

# **Examiners' Reports**

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**June 2011**

**J033/J133/J733/R/11**

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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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## **EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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## **Chief Examiner's Report**

The Dutch GCSE papers were successfully completed by many candidates. Both the Listening and Reading papers were answered well. Many candidates coped well with the new question and answer exercises in English and showed good understanding of the subject. The familiar matching and multiple-choice exercises caused no problems. In Speaking the introduction of the presentation went well. Candidates spoke on some interesting subjects and the subsequent discussions generally went well. It was important that candidates are given the scope to answer in different time frames or tenses and give opinions and points of view. This is also important in the Writing paper. Candidates were asked to write two essays of about 150 words. Some candidates wrote five essays, and many wrote far more than 150 words. Many candidates used the ideas suggested in the question paper and produced a couple of balanced essays.

## A801 Listening

### General comments

The examination went well this year. As always, the first two exercises did not cause many problems as these are multiple-choice style questions on very straightforward language.

The paper became gradually more difficult. For some candidates the first hurdle was presented in the third exercise, partly as this was the first time the candidates had to come up with a word themselves. The number of possible answers was very limited though, and most candidates managed quite well.

The fourth exercise was slightly more challenging. This section of the examination required candidates to listen more carefully to what was being said.

For the last two questions receptive knowledge of the target language was needed.

There were no obvious difficulties in this paper.

### Comments on individual questions

#### Exercise 1 and 2

Most candidates received full marks for this exercise. Some had problems with the questions about time and clothes.

#### Exercise 3

Most candidates did this exercise well. It is important for them to remember to answer English questions in English, as no marks can be awarded for answers given in Dutch. Some candidates failed to see the distinction between *We geven concerten...* (which introduced the answer to question 15) and *We repeteren...* (which led into the answer to question 16). In addition, some, no doubt expecting the answer to question 16 to be a place rather than a time, misinterpreted *lunchpauze* as 'lunch hall'.

#### Exercise 4

This listening exercise started with the comment *Het is spannend* which was interpreted by some candidates as: Erik likes to jump off the same bridge because it is exciting. That was not the correct answer as Erik said *Op onze eigen vaste brug weet ik dat het veilig is*. The reason for jumping from the same bridge is because it is safe.

#### Exercise 5

This exercise was a little more difficult, especially because candidates expected certain answers to be true due to common knowledge. It is important for candidates to realise that the test is always about what is being said in the recording, not about what might be true in 'the real world.'

#### Exercise 6

At this level candidates are challenged more. The candidates were required to listen to recordings and decide which topic was discussed. Some candidates thought the first section was on holidays because the recording started with *voor mij begint de zomer pas goed....* The piece was actually about sport.

#### Exercise 7

In this exercise candidates were required to summarise the information they heard. Most candidates did this exercise very well.

**Exercise 8**

The last exercise of this paper consisted of a reasonably difficult interview with fairly straightforward questions on the information given. Higher achieving candidates did not encounter problems with the questions, even though precise listening was required.

## A802 Speaking

### General comments

This year's speaking examination went very well. The format enabled the candidates to prepare well for their presentation and most teacher/examiners were very supportive towards them, which helped them to demonstrate their language skills. It is important to remind candidates that they should elaborate as much as possible, as we are looking for opinions and points of view.

Some candidates meet the teacher/examiner for the first time shortly before the test is taken. It would be very helpful for them to meet the teacher/examiner before the actual day or earlier on the day of the test.

The administration was handled very well. Where the appropriate forms were not available, most teacher/examiners gave us details of the candidates on a piece of paper, which was very helpful. Please make sure to mention the name and number of every candidate prior to the test.

Most teacher/examiners this year made sure that the candidates were as close as possible to the microphone. Please be aware that the microphone picks up all the other sounds in the room as well, including the tapping of fingers on tables, the kicking against tables of nervous candidates or the rustling of papers. It would be helpful if the teacher/examiners could keep these noises to a minimum once the recording has started. It is also important to test the recording prior to the speaking test, so the volume can be adjusted if needed.

The recorder should not be switched off at any time during the test. Please be aware also that the CDs need to be finalised before they can be used in any other computer or CD-player.

### Comments on individual questions

#### Presentation

There was a variety of presentation topics this year. Many candidates talked about their family or personal life, and a sizeable group talked about their hobbies. Most took the opportunity to talk about something close to their heart, which made for interesting presentations and discussions.

It is important to encourage candidates to present an introduction instead of a 'full talk', so it is easier to keep talking about the topic afterwards. Candidates should justify their opinions or point of views, e.g. *Ik hou van voetbal* is good as an opinion, but if the candidate adds the justification *want mijn vrienden spelen ook dus het is gezellig*, s/he immediately scores higher marks. Please check the assessment criteria to see what is expected of the candidates.

