

**REPORT TO CENTRES ON
EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

ASSET LANGUAGES REPORT TO CENTRES ON EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT 2008/09

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Introduction

Assessments for the Asset Languages scheme took place over five series between November 2008 and June 2009. This report is designed to inform centres of issues that arose in relation to the external assessments over that period, and incorporates feedback from examiners and moderators. This report provides information on the performance of candidates, and it is hoped it will be useful, constructive and informative to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future assessments.

Significant statistics

Entries and Results

Asset Languages qualifications allow the flexibility to enter candidates for assessments at the stage for which they are ready, and are designed to encourage success. Over 86.6% of all candidates were successful in achieving a grade.

In total, 154,778 results were issued to centres, an increase of 13.5% on the previous year.

The grades awarded in 2008/09 were distributed as follows:

	Breakthrough				Preliminary			
Grade	U	1	2	3	U	4	5	6
No. of candidates.	3933	13533	19627	36482	12399	14370	16854	21384
Total	73575				65007			

	Intermediate				Advanced			
Grade	U	7	8	9	U	10	11	12
No. of candidates.	4012	2951	2900	4397	417	286	437	796
Total	14260				1936			

Entries by series

The percentage of entries for each series in 2008/09 was as follows:

	November	January	March	May	June
% of entries	7.3	7.3	10.3	22.9	52.2

This was the final academic year when five series were available. From 2009/10 there will be four series – November, March, May and June.

General feedback

- **Use HB pencil** – All test mark sheets, (OMRs) must be completed in HB pencil.
- **Completed question papers** – These are required for reference purposes and need to be returned to OCR along with the OMRs.
- **Unused assessment materials** – All unused assessment materials including Examiner's and Candidate's Speaking test booklets must be securely destroyed. If you are unable to destroy them confidentially they may be returned to OCR.
- Examiner's and Candidate's Speaking test booklets are valid for all four series. At the end of the academic year, when the final Speaking tests have been conducted, centres must ensure that all Candidate's booklets, Examiner's Booklets and unused mark sheets are **securely** destroyed.
- Speaking tests must not be kept and used by centres as practice tests.

Conducting the Speaking test

Moderators reported that, while many tests were conducted well, some problems arose in each of the 2008–9 sessions. We would therefore ask teachers to bear in mind the following points when conducting the tests.

- Teachers conducting the test need to be familiar with the standard of the relevant stage as described by the Languages Ladder statements.
- Please ensure that candidates are entered for the Speaking test when you feel they are ready to achieve the stage. Check the level of the candidates before ordering the test to be able to enter them for the appropriate stage.
- Teachers conducting the test may open the Examiner's booklet at any time before the first Speaking test to familiarise themselves with the materials and prepare for conducting the test. Please remember, however, that the booklet contains confidential examination materials and should be stored in a secure place when it is not in use. Test materials must not be shown to candidates or used as practice exercises before the test.
- Teachers should ensure that candidates are familiar with the format of the test. At Breakthrough stage, some candidates did not know that they were required to ask questions in the second part of the test.
- When conducting tests across a group of candidates, make use of a variety of topics, questions and pictures. You should not test all candidates using the same materials.
- Please ensure that you follow the instructions for conducting each task carefully, such as the time allowed to complete each task. All candidates should be given an equal opportunity to show their linguistic ability within the specified time limits. Tasks should be terminated when responses reach the appropriate time limit, allowing a candidate to complete an answer which has been started.
- It is not necessary to ask all the published questions when the time allocation is reached and teachers should not persist with a particular question when the candidate seems unable to respond.
- In the first instance teachers should use the questions provided in the Examiner's booklet. However, teachers can subsequently rephrase a question to assist a candidate who is unable to respond. When rephrasing questions, teachers should use open questions rather than closed questions that only require yes or no answers.
- Any additional support provided by the teacher, such as rephrasing of questions, should be taken into account in the marking of the assessment.
- Part 1, tasks 1 and 2 should always follow the order given in the Examiner's Booklet. Part 2 can be conducted separately from Part 1, at any convenient time before or after it.
- Part 1, Task 1: For weaker candidates please note that it is possible to try a different topic from the booklet if a candidate is unable to respond.

- Part 1, Task 2 (the picture task): Please remember to introduce the task before asking questions and to announce the picture title and number. Teachers should use the questions provided in the Examiner's Booklet but they may rephrase them if a candidate is unable to answer. Please try not to leave long pauses between questions.
- The majority of recordings were of a good standard but it is important that teachers check that the candidate is clearly audible. Cassettes should be spot-checked for recording quality before being posted to the moderator. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure recordings are clear and complete.
- Teachers should NOT begin a test on one cassette and complete the recording on a different cassette.
- Please rewind all tapes to the beginning of side A before submitting to the OCR Moderator.
- Please label the cassette and cassette box clearly and securely in ink (Please read the relevant section of the Guidelines for assessment in the Examiner's booklet for details). Teachers should keep accurate lists of the sequence in which candidates are recorded. Then, in each cassette box, provide a list of candidates and their candidate numbers in the order they have been recorded on the relevant cassette. This information is essential in the moderation process.
- Methods of delivery requiring the signature of the moderator on receipt should be avoided.

