



ENTRY LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**ENGLISH (NEW)
ENTRY LEVEL**

SUMMER 2019

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ENGLISH

General Comments

Introduction

This is the second year that the 'new' specification has been offered to centres and its numbers are growing steadily. Many centres see it as a good first step towards GCSE with some entering Year 9 and Year 10 students for their first taste of external qualifications. Others, who have less able students, see it as the main way to gain a qualification for their students who would struggle to cope with GCSE.

Learners' knowledge, understanding and skills are developed over the course and assessed through three components at the end.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Component 1 – the Written Examination

The overall theme of the paper was mental health especially for young people. The resource material had three texts which became progressively more difficult: Text A being a simple labelled diagram of a cyclist on how cycling improves health (including mental health); Text B was an information leaflet; Text C was a newspaper article including a chart. Candidates and their teachers recognised the relevance of the topic of mental health and responded with an unexpected degree of knowledge and understanding.

The non-literary part of the paper carried 20 marks and demanded comprehension of the resource material. The first 5 marks were on Text A and answers were mainly tick boxes so that any writing issues of the least able should not have been a problem. The second 5 marks for Text B had one tick box but answers could mostly be drawn straight from the text; only the final question needed to be in a sentence (explaining the meaning of 'ups and downs'). The final 10 marks on Text C were split into tick boxes, joining boxes and answering in sentences. The majority of the candidates attempted all the questions.

The second part of the paper assessing functional writing had two tasks. The first task (question 4) required candidates to fill out a form reporting an incident that had happened in class. The candidate had to write his/her full name and email address (or school's email address); marks were not awarded if only the first name had been given or if the email address did not have the @ symbol and a dot in the latter part of the address. The description of the incident had to be relevant and include the necessary details e.g. time of the incident, name of the person involved etc.

The final task (question 5) was a formal letter to the headteacher persuading him/her of the importance of having a school counsellor. The marking grid was in two parts, rewarding communicating and organising (meaning, purpose, readers and structure) and writing accuracy (language, grammar, punctuation and spelling).

Generally, those writing in the correct register, making clear points, developing ideas and writing with some degree of accuracy scored highly. Centres should be aware that the mark grid caters for those working below Entry Level 1 to those working at Level 1. This year candidates were allowed to have a scribe if required but this did affect the marks awarded for writing accuracy. The letters were frequently written from the heart; many candidates could see that some students, if not themselves, needed someone in school in whom they could confide whether their difficulties were in school or at home. Many candidates recognised that mental health problems were quite common and could have very serious consequences if help were not available.

Component 2 – Four Topic Tests

The tests in this component are each of 30 minutes' duration and may be taken at any time during the course under a high level of control. Each test is marked by the centre taking great care to abide by the mark scheme. In centres where there is more than one teaching group there should also be evidence of internal moderation to ensure consistency. All four tests should be submitted with the Record Keeping Mark Sheet (signed by both teacher and student) as the front cover. Moderators very much appreciate the effort that most centres go to when stapling or using treasury tags to ensure that papers stay in the correct order and do not go astray. Loose sheets should never be submitted.

The need for **clear marking and annotation** cannot be stressed enough to ensure fair moderation; it should always be made obvious to the moderator how marks have been allocated.

Topic Test 1: Response to twentieth/twenty first century prose

The extract was taken from 'Cowgirl' by G. R. Gemin. This introduced the theme of bullying in this component. The first questions were straightforward, demanding simple information retrieval skills. Question 1.5 required two pieces of information that showed that the writer liked cycling; some candidates focused on the writer imagining she was in a road race in the Olympics but they should also have pointed out that she had wanted Sian's brother to tell her who had 'nicked' her bike. For question 1.7 candidates were asked to write an extended answer on the writer's feelings for Sian. Most candidates could see that she was afraid of her and referred to the descriptive language used e.g. she was 'like a dog baring its teeth'. Others went further, commenting on the language that Sian 'stabbed' a finger at Kate. Those scoring the highest marks went on to point out that she was less scared when Kate went to support her. Marks ranged from band 1 which rewarded one or two points taken from the text with varying relevance, to band 5 which rewarded inferences and deductions supported by textual detail.

