



GCSE

Polish

8688/SH Speaking (Higher)

Report on the examination

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General Comments

This year saw 7,459 entries, reflecting continued strong uptake of this qualification at this level. This is both very encouraging and pleasing, particularly at a time when the number of students enrolling in other languages is declining.

Overall, the exam went well, with results broadly in line with previous years. As in past sessions, there was a wide range in the standard of work produced by students, varying from those who performed excellently to those who earned much lower marks. Some students did not perform well in the Role-Plays and Photo Cards.

Generally, it was also gratifying to observe improved delivery of the exam by many teacher-examiners.

However, several ongoing issues negatively impacted students' marks.

Poor timing sometimes led to a loss of 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 accurate 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 thorough overview of the 2025 GCSE Polish Speaking Test, covering both teacher conduct and student performance.

Role-Plays

Students generally performed less well in the Role-Play than in the General Conversation, highlighting gaps in preparation and limited understanding of exam requirements.

Most teachers followed the prescribed role in the Teacher's booklet, but some modified the script, which led to invalidated student responses. Examiners also sometimes asked unauthorised questions or omitted required prompts. Two-part questions requiring separate responses for opinions and reasons, or two details, were not always delivered clearly by teachers and were often overlooked, resulting in lower student marks. Additionally, few examiners gave students the required key words when prompting them to ask a question, resulting in uncredited attempts.

Few students were clearly not prepared for the exam: the question in the Role-Play was particularly problematic, with some students unsure of what was expected. They sometimes asked a question related to the previous answer or one that was completely unrelated, instead of responding with the correct prompted question. It was also clear that some students struggled to construct grammatically correct questions.

Many students did not pay close attention to the context provided in English and Polish on their Role-Play cards, resulting in inaccurate or irrelevant answers. Teachers are advised to read the scenario introduction at the start and remind students to carefully review the scenario during their preparation time.

This year, it was evident that some students talked about their own experiences rather than staying 'in role'. This caused difficulties in tasks where they were expected to speak from the perspective of the role given. For example, some students who do not celebrate Christmas or Saint Nicholas' Day found it difficult to talk about traditional food or customs, which impacted their ability to respond appropriately.

Interrogatives remained a significant challenge, with many students struggling to form the required questions. Some students successfully produced a correct question using the prompt, but others asked unrelated questions or simply read the prompt aloud, which could not be credited.

Students often provided more details than required, which should be discouraged in this task.

Nevertheless, many students handled unpredictable elements well, demonstrating their ability to respond spontaneously in Polish.

All students need to become fully familiar with the Role-Play format and understand the meaning of the "?" and "!" symbols on their cards.

The published mark scheme outlines the criteria for awarding two, one, or zero marks for each task.

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

Role-Play 7

Students had difficulty formulating the required question in Task 5, particularly when it involved asking about parking spaces (*miejsca parkingowe*). Many struggled with structuring the question correctly.

Role-Play 8

Some students confused Christmas (*Święta Bożego Narodzenia*) with Easter (*Wielkanoc*), which led to incorrect responses in Task 1. In Task 2, quite a few students listed food traditionally eaten at Easter rather than at Christmas. In Task 3, students often misinterpreted the question about festive decorations and described decorations for other holidays, including Easter eggs (*pisanki*), Easter bunnies (*zajęce wielkanocne*), or even Halloween items like spider webs and spiders (*pajęczyny i pająki*). In Task 4, some students confused St. Nicholas Day (*Dzień Świętego Mikołaja*) with Christmas Eve (*Wigilia*); in such cases, teacher-examiners sometimes gave the correct date as a prompt, which is not acceptable in this part of the exam. In Task 5, some students did not include the required *Polish* element in their questions, and a few misread the word *kolędy* ("carols") as *koledzy* ("friends"), leading to unrelated or incorrect questions.

Role-Play 9

In Task 2, when asked about the intended frequency of swimming, some students gave vague or inappropriate answers such as *dość często* ("quite often") or *Będę pływać, kiedy będę w basenie* ("I will be swimming when I am in the pool"). In Task 4, students often spoke about their own habits for staying healthy rather than explaining the benefits of a healthy lifestyle for young people.

Role-Play 10

In Task 2, some students misunderstood the term *wady* ("disadvantages") and instead listed advantages of living in the countryside. In Task 4, although answers such as cinemas or shopping centres were given, more appropriate examples of tourist attractions were expected. In Task 5, a frequent error was asking *Gdzie mieszkasz?* ("Where do you live?"), which did not meet the task's requirement to ask about housing preferences.

Role-Play 11

In Task 1, some students struggled to name a specific job and instead gave vague descriptions such as *Dobrze płatną pracę, która da mi satysfakcję* ("a well-paid job that will give me satisfaction"). There was also difficulty in forming a question about unemployment in Poland (*bezrobocie w Polsce*), with many students either avoiding the topic or not using correct phrasing.

Role-Play 12

In Task 1, students sometimes answered the question about when they joined the club by referring to the day of the week the club takes place, rather than the actual time of joining. In Task 4, when asked why studying history is important, many gave basic answers like *bo to jest interesujące* ("because it is interesting") without further development. In Task 5, some students had difficulty formulating a correct question about history books (*książki historyczne*), which led to vague or unrelated questions.