Some candidates take 'props' to support their presentation. This can be very helpful but props can even work better if the candidates do not use them during the presentation itself. The teacher/examiner can then ask about the 'prop' during the discussion (*Ik zie dat je een foto hebt mee genomen, vertel eens?*).

Some candidates had made sure they expressed many opinions and justifications in their one minute presentation. This works really well because it allows the teacher/examiner to ask for even more information on the topic. The lower ability candidates can start off in the presentation stating some opinions or points of view. The teacher/examiner can then ask questions, depending on the level of the candidate, to get more justifications (*Waarom hou je van voetbal? Wat vind je leuk aan tennis?*) Be aware of closed questions to which the candidate can only answer with *ja* or *nee* (i.e., *Voetballen je vrienden ook?*). If such questions are asked by the

teacher/examiner, please make sure that they are always followed up by questions like *hoe vind je dat?*

### **General Conversation**

In this second part of the examination the teacher/examiner presents the candidate with a choice of three topics from which the candidate selects one topic to talk about. The topics in this part of the examination open up the conversation quite easily. Most teacher/examiners were able to hold a conversation that sounded natural, which very often brings out the best in candidates.

The topic 'Music, Film and TV' was very popular amongst the candidates, but please be aware that it is best to talk about Dutch television and Dutch programmes or about the content of the films or TV programmes. Some candidates merely gave a string of English titles of films and artists, so there was little Dutch in the speaking test even though the conversation was going very well. To receive full marks it is important for candidates to produce longer sentences and show they can take initiative in the conversation. It is therefore very helpful if the teacher/examiner responds to the comments the candidate has made by asking *Waarom? Vertel eens?* etc.

The best conversations were those in which the teacher/examiner found a topic that was close to the candidate's heart. Many teacher/examiners used the questions in the back of the Teacher Instructions booklet as a starting point and picked up more personal information as soon as possible to make the candidate talk. This technique worked very well and meant that the candidate scored highly in most cases.

### **Conclusion**

All in all, there were very few problems with the speaking tests this year thanks to the good work of many teacher/examiner and the excellent preparation of the candidates. Thank you!

## A803 Reading

### General comments

The new GCSE Reading Examination consists of eight exercises with Dutch texts and mainly English questions. Exercise 2 is a matching exercise with icons and Dutch statements, while the final exercise requires candidates to complete sentences briefly in Dutch. The multiple-choice and matching exercises were well done.

Most candidates also responded well to the open ended questions in English. However, some could not express themselves well enough in English to answer these questions correctly. A few gave Dutch answers. Good responses needed to be short and to the point. Full sentences were not required.

It needs to be stressed that texts should be read carefully. Candidates should be aware that questions about a text appear in the order in which the text is written. It is important to 'turn over' when this is indicated on a page. Some candidates did not do so, and missed the exercise on the final page.

### Comments on individual questions

#### Exercise 1

This exercise was done well. Question 4 was a challenging question. In question 4 the *korte broek* was in icon C, not B.

#### Exercise 2

Most candidates gained full marks. Occasionally icon H was wrongly chosen in question 8 or 9. There was no statement for the car cleaning shown in H.

#### Exercise 3

This was the first longer Dutch text. The multiple-choice exercise of English statements was answered well. Many candidates received full marks. Question 18 was challenging and provided an opportunity for candidates to show that they had read the text carefully. It was a common error to choose answer C rather than B.

#### Exercise 4

This exercise consisted of two Dutch texts about television programmes with six statements in English. Candidates had to tick a box to indicate to which text the statements referred. Candidates need to remain focused when dealing with two texts. Many candidates did well. When an incorrect answer was given there was no obvious pattern, although questions 21 and 22 appeared to be harder than the others.

### Exercise 5

This exercise consisted of a Dutch text with open ended questions in English. Brief answers were required. Many answers were unnecessarily long. Some candidates found it hard to express themselves in English. A few candidates gave Dutch answers.

- Question 25: This was answered well.  
Question 26: This was answered well.  
Question 27: Candidates provided many good responses. Some were rather long.  
Question 28: This question only needed a one-word answer: swimming. 'Superfast in water' did not score.  
Question 29: Some candidates misread the question. 'When' not 'what' was the question. Most candidates gave the correct answer.  
Question 30: Most candidates responded well. Some did not seem to understand the word 'ranking'.  
Question 31: The answer needed to be precise: her own time/personal best/ record, but not the record.

### Exercise 6

This Dutch text about an unusual topic was challenging. Most candidates responded well to the English multiple-choice questions. When an incorrect answer was given there was no particular pattern, although question 37 appeared to be the hardest.

