

USE OF ENGLISH

ADVANCED SUPPLEMENTARY LEVEL

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This syllabus aims to foster the development of students' English language skills in order to equip them for tertiary education and/or employment.

The examination will test the ability of candidates to understand and use English as might be required in tertiary education and/or future employment. It will test the ability of candidates to:

- (i) understand and interpret spoken English as it might be encountered in academic or vocational situations;
- (ii) write clear, concise and grammatical English in an appropriate style;
- (iii) demonstrate both global and detailed understanding of a variety of written texts;
- (iv) understand and use spoken English for practical communication;
- (v) integrate reading, writing and study skills in the pursuance of task-based/problem-solving activities.

THE EXAMINATION

The examination consists of five sections, all of which must be attempted.

- (i) Four proficiency sections (A – D) which focus on a range of productive and receptive skills.
Weighting 72%
- (ii) A section (E) which concentrates on work and study skills.
Weighting 28%

(i) Proficiency Sections (A – D)

These four sections test the level of English language proficiency of the candidates. Formal knowledge about language is not tested nor is correctness for its own sake.

Section A – Listening: tests the ability of candidates to understand, organise and interpret spoken English as used by educated and fluent speakers of English as an international language: i.e. the language spoken will be semi-formal rather than informal, and will not test such colloquialisms as various groups of native speakers might use in informal conversation amongst

themselves. The content will be appropriate to study and work purposes. The form of presentation may include dialogue as well as monologue.

Test items will be marked objectively. Candidates may, for example, be asked to complete matrices, graphs and sets of notes or headings, etc., identify pictures and deal with items in a multiple-choice format.

Examining time for Section A 1 hour; weighting 18%

Section B – Writing: tests the ability of candidates to write extended English discourse. Topics will be selected to encourage expository writing, e.g. persuasion, argument, reporting, development of hypotheses, organising of information, etc., rather than narrative or purely descriptive writing.

In marking, attention will be paid both to language accuracy and to the organisation and coherence of the argument presented. *It should be noted that any memorised material incorporated in an essay, whether relevant or irrelevant, will be discounted in the marking of the essay.*

Candidates will be required to write a minimum of five hundred words on a single topic in 1¼ hours and will have at least three topics to choose from.

Examining time for Section B 1¼ hours; weighting 18%

Section C

- (1) **Reading:** tests the ability of candidates to achieve an ‘in depth’ understanding of an expository text. Candidates will not be asked to locate mere factual details, but to identify central ideas, the purposes and assumptions of the writer as revealed in the text, and to differentiate between what is more or less important and more or less relevant in terms of those purposes. Candidates will also be tested on their ability, for example, to recognise the limiting effects of qualifications and exceptions, to relate cause to effect and evidence to conclusions. Where questions focus on particular words or phrases, their interpretation will depend upon the context of the passage.

All items will be in a multiple-choice format.

Examining time for Section C(1) 20 minutes; weighting 6%

- (2) **Language Systems:** tests the extent to which the systems of the English language have been internalised by the candidates, including:
- the lexicon,
 - the morphology,
 - the syntactic relationships within and among phrases and clauses, and

- the structural relationships among sentences within paragraphs and in discourse.

Item types selected may vary from year to year. They will be objective but not necessarily multiple-choice.

Examining time for Section C(2) 70 minutes; weighting 12%

Both parts of Section C will be tested together in a 1½ hour paper.

Section D – Oral English: tests the ability of candidates to give an oral presentation and take part in a small-group discussion. Candidates will be examined in groups of four. There will be two parts:

- In Part One, each candidate will be required to present a brief spoken account of a short written text lasting from 1½ to 2 minutes. The four texts will be related to the same topic.
- In Part Two, the candidates will take part in a 10-minute discussion on a topic related to the texts they spoke about in Part One of the examination. The discussion will simulate a study-related or work-related situation where it is assumed there is a problem to be solved or a task to be addressed.

The candidates will be expected to demonstrate a range of oral skills including the following:

- expressing factual information, describing, explaining, confirming, presenting plans, etc.
- expressing personal feelings and judgements, presenting arguments, agreeing and disagreeing, giving opinions, persuading, etc.
- seeking understanding and clarification through questioning and discussion,
- using appropriate interaction skills,
- pronouncing English clearly and intelligibly, with appropriate use of the intonation system.

Both parts of Section D will be tested together. Examining time for Section D 20 minutes; weighting 18%

(ii) **Section E – Practical Skills for Work and Study:** tests practical communication through simulated work and study situations. In general terms, the set tasks involve:

- locating and processing information,

- identifying and solving communication problems, and
- carrying out communication tasks.

The language modes will be restricted to reading and writing, with a proportion of items being of the objective type. However, at least one item will require candidates to engage in extended writing.

(a) Test Materials

Candidates will receive a set of materials in the form of a booklet. The materials will relate to a particular theme (for example, *television, transport, travel*) and may contain a variety of styles, including transcriptions of a dialogue and ranging in content from factual information to the expression of attitudes, opinions and beliefs for a variety of communicative purposes, e.g. instruction, entertainment or persuasion. Information may also be presented graphically (in tables, histograms, flow charts, graphs, pictures, etc.).

(b) Test Items

Test items will be designed to determine the ability of candidates to process information, to compare and contrast information from a variety of sources, to integrate and categorise information, and to use this information in dealing with a variety of communication tasks and problems. The emphasis will be upon practical rather than academic skills as such, though the techniques and skills to be tested are those which are required for any professional work which requires the ability to process information, make judgements and formulate solutions to problems; they will thus be equally relevant for students entering tertiary education. The skills involved are loosely categorised under the following headings:

Study Skills & Reasoning Skills: these items require the candidate to exercise judgement and to demonstrate the ability to organise information. In relation to a given task or context, the candidate will be asked to determine what information is important or relevant. The candidate may be required to:

- differentiate between fact and opinion,
- provide evidence for a particular conclusion,
- draw conclusions from given evidence,
- categorise and classify information,
- determine cause or effect,
- define terms,
- formulate hypotheses for investigation, and
- determine the nature of communication problems to be solved.

Study skills may also include the exploitation of extracts from reference materials such as the use of indexes and contents pages and the understanding of conventions such as bibliographical references and the use of symbols, abbreviations, footnotes, etc.

Reading Skills: the reading skills tested will include the ability to match the reading technique to the task. Items may require:

- rapid scanning to locate information,
- skimming so that the gist of a passage is understood, and
- reading for detailed information.

The information sought will relate not only to facts presented and their implications, but may include identifying:

- the purposes, feelings and attitudes of the writer,
- the assumptions made by the writer, and
- inferences or predictions which might be made on the basis of what is written.

Writing Skills: writing tasks will be fully contextualised, i.e. all the information needed for completing the task will be provided and the communicative purpose will be stated. Types of writing will include:

- reports,
- minutes of meetings,
- memoranda, and
- formal letters on a variety of topics.

In each case the primary consideration will be successful task completion rather than simply language accuracy. Examiners will consider, for example, whether the necessary and relevant details have been included and whether the 'communication gap' has been successfully bridged.

Examining time for Section E 1¾ hours; weighting 28%