

GCE



Chief Examiner's Report
Irish

Summer Series 2019



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2019 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 section on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE IRISH

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Assessment Unit AS 1 Speaking

Presentation

To a large degree, assistant examiners continued to report that the standard of presentations was very high in their allotted centres. Many candidates dealt very well with this element of the examination and were able to access the top mark bands. Presentations were frequently original and based on sound research and pupil input. Occasionally, the focus of the presentation did not specify that it dealt with Ireland or an Irish-speaking community and it should be emphasised by centres and teachers that this is a requirement under A04.

It is pleasing to report, however, that this was only very rarely an issue and that almost all candidates were able to access the full range of marks available. Assistant examiners reported that some candidates did not make use of the full three minutes allowed at AS level for the presentation element of the examination. While there is no requirement to speak for exactly that length of time, candidates speaking for much shorter than that risk being excluded from the top bands of marks.

It is pleasing to report that there were very few candidates in this series who were unable to complete the presentation. Assistant examiners were impressed with the preparation of candidates for the presentation in the vast majority of centres.

Conversation

As has been the case for several years now, assistant examiners were hugely impressed with our young people's ability to engage in conversation at a level that, in many cases, far exceeded the requirements for AS Irish.

Centres and candidates are reminded that examiners do not have a pre-prepared or pre-determined list of questions and instead aim to allow a genuine conversation to develop for 8 minutes or so. An able candidate will be able to steer the examiner to the areas of interest where he or she feels most confident and this includes topics which the examiner will not initiate due to their being A2 topics rather than AS. Part-time work and School Life are clear examples of this.

The examining team have built and enjoy excellent working relationships with subject teachers, examination officers and centres. Long may this continue.

Assessment Unit AS 2

Listening, Reading and Use of Language

Section A

The candidates performed very well in this paper as a whole. They responded positively and almost all candidates attempted all of the questions. Some more able candidates were able to achieve full marks in various sections of the paper and other candidates were able to find their own level in this paper. There were some discriminators in the paper and these allowed for a good spread of marks.

Question 1 is always more challenging in that the candidates are responding in the Target Language. Candidates are reminded to attempt all questions as examiners respond positively to all attempts and where the answer is understood marks can be awarded for AO1. Some vocabulary such as 'Ros Comáin', 'Aire' and 'milliún' proved challenging. Candidates are reminded that months, days and such vocabulary should be spelt correctly at this level.

Question 2 was very well handled. However, candidates should revise months as some wrote June instead of July for Question 2(b). Question 2(e) challenged some candidates. In Question 2(i) two pieces of information were needed to gain two marks almost [1] and 800m [1].

Candidates are reminded that they should attempt all questions. This section of the paper tests AO1 and understanding is the most important part of this question.

Sections B and C

Given that this is a relatively new specification, candidates responded positively and very few candidates made no attempt. Some more able candidates were able to achieve very 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.

Section B

Question 1 Reading. The candidates responded very well in general in this question and were able to manipulate information from the passage.

Question 2 The translation was done very well in general by most candidates. Some words and phrases that proved challenging were 'spotsholas', 'ar leith comharsana' and 'l'ionann siad na bearnaí'. The final paragraph was a very good discriminator and only the more able candidates translated 'Nach maith iad' accurately. 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 challenging part of the examination, although the candidates did very well in general in this section. This is the third series of this exam and candidates were more familiar with it.

Question 1 was handled well overall. Some candidates, however, gave an antonym instead of a synonym. Candidates are reminded to read all questions and rubrics carefully.

Question 2 challenged the candidates and this particular area of grammar should be revised.

Questions 3 and 4 were handled very well.

Question 5 was attempted by most candidates. The vast majority of candidates scored between 6/12 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 thereof, translated. Candidates are also reminded to read the sentences carefully as many misread ‘county’ as ‘country’.

Assessment Unit AS 3 Extended Writing

Candidates were well-prepared and were, for the most part, very competent at managing to produce essays that covered all three bullet points effectively. As in previous years, there is still evidence of candidates learning essays and hoping they “fit” the title on the paper. These answers tend to score low marks under AO2 because they lose focus on the bullet points in the questions.

The *Gearrscannáin* were by far the most popular choice and there was a broad spread of answers from all three films. Once again, only a small number of centres prepared students for answers on *Anne*.

