

Asset Languages Exams for Independent Schools

What is Asset Languages?

Asset Languages is the assessment scheme for the DCSF's Languages Ladder. Language exams at 6 levels, in 25 different languages. Unusual in that there are multiple exam sessions in a year.

Two types of assessment available:

- informal Teacher Assessment materials for in-class motivation and assessment for learning.
- External Assessment leading to a nationally recognised OCR qualification.

Just another exam?

Usually language exams have to be taken in all four skills. Not so with Asset Languages, which has four free-standing exams. A student who can speak but not write will gain a qualification. Levels can be mixed.

Are they 'respected'?

Yes. Part of OCR. Over 150,000 assessments taken in 07/08. Levels are pegged to the six Common European Framework levels (CEF). Ironically it is possible that these levels mean more to a foreign employer than GCSEs or AS levels. A far more useful qualification to an employer who may, for example, want someone to work only over the phone. An A level grade says little about individual skills. UCAS tariffs for Asset are at:

http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/ucas_tariff/tariff tables/#Asset

What levels?

<http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/about/structure.aspx.org.uk/about/structure>

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|----------------|-----------------------------|
| • Breakthrough | Entry Level |
| • Preliminary | Foundation stage GCSE (D_G) |
| • Intermediate | Higher Stage GCSE (A*-C) |
| • Advanced | A Level |
| • Proficiency | B2/C1 |
| • Mastery | C1/C2 |

Enter learner at stage most appropriate – do not have to start at the beginning.

Why is it useful for Independent schools?

- Accessible levels for learners of Mandarin
- Useful for 6th form taster classes (say 2 ppw) – Breakthrough level in one or more skills possible
- Languages covered include Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Italian.
- Assessment is skills-based so doesn't rely on particular programme of study or occur after set length of course.
- Can be used alongside GCSE – prepare students for Asset type tasks
- Reading and Listening comprehension ideal for pupils starting a second language in yr 9. Even if they give up they still have a qualification. Good for motivation – and inspections!
- Ideal exam in yr 11 for early GCSE takers.
- Good for foreign students arriving after yr 9 who won't make it to GCSE – e.g. students from outside Europe
- Can use wide range of languages to recognise home or community languages skills
- Smaller grades within each stage are individually assessed using the Teacher Assessment materials. External Assessment covers all of the grades within a stage. Can choose to use both forms of complementary assessment or just the external exam.

Administration

Register as a centre to offer External Assessments. Purchase a pack to use Teacher Assessment. Entries are simple online. Papers can be taken online for some languages and stages (except oral). Multiple exam sessions a year only possible because papers made from an item bank – therefore no past papers available except for single sample paper online.

What Next?

- Look at Asset website - <http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk>
- Sample papers - <http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk/about/samples.aspx>
- Staff handling phone calls are helpful – worth a call with questions

Verdict

- Well worth a look – especially with Mandarin, non-'standard' languages, if you need an exam beyond GCSE / A level.
- Easy to administer