

## Guidance for Interlocutors Online Classic IESOL

### 1. Purpose & Scope

This booklet contains regulations for the delivery of Gatehouse Awards IESOL online spoken examinations.

**Interlocutor** – an interlocutor is a member of staff, either at Gatehouse Awards or an Approved Centre, who is responsible for the delivery of Speaking examinations. Interlocutors are not responsible for making assessment decisions.

### 2. The Role of the Interlocutor

An Interlocutor is a member of staff, either at Gatehouse Awards or an Approved Centre, who is responsible for the delivery of Speaking examinations.

The main role of the Interlocutor is to give Candidates the opportunity to complete the Speaking Tasks to the best of their ability. They are also responsible for eliciting appropriate samples of the Candidates' language for the Marker to arrive at a valid and reliable assessment decision.

This can be achieved by:

- ensuring that the required examination standards are met.
- ensuring that the examination is recorded properly.
- following the instructions set out in the *Interlocutor Booklet*.
- ensuring that the Candidates are given adequate opportunities to speak.
- keeping to the time limits set out in the *Interlocutor Booklet*.

Interlocutors are not responsible for making assessment decisions.

The only other persons permitted on the call during spoken examinations are Gatehouse Awards Examination Observers, members of the internal or external quality assurance team of the GA Centre or trainee Interlocutors.

### 3. Examination Equipment

Before the examination begins, the Interlocutor must check that:

- they have verified each Candidate's identity against their original ID document and have confirmed that the check has been recorded in the Exam Report Form
- they have the *Prepared Speaking Tasks* document open on their device and ready for screen share (during Task 2).

- they have the *Candidate Visual Prompts* document open on their device and ready for screen share (before Task 3).
- the Candidates have a pen and a blank sheet of paper on their desks.
- they have a silent clock or stopwatch for the Interlocutor to monitor the Candidates' adherence to the guideline times.
- they have a copy of the *Interlocutor Booklet* available to them, either on paper or on a second device that isn't used for Zoom.

For information about Candidate room requirements and other technological requirements for online speaking exams, please see the *GA Online IESOL Exams Frequently Asked Questions* document.

## 4. Commencement of Examinations

At the beginning of each assessment, the Interlocutor should place all other candidates who are not participating in the session into the Waiting Room on Zoom.

Once the ID checks have been completed (off camera), the Interlocutor should:

- do a 360-degree check of the Candidates' rooms by asking them to turn their cameras around the room, paying particular attention to their desks or tables.\*
- ask candidates to remove everything from their tables. They are allowed a drink, a pen, a blank piece of paper and their ID document.
- inform the candidates that mobile phones and other electronic devices must be on silent and away from their desks during the Speaking exam.
- inform candidates that no dictionaries or external websites can be accessed during the exam.
- if the Candidate wishes to have a relative or friend present in the room during the examination, inform them politely that this is not allowed. (See *FAQs* for interruptions during the exam)
- welcome them to the session.
- explain that the examination will be recorded and it should be completed in one continuous session. Any breaks for the toilet should be between skills.

## 5. During the Examination

The Interlocutor script and instructions are found in the *Interlocutor Booklet*. Interlocutors must ensure that each Candidate completes all Speaking Tasks.

- All Speaking examination activity must be recorded on Zoom in both video and audio format.
- The recording should be continuous – no breaks or pauses are allowed between the Tasks.
- The Candidates and the Interlocutor must be audible and visible throughout. The Interlocutor can ask candidates to move closer to their microphones or speak louder if the volume is not sufficient.
- If a Candidate loses connection, see *FAQs* for guidance on this. This should be recorded in the *Exam Report Form*.

---

\* See Appendix 1

## 6. General Guidance for Interlocutors

- The Interlocutor should read the *Interlocutor Booklet* before the start of the examination to ensure that they are familiar with the script, as well as the time limits for each task.
- The Interlocutor should ensure that the Candidates adhere to the guideline times by monitoring this using a silent clock or stopwatch. If a Candidate significantly exceeds the stated time, the Interlocutor should prompt them gently and politely to move onto the next question /task.
- Where the *Interlocutor booklet* dictates the exact words to be read aloud to the Candidates, the Interlocutor must not deviate from the script.
- Where the *Interlocutor booklet* allows deviation from the script, the Interlocutor should ensure that the language used is at a level appropriate to the examination being conducted.
- The Interlocutor should keep in mind the language level of the candidates:
  - at levels A1 and A2, speak slowly and clearly in short sentences emphasizing key words.
  - at levels B1 and B2, speak clearly at natural speed, as appropriate when speaking to a stranger who may not speak your language fluently.
  - at levels C1 and C2, speak in a completely natural way, making no concessions to the fact that the Candidates are not native speakers.

