FAQs

UNIT 2 - CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT SPEAKING

1 Can the candidates bring in pictures - possibly on PowerPoint - for their presentation as in the exemplar DVD?

The specification states that a visual stimulus such as a photograph, post card or small object may also be used, i.e. one, but there must be no more than 30 words in the target language overall as part of the preparation. The 30 words can be made up of single words, phrases or sentences and can be in the Target Language, English/Welsh or a mixture.

2 Can the candidate bring in a poster with words?

Yes, as long as it respects the word limit.

3 Can the two parts of the test (Structured Conversation and Presentation) be recorded at different times?

Yes.

4 Can candidates be recorded at the end of the course as at present?

Yes, as long as the correct conditions for assessment are observed.

5 When will the concept webs be available?

Concept webs have been available on the WJEC website since September 2009 and additional examples were provided in October 2011. Please note, however, that a Concept web is only one way of preparing for the Structured Conversation.

6 Will recordings on cassette be accepted?

No, only digital formats will be accepted.

7 Will a DVD be provided to guide teachers?

Yes. The DVD was distributed at the Teachers’ Professional Meetings (INSET) in November/December 2009.

8 Why does the WJEC allow 30 words of prompts for Speaking but 40 for Writing?

This was a QCA decision.
9 How many questions do teachers have to ask candidates to reach each level?
There is no definitive answer but weaker candidates may need more individual questions to elicit the range of responses required for certain levels.

10 Can candidates rehearse the questions for the Structured Conversation during the 2 weeks?
Yes, but they should not be rehearsed to the extent that the candidate knows the order in which the questions will be asked. There needs to be an element of unpredictability in the test.

11 Does every candidate have to do a different presentation?
No. Candidates are actually encouraged to cooperate on topics but their responses must be individual for assessment purposes.

12 How can we alleviate the logistical problems of the recording and sampling?
Further guidance is available in the JCQ booklet *Instructions for conducting controlled assessments; Instructions for conducting coursework*. Re-recording candidates sitting the same task specifically for the purposes of moderation is not permitted.

13 Will there still be “special circumstances”?
There should be no need of special circumstances as teachers have the whole of Years 10 and 11 to record candidates.

14 How many words may be written in the “brief headings” for the Structured Discussion?
30

15 Is there a limit to the marks available for material which is obviously pre-learnt and rehearsed?
Yes, spontaneity and interaction is required for 3 - 10 marks in the Structured Conversation.

16 Do teachers have to use the concept webs provided by the WJEC?
No, but whomever designs one must ensure that it provides direction to both candidate and teacher regarding the coverage expected of a topic.
17 Can teachers point to sections of the Concept Web during the Conversation?
Yes. The themes may be addressed in any order.

18 Can a Concept Web be used for practice in class before the 2-week preparation period?
Yes, but the Concept Web used in the actual test must not be identical.

19 Is it permissible to interrupt candidates if they "dry up" before the 2-minute lower limit of the Presentation is reached?
Yes but the candidate will receive no more than 3 marks for Delivery of Presentation and the 3 - 4 minute Discussion should begin at that point. Words of agreement and encouragement from the teacher and insignificant responses from the teacher to indicate that s/he is listening to and understanding the Presentation would not be regarded as prompting.

20 Is a candidate assessed only once? If not does the candidate have to use different Concept Webs and Presentations for each assessment?
Candidates may be assessed on any number of occasions but the Concept Webs and Presentations must be different on each occasion.

21 Are there any topics that are prima facie unsuitable for the Presentation?
This is left to the discretion of teacher and candidate though there are general guidelines - available from the Centre Examinations Officer - which govern all material submitted for assessment.

22 Does the degree of coverage of the content of the Concept Web matter?
No. The Mark Scheme for Communication and Content does not refer to coverage but candidates may find that they penalise themselves in terms of Range of Language.

23 Can the recording of the Controlled Assessment Speaking be stopped and re-started?
No, the recording should only be stopped in emergencies.

24 Do words crossed out on the crib-sheet count towards the 30 allowed?
Yes, any words crossed out or blanked out with correction fluid count.
25 Can candidates use different coloured pens when preparing their crib-sheet?
   Yes.

26 As “Healthy Living” appears as a topic in both Personal and Social Life and The Wider World can it be used for both tasks?
   Yes, however, it should only be submitted once.

