

## **Reports on the Units**

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**June 2010**

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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.

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**General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) Spoken J034**

**General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) Written J134**

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## **Chief Examiner's Report**

This was the first time that this new specification was tested and this year a choice of both the legacy and new specifications was given to candidates. This means that entry for all the units was very small as it was not possible to certificate for a full GCSE qualification this year.

This series was principally to allow candidates to take advantage of the flexibility of the new specification in taking a short course or building up units towards a full qualification next year. However it is hoped that teachers will make use of this feedback and take this as an opportunity to learn more about the new papers and make the transition from the old specification a smooth one.

The flexibility of the new specification will allow candidates to take each unit individually as there is no longer the requirement to take all four skills at the same time. It will also be possible to take each paper twice if students wish to improve their marks. The only restriction is that they must take 40% of the papers in the year in which they apply for a qualification.

It is hoped that more candidates will take the opportunity to study this new modular specification and make use of the short courses, Listening and Speaking to make a Spoken Language short course and Reading and Writing to make a Written Language short course. This might suit candidates who are stronger in some skills than others or who have limited time to study for a qualification.

While there were fewer rubric infringements in the speaking examination this year, as a result of a much simpler scheme of assessment, the rubric infringements in the writing paper were disappointing. Candidates needed to be aware that they had to choose two out of the five questions available. Examiners would urge teachers and candidates to make use of the Specimen Assessment Material on the OCR web site to prepare candidates for the examinations and take advantage of the Inset training programme scheduled for November.

## A811 Listening

### General Comments

This was the first time that this new specification was tested and it was offered in parallel with the legacy specification 1927/2371. As most of the candidates probably wanted their full qualification this year, only a tiny minority who wanted a short course qualification, or who wanted to bank a result for future use, entered for the new specification. 21 candidates took this paper.

This paper contains a similar style of questions to the legacy Listening paper but it is now single tier, with exercises becoming more difficult through the test and targeting specific grades.

Owing to a change in the subject requirements for Modern Foreign Languages, this test now has instructions and questions in English; therefore candidates with a good command of English language achieved higher marks. All questions must be answered in English and candidates who answered the questions in Gujarati did not gain marks.

On the whole, examiners were pleased with the performance of candidates, with most candidates scoring good marks. Candidates with a wider knowledge of Gujarati vocabulary inevitably achieved the higher marks.

As anticipated, the multiple-choice questions proved to be very accessible and nearly everyone scored full marks in these exercises. The exercises which required short answers in English proved more challenging and some candidates lost marks when they did not provide a sufficiently accurate answer.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Exercise 1: Jesal's evening routine

Questions 1-5

This was a very familiar multiple-choice exercise with icons. Nearly all the candidates achieved full marks for this exercise, with only a basic knowledge of Gujarati being tested.

#### Exercise 2: Interests

Questions 6-12

This exercise required candidates to identify the correct activity and put the appropriate English letter against a name. This matching exercise allowed most candidates to gain full marks. A small number answered Question 6 incorrectly. Examiners reported evidence that some candidates did not know the word for dance (જાન્ય).

#### Exercise 3: Local facilities

Questions 13-18

This exercise required candidates to complete the sentences in English. Most candidates achieved good marks for this exercise.

**Exercise 4: School life**

Questions 19-24

This exercise required candidates to match the questions with possible answers that had to be selected from a box. As the word list was in English most candidates did well.

**Exercise 5: Work experience**

Questions 25-30

This exercise was a slightly more demanding task and required short answers in English. Unlike Exercise 3, candidates were expected to write specific details which showed an understanding of the listening material, so those who wrote half answers or did not give specific details lost some marks. Generally most candidates did well.

Question 28: Candidates lost marks if they simply wrote 'reading' or 'walking' without mentioning the old people they were walking with and reading to.

Question 30: A variety of responses were given for this question. Examiners accepted answers which related to patience, but quite a number of candidates did not know the meaning of the word ધીરજ and lost a mark.

**Exercise 6: Life styles**

Questions 31-36

Candidates were required to match the people and lifestyles by putting the correct letter next to each name. Most candidates did well in this exercise.

**Exercise 7: Feelings**

Questions 37-40

Most candidates did well, given that the exercise was quite stretching. Candidates were required to state the person's feeling and summarize the reason in their own words. A fair number of candidates answered Question 39 incorrectly, possibly because they were not aware of the word for pride.

**Exercise 8: Jodha Akbar – A Bollywood Film**

Questions 41-46

This was the most complex listening extract and candidates were required to write longer answers in English after listening to the recording in Gujarati.

Although the passage is about a popular Bollywood film which most candidates have watched, the candidates had to give specific information from the listening material in order to access the marks. Many candidates gave answers which were not specific or detailed enough and hence lost marks.

## **A812 Speaking**

### **General Comments**

This was the first time that this new specification was tested and it was offered in parallel with the legacy specification 1927/2372. As most of the candidates probably wanted their full qualification this year, only a tiny minority who wanted a short course qualification, or who wanted to bank a result for future use, entered for the new specification. A total of 23 candidates entered for this paper.

