills.

All centres can offer Teacher Assessment, but in order to award Grade Awards a centre must have access to an Accredited Teacher who is prepared to supervise the marking of assessments according to principles laid down by OCR, which will include internal standardisation.

Centres should note that, since it does not involve External Assessment, a Grade Award cannot be regarded as a formal qualification within the National Qualifications Framework. It does nevertheless provide:

- a short-term motivational goal for students;
- a good measure of students' attainment for use in a range of informal contexts.

2.2 EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

In order to achieve a formal, certificated qualification, candidates must be entered for External Assessment. External Assessment has been designed to recognise the achievement of candidates at the end of the Preliminary Stage and it is recommended that candidates are normally entered following the award of Grade 6 through Teacher Assessment, though other entry strategies are possible.

Each External Assessment comprises a single, short test, details of which are given in Section 3. The test covers the entire stage and candidates who achieve marks at or above the minimum standard are awarded Grade 4, 5 or 6.

External Assessment in Reading, Writing and Listening is work that is set and marked by OCR. Speaking is assessed through a selection of OCR set tasks and a presentation. It is assessed by a teacher and internally standardised. Part 1 is moderated by OCR.

External Assessment is carried out under controlled conditions which are described in Section 6.1. These are designed to ensure that the qualification is valid and reliable, whilst avoiding the more formal requirements associated with some modes of external assessment. It is expected that most External Assessment will take place within the normal classroom environment, though other models, including the use of classroom assistants, may be possible.

External Assessment is available to centres throughout much of the academic year. In practice, this means that centres can offer tests at a time of their choosing, provided that entries have been made in accordance with the schedules provided by OCR.

In order to enable centres to offer tests to pupils within normal class time, a number of versions of each test are made available and centres are expected to ensure that security is maintained by following the rules laid down in Section 6.1.

2.3 CONTEXTS

Asset Languages is designed to promote lifelong learning in languages. In order to ensure that assessment materials are appropriate for different learners, both Teacher Assessment and External Assessment will eventually be available in up to four contexts for the Preliminary Stage:

- Primary
- Secondary
- Post-16
- World of Work

All contexts will provide equivalent assessment and there are no restrictions on entry.

The context of the World of Work will only be available in French, German and Spanish.

2.4 COMPUTER-BASED ASSESSMENT

Asset Languages is designed to encourage the use of computer-based learning in languages.

Delivery will be based on the Cambridge Assessment computer-based test administration system (Cambridge Connect). Cambridge Connect is a secure system that is designed to avoid problems of internet connectivity and slow speeds by delivering test bundles to centres in advance of the test date. Through the use of a centre-based test delivery client system the centre is then able to deliver tests to candidates at the time of their choice.

Regulations for sessions are included in the External Assessment Reference Guide.

In order to establish a basis for comparability, questions will initially be identical to those used in paper-based tests. Once a set of anchor items is securely in place, further tasks will be created to utilise more fully the potential of computer-based tests.

2.5 AVAILABILITY OF ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

Up-to-date information on External Assessment sessions and availability of languages and stages can be found on the Asset Languages website.

2.6 AWARDING OF GRADES

Each qualification is graded on a three point scale: Grades 4, 5 and 6. Grades are awarded on the basis of External Assessment only.

External Assessment is primarily designed for candidates who are expected to achieve Grade 6. However, candidates who do not achieve this grade may be awarded Grade 4 or 5, depending upon their performance. The teacher assessment materials are designed to support teachers in making suitable judgements with regard to entry.

Wherever possible, questions are pretested and grade thresholds will eventually be predetermined, though awarding meetings will be held until stability is achieved. Grades are awarded on the basis of the candidates' raw marks in relation to the threshold. Candidates who fail to achieve the mark for the Grade 4 threshold are ungraded.

3 External Assessment Methods

3.1 GENERAL

All papers are based on the specification content described in Section 4. Language-specific content is published in separate supplements available on the website.

Rubrics are in English.

Dictionaries are not permitted in any external assessment, though words may be glossed where appropriate.

The external assessments in Listening and Reading are designed to contain material that covers the 'can do' statements for all three grades within a stage, i.e. Grades 4, 5 and 6 at Preliminary. External assessment in Speaking and Writing will require the level of achievement to be measured against performance criteria.

3.2 LISTENING

Tasks are intended to test comprehension. Rubrics and questions are all in English.

The assessment is a test of approximately 30 minutes' duration (including time for candidates to transfer their answers to the answer sheet). It comprises 25 questions, each worth one mark. The test is available in paper-based format. For some languages, it is also available in computer-based form.

