



**GCSE**  
**Polish**

8688/SH Paper 1 Speaking Higher Tier

Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

This year saw over 8100 entries, setting a record for the number of students taking this qualification at this level. This is both highly pleasing and encouraging.

Overall, the exam went well, with results comparable to previous years. As previously, there was a broad range in the standard of student performance, ranging from students who performed excellently to those who received much lower marks. Some students did not perform well in the Role-plays and Photo Cards.

Generally, it was also pleasing to observe improved conduct of the tests by many teacher-examiners.

However, there were still several issues that adversely affected the students' marks, in particular poor timing which impacted adversely on students' marks. For the Role-plays, teachers occasionally deviated from the script, resulting in students' answers not being credited.

In the Photo Cards, while teachers are permitted to paraphrase the questions, sometimes the alternative versions used were not paraphrases. Additionally, there were instances where teachers asked only three questions instead of five.

It is crucial for teacher-examiners to read the advice sections at the end of this report and integrate the recommendations into their future testing.

The following comments aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the 2024 GCSE Polish Speaking Test, Higher Tier, covering both teacher conduct and student performance.

## Role Plays

Students generally performed less well in the Role-play than in the General Conversation, indicating a lack of preparation and understanding of exam expectations.

Most teachers followed the prescribed role in the Teacher's booklet, but some reworded the script, invalidating student responses. Examiners sometimes asked unscripted questions or omitted required ones. Two-part questions, needing separate responses for opinions and reasons, were consistently not handled well by teachers. Additionally, few examiners provided key words when prompting students to ask a question, leading to uncredited responses.

Many students did not pay enough attention to the context provided in English and Polish on their Role-play cards, resulting in inaccurate or irrelevant answers. Teachers should read the scenario introduction at the start and remind students to carefully read the scenario during preparation. Interrogatives were particularly challenging, causing difficulty in formulating required questions. Some students managed to ask the correct question using the prompt words, but others asked random or unrelated questions or merely read the prompt aloud, which could not be credited.

Often, students gave more information than necessary, which should be discouraged. Despite this, most students responded well to unpredictable tasks, showing their ability to use language spontaneously. All students need to familiarise themselves with the Role-play format and the meaning of the ? and ! symbols.

The published mark scheme provides details on responses worth two, one, or zero marks per task.

In Role-plays, the following tasks generally caused the most problems for students:

### **Role-play 7**

Some students lost marks for giving only one detail in the first task (*Książka – jaka i cena*).

The expression *rodzaje książek* was not well-known, so the third task proved challenging for many. Some of the students talked about *smutne* or *długie książki* instead.

Many students also had difficulty with the fourth task. In some cases, this was due to a problem with understanding the phrase *księgarnie internetowe* (*Co Pan/Pani sądzi o księgarniach internetowych?... Proszę podać jedną zaletę i jedną wadę.*). Many students were able to give advantages of the online book stores, but when it came to disadvantages, they often referred to the kindles/ebooks/screens instead.

### **Role-play 8**

Some students had difficulty with Task 1 as they did not know the vocabulary describing human personality.

Many students could not formulate a correct question about a friend's dream birthday; they were asking questions about the birthday directly to the friend, eg *Jakie są twoje wymarzone urodziny?*

### **Role-play 9**

Many students seemed not to read the introductory text specifying they had an injury and instead talked about various aches and pains (eg *ból brzucha, ból głowy*). However, credit was still given for these responses.

Some students were unable to correctly phrase a question in the task *Stosowanie lekarstwa*.

### **Role-play 10**

Many students found Task 4 difficult and often described charity work and gaining work experience rather than giving their opinion about charity work and the reasoning behind it.

### **Role-play 11**

In the second task (*A gdzie mieszkałeś/mieszkałaś w czasie tego kursu?*), many students named places or cities instead of different types of accommodation. The mark scheme was amended to reflect this tendency. Many students did not gain any credit in this task because they did not pay attention to introductory text and listed many different countries (eg *w Polsce, w Anglii*).

Many students could not formulate a correct question about learning foreign languages at Polish schools; they asked questions about languages at schools in general, omitting Poland, or about learning languages in Poland without the necessary references to school.

In Task 5, students often failed to recognise the question's reference to how knowledge of foreign languages can help in finding a job. However, responses listing how beneficial knowledge of foreign languages is at work in general were accepted.

### **Role-play 12**

Task 2, about work experience in a restaurant, seemed to be challenging for many students. Very often, students talked about the qualities needed to work in a restaurant or what the job gave them and, as a result, did not gain any credit. On the other hand, some students discussed their experience in a current restaurant and credit was given for it.

