



Entry Level Certificate 2008

ENGLISH

Chief Examiners:

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Entries

Total Entry	7989
Entry 3	37.2%
Entry 2	82.6%
Entry 1	96.8%

Introduction

Mrs. Dilys Ralph has unfortunately been very ill this year and has not been able to undertake her usual duties. However, we trust that she will be returning to the fray in the very near future and send our very best wishes to her.

Themes for both the Examination and the Controlled Task proved very popular again this year. Both were considered accessible and topical. The course as a whole is felt to be an excellent preparation for GCSE English and also a means of generally improving students' literacy skills.

Access Arrangements

The JCQ regulations state that candidates are **not allowed readers** in any reading test (in this specification the reading section of the examination paper/Controlled Task) and are **not allowed scribes** in any writing test (in this specification the writing section of the examination paper/Controlled Task). There are several centres which continue to disregard or appear unaware of these regulations. The front of the examination paper makes clear exactly what help is allowed.

Examination

- Teachers continue to feel that the same format is appreciated by the pupils as it helps pupils prepare and also settles nerves. They appreciate the symbols on the resource material and exam script as it helps the candidates navigate their way around the resource sheet. Problems were encountered by some candidates who misread the question about what activities could be undertaken in good weather and they went to the wrong part of the resource material and wrote about wet weather activities!
- The subject matter for the 2008 examination paper 'Funland' interested most of the candidates who seemed to engage well with the resource material. Most candidates could identify with the theme.
- The form completion question still remains an integral part of the examination. It is important that pupils are made aware of the block capitals element and that the envelope is always addressed from the resource material. Again this year, a few candidates lost marks as they forgot to put their signatures on the form and many do not use block capital letters to the end of their address as directed.

- The cloze passage is strictly reading and not a spelling exercise and is included to help the weaker candidates gain a few more marks. Very few candidates failed to obtain full marks for this section.
- For Question 4, friends have to be named and have different reasons for being chosen. Repetition is not rewarded, and is still a problem in this question; this year a reminder in bold print was printed on the page with some success, to encourage candidates to give specific names and different reasons.
- Question 5 – the poster – is completed very well by most candidates. Artistic merit is not rewarded here, but candidates should be made aware of the importance of presentation e.g. size of lettering, use of space and colour. Candidates were told to advertise their own trip from school this year and not use information from the resource material as this is a test of writing and not reading. Some schools provide coloured pencils which help the candidates show off their knowledge of the use of colour in advertising and usually improve presentation.
- The story element is a challenge for most candidates who forget to use basic punctuation and often pour out all their ideas in just a few lines. The better stories were lively, well sequenced and showed awareness of the reader.

Controlled Task

The Controlled Task is continuing to be a popular alternative to the examination. When the idea for this Controlled Task was implemented in 1998 it was intended for use with the weaker candidates so that centres could support those students as much as possible. However, the same rules now apply as for the examination, i.e. no help is to be given with reading when reading is being assessed, and no help is to be given with writing when writing is being assessed. **On no account must a reader be used in the Reading section and no scribe/amanuensis can be used in the Writing section.** However, time is not an obstacle for the candidates as the task may be completed over a three month period from January to March.

The topic of the task this year was based on organising an end of term school trip. Generally centres felt that the theme was accessible and topical. For the majority of candidates, the examination will continue to remain the most logical option and we certainly do not envisage large numbers of candidates from each centre being entered for the Controlled Task.

It is felt that centres that complete the preliminary exercises, as outlined in the Teacher's Booklet, help their students greatly when preparing for the Controlled Task, particularly when they complete the tasks which highlight the differences between factual and persuasive language.

Please be aware of the following points:

- It is important that the writing section is the pupil's own work. Any words that the pupil has been given by the teacher or the LSA should be written under the heading 'Conditions for Task' at the back of the Controlled Task on the E3 form. If the candidate has a disability that prevents them from completing the writing task without the aid of a laptop, then that must be recorded on the E3 form.
- The reading section can be answered orally. If this is done then teachers will need to fill in the second part of the E3 form which, as mentioned above, will be found at the back of the Controlled Task paper. As for coursework, however, a mark equivalent to a **level one grade can only be given for an oral response.**
- Only one E3 needs to be completed if the conditions are the same for all pupils.
- The deadline for the task is the same as that of the examination. Coursework requirements are the same for both.

Coursework

Coursework continues to be a delight to moderate from most centres. It is very important however, to check the current specification as there may be some minor changes made. An updated copy of the specification may be downloaded from the WJEC website on www.wjec.co.uk

In many centres a great deal of time has been spent presenting the work in special folders. It is sufficient to just wrap the E2 coversheet around the coursework. Copies are sent to centres but can also be downloaded from the website. It does help if the work is placed inside the coversheet in the order the assignment details appear on the sheet. No other work completed by the candidate should be included other than that noted on the E2. Samples of candidates' coursework must be sent to a moderator after the examination has been sat and **by the closing date of May 1st**. Early submission of coursework is always appreciated by moderators. It creates considerable difficulties if the work is submitted late. The numbers of folders sent depends on the number of candidates the centre has entered for this examination, details of which will be found on page 15 of the specification or on the back of the E1 forms sent to the Examination Officers of all centres in early February.