Candidates are required to listen for and identify the main points, some detail and basic opinions from a range of texts. Texts will be of varying length, including short and longer monologues such as phone messages, and short and longer dialogues such as simple conversations, from a range of adapted authentic sources. Candidates hear all spoken materials twice.

A range of task types are used which are similar to or of an equal difficulty to the following. Task types are generally ordered so that the less demanding tasks appear earlier in the paper.

Three-option multiple-choice (visuals) task based on a short monologue.

Three-option multiple-choice (verbal) task based on a series of short discrete dialogues that may include a variety of topics, speakers, situations and time references.

Note-taking or sentence-completion task based on a short monologue. Candidates have to write a word (or number) to complete sentences or notes in English.

Matching task based on a longer continuous dialogue, consisting of a series of short turns. The task is to match the text to a series of statements in English. One of the statements is not in the text. The text is a social exchange including both factual information and simple expression of opinion.

Three-option multiple-choice task based on a dialogue on a general interest topic.

World of Work

Assessments set within the context of the World of Work follow the above format.

3.3 SPEAKING

The assessment is a test of 6 minutes' duration. It is conducted and assessed by the teacher. The test is not available in computer-based form.

Part 1 of the test, comprising tasks 1 and 2, is conducted face-to-face, with one teacher and one candidate. The teacher follows an interlocutor frame in order to standardise assessments. Part 2 of the test may either be conducted face-to-face or may take the form of a presentation to a group or whole class. Part 1 must be recorded on cassette and is moderated by an OCR appointed moderator. Part 2 is not externally moderated. Parts 1 and 2 can be conducted on the same occasion or on separate occasions. Separate arrangements are made for the World of Work contexts.

All contexts except the World of Work

Part 1

The interlocutor has a frame with an introduction in English and questions in the target language which are to be used as prompts.

Task 1 requires the candidate to answer brief personal questions. The examiner chooses from topics and questions provided in the Speaking test pack.

Task 2 consists of an interaction task. Tasks are used which allow the candidate to interact with the examiner and to initiate conversation; for example, a task based on a photograph. The candidate is given some time to familiarise him/herself with the photograph. The candidate is asked to talk about the content of the picture and to relate it to their personal experience and opinions.

Part 2

Task 3 consists of a presentation lasting up to two minutes, on a topic previously chosen and prepared by the candidate, guided by a list of suitable topic areas. It is followed by two questions from the examiner. At this level, these are as follows.

An account of something the candidate has experienced: e.g. a description of a holiday or visit to a place of interest.

A 'promotional' presentation, in which the candidate describes and recommends something (a hobby, a place, a career, a famous person, e.g. a singer, writer or actor) s/he is personally enthusiastic about.

A presentation in which the candidate gives instructions or advice on how to do something (examples could be: how to cook a certain dish, how to get fit, how to plan a party).

Up to three illustrations (photos, overheads or PowerPoint slides) may be used. No words can appear on these support materials.

World of Work context

Assessments set within the context of the World of Work differ from the above in the following ways.

Part 1

Task 1 is an interaction task based on visual and written prompts. The candidate is given some time to familiarise him/herself with the information and then to ask and answer questions based on it within a roleplay scenario.

Task 2 requires the candidate to answer questions about their job within the roleplay scenario.

Part 2

Task 3 consists of a presentation followed by questions on an organization or company that the candidate has personally researched.

3.4 READING

Tasks are intended to test comprehension. Rubrics and questions are all in English.

The assessment is a test of 40 minutes' duration. It comprises 25–30 questions, each worth one mark. The test is available in paper-based format. For some languages it is also available in computer-based form.

Candidates are required to read texts of varying length, including brief notices or messages, emails, faxes, letters, brochures and short articles from a range of adapted authentic sources.

A range of task types are used which are similar to or of an equal difficulty to the following. Task types are generally ordered so that the less demanding tasks appear earlier in the paper.

Matching task with brief notices or messages. There are sentences in English to match the meaning of the notice in the target language. There are five items and six notices.

Matching task with short descriptive texts in the target language on the same theme (e.g. restaurants). The task is to match texts to statements by different people expressed in one or two short English sentences. There are five statements and six texts.

Three-option (visual) multiple-choice task based on a longer target language text. The text is personal, either a letter or an email, and it is descriptive/narrative.

Right/Wrong/Don't know task based on a longer target language text. The text is narrative, article or story of general interest.