27 Can I practise doing both a Structured Conversation and a Presentation and Discussion in the classroom on the same Context?
   Yes, but only one of these tasks may be submitted to WJEC for moderation.

28 I have a candidate whose first language is Chinese. Can the Concept Web - the task - be in a language other than English or Welsh?
   Yes, the Concept Web may be in any language which is the candidate’s mother tongue as long as the teacher can also understand that language, otherwise the candidate may gain an unfair advantage. The task for the Structured Conversation, e.g. a Concept Web, may have any number of words in the candidate’s mother tongue but only 30 words in the target language.

29 Can the Concept Web bubbles be numbered?
   Yes.

30 How should I label my audio files?
   Each audio track should be labelled as follows:

   for Structured Discussion - centre number_candidate number_SD_candidate name
   for Presentation and Discussion - centre number_candidate number_PD_candidate name

   Please remember to use a 4-digit candidate number 
   e.g. 12345_0001_SD_david_thomas. Please label the CD or USB stick appropriately and include as much detail as possible on the CD inlay or a separate sheet of paper. As a USB stick is much smaller than a CD and does not have an “inlay” centres are requested to attach as large a fob as possible to the stick with at least the centre name and number clearly labelled on it.
31 Does it matter if I exceed the times recommended for recording?

Yes. The test will be deemed to have started after the candidate’s details have been recorded on the track. **No credit will be given** for any material which then exceeds the time limits of: Structured Conversation 5 minutes; Presentation 3 minutes; Discussion 4 minutes. If a candidate does not fill the allocated time of 3 minutes for the Presentation it cannot be “carried over” and added to the 4 minutes allocated to the Discussion.

32 Can a candidate be awarded marks if they complete a Presentation but not a follow-up Discussion?

Yes, though even if they gain high marks for the delivery of their Presentation, their marks for Accuracy and Range will necessarily be low.

33 What range of tasks should be included in my sample?

JCQ’s notice to centres advises centres “to make a recording of one of the two tasks”. WJEC recommends, however, that both tasks are recorded. Please see link to JCQ documentation.


Please note, however, that a revised document is expected from JCQ in January 2013.

34 What is the importance of the Moderator’s Report?

In the Moderator’s Report a warning will be given to centres where internal assessment has been too generous or too harsh. Centres are advised to take the necessary steps to address the concerns of the moderators’ report, as scaling may need to be implemented.

35 How is scaling applied?

Where scaling is applied, the JCQ notice to centres advises that moderation and adjustments are based on the evidence from the one recorded task. WJEC, however, recommends the recording of both tasks. Therefore, it is possible that different scaling may be applied to the two tasks.
36 If the computer-generated sample includes candidates from only one teaching group should I choose alternative candidates?

No, you must send the candidates’ work as stipulated by WJEC.

37 In the past we have been advised not to send candidates’ work which has been marked as 0. Might the computer-generated sample ask for a candidate on 0?

It might do and, in which case, it must be sent.

38 Can I take notes on a candidate’s Presentation before it has been delivered so that I can prepare questions for the Discussion?

Yes.

39 How many tenses must a candidate use in order to gain 4 marks for “variety” in Range?

Two.

40 Does a candidate have to use more than one tense in order to gain 3 marks for Range?

No. Interpret “when” as “if” in that criterion.

41 Will candidates’ work be credited even if it does not last the minimum times indicated?

Yes, everything will be marked no matter how short but full marks will not be available for a Structured Conversation which lasts less than 4 minutes, a Presentation [for Delivery] which lasts less than 2 minutes and a Discussion [for ‘Responding to Questions’] which lasts less than 3 minutes.
UNIT 4 - CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT WRITING

1.0 TASKS: TITLE

1.1 What format will the written tasks take?

The onus is on the teacher to choose appropriate titles and tasks. Candidates are required to produce two pieces of written work from different contexts. Failure to do so will result in the candidates being disadvantaged.

1.2 Where can I find titles for written tasks?

WJEC have provided centres with a list of suggested titles. To view these please follow the link below:


The tasks for controlled assessment writing on the website are for illustrative purposes only. ANY question can be set as a task. However, you must ensure that the task set gives students the opportunity to obtain the highest marks for Communication, Accuracy and Range.

1.3 Do schools need to check their CAW titles with WJEC?

No. The onus is on the teacher to choose appropriate titles.