### Exercise 7

Most candidates are familiar with the subject of theme parks and rollercoasters. Some answers to the open-ended questions reflected the candidates' opinions rather than the text. Most candidates responded well. Candidates need to realise that the answer to the first question will be at the beginning of a text. The first two questions were about the first two sentences.

- Question 38: The answer to this question was right at the beginning of the text. It was about the park, not about one attraction.  
Question 39: This question dealt with the height of the rollercoaster, not the length or speed.  
Question 40: Candidates found many ways in which to say, or spell, that people should 'take their turn' or 'not jump the queue'. Most of the answers were allowed.  
Question 41: This question was challenging. The answer had to express uncertainty about the height of the passenger.  
Question 42: The answer had to be about the friend's recommendation. The addition of the need for a holiday job was allowed.  
Question 43: The question about travelling to work was answered quite well. Many answers included unnecessary details. Some candidates tried to justify their answer with details from the following paragraph. This was incorrect.  
Question 44: The concept answer is 'experience / try it'. Many candidates answered this correctly. Some translated the last paragraph, which did not show understanding of the text. Others mentioned just the speed and the feeling and this was not enough.

### Exercise 8

Some candidates did not 'turn over' and did not do the exercise. This final exercise consists of a Dutch text and statements. Candidates are asked to put a Dutch word (or words) in the gaps in the statements. The words are not necessarily in the text. This exercise was challenging for

many candidates. Some attempted only a few of the questions or tried to insert random words from the text. Others answered many of the questions correctly.

- Question 45: Candidates needed to realise that the statement was about the weather. The required word was *droog*. Other 'weather' words such as the Dutch for sunny or good weather were allowed.
- Question 46: The spelling of the correct answer *ruikt* was not easy. Some incorrect spellings were allowed, as was the use of the infinitive, past tense or present participle. A common error was the use of *smakelijk(e)* or *smaakt*.
- Question 47: The man in the van *groet* the writer. *Zegt hallo tegen, praat tege* and *spreekt met* were allowed, but not the Dutch for wave or introduce.
- Question 48: Many candidates produced a good answer with words such as *blij* and *gelukkig*. *Tevreden* and *vrolijk* were also allowed.
- Question 49: A good response was *mensen*. As such, all kinds of people words were allowed, such as men, persons, passengers and travellers, but not things.
- Question 50: Quite a few candidates knew the correct verb *gemist*. Various spellings were allowed, but not the English 'missed'. The word *heimwee* often appeared, but this did not fit in.

## A804 Writing

### General comments

This paper was done well by many candidates. Good responses were detailed and fully relevant to the task, with clearly expressed information. These responses also included fully developed and justified ideas and points of view. Many candidates wrote good length essays. Others wrote far more than the required 150 words.

Many candidates indicated the particular purpose of their writing e.g. blog / e-mail / letter / magazine article / script of a conversation. Others did not mention a purpose, although often the style of writing was different. Many were able to produce a variety of vocabulary, different types of sentences and different verb tenses.

There were candidates who had not read the instructions carefully enough and wrote all five essays. Others wrote about one part of the task only. To get high marks for communication, candidates need to write about the whole task. Some candidates may not have understood the English instructions or questions. Dictionaries are allowed in this examination.

### Comments on individual questions

#### Question 1

Most candidates chose to write about themselves and the place where they live. Those who used the ideas in the question paper often wrote a balanced essay with all the required elements. Writing about possible changes in the neighbourhood and the reasons for them often produced a higher quality essay. Many of the younger candidates gave basic factual information, but offered few opinions or justifications. Other candidates gave lively descriptions of themselves and their towns and villages. Many wrote a letter or an e-mail.

#### Question 2

There were some excellent responses to this task. Candidates mentioned health problems such as broken limbs or asthma. They created opportunities for the expression of points of view and justification, as well as a variety of vocabulary and different verb tenses. Some candidates only wrote about their favourite sport and did not receive high marks for communication. It was not always clear what the purpose of the writing was.

#### Question 3

Many candidates wrote about their birthday and future and past parties in e-mails, blogs or scripts of a conversation. Candidates need to be aware that even in conversations different types of sentences are necessary to receive high marks. This task was well done.

#### Question 4

Many candidates wrote well on the subject of travel plans after their examinations. Good responses included the use of some of the ideas suggested for the task. Descriptions of how friends decided on their itinerary produced many opinions, points of views and justifications as well as a variety of vocabulary, tenses and sentences. On the other hand, some candidates

wrote about past holidays with family and friends. This meant a loss of marks for both communication and quality of language as there was not the required variety of verb tenses.

**Question 5**

This last task was not as popular as the others. There were some good essays in which work at home, work experience, and earning pocket money were dealt with. Others only dealt with one aspect of the task, or described a current job.

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