



GCSE Examiners' Report

Welsh Second Language
GCSE
Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.</p> <p>For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.</p>	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note: where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal By WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

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Executive Summary

In Unit 1 this year, a total of 24,175 candidates were entered which is less than in 2023 (24,922) but more than in 2019 (23,986). 61.7% of candidates entered for this unit were 15 years old and 37.2% were 16 years old. In Unit 2 this year, a total of 22,888 candidates were entered which is more than in 2023 (21,997) and more than in 2019 (20,161). 87.7% of candidates entered for Unit 2 were 16 years old and 11.2% were 15 years old.

Unit 1 assessments were carried out this year on 16-18 April with 12 specific papers across the six assessment periods. Unit 2 was carried out this year on 24-26 April with 18 specific papers across the six assessment periods. There was a fair cross-section of topics during the assessment periods based on the three broad themes in the specification, which are employment, Wales and the world and youth. The Principal Moderators noted that the most popular topics with centres in Unit 1 this year were part-time work, half term activities, the Urdd movement, sport and various foods and responding to the question 'What is important?', while 'Sport. My favourite thing', 'It's important to look after the body', 'It's important to have a lot of friends' and 'Spending time in my area' were the most popular topics in Unit 2.

The Principal Moderators noted in their reports that the administrative element has improved tremendously with the majority of centres now accustomed to uploading the sample work onto Surpass. On the other hand, they noted that a few centres need to read and take note of the guidelines on the mark sheet and also in the oral handbook to ensure that the mark sheet and the way in which the sample is named and uploaded is in line with WJEC guidelines and expectations. A few centres should take note of the length of conversations recommended by WJEC as some centres continue to submit work that is too short and others present work that is too long. Some centres should be mindful of the need to group candidates by ability and not by friendship groups.

Both noted that the vast majority of candidates now stick to discussing what was seen and heard in the video (Unit 1) or seen on the stimulus sheet (Unit 2) rather than talking generally about the topic. This year there was only little evidence (according to the Principal Moderator of Unit 2 in particular) of candidates scripting during the preparation period and therefore centres should be commended for eliminating the practice of cultivating general discussions.

There was an increase in both units this year in candidates taking the assessment individually without any explanation. In fairness to the candidates, they should be given the opportunity to gain marks by interacting with others in a group.

Both moderators congratulated the best candidates on submitting work with clear and consistent evidence of high-quality interaction and communication but also commended the effort at the bottom of the ability range.

The linguistic errors that continue to appear in the candidates' work were noted and it is suggested once again this year that centres consistently offer opportunities to practise in order to reinforce pronunciation and also to remember the importance of teaching the 6 unchanging rules in the speaking and listening elements, as well as the reading and writing.

The role of the teacher in the assessment is emphasised once again this year and sound guidance is given in the reports in terms of how to best support the candidates. Similarly, the lack of internal standardisation in a few centres was noted again this year as an important area for improvement. Advice is given on how to ensure that internal standardisation is integrated into the work of the department during the year.

22,188 candidates were entered in Unit 3 and Unit 4 this year. This is an increase from 2019 (19,688) and also from 2023 (21,020) and in line with the grade cash-in growth.

The Principal Examiners noted in their reports the effort of the majority of candidates across questions in these two non-tiered papers. The questions of both papers were based on the three broad themes of the specification and the topics of these questions were perceived to be within the candidates' experience.

The least accessible question in Unit 3 according to the Item Level Data was question 7, which was the translation. The Principal Examiner stressed once again the importance of teaching this practical skill as well as translating in lessons.

The least accessible questions in Unit 4 this year were questions 6 and 8, which were the last reading question on the paper (the most ambitious) and the extended writing question. The Principal Examiner alluded to the fact that the answers to question 6 (part iii) were peppered with the use of English which could not be rewarded, and the variety of the standard of responses seen in the final question, which is question 8 in this non-tiered paper.

Both Principal Examiners noted in their reports that centres need to teach the 6 unchanging rules and ensure that their candidates understand and are able to use these linguistic rules accurately in their work.

