

FAQS FOR GCSE SINGLE TIER MODERN LANGUAGES

GCSE Modern Languages (single tier) 2003 Specification

Arabic 1606 / 1607

Chinese 1666 / 1667

Japanese 1752 / 1753

Modern Greek 1776

Russian 1241

General

Does the examination have tiered papers?

No, it is a single tier examination.

How should candidates be entered?

The correct specification should be chosen for Arabic, Chinese and Japanese (three skills, Specification A or four skills, Specification B).

The correct option should be chosen for Chinese (Cantonese) or (Mandarin).

How much is each part of the exam worth?

For the four-skill specifications (**Arabic 1606**, **Chinese 1666**, **Japanese 1752**, **Modern Greek 1776** and **Russian 1241**) each of the four components (listening, speaking, reading and writing) is worth 25% of the final mark.

For the three-skill specifications (**Arabic 1607**, **Chinese 1667** and **Japanese 1753**) each of the three components (listening, reading and writing) is worth 33% of the final mark.

Please note that if a teacher-examiner is not available candidates should be entered for the three-skill specification ie. Arabic 1607, Chinese 1667 and Japanese 1753.

For Modern Greek and Russian the speaking test is compulsory. Centres should arrange for the candidate to take the test at a host centre. A list of host centres will be sent in March to centres who request this on the L1 form.

Can candidates use dictionaries in any part of the exam?

Dictionaries are **not** allowed in the listening, speaking, reading or writing examinations.

Paper 1 Listening and Responding and Paper 3 Reading and Responding

Will the rubrics for the Listening test be read out on the tape?

No, but there will be an in-built pause of 20-30 seconds at the beginning of each set of questions to give candidates time to read the question. Teachers should also pause the tape at the double beep to allow candidates sufficient time to write their answers.

Do the candidates have five minutes reading time in the listening exam?

Yes. Candidates will be able to read through the question paper for five minutes before the tape is started.

Are candidates allowed to write during the five minutes reading time in the listening exam?

Yes.

Is “glossing” used on the question papers?

As candidates are not allowed access to dictionaries, question setters may provide a short glossary to make the text more accessible. Vocabulary which appears in the minimum-core vocabulary is not glossed. No lexical item which has been glossed will be targeted in response to a question. Any glossary will only appear on the grade D-A* questions.

Why are ‘true’ and ‘false’ questions no longer appearing in listening and reading papers?

‘True’ and ‘false’ type questions are no longer appearing in GCSE modern foreign language papers since they do not necessarily test a candidate’s linguistic knowledge. A candidate has a fifty percent chance of getting answers correct without any prior knowledge of the language. True and false exercises appear in different textbooks and can be very useful in developing language skills but will no longer constitute MFL GCSE test type questions.

What is meant by ‘peaks and troughs’?

The Edexcel GCSE listening and reading papers are produced in a ‘peaks and troughs’ format. This means that there is no progressive incline of difficulty and candidates experiencing difficulties with one set of questions can move on to the next knowing that they may be more accessible. This encourages weaker candidates to complete, or at least attempt, the whole paper rather than stop too early.

Why aren’t the transcripts sent out with the tapes?

Security reasons. Transcripts are despatched with the Examiners' comments and mark scheme.

Paper 2 – Speaking

How long should each candidate's speaking test last?

8-12 minutes in total.

How will the Speaking Test be marked?

The oral must be conducted by the teacher-examiner at the centre. All speaking tests must be sent to an Edexcel examiner for marking.

Are there any role plays?

No.

Can we have a visiting examiner?

No, Edexcel is unable to provide a visiting examiner at GCSE level.

Can you explain the 'teacher choice' of the second and third conversation topics for Arabic, Japanese, Modern Greek and Russian?

Rather than prescribe the second and third topics of conversation, Edexcel offers the Teacher-Examiner a choice of three, randomly allocated main topic areas. The teacher is free to choose the main topic areas that s/he feels best complement the previous conversation (eg. allowing candidates to demonstrate different structures and vocabulary and give different opinions). Naturally, if one of the allocated main topic areas coincides with the one that relates to the candidate's choice, the Teacher-Examiner should initiate conversation related to the other allocated main topic areas. All candidates will know that their second and third conversation topics will relate to one of four main topic areas.