While most students named the most profitable profession in their opinion in Task 4 and justified it as *bo daje ci pieniądze*, some interpreted the phrase *opłaca się mieć* in terms of gaining experience, being useful to help others, or providing job satisfaction. Some students referred to how beneficial working in a restaurant was for them or talked about the job they wanted to do rather than a profitable profession.

### **Photo Cards**

While some teachers paraphrased entire questions correctly, many did not retain the exact meaning, invalidating student responses. Some teachers introduced their own questions or added extra ones, reducing the time for students to answer the prescribed questions fully. Additionally, some teachers only asked three questions instead of five.

On the other hand, students generally seemed well-prepared for this part of the test and completed the Photo Card task comfortably within the time limit at both tiers. At Higher tier, where the time limit is three minutes, there were some cases in which all five questions were not asked within the time allowed. This was occasionally due to a very slow delivery by the student, but more often the result of too long and repetitive type of answers to the first three questions, especially the question eliciting a description of the photo. Although good development of response is to be welcomed, students need to make sure that what they say still addresses the question of what can be seen in the photo. It is worth mentioning the continuing English influence in commonly used collocation by students *w tej fotografii*.

To score in the top band, students needed to answer all questions clearly and develop at least three responses with several clauses. A lack of development in some answers prevented top marks.

Overall, questions discriminated well, with a wide range in the quality of answers, but there were some that were done noticeably less well than others. These were the ones which students found most challenging:

### **Photo Card G**

Some students did not seem to understand the meaning of the word *wynalazek* in the first question.

Question *Do czego, według Ciebie, ludzie będą używać Internetu w dalekiej przyszłości?* was a prepared question, but some students still struggled to fully develop their responses. For instance, some only answered with brief statements like *do tego samego, co teraz*.

**Photo Card I**

In the third question, some students misunderstood the phrase *praca domowa* to mean ‘homework’ rather than ‘housework’. They did not understand the concept of housework and were unfamiliar with tasks performed at home.

Many students missed the *w Twojej okolicy* part of the fourth question, leading them to a wrong answer; they described a trip to America or another country, or city, where they went on vacation.

**Photo Card J**

Some students struggled with question four as they did not know the names of different seasons in Polish. This task was also often misunderstood. Many students interpreted the question to mean the best season for travelling outside of Poland or the UK, rather than within these countries. Common responses included: *Jesień, bo deszcz, więc byłoby dobrze podróżować do ciepłych miejsc* and *Zima, bo u nas jest zimno, więc chciałabym podróżować do Dubaju*.

Question *W jaki sposób rozwój transport wpłynął na życie ludzi?* was an unprepared question and that may be the reason why some students found it difficult.

**Photo Card K**

Polish names for professions were often not known by students, leading to incorrect answers in the first question, such as *widzę trzech kucharzy* or *widzę trzy piekarniki*.

Many students had difficulty understanding and naming the advantages and disadvantages of *praca na zmianę* in the fourth question. They were unfamiliar with this phrase and often mistook it for part-time work or thought it had something to do with changing jobs. After the teacher's paraphrase, some students missed the marks for not eliciting both aspects in this task and mentioning only advantages or disadvantages of shift work.

The word *zawody* in the fifth question was still sometimes unknown by students. Many of them confused the term *zawody* in the context of work with sports competitions or school subjects.

**Photo Card L**

In general, many students did not seem to understand the meaning of the phrase *szkola z internatem* in the third task and as a result, they were unable to respond to this question. Some students confused *internat* (boarding school) with *Internet*, and as the result, they often talked about online learning or the internet in schools.

Some students found the fourth question *Jakie są zalety rozpoczęcia pracy w wieku osiemnastu lat?* very difficult. Maybe because this was an unprepared question, many students struggled to find a suitable answer.

## General Conversation

Most students performed best in the Conversation section of the test. However, there were instances where teachers focused on only one theme or mixed themes, and sometimes repeated the theme from the Photo Card, which limited the maximum Communication marks to five. Timing issues also arose, affecting the marks for Communication as explained in the mark schemes. If time on one or both themes was below the minimum requirement, the maximum Communication mark was reduced by one band. For example, if a mark of 8 (level 4) would be awarded, this is reduced to a mark of 6 (level 3).

For lower-attaining students, the style of questioning often did not allow them to show their full potential. Some examiners stuck to example questions without considering the student's ability, and used closed questions that limited the students' responses. Teachers also sometimes repeated questions students had already answered.