It was pleasing to see candidates using the bullet points or discussion points that appear on both papers in writing questions to structure their responses and also recognising and following the marks that appear next to the bullet / discussion points to ensure that they present enough information in their responses.

Concern about the handwriting standard of many of the candidates was noted once again this year and departments are encouraged to provide ample opportunity in the lessons for candidates to practise their responses by writing with pen and paper, rather than digitally, as preparation for the exam.

Thank you very much to the teachers and Welsh Second Language departments in centres for all your work in teaching, preparing, encouraging and inspiring the candidates who sat this qualification this year.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Unit 1 and Unit 2: Administrative work; the role of the teacher; internal standardisation.	GCSE Welsh Second Language Oral Handbook. Unit 1 and Unit 2 bands. CPD training materials on Portal.	You can find both of these (handbook and bands) on our webpage on the WJEC website. Digital resources, WJEC website CPD training materials on Portal
Units 1 - 4: Candidates' language standard	Unit 1 and Unit 2 Bands Unit 1 and 2 past papers Unit 3 and 4 mark schemes and past papers Blended learning resources, exam guidance, information organisers, CPD resources	You can find all of these on our webpage on the WJEC website, on WJEC's secure website (Portal) or on WJEC's digital resources website.

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UNIT 1 ORACY RESPONSE TO VISUAL STIMULUS

Overview of the Unit

This is the first of the oral units which assess candidates' ability to communicate and interact effectively, together with responding to different materials and situations, in a pair (6-8 minutes) or a group (8 – 10 minutes).

There have been a number of examples this year with candidates being assessed individually without any clarification. The oral assessments are a group work assessment, and apart from in rare cases where there were valid reasons, the assessment centre has no right to assess candidates on their own. This practice will not be acceptable in the future.

The assessments are based on one or more of the three broad themes, and candidates are expected to respond to the audio-visual trigger intelligently, interact with others by listening and responding to their contributions, and express opinions with clear reasons. Different options are given during each assessment period, with each option covering a range of discussion topics. There is therefore an opportunity for a centre to choose the best option for its applicants.

We expect to receive samples of work and the appropriate forms from each centre in May, with this information forming the basis of WJEC's moderation work. Many thanks to the majority of the centres for their punctuality and organised work. However, there have been examples this year of missing samples, incorrect marks on official forms, different marks on Surpass and lamis, unsigned forms and missing details. This is not fair on moderators or the candidates, with precious time being lost waiting for the right information before the moderation process can begin in some cases. Details of the centre, the names and numbers of the candidates and the title of the test are also expected at the start of recording, and it is sad to note that this has also still not happened.

The need for a short presentation by each candidate before starting was noted in order to distinguish between different names and similar voices, and therefore to ensure fairness for each individual. No marks are awarded for the presentations, but this is an opportunity for candidates to gain confidence before starting. This good practice was missing in some centres this year, with others spending up to 4 minutes introducing themselves.

A high standard was achieved by a number of centres this year; the discussions of the best candidates were lively and interesting, using a range of language patterns correctly and confidently. The majority were successful in discussing the topics in question but there were a few rare examples again this year of candidates insisting on discussing topics of their personal choice, instead of sticking to the assessment topics.

Oral assessments offer opportunities to increase candidates' confidence in using the Welsh language inside and outside the classroom. Perfection cannot be expected, but rather natural conversation, with candidates having a spontaneous discussion and using the language they are familiar with and adapting it to the requirements of the task in question. Candidates need to be prepared to live as part of a bilingual Wales, which is the aim, so that they can appreciate the richness of the language, foster healthy attitudes towards it and continue to use it in the future.

Comments on individual questions/sections

There were twelve stimuli again this year, with each clip containing a range of discussion topics. Popular choices this year included video clips discussing part-time work, half-term activities, the Urdd movement, sports and different foods. Many candidates had also chosen to respond to the three characters discussing the question "What is important?", with a number of them doing so in a confident, sensitive and meaningful way.