This test is quite different from the test in the legacy specification and now consists of only two parts: a Presentation by the candidate followed by a Discussion of the same topic and a General Conversation on a topic chosen by the candidate from a list of three given on the random order sheet in the confidential instructions for teachers. It is hoped that this simplified test will allow candidates of all abilities to show what they can do by choosing topics they are confident with.

The simplified structure has resulted in fewer rubric infringements than in previous years and no part of the test was omitted. Almost all the teachers followed the criteria for the time limit of one minute for the presentation topic and a total of ten minutes for the whole of the examination. Examiners would nevertheless like to remind teachers that only 10 minutes of the test will be assessed and if the test is longer than 10 minutes they will only assess the first 5 minutes of each Part. Examiners would also like to encourage teachers to offer candidates the choice of topics for General Conversation during the recording. Candidates should not be informed of the three topics for General Conversation before the start of the test but, if the topic was simply stated by the conducting teacher, Examiners marking the tests were often unsure when candidates had made the choice.

The overall performance of the candidates was of a good standard and demonstrated secure knowledge of the language and enjoyment of the subject. Some of the presentation topics were not only well prepared but also interesting and imaginative, with a good range of factual information and justified individual ideas and points of views.

Many teachers encouraged the candidates to show their linguistic ability. However, some of the candidates were not encouraged to give detailed answers with opinions and justifications using a variety of structures, tenses and vocabulary. While some candidates may need encouragement with simple closed questions the more able should be given the opportunity to expand their answers to open questions and teachers should enable candidates to use a variety of tenses.

In this new specification the three strands of assessment, Content and Communication, Quality of Language and Pronunciation and Intonation are assessed separately in each Part. This means that the conducting teachers should encourage candidates to use features which will gain access to the higher bands of the marking grid in both the Presentation and Discussion and in the General Conversation. Unlike the legacy specification, where Quality of Language was assessed over the whole test, the use of different structures and tenses in one part of the test will only count towards the quality mark in that part. To gain access to the highest marks throughout the test candidates must be encouraged to use different structures, tenses and clauses in both the Discussion of the Presentation and the General Conversation.

Some of the teachers asked questions that included English words and did not encourage the candidates to keep to only Gujarati vocabulary.

Examiners reported a widespread use of cassettes for the recordings this year. During this overlap year this was not discouraged but centres should note that OCR will only accept recordings on CD in June 2011.

## **PART 1**

### **Presentation and Discussion**

Many topics were well presented and demonstrated good preparation in advance of the test. Some of the presentations were well organised with facts, as well as candidates' own ideas, opinions and justifications. However, a few candidates had not prepared their presentation topic well and so did not gain higher marks.

The titles varied from simple topics such as Self, Family and Friends, School Life, Education and Work Experience, Special Occasions and Festivals, to high level topics such as Socialising, Health and Sports, Gandhiji, Mahavir Bhagvan. Most candidates managed to develop and justify their own ideas and points of views.

### **Discussion of Presentation**

For the discussion of the presentation some of the candidates were not given the opportunity to respond to unprepared questions on their presentation topic.

Where a full discussion of the topic took place, many candidates were able to respond well to teachers' questions. Some teachers did an excellent job, bringing out lengthy responses with opinions and justifications. The most successful performances were from candidates who had chosen a topic in which they were genuinely interested and to which they could respond positively in the ensuing discussion. Candidates should be given opportunity to respond to unprepared questions on their presentation topic. Examiners reported some instances where the questions asked during the discussion covered the same basic information that the candidate had used in their presentation, which allowed limited scope to score highly for Content and Communication.

Some candidates were not given ample opportunity to display their knowledge and use of different tenses during discussion of their presentation topic. If a candidate has presented mainly factual information in their presentation, the questions should be used to get the candidate to express opinions and justifications and, if they have stuck to the present tense, the questions should encourage the candidate to use a greater variety of structures and tenses during the discussion.

## **PART 2**

### **General Conversation**

As the candidates were given a choice of topic most used their initiative in this part of the test. Where teachers asked open-ended questions, candidates gave a range of opinions and justified them. The most able candidates demonstrated extensive vocabulary, good application of tenses, and a range of language structures, thereby accessing the top marks in both Content and Communication and Quality of Language. Some candidates were not given ample opportunity to display their knowledge and use of different tenses during the discussion of the topic.

There was evidence of some excellent preparatory work on the part of the teachers and candidates, exploited to good effect by natural questioning in the test, which elicited a high standard of Gujarati, with some candidates producing a mature exposition of their opinions and ideas.

### **Pronunciation and Intonation**

For non-native language speakers the Pronunciation and Intonation was mostly accurate though there were some minor errors. Most of the candidates earned high marks in this area.

