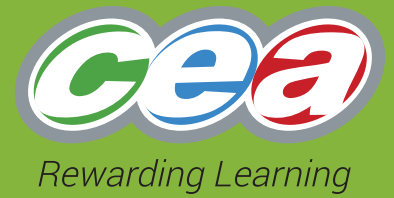


GCE



Chief Examiner's Report Irish

Summer Series 2023



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2023 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

Chief Examiner's Report

Subject Overview

Once again, candidates appeared to have had expert instruction in the handling of the various aspects of the A Level Irish examinations. The provision of Advance Information by CCEA to centres in March paid dividends. Candidates approached all aspects of the examination with confidence, and linguistic skills were apparent throughout. All questions appeared to be accessible to all candidates and some questions proved to be good discriminators with only the more able candidates achieving full marks. There was no evidence of time pressure in any of the papers and some candidates had time to plan, re-read and amend answers where necessary.

At AS Level, students appeared to have bridged the gap between GCSE and AS Level very well. Section C in Paper 2 continues to be a good discriminator, with the better candidates showing a flair for the grammar of Irish.

At A2 Level, candidates continued to produce some excellent work which, in some cases, far exceeded the standard required for this level. Teachers and candidates are to be commended for the standard of work submitted this year at AS and A2 Level.

Assessment Unit AS 1

Speaking

Overview

Visiting examiners reported that centres prepared diligently and appropriately for the AS speaking component and no issues for concern were reported regarding accommodation.

Centres are reminded that the examiner who visits the school may, at times, be accompanied by the Principal Moderator and that this is a normal part of the examination process for the purposes of quality control.

Presentation

Assistant examiners noted that the overall quality of presentations was commendably high. Most candidates exhibited originality and showcased in-depth research, especially on Irish or Irish-language societal topics.

However, a few candidates' presentations, while competent, failed to align with the requirements of AO4, which subsequently limited their potential for higher marks. Centres are reminded of the guidance on Page 11 of the current specification. It emphasises the requirement to knowledgeably discuss their researched Irish-speaking country or community. Further clarification is accessible via the CCEA Microsite for Irish, particularly within the 'A Level revised Specification Clarification information', and the 'GCE (AS) Modern Languages: Instructions and Guidance to Teachers and Candidates Summer 2023' documents.

Presentations must integrate references to Irish contexts beyond mere mentions of *in Éirinn*.

Some candidates did not fully utilise their presentation time. While a few were well-prepared for the introduction, they struggled to continue and seemed to improvise for the rest. Occasionally, nerves hindered candidates from completing their presentations. The most effective presentations were structured logically, presenting data, opinions and facts clearly.

Conversation

Examiners noted their enjoyment in interacting with many proficient and passionate candidates who demonstrated a deep appreciation for Irish and the Gaeltacht. These candidates often employed advanced language structures exceeding the expected AS level standard.

Centres and candidates should remember that examiners don't have pre-set questions. Their goal is to stimulate genuine dialogues that evolve naturally over approximately 8 minutes. Candidates with access to a language assistant typically displayed better pronunciation and fluency.

The most challenging areas for candidates were expanding on ideas beyond factual statements. A minority exhibited inconsistencies, particularly with the copula, verbal noun, sentence structures and irregular verbs.

The visiting examining team remains very grateful to and appreciative of school staff for their warm hospitality during their visits.

Assessment Unit AS 2 Listening, Reading and Use of Language

Overview

Candidates demonstrated a range of abilities within both papers. A good percentage of candidates were able to access the top marks in the listening, reading and writing components while others found some aspects challenging, especially when being assessed under AO3. The provision of AI however allowed for a higher level of performance in Section C this year in comparison to previous series.

Section A Listening

Generally, this section was answered very well by all candidates and the paper was successful in discriminating between candidates of varying abilities. Even the weaker candidates were able to access some of the material while others showed a very high level of understanding.

- Q1** Overall, this question was well handled, and most candidates gained between 6 and 10 out of 10.
- (a) *Déagóir* was answered correctly by most candidates.
 - (b) *Filíocht* caused difficulty for a small number of candidates.
 - (c) *Ar a bealach féin* was generally well answered.
 - (d) *Snagcheol* was generally well answered.
 - (e) *An Fhraincis* caused difficulty for a small number of candidates.
 - (f) *Craoltóir* caused some difficulty for a small number of candidates.
 - (g) *Teagmháil phearsanta* posed very few difficulties.
 - (h) *Na healaíona* proved very difficult for a significant number of candidates.