The purpose of the grid is to help candidates to structure a discussion, bearing in mind that there are ten minutes of preparation time, and that includes watching the clip twice. The grid gives them additional vocabulary and reminds them of the contribution of certain characters. Certainly, the vast majority of this year's candidates used the grid well and made the most of the opportunity to discuss the individual sections before extending any discussion. Nevertheless, it is not sufficient for candidates to simply repeat vocabulary or phrases from the grid without responding to them or elaborating on their content. A reference to the appropriate person in the clip, and a comment or opinion on what was said is expected. Understanding must be proven in order to gain marks. This was maybe a weakness this year, with some only recording facts without justifying opinions or responding to others.

The element of reacting to each other is so important, as is the need to listen and respond to the contributions of others. This was strong with a number of candidates, but there were a few causes for concern. Firstly, sensible groups must be formed, putting candidates of similar ability together. This year, there were groups consisting of candidates with marks of 45, 29 and 8 trying to hold a conversation. There was no way for the candidate on the highest band to have an in-depth discussion, and the lowest-band candidate was completely lost. The need to choose group members carefully was emphasised. This is an external assessment, and therefore best-friend groups are not expected; rather, groups that will strengthen the performances of the group members, allowing them to show themselves at their best. On the other hand, it was clear that some candidates did not know the rest of the group this year, creating an impossible and completely unfair situation. Also, it was impossible to assess the element of interaction when moderating individuals, with the majority either offering an individual presentation or only answering the teacher's questions. The opportunity to show initiative and the ability to hold a spontaneous conversation was missed.

There were exceptional conversations from the best candidates as they responded to the topics with energy and enthusiasm, being keen to share their ideas and opinions using a range of language patterns skilfully and appropriately. There was clear evidence of preparation, with the confidence coming from their clear understanding of the assessment criteria. Regular practice and taking advantage of past WJEC papers pays dividends when considering the support it offers.

The solid use of the verb tenses and the ability to move from the first person to the third person, and then to the plural without difficulty, was encouraging in several cases. The use of idioms was relevant and an important element of the naturalness. In addition, there were examples of latecomers chatting well with such healthy attitudes towards learning Welsh and the effort was refreshing. It was truly an honour to moderate them.

However, the need for a number of candidates to revise basic patterns was evident this year, with some struggling to create a sentence when responding to a question or comment. Others conversed well, but their language contained awkward constructions and was full of mutation errors. With an emphasis on the six unchanging rules, the mutation problems are surprising, bearing in mind that these rules apply to all units, and not just the written units.

There were incorrect pronunciations by some candidates, especially when using familiar words such as "caru" and "gallu". This problem has already been referred to in CPD sessions and previous reports, but the problem remains, especially with medium- and lower-ability candidates. It is an idea to create a list of specific vocabulary to use and ensure that the pronunciation of those words is clear and correct, and that candidates can use them confidently. It must also be noted that the assessment room is not the best location for pronunciation lessons or grammar lessons. The aim is to encourage candidates to speak, instead of letting them lose confidence when they hear about their language errors.

The importance of the teacher's role has already been noted, for assisting and supporting candidates during the test. This is key in order to create a positive atmosphere in the room. There were instances this year of teachers talking too much at times, but even more so, teachers leading candidates astray, and discussing irrelevant topics. This reality meant that a few candidates lost marks, which is sad and unfair. Excessive translation must also be avoided, instead of paraphrasing or simplifying the question.

In summary, the progress of a number of centres must be praised, and they must be thanked for acting on the advice given last year and in the CPD sessions. Centres have a responsibility to prepare candidates to the best of their ability and to ensure that they get every chance to meet their full potential. The importance of internal standardisation must also be noted as a process for ensuring consistency across the centre, but also to ensure that what is presented to WJEC is correct and that it follows the requirements of the unit. Schools have limited time, but this is a very important step, and an integral part of the assessment.

In short, we had pleasure in listening to so many wonderful conversations this year, and it was nice to see a positive response to so many different topics. Thank you, therefore, to centres for their huge effort in raising standards and fostering the naturalness of the conversation.