Most students either asked a question at their chosen time or were prompted by the teacher at the end, sometimes resulting in the question not being asked within the maximum time limit and a one-mark penalty for Communication. Teachers should also remember that they are allowed to prompt the student to ask a question by saying eg *Masz jakieś pytanie?* or *Czy chciałbyś/chciałabyś mnie o coś spytać?* Some teachers did this effectively, even though the students declared *Nie* at the first instance, but others did not prompt the student effectively.

At Higher tier, most students were given the opportunity to use all three time frames, thereby gaining access to the 9-10 mark band for Range and Accuracy. There were isolated cases when students did not get/use opportunities to use different time frames, which limited them to the 1-2 mark band.

Many students used complex structures and vocabulary, achieving top marks for Language and Accuracy. Overall, students' vocabulary was mostly good, but some colloquial words were used, which were not always appropriate during a formal exam and may reflect the process of learning Polish language from hearing by students, eg *matma, spoko, gadać*. The verb *go* was overused in incorrect way: *jechać samolotem, szłem na wakacje, szedłem do Polski, iść do Ameryki, co rok idę do Polski na wakacje, poszliśmy do Teneryfy*, and the verb *have* was misused. Instead of *mieć*, some students used the form *mać*: *ja bym chciał mać, dobrze jest mać*. There were lots of English words conjugated in Polish, resulting in incorrect forms and sometimes with a complete change of meaning, like *polucja (zanieczyszczenie), uniform, juniversity, rewizja (revision), adykcja (uzależnienie), karawan (przyczepa) akomodacja (zakwaterowanie)*. English influence was obvious in collocations like *spędzać* (in a meaning of *wydawać*) *pieniądze, dobra kondycja* (instead of *dobrze warunki*) and incorrect forms, like: *w tej fotografii, w moim zdaniu, rozmawiać na telefonie, nie to co zapłaciłam za*. The most common influences though, were visible in the usage of the nouns *student* in place of *uczeń, klasa* in the meaning of *lesson, forma* as *lekcja wychowawcza* and verb *studiować* instead of *uczyć się*, or some words (mainly connected with the school life and education) used in their English form; most commonly *Sixth Form, Science, Art, level, break, grade, subject*. It is pleasing to note that some students did elaborate and explain their meaning in detail in Polish.

While some students used limited vocabulary and mixed time frames, noun cases, and verb endings, others incorporated a greater range of structures, including modal verbs and common subordinating conjunctions.

Pronunciation and intonation were usually very good or excellent, with many students receiving the highest marks, although a few showed little intonation.

## Advice to teachers

### General

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.
- Make sure that your own and the students' mobile phones are switched off (not just on silent) before the recording begins. Students must not have access to their mobile during the preparation time or during the exam, in accordance with examination regulations.
- The *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations* document is available in the Assessment resources tab of the AQA website language pages as well as in the secure Centre Services area. It is *essential* that you follow the instructions in this document, which is updated each year.
- In the *Instructions* document, you are reminded how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every student: GCSE Polish examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number \_\_\_\_, candidate number \_\_\_\_, candidate name \_\_\_\_. Role-play number \_\_\_\_, Photo Card letter \_\_\_\_, General Conversation theme chosen by student Theme (1, 2 or 3).
- Use Polish throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her Role-play and Photo Card combinations and the nominated theme for the General Conversation in English.
- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not as good as you would like. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.

### Role-play

- Keep to your script as laid out in the Teacher's Role. Not to do so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of zero for Communication in that task.
- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop him/her and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of zero for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.
- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.

### Photo card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided that exactly the same meaning is maintained. However, be careful that that is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.
- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any follow-up questions.
- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question in the three minute maximum time, it may be better to interrupt an answer and move on to the next question.

## General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on – not everything has to be described as *interesujące* or *nudne* and there are other ways to say *lubię to*. In order to introduce some variety of language, ensure that students have a bank of adjectives such as *zabawne, niesamowite, wspaniałe, świetne, nieprzyjemne*; and verbs such as *uwielbiam, interesuję się, znajduję to, nienawidzę tego, to mnie niepokoi*.
- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.
- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town is not going to be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, eg the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Don't ask all students identical questions.
- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.
- Announce the change of theme in Polish: *Przejdźmy teraz do tematu rozmowy numer jeden*, etc.
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 2'30", there is a marking penalty – see the published mark schemes.
- The maximum length of the General Conversation is seven minutes. Anything said after the maximum time will not be marked.
- Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they don't do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you don't forget to do it later.
- If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.

## Advice to students

- Use the 12 minutes' preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the Role-play tasks and in response to the three questions on the Photo Card.
- For the Photo Card questions, try to prepare answers that consist of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one.
- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the Role-play and Photo Card and to all questions in the General Conversation.
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Polish. For example, you can say *Proszę powtórzyć*.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.