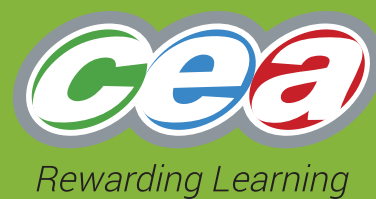


GCE



Chief Examiner's Report
Irish

Summer Series 2018



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Irish for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCE IRISH

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit AS 1 Speaking

Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Irish for this series. CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process. This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk. 3

Presentation

Assistant examiners reported that the standard of presentations continued to be very high in a majority of centres and most candidates were able to cope well with this aspect of the speaking test and access the higher mark bands. Presentations, in nearly all cases, were original and of a very high standard. As well as being rooted in topics that were pertinent to Irish or an Irish-language society, they also included comprehensive research and statistical support.

It is pleasing to report that very few candidates were unable to access the full range of marks available at AO4 in this element of the exam. It appears that advice to centres in last year's report about the appropriateness of presentations that failed to acknowledge Ireland, or Irish society, has been heeded and problems remedied. It is important though that centres continue to take cognisance of guidance issued by CCEA at Page 11 of the current specification which states that this element of the unit is assessed by the candidate delivering 'a prepared presentation based on an AS level theme related to an aspect of an Irish-speaking country or community' (emphasis added). This guidance is supported later on the same page with a reference that the candidate 'should speak knowledgeably about the aspect of the Irish-speaking country or community that they have researched.' Further guidance is available on the CCEA Microsite for Irish, including a FAQ document 'A Level Irish Specification: AS level clarification'; and from the document 'Modern Languages: Instructions and Guidance to Teachers and Candidates – Conduct and Administration of AS Modern Languages Speaking Tests (Revised)'.

Assistant examiners reported that some candidates did not take full advantage of the presentation, or of the time available to them. It is pleasing to report that there were fewer candidates in this series who were unable to complete the presentation. Assistant examiners reported on the varied use of the Presentation Pro-forma in many centres, with some candidates not using it effectively. The best presentations had all the relevant information, views and statistics presented in a clear and logical order.

Conversation

Assistant examiners reported their pleasure at being able to engage with so many able, interested and enthusiastic candidates who were able to converse competently about a range of topics. Their love for Irish and the Gaeltacht was evident. Many candidates used a range of complex language and structures that were beyond the expected AS level standard.

Centres and candidates are reminded that examiners do not have a pre-prepared list of questions and instead are trained to encourage a genuine conversation allowing for an exchange of ideas and opinions to develop over the 8 minutes or thereabouts. The reduction of contexts for learning has meant that the topics of school/school life, and part-time jobs have moved to A2 and candidates should not expect to have to converse on these areas. However, if the candidate brings up these topics the examiner will allow the conversations to develop to a certain extent.

It is clear that candidates who have access to a language assistant were clearly at an advantage in that their overall pronunciation and fluency were better.

Assistant examiners noted that the main areas candidates found challenging were those in which they were encouraged to develop their ideas beyond delivering facts. For example, a question such as ‘Cad é an maitheas a dhéanann spórt duit?’ should allow candidates to take advantage of a range of opportunities to develop answers, including their own participation in sport, how it can help issues with mental health, and with dealing in the pressures of school life. This is one example of a question that allowed the more able candidates to develop their answers appropriately, while less able candidates did not feel disadvantaged.

Assistant examiners noted that there were inconsistencies and mistakes with a minority of candidates particularly when using the copula, the verbal noun and general sentence structure and with the use of irregular verbs. It is regrettable that habit of inserting English words and phrases into the conversation is becoming more common.

The visiting examining team continue to express their appreciation and gratitude to colleagues in schools who make us feel so welcome and supported during our annual visits.

Rath Dé ar an obair sa scoilbhliain úr.

Chief Examiner’s Report

Assessment Unit AS 2

Listening, Reading and Use of Language

Section A

The candidates performed very well in this paper as a whole. They responded positively and almost all candidates attempted all questions. Some more able candidates were able to achieve full marks and other candidates were able to find their own level in this paper. There were some discriminators in the paper and these allowed for a good spread of marks.