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UNIT 2 COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Overview of the Unit

Unit 2 requires candidates to respond orally and listen to their peers by interacting with a partner (6-8 minutes) or in a group of 3 (8-10 minutes). Candidates are expected to express and support opinions. WJEC will provide the material to stimulate discussion. The material may include a combination of graphs, pictures and short reading texts, and will cover one or more of the broad themes, which are youth, Wales and the world or employment.

As seen in the specification and the marking scheme/bands, this unit emphasises communication and interaction, and the candidates are expected to demonstrate this through their speaking and listening. Marks are awarded for the two skills individually. The aim in teaching the unit is to give the candidates every opportunity, which would enable them to develop skills and strategies to learn the language confidently and to be able to speak it naturally and easily.

The standard varied across the different centres, and a large number of the candidates coped well with the task and were generally able to hold spontaneous conversations. A number of them also seemed to be used to discussing with each other during their lessons and are very familiar with the stimulus sheets and how to use these in order to maintain an intelligent and fairly natural conversation.

It is very pleasing to note this year that the vast majority of the candidates stuck to discussing what was seen on the stimulus sheet, rather than talking in general about the topic. We must commend those centres that have taken note of the suggestions made last year by the moderators and within the Principal Moderator's report to remove the practice of general discussion.

The Surpass program and the uploading of the candidates' work to that site is now very familiar, as is filling in the mark sheet and uploading it. It seems that a number of centres had followed WJEC's detailed instructions and submitted neat mark sheets with all the details in place. Unfortunately, this did not happen in every case. In terms of the mark sheet, centres must ensure that the names and marks of every member of the groups are included on these sheets, in order of merit. They must also ensure that they use the sheet provided on the WJEC website, and not a leaflet produced by the department. Marks for AO1 Listening and AO2 Speaking must be recorded in the correct columns to facilitate the moderator's work, and it would also help if the recordings were loaded onto Surpass in the same order as the samples. However, it must be noted that the administrative work on Surpass has improved enormously in terms of quality, and we recognise that uploading work can be time-consuming, but care must be taken for the sake of fairness to the applicants and moderators.

Unfortunately this year, we saw a large number of candidates taking the test individually, and more often than not, there was no clarification. We must emphasise firstly that this is a pair / group assessment, as is clearly stated in the specification and the oral manual. In future, if centres were aware of individuals who will have to sit the test individually for exceptional reasons, then WJEC should be contacted in advance, where the request would be considered, and WJEC would then respond.

If something happened on the day that would mean that a candidate would be obliged to sit the test individually, there would be no need to get in touch at that time, but an explanation would need to be included on the mark sheet or in a separate note.

As can be seen in the assessment guidelines, the test and the task must be noted at the beginning of every recording. These details are noted clearly on the front page and inside pages of each test. By failing to do this, the work of the moderators is complicated greatly as they must often try to guess which triggers are being discussed. There were several examples of this again this year. It is easy to adopt the habit of noting these details immediately after the candidates have introduced themselves. It would be a natural starting point to begin the assessment.

Comments on individual questions/sections

There were eighteen stimuli this year as usual, with the candidates having a choice of three stimuli in each session. There were a variety of topics within the tests, and those were based on the three broad themes of youth, Wales and the world, and employment. The most popular questions were 'Sport. My favourite thing', 'It's important to look after the body', 'It's important to have a lot of friends' and 'Spending time in my area'. The best candidates used the stimuli as a basis for their discussions and obviously chose the suitable stimuli in general.

The best candidates conversed naturally and collaborated intelligently, referring to the leaflet constantly referring to the leaflet and backing up what was there with their own experiences. They were able to compare the experiences with what was within their own sphere, agreeing and disagreeing and reasoning effectively. It was demonstrated that they have a store of suitable vocabulary, which was very rich at times, when referring to the different features, namely pictures, settings, a graph / chart and comments and they were also able to use the third person of the verb when referring to the speech bubbles.

As already stated, this cohort was obviously very familiar with the activity, and also well used to the structure of the sheet itself. Evidence shows that the best candidates should be able to ask each other's opinion, add to other people's comments and also use a wide range of simple language patterns correctly. They could also use a range of different verb tenses. Idioms were used suitably in several conversations, and it was good to get the feeling whilst listening that the candidates were really enjoying speaking Welsh and that they were getting the opportunity to showcase their language skills.

