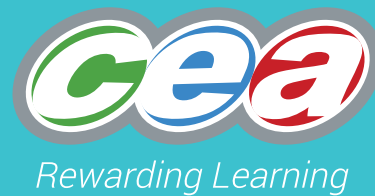


GCSE



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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GCSE Irish

Chief Examiner's Report

Subject Overview

The Summer 2023 series of examinations required candidates to undertake a full suite of examinations across all four GCSE Irish Units whilst offering a degree of support and direction through the provision of Advanced Information to aid with and focus candidates' revision.

As an examination team, we endeavour to ensure that all candidates are given the opportunity to showcase what they have learned during their study of GCSE Irish. This is achieved through the production of engaging and challenging examinations, across the four Units, which cover the breadth of the GCSE course. By doing so, we aim to ultimately allow candidates to be credited for the knowledge and understanding they have gained within the parameters of the Specification across the typical two years of GCSE study.

As always, the work of the teachers and support staff across all centres in preparing candidates to sit examinations is commendable. The dedication and skilled delivery of the GCSE Irish Specification in centres has empowered candidates to engage with the examination process in a well-prepared and competent manner, leading many to achieve highly.

I wish to express my gratitude to those who took the time to feedback their opinions on the various examinations. Any opinion expressed to the examination team is welcomed and is always treated with due diligence to ensure fair and positive outcomes for current and future candidates.

As centres continue to deliver the GCSE Irish Specification to candidates, I would encourage both teachers and future candidates alike to take cognizance of the advice and points of information contained within this report to assist in informing future teaching and learning and to ultimately lead to the continued successful study of GCSE Irish.

Assessment Unit 1 Listening

Foundation Tier

Overview

Candidates performed reasonably well in this unit. This was evidenced by the mean for the paper this year being higher than last year's mean. The paper was designed to allow candidates to feel a degree of success throughout and examiner feedback indicated that most candidates answered all questions. Generally, candidates responded positively to the multiple-choice questions which were designed to help candidates achieve their potential. It is essential, however, to highlight the importance of reading the rubrics for each question carefully. In 2022 there were examples of a small number of students selecting additional answers; this year, however, it was noted that a few candidates ticked only one answer in instances where two were required.

The fact that there are sixty marks available in this paper is reflected in the range of vocabulary being tested. It is worth pointing out that the Minimum Core Vocabulary list in the CCEA GCSE Specification is an essential guide in assisting candidates to prepare for the Foundation Listening examination.

- Q1** Very few candidates did not score marks in this question, but some found the date challenging in Part (a).
- Q2** Vocabulary for school items proved very accessible for the majority of candidates, and over 50% of the cohort achieved full marks in this question.
- Q3** This question was generally well answered by candidates.
- Q4** The response to this question was very pleasing. Very few candidates did not achieve a mark, and a majority of candidates scored good marks.
- Q5** On the whole candidates did well in this question and Part (c) in particular was very well answered. The most challenging part proved to be Part (b) where candidates had to recognise the words *bó* and *capall*.
- Q6** More than 50% of the candidates achieved some marks in this question. Parts (a) and (d) were generally better answered by candidates whilst some found Parts (f) and (g) more challenging. *Ag casacht* was not widely understood.
- Q7** Most candidates gave two answers for each part of this question. The format of this question has been used several times in previous years and examples of it can be practiced by referencing past papers. Parts (b) and (d) were the main discriminators in this question, but over 70% of candidates achieved both marks in Part (c).
- Q8** Generally, candidates handled this question quite well. Over 50% of candidates achieved two marks in both Parts (a) and (b). A small number of candidates only ticked one answer in each part of this question.
- Q9** This question proved to be accessible for candidates and was well answered by a majority of candidates.
- Q10** This question produced a range of marks. Candidates scored very well in Part (b) but found some of the other parts more challenging. *Troscáin* was not widely correctly identified by candidates.
- Q11** Only a minority of candidates did not manage to achieve marks in this question, but most tended to score better in Part (a) than Part (b).
- Q12** This question was effectively handled by candidates, and it was answered very well. Over 50% of candidates achieved full marks. Parts (e) and (f) proved to be very accessible with over 70% of candidates achieving the marks in both these sections.