Three-option multiple-choice (verbal) task based on a longer target language text. The text is general interest, article or review.

Gapped-text task. The text is either made up of sentences with some sentences or parts of sentences missing or questions and answers. Candidates choose from six options which (part of a) sentence or answer completes the text.

World of Work

Assessments set within the context of the World of Work follow the above format.

3.5 WRITING

The assessment is a test of 25 minutes' duration. It comprises two different tasks. Candidates are not allowed to use dictionaries. The test is available in paper-based format. For some languages, it is also available in computer-based form.

All contexts except World of Work

There are two parts to the test. Part 1 consists of one task that all candidates must attempt. Part 2 consists of two tasks and candidates choose one.

A range of task types is used which is similar to or of an equal difficulty to the following.

Part 1

Candidates follow prompts to write one short descriptive paragraph of 20–40 words.

Part 2

Candidates write a factual text of 50–70 words in the target language using prompts written in English. Key words may be provided as support.

or

A creative writing task either based on three key words that must be used or on English and target language rubrics. Candidates write a paragraph of 50–70 words.

World of Work context

Tasks set with the World of Work context require candidates to write emails, letters, memos, messages and other work-related texts.

Part 1

Candidates follow prompts to write one paragraph of 20–40 words.

Part 2

Candidates have a choice of two tasks. They write a factual text of 50–70 words in the target language using prompts written in English. Key words may be provided as support.

3.6 MARKING CRITERIA FOR EXTERNALLY ASSESSED SPEAKING

For each part of the test, the candidate is awarded two equally weighted marks, for Language and for Communication, using the mark scheme given on the following page.

Marks can be awarded in three bands: 1, 2 and 3. Each band is then subdivided into three levels, e.g. 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. This allows the examiner to determine, within each band, that the level has been minimally achieved (3.1), partially achieved (3.2) or fully achieved (3.3).

Examiners record their marks for both Part 1 and Part 2 on a mark sheet provided by OCR.

At Preliminary stage, Part 1 carries 60% of the final mark and Part 2 carries 40%.

3.7 MARKING CRITERIA FOR EXTERNALLY ASSESSED WRITING

For each part of the test, the candidate is awarded two equally weighted marks, for Language and for Communication, using the mark scheme given on page 17.

Marks can be awarded in three bands: 1, 2 and 3. Each band is then subdivided into three levels, e.g. 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. This allows the examiner to determine, within each band, that the level has been minimally achieved (3.1), partially achieved (3.2) or fully achieved (3.3).

At Preliminary stage, Part 1 carries 40% of the final mark and Part 2 carries 60%.

PRELIMINARY SPEAKING

This mark scheme is to be interpreted at Preliminary standard.

Language	Communication	
<p>A range of structures is used successfully. There may be a few grammatical errors. A range of vocabulary is used.</p>	<p>The main points of the task are communicated. Responses are sometimes extended. Hesitations do not make communication difficult. Simple strategies to repair or clarify communication can be used when needed. There is a good attempt to use the target language pronunciation. Understanding requires little effort from the listener.</p>	<p>3.3 3.2 3.1</p>
<p>There is an attempt to use a range of structures. There are some grammatical errors. There is an attempt to use a range of vocabulary.</p>	<p>Some of the main points of the task are communicated. Responses are not usually extended. Hesitation can sometimes make communication difficult. There is an attempt to repair or clarify communication when needed. There is some attempt to use the target language pronunciation. Understanding requires some effort from the listener.</p>	<p>2.3 2.2 2.1</p>
<p>A range of simple structures is used. Grammatical errors are evident. A limited range of vocabulary is used.</p>	<p>Few of the main points of the task are communicated. Responses are not extended. Hesitation makes communication difficult. There is no attempt to repair or clarify communication when needed. There is little attempt to use the target language pronunciation. Understanding requires considerable effort from the listener.</p>	<p>1.3 1.2 1.1</p>
<p>Response below Preliminary (Grade 4) level</p>	<p>Response below Preliminary (Grade 4) standard</p>	<p>0</p>

PRELIMINARY WRITING

This mark scheme is to be interpreted at Preliminary standard.

