

*Specifications*  
for  
**the School-leaving Examination  
in English**

This document was produced by the English Examinations Reform Project, supported by the British Council, Hungary. It is the result of collaboration from 1996 to the present day among many colleagues.

# INTRODUCTION

This document was produced by the English Examinations Reform Project, supported and funded by the British Council. It is the result of collaboration from 1996 to the present day among many colleagues. The document is intended to give a general overview of the aims and content of the proposed new School-leaving Examination in English to be introduced in 2005 as part of the overall School-leaving Examination Reform of all school-subjects. It describes the English examination model as developed and proposed for introduction by the Project.

As Hungary is about to join the European Community, it is necessary for Hungarian citizens to meet new expectations. European norms require competencies in three languages: in the mother tongue and in two other modern languages. According to the 1996 Law of Education, all school-leavers are supposed to take the School-leaving Examination in one modern language at the Intermediate level and/or at the Advanced level. As externally evaluated examinations have a long history and a high prestige in Hungary, it is hoped that the new School-leaving Examinations can, at both the Intermediate and Advanced levels, take over the role of external examinations, and may be accepted for bonus points and/or for admission to tertiary education.

## **Statement of purpose**

The School-leaving Examination in English is part of the Examination Reform in two senses: 1) it is under reform as a result of the overall School-leaving Examination Reform of all subjects, and 2) it is intended to serve as the second and third stages in a new, three-level examination framework, where the first stage is the 'Basic Level' examination supposed to be taken by students at the age of 16.

The main purpose of the new School-leaving Examination in English is to provide students with a valid, reliable, and meaningful certificate of language proficiency on two levels: Intermediate and Advanced. The new examination, as opposed to the current one, should have value both nationally and internationally, allow for the comparison of test results at national level, as well as with international examinations. It should be developed in accordance with international standards and practice, following professionally respectable standardisation procedures. It should be capable of certifying the level of achievement of all candidates taking the examination, and is hoped to have positive wash-back on the teaching-learning process in terms of teaching methods followed and materials used in the classroom .

The new School-leaving Examination is to assess whether students have sufficient competence in the foreign language to communicate effectively in real-life situations, to assess their abilities to understand and produce spoken and written English. It is to assess students' language proficiency, not their personality, intelligence, or knowledge (cultural, or otherwise) of the world.

The Examination assesses students' language proficiency irrespective of how, how long, where and from what materials they learnt the language. As Years 11 and 12 are not based on a curriculum, the Specifications for the examination are based on the *Detailed Requirements for the School-leaving Examination*, which also incorporates requirements of the National Core Curriculum for lower grades. Although the School-leaving Examination relates to the English taught in the last two years of secondary education, it is a proficiency test, not a

measure of achievement, and is not based on any particular syllabus or course. There are, however, many different ways of successful preparation for the exam.

## **Description of the test taker**

The School-leaving Examination will be taken by all students graduating from secondary education. Students need to state prior to taking the examination whether they intend to take the Intermediate or the Advanced level.

Students aiming to enter tertiary institutions where a high proficiency is required in modern languages, or competition is strong, will most probably choose the Advanced level.

Students of average aptitude, learning English in average educational conditions are expected to be able to pass the Intermediate level School-leaving Examination at the age of 18.

## **Construct for the School-leaving Examination**

One of the main issues in the field of foreign/second language learning is that the views of language and language use have been broadened. The aim of language learning has become to develop communicative competence or, as is also termed, communicative language ability, which is commonly defined as having the following components:

- a) linguistic competence
- b) socio-linguistic competence
- c) discourse competence
- d) strategic competence
- e) socio-cultural competence.

The School-leaving Examination is developed on the premise that language is a dynamic vehicle of communication, driven by underlying competences which interact in various ways in order for communication to be effective. Considering our main objectives, the examination should lay special emphasis on assessing the ability to use knowledge of the foreign language for different communicative purposes rather than on assessing knowledge of the language system itself.