Writing feedback

Breakthrough

- Candidates need to be aware that by simply copying the stimulus material, the maximum mark they can achieve is 1.3 for language and communication. Many candidates who copy the phrases, however, also fail to do so accurately.
- Some candidates lose marks by writing numbers inaccurately, when the use of numerals would be acceptable.
- Many candidates have difficulty writing coherent sentences in Part 2. Candidates should be advised to write no more than three simple distinct sentences. Writing more than is required will gain no extra marks.
- Some candidates still attempt both alternatives in Part 2, though it is pleasing to report that the number of such cases is now falling.

Preliminary

- Candidates must show awareness of basic grammatical rules, such as use of the third person, adjective agreement and position at Preliminary stage.
- A number of candidates failed to write sufficient words. Answers falling well short of the required total are penalised for both communication and language.
- The requirement for candidates to ask questions proved difficult for the majority.
- There is a tendency for some candidates to include future and past tense phrases for tasks that do not require it. This should be discouraged.
- Although many candidates included the three required items of vocabulary, their use was often ambiguous or the vocabulary misunderstood.
- Candidates must be advised to read the opening rubric of the Part 2 questions carefully and ensure that they follow all the instructions.
- When copying words provided on the paper, candidates should take care to copy the words exactly, including the correct reproduction of accents.

Intermediate

- Candidates entered for the Intermediate assessments need to be able to display sufficient accuracy in the use of verbs in different tenses, and a reasonable mastery of basic grammatical concepts, such as adjective position and agreement.

- Candidates need to be taught a range of suitable final salutations for use at the end of a letter or email.
- Candidates must check that they have written the required amount of words (50-70 on Part 1 and 100-120 on Part 2). Many wrote far too few words. The use of English for unknown words should be discouraged.
- Candidates should avoid using pre-learned material.

Advanced

- All candidates entered for this stage must show a suitably advanced command of verb forms in a range of tenses, and an ability to include accurate subordinate clauses, sentence links, direct and indirect pronouns, and a certain degree of competence in using idiom and a range of vocabulary.
- In Part 1, candidates are generally careful to ensure that they deal with all communication points. In Part 2, candidates tend to attempt the creative writing option, but need to ensure there is appropriate attention to detail and accuracy for this level. High communication marks are not easy to gain on this type of essay.

Language specific reports

The following language specific reports have been compiled by the principal examiners and principal moderators for each language. They reflect the issues raised during the marking for the five series that have been offered this year and provide recommendations for how centres can help their candidates to improve.

Arabic

The Arabic assessments have seen an increase in entries since last year. The Advanced stage has now been running for a year in all four skills.

Speaking

It is very important that tests are conducted in the standard form of the language and use standard pronunciation. Deviation from standard Arabic can lead to confusion and candidates could be disadvantaged.

- Breakthrough Overall, the assessments were conducted well.
It is important to give candidates time to think and answer before asking another question.
- Preliminary Assessments were conducted well.
Teachers need to ensure candidates are able to distinguish between masculine and feminine and can use a range of structures.
If the candidate has difficulty with a specific question or topic, try another one from any Task 1 page.
Please remember to ask open-ended questions rather than closed ones.
Teachers need to avoid praising, repeating or correcting what candidates have just said during the examination.
- Intermediate Candidates need to be able to use a range of structures and a variety of tenses. Teachers and candidates need to ensure that language is at the appropriate level for the Intermediate stage.

Writing

There are no specific writing issues to report for Arabic. However, please refer to the generic writing feedback on pages 4–5.

Bengali

The entries for Bengali assessments have almost doubled during the last academic year.

Speaking

Overall, performance was better than the last year. There was also an improvement in the use of standard language and the assessment criteria were followed consistently. Generally, all candidates performed very well in these tests and scored high marks.

However, to avoid frequent use of English words, teachers should ensure that candidates have enough Bengali vocabulary before the test.

Writing

Breakthrough Spelling was good overall at this stage. A small number of candidates copied exactly what was given as an example, though the majority adapted it by changing one or two words.

There was evidence that some candidates had difficulty with the order of subject, object and verb.

Part 1 led to issues with candidates not articulating answers, and using phrases given in the question without any context. Part 2 was more satisfactory.

Preliminary Overall, performance was good. Most candidates managed to write something meaningful, although, occasionally, there were signs of poor language. Most candidates included all three prompts in their answers and came up with different ideas.

A small number of candidates showed good imagination and a high-level of vocabulary.

Candidates need to be able to distinguish between 'he' and 'his/her' or 'him'.

Intermediate Overall, performance was rather disappointing. Teachers need to ensure candidates are entered for the correct stage.