The candidates responded well in general in this question. Question 1 is more challenging in that the candidates are responding in the target language. Candidates are reminded to attempt all questions as examiners respond positively to all attempts and where the answer is understood marks are awarded for AO1. In Question 1 (a) most candidates were able to gain two marks. Question 1 (b) however challenged some candidates with spelling. Candidates are reminded that months, days and such vocabulary should be spelt correctly at this level. Question 1 (f) and Question 1 (h) were challenging for some candidates.

There was evidence from the answers that the language used in the examination paper was appropriate and the answers gave a good spread of marks.

The mark scheme was discussed at length at the standardising meeting and all acceptable answers were agreed. Candidates are reminded to attempt all questions. This part of the exam is assessed solely on AO1 and candidates need to demonstrate understanding of the spoken word in their answers.

Sections B and C

The candidates responded very well in general in this question. Candidates were able to handle Question 1 very well and manipulate information from the passage. Some parts of the question posed difficult for some candidates: Question 1 (a) candidates needed cúig bliana [1] ó shin [1] to gain two marks. (cúig bliain anuas gained one mark.) In Question 1 (e) Harry Potter was the only acceptable answer.

Question 2 (translation) was handled very well in general by most candidates. Some words and phrases that proved challenging were ‘na tonnta, ‘is cumhachtaí and ‘tonnmharcaíocht’. Candidates are reminded to read back over their translation into English to make sure it makes sense and is ‘highly accurate and competent, sensitive to idiom with very few errors’ as stated in Band 5 of the mark scheme.

Section C (Use of Language) is a challenging part of the examination although the candidates did very well in general in this section. This is the second series of this exam and candidates were more familiar with it. In some respects, this part of the examination, while considered more challenging, can prove to be a good discriminator. Question 1 Section C was handled well overall. Some candidates, however, gave a synonym instead of an antonym. Candidates are reminded to read all questions and rubrics carefully. Question 2 was handled fairly well and again most candidates gained 3/5 marks. Parts (b) and (e) proved most challenging. In Question 3 the candidates had to translate the whole section underlined - including the article. Where candidates did not do this, the marks could not be awarded. As only one mark is available for each answer it has to be totally correct – an bhliain, na bliana, an lá, an lae. Question 4 was handled well and the candidates showed their ability to manipulate the verbs and tenses. Again candidates are reminded to write the correct form. Parts (b) and (d) proved most challenging. Question 5 was attempted very well by most candidates. The vast majority of candidates scored between 7 and 13 out of 15. Candidates are reminded to attempt all parts of the question and to remember that examiners mark positively and reward marks for each sentence or part of sentence translated.

Assessment Unit AS 3 Extended Writing

It is pleasing to note that candidates seem to prefer the new specification where this unit is separate from the language element of the exam and it was obvious this year again that candidates were well-prepared and were, for the most part, very competent at managing to produce essays that covered all three bullet points effectively. At this level, however, there is still evidence of candidates learning essays and hoping they “fit” the title on the paper. These answers tend to score low marks under AO2 because they lose focus on the bullet points in the questions.

The Gearrscannáin were by far the most popular choice and there was a broad spread of answers from all three films. Once again, only a small number of centres prepared students for answers on Anne.

Answers in this element of the examination are marked out of 35 for AO2 (Understanding), out of 20 for AO4 (Knowledge) and out of 20 for AO3 (Language).

Broadly speaking, AO2 involves understanding what the question entails – this can be shown by covering all three bullet points and making reference to the key terms of the question. (eg: Cad é mar a léirítear an taisteal sa scannán?) Under AO4, examiners will be looking for the candidate’s knowledge of the film/text – relevant to the question. With a text, this will be evidenced by the use of quotation or reference to the detail within the text. The better answers may show some understanding of what the author was trying to achieve. With films, the better answers might convey how lighting, sound, camera angles, shots etc. are used to enhance the theme or specific focus of the question as well as what the characters

say, how they react and, perhaps, an indication of what effect was hoped for by the film makers. Under AO3, examiners will be looking for evidence of excellent command of the language appropriate to AS level. Some use of idiomatic language is to be expected where it weaves naturally into the fabric of the essay.