1.4 Can a whole class do the same task?

Cooperation in preparing the task is encouraged but candidates must provide an individual response.

1.5 After 2 years' use of new titles in 2013 - 14 can teachers revert to using the titles from 2011 – 12?

Yes but remember that any titles not already used twice by centres are available for use at any time.
2.0 TASK SETTING

2.1 How much “change” is expected in CAW questions every two years?

Any alternative question will be accepted after 2 years as long as the wording is not identical to the one used in the previous two year period. The task should change but the topic can remain the same. Preferably, titles should be specific.

2.2 My students find the tasks on the website too easy. What should I do?

The tasks for Controlled Assessment Writing on the website are for illustrative purposes only. Any question can be set as a task as long as it gives students an opportunity to obtain the highest marks for Communication, Accuracy and Range.

2.3 My students find the tasks on the website too hard. What should I do?

The tasks for controlled assessment writing on the website are for illustrative purposes only. Any question can be set as a task as long as it gives students an opportunity to obtain the highest marks for Communication, Accuracy and Range.

2.4 In which language will the prompts of the tasks be written?

The prompts for the task must be written in Welsh or English though the title may be written in the language of the examination.

2.5 How detailed can the prompts be in the tasks?

There is no restriction on the number of prompts which may be included in the task. Teachers who devise their own tasks may write prompts which make it clear to candidates what they have to do.

2.6 Can a mixed-ability class be given a differentiated task?

Yes. Differentiation of CAW is by outcome. Tasks should be designed to give candidates the opportunity to gain the highest marks. If not then the marks awarded are likely to be confined to the lowest bands.

2.7 What advice and feedback can I give to candidates once the task has been set?

Teachers are not permitted to:
- Provide detailed specific advice on how to improve draft to meet assessment criteria.
- Give detailed feedback on errors and omissions which leave candidates with no opportunity to show initiative themselves.
- Intervene personally to improve the presentation or content of work.
3.0 TASK PREPARATION DURING THE TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO TASK COMPLETION

3.1 During the 2 weeks before completion of CAW task can help be sought outside the classroom?

Yes. Candidates may have sight of the task 2 weeks prior to the test. Preparation prior to assessment may include class notes, textbooks, dictionaries or IT resources and teacher input. Candidates should be encouraged to research the topic and teachers may offer advice on research methodology and advice on the language. No other support should be offered.

3.2 Can writing about a subject form part of formative assessment before the two-week period before the task is given out?

Yes. There is no limit on the teacher input before the task is given to pupils. After the task has been given a teacher may not mark or correct work but may give “advice on the language” and draw attention to mistakes.

4.0 WORD COUNT

4.1 Is the word count important?

Yes because a candidate aspiring to C - A* grades should write at least 200 words for each piece and for G - D at least 100. It is highly unlikely that communication marks of 7 - 10 would be awarded for an answer of less than 200 words as it should contain detailed information and points of view that are both developed and justified. Candidates must also ensure that they stay within the upper word limit 300 words for each piece as straying beyond would indicate that they have not written their answers "in an organised fashion" - a criterion for 9/10 marks for Communication. Candidates straying beyond the word limit run the risk of self-penalizing, by making additional errors.

4.2 Can a candidate simply copy out the 40 words from the crib sheet where they constitute an accurate and coherent answer and still gain credit for it?

Yes, though marks for Communication and consequently those for Accuracy and Range also will necessarily be low if the answer is only 40 words in length.

4.3 How should candidates write their 40 words on proforma 2?

The 40 words can be made up of single words, phrases or sentences and can be in the Target Language, English / Welsh or a mixture. Please adhere to the word limit. Any words crossed out or blanked out with correction fluid will still be counted.
5.0 PROFORMA 2 & 40 WORDS

5.1 Can pictures, codes and other non-verbal help be included on Proforma 2 to help candidates fulfil the written task?

No, ONLY a total of 40 words in the target language and/or English/Welsh are permitted. Failure to do may result in the candidates being disadvantaged.

5.2 Can candidates use their 40-word allowance to write words such as “JSAACAMA” as a prompt?

No. “JSAACAMA” as “Je suis allée au cinéma avec mes amis” is a code not a word. Similarly a candidate who writes e.g. “ich” followed by a picture of a dustbin to indicate “[ich] bin” [“I am” in German] would be disqualified.