Chinese - Cantonese

This is the first year that Asset Languages Cantonese assessments were available in all series. The entries for 2008/9 have increased significantly, therefore, by over 200%, since the previous year.

The questions in the Speaking test in the Examiner's booklet use the formal written form of the language. Teachers should adapt this to the colloquial spoken form of Cantonese when conducting the Speaking tests.

Speaking

Overall, performance was good.

Teachers need to pay special attention to rephrasing and prompting to help candidates express more and provide them with opportunities to use their language skills.

Breakthrough The overall performance for this stage was very good. Candidates were very fluent and teachers followed instructions well.

Preliminary Candidates performed very well at the appropriate standard. Teachers showed experience and were able get the best out of the candidates.

Intermediate At this stage, candidates should use the target language, not English. Teachers should encourage candidates to give more opinions.

Writing

Breakthrough Candidates need to be reminded to use Chinese punctuation and characters as much as possible. The use of complicated sentence structure should be avoided.

Preliminary Candidates need to be reminded to read the instructions and questions carefully, write the content accordingly, and include all the required information.

Intermediate Candidates need to be reminded to read the instructions and questions carefully, and write the content accordingly. Teachers need to ensure candidates are entered for the correct stage and have mastered a range of structures and vocabulary.

Advanced Overall, candidates used good Chinese at this level and were competent in both English and Chinese. However, candidates need to be reminded to read the question both in English and Chinese and write the essay accordingly.

Chinese – Mandarin

The entries for Chinese Mandarin assessments have continued to rise since last year.

Speaking

- Breakthrough** In general, candidates were able to use key words satisfactorily, but it would be good to hear more candidates using these words to create coherent sentences.
Candidates should be encouraged to expand their answers to a greater extent and to develop a greater sense of communication within the test.
- Preliminary** In general, most candidates answered the questions satisfactorily using basic sentence structures, and many demonstrated a good level of ability to expand their answers. Where answers are not extended, teachers should encourage this.
Candidates were able to use key words satisfactorily, but it would be good to hear more candidates using these words to create coherent sentences.
- Intermediate** All candidates demonstrated good general competence in Mandarin and some showed a good level of ability to develop their answers.
At Intermediate stage, teachers need to use more sophisticated Mandarin, for example, using correct words of measure.
- Advanced** At this stage, teachers and candidates communicated very well and all tests were of a high standard.

Writing

There are no specific writing issues to report for Chinese Mandarin. However, please refer to the generic writing feedback on pages 4–5.

French

The number of entries has continued to rise in all skills and stages for French.

Speaking

- Breakthrough** Candidates should be encouraged to ask a variety of questions and questions that are different from those previously asked by the examiner. Candidates at this stage should be given credit for successful use of simple structures and basic vocabulary. However the candidate cannot be given credit when simply repeating the answer provided by the examiner.
- Preliminary** Candidates should be encouraged to use a range of structures, to answer in full sentences and to express simple opinions. Open and follow-up questions need to be more varied and to be used effectively. The range of questions was often too narrow, which tended to restrict candidates who lacked variety and spontaneity in their answers. Open questions allow candidates to speak in more detail. At this level, candidates are expected to be able to pronounce “parce que” correctly. Candidates need to respond to questions using the correct grammar, verbs and pronouns to obtain maximum marks. This may require an answer of one or two sentences.
- Intermediate** The overall performance of candidates at this stage has improved. Where candidates are encouraged to respond using full sentences, they are given better access to high marks for ‘Language’; similarly, frequent extension of answers, even with relatively simple subordinate clauses (e.g. parce que), helps to improve marks for ‘Communication’. Candidates at Intermediate stage need to demonstrate a control of grammar, particularly in relation to tenses. Accuracy of future and past time frames was generally weak, and these inaccuracies sometimes had an adverse effect on ‘Communication’ marks.
- Advanced** There was a significant improvement in the overall performance of candidates. With reference to ‘Language’, the expectation of control of grammar is an important element at this stage. An emphasis on accuracy in verb tenses would allow access to high marks. Where presentations were very factual in content, expressions of opinion were often omitted completely and did not relate the topic to other areas.

Writing

- Breakthrough** Generally, standards at this stage were pleasing and indicate that candidates have been well prepared and are, for the most part, familiar with the requirements of the paper. Some candidates were able to write straightforward sentences, successfully targeting all the required elements, and achieving high marks for ‘Communication’. Adult centres performed very well, with many candidates achieving well beyond the requirements of this stage. Most candidates made good use of the support given in the vocabulary lists. Question 1 showed a failure by some candidates to write three distinct sentences, while Question 2, Part 1 was done quite well. When copying words provided on the paper, candidates should take care to copy the words exactly, including the correct reproduction of accents. There is frequent confusion in the use of *Angleterre* and *anglais* when candidates were talking or writing about themselves – viz. *Je suis anglais(e) / J’habite en Angleterre*. There was also confusion by candidates about *à* and *en* or the omission of the

preposition; confusion of nationality and country (e.g. *français/France*); use of proper names when saying who the candidate is with (e.g. *Je suis avec Mark*); inaccuracies in the use of the partitive and the definite article (e.g. *je mange les pommes*). The use of possessive pronouns *mon/ma/mes* before family members also caused confusion.

