

Examiner's Report

June 2011

R392/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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General comments

This specification was available for the first time this year. It replaces the former Entry Level English specification 3911, which was also available this year as a legacy specification and attracted the majority of Centres requiring an Examination at this level.

Centres found R392 to be very similar to 3911, but a slightly altered and slimmed down version of OCR's well established Entry Level Certificate. A shorter version of the Reading test continues to be set by OCR, while there is no longer an option between Coursework and the Examination, both the test in writing and in Speaking and Listening being set and administered by teachers. Teachers submit one mark only, out of a hundred, and no longer need to complete three mark returns.

There was some confusion over the word 'component', which led to one Centre only submitting marks and work for one part of the Examination. Centres are therefore reminded that the final mark consists of the three assessments in Reading, Writing and Speaking and Listening.

The quality of the work seen was very similar to that of 3911 and Moderators were able to apply the same standards as previously. However, the major changes were that the Reading test was allocated only twenty marks as opposed to forty for 3911, and that Speaking and Listening was marked out of forty rather than twenty.

Centres are thanked for the care with which they carried out their work and for the quality and presentation of the samples. The following points were made by Moderators, but it should be stressed that in most cases everything was well done and in order.

- 1 Each candidate's work should be enclosed in OCR's Internal Assessment Form. This form is important to the Moderator since it states the marks given for each part of the test, the content of each part of the writing test and an account of performance in Speaking and Listening and the tasks set. There is also space to give an account of help given to candidates in Reading and Writing.
- 2 The information concerning help given to the candidate is essential to the Moderator and should be as detailed as possible. It should also state how marks have been adjusted as a consequence of this help.
- 3 Each Centre should submit an Authentication certificate and a copy of the MS1 or equivalent mark sheet giving the marks of all candidates.
- 4 Centres should expect to receive an email from OCR telling them which candidates' work to send to the Moderator. On receiving the email they should send their sample to the Moderator whose address is notified in the email.

Comments on the individual parts of the Examination

Reading

The Reading tests came as a bank of six passages with questions. Centres were free to choose which of the six best fitted their interests and their candidates. Twenty marks were available for each test and at least one of the questions required multiple answers, as a type of summary. There was also a question which touched on the language used in the passage. The most

popular of the tests was the first, the newspaper report concerning a car which crashed into a fruit stall. This included a question requiring six facts about the way in which the car was driven. This discriminated well, as less good readers could only find a smaller number of facts. The question for which the candidates had to understand how different characters in the passage were affected also discriminated well. Finally, candidates had to explain how the flying fruit resembled a hailstorm. This was answered encouragingly well in a variety of ways, some ingenious.

Another popular task was Task 4, about Windby-on-Sea and Sundale, two very different places for a holiday. In this task, candidates had to find seven reasons why Sundale sounded a good place for a family holiday, which worked in a similar way to the question about the car in Task 1. There were also language questions about the writer's use of 'shivered our way through the town', 'shabby' and the name of the hotel, 'The Splendid'.

All the Reading tasks were used by at least one Centre and all proved to pose similar demands. It is intended that they will remain in use for the lifetime of the specification. They were generally marked well, but the following points should be observed by teachers:

- 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, if a candidate gives answer that is not on the mark scheme - even if it appears to be satisfactory - do not give the mark. The reason for this is that OCR requires all Centres to award marks in the same way, to ensure consistency of outcome across Centres.
- In marking the multiple answer questions, do not reward the same idea twice, even if it is differently expressed.
- An answer does not have to be given in exactly the same wording as that in the mark scheme. There may be a variety of ways of giving an answer, particularly if the candidate is rightly using own words.

Writing

The specification gives the requirement very simply as 'informative writing' and 'imaginative writing'. While the guidance given for this part of the assessment is very similar to the writing requirement for 3911/04, the Writing Paper, there is no need to follow it. Centres are free to create tasks of their own to meet these requirements. Most Centres set a letter and a story and some set topics from the current or previous 3911 papers.

A slight change was that each piece of writing was marked out of twenty and the marks were added together as opposed to 3911 where a mark was given for the candidate's total performance. A letter has been and continues to be a good choice of task, but Centres sometimes set topics that did not encourage writing at sufficient length to warrant the top marks out of twenty.

Some Centres realised that informative writing could be an account of a candidate's hobby or work experience, or that more argumentative writing would also be allowed, such as why a mobile phone is useful and a pleasure.

Imaginative writing was generally a made-up story, but it could equally well be an autobiographical fragment or a story based on the candidate's own recent experience.

The marking of writing was again generally sound, although there remained some difficulties over assessing the incidence of error. Historically, the standard of writing at the top level is quite high, so Moderators expected to see evidence of some ability to spell a range of words including

some more difficult ones, and particularly of the ability to use full stops. The best candidates had some notion of how to construct a sentence. From the middle of the range in Band 2 downwards, error became a distraction.

Speaking and Listening

Again the requirement was simple, 'discussion' and 'role play', and the tendency was (legitimately) to follow guidance and previous Examination tasks and to use 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 3911.

Because of this, Centres should consider whether the telephone call task that they set is sufficient for the award of twenty marks. Obviously, calls had to last long enough for candidates to do more than simply to say what they wanted and give a name and address. Centres were urged to include sub tasks in the calls, such as to give complicated directions or an account of something that had happened. This allowed candidates to sequence facts and ideas and to communicate in well thought out sentences as appropriate. The work for such a telephone call needed to be more substantial than that for 3911.

The discussion work was more difficult for Centres that had not been used to taking the option previously. It was important that all candidates had the chance to say something and not to be unduly affected by others in the group or by the topic itself.

Recordings were made on disk rather than on tape, and the quality of sound was generally better than on previous occasions. Some recordings were excellent. However, there remained a difficulty in identifying speakers in the discussions. Centres should supply a running order so that Moderators have the names of the speakers in the order in which they are heard. In addition, before a discussion, each speaker should make an introduction, giving their name clearly and slowly and supplying a sentence or so about themselves, so that the Moderator can get used to individual voices.

Final comments

The Moderators thank teachers for marking the work professionally and for submitting an interesting range of samples.

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