Topic Test 2: Editing and Sequencing

The cloze procedure for 2.1 is straightforward: the ten words are either correctly placed or not. Correct spelling is not a consideration. Test 2.2 can be difficult to mark if the candidate has not used a ruler or has linked the boxes with loopy lines. If a box has more than one line coming from it, it has to be marked as incorrect as the meaning is not clear. For 2.3 and 2.4 three sentences have to be sequenced; the whole sequence does not have to be correct so if one of the sentences is correctly placed, a mark should be awarded. This test usually poses few problems and many candidates score highly.

Topic Test 3: Narrative Writing

Candidates have a choice of two titles and marks are divided between communicating and organising (15) and writing accuracy (5). The mark grid covers marks from band 1 where writing is barely literate to band 5 which is equivalent to L1. It is extremely important that the centre marks the writing showing the two component marks, not just the overall total; annotation should also make it perfectly clear why each of the two bands was chosen. Scribes are allowed but will affect the writing accuracy mark. This, more than any of the other topic tests, needs to be internally moderated if there is more than one teaching group taught by different teachers.

Topic Test 4: Proofreading

In the two proofreading passages, candidates must circle and correct the mistakes. There are still some centres who award marks for merely circling the errors which is not acceptable. Corrections must be clear and if they are not clear, then marks cannot be awarded. If a correction is written using a capital letter when one is not needed, then that will be marked as incorrect. Some centres correct candidates' errors (without awarding marks) and this is not helpful to the moderator. It must be made clear to the moderator where marks are being awarded using the tick system; the teacher does not need to write anything else on the script. At times, centres mark these exercises hastily and errors are made.

Component 3: Communication

Each candidate took four tasks:

- 1.1 group discussion on bullying
- 1.2 individual presentation on bullying
- 2.1 individual presentation for a job interview (playworker)
- 2.2 panel interview for the job of playworker

These tasks should have been recorded and submitted for moderation on the Surpass system. There should have been four separate recordings; centres should not link the two World of Work tasks into one extended task. A copy of the group recording should also be sent for every candidate.

It is absolutely essential that the Record Keeping Mark Sheet is submitted with the recordings and, if possible, sent manually to the moderator with the Component 2 tasks. If a candidate does not have parental permission to be recorded or refused to be recorded, evidence must still be provided for moderation via a transcript of what the candidate actually said. Marks may not be awarded without evidence.

A serious concern is that some centres are still not aware that no scripting of any part of this component is allowed. Candidates may refer briefly to notes or PowerPoint slides but must not read the whole presentation from them. Communication should be prepared but natural and spontaneous.

Group recordings can be problematic. It is very important that the moderator is able to identify each candidate in the group so it is insufficient for the teacher to just read out the names before beginning. If it is not possible for a candidate to be in a group and he/she must be in a paired situation with the teacher, it should not just become a question and answer session. The candidate must be given the opportunity to show understanding and respond to other people's views; there must be some interaction, not just a teacher led information seeking exercise. It is preferable if groups can be kept to about three candidates especially if it is just an audio recording.

The individual presentations (1.2 and 2.1) should be clear and persuasive. Occasional prompting/encouragement from the teacher may be necessary for the less able but it should always be remembered that the candidate should speak on his/her own when possible. The length of recordings need only be about two to four minutes in length. Most candidates use the bullet points given in the task to structure their presentations and those reaching the higher bands will be able to develop ideas under these headings, express their points of view and give details to add interest for the listener.

Summary

It is very encouraging to see this 'new' Entry Level Certificate being used by so many centres and with such success. There have been some administrative problems with the new Surpass system but hopefully these will disappear with continued use. It is, as ever, a privilege to see the commitment and dedication of teaching staff and the creativity and hard work of the candidates; I would like to pass on my sincere thanks to all.



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