

GCE



Chief Examiner's Report Irish

Summer Series 2017



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Irish for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

Contents

Assessment Unit AS 1:	Speaking	3
Assessment Unit AS 2:	Listening [A], Reading [B] and use of Language [C]	5
Assessment Unit AS 3:	Extended Writing	7
Contact details		9

GCE IRISH

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit AS 1 Speaking

Presentation

Assistant Examiners reported that the standard of presentations was generally very high and most candidates were able to cope well with it and access the higher mark bands. Presentations, in the majority of cases, were original and of a very high standard. They were rooted in Irish and/or Irish-language society and included comprehensive research and statistical support.

However, it is noteworthy that in a minority of cases candidates delivered presentations that were competent but did not address the demands of AO4, and regrettably were unable to access the higher mark bands. Centres are reminded that this element of the examination has changed from the previous specification and should note the guidance on Page 11 of the current specification which states that this element of the unit is assessed by the candidate delivering 'a prepared presentation based on an AS level theme related to an aspect of an Irish-speaking country or community' (emphasis added). This guidance is supported later on the same page with a reference that the candidate 'should speak knowledgeably about the aspect of the Irish-speaking country or community that they have researched.' Further guidance is available on the CCEA Microsite for Irish, including a FAQ document 'A Level Irish Specification: AS level clarification'; and from the document 'Modern Languages: Instructions and Guidance to Teachers and Candidates – Conduct and Administration of AS Modern Languages Speaking Tests (Revised)'.

Centres and candidates should ensure that they have included sufficient material in their presentation that will allow the demands of AO4 to be assessed fairly. This needs to be more than a passing reference to 'in Éirinn' and needs to permeate the entire presentation.

Assistant examiners reported that some candidates did not take full advantage of the presentation, or of the time available to them. A minority of candidates seemed to have learned the introduction but could progress no further and attempted to guess their way through the remaining time. Some candidates experienced trouble completing their presentations and this may have been due to nervousness. The best presentations had all the relevant information, views and statistics presented in a clear and logical order.

Conversation

Assistant Examiners reported their pleasure at being able to engage with so many able, interested and enthusiastic candidates who were able to converse competently about a range of topics. Their love for Irish and the Gaeltacht was evident. Many candidates used a range of complex language and structures that were beyond the expected AS level standard.

Centres and candidates are reminded that examiners do not have a pre-prepared list of questions and instead are trained to encourage a genuine conversation allowing for an exchange of ideas and opinions to develop over the eight minutes or thereabouts. The reduction of contexts for learning has meant that the topics of school/school life, and part-time jobs have moved to A2 and candidates should not expect to have to converse on these areas. However, if the candidate brings up these topics the examiner will allow the conversations to develop to a certain extent.

It seems clear that candidates who have access to a language assistant were clearly advantaged in that their overall pronunciation and fluency were better.

Assistant examiners noted that the main areas candidates found challenging were those in which they were encouraged to develop their ideas beyond delivering facts. For example a question such as ‘Cad é an maitheas a dhéanann spórt duit?’ should allow candidates to take advantage of a range of opportunities to develop answers, including their own participation in sport, how it can help issues with mental health and with dealing in the pressures of school life. This is one example of a question that allowed the strongest candidates to develop their answers appropriately while weaker candidates did not feel disadvantaged.

Assistant examiners noted that a minority of candidates displayed inconsistencies in their language particularly when using the copula, the verbal noun and general sentence structure and with the use of irregular verbs (ní chuaigh, tharann/tabhraíonn). It is regrettable that habit of inserting English words and phrases into the conversation is becoming more common, (e.g. Is breá linn each other).

The visiting examining team continue to express their appreciation and gratitude to colleagues in schools who make us feel so welcome and supported during our annual visits.

Rath Dé ar an obair sa scoilbhliain úr.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit AS 2 Listening, Reading and use of Language

Section A

The candidates performed very well in the listening paper as a whole. They responded positively and very few candidates made no attempt. Some more able candidates were able to achieve full marks and other candidates were able to find their own level in this paper. There were some discriminators in the paper which allowed for a good spread of marks.

The candidates responded well in general in Question 1. Question 1 is more challenging in that the candidates are responding in the target language. Candidates are reminded to attempt all questions and as examiners respond positively to all attempts and where the answer is understood, marks are awarded as this question is assessed under AO1. Some candidates could not spell *lúcháir* in Question 1(a) but understood the context and wrote *an-sásta* and the mark was awarded in this case. Similarly in Question 1(b) *easpa* gave some candidates difficulty and they wrote '*ní raibh go leor airgid acu*' and they were awarded two marks. In Question 1(c) *feachtas* was a good discriminator and the more able candidates were able to gain the mark. Question 1(d) and (e) were answered well in general. Candidates are reminded that figures or words are acceptable for answers where numbers are required. In Question 1(f) spelling was challenging for some candidates although the examiners were instructed to accept answers where the candidate had left out the article 'An' before the country. Question 1(g) was generally answered well. In Question 2 the candidates were requested to answer in English. Question 2(a) was an easy starter for the majority of candidates. Some words that proved challenging were '*meánaicme*', '*léachtóir*', '*samhnas*' and '*eisheadúnas*'. These proved to be good discriminators and the more able candidates were able to do very well. Again, there was a good spread of the marks. Candidates are reminded to attempt all questions as the examiners mark positively. One example of this is in Question 2(e) where examiners were instructed to accept 'separated' for 'divorced'.

Sections B and C

The candidates performed very well in the paper as a whole. Given that it was a new specification they responded positively and very few candidates made no attempt. Some more able candidates were able to achieve high marks and other candidates were able to find their own level in this paper. There were some discriminators and new challenges regarding grammar in the paper which allowed for a good spread of marks.

