



GCSE

German

8668SF/ Speaking (Foundation)

Report on the examination

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Introduction

It is pleasing to report that the 2025 GCSE German Foundation tier speaking test was successful in its primary aim of allowing all students to demonstrate a level of oral proficiency commensurate with their ability. The questions offered an appropriate balance of accessibility and challenge for a candidature generally entered for the correct tier. The overall impression is that student performance has improved over the lifetime of the current specification, particularly in terms of Role-play and Photo card technique.

The following report aims to give a comprehensive overview of the Foundation tier speaking test, both in terms of teacher conduct and student performance. As well as being summative, connections will be made where applicable to the new GCSE German specification, for first assessment in 2026.

The content of this report has been informed by senior examiners listening to a wide sample of student performance and is therefore representative of the entry cohort as a whole.

Quality of recordings

Nearly all tests were conducted in a suitable venue with a quality recording device. There were only a small number of cases where external background noise and/or poor-quality recordings affected the audibility of what the students said.

Teacher conduct Test Routine Procedures

Most teacher-examiners adhered closely to the guidelines laid out in the Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations. This allowed the smooth running of tests, something which puts the student at ease and helps the marker at a later stage.

In the new speaking test in 2026, it will still be important that the introduction to each new student includes the number or letter of each element tested from the sequencing chart. During the test, transitions should still be announced succinctly in the target language. Suitable wording will be provided in the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examinations.

Timings

Nearly all students completed the Photo card task comfortably within the Foundation tier time limit of two minutes. On the rare occasions that not all five questions were asked within the allotted time, this was due to a very slow delivery by the student and/or an overlong and repetitive type of answer to the first question eliciting a description of the photo.

Most General conversations adhered to the minimum and maximum timings. Very few failed to reach the minimum time; however, there were some occasions when coverage of the second theme did not meet the minimum time requirement. This impacted on the mark awarded for communication.

Centres should be aware that from 2026 there will be a minimum and maximum time applying to the entire speaking test, with recommended rather than prescribed timings for each specific element.

Conducting the Role-play task

The prescribed role in the teacher's booklet was adhered to by most teacher-examiners. However, the script was sometimes re-worded, thereby invalidating any subsequent response by the student. In the case of two-part questions, often ones requiring an opinion and reason, it is good practice to elicit the two elements separately. This was not always common practice even though it is helpful to students.

Looking to the new speaking test in 2026, it is important to note that the teacher script in the Role-play element will continue to be prescribed and that no rephrasing will be permitted.

Conducting the Photo card task

Most teacher-examiners asked the questions as they appeared on the card. Paraphrasing is allowed but any change of wording must maintain the exact original meaning of the question. For example, on Photo cards A/D/E, it was permissible to substitute *in letzter Zeit* with *neulich*.

There were some occasions when a key element of a question was fronted and repeated. For example, on Photo card H Task 5: *Und deine Freunde ... wie oft hören deine Freunde Musik?* On other occasions, a key question word was repeated with emphasis at the start of the question. For example, on Photo card C Task 5: *Mit wem ... mit wem feierst du normalerweise deinen Geburtstag?* Such questioning technique provides an unfair advantage to those students; to maintain fairness any subsequent student response has to be invalidated.

Conducting the General conversation

Most teacher-examiners asked questions that were appropriate to the ability of the student. There was still, on occasion, the sense of a set list of questions being asked without consideration of the ability or interests of a particular student.

Questions were consistently asked that allowed all students to give and explain opinions, necessary for accessing the Foundation tier top band for communication. Higher attaining students were nearly always given the chance to use three time frames and thereby access the 9-10 band for range and accuracy.

A few teacher-examiners persisted in asking low attaining students a succession of tense orientated questions, which left them confused and resulted in unclear or even unintelligible responses. It is worth noting that in the 2026 Unprepared conversation, although tenses will still provide evidence of variety of structure, no mark for AO3 will be solely dependent on using all three tenses.