Higher Tier

Overview

Most candidates responded positively to the mixture of question styles in this paper. The multiple-choice questions, in particular, allowed candidates of all abilities to access marks and the paper also contained some questions which were discriminators to cater for differentiation. It is interesting to note that the mean in the paper this year was higher than last year's mean, and a number of questions were very well answered by most candidates. There were several questions throughout the paper in which over 90% of the candidature achieved the marks allocated to them.

It was very pleasing this year to see fewer blank answers in scripts with most candidates attempting all questions. Assistant examiner feedback highlighted that, where answers were omitted, it was mainly for Question 12. Generally, candidates are now following the rubrics better and don't seem to be adding additional responses for tick box questions. However, it is important to note that a number of candidates mistakenly answered some questions in Irish instead of English.

The fact that there are sixty marks available in this paper is reflected in the range of vocabulary being tested. It is worth pointing out that the Minimum Core Vocabulary list in the CCEA GCSE specification is an essential guide in assisting candidates to prepare for the Higher Listening examination.

- Q1** Only a very small percentage of candidates missed out on achieving marks in this question. For a few, the words *léitheoireacht* and *garraíodóireacht* proved challenging.
- Q2** This question produced a range of marks. Over 90% of candidates achieved a mark for Part (b) but Part (c) proved to be a challenge for some. In Part (d) slightly over half of the candidates correctly chose the word *troscáin* as the answer.
- Q3** The response to this question was very pleasing as only a minority of candidates did not manage to achieve marks in this question. Most tended to score better in Part (a) than in Part (b) which proved to be a good discriminator.
- Q4** Generally, this question was very well handled by most with over 90% of the candidature achieving marks in four parts of the question.
- Q5** This question proved to be very accessible for candidates. Parts (a) and (c) were largely very well answered.
- Q6** Part (a) was answered well, but part (b) was challenging for some candidates. The majority of candidates achieved one out of the available two marks in Part (b), but some candidates were not familiar with the word *aonach*.
- Q7** Generally, this question was well handled, but the word *beart* was a challenge for some.
- Q8** Most candidates managed this question very well, and answered it effectively and scored good marks. Part (c) which contained the phrase *Bruachbhaile na cathrach* was the discriminator in this question.
- Q9** Candidates need to be reminded that they must write their answers in English in Section B of this paper. Although candidates responded positively to this question, some struggled to interpret *daoine gan dídean* and *daoine dífhostaithe*. Candidates also need to ensure that they carefully read the question wording to help them concentrate on selecting the key information required for the answer. In Part (b), several candidates missed the importance of the question 'Who' and offered 'coats' as an answer.
- Q10** The parts within this question were designed to allow for differentiation between candidates. In Part (a) sometimes the loose interpretation of information caused candidates to lose the marks, for example by giving such answers as, 'bad/terrible weather'. Statistics show that nearly 75% of the candidates gained a mark in Part (b), but Parts (c) and (d) were more challenging. *Reoiteoir* and *abhainn* were clear discriminators.
- Q11** The multiple-choice format of this question facilitated candidates to achieve their potential, and it was very well answered. Over 88% of candidates gained marks in Parts (a), (b) and (c) of this question.
- Q12** This question proved more challenging, but this is to be expected at this stage of the paper. The final question enables the most able candidates to achieve marks to allow them to access the top grades. Part (a) was mostly well answered, and over 50% of candidates achieved a mark in Part (f). In Part (c), *Stáit* appears to have been misinterpreted for 'stadium' or 'station'. Assistant examiners reported that candidates frequently missed out on the marks for Part (e). *Cáilíochtaí* was mixed up with *cailíní*.

Assessment Unit 2 Speaking

Overview

This was the first year since the disruption caused by Covid 19 that this unit was universally examined, and examiners were impressed with the amount of work and effort that had gone into the preparation for this Unit. Although some issues did arise, the conduct and outcomes of the assessment were pleasingly successful.

A small number of centres seem to be unfamiliar with the format of the Speaking Examination. The format of the examination is as follows:

- 2 Role Plays
- 1 Prepared conversation based on the Pre-Release topic (this is NOT a presentation) – all three tenses should be covered in this conversation.
- 1 unprepared conversation – again all three tenses should be covered in this conversation.