Question 1 was less challenging than the old specification in that there are no longer marks for AO3. Candidates were able to handle this question very well. The translation was handled very well in general by most candidates. This part of the question paper has not changed from the old legacy paper and candidates were familiar with it and translated to a high standard. Some words and phrases that proved challenging were: '*i bhfeidhm*', '*agus iad ag dul chun na Gaeltachta*' and '*imeacht*'. Candidates are reminded to read back over their translation into English to make sure it makes sense and is 'highly accurate and competent, sensitive to idiom with very few errors' as stated in Band 5 of the mark scheme.

Section C is a new part of the examination and the candidates did very well in general in this section. This being new gave the candidates new challenges with most responding very well to the challenge. In some respects this part of the examination can be considered more demanding. Question 1 Section C was handled fairly well with most candidates gaining 3/5

marks. Parts (b) and (e) proved to be the most challenging. Question 2 was handled well and again most candidates gained 3/5 marks. The candidates are reminded to rewrite the tense and form of the verb – question form or negative if required. Where candidates failed to do this they lost the mark – see Part (c) and (e). In Question 3 the candidates have to translate the whole section underlined including the article. Where candidates did not do this the marks were not rewarded. As only one mark is available for each answer it has to be totally correct – an scoil – na scoileanna – an scoileanna would not be accepted. Question 4 was handled well and the candidates showed their ability to manipulate the verbs and tenses. Again, candidates are reminded to write the correct form. In Part (b) ‘habair’ was required and ‘abair’ was marked incorrect. In Part (e) ‘go raibh, go bhfuil, go mbíonn’ were all accepted. Question 5 was attempted very well by most candidates. The vast majority of candidates scored between 8/13 from 15. Candidates are reminded to attempt all parts of the question and to remember that examiners mark positively and reward marks for each sentence or part of translated.

Assessment Unit AS 3 Extended Writing

The new specification in languages sees candidates presented with a separate unit (AS 3) for extended writing and it was obvious that candidates were well-prepared and were, for the most part, very competent at producing essays fit for purpose.

The Gearrscannáin were by far the most popular choice and Yu Ming Is Ainm Dom and Clare Sa Spéir were the most popular with many centres. It was obvious from the spread of answers that quite a few centres had prepared candidates for answers on all three films. Only a small number of centres prepared students for answers on Anne.

Answers in this element of the examination are marked out of 35 for AO2 (Understanding), out of 20 for AO4 (Knowledge) and out of 20 for AO3 (Language).

Broadly speaking, AO2 involves understanding what the question entails – this can be shown by covering all three bullet points and making reference to the key terms of the question. (eg: an dóigh a léirítear Máthair Mhíchíl...) Under AO4, examiners will be looking for the candidate's knowledge of the film/text – relevant to the question. With a text, this will be evidenced by the use of quotation or reference to the detail within the text. The better answers may show some understanding of what the author was trying to achieve. With films, the better answers might convey how lighting, sound, camera angles, shots etc. are used to enhance the theme or specific focus of the question as well as what the characters say, how they react and, perhaps, an indication of what effect was hoped for by the film makers. Under AO3, examiners will be looking for evidence of excellent command of the language appropriate to AS level. Some use of idiomatic language is to be expected where it weaves naturally into the fabric of the essay.

Examiners this year reported on some excellent work produced by candidates and there was evidence that teachers, despite their initial misgivings about a change of specification, had met the challenges head-on and had prepared their charges to a very high standard.

There was some evidence of rote learning of essays and candidates were unable to make the learned essay “fit” the bullet points within the question on the paper. These answers did not score well under AO2. To gain access to the higher mark bands, answers have to cover all three bullet points, giving equal attention to each.

Most answers scored well under AO4 and it was obvious that candidates enjoyed the study of their chosen film/text. Centres are reminded that the knowledge displayed in answers needs to “focus appropriately on key aspects of the question” to gain access to Band 5. Simply writing everything you know about a film/text will not gain you full marks under AO4.

Examiners suggested that candidates will need more training from teachers in “unpicking” the bullet points within the question before the 2018 series. There was no evidence to suggest that candidates did not understand the language of the bullet points but there was evidence to suggest a hasty or careless approach to reading the bullet points. In Question 3(a) some candidates saw the name Clare and wrote about Clare and her reasons for leaving the family home instead of looking at Eoin's life before Clare left. In Question 2(a) the third bullet point (do bharúil féin ar an dóigh a léirítear an scrúdú béil) was, in a number of essays, interpreted as your own opinion of the speaking exam. Candidates wrote about their own recent experiences of the speaking exam at GCSE and AS Level and completely missed the aspect of how the exam is portrayed in the film. Teachers are urged to explain to students that all bullet points will refer to the text/film.

From answers produced on the films, it was obvious that students are confident in their use of media terminology and this is to be commended and encouraged. Candidates who answered questions on Anne showed competence in producing extended pieces of writing that focussed on the key terms of the question set. Perhaps teachers are more comfortable with the preparation of this type of literature answer.

While all candidates were able to sustain their writing in the target language, as always, standards in the use of language varied.

Some issues were common:

ar lorg obair

sa Tsín/síneach (meaning the language)/Tá sé síneach

níl cliú dá laghad aige (he hasn't a clue)

nuair a bhfuil

ag lorg leaba

tá sé ag iarraidh bheidh.../bheith sé ansin

The misuse of “talamh slán” to indicate that everyone took advantage of Clare was widespread. (buntáiste a bhreith ar dhuine/teacht i dtír ar dhuine)

On the whole, examiners were very pleased with the standard of answers in this paper and look forward to improved performances as advice is taken on board and past papers and answers are used to enhance the teaching and learning within this aspect of the examination.

Contact details

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