Having taken on board advice from previous exams and from CCEA support materials, candidates performed better in this element of the exam in that they are now more able to handle all three bullet points rather than relate the story of the film or text.

Most answers scored well under AO4 and it was obvious that candidates enjoyed the study of their chosen film/text. Centres are reminded that the knowledge displayed in answers needs to “focus appropriately on key aspects of the question” to gain access to Band 5. Simply writing everything you know about a film/text will not gain you full marks under AO4.

In Question 1 (a) some candidates wrote about the Irish language as opposed to Ireland and this led to some confusing answers. Some of these candidates seemed to have prepared an answer on attitudes to the language in the film and tried to make it fit the essay that appeared on the paper. In relation to the second bullet point in Question 1 (a), some candidates tended to write all they knew about how sound and colour were used in the film as a whole rather than limiting it to how they were used to portray Ireland and her people. In Question 1 (b) some candidates ignored the key term *taisteal* and wrote about Yu Ming as a character. Questions 2 (a) and Question 2 (b) were very well handled and candidates seemed to find the bullet points easy to handle. Questions 3 (a) and Question 3 (b) were well handled. Among the small number of candidates who answered questions on Anne, Question 4 (a) was the most popular and, in general, the answers were good. Examiners noted that candidates did well on bullet points where they were asked for their own opinions and centres seem to encourage debate around the issues raised in the films/texts.

While all candidates were able to sustain their writing in the target language, as always, standards in the use of language varied.

Some issues were common:

- confusion between *chuig/thuig/thig*;
- *níl cliú dá laghad aige* (he hasn't a clue);
- *tá Éire léirítear*; and
- *tá sé ag iarraidh bheidh.../bheith sé ansin*.

On the whole, examiners were very pleased with the standard of answers in this paper and enjoyed the experience of marking them. They commented on the hard work being done in all centres. It was pleasing to note that some of the common mistakes outlined in last year's report were addressed and candidates benefitted from having the advice passed on to them.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit A2 1 Speaking

Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Education (GCE) in Irish for this series. CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process. This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

Discussion

Since this was a new element of the exam at A2 level, there was some trepidation among Visiting Examiners at the Briefing Meeting surrounding the conduct of the exam in the various centres. In the event, Visiting Examiners reported that this element of the exam proved relatively simple and the majority of candidates took it in their stride. It proved to be a very natural part of the exam and examiners recorded their enjoyment in hearing the diverse range of topics studied by the students.

There was little evidence that the mechanics of the discussion element posed any difficulties for candidates or examiners and some candidates excelled because they were able to pursue their own interests within the themes on offer.

Candidates had carried out extensive research into topics of interest. Some had interviewed experts or, indeed, their grandparents. Some had read books, accessed internet material, visited areas of interest or invited visiting speakers to the school. Others had drawn on knowledge from other subjects being studied or had drawn on family history to provide them with a springboard from which to launch their research. The resulting projects reflected the wide variety of interests of our A Level students.

With regard to the one-minute introduction to the research topic, candidates dealt with it in two ways: they either summarised their whole topic in a one-minute introduction or spent one minute explaining why they chose the topic, where they got their material and how they set about putting it all together. Both approaches worked well and the rest of the discussion seemed to flow organically from the introduction. The only note of caution with summarising the points is that candidates felt they had dealt with a particular point in the introduction and didn't go into detail on it when probed by the examiner. Candidates and teachers should note that the discussion will flow naturally from the introduction and candidates will not be stopped unnaturally by the examiner and told that their one minute is up.

The Summary Sheet should be used by the candidate to give five brief points which will guide the examiner as to the direction the research has taken. Candidates may, but should not expect, to be asked questions on all five areas and candidates should not write out questions that they would like to be asked!