In line with the above, at both Intermediate and Advanced levels, the examination is intended to measure students' communicative language ability through separate tests of the four basic language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, in contexts as close as possible to those likely to be encountered in everyday life. At the Advanced level, in addition to tests of the four skills, there is an additional component, the Use of English Paper, with a focus on assessing candidates' linguistic competence, their ability to apply knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary of the foreign language.

In order to avoid what is commonly referred to as 'construct under-representation', each test should contain as many different texts and tasks as is possible, sampling as wide a range of relevant sub-skills, student performance as is possible in a test. A range of different tasks in each test will, on the one hand, provide students with more opportunities to demonstrate their language knowledge and, on the other, it will increase both validity and reliability of the examination, necessary for us to be able to generalise from students' scores on the tests to

their real-world language abilities or language behaviour - which, after all, is our ultimate aim with the examination.

The use of dictionaries is not allowed in any of the Papers, as the examination is not intended to measure dictionary skills.

## Test Level

The levels of the School-leaving Examination are defined according to the six-level scale proposed in the Council of Europe Framework. According to official regulations for the School-leaving examination, both levels of the examination are set to cover two 'Council of Europe' levels. These are A2 and B1 for the Intermediate level examination, and B2 and C1 for the Advanced level. A 'just adequate' performance on the Intermediate examination is defined as corresponding to the CUF *Waystage* level, and a 'just adequate' performance on the Advanced examination to *Vantage* level. The description of the above two levels in the Common European Framework (2001: 24) reads as follows:

### *The Waystage User:*

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate personal relevance. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

### *The Vantage User:*

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

*Levels of the School-leaving Examination in comparison with CUF levels and the supposed levels of the Hungarian State Language Examination*

<i>Council of Europe</i>			<i>School-leaving Examination</i>		<i>State Language Examination</i>
			<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	
Proficient User	<b>C2</b>	Mastery			Advanced
	<b>C1</b>	Effective Operational Proficiency			
Independent User	<b>B2</b>	Vantage			Intermediate
	<b>B1</b>	Threshold			
Basic User	<b>A2</b>	Waystage			Basic
	<b>A1</b>	Breakthrough			

## Assessment

Both the need to have a standardised examination with comparable results in all schools of the country and the issue of fairness to candidates require that, on the one hand, all Papers of the examination should be designed centrally and, on the other, that external assessment should be introduced.

Papers of the ‘receptive’ skills of Listening and Reading, as well as the Use of English Paper (all of which can be marked objectively), are to be assessed with the help of centrally-prepared marking schemes.

Administration of the Speaking Paper should involve two examiners, one acting as an interlocutor, the other as an assessor. Although the interlocutor is the candidate’s own teacher, the candidate’s performance is also assessed by an external expert. The assessment of both the Speaking Paper and the Writing Paper should be based on centrally-prepared analytic rating scales.

To increase reliability of the scores achieved on the test, the assessment of the Writing Paper should involve double-marking. One of the raters of the Writing Paper should be an external examiner. Interlocutors, assessors and raters should be specially trained for the job they are expected to do.

Different components of the examination are assessed separately. All Papers are, however, equally weighted: 25% each at the Intermediate, 20% each at the Advanced level. There is no minimum pass mark for individual Papers. The final mark that a candidate receives is an aggregate of the marks obtained in each Paper of the examination.

It is intended that scores will be reported on a 1-100-point scale in order to acknowledge the achievement of all school-leavers and certify valuable levels of achievement, but scores could be converted to the traditional 1-5 scale if required.

## Content and structure of the School-leaving Examination

The examination consists of two parts: a *written* and an *oral* part.

The *written part* consists of three Papers (Listening, Reading, and Writing), and lasts for 180 minutes at the Intermediate level, whereas it contains four Papers (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Use of English), and lasts for 240 minutes at the Advanced level.

The *oral part* of the examination at both Intermediate and Advanced levels contains one (the Speaking) Paper with three tasks, which lasts for approximately 20 minutes.