5.3 Do words crossed out on the Proforma 2 count towards the 40 allowed?

Yes.

5.4 Does a candidate’s proforma 2 have to be submitted with the answer even if it has been forgotten [and not used] on the day of the task?

Yes. Teachers should submit a proforma 2 for every candidate and write “not used” for those who did not use it.

5.5 Can candidates use different coloured pens when preparing their crib-sheet?

Yes.

6.0 LANGUAGE OF TASKS

6.1 What if candidates use only one tense in their answer?

There is no requirement for candidates to use a variety of tenses at either F or C grade but it is good practice to encourage candidates to use two tenses in order to access the highest marks for Accuracy and Range.

6.2 What is “adventurous” language (required for 5 marks at Range and Accuracy)?

“Adventurous “ language is defined as anything which is denoted as “R” i.e. for receptive use only, in the Specification but which is used productively.
7.0 RESOURCES FOR THE COMPLETION OF CAW IN CLASS

7.1 What resources are permitted for the completion of CAW in class? Dictionaries will be allowed and candidates will have access to notes which they have prepared prior to the session that will be submitted with their work. Work may be produced by IT but teachers must ensure that there is no access to online grammar and spell checks.

7.2 Can pupils access on-line dictionaries when completing the task? Yes, however, grammar and spell-checkers must be disabled for the completion of the tasks.

8.0 TIMING OF TASKS

8.1 Are candidates disadvantaged if they have only 45 minutes to complete an assessment? No. The maximum allowed is 60 minutes and the word count suggested should be within the capability of every candidate. Appropriate arrangements will need to be made for candidates who qualify for “extra time”.

9.0 APPLICATION OF THE MARK SCHEME

9.1 Will there be a link in the mark scheme between the marks awarded for Communication and those of Quality of Language (Accuracy and Range)? Answers should be marked separately on the basis of the three criteria but in practice it is unlikely that high marks will be awarded for Accuracy and Range where low marks have been given for Communication, as a good Quality of Language is essential to expressing information “clearly and in detail” (Communication Criteria for 9/10 marks).

10.0 MODERATION

10.1 Can candidates’ controlled assessments be used outside of school e.g. for cluster moderation? No. Work should be shared amongst teachers in a school in order to establish a standard for moderation across teaching groups but otherwise the work should remain under lock and key. Neither candidates nor teachers outside the school should have access to completed controlled assessments. Should teachers wish to use the completed work for formative assessment then a photocopy may be made of the original but that copy must also remain in the classroom.
11.0 SUBMISSION OF CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT WRITING TO EXAMINERS

11.1 How can teachers decide which are the two “best” pieces of work if they are not marking the CAW?

In practice teachers will want to assess the quality of the answers to the tasks (if more than two are attempted) before submitting them to WJEC. If any annotation is made it must be on a photocopy of the original work. No annotation must appear on work sent to WJEC for marking. Although teachers may have “marked” the work before submitting it, the marks awarded by WJEC examiners will be considered final unless a centre wishes to submit a request for a review of marking of scripts.

11.2 How will teachers know if the two “best” pieces of work will be graded as C or above?

Teachers should concentrate on applying the mark scheme to the work completed by the candidates in order to determine the two “best” pieces of work.

11.3 How will the titles of the CAW tasks be communicated to WJEC?

Each piece of work submitted will be accompanied by the following:
Proforma 1 – candidate, centre, task details (date, title and context)
Proforma 2 – 40 word sheet
Proforma 3 – Task writing sheet (including the same title as listed on proforma 1)

11.4 Will the CAW tasks be returned to school?

No they are not returned to school as they classified as examination scripts and marked externally. Schools can request the return of CAW tasks through the usual post-results service for which there will be a charge. No annotation is made on the scripts by examiners.

12.0 AUTHENTICATION

12.1 How is candidates' work authenticated?

All candidates must sign a declaration to confirm that the work they submit for assessment is their own unaided work. Teachers must confirm that the work is solely that of the candidates concerned and was completed under controlled assessment conditions. Teachers must be sufficiently familiar with the candidates’ general standard to judge whether the piece of work submitted is within his/her capabilities. To avoid future potential problems caused by a change of staff within the department, we recommend that the declaration of authentication is recorded on proforma 1 on the day that each task is completed. It is a requirement of the awarding organisation that each task is authenticated by the candidate and the teacher before it is submitted.
12.2 What happens if the teacher doubts the authenticity of the candidates work?