Conversation

Assistant Examiners reported no issues with the conversation element of the exam. Candidates seemed very well prepared and showed insight into how to access the full range of marks. Less able candidates knew to offer some opinions in material they had prepared while more able candidates were very able to justify opinions and lead the discussion to a higher level even if the Examiner introduced a new idea. Since topics like school and part-time jobs are now dealt with at A2 level, this provided the candidates with an opportunity to ease into this part of the exam and use vocabulary that they were familiar with from Key Stage 3 and GCSE level.

Overall, Visiting Examiners reported very positively on the new exam and recorded their enjoyment of the experience of visiting schools where they were welcomed by staff, where all accommodation was excellent and where students seemed enthused and excited by their study of the language.

Chief Examiner's Report

Assessment Unit A2 2 Listening and Reading

Section A

The candidates performed very well in this paper as a whole. Almost all candidates attempted all questions. Some more able candidates were able to achieve full marks [25] and other candidates were able to find their own level in this paper. There were some discriminators in the paper and these allowed for a good spread of marks across the candidates.

The candidates responded very well in general in this section. In Question 1 the candidates have to respond in the target language. Candidates are reminded that figures or words are accepted for questions which have a number as the answer. Candidates at A2 level should be able to spell the words correctly. Where there is a slight misspelling eg. séimhiú or síneadh fada the mark is awarded. In Question 2 the candidates have to answer in English. Most candidates did very well and adhered to the rubric. However, if the rubric is not adhered to marks cannot be awarded.

Section B

The candidates performed very well in the paper as a whole. Given that it was a new specification they responded positively and very few candidates made no attempt. Some more able candidates were able to achieve high marks across all areas and other candidates were able to find their own level in this paper. There were some discriminators and new challenges regarding a summary type question in the paper which allowed for a good spread of marks.

The candidates responded very well in general in this Section. In Question 1 candidates were able to manipulate the language and select the correct word to fill the gap. There were some discriminators such as Éirinn, Éireann and tuismitheoirí and dtuismitheoirí. Most candidates scored between 7-10. Candidates are reminded to consider the correct word and make sure it fits in and is grammatically correct.

In Question 2 Candidates again did very well. The candidates are able to use phrases and sentences from the passage in their answers and this is helpful to them. While it is beneficial for the candidate to show his/her flair for the language by manipulating the language from the passage in their answer, they should remember that they can use phrases and sentences from the passage.

Question 3 was a new skill for this series and the majority of candidates handled this very well. Candidates are reminded to refer to the grade descriptors for guidance with this question. Candidates are asked to write the summary in approximately 100 words. Band 5 describes the question as having been answered within tolerance of the word limit. To be in Band 5 candidates have to cover all the points and be within tolerance with regard to the word limit. The tolerance for the completed passage is 10% above or below. To be fair to all candidates the examiners count the words in this answer.

Candidates are familiar with Question 4 and they are able to show their flair for the language in this section. A lot of candidates showed excellent command of the language and this was pleasing for all examiners. Candidates are reminded to refer to the mark scheme to see the breakdown of the marks. There are seven pieces in the translation each being awarded a possible 5 marks giving a total of 35 for this question. Where a word is given incorrectly in one piece, if repeated, candidates are not penalised twice. The candidates are reminded to read the passage and to consider it in its totality. They should read it twice before attempting the translation. Candidates should look at tenses, genitive, plurals, pronouns and other grammatical points before attempting the translation. The word *Giúdach* was challenging for a lot of candidates. This word appears several times in the passage and candidates were only penalised for the first error. Other grammatical points such as slender plurals (*baill thábhachtacha*) were challenging however they give the stronger candidates the opportunity to show their flair.

Assessment Unit A2 3 Extended Writing

The new specification in languages sees candidates presented with a separate unit (A23) for extended writing and it was obvious that candidates were well-prepared and were, for the most part, very competent at producing essays fit for purpose. New and some returning texts provided centres with the opportunity to pursue new areas of interest in literature.

