

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

INTRODUCTION

The assessment of this subject is based on the 1999 Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1 – 5) prepared by the Curriculum Development Council. The overall aim of the assessment is to evaluate candidates' achievement of the learning targets and objectives of the Syllabus. Candidates have to refer to the Syllabus for the forms and functions, skills and strategies, and attitudes that they are expected to achieve at Key Stage 4.

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

To assess the ability of candidates to:

1. understand ideas, facts, opinions and feelings presented through the medium of spoken and written language;
2. respond to, evaluate and make use of ideas, facts, opinions and feelings which may be presented in an integrated manner through the medium of spoken and written language;
3. express their own views, feelings and ideas, imaginative and otherwise, and describe, discuss and reflect upon their own experiences through the medium of spoken and written language;
4. interact with others through the medium of spoken and written language.

MODE OF ASSESSMENT

The assessment will consist of a public examination component and a school-based assessment component as outlined in the following table:

Component		Weighting	Duration
Public examination	Paper 1A Reading	20%	1 hour
	Paper 1B Writing	20%	1½ hours
	Paper 2 Listening & Integrated Skills	30%	2 hours
	Paper 3 Speaking	15%	12 minutes
School-based assessment (SBA)		15%	

PUBLIC EXAMINATION

Paper 1

This paper will be divided into two parts, Part A Reading and Part B Writing, with equal weighting. The two parts will be thematically related.

Paper 1A Reading (1 hour) (20%)

Candidates will be required to respond to a variety of written texts of different lengths and levels of difficulty. A range of question types will be used, including multiple-choice items, short responses and more extended open-ended responses. Candidates will be required to demonstrate their ability to:

- (i) understand the overall meaning of a text as well as extract specific information from it;
- (ii) recognise, interpret and make inferences from opinions, assumptions, intentions, attitudes and feelings which occur explicitly or implicitly in a text;
- (iii) use linguistic and contextual clues and general knowledge to determine meaning;
- (iv) complete a text by supplying or selecting words or phrases which are semantically and syntactically appropriate to the overall meaning of the text;
- (v) make use of information provided in a variety of texts to produce or complete a different type of text such as a text written for a different audience, with a different purpose or in a different style or format.

The assessment criteria for this paper will vary according to the item types.

(See Annex I for further information.)

Paper 1B Writing (1hour 30 minutes) (20%)

There will be two writing tasks. The first task will be a short, guided one (100 – 150 words). Candidates will be provided with the situation and the purpose for writing, as well as some relevant information. The second task will be longer and more open-ended (200 – 250 words). Pictures and other forms of graphic representation may be used in setting tasks.

Candidates will be required to do one or more of the following:

- (i) to express their own views, feelings and ideas, imaginative and otherwise;

- (ii) to describe and discuss their own experiences;
- (iii) to respond to, reflect upon, evaluate and make use of given information;
- (iv) to modify a written draft so that the modified text makes sense and reflects a correct use of language.

The text produced by the candidate should be appropriate to the context, purpose and/or audience in terms of content, style and use of language.

For assessment purposes, consideration will be given to the relevance and adequacy of the content; the planning and organisation of the ideas; the accuracy and appropriacy of punctuation, vocabulary and language patterns; and the appropriacy of tone, style, format and register.

It should be noted that the incorporation of copied or memorised material, relevant or irrelevant, will be severely penalised.

(See Annex II for further information.)

Paper 2 Listening and Integrated Skills (2 hours) (30%)

There will be a variety of listening, reading and writing tasks based on the same theme. At least one of the writing tasks will require candidates to produce an extended piece of writing (100 – 200 words).

Candidates will be required to process information by selecting and combining data from both spoken and written sources in order to complete various listening and writing tasks in a practical work or study situation. All the information necessary to complete these tasks will be provided.

A variety of spoken and written input material will be used, including conversations, telephone messages, interviews, lectures, articles, letters, tables, graphs and flowcharts.

Assessment will be based on how well candidates complete the tasks, taking into account appropriacy to the purpose and context, relevance, and organisation where applicable. Language will be assessed in terms of the extent to which the use of sentence structures, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation supports or interferes with successful communication.

(See Annex III for further information.)

Paper 3 Speaking (15%)

Part A Group discussion (preparation: 5 minutes; discussion: 6 minutes per group)

Four candidates will be grouped together and will take part in a group discussion based on given prompts. These prompts may be in prose form or may be presented graphically, in tables, graphs, flow charts, pictures and so on. Candidates may be required to make suggestions, give advice, make and explain a choice, argue for and/or against a position, or discuss the pros and cons of a proposal. The emphasis will be on effective communication rather than on task completion.

Candidates will be given five minutes for preparation and will be allowed to make notes. During the discussion they may refer to their notes.

Part B Individual response (one minute per candidate)

Each candidate will respond individually to an examiner's question(s), which will be based on the group discussion task. Candidates may be required to make and justify a choice, decide on and explain a course of action, argue for or against a position, and so on.

Candidates will be assessed on the quantity, quality and organisation of their ideas; the clarity and accuracy of their pronunciation and delivery; the appropriacy and accuracy of their vocabulary and language patterns; and their ability to establish and maintain interaction in both parts of the speaking examination.

(See Annex IV for further information.)

SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT (15%)

This component will consist of a reading/viewing programme where students will need to read/view three texts over the course of two years (one each from three of the following four categories: print fiction, print non-fiction, non-print fiction and non-print non-fiction), write up some comments and personal reflections, and then take part in a discussion with classmates on what they have read/viewed. They will also need to make an individual presentation on the books/videos/films that they have read/viewed and respond to their teacher's questions, which will be derived from their written personal comments. The assessment will be based on the student's oral performance.

The reading/viewing/writing will only serve as the means to this end and will not be assessed.

An annotated bibliography of recommended texts will be provided to facilitate teachers in the choice of appropriate texts for their students. Texts of a range of difficulty levels will be included. Teachers can choose texts from the recommended list or use any other texts they find appropriate for their students. Texts should be chosen according to the text selection criteria provided.

Teachers need to conduct two assessments, one in S4 and one in S5, and report two marks, one at the end of each school year. The assessments can be either group discussions or individual presentations or both.

Guidelines on suitable assessment tasks and assessment criteria will be provided, as well as samples of performance to illustrate assessment formats and standards.

ANNEX I

PAPER 1A READING

Texts for this paper may be drawn from a variety of sources including newspapers, magazines, websites, short stories, government publications and promotional materials, and will be of the type commonly encountered in occupational, educational, social and recreational contexts.

Question types will include multiple-choice items, short responses and more extended open-ended responses, and may vary from year to year.

Candidates may be required to:

- follow and evaluate the development of a point or an argument;
- recognise the theme of a passage;
- decide what the mood of the writer or the tone of the passage is;
- locate or extract specific information from a passage, and relate it to a particular point or the whole passage;
- recognise what rhetorical functions (e.g. example, contrast, elaboration, generalisation) sentences perform in the development of a text;
- distinguish different points of view and arguments;
- find the implications and draw inferences from the passage;
- appreciate the writer's relation with the reader and attitude to the subject matter;
- understand how sentences and parts of a sentence relate to each other;
- decide the probable meaning of words and phrases through a study of the context by making use of previous experience of word meanings;
- understand the different types of meanings of words (e.g. denotation, connotation, collocation), and the semantic associations that exist among words (e.g. semantic fields, synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy);
- know what a word or phrase refers to in the previous or subsequent context;
- make use of knowledge of the world to make sense of the text;
- recognise how writing conventions such as punctuation marks affect meaning;
- complete or amend a text by supplying any missing words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs;
- demonstrate control of discourse features by pairing, matching or ordering sentences or paragraphs to produce a coherent text.

ANNEX II

PAPER 1B WRITING

Candidates are reminded that in order to achieve successful written communication, they need to consider the following:

- appropriacy to context;
- awareness of reader(s);
- impact on the reader(s):
 - interest, style, and so on;
- expression of rhetorical functions:
 - generalisation, elaboration, explanation, definition, classification, illustration, hypothesis, deduction, implication, restatement, concession, reason, cause, consequence, comparison, contrast, summary, conclusion, and so on;
- sense of purpose of writing:
 - informing someone about something, making a proposal, appealing for something, considering an issue, changing somebody's mind, advising somebody, telling a story, defending/explaining a decision or action, persuading somebody to do something, and so on;
- management of types of writing:
 - analytical, expressive, descriptive, persuasive, argumentative, narrative and so on;
- use of conventions of common formats:
 - letters, articles, reports, speeches, stories and so on;
- development of an organised and cohesive text;
- correct use of language:
 - language patterns, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.

ANNEX III

PAPER 2 LISTENING AND INTEGRATED SKILLS

Listening task types may include taking messages, writing short notes, filling in forms, and so on.

The writing tasks will require candidates to select and integrate information relevant to the task from the written and/or spoken material provided.

The written material may be in a variety of styles and formats, ranging in content from factual information to the expression of attitudes, opinions and beliefs. This material may be in prose form or be presented graphically, in tables, graphs, flow charts, pictures, and so on.

The spoken material may be in the form of conversations, interviews, lectures, telephone messages and so on.

The tasks in this paper may involve writing, editing, amending or rewriting texts in the production or completion of one or more of the following:

- letters or replies to letters,
- memos,
- reports,
- summaries,
- articles,
- texts for talks or speeches,
- diary entries,
- instructions,
- maps, tables, charts, and so on.

All tasks will be contextualised, i.e. all the information needed for completing the tasks will be provided in the written and spoken material, and the communicative purpose will be stated. In the completion of the writing tasks, candidates should take into consideration the advice given in Annex II.

ANNEX IV

PAPER 3 SPEAKING

Part A Group discussion

Candidates will be examined in groups of four by two examiners. Before taking part in the group discussion, each candidate will be given five minutes to read the information provided and to make notes. After the preparation, candidates will work together on the assigned discussion task. This may involve them in:

- expressing, eliciting and responding to ideas, opinions and feelings;
- asking for and giving clarification;
- supporting and developing each other's views;
- disagreeing and offering alternatives;
- summing up the points made; and
- redirecting the discussion if necessary.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate appropriate interaction skills and make a balanced contribution without either dominating the discussion or being too reticent. They will not be allowed to take notes during the discussion but may refer to the notes made during the preparation time.

Part B Individual response

After the group discussion, each candidate will need to interact individually with an examiner and respond to the examiner's question(s), which will be based on the group discussion task. The examiner will ask at least one question but may ask follow-up questions depending on the candidate's response. Candidates can make use of the information derived from the group discussion in formulating their answers, or express new ideas and opinions.