The table below provides a summary of the different components of the examination:

<i>Examination</i>		<i>Timing (minutes)</i>		<i>Weighting (%)</i>	
<i>Part</i>	<i>Component</i>	Intermediate	Advanced	Intermediate	Advanced
<i>Written</i>	<b>Listening</b>	30	30	25	20
	<b>Reading</b>	60	60	25	20
	<b>Writing</b>	90	90	25	20
	<b>Use of English</b>	-	60	-	20
<b>Total:</b>		180	240		
<i>Oral</i>	<b>Speaking</b>	20	20	25	20
<b>Total:</b>				100	100

Details of each component of the examination are presented in the chapters that follow.

# Reading Paper

## *Aim*

The aim of the Reading Paper is to assess candidates' ability to read and understand authentic texts independently, under timed conditions.

## *General requirements*

Candidates should be able to understand authentic texts encountered in everyday life, the topic of which is close to their everyday experiences. They should be prepared to demonstrate their ability to use reading strategies appropriate for real-life purposes of reading (e.g. reading for information, instruction/advice, reference, etc.). They are expected to be able to follow the main points, understand detail in a text as required by the task even if the text contains a few words or expressions unknown to them.

## *Difference between levels*

The difference between the two levels of the examination will, partially, be reflected in the range of text types and the length of texts used in the examination, to a greater extent, however, it will result from the complexity of texts used, and the difficulty of the accompanying tasks. Complexity of text may be related to purely linguistic features (e.g. syntax), but it will also be influenced by other features, like text structure, or the concrete/abstract nature of the topic of the text. Difficulty of the task will be influenced, apart from difficulty of the text itself, by the demands of different ways of reading, the level of understanding required by the task.

At **both Intermediate and Advanced levels**, the Reading Paper consists of **four parts**. Each part contains a text and a corresponding comprehension task. One part may consist of a series of shorter pieces (e.g., sets of advertisements).

Length of texts and the number of items in the Paper are as follows:

*Intermediate:* 1200-1600 words approximately overall; 300-500 words approx. per text;  
between 30-40 items in total, 5-12 items per task;

*Advanced:* 1600-2000 words approximately overall; 350-600 words approx. per text;  
approximately 35-40 items in total, 6-14 items per task;

## *Test focus*

The Paper will focus on reading skills as follows:

- understand gist, overall message
- follow the main points
- find specific information by scanning
- separate relevant from non-relevant information
- distinguish between factual information and opinion
- infer meaning from context
- understand text structure, recognize relations across paragraphs of a text

## ***Texts***

Texts for the Reading Paper will be taken from different authentic sources, including newspapers, magazines, journals, books, as well as different brochures, information leaflets, the internet, etc.. Apart from their sources, the texts used in the exam will also vary in terms of the genres they represent (e.g., descriptive, narrative, advice/instructional, argumentative, procedure/process, etc.). Because of their authentic nature, they may contain words and expressions which may be unknown to candidates. Understanding of these, however, is not essential for successful task completion.

## ***Text types***

### *Intermediate:*

- newspaper, magazine, journal articles
- timetables, menus
- notices, warnings
- product guides, manuals, recipes
- advertisements, holiday/travel offers, film previews, synopses
- radio-TV, theatre and other programme guides
- letters (personal/formal, from/to the editor, etc.)
- personal notes, messages (e.g. emails)
- popular-science articles

### *Advanced* as for Intermediate plus:

- literary texts

The Paper will draw freely from the above range, but will not normally include more than one text of the same type.