A small number of candidates were not able to spell the phrase *au revoir* correctly.

- Preliminary** Candidates' performance fell below expectations this year. Although those writing accurately in the past tense were obviously credited, the main problem seems to be confusion regarding which tenses to use, and inappropriate mixing of tenses. Candidates need to know how to use verbs accurately. Candidates should be more familiar with the vocabulary in writing descriptions of people and places. It would be helpful to teach candidates how to use the structure *aimer* + infinitive. There appeared to be confusion with *et* and *est* and a lack of awareness of adjective agreement and position. Candidates need to be careful not to include Spanish, German or English words in their answers.
- Intermediate** Despite some good scripts, standards were generally below expectations for the stage. There was evidence that some candidates had not been entered at the correct stage. At this level, candidates need to be able to express an apology, use suitable endings to messages and letters, use extra detail and description (all candidates should be made aware that this is an important criterion for the marking of communication at this level) and use linking words correctly. Spelling should be accurate and any words that are copied need to be done so correctly. Candidates need thorough practice in writing to improve their competence in using basic verbs in different tenses, in particular the past tense. Confusion of the continuous present and past tenses was common, with errors such as *je suis allé* for "I am going". There was a tendency for candidates to insert pre-learned phrases, often inappropriately.
- Advanced** The overall performance at this level was mixed, with some good work and some work below expectations at this stage. The standards expected at this stage are high and must show a clear increase above Intermediate stage. Proficiency and confidence in the use of verbs in all main tenses for all persons is therefore paramount, as well as the accurate use of pronouns, adjective agreement and a range of language and sentence links. Candidates need to remember that their ability to write relatively complex and generally accurate French is being assessed. Candidates who performed well were those that succeeded in writing coherent French and made use of French idiom and a range of expression, rather than translating from English. High-performing candidates all showed the required skills of dealing clearly with the points for communication and expressing themselves with a suitable degree of confidence, particularly in their use of verbs in different tenses.

French World of Work

This is a new qualification that focuses on the language used within a general work context. It is now available at Preliminary and Intermediate stages.

German

The number of entries has continued to grow.

Speaking

Breakthrough Performance was generally in line with expectations for this stage. However, some candidates were over-prepared for the questions. This led them to jump to conclusions and produce an inappropriate response.

Some candidates, adult candidates especially, were already working above the standard expected and could have been entered at a higher stage.

Preliminary The candidates performed quite well overall. The candidates were able to use German adequately, but they should be encouraged to relate their responses more closely to the picture material concerned and, where possible, develop their answers to some questions. At this stage, there is a tendency for teachers to help candidates who have difficulty answering open questions by using a closed (ja/nein) question or by providing a choice of answers (groß/klein). This should be avoided.

Intermediate The performance of candidates was generally as expected, covering the whole range of marks. Overall performance could be improved if responses were extended more often.

Advanced Candidates often speak good, correct German, but do not score well because their replies to questions are too simple. It is important that centres make candidates aware that extended, considered responses are required, and that presentation topics should be reasonably challenging and appropriate to the Advanced stage.

Writing

Breakthrough Many candidates were well prepared and managed the tasks well. In Part 2, Question 1, large numbers of candidates wrote *im* + place name. Weaker candidates could not spell *ich wohne*. Words for family members were not always correct. Candidates might find the formulation *mit Mutti und Vati* a useful way round the need for a preposition. In Question 2 candidates sometimes did not know basic names for clothes, offering *jumper* for *pullover*. Those not familiar with colours could have offered *Die Blumen sind schön*.

Preliminary There was a noticeable improvement in performance at this stage. This stage requires the use of 'a range of structures, including tenses or time references, and stronger candidates were able to use the perfect tense with confidence. However, there were a few cases where candidates used phrases previously learned and then contradicted themselves. Candidates should also know how to end correspondence appropriately; *Bitte schön* is not adequate. Candidates need to avoid the use of English in responses.

Intermediate Teachers are reminded that Intermediate stage requires the use of 'a range of structures, including tenses or time references'. Candidates therefore need to be able to use more than one tense, usually a past tense. Many candidates kept to the present tense, which resulted in fewer errors. Candidates need to be taught rigorously about: *Mein Freund / meine Freundin* and *Meine Freunde / meine Freundinnen*. Teachers should ensure that candidates have some competence in at least six to ten common verbs.

There were many misspellings of *Haare* and *kurze*. Not all candidates knew vocabulary for domestic equipment and furniture. Inaccuracies in copying the spelling of the vocabulary given do not give a good impression at this stage. Candidates should also know how to end correspondence appropriately; *Bitte schön* is not adequate.

