

# **OCR Report to Centres**

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**June 2013**

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It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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# R392 Entry Level English

## General comments

This specification replaced Entry Level English (3911) and this was its third year of operation. Centres continued to welcome it as a simpler and more flexible version of the former specification and there was a 17% increase in entries. 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 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.

## Quality of the work

All three bands of ability were frequently illustrated in both Speaking and Listening and in Writing. The best of the work was clearly outside the range of this specification, especially when candidates used ideas taken from GCSE classes and wrote in response to texts such as *Of Mice and Men* and *Macbeth*, or created letters from the First World War trenches. In Speaking and Listening, there were some creative tasks not associated with telephone calls, and these often facilitated responses from interested and involved candidates. The Reading tests were often completed efficiently, and although full marks were hard to come by, there were some good attempts to explain the vocabulary used in the passages. Much of the work was neatly presented whether word-processed or in handwriting. It was clear that most candidates took great care over their work and the Moderators expressed their pleasure at reading and listening to their efforts.

## Marking by teachers

Generally, teachers had applied the mark schemes very accurately and very few changes were made to Centre marks. Where there was some uncertainty, for example in Writing at the Band 2 / Band 3 boundary, this was noted in the reports on the moderation. However, it was not intended that Centres should change their marking standards by more than a mark or two at the most.

## Administration

This consisted chiefly of supplying a copy of the MS1, a Centre Authentication Form and a fully completed Candidate Assessment Form (for each candidate in the sample). All these were essential to the work of the Moderator.

Candidate Assessment Forms were well presented. It was particularly important to give a detailed account of the performances in Speaking and Listening. Many of these were detailed enough for the Moderator to compare how the candidate had performed with the marks given.

It was equally important that there should be a detailed account of any help given to the candidate, for example in understanding the reading passage or with spellings in the written part of the examination. While help was permitted, it had implications for the marks awarded (as set out in the specification). Candidates awarded marks in Band 3 were expected to work independently and there were scales of marks awarded in the Reading test for different levels of assistance.

Most Centres sent the Moderator a Centre Authentication Form. This was required as a condition of entry and without it, moderation could not take place.

The commonest problem was that there was no recording of the candidates' Speaking and Listening. This was often omitted because Centres were not used to providing one at GCSE level. However, it was required because the percentage of marks for Speaking and Listening was 40%, much higher than at GCSE.

Finally, it was not always understood that marks had to be submitted to OCR and that OCR would then call for a sample of chosen candidates to be sent to the Moderator. Some Centres sent their marks direct to the Moderator or sent their own sample without waiting for instructions. This led to considerable delay and extra work for Centres.

## **Comments on the specific elements of the Entry Level Certificate in English**

### **Reading**

Candidates were given a choice of reading passages, all of slightly different types, but all containing the same sort of questions. Some Centres used the same passage for all of their candidates, but others used several different ones.

Those questions requiring explicit answers were done best, and this included questions with a number of different answers. Many responses were worth nearly full marks, with only occasional gaps or examples of the same answer given twice.

For each passage there were some questions on vocabulary, including some asking why the writer had used a particular example of simple imagery. Candidates in Band 1 found these questions difficult, but at Band 3 there were some good, imaginative attempts to explain.

Implicit questions were not always well answered. They often were worth at least two marks, and candidates commonly gave simple answers, when a little problem solving and explanation would have scored both marks. Candidates commonly scored between nine and fifteen marks for the Reading test.

### **Writing**

Centres were more adventurous than last year in choosing tasks for this part of the specification. In the past, the first piece of writing was a letter, but there was no longer any need to follow this custom. Since the second piece was a story or description, the first piece could be anything that was informative or had an element of argument or persuasion. This gave Centres much more flexibility.

Examples of work submitted for the first assignment were:

Writing a newspaper article  
A statement of opinion about the use of mobile phones  
How to bake a cake  
'All about me', a personal statement  
Why school uniform should be abolished  
Why we need our friends

There were also many good letters, usually of complaint and mostly of a suitable length. There was evidence of helpful and sensible paragraphing.

Obviously, there was a sense of considerable freedom in deciding on a title for the second assignment. The follow-on writing to *The Woman in Black* was not always successful and some of the haunted houses were not particularly realistic or original. The following selection of titles gave the opportunity for some imaginative writing:

My friend Max  
A special moment  
Life as an evacuee  
A visit to a theme park (descriptive)  
The opening of a ghost story

Candidates were aware of the importance of spelling and punctuation and there were frequent examples of comparatively simple but well-formed sentences. A very obvious discriminator was the use of an apt and developing vocabulary.

### **Speaking and Listening**

Many of the CDs submitted were excellent, generally easy to listen to and accompanied by a list giving the order of the speakers. There were several DVDs, which made the identification of candidates much easier.

The work varied. There were a number of candidates who rarely made more than monosyllabic responses or who uttered brief sentences, often only when encouraged by their teachers. Other candidates offered joined-up thought and were frequently able to take charge of a discussion. Where telephone assignments were set, there were a number of candidates who did not know a suitable way to begin or end the call.

Although only two assignments were required for 40% of the marks, it was obvious that in some Centres they were properly the culmination of a course of Speaking and Listening where candidates had been taught how to use communication effectively. This part of the course should not be seen as a one-off event.

For the first part of this element, the discussion, there was a good deal of variety. Assignments were set that were specific to the interests of pairs or groups of candidates, or to issues in the locality. Examples were as follows:

Planning a party  
The coming of the HS2 rail system  
A discussion of three different versions of Little Red Riding Hood  
The tramway from Nottingham City Centre to Toton  
How to adopt an animal  
A presentation with questions: My pet budgie  
A paired discussion of two poems read in class  
A paired discussion: My holiday

For the second part, there were many different telephone calls, some of them carefully set so that they contained sub-tasks and various opportunities to extend and explain. However, 'role play' could mean many different activities, and an element of drama did not come amiss. Again, it was intended that there should be flexibility in order to make this exercise as valid and as relevant to the candidates' lives as possible.

Examples were as follows:

Enquiring about a job and persuading someone that you were suitable

A visit to the police station to report the loss of a wallet

Relaxing with friends after watching a film and then deciding to phone up for a pizza

A balloon debate

A telephone conversation with the deputy head to suggest some school improvements

Monologues by homeless people (this was filmed with the candidates huddled in a corner in appropriate dress)

For both Writing and Speaking and Listening it was clearly possible to select assignments that were both challenging and fun, and this once again demonstrated that one of the main advantages of this specification is that it offers this type of opportunity.

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