## ***Task types***

Tasks will be selected from the following types:

### *Intermediate:*

- short-answer questions (two-three words)
- multiple-choice questions (4 options)
- gap-filling (open or banked)
- matching and multiple matching, e.g.:
  - matching title, picture, summary sentence to parts/paragraphs of text
  - matching clauses, sentences, paragraphs to gaps in text
  - matching opinions, standpoints, statements to people identified in a text
  - arranging pictures, events, mixed paragraphs, chunks of text in order
  - categorizing: matching items to appropriate headings (facts, opinions, etc)

### *Advanced:* as for Intermediate plus

- summary completion in a multiple-choice or open format



## ***Administration***

The Reading Paper will be administered as part of the Written Examination. The time allowed for the Reading Paper is:

*Intermediate:* 60 minutes

*Advanced:* 60 minutes

At both Intermediate and Advanced levels, instructions are given in English. The language level of the instructions is well below the proficiency level expected from candidates taking the examination. Examples are provided.

Dictionaries are not allowed.

## ***Assessment***

Objective; one point for each item. Marking will be carried out from centrally-produced keys and marking instructions.

The Reading Paper accounts for 25% of the overall score of the Intermediate examination and 20% of the Advanced examination.

## ***Examination outline***

<b>Level</b>	<b>Number of texts</b>	<b>Length of texts</b> <i>(in number of words)</i>	<b>Number of items</b>	<b>Time</b> <i>(minutes)</i>	<b>Scoring</b>
<b>Intermediate</b>	4	1200-1600 (total)	30-40 (total)	60	1 point/item
<b>Advanced</b>	4	1600-2000 (total)	35-40 (total)	60	1 point/item

# Listening Paper

## *Aim*

The aim of the Listening Paper is to assess how well the candidate is able to understand the authentic speech of native and/or other speakers of the target language.

## *General requirements*

Candidates should be able to understand texts of different types, taken from everyday life and close to their everyday experiences. They should be prepared to demonstrate their ability to follow the main points, understand detail in a text, as required by the task, without necessarily understanding every word in a given text. Candidates' listening skills will be assessed through different texts and in various tasks. Tasks will not test candidate's memory. Linguistic accuracy or spelling will not be assessed provided errors do not hinder comprehension.

## *Difference between levels*

The main difference between the two levels of the examination will be manifested in the complexity of texts, and the difficulty of tasks. At intermediate level candidates are expected to understand texts that can be heard in everyday life, and which are unambiguous in their form, content and structure. At advanced level candidates are expected to understand the more complex and less predictable communications of standard English.

At the **Intermediate level**, the Listening Paper contains **three texts** of approximately 2 minutes in length each, while at the **Advanced level**, it contains **three or four texts** of approximately 3 minutes each. The number of items in the Paper is 20-30 at the Intermediate, and 25-35 at the Advanced level.

## *Test focus*

Candidates should be able to

- understand the gist of the text
- follow the main points
- understand specific information
- distinguish between factual information and opinion
- follow verbal instructions
- infer meaning from context
- recognise stylistic characteristics and the relationship between speakers

## *Texts*

All texts will be authentic or slightly adapted, retaining their most important authentic features. Recordings will include varieties of English. The topics of the texts will be appropriate for the age and the interests of the candidates and no special knowledge beyond the average cultural and educational level of the school leaving examination will be necessary for understanding the texts.

## ***Text types***

### *Intermediate*

- public announcements, common official communications, instructions (customs, airport, transport, shops, etc.)
- media announcements (weather forecast, programme announcements), news, commentaries
- directions
- telephone-related information
- tourist information
- dialogues
- conversations involving more than two people
- interviews, lectures on topics of public interest
- educational lectures

### *Advanced*

As for intermediate, but one or more features influencing the difficulty of a text are present (e.g. more complex grammatical structures, quicker speech, less frequent lexical units, etc.)

## ***Task types***

### *Intermediate*

- identifying pictures, parts of pictures
- matching pictures to texts, sequencing pictures
- following routes on a map
- short answer questions
- multiple-choice items
- filling in tables
- filling in forms
- identifying, correcting factual errors
- grouping, matching according to given criteria
- completing texts
- identifying the order of events

*Advanced* : as for Intermediate

The text and task types listed above are not included in every paper. The list, however, contains all text and task types for possible inclusion.

## ***Administration***

The Listening Paper will be administered as part of the Written Examination.