It is very important that if there is more than one teaching group that all groups are represented in the selected sample which should include the **whole range of ability of each teaching group**. There should also be evidence of **internal moderation**. It is essential when awarding marks for coursework that the marks of those who are performing above Entry Level 3 do not depress the marks of those at Entry Level 3 or below, in order to ensure that these candidates are justly rewarded for their achievements.

The Coursework Elements:

EN1: Speaking and Listening

The taped presentations continue to be a joy to moderate. Some of the teachers are superb at drawing information out of their pupils! They gently encourage their candidates to speak about their lives, their hobbies and what they did for work experience. Some candidates speak freely about their lives, others prefer to simply participate in question and answer sessions. Teacher intervention is always preferable to the candidate simply reading (often in a very stilted manner) or faltering and coming to an early halt! Candidates who simply read on tape are not working to the spirit of the component and there is a danger that those whose reading skills are not fluent could be penalised in this section if they are not part of a guided conversation.

Points to bear in mind:

- It would be helpful if candidates whose files have been submitted for moderation could also be included on the tape. If this is not possible, please **indicate the mark awarded for this individual assignment** (EN1:1) either on a sheet of paper or simply next to the candidate's name on the inside cover of the cassette case. This helps your moderator determine whether you have assessed your candidates correctly for that individual assignment. Once that has been established, then we feel satisfied that other oral assignments have been assessed accurately.
- Teachers should listen to all the tapes before submitting them. Also please make sure that the tape is rewound to the beginning and that the side which has been taped on is clearly labelled. Our moderators are told that they must listen to the tapes and so it can become very frustrating for them if they have to keep winding the tape on and on in order to find the part where candidates are actually speaking. An example of good practice from some centres is to send a short, individual tape for each candidate; usually, a five minute tape is sufficient.

- It is difficult to envisage a situation where no marks are awarded for speaking and listening assignments and under no circumstances should a candidate be given zero simply because they refused to be taped. Some candidates may be very timid and will not contribute forcefully to classroom discussion, though often they will show signs that they have been listening, especially when asked directly by the teacher. Remember to award for listening as well as speaking. **Assessments should not be limited to one occasion, but should take place throughout the course.** It was disappointing again this year to note some centres still not awarding marks for this element for some candidates; we are fully aware that it can be difficult to record some candidates, but it is to be hoped that at some point during the course, they will have been given an oral assessment (even if they are not aware it is happening!).
- Please submit only audio tapes or cds of your candidates' work. Video tapes are not acceptable.

EN2: Reading

There is no reading list to adhere to for the Entry Level English course, and teachers are free to choose whatever literature they feel is suitable for their particular teaching group. However:-

- Where possible, two different genres should be studied. If one piece is on poetry, then the second piece should be on prose, drama or media text. It is important to include copies of poems or unusual resource material with folders for the information of the moderator.
- Simplified Shakespeare texts often have many fragmented exercises to aid comprehension; it is preferable if these lead eventually to an extended piece in order to allow candidates to demonstrate their personal response to the text.
- If a comprehension exercise is used, then questions really should be supplied for the moderator. However, **comprehension exercises are to be avoided if at all possible.** It should also be noted that if a pupil gets full marks for a comprehension exercise this does not necessarily equate to full marks at Entry Level. Some exercises concentrate on simply locating information and thus prevent candidates from expressing personal opinions and showing Level 3 skills. We appreciate that sometimes candidates are unable to complete a full novel and we would be grateful if the circumstances surrounding this problem could be outlined. Moderators are sympathetic and if we are informed of all the details it will help in offering constructive advice in moderator reports.
- Topics should be carefully chosen according to the ability of the pupil – neither too challenging nor too limiting. It is not wise to ask pupils to produce a piece of work which imagines what could have happened after the story has ended. These pieces do have their value but are better placed in the EN3 section under Imaginative Writing.
- For pupils studying at Level 1 an oral response will be accepted but a written response is preferred as the moderator may move it to the Level 2 band. However, if no written responses are available, please remember that a mark up to 9 may be given for an oral response. Supporting comments should be supplied in such circumstances.
- The reading response tests reading skills only, not spelling, punctuation or grammar. These will be tested in the EN3 Writing section. What we are trying to assess here is whether the candidate has been able to read and show understanding of the given text.
- If a writing frame has been used to help a candidate structure a piece, it should be sent with the coursework in order that the moderator can assess the amount of help needed. Some centres supply identical work because they have used such a tightly constructed writing frame and this can appear like copying unless we are aware of the writing frame. Such exercises are often limiting for the more able candidates. Word searches, punctuation exercises, handwriting exercises, copying out of information – none of these fit the criteria for reading.