Recordings

The quality of the recordings for the most part was excellent; however, we did have some issues, e.g. a lot of noise in the background. Centres should be mindful that this is an examination and conditions should be such that neither the candidate nor the teacher examiner should be distracted by excessive noise. Care also should be taken to ensure that the recording device is placed near to the candidate, particularly in the case of a candidate who is very softly spoken. It would appear that uploading a large number of candidates is quite time-consuming, so centres need to be aware that they need to factor this time element into their assessment schedule. It is also important that extreme care is taken when uploading tasks to ensure that all details are accurate.

Q1 Role Plays

In general, the Role Plays were well received, and candidates performed well in them. It may be helpful to teachers and candidates alike, however, to take note of the following advice.

- Candidates do not have to answer in full sentences if a phrase conveys full communication e.g. *Cá ndeachaigh tú ag deireadh na seachtaine? – go dtí an dioscó* would be a perfectly acceptable answer.
- However, if a candidate does use a verb, the verb must be in the correct tense e.g. *Cá ndeachaigh tú ag deireadh na seachtaine? - Chuaigh mé go dtí an dioscó* would be awarded 2 out of 2 marks but *Téim chuig an dioscó* would only achieve 1 out of 2 marks.
- If a candidate uses just a phrase but a preposition is required then the preposition must be included in the response e.g. *Cá ndeachaigh tú ag deireadh na seachtaine? go dtí an dioscó* would achieve 2 out of 2 marks) but *dioscó* on its own would only be awarded 1 out of 2 marks.
- Candidates do not have to extend their responses in the Roleplays. Short, accurate responses are the most successful.
- Candidates should also take care in ensuring that they give as much information as possible on their Role Play Preparation Sheet and that what they write is legible.

- When in the examination room, the candidate should only have their preparation sheet available to them.
- The Role Play task that required the candidate to ask a question was the task that candidates found most challenging. It may be beneficial to give candidates practice in asking questions in future teaching.
- Teachers need to be aware that it is not acceptable to deviate from the script of the Role Plays. Teachers must not rephrase or translate a stimulus, nor can they use a stimulus of their own; they must keep strictly to the script.
- Teachers should ensure that they keep the candidates' preparation sheets until after the remark period as they can be requested in the case of a 'missed element' in the Role Play or if a recording is incomplete.
- Teachers also need to be mindful of the individual candidate's choice of Role Plays in relation to the rest of the examination e.g. if a candidate chooses Context for Learning 1 for their Role Plays and the Pre Release Topic is from Context for Learning 2, then the unprepared conversation must be based on a topic from Context for Learning 3.

Q2 Pre-Release Topic

This part of the examination was very successful. Candidates had prepared well for the speaking examination, and it was evident that they both appreciated and used the fact that they had control over this element. Candidates tended to showcase their language skills well in this task and the fluency and confidence of the better candidates were impressive. Again, it might be helpful to all to take note of the following observations:

- Candidates should strive to extend their answers giving as much information as they can without turning their response into a mini presentation.
- Candidates should listen carefully to the tense in which they are asked the question and respond in that tense.
- Candidates should try to incorporate language which gives their response a 'natural feel' e.g. *creid nó ná creid, leis an fhírinne a dhéanamh*, etc.
- There is no longer a requirement for a candidate to ask a question in this part of the examination.
- Candidates should include Past, Present and Future tenses in their responses and endeavour to use a variety of language structures e.g. indirect speech, prepositional phrases etc.
- Candidates should ensure that they give and justify their opinions, saying what they think and why.
- Teachers should ensure that they ask open-ended questions to allow the candidates to extend their answers and avoid one-sentence responses.
- Teachers should include questions in Past, Present and Future tenses.
- Teachers should ensure that candidates get the opportunity to give and justify their opinions.
- Teachers should be mindful of the time factor. This part of the examination should not exceed 4/5 minutes.
- Teachers can rephrase a question in this part of the examination, but cannot translate it.

Q3 Unprepared conversation

This part of the assessment was perhaps not as successful as the other two parts. The advice given for the conduct of Question 2 is of course totally relevant to the conduct of the unprepared conversation, and candidates should ensure that they prepare as well for this element as they do for the Pre-Release topic as it does carry the same number of marks. Again, candidates and teachers alike may find the following points helpful.