Time allotted to the Paper is approximately 30 minutes at both Intermediate and Advanced levels.

Listening skills will be assessed with the help of pre-recorded texts delivered over electronic media. Each recording will be played twice at both Intermediate and Advanced levels.

The recordings will include

- instructions for each task
- instructions for when and what the candidate has to do
- how many times the text will be heard
- the texts, recorded twice
- pauses for either reading the texts of the tasks or for solving the task
- music separating tasks

All instructions will be in English. Instructions to be heard on the tape and the one to be read on the task sheet will be identical.

Dictionaries are not allowed.

### ***Assessment***

The Paper is scored with the help of a centrally prepared answer key. One point for each correct answer. In the case of tasks where the correct answer may be phrased in various ways, the answer key provides content-related instruction concerning acceptable answers. The answers are scored exclusively on the basis of content. Linguistic accuracy and spelling are not assessed.

The total score for the Listening Paper makes up 25% of the overall score of the exam at Intermediate level and 20% at Advanced level.

### ***Examination outline***

<b>Level</b>	<b>No of texts</b>	<b>Length of texts (in minutes)</b>	<b>No of items</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Scoring</b>
<b>Intermediate</b>	3	max 2 mins/text	20-30	30 mins	1 point/item
<b>Advanced</b>	3-4	Max 3 mins/text	25-35	30 mins	1 point/item

# Writing Paper

## *Aim*

The aim of the Writing Paper is to assess candidates' ability to produce written language for purposes of real-life communication, perform writing tasks related to everyday life and work.

## *General requirements*

Candidates should be able to record their thoughts in writing at the specified level, following the requirements of common written text-types used in everyday life so that the text created is clear and understandable for the reader, and ensures the achievement of the communicative purpose of the text.

The assessment of candidates' writing skills is based on the communicative view of language teaching and testing: candidates are expected to perform real-world writing tasks which are interactive and purposive and in which they write texts to specific readers.

In the assessment of writing skills real communicative situations are created, i.e. the text to be written has (a) reader(s) (to whom it is written), a purpose (for which it is written), and a topic (about which it is written). Furthermore, the task specifies when and where the text is written and what the relationship between the writer and the reader is. These factors determine the type, the style and the register of the text; therefore candidates should create their texts taking into account the organisational and linguistic requirements of the given text-type, style and register.

## *Difference between levels*

The difference between the two levels of the examination is apparent in the complexity of the texts to be created, including linguistic complexity, and in the approach to the topics. As to linguistic complexity, at intermediate level candidates are expected to write short, coherent texts using relatively simple structures, while at advanced level they are expected to use more precise and more varied vocabulary and a wider range of structure, with more precise spelling. As to the approach to topics, at intermediate level candidates are expected to write about the given topics from a personal point of view, while at advanced level they are expected to approach topics from a wider perspective.

At **both levels**, the Writing paper consists of **two parts**. At **Intermediate level**, the *first part* requires candidates to create a shorter text of about 100-120 words, while the *second part* requires them to produce a longer text of about 150-180 words. At **Advanced level**, candidates are expected to write a text of about 150-200 words in the *first part* of the Paper, and 200-250 words in *the second*.

## ***Test focus***

### *Intermediate*

Candidates should be able to

- create a coherent text using forward and backward references, simple synonyms, simple linking devices
- organise their texts logically, following the requirements of the given text-type and organising their texts into paragraphs accordingly
- use some typical ways of starting, developing and concluding a text
- use formal and informal registers appropriately
- use appropriate language (e.g. style, tone) according to the text-type, the communicative purpose and the relationship between the reader(s) and the writer

*Advanced:* as for Intermediate plus the ability to

- use more varied language (e.g. style, tone) according to the text-type, the communicative purpose and the relationship between the reader(s) and the writer

At both levels, the first part of the Paper focuses on the production of a text involving both transactional and interactional language, while the focus of the second part is rather more on the use of transactional language in an argumentative type of text.