In order to look at how marks are distributed for this unit, it is perhaps best to clarify what the Assessment Objectives mean.

AO2 (Understanding) 35 marks can be awarded for how well the candidate answers the question. For example, an examiner here would be looking for an analysis of what the text means, its effect on the reader and how well the candidate has addressed the key terms of the question. Question 2 (b) for example had three parts: Murtach's role, his description as a "seanduine cantalach" and whether it was wise to listen to what he has to say in the play. Question 1 (b) was more straightforward but a good answer would have analysed what Ó Conaire was trying to say by portraying the character of Nóra as he did.

AO4 (Knowledge) 20 marks can be awarded for quotations, references to the text and interpretation of theme, content and, where relevant, context. It would be expected, for example, that any answer on *Lá Fhéile Míchíl* would make reference to the political context of the time.

AO3 20 marks are available for the manipulation of the target language. Candidates should be made aware that examiners mark positively and cognisance will be taken of the expected standard at this level.

Answers on *Anam na Teanga*, a new text for this exam, were, for the most part, very good to excellent. Answers on *Lá Fhéile Míchíl* in the past tended to be very good and this year's offerings did not disappoint. Answers on poetry this year were a mixed bag.

Candidates who studied *Anam na Teanga* produced some fine pieces of work in this exam. Answers were spread evenly over the two options on offer and some of the better candidates managed to achieve full marks. Weaker candidates were able to deal with some aspects of the questions. It was obvious that candidates enjoyed the study of the short story as a genre and examiners recorded their enjoyment of the responses.

Candidates who studied Lá Fhéile Míchíl had done work on the background of the play and used it to inform their responses. Again, answers were evenly spread across the two options and some excellent responses were recorded.

Question 3, the poetry option, usually sees candidates opting for the poem that was printed on the paper and this year was no exception. There was a worrying amount of students, however, who did not seem to fully understand the poem and, as a result, did not deal with huge chunks of the poem when writing their response. Rian na gCos is a poem about the poet going out one morning, coming home that evening and seeing his own footprints in the mud – footprints from his morning journey. He muses on the person that travelled that way in the morning and how he has now become a different person because of what he has experienced between going out in the morning and coming home in the evening. “Is mó mé i mise amháin” refers to Ó Ríordáin’s philosophy that it takes many experiences of the current person – mé – to make up the final fulfilled version of the person – mise. Many candidates who answered on this poem seemed to be unaware of what the poem meant and were unable to gain high marks under AO2. Candidates who answered on the Ó Searcaigh option generally did well but there was evidence, in some cases, that knowledge of the poems was scant because they had been banking on an Ó Searcaigh poem being printed on the paper.

Another aspect of poetry answers that gave cause for concern this year was the fact that candidates opted for “technique spotting” and did not analyse what the poet’s intention is in using the technique in question. Examples included: “Baineann Ó Searcaigh úsáid as uaim.” “Tá samhail in úsáid ag Ó Ríordáin.” This spotting of techniques is not enough on its own. Some explanation of the reason or the effect on the reader needs to accompany it. Something along the lines of: Is maith liom an íomhá “Buicéad stáin na spéire”. Cuidíonn sé leis an léitheoir pictiúr a fheiceáil ina intinn/Sílim go bhfuil an file ag iarraidh pictiúr a tharraingt dúinn agus baineann sé úsáid as rud a bheadh coitianta go leor (buicéad stáin) i ngach teach ag an am sin. Some answers gave the background to one poet’s life while writing about another poet’s work. Thankfully, this error was not prevalent.

While all candidates were able to sustain their writing in the target language, as always, standards in the use of language varied.

Some issues arising:

- roimh a mbíonn;
- níl cliú dá laghad aige;
- ag deireadh an scéal;
- rothar mór an tsaoil;
- baintear sé úsáid as uaim;
- baineann úsáid as uaim; and
- léirítear sé.

Examiners were very pleased with the standard of answers and it is an absolute pleasure to read responses that showed the enjoyment our students got from literature in their native tongue.

Contact details

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