Q2 Overall, this question was very well understood and showed a very high level of understanding. Most candidates gained between 10 and 15/15.

The language of the paper was at the level of the candidates. They showed a good level of comprehension and were able to gain high marks.

Section B Reading

Generally, this section was answered very well by all candidates and the paper was successful in discriminating between candidates of varying abilities. Even the weaker candidates were able to access some of the material while others showed a very high level of understanding.

Q1 This question was answered well by most candidates as they are awarded marks for answers taken directly from the text. Candidates are advised not to lift whole paragraphs from the text as it may not always demonstrate understanding of the question posed.

Q2 This question gave candidates the opportunity to show their understanding of the language under A02. Most candidates manipulated the translation very well and were able to gain between 10 and 20/20. Some challenging vocabulary included *seoladh*, *sa bhuiséad*, *maoiniú breise a chomhlíonadh* and *ar an tseinnteoir*.

Section C Use of Language

Q1 This question was generally very well handled by the candidates.

Q2 This question was the most challenging for the candidates and the knowledge of numbers was quite limited.

Q3 This question was generally very well answered with candidates displaying an excellent knowledge of the future tense.

Q4 This question was generally very well answered with candidates displaying an excellent knowledge of the use and manipulation of a preposition.

Q5 This question was generally very well answered, however the phrases 'I succeeded' and 'at the same time' did cause difficulty for a small number of candidates.

Assessment Unit AS 3 Extended Writing

Overview

Once again, *Na Gearrscannáin* were the popular choice in this paper. A small number of centres only study *Anne*. There was abundant evidence from work submitted for assessment that candidates had been given the opportunity in class to practise writing essays and most candidates now realise that they are required to cover all three bullet points in the answers.

Examiners have noticed an increase in the number of scripts that are difficult to read.

Teachers are reminded that where a student's handwriting is difficult to read, they should speak to the school SENCO about arrangements for a scribe or the use of assistive technologies to complete their exams under the terms of CCEA's Access Arrangements.

It is essential again this year to sound a note of caution about the rote learning of essays. They do not always 'fit' the bullet points on the exam paper, and candidates are missing out on achieving top marks if they have irrelevant material in their answers.

Long introductions serve no purpose and cannot be credited under any of the AOs. Candidates should start straight away to address the first bullet point. It is advisable to mark essays in class with students using the mark scheme so that students can see where they can gain optimum marks. Top marks in AO4 will only be awarded to answers where 'Detailed knowledge, views, arguments and insights are presented clearly'.

There were fewer examples this year of retelling the story of the film and this is to be commended. There needs to be some level of insight into why a character is presented in a particular way, and some insight into the development of theme/character throughout the work. Some centres appear to deal with aspects of the film in class discussion and encourage students to write their own essays rather than providing prepared essays – these are the excellent examples that examiners comment on.

The level of Irish used was very good in general but some candidates did struggle to write coherently. Some left words out of pre-learned paragraphs and this made it quite difficult to understand what they were trying to say. Some struggled with the effective use of grammar and structures, which at times impeded the examiner's understanding.

As a final point, teachers are asked to remind students that they need to write the number of the question they are attempting in the margin. In some cases, it is not always obvious from the answer given which option is being answered because the essay is so general.

Q1 The majority of candidates answered the questions on *Yu Ming Is Ainm Dom* and answers were divided equally between the two choices this year. It was evident from the responses marked that this paper was fair.

Candidates had a very good understanding that they had to write about the three points given in the question and responses corrected were of adequate length.

- (a) This question was handled better than Option (b). The Advance Information had informed centres that a character would be the focus and candidates had prepared well. Some candidates wrote about Yu Ming's life in China under bullet point 1 and this information was irrelevant.
- (b) Answers to this question gave more cause for concern. Some candidates used information learned by heart for the character of Yu Ming but were unable to manipulate it to suit the bullet points. Under the first bullet point (*na carachtair a mbuaileann Yu Ming leo*), many candidates wrote about the librarian and the shop manager in China and neglected to note that the focus of the question was *an saol Gaelach*. Therefore, this information was irrelevant and precluded the answer entering Band 5 under AO2. Most students are very adept at discussing how colours and sounds contribute to the overall portrayal of a character theme, and this is commendable.