Advanced Candidates were realistically entered. Complexity and variety of language and linking of clauses and ideas provided good results.

German World of Work

This is a new qualification that focuses on the language used within a general work context. It is now available at Preliminary and Intermediate stages.

Speaking

Intermediate The candidates performed quite well, but should be encouraged to consider fully the situation described in the test and to respond in line with their role.

Modern Greek

Entries have almost doubled over the last year. The Advanced stage has now been running for a year in all four skills.

Speaking

- Breakthrough** Candidates performed well and were able to use a range of structures. Candidates should continue to improve their performance by practising pronunciation in the target language. Additionally, candidates should be encouraged to ask a variety of questions.
- Preliminary** Candidates provided appropriate responses which, most of the time, were of a sufficient length for the stage. The performance of the candidates could improve by practising how to express simple opinions and describing pictures that depict an everyday situation.

Writing

Overall, candidates' performance was good.

However, candidates' performance could be improved by:

- The correct use of accents.
- Knowing the Greek alphabet.
- Using correct sentence structure (e.g. subject verb object) and cases.

- Breakthrough** Generally, the performance of candidates was very good. Many candidates were not sure about the correct use of the accents and appeared uncomfortable when describing places and actions. There were frequent errors in using the nominative case instead of the object case.
- Preliminary** The candidates understood the points they had to develop but the language was not up to the level required. Many candidates were unsure of the gender of words and the use of 'I like / you like / etc. Some candidates did not know expressions of time and the days of the week.
- Intermediate** Candidates understood the points they had to develop, but the language was not up to the required level. Their knowledge of tenses, other than present, was very limited.
- Advanced** Generally, candidates' performance was unsatisfactory and below expectations for Advanced stage. For candidates to improve their results, they need a greater awareness of the use of the accents and the Greek alphabet. There needs to be a distinction between formal and informal language, and clear descriptions and points of view.

Gujarati

The number of entries has increased overall.

Speaking

The quality of entries has significantly improved. Candidates scored well for communication but their achievement would be enhanced further if candidates paid similar attention to language accuracy.

Writing

Centres need to ensure that candidates are familiar with the basic script.

Hindi

Assessment is now available in Breakthrough, Preliminary and Intermediate stages.

Speaking

There are no specific Breakthrough and Preliminary speaking issues to report for Hindi. Please refer to the general feedback on pages 3–4.

Intermediate Candidates performed well and were very fluent and confident.

Writing

There are no specific writing issues to report for Hindi. Please refer to the generic writing feedback on pages 4–5.

Irish

This was the first full year that Irish assessments were available in Breakthrough, Preliminary and Intermediate.

There are no specific issues to report for Irish. Please refer to the feedback on pages 3–5.

Italian

The entries for the Italian assessments have continued to increase.

Speaking

Centres must enter candidates for the correct stage to give candidates the opportunity to perform at their current level and sustain motivation in language learning.

Teachers should ensure that candidates cover all the required grammar and learn the necessary range of vocabulary. Above all, candidates must be given the opportunity to practise during their course.

Writing

Breakthrough Overall, candidates produced well-structured sentences, using correct word order and accurate verbs, especially in the third person. There was excellent use of vocabulary and adjectives. Candidates produced good language and some candidates attempted to use linking words (*e*). There were some errors in the use of simple prepositions (e.g. *in* followed by the name of the room *in la camera, in la cucina*).

Candidates should ensure that they know the verb 'is' (*è*) and that they write it with an accent.

Candidates should practise the use of verbs in the first person (present tense) as well as nouns and prepositions with articles. They should also learn the difference between the use of the definite and indefinite article.

Preliminary In general, there were good descriptions and good use of adjectives and linking words such as 'perchè' and 'ma'. The candidates who achieved high marks were those who focused on one option only and wrote clearly, avoiding ambitious narratives. In both parts, there was a good range of vocabulary, verbs and good use of compound sentences (using *e* and *ma*). There were some errors in the use of the *preposizioni articolate* and in the use of the preposition *a* followed by the name of town/city. Candidates should practise the use of prepositions with articles. Candidates should learn the present tense of the verbs *essere* and *avere* and be encouraged to pay attention to the difference between *è* and *e*, and the agreement between nouns and adjectives.

Intermediate Sentence structure was good. Candidates wrote, or attempted to write, more than the basic information required. However, the spelling of basic words was not always accurate. Candidates made very good use of modal verbs and covered all the points. There was a good attempt at using complex sentences, but the range of vocabulary (including verbs) was a little too limited and repetitive. Candidates should be encouraged to be accurate with spelling, use a variety of vocabulary, avoid repetitions, and practise the construction of complex sentences.

Advanced In both tasks, there was some very good work: a good range of structures, and advanced and sophisticated vocabulary, including adjectives. There were some basic errors, such as the use of the article with a masculine noun starting with a vowel, and the use of some adverbs after the verb (*sempre, anche*).

Japanese

The entry for the Japanese assessments has continued to increase.