Some teacher-examiners employed a questioning technique through which students were clearly able to demonstrate spontaneity. In some examples of best practice, teacher-examiners allowed even the lowest attaining students to sustain a conversation through the use of simple follow-up questions, such as *Und wie findest du ...?, Warum?* and *Wie oft?* However, examiners noted that this was the exception rather than the rule and too many performances were still dominated by pre-learnt responses.

A style of questioning which encourages a more natural kind of interaction will still be desirable for the Unprepared conversation in the 2026 speaking test.

Most teacher-examiners were aware of the requirement for the student to ask a question during the General conversation. Some students asked the question at a moment of their choice while others waited for the teacher to elicit it at the end of the test. Unfortunately, some questions were elicited and asked beyond the maximum time limit, or the student was not prompted at all to ask a question.

Some students had been trained to ask a question through adding 'Und du?' to the end of a response. For example: *Ich spiele Fußball. Und du?* This is a legitimate technique as long as the question tag corresponds to the preceding response. On occasions, this was not the case and so the task was not fulfilled. For example: *Fußball ist toll. Und du?*

There were a few occasions when a question was asked by the student that was not relevant to either of the two General conversation themes.

Student performance

Student performance in the Role-play task

Most students have become proficient in decoding the target language bullet-points and formulating an appropriate and succinct response including a verb. It is pleasing to note that there were very few examples of a student lifting and using the subject pronoun (*du/Sie*) or possessive adjective (*dein/Ihr*) from the bullet point. Students of all abilities recognised and responded appropriately to the standard formulation of *Deine/Ihre Meinung über ...*. The most common opinion structure used was *Ich finde ...* with a simple adjective.

Some students developed responses beyond what was necessary. It is important to note the number of details required to fulfil a task, which is always indicated in brackets at the end of a bullet point. This will continue to be the case in the Role-play tasks in the 2026 speaking test.

Some students found the transactional Role-plays more challenging than the informal scenarios. However, most were well-trained in recognising when a request has to be made, denoted by the words *für Sie*. For example, on Role-play 8 Task 1: *Tickets für Sie – wie viele*. The preferred structure in the student response, *Ich möchte*, was sometimes rendered as *Ich mochte*, which creates ambiguity and can only score a maximum of one mark. Any difficulties with transactional role-playing will no longer impact as from 2026 every Role-play will take the form of a social conversation with a friend.

Many students were able to form a question effectively from the prompt word(s) provided on the question (?) task. As in the previous series, examiners noted that many students had been tactically trained to apply a *Wie findest du...?* formulation. The ability to formulate a question will remain a key element of the Role-play task in the 2026 speaking test.

Some students were not able to respond appropriately to the unprepared (!) task. Students who succeeded were those who had a good command of question words and had been trained to give a short but appropriate response, even if the rest of the question may not have been fully understood. For example, Role-play 9 Task 3: *Wie oft bekommst du ein neues Handy? – Jeden Tag!* It should be noted that no unprepared task will feature in the Role-play in the 2026 speaking test.

Specific Foundation tier Role-play comments

The following Role-play tasks generally caused the most issues for students.

Role-play 1 Task 1: Some students did not recognise the *wohin* element of the task and requested a flight without a destination. This scored 1 mark for a partial message.

Role-play 2 Task 5: *Stundenplan* was sometimes pronounced as *Studen(tp)lan*, which did not communicate a message.

Role-play 4 Task 1: Some students used the present tense to state an activity rather than make a request to do an activity.

Role-play 5 Task 3: Quite a few students did not understand this unprepared task where a name of a country was required.

Role-play 8 Task 4: Some students did not recognise the request for an age in its formal register *Wie alt sind Sie?* However, there were also some linguistically adept responses where the student thought the *Sie* pronoun referred to the number of people for whom tickets had been requested in Task 1 and gave a corresponding, such as *Sie sind zehn und acht Jahre alt*. This was perfectly valid and gained full marks.