- Teachers should ensure that the unprepared conversation covers the required Context for Learning e.g. Role Plays (CL 2), Pre-Release (CL 3) then Unprepared Conversation must be from CL1. All 3 Contexts for Learning must be covered in the Speaking Examination.
- It is not necessary to ask questions on all the topics from any Context for Learning e.g. if CL 2 is chosen, then it is sufficient to ask questions on Travel or Tourism.
- Teachers should be mindful of the time element. The length of the unprepared conversation should be more or less the same as the length of time devoted to the Pre-Release topic.
- Again, candidates must be given the opportunity to answer questions in the Past, Present and Future Tenses

General

As mentioned at the onset, the standard of the speaking examination this year was high, and the quality of the work was excellent. We are mindful of the burden of administration of this Unit and the number of things that both teachers and candidates have to keep their eye on to ensure a successful outcome. We would like to congratulate both teachers and candidates alike for the hard work and effort that was so evident in this series and wish all concerned equal success in 2024.

Assessment Unit 3 Reading

Foundation Tier

Overview

The 2023 Summer Examinations series was the third time, since the inception of the 2017 GCSE Irish Specification, that candidates were presented with a Foundation Reading paper in the 60-mark format. This allowed candidates to access 25% of the overall marks available for GCSE Irish through demonstrating their ability to read and comprehend the written word.

The familiar 12-question layout of the Foundation Tier paper, with an overlap of 4 questions which also feature on the Higher Tier paper, required candidates to engage with a variety of question styles such as selecting answers from 3 written or pictorial options, gap-filling, translation into English and written responses in English.

Assistant examiners reported that candidates had generally been able to cope very well with the various question styles. It was noted, however, that, when providing written answers, candidates should try to ensure that they discriminate between the information required for an accurate answer and to not also provide further information that has no relevance to the required answer.

Approximately 14% of the overall cohort of candidates opted to sit GIH31, Foundation Tier Reading. The following observations were noted by the examiners whilst marking the candidates' work.

- Q1** This question required candidates to engage with familiar vocabulary. On average, over 60% of candidates achieved full marks for this question.
- Q2** Candidates were required to engage with some topic-specific vocabulary relating to New Technology. Almost 70% of candidates achieved full marks for this question. Common mistakes included selecting too many or too few answers, as well as mistaking *ríomhaire glúine* for an image of a computer instead of a laptop.
- Q3** In this question, candidates were challenged to match sentences based on Sports with the appropriate images. Over 80% of candidates achieved full marks for this question.
- Q4** In this question, based on Festivals and Celebrations, candidates were required to write answers in English. Approximately 77% of all the responses to Question 4 were accurate. One common mistake noted was a misunderstanding of the phrase *Oíche Shamhna* with many candidates offering Summer as an incorrect answer.
- Q5** 99.5% of candidates were awarded at least 1 of 4 marks available for this question with approximately 44% of candidates achieving full marks. Some candidates struggled to understand the phrase *cois farraige*.
- Q6** This six-part question presented candidates with a mixture of challenges. A high percentage of candidates were awarded marks for Parts (a), (c) and (f) with the most challenge presenting in Part (d). Approximately 40% of candidates were unable to show an understanding of the phrase *ag glanadh*.
- Q7** This tick box question, based on Healthy lifestyle, offered some opportunity for candidates with a good command of vocabulary and comprehension to discriminate between the correct answers and the alternative incorrect answers available. It is worth remembering that in questions such as these, only two answers should be offered as directed.
- Q8** This four-part translation question, based on Holidays, presented some challenge for many candidates. The most successfully-answered part was (b), with approximately 75% of candidates being awarded the full two marks available. Common mistakes across Question 8 included misuse of tenses and incorrect verbs.
- Q9** Question 9 is the first question in Section B which requires candidates to respond in Irish. This is also the first of four overlap questions which appear on both the Foundation and Higher Tier examinations. In general, this question was well handled by candidates, with the most successful part being (a) which was answered correctly by approximately 72% of candidates. Part (e) was the most challenging for candidates; many candidates may have misunderstood the word *cosc* when selecting the incorrect answer.
- Q10** This question, which required candidates to select the correct answer from three written options, allowed for some effective differentiation between candidates, with a reasonably even mixture of both correct and incorrect answers across the six parts of the question. Common mistakes included some misunderstanding of time indicators.
- Q11** In general, candidates responded very well to this question on *Saol na hOibre*, with most challenge being met in Parts (b) and (f). Candidates are encouraged not to leave any questions unanswered, especially where a multiple-choice option is available. If unsure of the correct answer, candidates should, where possible, try to eliminate any option they believe is wrong and make an attempt at selecting the correct answer.