Speaking

Preliminary Centres conducted the speaking assessments well. Questions were varied from candidate to candidate, and the types of questions elicited the variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary expected from candidates at this stage.

Writing

There were no specific writing issues to report for Japanese. Please refer to the generic writing feedback on pages 4–5.

Panjabi

Entries for the Panjabi assessments have continued to increase at Preliminary and Intermediate stages.

There were no specific issues to report for Panjabi. Please refer to the feedback on pages 3–5.

Polish

The entries for the Polish assessments have more than doubled.

Speaking

Overall, performance was satisfactory. In general centres followed the guidelines on how to conduct the test but need to ensure they adhere to requirements and guidelines of the assessment.

Teachers need to allow candidates time to look at the pictures before beginning the test.

Breakthrough Teachers need to prompt some candidates and encourage them to give answers for Part 1B. Where required, teachers should rephrase the questions if the candidate appears not to understand.

Advanced At this stage the candidates should have been encouraged to give their own opinions. At times there was not enough discourse. The candidates tended to narrate rather than discuss. Teachers should make better use of the content of the pictures and take care not to repeat the topic areas and vocabulary.

Writing

Candidates displayed a very good level of Polish at each stage and were well prepared.

There are a few general observations:

- some candidates transfer the rules of English spelling into Polish, for example spelling adjectives of nationality with a capital letter or using 'ch' instead of 'cz'
- many candidates could not spell verbs and made basic spelling mistakes (e.g. 'en' instead of 'ę', 'o' instead of 'u', 'z' instead of 'rz')
- some candidates did not recognise the difference between written and spoken language, and wrote as they speak.

Breakthrough The candidates displayed a very good level of Polish and were well prepared.

Preliminary Most candidates showed a very good command of Polish with ambitious and thoughtful writing. However, it is important that answers cover the appropriate topic and display a range of grammatical structures. Attempts to use complicated grammatical structures (above the stage), were often unsuccessful. More attention needs to be given to correct spelling.

Intermediate In general, the level of the work was high. However, lack of attention to spelling and punctuation prevented candidates from achieving the highest marks.

Advanced Some candidates produced very good work. Candidates who achieved full marks displayed a wide range of vocabulary and more complex grammatical structures, with a variety of tenses appropriate for the stage. Attention needs to be paid to the word count for the tasks, as there were instances in both questions where candidates had not written enough. In Question 1 candidates need to ensure they cover all the points, while Question 2 needs to have a coherent argument.

Portuguese

The entries for the Portuguese assessments have increased at Advanced stage.

Speaking

The tests this year were well conducted.

Candidates should be given the opportunity to express themselves in past, present and future tenses at Preliminary stage. There was not always parity across questions in terms of the range of tenses used.

Writing

Overall, performance was good.

Most candidates achieved higher marks for communication than for language.

Russian

The entries for the Russian assessments have increased since last year. There are now Breakthrough to Advanced stages available in all skills.

Speaking

Breakthrough Candidates showed the right knowledge of Russian for this stage. Centres conducted the tests well.

Preliminary The overall performance of candidates was suitable for this stage. Both adults and school pupils coped well with the demands of the Preliminary tasks and there were some good performances. Centres conducted the tests well.

Intermediate Performance generally did not meet expectations for this stage. Centres need to be more aware of the level of linguistic competence required.

Advanced Teachers must adhere to the test timings for this stage to allow the candidates to achieve their full potential. More open questions should be asked in Part 2B.

Writing

The standard was generally good at all stages.

Breakthrough The main points of the tasks were communicated with a basic range of vocabulary and simple structures used successfully. Spelling was accurate enough for the meaning to be clear. The language mark was generally high, but in communication, the candidates did not always cover all the context points. The higher achieving candidates often communicated more than the task required, and the three sentences were easily understood and conveyed their points clearly. Candidates need to be given practice in writing a variety of words and simple sentences, to increase their confidence and spelling. English spelling was sometimes used instead of Russian. Common errors were made with spelling, endings of nouns with prepositions, adjectives and verbs.

Preliminary The main points of the task were generally communicated. Candidates used a variety of sentence structures and there was a good range of vocabulary. However, grammatical and spelling errors were evident, along with incorrect use of capital and small letters. There were mistakes with the spelling of common words, grammatical errors

with nouns (gender, cases), ending of nouns with prepositions, verbs (conjugations, tenses, aspects), adjectives, pronouns and the use of prepositions.

Intermediate There was a variety of sentence structure and a good range of vocabulary. However, spelling was poor.

There were common spelling mistakes, grammatical errors with nouns (gender, cases), ending of nouns with prepositions, verbs (conjugations, tenses, aspects), adjectives, pronouns, the use of prepositions, numbers (cases) and capital and small letters.

Advanced Texts tended to be rather short, lacking in detail, and the range of vocabulary quite limited. As with other stages, there was poor spelling and grammar.