Language	Communication	
<p>A range of structures is used successfully. There may be a few grammatical errors. A range of vocabulary is used. A range of kanji is used. (Japanese only) Spelling is generally accurate. Character formation is generally accurate.*</p>	<p>The main points of the task are communicated.</p>	<p>3.3 3.2 3.1</p>
<p>There is an attempt to use a range of structures. There are some grammatical errors. There is an attempt to use a range of vocabulary. There is an attempt to use a range of kanji. (Japanese only) Spelling is accurate enough for the meaning to be clear. Character formation is accurate enough for the meaning to be clear.*</p>	<p>Some of the main points of the task are communicated.</p>	<p>2.3 2.2 2.1</p>
<p>A range of simple structures is used. Grammatical errors are evident. A limited range of vocabulary is used. A limited range of kanji is used.(Japanese only) Spelling is accurate enough for the meaning to be clear (with some effort from the reader). Character formation is accurate enough for the meaning to be clear (with some effort from the reader).*</p>	<p>Few of the main points of the task are communicated.</p>	<p>1.3 1.2 1.1</p>
<p>Question not attempted or totally incomprehensible response. Response below Preliminary (Grade 4) level.</p>	<p>Question not attempted or totally irrelevant to the task set. (Irrelevant tasks will not be marked according to the Language criterion.)</p>	<p>0</p>

* for all non-Latin script languages

3.8 EXEMPLAR TASKS

Exemplar question papers are provided in a separate booklet available on the website. The exemplar tasks are written in English and are indicative of the content for all target languages.

Tasks are produced according to detailed item writer guidelines. These specify the exact format of each task type. Item writer guidelines are fundamental to the production of comparable tasks in a range of languages. Language-specific issues are highlighted for each team of writers during editing meetings. The guidelines are reviewed for all languages to ensure consistency in the production of the tests. All new task types are trialled and pretested to ensure comparability with existing tasks.

The exemplar question papers serve to familiarise candidates with the layout and format of tasks and how to answer them. Further preparation for the External Assessment may be achieved through the Teacher Assessment materials.

SECTION C: SPECIFICATION CONTENT

4 Specification Content

4.1 LANGUAGE PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

At Preliminary stage, the realisation of these functions:

- builds on the specifications at Breakthrough stage by adding some range to the language used;
 - occurs in a wider range of areas.
- taking part in social situations, e.g. greeting / responding to greetings; expressing thanks; apologising
 - repairing communication (e.g. asking for repetition, checking meaning)
 - giving information
 - asking / answering questions
 - describing
 - asking for and giving opinions
 - following / giving instructions
 - asking for things
 - expressing ability
 - using numbers and expressing quantity
 - expressing time
 - agreeing / disagreeing
 - comparing
 - giving reasons
 - expressing preferences
 - making and responding to suggestions
 - expressing obligation and lack of obligation
 - expressing feelings and emotions
 - talking about the present
 - talking about the future
 - talking about the past

4.2 GRAMMAR AND LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES

Candidates are required to show knowledge of the grammar and linguistic structures that are minimally required to express the language purposes and functions in 4.1. Language-specific guidelines for grammatical and linguistic structures are provided in language-specific supplements available on the website.

4.3 VOCABULARY

The vocabulary used in Preliminary stage consists of common items that normally occur in the everyday vocabulary of native speakers using the target language today in a range of predictable everyday areas.

Some items may be glossed to aid candidates.

4.4 WORLD OF WORK

Assessments set within the context of the World of Work cover the above range of language purposes and functions, grammar and linguistic structures and vocabulary. Additional information is provided with exemplification of these within the work context in a supplementary document on the website.

SECTION D: ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

5 Communicating with OCR

5.1 ROLES WITHIN CENTRES

All centres are strongly advised to appoint a Centre Coordinator. Centres offering Grade Awards for Teacher Assessment need to have access to an Accredited Teacher.

Centre Coordinator

The Centre Coordinator is the person in the centre who has a detailed understanding of the workings of the scheme. They:

- attend the Centre Coordinator training course and cascade information to colleagues;
- liaise with OCR on general queries related to Asset Languages;
- act as the point of liaison between the languages team in the centre and the Examinations Officer.

In practice, Centre Coordinators in large centres may also take on delegated responsibility from the Examinations Officer for running external assessments in class time.

In addition, they may take on a coordinating role for Teacher Assessment and Accredited Teachers.

In primary schools this role will normally be filled by the Languages Coordinator. In secondary schools and FE colleges the role would sit naturally with the Head of Languages.

Accredited Teachers

Accredited Teachers receive training regarding the implementation of Teacher Assessment.

5.2 SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

Asset Languages will provide training courses for Centre Coordinators.

Details of availability may be obtained from:

OCR Training Division
Mill Wharf
Birmingham
B6 4BU
Tel: 0121 628 2950

Asset Languages will also be supported through:

- the website: www.assetlanguages.org.uk ;
- a helpdesk for first line support, email assetlanguages@ocr.org.uk or telephone 01223 553998;
- a dedicated Centre Support Manager for second line support;
- additional optional training courses.

