



ELC

English

Entry Level Certificate **R392**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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General report and review of the Examination

The specification replaced English Entry Level 3911 and this was its fourth year of operation. Centres continued to welcome it as a simple and flexible examination which offers valid educational opportunities and which encourages candidates to express themselves as individuals. The main features of the specification are:

- 40 marks are available for writing and speaking and listening, and 20 marks are available for reading.
- The two assignments for writing and speaking and listening are each marked out of 20 and the marks are added together.
- The reading test consists of one non-literary passage with a variety of different types of question, including a brief summary and questions on language.
- Apart from the reading test, all assignments are set by teachers.

Although teachers spent time setting up the tasks for writing and speaking and listening there was no indication that candidates had not been allowed to express themselves freely with originality, which is of course the whole point of coursework such as this specification offers.

Quality of the work

The quality continued to improve in all sections of the examination. Many of the reading scores were high, and candidates showed greater ability in dealing with questions that had multiple answers. There were fewer examples of presenting the main points twice. There was more variety in the choice of reading tests. The most popular remained the adventure with the car accident and the account of the seaside town, but all the other tests were used and there was sometimes a variety within one centre.

In writing, there were occasional examples of stories written at considerable length and some of these were engaging to a reader. Some of the best work was in speaking and listening, particularly in the group discussions where teachers were careful in choosing topics that were in the reach of candidates. Many of the candidates were on the borderline of being able to succeed in completing GCSE specifications, and it is hoped that this examination gave them the confidence that they deserved.

Many Centres began to move away from the specific tasks imposed by the former 3911 syllabus and tailor-made them to their teaching groups. This gave candidates more scope and confidence to do well.

Marking by teachers

A usual, most of the assessment was accurate and there were very few cases where marks had to be adjusted. This was partly due to the tolerance of six marks out of a hundred. Where there was some inaccuracy, slight generosity in one section of the examination was often balanced by slight severity in another. The marking of the reading test was often precise, and teachers showed the right degree of judgement in awarding marks where the candidate's wording was unusual or not entirely clear. The marking of the test about behaviour at a job interview, where there was some flexibility in what was allowed, was confidently marked.

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It proved difficult to be consistent when marking at the Band 2 / Band 3 boundary for writing. Band 3 candidates were the ones who could develop their content a little and who started to write in fluent sentences. The amount of error was not always the deciding factor. In speaking and listening the marking at the same boundary was generally very accurate.

There were occasions in both writing and speaking and listening where the top mark should have been awarded since the quality of the work was above Band 3 and suitable for assessment at GCSE level.

Administration

Nearly every centre enclosed a mark sheet and an Authentication form. Only one form was required to vouch for the work of the entire Centre in all three sections of the examination.

It was important that every candidate's work was enclosed in an Entry Level Internal Assessment Form. This not only gave the marks awarded but also listed the tasks set by the Centre and, for speaking and listening, notes on performance.

The specification required Centres to supply a recording on a disk for speaking and listening. This is different from GCSE because here, the percentage of the final mark is 40%, which is a substantial part of the assessment. Moderators needed to be sure that the marking was correct. Some Centres did not supply a recording and there were one or two that were blank, very difficult to hear, or which behaved badly when introduced to the Moderator's computer. Luckily, where this was the case, the comments on the assessment form were generally detailed enough for the Moderator to verify the marks awarded. These comments usually covered the effectiveness of the listening, the amount of involvement in the task, the quality and length of the contributions and the initiative shown by the candidate. Without these comments, Moderators would not have been able to verify the marks.

The third page of the Internal Assessment Form carried comments about the amount of help given to candidates and the action taken by the teacher in awarding marks where it was necessary to give such help (as set out in the specification). These comments were nearly always fully detailed and were of considerable importance to the Moderator.

Because the process of recording the results of moderation is done electronically, the sample of folders is chosen by the system and the Centre is then sent an email listing the required folders. However, the instruction in the specification is that the Centre makes the selection. The first arrangement is correct and Centres should wait for the email before sending folders to their Moderator.

Finally, there was another case this year of confusion between Entry Level and Functional Skills. The two specifications are different and Centres should be quite clear which of these examinations they are entering candidates for.

Comments on specific elements of the Examination**Reading**

As noted earlier, the responses to the reading test were slightly better this year. However, some candidates found it difficult to think implicitly and there were some disappointing answers to questions about language, particularly where it was used figuratively. For example, the figurative use of the word 'hailstorm' in the first reading test created difficulties because candidates did not think first what a hailstorm was like and secondly how it could be compared to a shower of oranges flying through the air. It was this double thinking process that needed practice. Perhaps some work on the language of poems might help candidates to understand the way in which language can be used.

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Writing

Centres continued to use their imagination in task setting, and the result was some effectively long pieces of writing which were undertaken with the candidates' interest and sometimes enthusiasm. Topics included the following:

'I would love to do that again' (for example reading and writing Braille)

'I remember'

'It was a normal day'

'The Victims'

'The Old House'

A story based on the legend of the Minotaur

A story about evacuation in the Second World War

Being stranded on a desert island

Most of the non-fiction pieces were letters, but they did not have to be and the list included:

A film review of 'Treasure Island'

CVs with biography

Invitations to birthday parties

Letters of complaint about various bad purchases

Letters to the head teacher about what would be good to change about school

Where the choice of task was carefully suited to candidates, they reacted with the best writing they could manage, and some of it was very good. Some scripts were carefully presented with few errors and were written in quite fluent sentences. The stories were often carefully structured and there was occasionally some interesting descriptive detail that engaged the reader. Some of the work merited full marks since at GCSE level it would have been worth a mark in grade E.

Speaking and Listening

Centres should remember that this part of the examination is worth 40% and that it should be taken seriously with plenty of practice in speaking in different roles before the tests for the examination are taken. It was good to see that a number of Centres were no longer using a simple telephone conversation as the role play task. The problem with this task is that it is difficult to test the candidates with challenging and extended sub tasks if all one is doing is to ordering a pizza. This particular task is now beyond its sell-by date and would be better replaced.

For role play there is a great variety of situations that one could explore, including those within the family, trouble at school, helping a stranger, making a statement to someone in authority, and situations at work.

Some tasks that were set for role play were:

Dealing with a complaining customer in a sandwich shop or a restaurant

Role playing characters in 'Lord of the Flies'

Role playing a character from 'Star Wars'

An interview for a job or for college

'A convincing performance as a witch'

A member of the school council answering questions from a school governor

Hot seating Macbeth

All these examples gave candidates more opportunities to speak at some length and to achieve the description given for Band 3.

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There were also many good group discussions. Here it was important to choose a topic where everyone in the group could join in with some confidence. One Centre had a bank of what it called 'hot topics', all of them the type of discussion that candidates hoping for Grades A-C might discuss. Other topics included:

Adopting an animal

The school rules

Discussing the news

Remembering the Easter holidays, just passed

A balloon debate

Discussing the characters in 'Macbeth'

What was encouraging was that all the examples given in this report came from just nine Centres, so there is no doubt that many of the rest of the others that entered had equally or even better ideas for tasks. It should be remembered that the requirement of the specification leaves Centres free to choose almost whatever they wish in order to test their candidates, and there were welcome signs that this was at last becoming the norm.

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