### Interlocutor DOs

The Interlocutor should:

- ✓ maintain a friendly and relaxed approach, to allow the Candidates to perform to the best of their ability.
- ✓ maintain reasonable eye contact with the Candidates, except during preparation times.
- ✓ use nods and phrases to indicate that you are listening and interested in the Candidates' output, for example: 'ah-hah', 'yes', 'OK', 'right', 'I see' etc.
- ✓ use a lively, rising intonation to invite contributions.
- ✓ use downward intonation to indicate that a particular element of the assessment is coming to an end.
- ✓ speak clearly and with confidence and use Candidates' names at regular intervals throughout the assessment – this is very important to allow the Markers to correctly identify who is speaking when the recording is being marked.
- ✓ keep their own input to a minimum, except when eliciting language from candidates
- ✓ clearly guide the Candidates through all the elements of the assessment.

### Interlocutor DON'Ts

Interlocutors should not:

- ✗ echo or rephrase Candidates' answers.
- ✗ correct Candidates' errors.
- ✗ suggest answers, provide vocabulary or expand on Candidates' responses for them. If a Candidate is struggling to find the right word, encourage them to give a definition, description, or an explanation instead.
- ✗ give any indication of a Candidate's performance, for example 'fine', 'good' or 'that's great'. 'Thank you' is the preferred response.

- ✘ allow the conversation to lapse into complete silence for more than several seconds where the Candidates might be gathering their thoughts before answering a question or making further contributions.
- ✘ speak too much – the Interlocutor’s contributions should be brief, even those made to elicit further contributions from the Candidates or help the Candidates relax

For further examination-specific Interlocutor Guidance, please refer to the *Interlocutor Booklet*.

## 7. At the end of the Examination

When the Speaking Tasks are finished, the Interlocutor:

- should politely thank the Candidates for their contribution.
- not give any indication as to the Candidates’ performance.
- stop the recording as soon as one exam finishes. If there is another set of Candidates, the Interlocutor must start a new recording for the second exam.

## 8. ‘Dummy’ Candidates

Gatehouse Awards IESOL Speaking exams are intended for 2 Candidates. However, there may be circumstances where this is not possible.

If there is an odd number of Candidates, the Interlocutor should ask a strong candidate to take the examination again and act as a ‘dummy candidate’. The Interlocutor must clearly state that in this exam, that person is the dummy candidate.

It is possible for a member of staff from the institution to act as a dummy candidate. This is undesirable as members of staff often have a level of English above that being tested. If a member of staff is to be used, the Interlocutor must clearly inform them of their role as the dummy candidate and the level of language to employ.

The dummy candidate does not have to take part in Task 1. The dummy candidate needs to ask and answer questions in Task 2, give an appropriate presentation from the Prepared Tasks List and participate in Task 3.

If there is no one else available to act as dummy candidate, it is possible for the Interlocutor to take the role of the dummy candidate. This is not desirable and should only be done when there is no other option.

The Interlocutor does not have to ask themselves the questions in Task 1. The questions are asked only to the real Candidate. In Task 2, the Interlocutor should ask the Candidate **twice** the number of questions about their topic. The Interlocutor must then give a presentation and the Candidate must ask questions about the presentation. In Task 3, the Interlocutor must engage in the discussion with the Candidate at a level appropriate to the examination level.

## **9. Further information for Interlocutors about the GA IESOL Speaking examination**

### **What if a Candidate attempts to read notes or appears to be accessing some other source?**

Part of the role of the Interlocutor is to assist in the prevention of malpractice (cheating) by Candidates.

The Interlocutor should remind the Candidate that this is not permitted and remove the notes from the Candidate or inform the Candidate to turn off any device they are accessing. If the Candidate persists or refuses, then the Interlocutor should inform the Candidate that they are liable to be disqualified from the exam.

The Candidate's actions should be noted in the *Exam Report Form*.