For Chinese, how are the conversation topics chosen?

The candidate chooses the first topic which must relate to one of the four topic areas. The teacher-examiner chooses two more topic areas from the remaining three.

Is the Chinese examination accessible to both Mandarin and Cantonese speakers?

Yes. All questions and passages are printed twice in the exam papers, once in Traditional characters and once in Simplified characters. Candidates may work from whichever version they wish. All written answers should be in standard modern Chinese. The listening tape is recorded in both Cantonese and Mandarin.

Can all candidates in a class choose the same topic for their first conversation?

It would seem unusual for all students to choose exactly the same topic and it would suggest that candidate 'choice' had not been exercised. The topic chosen by candidates should reflect their interests and they should have appropriate language for this. A centre could perhaps consider negotiating candidate choices but should not require all the candidates to make the same choice.

Can candidates make notes when preparing for the speaking test, and if so, can they use them during the exam?

Candidates are not allowed access to dictionaries during the preparation time, but they may make notes on paper in that time. However, they will not be able to refer to these notes during the test period. We want to prevent candidates being tempted to read out

scripts rather than engage in a natural transaction. They can, however, refer to notes made for their first conversation topic (up to half A4 page of brief notes). Centres are advised to retain these notes until certification.

Where can we find the Edexcel bank of questions?

The bank of questions is in the Specimen Papers with Mark Schemes booklet. This can be ordered from the Publications department on telephone 01623 467467 or fax 01623 450481. The address is Edexcel Publications, Adamsway, Mansfield, Notts NG18 4FN. The email address is publications@linneydirect.com

Can the Teacher-Examiner question candidates on any area within a broad Topic Area (eg At Home and Abroad) and not just on their narrow subject such as “My favourite footballer”?

Yes, the Teacher-Examiner *may* question the candidate on any area within that broad topic area. The Teacher-Examiner *may* choose to focus on one part of the topic area, which is also acceptable, provided the candidate is given ample opportunity to expand and give opinions.

What if we do not have a teacher who can run the speaking test?

If a candidate is taking an examination in a centre where the language is not taught (for example the candidate’s mother tongue) it is the centre’s responsibility to find a host centre where the candidate can be examined. Use the L1 form to inform Edexcel of the details of the host centre or to request a list of possible test centres.

If after contacting possible host centres you are unable to find a host centre, a candidate’s relative may conduct the speaking test. In such cases the centre must be satisfied that the relative is fully briefed on the requirements of the speaking test and the speaking test **must** be observed by a senior member of staff such as the Head of Languages or the Examinations Officer to ensure that the examination is conducted properly.

Can Teacher-Examiners opt to mark orals themselves?

No.

Paper 4 – Writing

In the writing exam, what happens if a candidate writes too much?

Candidates should be encouraged to stick to the word limit. Writing beyond the word limit can often lead to a deterioration in the quality of language. When marking a piece of writing which is over the word limit, examiners will mark the whole piece. Candidates should be trained, however, to try to keep within the word limit, since they are penalised at AS and A Level if they go over the word limit.

Is there a coursework option?

No, there is no coursework option.

Support Materials

How can I order specifications, specimen papers, past papers, past cassettes and Examiners Reports?

These items can be ordered from the Publications Department on Tel 01623 467467. Fax 01623 45048. Address: Edexcel Publications, Adamsway, Mansfield, Notts NG18 4LN.

E-mail: publications@linneydirect.com

A publications catalogue can be ordered by quoting code Z014234.

What is the difference between the student guide and the student handbook?

The student guide is a useful free handout from the Publications department (Tel 01623 467467. Fax 01623 45048. Address: Edexcel Publications, Adamsway, Mansfield, Notts NG18 4LN.

E-mail: publications@linneydirect.com) which explains the appeal and benefits of studying languages at key stage 4. The student handbook aims to help students fully understand the demands of the exam and to prepare them for success with practical guidance on learning strategies and ‘student friendly’ explanations of assessment criteria etc.