Photo Cards

While some teachers correctly paraphrased entire questions, many did not maintain the exact meaning, resulting in invalidated student responses. Some teachers introduced their own questions or added extra ones, which reduced 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 appeared 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 caused by overly long and repetitive answers to the first three questions, especially the question eliciting a description of the photo. Although well-developed responses are encouraged, students need to ensure that what they say remains

relevant to the question about what can be seen in the photo. It is worth mentioning the continuing English influence in commonly used collocations by students such as *w tej fotografii*.

A notable challenge remains with the words *zalety* ("advantages") and *wady* ("disadvantages"), which many students either do not understand or frequently confuse and misuse, impacting the clarity of their responses.

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 some were done noticeably less well than others. These were the ones which students found most challenging:

Photo Card G

Task 1: Some students did not understand the meaning of the word *wynalazek* ("invention").

Task 5: Some confused *wady* ("disadvantages") and *zalety* ("advantages"). Students had difficulty naming and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of spending free time alone due to limited vocabulary.

Photo Card H

Task 3: Many students described personal changes in their family life rather than general social changes in recent years; however, these responses were still awarded marks.

Photo Card I

Task 3: Most students talked about how their holidays changed (e.g., spending more time in the pool) instead of explaining holiday planning.

Task 4: Some misunderstood *praca domowa* as housework instead of homework.

Task 4: Many missed the phrase *w Twojej okolicy* ("in your area") and talked about trips abroad instead of locally.

Photo Card J

Task 4: Many students gave examples of environmentally friendly activities done outside the home (e.g., picking up trash in parks or beaches) instead of at home. Several teachers missed the "at home" element or changed it to "at school." Some students mentioned planting trees in the park rather than cleaning.

Photo Card K

Task 2: Some students misunderstood the phrase *zadanie domowe*, interpreting it as "household chores" rather than "homework". As a result, their answers focused on tasks like cleaning or cooking instead of school-related activities. This affected the relevance of their

responses and limited the marks that could be awarded.

Photo Card L

This card was particularly challenging for many students.

Task 3: Many confused *praca z domu* ("working from home") with household chores when discussing its advantages and disadvantages.

Task 4: Many students also found it difficult; it focused on the impact of the internet on job searching.

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 was reduced to a mark of 6 (level 3).

For lower-achieving 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, e.g., *Masz jakieś pytanie?* or *Czy chciałbyś/chciałabyś mnie o coś spytać?* Some teachers did this effectively, even though the students declared *Nie* at first, 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 or use opportunities to employ 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 the formal exam and may reflect the process of learning Polish through listening, e.g., *matma*, *spoko*, *gadać*.

A lot of English words were conjugated in Polish, sometimes with a complete change of meaning: *egzemplarz* (przykład), *kondycja* (warunki), *polucja* (zanieczyszczenie), *juniform* (mundurek), *juniversity* (uniwersytet), *rewizja* (powtórka), *adykcja* (uzależnienie), *karawan* (przyczepa), *akomodacja* (zakwaterowanie), *klasa* (lekcja), *forma* (lekcja wychowawcza), *studenci* (uczniowie), *dedykacja* (poświęcenie, zaangażowanie), *energetyczny* (energiczny, pełen energii),

sportowny (wysportowany), *ekspresować się* (wyrazić siebie), *jedzenie procesowane* (przetworzone), *beneficjalne* (korzystne), *krystianka* (chrześcijanka), *linia* (kolejka), *monitor* (ekran) *w kinie*. There are Polish equivalents for all these words.

The verb “go” was overused, with examples like *szłem na wakacje*, *szedłem do Polski*, *iść do Ameryki*, *poszliśmy do Hiszpanii*. The verb “have” was misused; instead of *mieć*, some students said *mać*, as in *ja bym chciał mać*, *dobrze jest mać*. The word *zawód*, *zawody* was misunderstood by many students, with answers ranging from sports disciplines (e.g. *żużel*) to school subjects (e.g. *chemia*).

English influence was particularly evident in phrases and structures like: *spędzać* (meaning *wydawać*) *pieniądze*, *w złej kondycji* (meaning *stanie*), *media społeczne*, *w moim zdaniu*, *rozmawiać na telefonie*, *nie to co zapłaciłam za*, *dobrze jest mieć kogoś kto gadać z*, *interesuję się w gry*, *słuchać do muzykę*, *szkoła*, *co chodziłam do*, *co oni wierzą w*. Other common mistakes included: *te ludzie*, *są więcej krzesel*, *są dwa pany*, *idę do formy*, *mam pierwszą klasę* (lekcję), *z przyjaciółkami*. The most common English influence was the use of *student* instead of *uczeń*.

Some words were used in their English form, most commonly “Sixth Form”, “Science”, “Art”, “break”, “form”, “half term”, and “apprenticeship”. It is pleasing to note that some students elaborated and explained 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 are 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 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, you 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, e.g. the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Don't ask all students identical questions.
- 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.