Since the qualification does not specify any particular course of study, OCR does not currently endorse teaching materials. Enquiries in relation to course materials should be referred to:

CILT
20 Bedfordbury
London
WC2N 4LB
Tel: 020 7379 5101

5.3 ENTRY CODES

In order to enter for External Assessment, centres must use the appropriate Entry and Option Code. These will be published on the Asset Languages website.

6 Regulations for Assessment

6.1 REGULATIONS FOR EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

External Assessment leads to a formal qualification and should therefore be conducted in a formal environment, though this could include a properly supervised classroom. The test should be directly supervised by a responsible individual, and there should be no opportunity for the candidates to communicate with each other. For the duration of the test there should be silence in the room where candidates are taking the test and they should be under the direct observation of an individual.

External Assessment tests will be formally timed according to the length of time stated on the front of the question paper.

Question paper packets should be checked upon receipt by the centre and stored in secure conditions with restricted access. Under no circumstances may any packet be opened prior to the nominated date/time at which the test will be conducted. Any confidential material received on tapes or other media should be checked prior to the test taking place so that any defects can be reported to OCR and a replacement despatched if necessary.

In order to maintain the security of the tests, centres that have multiple groups of candidates sitting for the same assessment, but at different times, will need to request a number of different versions of the test so that a different version is being used for each time/date during the entry session. For example:

Set 1 are writing Preliminary French in the morning.

Sets 2 and 3 are writing Preliminary French in the afternoon.

The centre would need to request 2 versions of the test – one for use in the morning, and another for the afternoon.

No display material (e.g. wall charts/posters) that may be explicitly helpful to candidates must be visible in the test room.

The seating arrangements must be such as to prevent candidates from seeing, intentionally or otherwise, the work of others.

Supervisors must give their full attention to the proper conduct of the test. At least one supervisor must be present for every group of 30 candidates or part thereof.

Unauthorised material, including mobile telephones, pagers, pocket translators, and any other products with text facilities, are not permitted in the test room. Any such materials must be handed to a supervisor prior to the start of the test.

The supervisor should remind candidates that they are forbidden to communicate with another candidate whilst they are in the test room.

At the end of the test candidates must be told to stop writing. Candidates who have been awarded extra time as a result of a Special Arrangements application (see section 6.3) may continue writing for the permitted period of time.

All answer scripts and question papers must be collected in and accounted for, prior to the candidates leaving the room. If test sessions are being held for different classes over a number of days, scripts should be stored under secure conditions until the end of the last test and then despatched together to the examiner.

Any question paper which does not form part of a candidate's answer script must be returned to OCR.

It is the duty of the Head of Centre to ensure that all cases of irregular conduct or suspected malpractice are reported to OCR.

6.2 MODERATION OF SPEAKING

Centres will assess and internally standardise candidates. This will result in a rank order for the centre that must be internally standardised if carried out by more than one assessor.

Marks are then submitted to OCR, after which moderation takes place in accordance with OCR procedures. The purpose of moderation is to ensure that the standard of the award of marks for internally assessed work is the same for each centre and that each teacher has applied the standards appropriately across the range of candidates within the centre.

The sample of work which is presented to the Moderator must show how the marks have been awarded in relation to the marking criteria.

The candidates selected for moderation should be spread as evenly as possible across the range of marks (e.g. 3 good, 4 middling, 3 weak). They should be recorded on audio tape.

For each assessment window, OCR publishes a fixed date by which moderation samples must be received. If a sample is received after this date, the Speaking test results for the centre concerned may be held over to the next assessment window.

Feedback to Centres

OCR will give feedback to centres on the suitability of tasks, the appropriateness of marking and the outcome of the moderating procedure.

6.3 CANDIDATES REQUIRING SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

General

OCR is committed to creating access to the Asset Languages scheme and permits a range of special arrangements to be made for eligible candidates.

In order to ensure the validity of the qualification, all candidates, including those with a disability or learning difficulty, will be required to demonstrate the same standards of competence in the skill tested.

There will be no allowance for candidates who are unable to take, or fail to complete, a test, for whatever reason. Such candidates should be re-entered at the earliest possible opportunity.

Eligibility

Candidates will be eligible for special arrangements provided they have been previously identified as eligible for the purposes of the Key Stage tests, Entry level, GCSE, GNVQ, GCE or VCE. Candidates in Further or Higher Education who are eligible for Additional Learning Support are also eligible for special arrangements.