If the teacher is unable to confirm that the work presented by a candidate is his/her own:
- Do not accept the candidate’s work for assessment
- Record a mark of zero for the work.
- If you are concerned that malpractice has occurred, you must inform your Examinations Officer.

13.0 CANDIDATE ABSENCE

13.1 What happens if a pupil is absent when the CAW is set?

The pupil can sit the task anytime within the 2-week limit. Once that period has passed another title will have to be chosen. However, there may be situations or events e.g. irregular timetables or acts of God that prevent whole classes from taking the task strictly within the 14-day period in which case they should take it on the first available opportunity after the 14-day limit. If in doubt please contact WJEC directly.
GENERIC QUESTIONS

1  Do candidates have to sit the same tier if they re-sit units 1 and/or 3?
   No. [Centres in England will no longer be able to enter candidates twice for Units 1 and 3 for awarding in 2014 onwards].

2  Can candidates use the same topics for their Speaking Tasks as their Writing Tasks?
   Yes, however, the language used for each skill should not be identical.

3  Are there any amendments to the printed Specifications and Specimen Assessment Materials?
   Yes. The current versions on the WJEC website are correct. Please note, however, that in the hardcopy Specification section 3.1 Speaking Unit 2 should state that the Presentation should last 2-3 (not 1-3) minutes [see also Section 5 Speaking - Task setting]. The Specification section 5 Speaking - Task taking - paragraph 2 should be deleted and paragraph 8 should begin “The assessments may” (not “will”). The Specification section 5 Writing Task marking paragraph one should read “…each candidate” (not “candidates”). In the Specimen Assessment Materials the Higher Tier Listening Exam targets grades D - A* (not C - G) and the Foundation Tier Reading Exam is 35 (not 30) minutes long.

4  Can topics be chosen for writing and speaking which are not included in the “broad contexts” in Specification section 2 Content?
   The contexts range from “self” to “life of young people today” and “life in the countries and communities where the language is spoken” so any topic is suitable provided it complies with the general guidelines for material submitted for assessment (available from the Centre Exams Officer).

5  Do classroom posters have to be covered up when pupils are completing their controlled assessments?
   The JCQ document Instructions for conducting controlled assessments (GCSE Qualifications) [2012/2013] states “The centre must ensure that display materials which might provide assistance are removed or covered.” [p7, 4.1].

6  Will WJEC provide a bi- or tri-lingual list of Vocabulary?
   There is an alphabetical list of the minimum core vocabulary for Foundation Tier in the specification.
7 Will more exemplars of CAS and CAW be provided to help teachers mark and moderate candidates’ work?

Yes, all exemplar material for CAS and CAW used at CPD will be available to centres via the secure website in electronic format.

8 Will the UMS conversion points be available to teachers?

The UMS conversions are available on the website.

9 Does a future of intention meet the requirement of use of a future tense?

No, though as compound or simple future tense [where applicable and appropriate] would be sufficient to meet this criterion.

10 Are candidates allowed to use “highlighters” to highlight text and question words for Listening and Reading question papers?

The JCQ document states the following in “Instructions for Candidates 2012-2013” [link to document]

“You must not use highlighter pens in your answers (although you may use them to highlight questions within the question paper or question/answer booklet)”

11 Why are there perceived differences between French, German and Spanish GCSE papers?

French, German and Spanish, although under the umbrella of Modern Foreign Languages, are separate subjects. At the meetings to award grades for each language, performance of students is looked at and boundaries are set in line with agreed national standards. Although some students will sit more than one language during the same session, the cohort for each language overall will be different leading to different outcomes for each language.

When awarding the new GCSEs awarding committees were required by the regulator to ensure that standards at subject level did not change as compared with legacy specifications. In other words the percentage of As, Cs and Fs for 2011 at subject level had to be roughly in line with those of previous years. The change in structure had to be carried out in such a way as not to either advantage or disadvantage the 2011 cohort as compared with its predecessors. Awarders were seeking to establish appropriate standards for the separate units under the constraint of having to ensure that the overall outcome was in line with expectations. In 2012, the regulatory expectation for Awarding Organisations was that standards would be maintained using the ‘comparable outcomes’ approach; that is, the proportion of students achieving each grade is roughly the same each year. Therefore, grade boundaries will be different across the three separate subjects.