### **What if a Candidate has memorised (rote-learned) their presentation?**

The Candidates are still complying with the exam instructions and the exam will be marked accordingly. The Interlocutor should ask questions designed to elicit original language after the candidate has completed the presentation.

### **What if a Candidate attempts to write their presentation while they should be listening to the other Candidate's presentation?**

The Interlocutor should remind the Candidate that they have to ask the other Candidate questions based on the content of their presentation and therefore they should be listening to the other Candidate presenting.

The Candidate's actions should be noted in the *Exam Report Form*.

### **What if a Candidate gives a presentation that is not on the list of Prepared Speaking Tasks?**

The Interlocutor should check the list of *Prepared Speaking Tasks* and if the presentation is not there, inform the Candidate, show them the topic list and allow them to start again. Inform the Candidate that if the presentation is not on the list, they will receive zero marks for the Task.

This should be reported in the *Exam Report Form*.

### **What if a Candidate has not prepared Task 2?**

The Interlocutor should present them with the list of *Prepared Speaking Tasks* and inform the Candidate that they can speak without preparing. The interlocutor should not allow time for preparation.

### **What if the Candidate has no questions to ask at the end of the other Candidate's presentation?**

The Interlocutor should remind the Candidate that this is part of the assessment and if the Candidate does not ask any questions, their marks will be reduced. To ensure that the other Candidate has sufficient opportunity to answer questions, the Interlocutor should ask additional questions.

### **What if the candidates are not interacting in Task 3?**

The interlocutor should remind the Candidates that the Task requires them to interact with each other. If the Candidates still do not interact with each other, they should also inform the Candidates that they will lose marks if they do not interact.

The Interlocutors should be aware that their role during Task 3 is to ensure that the candidates interact with each other and stay on topic. Specific guidance is included in the interlocutor script.

### **What if the Candidates appear to be reciting a pre-set script in Task 3?**

If the Candidates have a pre-set script, this is evidence of malpractice and the Interlocutor must assist in preventing it. In this case, the role of the Interlocutor is to intervene and ask relevant questions about the topic so that the Candidates cannot continue with a pre-set script.

This must be reported in the *Exam Report Form*.

### **What if a candidate doesn't understand or misunderstands one or more of my questions?**

If a candidate is struggling to understand one of the questions in ST1 (or a follow-up question in ST2), the interlocutor should rephrase that question to give the candidate every chance to respond. This does not include explaining the question or prompting the candidate with possible responses – these would still not be appropriate.

If a candidate misunderstands a question and begins giving an irrelevant response, the interlocutor can interrupt the candidate and repeat and/or rephrase the question for the candidate. An irrelevant response will cost the candidate marks, so stopping them and rephrasing or repeating the question can give them the chance to avoid this.

### **What if a candidate doesn't understand a particular word or phrase in the ST1 questions?**

If a candidate is stuck on a word within a question, the interlocutor can use a synonym for the word or a very brief description of the word to give the candidate a chance to respond.