Arrangements Available

The following arrangements are available for each paper:

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
A3 enlarged paper	✓	✓	✓	✓
Braille ²	✓	✓	✓	✓
Extra time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Word processor	✓	n/a	✓	✓
Scribe	✓	n/a	✓	See below
Extra tape	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
Transcript	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
Reader	n/a	n/a	No	✓

Note:

Centres should create their own A3 enlarged paper from the A4 paper supplied.

Note that a reader is **not** permitted in the reading paper, since this would create an invalid result. A scribe is not permitted in the writing paper unless only multiple choice answers are involved or any words in the foreign language are spelt letter by letter.

Applications

Applications for special arrangements are not required for candidates who satisfy the eligibility requirements. The cover sheet on the script should be completed, stating the special arrangements that have been allowed.

² Subject to availability in the language.

Applications for braille papers will be required only in externally assessed examinations.
Centres may braille materials required for Teacher Assessment.

In such cases, advice should be sought from the OCR Special Requirements team (telephone 01223 552505) as early as possible during the course.

SECTION E: FURTHER INFORMATION

7 Opportunities for Teaching

7.1 SPIRITUAL, MORAL, ETHICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ISSUES

Languages provide opportunities to promote learners' spiritual, moral, ethical, social and cultural development.

Learners' spiritual development involves the growth of their sense of self, their unique potential, their understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, and their will to achieve. The study of a modern foreign language permits all of these facets to develop.

Learners' moral and ethical development involves their acquiring an understanding of the difference between right and wrong and of moral conflict, a concern for others and the will to do what is right. They are able and willing to reflect on the consequences of their actions and learn how to forgive themselves and others. Many contexts can lend themselves particularly well to this end.

Learners' social development involves their acquiring an understanding of the responsibilities and rights of being members of families and communities (local, national, global) and an ability to relate to others and to work with others for the common good. As the use of language is a social activity, skill in conducting various relationships is fostered by their study.

Learners' cultural development involves their acquiring an understanding of cultural traditions and an ability to respond to a variety of aesthetic experiences. They acquire a respect for their own culture and that of others, an interest in others' ways of doing things and curiosity about differences. Teaching languages through a range of contexts creates constant scope for developing pupils' cultural awareness, most especially where the target language is used in more than one country.

7.2 HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

OCR has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community and the Report *Environmental Responsibility: An Agenda for Further and Higher Education*, 1993, in preparing these specifications and associated specimen assessments.

Whilst making no specific demands from teachers, these specifications permit issues of health, safety and environment to be addressed through suitable teaching programmes.

The following contexts provide examples of particular relevance to health, safety and environmental issues.

- Food and drink (primary)
- Good health, bad health, injuries (primary + secondary)
- Environment (primary, secondary, adult)
- Crime (secondary, adult)
- World events and issues (secondary, adult)

7.3 THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

OCR has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community in preparing these specifications and associated specimen assessments. European examples should be used where appropriate in the delivery of the subject content.

Languages intrinsically support cross-cultural understanding and European languages in particular contribute to a greater awareness of our European partners.

7.4 KEY SKILLS AND ADULT NUMERACY/LITERACY

Key Skills are central to successful employment and underpin further success in learning independently. They are certificated separately. The Key Skills guidance for this qualification has been designed to support the teaching and learning of the content.

A programme of study leading specifically to a language qualification would not by itself lead to opportunities to demonstrate competence in Application of Number or Problem Solving.

Although the Key Skill of Communication is central to the study of Modern Foreign Languages, the Communication specification requires evidence to be produced in English, Irish or Welsh as the mother tongue. MFL, therefore, offers opportunities for developing, rather than producing evidence of, this Key Skill.

The following matrix indicates those Key Skills for which opportunities for at least some coverage of the relevant Key Skills units exist.

	Communication	Application of Number	IT	Working with Others	Improving Own Learning and Performance	Problem Solving
Level 1	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Level 2	✓		✓	✓	✓	

The wider Key Skills of Working with Others and Improving Own Learning and Performance may also be developed through the teaching programmes associated with the specifications.

APPENDIX: THE LANGUAGES LADDER

The Languages Ladder, part of the DfES' National Languages Strategy (NLS), is a six-stage learning programme that has been introduced in order to extend the opportunities for learning foreign languages.

Each stage comprises different grades that use a 'can do' statements to describe the typical behavior of a learner at that stage.

e.g. Speaking Grade 5: I can give a short prepared talk on a topic of my choice including expressing simple opinions.