Q2 This question was generally very well handled by the candidates who attempted it.

- (a) In bullet point 1, candidates were able to talk about the teachers and pupils, but could have been more focused in their explanation of their attitude to Irish. There was no need to talk about the *Scrúdaitheoir*. Some made use of the *Scrúdaitheoir* in bullet point 3 as a technique to illustrate *stádas na Gaeilge*. This question was well handled by most candidates, but only the more able dealt well with giving their own opinion on how the theme of *stádas na Gaeilge* was explored in the film.
- (b) Bullet points 1 and 2 were attempted well but the weaker candidates found the bullet point on *réalachas* associated with *saol na scoile* difficult to handle. The more able candidates handled it very well. Many students seemed to have prepared for the theme of school pressures and wrote about this, even though it wasn't a requirement.

Q3 *Clare Sa Spéir* continues to be a popular choice in centres.

- (a) This proved to be the more popular option of the two and students dealt well with the character of Eoin. Bullet point 3, which dealt with Eoin's development as a character throughout the course of the film, was handled very well by most candidates.
- (b) As with Option (a), this option was well-answered by the majority of candidates who undertook it. All 3 bullet points elicited good responses.

Q4 Overall, the answers produced on *Anne* were very good although this text is not as popular as the short films. Option (a) on the character proved the more popular option of the two.

- (a) All three bullet points were dealt with well by the small number of candidates who study this text.
- (b) Very few candidates opted for this question. Those who did, produced sound essays which held their focus on the bullet points.

Assessment Unit A2 1 Speaking

Overview

The examining team of twelve visiting examiners was very experienced at GCE level. Many examiners reported extremely well-prepared candidates, many of whom outperformed the level of attainment required to obtain full marks in the AIR11 Unit. Centres, candidates and teachers deserve huge credit for their diligent work in preparing candidates for this demanding examination. It is difficult to imagine that our other modern languages teams have the pleasure on an annual basis of conducting oral examinations with so many fluent or near-fluent candidates.

There were, of course, some candidates whom visiting examiners found were less well-prepared.

Schools should be aware that the Examiner who visits the school, may at times, be accompanied by the Principal Moderator and that this is a normal part of the examination process for the purposes of quality control.

Discussion

Some faltered in the Discussion element of the examination, where their research of the topic seemed limited, where the topic itself was either too narrow or too extensive, or where candidates were reliant on fluency and neglected to provide evidence, insights, views etc. as required by the mark-scheme. In some cases, candidates included elements in their chosen topics which were barely allowable according to the specification. It is not feasible for a visiting examiner to refuse a candidate a chosen topic on the day of the exam, but topics must align with the requirements of the specification, and it is the responsibility of teachers to ensure as far as possible that this is understood by candidates. It was also noticeable in some centres that candidates did not avail of the initial one-minute period designated for an introduction of their chosen topic, and in others candidates appeared to run out of material after only four minutes (approximately six minutes is recommended for this element of the exam).

Conversation

Many of the students were capable of very natural conversation, and were willing to expand on, elaborate and develop their answers, using their own initiative to great effect. Some candidates who had excellent comprehension of the examiner's questions were unfortunately reluctant to develop answers beyond short, perfunctory sentences. Centres should perhaps be reminded to encourage their candidates to show the examiner the highest level of interaction of which they are capable. Examiners continue to encourage candidates to express and justify opinions at a complex level. It is regrettable that some candidates with a high level of fluency are losing marks through repeated reliance on English vocabulary in answering wholly predictable questions about themselves. The names of school subjects, the word for university, the words for prospective careers, etc. are not nouns for which an A2 student of Irish should have to fall back on English. I should emphasise that I am not referring to highly technical or obtuse language, but language which is the nuts and bolts of frequently-referenced elements of the specification.

We are very lucky that these minor gripes are what exercise us, as we continue to have superb candidates prepared superbly by their teachers. *Gura fada buan iad!*

Assessment Unit A2 2 Listening and Reading

Overview

The candidates performed very well, on the whole, in this section. The paper was accessible to all candidates and there was a good range of marks.

Section A Listening

Q1 Overall, the answers produced were very good.