## Appendix 1

Fig. 1

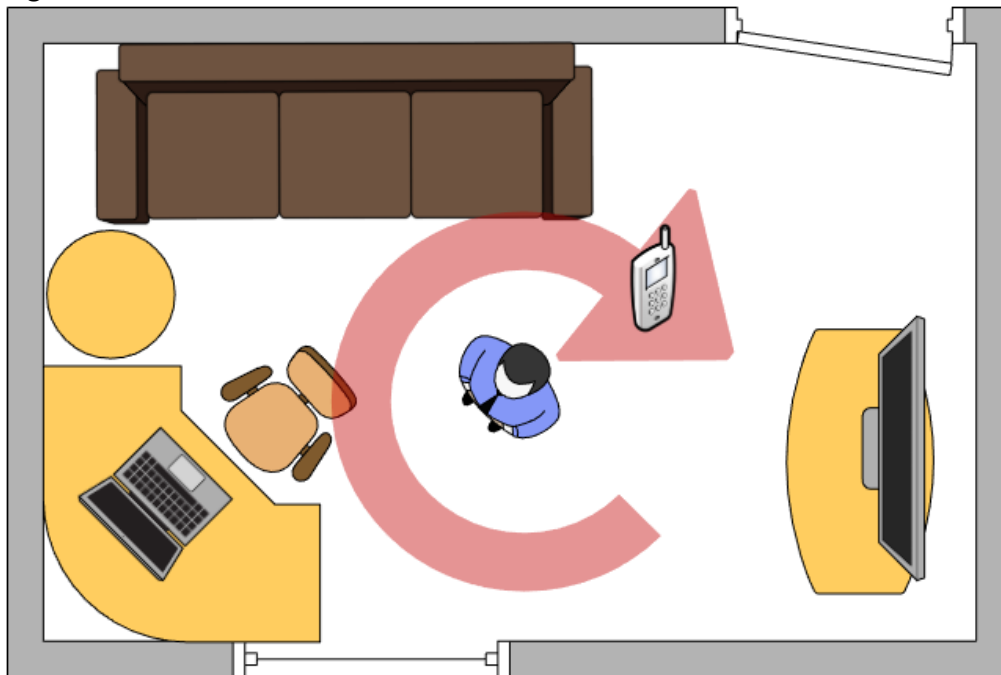
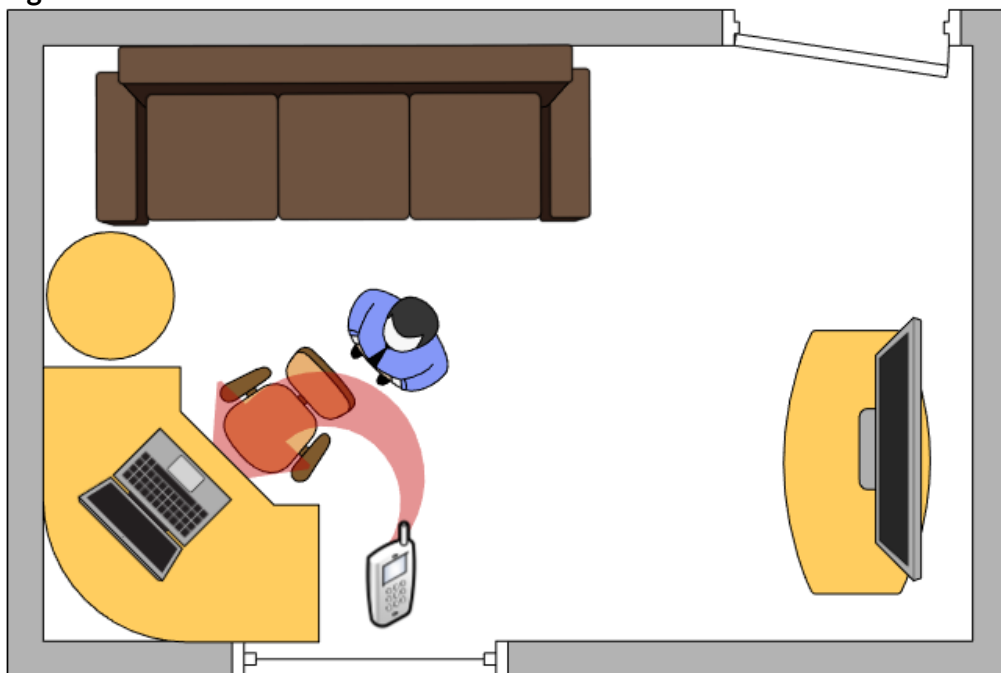


Fig. 2



The Invigilator (before LRW exams) and the Interlocutor (before Speaking exam) must ask the Candidates to scan the room with their smart phone/tablet, until they are satisfied they have covered the whole room (fig 1). This should include checking the area behind the monitor, checking to ensure that no audio device is being used (headphones are permitted for the Listening Exam only), the desk/table area is clear (except for the items mentioned in Section 4 of this document) and that any pieces of paper found on the desk are blank (fig 2).

Document Specification:	
Purpose:	To provide guidance to Interlocutors who conduct and deliver Gatehouse Awards IESOL Online Spoken Examinations.
Accountability:	Gatehouse Awards Governance Committee
Responsibility:	Assessment Manager
Version:	4
Effective from:	September 2025
Indicative review date:	September 2027
Links to Ofqual GCR	G4, G6, G7, G8, G9
Other relevant documents:	Gatehouse Awards Regulations for Conducting Controlled Examinations Gatehouse Awards Malpractice and Maladministration Policy & Procedure Gatehouse Awards Candidate Access Policy & Procedure Gatehouse Awards Centre Handbook