Within each stage the grades are progressive but may address different aspects of each skill.

The Proficiency and Mastery stages are under development.

LISTENING

Breakthrough – Grades 1–3

On *completing* this stage, you should be able to understand a basic range of everyday expressions relating to personal details and needs. You may need to listen several times to get the information you need, depending on how fast and clearly the speaker talks. You should have some understanding of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns. You should be familiar with the sound system of the language. You should be aware of how to address people both formally and informally as appropriate.

Preliminary – Grades 4–6

On *completing* this stage, you should be able to understand standard speech relating to a range of predictable everyday matters, providing that it is spoken clearly and directly. You should be able to recognise the difference between past, present and future events and be familiar with simple forms of the verb tenses.

Intermediate – Grades 7–9

You should now be comfortable with a range of tenses, and should be able to understand authentic passages on familiar matters. On *completing* this stage, you should be able to follow much of what is said at near normal speed on familiar matters or in predictable situations. You should be able to give an oral or written summary of what you have heard.

Advanced – Grades 10–12

You should now be comfortable understanding a range of tenses and a variety of registers. On *completing* this stage, you should be able to understand the majority of what you hear in the target language, including references to the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.

LISTENING

Breakthrough	Grade 1	I can understand a few familiar spoken words and phrases.
	Grade 2	I can understand a range of familiar spoken phrases.
	Grade 3	I can understand the main point(s) from a short spoken passage.
Preliminary	Grade 4	I can understand the main points and some of the detail from a short spoken passage.
	Grade 5	I can understand the main points and simple opinions (e.g. likes and dislikes) of a longer spoken passage.
	Grade 6	I can understand spoken passages referring to present and past or future events.
Intermediate	Grade 7	I can understand longer passages and recognise people's points of view.
	Grade 8	I can understand passages including some unfamiliar material from which I can recognise attitudes and emotions.
	Grade 9	I can understand the gist of a range of authentic passages in familiar contexts.
Advanced	Grade 10	I can understand the main points of an authentic spoken passage/conversation involving one or more speakers.
	Grade 11	I can understand the main points of authentic spoken passages and conversations in a range of different contexts.
	Grade 12	I can identify the majority of points and am able to infer the meaning of a range of authentic passages/conversations spoken at near native speed.

SPEAKING

Breakthrough – Grades 1–3

On *completing* this stage, you should be able to use a basic range of everyday expressions relating to personal details and needs. Your pronunciation will not always be completely accurate but your meaning will be clear. You should be able to understand and use a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns. You should be familiar with the sound system of the language. You should be aware of how to address people both formally and informally as appropriate.

Preliminary – Grades 4–6

On *completing* this stage, you should be able to use and adapt learned language relating to a range of predictable everyday matters. Your pronunciation should be clear and you should be able to maintain a simple conversation using strategies such as asking for clarification or repetition. You should be able to recognise the difference between past, present and future events and be familiar with simple forms of the verb tenses.

Intermediate – Grades 7–9

You should now be comfortable with a range of tenses, and should be able to use language relating to a range of familiar matters. On *completing* this stage, you should be using and adapting language for new purposes. Your pronunciation should be generally accurate. You should be able to maintain a conversation on familiar matters or in predictable situations, using a range of simple language.

Advanced – Grades 10–12

You should now be comfortable using a range of tenses and a variety of registers. On *completing* this stage, you should be able to communicate confidently and maintain a conversation using a wide ranging vocabulary. Your pronunciation and intonation will be generally accurate. You should be able to make references to the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.

SPEAKING

Breakthrough	Grade 1	I can say/repeat a few words and short simple phrases.
	Grade 2	I can answer simple questions and give basic information.
	Grade 3	I can ask and answer simple questions and talk about my interests.
Preliminary	Grade 4	I can take part in a simple conversation and I can express my opinions.
	Grade 5	I can give a short prepared talk, on a topic of my choice, including expressing my opinions.
	Grade 6	I can give a short prepared talk, on a topic of my choice, expressing opinions and answering simple questions about it.
Intermediate	Grade 7	I can answer simple unprepared questions in a conversation or following a presentation.
	Grade 8	I can tell a story or relate the plot of a book or film and give my opinions about it.
	Grade 9	I can take part in a discussion, giving and justifying my opinions and ideas.
Advanced	Grade 10	I can give a presentation on a chosen theme and respond readily to questions.
	Grade 11	I can give a presentation on a chosen theme and argue my viewpoints with some degree of success.
	Grade 12	I can participate in discussions relating to a variety of situations and topics, taking the initiative where appropriate.