## ***Text types***

At both levels candidates should be able to create texts of the following types:

- informal and formal letters
- messages
- articles for student magazines
- reader's letters
- applications
- autobiographies

## ***Task types***

All writing tasks are guided writing tasks (as opposed to free/creative and controlled writing tasks), that is, the task determines about what, what and how candidates are expected to write.

At both levels candidates are expected to create texts on the basis of

- a given situation and guiding points and/or
- verbal prompts (e.g. personal notes, messages, letters, announcements, advertisements, etc.) and/or
- visual prompts (e.g. pictures, charts, tables, etc.)

## ***Administration***

The Writing Paper is administered as part of the Written Examination.  
Time allowed for the Paper is 90 minutes at both levels.

Rubrics are given in English. The language level of the rubrics and verbal prompts is lower than that of the examination papers assessing receptive skills. The rubrics and the verbal prompts together require candidates to read no more than 150 words at the intermediate level, and 200 words at the advanced level.

Dictionaries are not allowed.

## ***Assessment***

The two tasks of the Paper are marked separately. Candidates' performance is assessed by two trained raters using a centrally-produced, 8-level (with bands from 0-7) analytic marking scale based on the following four criteria:

- 1) Task achievement
- 2) Grammar (range & accuracy)
- 3) Vocabulary
- 4) Organization, cohesion, layout

The Writing Paper accounts for 25% of the overall score of the Intermediate examination and 20% of the Advanced examination.

## ***Examination outline***

<b>Level</b>	<b>Part</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Target skills</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Intermediate</b>	1.	creating a text of about 100-120 words	transactional/interactional writing skills	90 minutes
	2.	creating a text of about 150-180 words	argumentative writing skills	
<b>Advanced</b>	1.	creating a text of about 150-200 words	transactional/interactional writing skills	90 minutes
	2.	creating a text of about 200-250 words	argumentative writing skills	

# Speaking Paper

## *Aim*

The **aim** of the oral examination is to assess candidates' ability to express their thoughts in the target language at the level specified for the examination, perform different tasks related to everyday life.

## *General requirements*

Candidates should be prepared to demonstrate their ability to interact in conversational English in a range of contexts. They should be able to use general interactional and social language, as well as transactional language, to fulfil different communicative intentions.

## *Difference between levels*

The main difference between the two levels of the examination can be expected to appear in the variety of language used by candidates to perform different tasks.

At **both Intermediate and Advanced levels**, the oral examination contains **three parts**, which are designed to elicit a range of speaking skills and communication strategies from candidates.

The three parts of the examination and their timing are as follows:

<i>Part 1</i> Interview	3-4 minutes
<i>Part 2</i> Individual long turn (based on visual prompt)	5-6 minutes
<i>Part 3</i> Problem-solving	5-6 minutes

Part 3 may be based on visual and/or written prompts. Visual prompts may include pictures, drawings, photos, maps, diagrams, etc. If written texts are used as input, they do not normally contain more than 30 words.

## *Test focus*

*Part 1* focuses on general interactional and social language (responding to questions about self, interests, etc); *Part 2* on transactional long turns (describing and commenting on the visual prompt using functions like giving information, expressing opinions through comparing and contrasting); *Part 3* requires both transactional and interactional short turns (candidates work together on a shared task demonstrating their turn-taking, negotiation and collaboration skills while exchanging information, agreeing and/or disagreeing, suggesting etc.).

