

THE SPEAKING TEST OF THE NATIONAL EXAM IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The interview consists of three stages:

- **Stage 1** – Introduction (not assessed) – up to 2 minutes
- **Stage 2** – Task 1 (based on pictures) and follow-up questions – between 5 and 6 minutes
 - Preparation time – 1 minute
 - Monologue based on pictures – 2 minutes
 - Questions – up to 3 minutes
- **Stage 3** – Task 2 (based on a statement) and follow-up questions – between 6 and 7 minutes
 - Preparation time – 2 minutes
 - Monologue based on a statement – 2 minutes
 - Questions – up to 3 minutes

Stage 1 has two functions: first, to provide a formal beginning to the interview and, second, to give the student an opportunity to warm up for the speaking test. The interview is recorded. Once the participants have been introduced, the interviewer selects a topic for the warm-up phase from among the four options given in the script. The topics are general interest topics that any B1/B2 level student should be able to handle. In this part of the test, the student's performance is not assessed and they should use this stage to warm up for Task 1 and Task 2 without being overly concerned about the quality of their language.

In **Stage 2**, the student gets a card with two photographs on the topic specified by the number of the card which they have picked. The student has one minute to familiarise themselves with the photographs and think about how to do the task. At this stage, note-taking is not allowed. The student is expected to focus on all the aspects of the prompt, that is, (1) describe, who or what is in the pictures, (2) compare the two photos (say what they have in common), (3) contrast them (say how they differ) and (4) respond to the question written under the photographs.

Once the student has completed the task or has been speaking for the allocated amount of time, the interviewer stops the monologue and proceeds with the four follow-up questions listed in the script. The questions aim to prompt the student to make use of different tense forms in the past, present and future in their answers. The final question seeks to see if the student can formulate questions, either direct or indirect.

In **Stage 3**, the student has to comment on a controversial statement. It should be noted here that the topics of stage 2 and stage 3 are not related, for instance if the student has to talk about sports in task 2, this means that task 3 will tackle a different topic. This follows the principle of giving the student as many fresh starts during the test as feasible.

In this part of the speaking test, the student has two minutes to think about the statement and plan their monologue. Note-taking is recommended but not obligatory at this stage. Here, too, the student should cover all the aspects of the prompt, i.e. why some people might hold the view, giving reasons for their position; this should be followed by the student's own point of view which again should be supported by reasons or examples.

The monologue is followed up by the student responding to questions, whereas the questions this time vary in their level of particularity and generality. The questions move from personal interest questions to those requiring the ability to generalise on fairly universal topics.

When the student has finished answering the questions, the interviewer ends the speaking test according to the script and the recorder is switched off. The interaction involving announcement of test results, signing documents and managing student notes should not be part of the speaking test recording.

The speaking test result will account for 20% of the overall examination score. The student's performance will be rated by an assessor according to a marking scale (0–5) which includes the following criteria: (1) task completion, (2) vocabulary, (3) grammar, (4) fluency and pronunciation.

It is important to note that in order to get maximum points for task completion the student should speak for 2 minutes in the Monologue parts of Stage 2 and Stage 3.