

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

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It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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General comments

This specification replaced English Entry Level 3911, which is no longer available. Centres welcomed it as a simpler version of the former specification with the following changes:

- 40 marks were available for writing and speaking and listening, and only 20 marks were available for reading.
- The two assignments for writing and speaking and listening were each marked out of 20 and the marks were added together.
- The reading test consisted of one non-literary passage with a variety of different types of question including a brief summary and questions on language.
- Apart from the reading test, all assignments were set by teachers.

There were some changes to the procedures for entry and moderation:

- There was no longer a choice between an examined and a coursework route, and the choice of entry, given as component 01 or 02, related only to the method of submitting samples. Component 01 was for Centres submitting their samples electronically via the Repository and component 02 was for submission by post. Most Centres submitted by post.
- Instead of selecting their own samples for moderation, Centres were asked to wait until instructed. OCR sent emails detailing the candidate numbers that were required and the work was then sent to the Moderator.

The mark schemes for writing and speaking and listening were unchanged from 3911 and the answers to the reading tests were presented in the same style as previously. As a result, the standard of assessment was generally accurate and it was very rare to find examples of generosity or severity sufficient to require any adjustment to Centres' marks.

Centres carried out their administration and presentation of the work well, with occasional exceptions. The Moderators made the following points:

- Each candidate's work must be enclosed in OCR's Internal Assessment Form. Moderators need to refer to this as it states the marks for the constituent parts of the qualification. It also contains valuable comments on the performance of candidates in speaking and listening, the amount of help given in reading and writing, and how that help affected the marks given to the candidates.
- Each Centre must submit a single Centre Authentication Form. One only is required, not one for each part of the qualification. Statements relating to individual candidates should be retained at the Centre.
- Speaking and listening recordings should be submitted in mp3 format, ensuring Moderators can access the file without specific software.
- It is important that the speaking and listening disk is accompanied by an indication of the order in which candidates spoke, some hints as to how they might be identified, and the system by which the recording was made. It is helpful if the teacher introduces candidates

slowly and clearly by name and number. It is also important to check that the recording is audible and has registered correctly. Some Centres were mistakenly informed that a recording was not necessary. However, for this specification, visits are not made, and a recording is required for moderation.

- Finally, the Moderator requires a copy of the MS1 or electronic mark sheet.

Comments on the individual parts of the qualification

Reading

The reading tests were available as a bank of six downloadable passages with questions and mark schemes. These were also available as hard copies in the training material given out at the training meetings. The papers and mark schemes do not change from year to year.

Centres were free to choose which of the six passages best fitted their interests and their candidates. Their choice of paper for the test had to be set as unseen, but there was no reason why other papers in the set should not be used for practice. The type and balance of the questions was the same in each case.

Twenty marks were available for each test and at least one of the questions required multiple answers as a type of summary. These questions were generally well done and often discriminated well, since the better readers were more able to find all the possible answers. There was also at least one question that required an understanding of the writer's choice of language. This also discriminated well since candidates had to think for themselves. As a result there were some imaginative and sometimes clever answers.

The most popular of the tests was, as in the first session of this qualification, the first, the newspaper report concerning a car which crashed into a fruit stall. This included a question in which the candidates had to understand how different characters in the passage were affected, and this discriminated well. Candidates also had to explain how the flying fruit resembled a hailstorm, which is a good example of this type of language question.

All the reading tasks were used by at least one Centre and all proved to make similar demands. Teachers marked them with care, although the following points should be observed:

- Only give marks that follow what the mark scheme says. If there is to be any flexibility in awarding, the mark scheme indicates this. Otherwise, even if a candidate appears to give a satisfactory answer that is not on the mark scheme, do not give the mark. The reason is that OCR requires all Centres to award marks in the same way.
- In marking the multiple answer questions do not award the same idea twice, even if it is differently expressed.
- The answer given in the mark scheme does not have to be given in exactly the same wording. There may be a variety of ways of giving an answer, particularly if the candidate is rightly using their own words.

Writing

The specification very simply gives the requirement as 'informative writing' and 'imaginative writing'. The guidance given for this part of the assessment follows the writing requirement for the writing paper formerly set for specification 3911, but Centres are at liberty to set what they like. For this year, most Centres continued to set letters and stories.

Some Centres used parts of the coursework requirement from the 3911 specification and set statements of opinion or personal statements for the first assignment. They could have set a range of assignments such as a newspaper report (perhaps of a school function), a factual journal, some advice to visitors to their town or new pupils at the school, or an account of their work experience.

Whatever the choice for Assignment 1 the genre and hopefully, the style of Assignment 2 had to be different. Most candidates wrote a fictitious story, which was probably the best choice. However, some tried descriptions of places and people.

Whatever the assignment, it was important that candidates working at the top of Band 2 and all of Band 3 wrote a sufficient amount to be assessed. There was a tendency for some of the letters to be too short because there were no sub-tasks available to extend the content.

There were many examples of good writing, both from the point of view of sentence construction and accuracy and because the content was interesting and often original. Some of the letters were well argued and the best of them were suitably structured.

The standard of marking was good, although on occasions a little generous in terms of the frequency and seriousness of error. Historically, the standard at Band 3 is quite high and it was here that Moderators expected to see some understanding of where to use full stops and some attempt to construct reasonably fluent sentences. Where error became distracting to the reader, a mark not exceeding the middle of Band 2 was appropriate.

Speaking and Listening

The specification requirement was simple, 'discussion' and 'role play', and the temptation was legitimately to follow guidance and previous specification tasks and to set a telephone call. Each assessment was again out of twenty and the total of forty was twice that of the marks available for Speaking and Listening in the previous specification.

Because the marks for speaking and listening had been increased from 20% to 40% of the assessment, it was important that teachers should set tasks that gave opportunities to candidates to develop the content of their speech in order to access the higher mark bands. Some telephone calls that relied wholly on simple orders, for example of a takeaway meal, were little more than lists and an address for delivery. Some teachers effectively added sub-tasks to make the calls more substantial. For example, the order for the takeaway might include a set of directions for the delivery, and a complaint about a faulty purchase might involve a detailed description of the fault or of damage that had been caused. To be worth 20 marks, a telephone call should last at least 3 minutes and this could be done by working candidates in pairs and reversing the roles for a second call.

There was no reason why a telephone call should be used at all. Everyday situations were sometimes acted out, or a candidate could take on the role of a presenter to give a short introductory talk, for example related to a specific, personal interest.

In discussions, teachers had to be careful that, where three or four people were involved, one of them was not prevented in any way from making a contribution. Again, meaningful contribution had to be sufficient for assessment to take place. There was nothing in the specification to prevent discussion from taking place between two candidates. For example, they could plan a lesson or a piece of writing. Equally well they could talk with a trusted teacher. This made identification on the disk easier.

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Most tasks were recorded quite well and candidates could be heard. However, as backup, it was very important that the second page of the OCR Internal Assessment Form was filled in to give detailed descriptions of candidates' performance in the two tasks. This ensured that Moderators understood the award of marks.

As usual there was a great difference in the ability of candidates to carry on a fluent conversation. Some said very little and replied using single words while others spoke in fluent sentences and took opportunities to explain themselves.

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