Q12 This final question, based on *Saol na hOllscoile*, assessed the candidates' ability to understand a lot of familiar vocabulary in use alongside some less familiar vocabulary, as well as dealing with negative phrases. Many candidates were able to select the correct answers from the options available.

Candidates are to be congratulated on how well they responded to this examination which covered a wide variety of GCSE Irish topics. Thorough revision of the minimum core vocabulary list, as well as additional broader learning was evident.

Assessment Unit 3 Reading

Higher Tier

Unit Overview

Approximately 86% of the overall cohort opted to sit GIH32, Higher Tier Reading. This high percentage of candidates who feel equipped to deal with the rigours of Higher Tier Reading is indicative of the high-quality teaching and learning taking place in centres.

In GIH32, candidates were presented a paper with a familiar 12-question layout in the 60-mark format. This allowed candidates to access 25% of the overall marks available for GCSE Irish through demonstrating their ability to read and comprehend the written word.

In a similar way to Foundation Tier, candidates were presented with a variety of question styles in English and in Irish, including written response in English, translating into English, gap-filling and selecting from 3 pictorial or written options.

In general, candidates coped well with the format of the various question styles; however, it is worth remembering that candidates should only select or provide the exact number of answers asked for in each question. When written answers are required, candidates should try to provide only the information that offers an accurate answer and not other information that is irrelevant to the required answer.

The team of examiners reported the following observations whilst marking the work of candidates from various centres:

- Q1** Question 1 is the first question in Section A which requires candidates to respond in Irish. This is also the first of four overlap questions which appear on both the Foundation and Higher Tier examinations. In general, this question was very well handled by candidates with the most challenging part being Part (e); many candidates may have misunderstood the word *cosc* when selecting the incorrect answer.
- Q2** This question was generally very well answered by candidates with the greatest challenge presenting in Parts (b) and (e) where candidates were tested on time indicators. This is similar to the performance seen at Foundation Tier on this question.
- Q3** This question, based on *Saol na hOibre*, was generally well answered by candidates with the greatest challenge presenting in Parts (b) and (f). This is similar to the performance seen at Foundation Tier on this question. Candidates are encouraged to draw understanding from the passages presented and not to expect to be able to lift an answer directly from the passage.

- Q4** This question, based on *Saol na hOllscoile*, was generally well answered by candidates. In comparison to their counterparts sitting the Foundation Tier paper, these candidates performed proportionately better than their peers. This highlights the importance of ensuring that candidates are entered for the tier of entry most akin to their ability in order to ensure a positive examination experience and successful outcomes.
- Q5** Question 5 is the first question in Section B in which candidates are required to respond in English. This question, based on describing people, required candidates to translate from Irish to English. Parts (a) and (b) were very well answered with an average of approximately 85% of candidates achieving full marks for this part. Many candidates faced more challenge in Parts (c) and (d). Common mistakes included misunderstanding *pósta* to mean job/employed and *páiste aonair* to mean having a child.
- Q6** This question, based on Technology problems, was generally well answered by most candidates. The most challenging Part was (a) whereby approximately 44% of candidates struggled to understand *clóscríobh* as the specific vocabulary needed for the answer.
- Q7** Approximately 73% of candidates were awarded the full four marks available for this question based on Going out. Candidates are reminded that in questions such as these, only two answers should be offered as directed.
- Q8** This question, based on Christmas presents, allowed for some effective differentiation between candidates as approximately 66% of candidates struggled to identify and understand *díomá* as the vocabulary needed for the correct answer.
- Q9** In this question, candidates were presented with information relating to the Town and countryside. Parts (b) and (c) relating to anti-social behaviour and countryside scenery presented the most challenge for approximately 40% of candidates. It is worth noting that answers should be offered 'according to the text' and not based on a general assumption.
- Q10** In general, candidates responded very well to this question based on Community involvement. Many candidates were able to draw understanding and select correct answers which were embedded in a stimulus on a less common topic.
- Q11** This penultimate question, based on Health, allowed for candidates with a good command of topic-specific vocabulary to be awarded marks accordingly. An average of approximately 31% of candidates successfully identified and understood *oideas* and *mo ghualainn* as the correct answers to Parts (b) and (c). Please note that unless otherwise indicated, only one answer should be offered for questions.
- Q12** This final question, based on Tourism in Ireland, allowed for the most competent candidates to showcase their understanding and be awarded marks accordingly. Candidates are encouraged to ensure that they read the entirety of the stimulus passage before offering written answers as the correct answer may be embedded later in the text. Many candidates missed out on the marks available for Parts (c) and (d) due to simply directly translating the parts of the stimulus passage they deemed to be relevant rather than digesting the information and offering coherent answers.