## *Administration*

The oral examination takes approximately 20 minutes. It involves two teachers: one teacher acts as an interlocutor, the other as an assessor. It will be conducted in the following formats:



- Part 1* two-way interaction between the candidate and the interlocutor  
*Part 2* two-way interaction between the candidate and the interlocutor  
*Part 3* two-way interaction between two candidates, interlocutor assisting as and when necessary

### ***Assessment***

Candidates' language performance on the Speaking Paper is assessed by a trained external assessor using a centrally-produced, 8-level (with bands from 0-7) marking scale based on the following four criteria:

- 1) Communicative impact
- 2) Grammar and coherence
- 3) Vocabulary
- 4) Speech quality (sound, stress, intonation)

The oral examination accounts for the following proportion of the school-leaving examination:

*Intermediate* : 25%  
*Advanced* : 20%

### ***Examination outline:***

<b>Part</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Target skills</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Input</b>	<b>Timing</b>
<b>1</b>	<i>Interview</i>	general interactional and social language	<i>individual</i>	-	3-4 minutes
<b>2</b>	<i>Individual long turn</i>	transactional long turn (describing, commenting, expressing opinion through comparing and contrasting)	<i>individual</i>	visual prompts	5-6 minutes
<b>3</b>	<i>Problem solving</i>	Transactional and interactional short turns (turn-taking, negotiation and collaboration skills, while exchanging information, agreeing/disagreeing suggesting, etc.)	<i>paired</i>	visual and/or written prompts	5-6 minutes

# **Use of English Paper**

## *(Advanced level only)*

### ***Aim***

The aim of the Use of English Paper is to assess whether the candidate possesses the lexical, grammatical, semantic and pragmatic knowledge that will enable him/her to communicate independently.

Acquiring the elements of the linguistic system is an important part of well-interpreted communicative language learning. No real communication is possible without the bases of linguistic competence. By including a Use of English Paper in the written examination we would like to emphasize that accepting and using the principles of communicative language teaching is not inconsistent with a thorough knowledge of the linguistic system.

Linguistic competence is assessed in different components of the school-leaving examination.

- at intermediate level accuracy and language use, i.e. to what extent the candidate uses the grammatical structures and lexical units appropriately for the purposes of communicative competence is assessed directly in assessing writing and speaking skills. Accuracy is assessed indirectly in Reading and Listening Papers as well, as the candidates will understand the text only if they know the basic grammatical structures and lexical units.
- at advanced level it is necessary to assess the knowledge of linguistic structures and lexical units in controlled forms as well. Accuracy and language use constitutes a separate part of the examination only at advanced level.

In this part of the examination the knowledge of various language elements will be assessed in any one task. Some task types may be the same as those used in the Reading Paper, the difference being that in the Use of English Paper the task focuses on the knowledge of grammatical and lexical units and not the global meaning expressed by the entirety of these elements. The texts used in this paper are less difficult than those of the Reading Paper so that reading comprehension problems should not impede successful task completion.

### ***General requirements***

Candidates should be able to use grammatical structures and lexical units as required by the level of the examination, possess semantic and pragmatic knowledge both at text and sentence levels. The Paper will cover morphology, syntax, lexis and cohesion.

### ***Test focus***

Candidates should be able to

- recognise, complete, produce and insert into sentences varied syntactic forms
- insert varied lexical items into sentences as required by syntax, collocations and verb patterns
- produce grammatical structures and lexical units in various text types

## ***Texts***

All items in the Paper are text-based items. The Paper contains **four or five texts** of about 200-350 words each. While the texts will normally appear in the Paper in their authentic form, candidates will have to be prepared to read slightly adapted texts as well.

## ***Task types***

- multiple-choice (4 options)
- gap-filling (open or banked)
- word formation (inserting appropriate form of a word into texts using a given stem)
- identifying errors
- arranging jumbled sentences/paragraphs of a text

## ***Administration***

The Use of English Paper will be administered as part of the Written Examination. Time allowed for the Paper is 60 minutes.

Instructions will be in English. Examples will be provided.

Dictionaries are not allowed.

## ***Assessment***

The Paper will, for the most part, be marked objectively with the help of centrally-produced answer keys and marking instructions. Items are equally weighted, one point for each item.

The Use of English Paper makes up 20% of the overall score for the examination.

## ***Examination outline***

<b>Level</b>	<b>No of texts</b>	<b>Length of text</b>	<b>No of items (total)</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Scoring</b>
<b>Advanced</b>	4-5	200-350 words/text	40-50	60 minutes	1 point/item