Student performance in the photo card task

Most students had been well trained in preparing suitably developed responses to the first three seen questions. A fully developed response comprises three clauses including a verb. A few students either offered too little information or gave over-long responses where a lack of clarity had an impact on the mark awarded.

Most students were able to give a simple three-clause response to the first prepared question *Was gibt es auf dem Foto?* Many made reference to the setting, number of people, description of people and the weather. When describing an outdoor scene, there was a tendency to mispronounce *Bäume*, *Gebäude*, *Geschäft* and *Auto*. Occasionally, students stated the mood of a person based on facial expression. For example, in Photo card A, *Die Frau sieht glücklich aus*.

On occasions, students gave a personalised response to the content of the photo. For example, in Photo card A, saying how often they go to the gym. It is worth noting that such a personalisation, although currently not accepted, will gain credit for the Photo task in the 2026 speaking test.

It was encouraging to note that most students began their response with *Es gibt*. During the lifetime of this specification, the use of *Der ist* has become far less prevalent. However, an invented present continuous form to describe activities is still quite common. For example, in card H: *Sie sind Musik spielen*. Looking again to the 2026 speaking test, teachers are advised to enhance students' ability to give an accurate description of activity in the third person or third person plural.

Most students were able to give and explain opinions. There were few students who were restricted to the 4-6 band through not offering an opinion, or could not access the 10-12 band because no opinion was explained.

There was a rather mixed picture in terms of students' ability to recognise and respond appropriately to the question eliciting a response in a past or future time frame.

Specific Foundation tier Photo card comments

The following Photo card tasks generally caused the most issues for students:

Photo card B Task 2: Some students gave a very anglicised pronunciation of *Universität*. **Task 5:** Some students struggled to formulate an understandable response about their best friend's plans for September.

Photo card F Task 4: As in the Role-play task, *Stundenplan* was sometimes rendered as *Studen(t)enplan*.

Photo card H Task 5: Some students misinterpreted the question as asking how often they listened to their friends' music.

Photo card I Task 3: Some students gave a present tense description of their current school uniform instead of saying what they would like to wear.

Foundation tier General conversation

Generally, students managed to sustain a conversation for the minimum amount of time across two themes. Most students made an effort to develop responses, particularly to prepared questions from the nominated theme, often giving and sometimes explaining opinions in addition to basic factual information.

It is important to note that an 'extended response' currently comprises a minimum of three clear clauses and a 'developed response' two clear clauses. These criteria will continue to apply to responses to the Reading aloud follow-up questions and the Unprepared conversation in the 2026 speaking test.

Most students relied on simple structures and vocabulary, which was sometimes repetitive, to convey basic messages. Opinions tended to include the same adjectives *gut*, *interessant* and *langweilig*. Some students did show an ability to accurately incorporate a greater range of

structure, including *weil*-clauses and modal verbs. On some occasions, intended messages were not communicated because the attempted vocabulary and structures were too complex for the ability of the student.

Many students attempted to demonstrate the use of different time frames, but with varying degrees of success. When forming the perfect tense, an auxiliary verb was sometimes omitted, resulting in a phrase such as *Ich Fußball gespielt*. When referring to a future time frame using *Ich werde*, some students forgot to include a second verb in its infinitive form at the end of the clause, as in *Ich werde Fußball*. Others used a past participle instead of infinitive, as in *Ich werde Fußball gespielt*.

The standard of pronunciation was quite variable and not all students were able to consistently enunciate basic German sounds such as ei / ie / ch / j / w / Umlauts. Many students pronounced words in an understandable way but showed little intonation to support the meaning of what was said.

Some students were able to achieve reasonably fluency by delivering pre-learnt responses. Unfortunately, this was often to the detriment of spontaneity as simple follow-up questions were not asked.

Looking forward to the Unprepared conversation element of the 2026 speaking test, it is important for students of all abilities to be gain sufficient practice in giving more unrehearsed responses.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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