## A813 Reading

### General Comments

This was the first time that this new specification was tested and it was offered in parallel with the legacy specification 1927/2373. As most of the candidates probably wanted their full qualification this year, only a tiny minority who wanted a short course qualification, or who wanted to bank a result for future use, entered for the new specification.

The reading paper for this unit had eight exercises and candidates responded quite well, according to their ability, to most questions. All the rubrics and questions are in English except for Exercise 8 where candidates had to answer in Gujarati.

### Comment on Individual Questions

#### Exercise 1: Sports

Questions 1-5

This text consisted of simple sentences about different people doing or liking different sporting activities and was followed by questions showing visuals about different sports. Candidates were able to match the visuals with the sentences successfully.

#### Exercise 2: Meet Hamida

Questions 6-12

A short text for the topic "Myself" was presented as Hamida's blog entry. This was followed by questions where candidates had to complete each sentence by ticking the correct box from a choice of three visuals. Candidates did not seem to have any problems with this exercise.

#### Exercise 3: A family's week-end routine

Questions 13-18

This text consisted of slightly longer sentences about different members in the family performing different duties and was followed by visuals representing those duties. Candidates had to match each name with the correct visual. Candidates performed very well.

#### Exercise 4: Food and Drink

Questions 19-24

This text about different people's food habits and food preferences consisted of longer sentences and included all three tenses. Again, candidates had to match different food items with appropriate sentences and they managed it very well.

**Exercise 5: Travelling to India? Important advice**

Questions 25-31

This was an extended text with complex language, again using different tenses. Questions/answers were in English and required short answers. Higher level reading and comprehension skills were needed by candidates to be able to complete the tasks successfully. Here it appeared that candidates perhaps had difficulty in understanding questions in English and could not answer all the questions.

**Exercise 6: Shopping in India**

Questions 32-37

Another extended text with complex sentences was followed by a verbal multiple-choice question type. Candidates needed higher level comprehension skills. Candidates had to extract details, understand inferences and draw conclusions from what they had read. In each question they then had to read the stem of a sentence and tick one of three verbal choices to complete that sentence. Candidates found this challenging and did not get all the answers correct.

**Exercise 7: Festivals in England and India**

Questions 38-44

This was an extended text with more challenging language. It was presented as an exchange of emails between two friends who talk about how festivals are celebrated in England and in India. In this exercise, candidates had to read and understand opinions and viewpoints in the extended text. They had to understand inferences and attitudes and draw conclusions. The question/answers were in English. Candidates found this exercise challenging and were not able to obtain full marks for this exercise.

**Exercise 8: Saving the Planet**

Questions 45-50

This text was about the environment and three students' gave their views about saving energy and recycling things we use in everyday life. As this was the last exercise in the paper and was targeted for higher ability candidates, they were faced with very challenging questions. Candidates were given sentences in Gujarati with some wrong words which were crossed out. They then had to provide the correct words in Gujarati according to the text. Candidates found this exercise challenging and were not able to obtain full marks for this exercise.

## **A814 Writing**

### **General Comments**

This was the first time that this new specification was tested and it was offered in parallel with the legacy specification 1927/2374. As most of the candidates probably wanted their full qualification this year, only a tiny minority who wanted a short course qualification, or who wanted to bank a result for future use, entered for the new specification.

This single tiered paper has a new format and all the questions are in English. All the five topic areas of the specification are covered and one question per topic was presented in the paper. Candidates had to answer 2 questions in Gujarati.

Each question must be for a different purpose and candidates could choose the format they wanted. For example, they could write it as an email or a letter, a magazine item or interview or conversation script. It is important that candidates are made aware of this requirement and teachers should encourage candidates to try different writing styles during preparation in class.

There were some bullet points as suggestions of what to include for each question but responses are not marked according to these bullet points and candidates could use their own ideas. The suggested bullet points are organised to allow candidates to start by using simple descriptive language or expressing more complex points of view according to their ability and they include the use of tenses, opinions and justifications to encourage candidates to show their ability with the language and access the higher levels of the marking grids.

Some candidates attempted all five questions instead of choosing two from five. This meant that they did not have enough time to tackle the questions properly. This suggests that perhaps candidates were not aware of the format of the paper and had not learned to read the rubrics in order to understand what they were supposed to be doing. However, in such situations all the questions were marked and the two best answers were used to make the final mark so the candidates gained the highest possible mark.

In the short writing pieces produced, these candidates expressed very simple opinions and points of views with hardly any justifications and therefore did not fulfil the criteria to gain high marks for communication. The message was not always coherent or organised and examiners felt that this had been the result of the reduced time taken to write each piece. Likewise, the quality of language used was often very simple, with limited vocabulary and structures used.

Those who made a choice of two questions had enough time and answered the questions well. However, candidates need to be aware that higher level opinions and points of views with justifications are essential for communication and, for higher marks for quality, candidates need to write with complex language, using different clause types and verbal expressions.

Examiners would urge teachers and candidates to make use of the two examples of candidate style responses on the OCR web site. These responses also contain a commentary by the Principal Examiner, which should prove useful in preparing candidates.

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