Options 1(a) and 1(b) were very popular and were handled very well by those who chose to answer on this short film. Candidates who wrote answers on this option tended to cover the bullet points but, as with all the options, there was some evidence of candidates writing irrelevant material.

Option 2(a) The third bullet point proved challenging for students. Some candidates wrote about techniques in general used in the film rather than how techniques were used to portray the Irish language. Other candidates ignored this bullet point completely. Candidates are reminded that all three bullet points need to be covered to gain access to the higher mark bands of AO2. Candidates who answered Question 2(b) dealt very well with the bullet points and gave good responses to the aspect of a realistic portrayal of the teachers in the film.

Questions 3(a) and 3(b) were well handled and students coped well with what was being asked in the bullet points. Option (a) was the more popular option among those who chose this film.

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.

Among the small number of candidates who answered questions on *Anne*, Question 4(b) was the most popular and, in general, the answers were good. Examiners noted that candidates did well on bullet points where they were asked for their own opinions and centres seem to encourage debate around the issues raised in the films/texts.

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

On the whole, examiners were very pleased with the standard of answers in this paper and enjoyed the experience of marking them. They commented on the hard work being done in all centres.

Assessment Unit A2 1 Speaking

This year's cohort of candidates undertaking the A2 Speaking Test once more excelled in their preparation for and execution of this most demanding aspect of the examination.

It is clear that an enormous amount of hard work is being undertaken by pupils, teachers and language assistants in practising the spoken language on a regular basis, in order to allow candidates access to the highest marks available.

Accommodation for the examinations was, by and large, very satisfactory. Although visiting examiners understand that they are visiting a working school during a regular day, it is always appreciated when an especially quiet and calm area is provided in which to carry out the Speaking Tests. This gives the pupils the best opportunity in which to show off their ability without interruption. No hospitality is expected on the part of the visiting examiners, yet they are very grateful, year on year, for the bottles of water, hot beverages, scones, buns, sandwiches and meals which are often provided by language teachers, examination officers and canteen staff.

With regard to the discussion, with its introduction, a pleasing range of topics was selected which fully explored the defined projects in the specification. Where candidates fared best, it was clear that the research was their own, and that it came from a passion for, or at least a genuine interest in, the subject in hand. Nothing can quite match the spark in the eye of an enthusiast who is engaging in a discussion on a matter with which (s)he really connects.

The nine-minute conversation was more often than not the platform which allowed the candidates to relax, to an extent, and really show off their ability to use Irish naturally, fluently and with precision. The more naturally fluent practitioners are reminded and encouraged always to develop their answers and not to be afraid of 'talking too much' during the test. They should be aware that those who are less naturally fluent can easily match their marks through diligent preparation of likely conversational topics. It would be wrong to anticipate a set line of questioning on the part of the visiting examiner, but one might reasonably expect certain conversational areas to get a 'run out' as pupils leave one educational establishment and embark upon pastures new.

Candidates ought never to be afraid to check themselves and correct an error which has arisen in their speech. If they listen carefully, they will often hear their examiner do the same. Pupils should always allow the examiner to hear the real them, this is an exploration of their ability to use the Irish language, not a performance in public speaking where flaws and slips are pounced upon. As much as possible, candidates should relax, engage, communicate and, as a consequence, gain good marks.

Assessment Unit A2 2 Listening and Reading

Section A

The candidates performed very well in this paper as a whole. Almost all candidates attempted all questions. Some more able candidates were able to achieve full marks [25] and other candidates were able to find their own level in this paper. There were some discriminators in the paper and these allowed for a good spread of marks across the candidates.

Question 1 The candidates have to respond in the target language. Candidates are reminded that figures or words are accepted for questions which have a number as the answer. Candidates at A2 level should be able to spell the words correctly. Where there is a slight misspelling eg. 'Séimhiú', 'fléiscín' or 'síneadh fada', the mark is awarded. The emphasis is on AO1, and where the answer is clearly understood, the mark can be awarded. Some pieces of vocabulary that proved challenging regarding spelling in Question 1 were 'Loch Garman', 'An Pholainn', 'thaitin' and 'comhaimseartha/nua-aimseartha.'

Question 2 The candidates have to answer in English. Most candidates did very well and adhered to the rubric. However, if the rubric is not adhered to marks cannot be awarded- which happened in at least one case. Again, candidates are reminded they can answer in figures when appropriate. Question 2(f), (g) and (i) proved the most challenging. Answers showed a good spread of marks.