It was encouraging to hear a significant number of lower-band candidates make an attempt to show that they can use some strategies to maintain and hold a conversation. A large majority of them were keen to communicate and interact at their level. Naturally the language standard of the weaker candidates was very uncertain and limited in terms of being able to extend the conversation by linking it to their own experiences. Across the bands, young people were heard communicating, and although the language was not always perfect, it was a joy to hear their enthusiasm and confidence.

It must be said that there is less evidence of candidates trying to script during the preparation period this year, although, unfortunately, there is room to suspect that this is still going on. This involves the pair/group then reading the 'script' and sounding completely unnatural. This practice is unnecessary, and the way to prevent this is not to start it during their lessons in school from year seven onwards.

As we've mentioned in the last few years, the role of the teacher is vital. As teachers who conduct the tests, you know your pupils and are well used to getting the best out of them. During the test, you can draw the discussion out in order to show the groups at their best. You can ensure that everyone in the group gets the chance to have their say by asking a few questions when the group is quiet or when the conversation begins to drift. There were examples again this year of teachers intervening unnecessarily, and at other times saying nothing when the group / pair clearly needed guidance. Take care to ensure that you are not translating unnecessarily, instead of simplifying the Welsh or paraphrasing the question. Remember that examples of questions are available to use or adapt in the 'Teacher's Copy'. In this case, perhaps the word 'spontaneous' in the mark scheme is misleading, as we know that some teachers presume that they don't have the right to intervene. You can certainly support and assist so that the candidates can reach their full potential.

Remember also that there are guidelines for the timing of the test; 6-8 minutes for a pair and 8-10 minutes for a group. Again this year there were conversations that were unacceptably short, a minute short in some cases, without any attempt on the part of the teachers to question the candidates further. On the other hand, there were conversations that lasted for almost twenty minutes and although you want the candidates to show themselves at their best, the discussion should be brought to an end naturally if it goes beyond ten minutes.

Unfortunately, the same linguistic errors were seen again this year, with sentence structure at the top of the list. A number of candidates still struggle to form simple sentences and also to form and respond to questions. Pronunciation is also a problem, especially at the lower levels, with the words 'caru', 'chwarae', 'chwaer' and 'TGAU' amongst those that were pronounced incorrectly. Opportunities to practise should be offered regularly in order to reinforce pronunciation.

The standardisation of the work is involved in any type of assessment. Unfortunately, it was very clear that this was not happening in every centre, and it led to issues when asking for additional samples. A large number of the marks within both skills were too generous. On the other hand, there were examples of marks being too strict. We are aware of a lack of time in your centres, but we implore you to prioritise this core aspect in fairness to the candidates and staff. It would be good to look at moderation during the year (not just before samples are submitted) as an activity that would share good practice and focus on the criteria requirements within the mark scheme.

I would like to thank centres, not only for their efforts during the examination period but throughout the year, in preparing and teaching young people to be Welsh-language communicators. The task is not an easy one, especially in the midst of the pressure in our schools these days. I hope that the arrival of the Curriculum for Wales has contributed towards showing the importance of learning Welsh as a second language and the Welsh Government's target of reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

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UNIT 3 NARRATIVE, SPECIFIC AND INSTRUCTIONAL

Overview of the Unit

This unit seeks to assess candidates' responses to a variety of different questions. There is a range of appropriate structured reading and writing questions based on different authentic forms. The questions cover the three broad themes, which are youth, Wales and the world, and employment, offering access to all questions for all candidates at every level. This is the foundation of any non-tiered paper, and it is important to identify this need in order to give everyone a fair chance. Although there are different questions every year, the aim is the same, namely to test candidates' understanding and ability to adapt the language they have learned to meet the requirements of various tasks.

The preparation was evident, with centres reviewing basic patterns and practising relevant tasks regularly during the two years.