Overall, candidates are to be praised for how well they dealt with this examination which challenged them to decipher and understand vocabulary and language structure from a broad range of GCSE topics.

Assessment Unit 4 Writing

Foundation Tier

Overview

This is the fourth year that the writing element of this examination has been offered in the format of an examination as opposed to Controlled Assessment, and the new examination format should now be more familiar to both candidates and teachers. The disruption to the examination series in 2020 and 2021 did certainly impact the skill of writing, the understanding and application of grammatical rules, the learning of vocabulary and the structuring of sentences. CCEA's journey back to pre-pandemic standards is ongoing, but Assistant Examiners found that the paper was generally accessible to all candidates with the majority of students engaging well with each question, assisted by the clear rubric in use throughout the papers. Advance Information had also been issued prior to the examination series as a support measure. The papers at both Foundation and Higher Tiers provided opportunities for candidates of varying abilities to display their knowledge and skill to achieve marks. Both communication and accuracy remain key components in the awarding of marks for the skill of writing, but it is important to remember that GCSE students are young modern language learners and, as such, can attain full marks in this paper, without producing 'error-free' responses.

In questions 1 and 2, the emphasis is on communication for marking purposes.

- Q1 (a)** This was a very open-ended question allowing candidates to display their breadth of vocabulary. A small number of candidates identified other foods as opposed to fruit and vegetables, or added a suffix to an English word. This meant they were unable to be awarded marks for their response, but the nature of the question meant that fairly accurately written nouns were permissible providing that they made contextual sense.
- (b)** While the rubric requested candidates to provide a 'suitable phrase (of 2-3 words)', some candidates responded with a sentence, at times penalising themselves by making mistakes or writing material which did not tie in with the context. Again, the open-ended nature of the question meant candidates could use their vocabulary as they saw fit, and there were some creative interpretations of what a healthy lifestyle entails. Some candidates responded to the instruction with a sport or activity e.g. *ag imirt peile* or *cispheil*, an activity related to healthy eating e.g. *ólaim uisce* or a lifestyle choice e.g. *luí go luath* or *caint le mo chairde*. It should be noted that it is not necessary for candidates to use a verb or particular tense in responding to this question. One-word answers do not qualify as a 'suitable phrase' and can only achieve a maximum of one mark.
- Q2** This question is the overlap question with the Higher paper. Candidates generally coped well with this question and used appropriate sentence structures with the correct tense to form their response. Candidates are reminded that full sentences should be used in the responses required in this question. On occasion, where candidates had written too much information, it often gave rise to errors in both spelling and grammar. In a minority of instances, candidates opted not to offer responses or provided irrelevant information. Some candidates struggled with sentence structure in Part 2(e) about whether or not they enjoyed their day e.g. *is maith liom* was a common response, with the correct verbal form not being used.

In questions 3 and 4, marks are awarded for communication and accuracy.