- If centres wish to study advertising, it is insufficient for pupils to construct their own advertisement. A preferable exercise would be a deconstruction of an advertisement i.e. why the advert has a positive/negative impact or is successful/unsuccessful.

EN3: Writing

Candidates must complete three pieces of work for this element of the coursework. **Two of the pieces are externally set assignments.** Please refer to pages 11 & 12 of the updated specification for the titles of the externally set assignments. However, please note the following points:

- If candidates find it difficult to write an autobiography due to adverse family circumstances then there is scope for them to write a story which places them as the main character. Please ensure that your candidates write this assignment in the first person.
- **First drafts are essential** for the moderator to assess the degree of help pupils have needed to complete the final draft. **If you know that the work is not the pupil's own, please do not submit it!** We rely on your integrity here. If work is developed in exercise books and then copied neatly onto A4 paper or even word-processed, please forward exercise books as evidence of drafting. Some candidates type directly onto a computer; however, it is good practice to hand-write all first drafts so that the moderator is fully aware of the candidate's ability to edit his/her own work.
- There is increasing evidence of candidates downloading information from the Internet and submitting it as their own. Usually this is more than obvious because of the level of sophistication of style and punctuation; however, if it is obvious to the moderator, it should be more obvious to the teacher and should not be submitted if there is any doubt whatsoever of its originality. This year all candidates and their teachers were asked to sign their Coursework Coversheet to verify that all the work was their own.
- Teachers should be prepared to award the full range of marks, especially if some candidates are also being double entered for GCSE (Foundation Tier) English. It is amazing to note that some pupils are given a mark on their actual piece of work equating to an F or even E at GCSE but have been given a mark which barely places them into Entry Level 2 for Entry Level.
- One piece of work may not be entered both for EN2 Reading and EN3 Writing – each folder must contain **five separate pieces of work** for candidates working above Entry Level 1. Incomplete folders should be avoided, if at all possible, as candidates are given a proportionately reduced mark.
- We like to see that the work produced by candidates has been marked and that feedback has been given with suggestions about how the candidate may improve that particular piece of work. Some centres will do this orally and so it is important that your moderator is made aware of this. Demands of GCSE and Entry Level are different in this aspect.
- While writing frames are of great help to some of our weaker candidates, they must not be too prescriptive to the extent where, in some cases, they become almost like a cloze exercise. Some writing frames direct the essay almost sentence by sentence and more able candidates are often restricted by such frames. It is advisable to forward any writing frames used by your candidates to your moderator.

Administration

- Pieces of work within the coursework folder should be stapled separately and labelled as on the E2 coversheet. It is advisable for first drafts to be stapled behind final drafts. These drafts really are **essential** for the moderators as they help determine the amount of help a candidate has actually needed.
- Supporting comments should be individual to the pupils; however, if all pupils have submitted the same titles, details of assignments need only be completed on one form. Moderators rely on the in-depth information which teachers hold in order to come to a fair decision. Comments on the E2 coversheets should reflect what the candidates can do, not what they cannot!
- Please note that the moderator, examiner or controlled task marker will probably not be the same person. Examination Officers will be issued with the correct address labels for each component. Also enough coversheets, E1 forms and plastic envelopes should be sent to your school in plenty of time before the examination. If they have not appeared by the end of February, then please contact the Entry Level Section at the WJEC.
- Separate E1 forms are required for each teaching group. This really is very important and the information will be reiterated on the back of the E1 forms. This allows moderators to determine whether one teaching group has been assessed differently, which may result in separate scaling for each teaching group. If there is more than one teaching group then there should be evidence of internal moderation.
- All 'C' forms should be sent directly to the WJEC.
- Moderators welcome coursework folders **as soon as possible** and you do not need to wait for the final deadline.
- Keep a record of all posting, and a photocopy of the E1s or 'C' form, as work can occasionally go astray.
- Examination Officers are informed of deadlines for Controlled Tasks and coursework. These dates are not arbitrary and should centres have any difficulty in meeting these deadlines the WJEC Entry Level office should be informed immediately.

SCALING

Scaling did apply to some centres again this year, but it was usually because the centres had been too harsh with their marking. We look, as always, to reward students positively for their achievements.

INSET

INSET meetings are usually held at the beginning of the school academic year. Six INSET course meetings took place in September 2007 in Cardiff, Swansea, Birmingham, Manchester, Llandudno and London. In particular teachers like to talk to other teachers, which helps them discover how other people have overcome certain difficulties in delivering the course. A full day was allocated for each venue this year and was hailed a success by most. We certainly enjoyed meeting everyone and sharing good practice. We look forward to meeting teachers at the next round of INSET meetings this autumn.