Candidates are reminded to attempt all questions. This section of the paper tests AO1 and understanding is the most important aspect of this question.

Section B

The candidates performed very well in the paper as a whole. Given that it is a relatively new specification, they responded positively and very few candidates made no attempt to answer questions. Some more able candidates were able to achieve high marks across all areas 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 Many candidates were able to manipulate the language and select the correct word to fill the gap. Some candidates mixed up one or two and this leads to mistakes further on. Candidates are also reminded that words misspelt from the boxes – even though they may be the right answer – cannot be accepted – e.g. ‘míchumas’ was incorrect.

Question 2 Candidates again did very well. The candidates are able to use phrases and sentences from the passage in their answers and this is helpful to them. While it is beneficial for the candidate to show his/her flair for the language by manipulating the language from the passage in the answer, they should remember that they can use phrases and sentences from the passage.

Question 3 Is a relatively new skill, although the majority of candidates handled this very well. Candidates are reminded to refer to the grade descriptors for guidance with this question. Candidates are asked to write the summary in approximately 100 words. Band 5 describes the question as having been answered within tolerance of the word limit. To be in Band 5 candidates have to cover all the points and be tolerant to the word limit. The tolerance for the completed passage is 10% above or below. To be fair to all candidates, the examiners count the words in this answer.

Question 4 Candidates are familiar with Question 4 and they are able to show their flair for the language in this section. A lot of candidates showed a great command for the language and this was pleasing for all examiners. Candidates are reminded to refer to the mark scheme to see the breakdown of the marks. There are seven pieces in the translation each being awarded a possible 5 marks giving a total of [35] for this question. Where a word is given incorrectly in one piece, if repeated the candidate is not penalised twice. The candidates are reminded to read the passage and to consider it in its totality. They should read it twice before attempting the translation. Candidates should look at tenses, genitive, plurals, pronouns and other grammatical points before attempting the translation. The word ‘neamhspleacháis’ in the genitive proved challenging, except for the more able candidates. The adjective agreeing with the noun was also challenging in ‘barúlacha éagsúla’. Where the word appears twice, such as ‘páirtaimseartha’, it is only penalised once if misspelt. The relative clause in the last paragraph was also challenging – ‘is cuma cen dóigh a n-amharcann tú air.’

Assessment Unit A2 3 Extended Writing

As was the case last year, candidates were very well prepared for this element of the examination and examiners reported their pleasure at reading essays of such a high standard which showed an excellent insight into the literature and into the minds of the writers.

Question 1 Answers on *Anam na Teanga* were, for the most part, very good to excellent. Answers were spread evenly over the two options on offer but the answers on 1(a) tended to be better because of the general nature of the question: “Scríobh léirmheas...” Answers on 1(b) tended, in some cases to write a general view of the story as a whole and not to focus on the character Antaine.

Question 2 Candidates who produced answers on *Lá Fhéile Míchíl* wrote competently on both options. Option 2(a) on the theme of tragedy was the more popular but there were some very good pieces of writing produced which showed an excellent insight into the character of Nuala under Option 2(b).

Question 3 This year’s poetry answers did not have any of the problems of misinterpretation that last year’s poetry answers suffered from. Some answers, however are still spotting techniques rather than explaining the effect of the technique on the reader. Techniques like alliteration and imagery are devices used by poets to communicate with the reader. An answer on poetry needs to explain how effective the technique has been in getting the message across. Option 3(a) was, by far, the more popular option on this section of the paper.

While all candidates were able to sustain their writing in the Target Language, as always, standards in the use of language varied. Issues similar to those mentioned in the Chief Examiner’s Report continue to occur. Over-use of the indirect relative has become a major issue in extended writing.

Some common issues arising:

Ag tús an scéal

Eibhlín a raibh tinn

ag deireadh an scéal

Nuair a raibh sé

Má bhfuil suim aige

An grá ina bhfuil aici dó

Cén fáth ina bhfuil

On the whole, examiners recorded their enjoyment at reading the responses to this year’s questions and, as always, were full of admiration for the work being done by teachers in all centres. This element of the paper demands insight and maturity and it is evident that candidates are given the opportunity to discuss literature in class and express informed opinions in the Target Language.

Contact details

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