- Q3** This question proved challenging for a number of candidates. The closed nature of the sentences to be translated resulted in inaccuracies in vocabulary, verbal forms and sentence structure. That said, many candidates attempted each strand of the translation with reasonable degrees of success. Almost a third of candidates were able to use accurate vocabulary and structures leading to partial or full marks depending on the response, though tense issues were prevalent and the word *cineálta* eluded a lot of candidates. Accuracy is key for this section and candidates are reminded that all elements of the sentence must be accurately translated. The most challenged candidates did not attempt to provide any responses to this question, and a significant proportion of candidates failed to achieve any marks at all.
- Q4** Candidates had a choice of three questions to choose from and the Advance Information issued to centres and candidates in schools, colleges and via the CCEA website did have an impact on candidate response. Some candidates learned essays off on the topics specified in the Advance Information and reproduced them in the exam, regardless of whether or not they were totally relevant to the specified bullet points, especially for Contexts 2 and 3. The option for Context 3 on Subject choices was least chosen while the majority opted to go for Context 1 or Context 2 with slightly more candidates opting to answer on Context 1. While Context 1 was most popular, descriptions of family members proved problematic for most candidates who found it difficult to use the correct pronoun or possessive adjective. Candidates are expected to write approximately 20-25 words per bullet point with five clear paragraphs, equally balanced in content. Some candidates addressed three or four out of five bullet points relatively well but fell down especially in addressing the other bullet point(s). In Context 1, this was the point about housework, in Context 2 it was the advantages and disadvantages of living in the area and in Context 3, work experience.

In addition, throughout the essay, candidates are expected to include some ideas and opinions and justification for those. The most successful candidates presented such essays and demonstrated a reasonably proficient command of the language at this level. In those instances where candidates did not perform as well, it was usually as a result of missing or incomplete bullet points, a lack of development or the grammatical knowledge to construct logical and coherent sentences or insufficient vocabulary. Writing a sustained piece of work did prove challenging for most candidates at this level of entry. Students should practise writing in short, simple sentences and developing bullet points with a few sentences for each one in preparation for this module of the examination.

Higher Tier

Overview

This is the fourth year that the writing element of this examination has been offered in the format of an examination as opposed to Controlled Assessment, and the new examination format should now be more familiar to both candidates and teachers. The disruption to the examination series in 2020 and 2021 did certainly impact the skill of writing, the understanding and application of grammatical rules, the learning of vocabulary and the structuring of sentences. CCEA's journey back to pre-pandemic standards is ongoing, but Assistant Examiners found that the paper was generally accessible to all candidates with the majority of students engaging well with each question, assisted by the clear rubric in use throughout the papers. Advance Information had also been issued prior to the examination series as a compensatory measure.

The papers at both Foundation and Higher Tiers provided opportunities for candidates of varying abilities to display their knowledge and skill to achieve marks. Both communication and accuracy remain key components in the awarding of marks for the skill of writing, but it is important to remember that GCSE students are young modern language learners and, as such, can attain full marks in this paper, without producing 'error-free' responses.

Candidates engaged with this paper fairly well, bearing in mind the effects of the pandemic alongside the fact that schools are still adjusting to the requirements of the new specification. For some, the opportunities provided were used to show off their proficiency in the language, but for others there was evidence to demonstrate that candidates experienced difficulties around verbs, tenses and knowledge of sufficient vocabulary to develop topics and bullet points. Saying that, the majority of candidates achieved a reasonable standard. It is important that candidates focus on regular, short, accurate, writing tasks throughout their GCSE Irish journey.

Q1 This was the overlap question with the Foundation paper and was generally well-answered. Candidates who used simple, concise Irish in these questions tended to score the maximum mark available. Those who used longer, more complex structures with extraneous information risked losing marks through inaccuracy. Some candidates pre-empted further responses within the question in Parts 1 and 2 by giving additional detail and then had to repeat their response. Furthermore, for full communication to occur, it was important that candidates selected a verb in a tense which responded appropriately to the question.

Q2 The majority of candidates responded very well to this question on hobbies (film and the cinema) though some candidates were unable to achieve full marks as they simply named films as opposed to describing them. The fact that the response required students to respond in all three tenses did challenge a significant proportion of students who experienced some confusion with verbs. Part 2(e) saw many candidates use the future tense correctly or verb forms which implied the future tense such as *Ba mhaith liom dul amárach* or *Tá mé ag dul go dtí an phictiúrlann ag an deireadh seachtaine*.

Both questions 1 and 2 saw a large number of candidates consistently confuse the spellings of *greannmhar* and *grianmhar*. Again, in both questions, some candidates tried to use complex language structures and vocabulary when simple language would have sufficed and failed to attain full marks as a result.