Practice should be provided in grammar, nouns (gender, singular/plural, cases), verbs (conjugations, tenses), adjectives, pronouns and punctuation.

Somali

Somali is now available in Breakthrough, Preliminary and Intermediate stages. The entries for the Somali assessments have increased at Preliminary and Intermediate stages.

There are no specific issues to report for Somali. Please refer to the feedback on pages 3–5.

Spanish

The number of entries has continued to grow in all skills and at all stages.

Speaking

Overall, the performance of candidates was at the correct standard and centres had conducted tests well. There were no unfamiliar topics or vocabulary.

Centres are reminded to ensure consistency of assessments for their candidates by carrying out the internal standardisation process thoroughly.

Writing

Breakthrough Candidates should use the information found in the prompts as these can help them to spell certain words correctly.

Preliminary Performance of candidates at this stage was mixed. Some candidates used many of the verbs in the infinitive and did not use tenses. Some candidates wrote longer sentences successfully, but more work on verb conjugation is needed. Overall, candidates used a range of tenses, including past and future, and engaged well with the exercise.

Candidates showed inaccuracies in pronouns (using “se” instead of “ella” or “le”). More practice is needed in the structures of the verb “gustar” (me gusta, le gusta, etc). When the verb was inserted, conjugation was generally good, but sentence structure hindered comprehension at times. There was considerable interference from French.

Intermediate Most candidates showed a level of language appropriate for the stage and were able to communicate all the points successfully, with appropriate structures and wide range of vocabulary. Centres need to enter candidates for the appropriate stage, as some were not prepared for this level and consequently scored very low marks. Poor sentence structure hindered comprehension and verbs were not always conjugated correctly by candidates.

Advanced Many candidates showed a level of language more appropriate for Intermediate stage. Candidates should pay attention to the spelling of words containing a “z” or “c” as they were usually misspelled with “s”. Some candidates did not fully develop all the elements in the task, but the register was generally appropriate for the type of task (formal letter). Accuracy was variable and, in some cases, a little effort was needed to understand the message. Candidates should pay more attention to sentence structure and word order.

Spanish World of Work

The number of entries has steadily increased at Preliminary and Intermediate stages. Spanish World of Work focuses on the language used within a general work context.

There are no specific issues to report for Spanish World of Work. Please refer to the feedback on pages 3–5.

Swedish

Swedish has been offered in Breakthrough, Preliminary and Intermediate stages this year and entries have increased.

Speaking

There are no specific speaking issues to report for Swedish. Please refer to the speaking feedback on pages 3–4.

Writing

Breakthrough Candidates showed a good level of vocabulary and generally performed well. Care should be taken to check answers for spelling mistakes, especially in the use of the Swedish characters ä, å, and ö.

Intermediate Centres should remind candidates that there is a choice of tasks in Part 2. Unfortunately, some candidates answered both and this affected performance. Candidates also need to ensure they write in Swedish not Norwegian.

Tamil

Tamil is now available in Breakthrough, Preliminary and Intermediate stage tests and entries have increased significantly. Tamil is now the 10th largest Asset Language in terms of entries.

Speaking

Teachers need to ensure they adhere to the timings and instructions specified in the Examiner's booklet.

Teachers should avoid asking closed questions so that candidates are required to answer with a full sentence, rather than simply yes or no.

Writing

There are no specific writing issues to report for Tamil. Please refer to the feedback on pages 4–5.

Turkish

The entries for the Turkish assessments have increased slightly. Breakthrough to Advanced stages are now available in all skills.

Speaking

The overall performance of all candidates was very good. They were prepared for the test and displayed good knowledge for the relevant stages.

Writing

Breakthrough The overall standard was very high and most candidates had the potential to be entered for a higher stage.

Preliminary The overall standard was very high and most candidates had the potential to be entered for a higher stage; this could give the candidates an opportunity to stretch themselves and provide more motivation.

Urdu

Entries for Urdu assessments have almost doubled since last year.

Speaking

There are no specific speaking issues to report for Urdu. Please refer to the speaking feedback on pages 3–4.

Writing

The standard of candidates' performance was varied across all the stages.

Spelling and grammar mistakes were so frequent that communication was impeded.

A number of candidates used items of Panjabi vocabulary instead of Urdu. Teachers must ensure candidates recognise the difference between Panjabi/Pushto/Hindko and Urdu lexis and grammar.

Candidates lost marks due to incorrect conjugation and subject-verb agreement.

Breakthrough Many Breakthrough candidates copied their answers from the rubrics and made no attempt to vary their answers.

Preliminary It was extremely pleasing to note that the candidates at this stage were able to communicate their ideas in the style of formal Urdu, and many achieved full marks, as the standard of the language used was extremely high. A small number of candidates chose to write their responses using the Latin script to convey their ideas in Urdu. Candidates must write coherently. Some letters were joined randomly to form 'words' producing lengthy texts with little sense of meaning. Candidates also need to recognise the differences in spelling between small, but significantly different, words.