- (a) Some candidates had difficulty with the words *teiripe*, *traenalaí* and *lúchair*. *Cairdiúil* proved to be a challenge to some candidates. The more able candidates were able to score full marks.
- (b) Candidates are reminded that where two marks are available, two pieces of information will be required; some marks were lost in Part (g) and Part (h) as only one piece of information was given.

Q2 This question was dealt with very well by most candidates.

- (c) Some candidates had difficulty with the phrase *breis agus*.
- (h) Many candidates had difficulty with the word *saothar*.

Section B Reading

Overview

This paper allowed the candidates to show their flair for the language. The more able candidates were able to gain top marks in all sections. The paper allowed for differentiation and examiners reported that they used the full range of marks.

- Q1** This question proved to be challenging for all but the most able candidates. Parts (a) and (e) proved the most challenging.
- Q2** This question was manipulated very well by most candidates. The candidates can use the language from the passage which makes the paper accessible.
- Q3** The answers to this question demonstrated that candidates are adept at reading and summarising passages, and they were able to access the top bands in many cases. Where candidates performed very well, they were able to summarise the main points within the word limit.
- Q4** The translation into the target language remains the most challenging part of this unit. The most able candidates were able to present the original information using excellent grammar and structures, but it was evident that weaker candidates struggled with rendering some of the vocabulary and complex structures accurately. Even where minor errors occurred, the candidates could still gain 4/5 marks for the section.

Assessment Unit A2 3 Extended Writing

Overview

Candidates performed well considering the disruption of recent years. There were some superb answers that showed sophistication of literary analysis. The type of task on this paper allows those of differing abilities to achieve according to their abilities. Even where candidates had difficulties with their manipulation of the target language, they were still able to make themselves understood well enough to gain marks on AO2 and AO4.

Once again, it was reassuring to mark pieces of extended writing in the target language that exemplified best practice in centres. Some responses were awarded full marks under all 3 assessment objectives and they far exceeded the standard for this level.

Some essays demonstrated exceptional standards of analysis – particularly on *Lá Fhéile Míchil* – and showed an understanding of the context in which the play was written and how this contributed to the theme of conflict.

This year again, there were essays that were learned by heart and this is not the best way for candidates to get high marks. The essay doesn't always 'fit' the question asked, and cannot, therefore, reach the higher mark bands in either AO2 or AO4. Under AO2, the essay must remain focussed on the requirements of the question throughout: 'Material relates very well to the task.'

There was no evidence that candidates were pressed for time and examiners commented that some candidates had time to plan their work before starting to write.

Q1 *Anam na Teanga*

- (a) This was by far the more popular answer on this text. Candidates seem to favour a question that allows them to analyse the short story.
- (b) This option was not handled as well as Option (a) and there was some evidence that candidates had prepared a general analysis of this story and were therefore unable to narrow their response to the discussion of a character. Teachers are asked to remind students that it is not a good idea to try to predict questions.

Q2 *Lá Fhéile Míchil*

- (a) This question was answered very well by nearly all candidates. Students showed that they had excellent knowledge of the play and were able to offer mature opinions on the theme of conflict.
- (b) There were some excellent essays on this option. Some students were able to analyse the character at a very high level. Where answers were weaker, they tended to re-tell events of the play and only occasionally mentioned Emmet's role in those events. Under both options, candidates scored highly on their knowledge of the text (AO4).

Q3 Filíocht

- (a) This option was not answered well by many candidates. Students seemed to have focussed on only one of Ó Searcaigh's poems in their revision, and were unable to talk at any great length on two or more poems that dealt with the theme of a sense of place. There were some answers that dealt effectively with the question.
- (b) This option was by far the more popular. As in previous years, it is worth mentioning that candidates do not gain the high marks they are capable of by failing to mention poetic techniques such as poetic voice, alliteration, assonance, imagery, rhythm and rhyme. Some candidates are relying too heavily on summarising the content of the poem. There were some instances of misinterpretation of the poem. Some candidates felt Ó Ríordáin had gone out for a walk and was unable to find the key on his return home. Disappointingly, very few candidates were able to explain the poet's coining of the term ... *le go ríordánóinn* ...

There was evidence that remarks in last year's Chief Examiner's Report about lengthy introductions had been heeded because these were less in evidence this year.

Teachers are again advised to use the CCEA Mark Schemes as common practice when marking students' essays or in peer-marking exercises in the classroom. This will let students see what they need to do to gain optimum marks under each assessment objective.

Contact details

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