READING

Breakthrough – Grades 1–3

On *completing* this stage, you should be able to understand a basic range of everyday expressions relating to personal details and needs. You should have some understanding of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns. You should be familiar with the writing system of the language. You should be aware of how to address people both formally and informally as appropriate.

Preliminary – Grades 4–6

On *completing* this stage, you should be able to understand standard language relating to a range of predictable everyday matters. You should be able to read clear handwritten text. You should be able to recognise the difference between past, present and future events and be familiar with simple forms of the verb tenses.

Intermediate – Grades 7–9

You should now be comfortable with a range of tenses, and should be able to understand authentic texts on familiar matters. On *completing* this stage, you should be able to follow much of what you read on familiar matters or in predictable situations. You should be able to give an oral/written summary or translation of what you have read.

Advanced – Grades 10–12

You should now be comfortable using a range of tenses and a variety of registers. On *completing* this stage, you should be able to understand the majority of what you read in the target language, including references to the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.

READING

Breakthrough	Grade 1	I can recognise and read out a few familiar words and phrases.
	Grade 2	I can understand familiar written phrases.
	Grade 3	I can understand the main point(s) from a short written text in clear printed script.
Preliminary	Grade 4	I can understand the main points and some of the detail from a short written text.
	Grade 5	I can understand the main points and simple opinions (e.g. likes and dislikes) of a longer written text.
	Grade 6	I can understand longer texts and distinguish present and past or future events.
Intermediate	Grade 7	I can understand longer texts and recognise people's points of view.
	Grade 8	I can understand texts including some unfamiliar material from which I can recognise attitudes and emotions.
	Grade 9	I can understand a wide range of authentic texts in familiar contexts.
Advanced	Grade 10	I can understand authentic written texts of moderate length and complexity. I can produce a summary covering the majority of points.
	Grade 11	I can understand authentic texts of some degree of complexity and abstraction in a range of different contexts. I can produce a summary covering the most essential points.
	Grade 12	I can understand and am able to infer the meaning of a range of more complex texts. I can produce a detailed report covering all essential points.

WRITING

Breakthrough – Grades 1–3

On *completing* this stage, you should be able to use a basic range of everyday expressions relating to personal details and needs. Your spelling will not always be completely accurate but your meaning will be clear. You should be able to understand and use a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns. You should be familiar with the writing system of the language. You should be aware of how to address people both formally and informally as appropriate.

Preliminary – Grades 4–6

On *completing* this stage, you should be able to use and adapt learned language relating to a range of predictable everyday matters. You should be able to write simple texts, with spelling that is generally accurate. You should be able to recognise the difference between past, present and future events and be familiar with simple forms of the verb tenses.

Intermediate – Grades 7–9

You should now be comfortable with a range of tenses, and should be able to use language relating to a range of familiar matters.

On *completing* this stage, you should be using and adapting language for new purposes. Your spelling should be generally accurate. You should be able to write on familiar matters or in predictable situations, using a range of simple language.

Advanced – Grades 10–12

You should now be comfortable using a range of tenses and a variety of registers. On *completing* this stage, you should be able to write confidently using a wide ranging vocabulary and more complex structures. Your spelling will be generally accurate. You should be able to make references to the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.

WRITING

Breakthrough	Grade 1	I can write or copy simple words or symbols.
	Grade 2	I can write one or two short sentences to a model and fill in the words on a simple form.
	Grade 3	I can write a few short sentences with support using expressions which I have already learned.
Preliminary	Grade 4	I can write a short text on a familiar topic, adapting language which I have already learned.
	Grade 5	I can write a short text on a range of familiar topics.
	Grade 6	I can write a simple text, e.g. a letter, giving and seeking information.
Intermediate	Grade 7	I can write a text (e.g. a report or a letter) conveying simple opinions and/or points of view.
	Grade 8	I can produce formal and informal texts in an appropriate style on familiar topics.
	Grade 9	I can communicate ideas accurately and in an appropriate style over a range of familiar topics.
Advanced	Grade 10	I can structure my writing to produce a coherent text, in an appropriate register, for a specific purpose e.g. a letter to an employer, an account of a visit.
	Grade 11	I can write a coherent text, in an appropriate register, for different purposes, including communicating information, ideas and opinions e.g. a review, an article or a report.
	Grade 12	I can write extended text using a wide range of language in a variety of registers covering more specialised contexts e.g. work-related, or a specialised area of study.