Welsh

Welsh assessments have now been available for a year at Breakthrough, Preliminary and Intermediate stages.

Writing

Breakthrough Most candidates coped well with the test and were entered for the appropriate stage. In a number of cases, candidates showed an ability to use vocabulary and structures at a much higher level than that required. In general, inaccuracies involved spelling mistakes, confusion with basic vocabulary such as "a" (and) and "ar" (on) and the use of basic structures such as "Mae..... yn...".

Preliminary The candidates were well prepared and were generally entered for the appropriate stage. They coped very well with the test and succeeded in communicating the required information effectively. There were some inaccuracies, mainly in spelling, but these did not often impede communication. Several candidates achieved a very high level of accuracy in spelling, vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Yoruba

Yoruba has been offered in Breakthrough, Preliminary and Intermediate stages this year and entries have grown substantially over the last year.

There are no specific issues to report for Yoruba. Please refer to the feedback on pages 3–5.

What's new for 09/10 – Administering Speaking tests

The process for administering Asset Languages Speaking tests has been simplified for 2009-10: **Estimated entries are no longer required.** Centres must now *Request Speaking test materials* for each language and stage required (See page 4 of the Asset Languages Admin Guide 2009/10 Ask your Examinations Officer for this guide, or download it from:

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

Speaking test materials will then be despatched on the basis of your request, they will **not** be sent on the basis of final entries.

When you request Speaking test materials you will receive an Internal Form for Speaking Test Marks with the Speaking test assessment materials. Please use this Internal Form for Speaking Test Marks during or immediately after a Speaking test to record the marks you award candidates. If Speaking tests for an assessment are conducted by more than one person, it is essential that marks are standardised in the usual way and then updated on the Internal Form for Speaking Test Marks.

After we receive your final entries, you will be sent Speaking test mark sheets (OMRs). These have been simplified and will now be pre-populated with most of the key information required. Please transfer the marks recorded on the Internal Form for Speaking Test Marks to the Speaking test mark sheet before submitting them to OCR. You will only need to provide the following information:

- marks awarded
- name of the person who conducted the test
- the number of the picture task attempted

Please return the completed Speaking test mark sheets with the attendance register and used cassettes to the OCR Moderator.

The completed Internal Form for Speaking Test Marks should be kept on file at your centre until certificates are issued.

- Please ensure all absentees are appropriately marked on the attendance register.
- You will also receive blank Speaking test mark sheets (OMRs) for any supplementary candidates. When completing these please fill in the candidate number in figures in addition to lozenging the numbers on the grid.
- When completing the number of the Part 1 task 2 (picture task) attempted, only shade one lozenge per candidate.
- The final 'To be completed by the Moderator' section at the bottom of the mark sheet must be left blank.
-

For further information about the changes to the administration of the Speaking Test please refer to the Admin Guide available on the Asset Languages website.

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

Further support

Teacher assessment

Teacher assessment materials are available for all languages to be used independently or to support external assessment tests. They provide informal tasks to test each skill at each grade within the stage. When used alongside external assessment, they can give a good indication of when candidates are ready to be entered for the external assessment tests. Please see the website at www.assetlanguages.org.uk/about/availability.aspx.

Specifications

The Asset Languages tests have been developed as the assessment arm of the DCSF Languages Ladder. The assessments are designed to be used alongside any course of study. Language specifications are available for each language, at each stage, which reflect the vocabulary and functional areas expected. These can be viewed on the website at www.assetlanguages.org.uk/about/specs.aspx.

Sample papers

Teachers who wish to see the format of the Asset Languages tests can refer to the sample papers on the website. These can also be used to familiarise their candidates with the task types. These are currently available in English, French, German and Spanish, but language-specific materials are gradually being added. Sample materials can be viewed on the website at www.assetlanguages.org.uk/about/samples.aspx.

Cluster Support Groups

Support groups of Asset Languages users have been established around the country. Designed to provide training and support at a local level, each has a co-ordinator with experience of Asset Languages to share good practice, and act as a channel of communication with us. To find out where your nearest cluster support group is, email us at assetlanguagesclustersupport@ocr.org.uk.

Training

Asset Languages offers three training courses:

'Get started' training sessions are designed as a helpful introduction to those new to the scheme. The full-day training course outlines the philosophy behind the assessment scheme and the two methods of assessment with Asset: external and teacher assessment. Delegates receive guidance on preparing candidates for Asset's externally assessed tests and information on what support and resources are available from OCR. The training also explains all administration procedure.

There are also two **'Get ahead'** training sessions in particular aspects of the scheme, designed to build the confidence of teachers already using Asset. Provided in response to demand, the half-day courses focus on:

- **Making the most of teacher assessment** - guidance for teachers on the teacher assessment material available and how to use it most effectively alongside your teaching.
- **Effective delivery of Speaking tests** - guidance for teachers providing practical help on the planning, delivery and assessment of this skill, with opportunities to share good practice.