Q3 The translation question was undoubtedly the most challenging for candidates and, for that reason, candidate success varied on this question. Many students lacked the vocabulary required in this question, despite the issue of Advance Information, which identified Social and Global issues as a topic of concern within Context 2. It is vital to note that accurate translation is key in this question, and while some candidates came up with excellent alternative options to the sentences to be translated, unfortunately these improvised responses could not be credited as accurate translations. In Part 3(a), for example, marks could not be awarded for *bruscar* as opposed to *truailliú* as rubbish does not equate to pollution. In Part (b) forms of *sráid* were acceptable but not of *bóthar* and vice versa in Part (c). Candidates found the words *barraíocht* and *iompar* for 'too many' and 'transport' challenging and found it difficult to differentiate between 'we must' and 'we should'. It is pleasing to note that the word *áthchúrsáil* was familiar to about two thirds of candidates. That said, those candidates who did attempt this section achieved varying degrees of accuracy. Candidates are reminded that all aspects of the paper should be attempted and encouraged to attempt each response, as opposed to not offering a response at all.

Q4 As with the Foundation paper, candidates were given a choice of the three contexts and distribution of responses among the other 3 choices was quite even. The Advance Information issued, particularly for Context 2, 'Travel and Tourism' and Context 3, 'School Life', meant that candidates learned essays off relating to these topics and reproduced them in the exam, regardless of whether or not they were totally relevant to the specified bullet points. Essays were written about fortnight-long trips to Europe involving hotel stays without specific reference to bullet points 1 and 2. In addition, for Context 3, essays were produced about school with an inordinate amount of detail in relation to bullet point 1 but no reference to bullet point 3 on school rules. Candidates are expected to write approximately 30-40 words per bullet point with five clear paragraphs, equally balanced. Some candidates addressed three or four out of five bullet points relatively well but then failed to address the final one or two. In addition, throughout the essay, candidates are expected to include ideas and opinions and justification for those. The most successful candidates presented such essays and demonstrated a proficient command of the language at this level, using accurate grammar and structures and a good range of appropriate vocabulary. In those instances where candidates did not perform as well, it was usually as a result of missing or incomplete bullet points, indicating a lack of development, a lack of grammatical knowledge to construct coherent sentences or insufficient vocabulary. A significant number of candidates attained full marks in Communication but did not reach the top band for marks in Grammar and Structures. Candidates, at this level of entry, should practise writing in paragraphs in which a stimulus bullet point is developed. This will result in candidates being awarded highly for their efforts.

Overall, the standard was very high and Assistant Examiners continue to report very positively on their marking experience of this element of GCSE Irish. There is some evidence that those students who entered early for this examination did not have the linguistic development necessary to respond well to the specified tasks, which are designed for more typical GCSE candidates. It is inspiring to note, however, that many of the responses we read are of a level well beyond the standard required for the top grades at GCSE, and the Examining Team continue to be impressed by this exceptional standard.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to firstly congratulate all candidates who entered for GCSE Irish in the Summer 2023 series. Their individual efforts and achievements are noteworthy. The ongoing expert and professional support of teachers across all examinations centres is critical in ensuring that all candidates are prepared to meet their individual potential. The ever-growing pressures placed on candidates and teachers is significant, and I wish to applaud all concerned for continuing to deliver the teaching of GCSE Irish to such a high standard for candidates. I wish to take this opportunity to thank teachers in centres for their highly professional facilitation of the Unit 2 Speaking examination. Their effective management of these examinations allowed candidates to be at ease and to perform to their very best ability.

The Assistant Examiners, under the continued support and direction of the Principal Examiners, are a vital part of the examination process, and their diligent and faithful input is greatly valued. The fair and consistent manner in which Assistant Examiners apply the mark schemes for all units is vital to the overall awarding process. A debt of gratitude is also due to the fantastic team of support staff in CCEA who have assisted all Examiners throughout this examining series.

Lastly, I wish to express my sincere thanks to all members of the Senior Examining Team. Their continued professionalism and candidate-centred approach to the examination and awarding process ensures the completion of fair, challenging and robust examination materials in GCSE Irish.

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