Comments on individual questions/sections

This year's questions were based on a variety of subjects, but referred specifically to voluntary work, health and well-being, the environment and Welsh-language education outside Wales. Again this year the materials were completely authentic and conveyed the reality of life to the candidates and discussed topics that are within their sphere and understanding.

- Q.1** This is a question in a familiar form to start the exam in order to entice candidates of all abilities to take the plunge. Volunteering opportunities needed to be matched with the appropriate pictures, and it is good to note that the vast majority succeeded without difficulty in this question.
- Q.2** Again, a large number had been successful here, gaining good marks, and there were very few candidates who failed to gain a mark. However, the word "gwirfoddoli" caused trouble for a few, as did the need to associate the phrase "cadw'n ffit" with the need for fitness. Training candidates to read the rubric of a question carefully and to take advantage of the Welsh version of that information will certainly pay off.
- Q.3** This is a question in a familiar form, namely to select the relevant information in order to fill in a grid for a team leader. The majority of the candidates received very good marks as they managed to clearly note the locations of the voluntary work and to make note of the individuals' opinions. Be careful is our message here, so read the requirements of the grid carefully, remembering that not every detail will follow the same order every time. The last row caused issues for a few candidates, as the opinion appears at the beginning of the text with the location later, and that is different to the order of the grid. As a result, some had recorded "hwyl" as the location and "y llyfrgell" as an opinion. Also, not all candidates were familiar with the expression "gweithio am ddim", and therefore there was some confusion between the idea of not liking to work and not liking to work without pay.

- Q.4** A proof-reading question appears every year, giving candidates the opportunity to correct spelling, grammar or punctuation mistakes. It was decided to divide the task this year, with the need to correct an advert in the first part and then for them to correct signs in the second part.

Although we divided the question, the standard of the responses was disappointing. The problem here was not a lack of application, but a lack of quality. Candidates were generally unable to correct the spelling of "Dydd Llyn" or the number "saeth", which are very basic requirements. Certainly, there were a few challenging errors, bearing in mind the need to create an exam question that will stretch all abilities. It is then surprising to note that many manage to correct "byddwch chi ddim", but had trouble spelling a basic number. "Mae ni" has created trouble for several years now, and it is sad to note that this was the biggest problem this year again.

The need to correct the underlined word must also be noted. Some had changed "Ydych" to "Wyt", which then creates a correct form, but that was not what the task was about.

I implore you as centres to spend time preparing candidates to answer this type of question. This is a skill that will be so important to many of them in the future, a completely practical skill that will be useful in a wide variety of workplaces. It is not enough to prepare practical skills only when setting starter tasks or revision tasks; a specific learning method must be created that will offer clear training and preparation for this exam question.

- Q.5** There were three parts to this question: a multiple-choice method, noting facts and then the need to express a personal opinion giving reasons. The quality of the multiple-choice responses varied, with a few candidates having trouble with the costs of items and several not understanding "yn llai na" and then choosing the wrong answer. It was also strange that many circled the orange instead of the lemon, given that it was on a paper printed in colour.

There was no problem identifying healthy foods, with the majority noting the salad, the water or the fruit. Then this is an opportunity for a personal opinion in the last part, and the responses here were very encouraging. Every year, we get simple reasons using familiar sentences and basic adjectives, but this year, there was a variety of extended patterns and intelligent reasons to support opinions. Perhaps the influence of the oral units can be seen here, with candidates having become familiar with voicing opinions using a range of different constructions. It was also good to see the progress with the idioms flowing and the attempts evident.

- Q.6** This was an opportunity to respond to the results of the local college survey. Firstly, there was an opportunity to test understanding by reading different statements. The only difficulty here was the word "uchaf", which is a similar problem to a few other questions this year, suggesting that our candidates are not familiar with comparing adjectives in the superlative, even though all CPD and reports refer to this need every year.

In addition, they were required to consider the results from a personal point of view and offer reasons to support opinions. Again, many of these answers were so intelligent and meaningful, and used polished and clear language.

Lastly, a suitable question was required. There was a series of good questions, with the minority being irrelevant in terms of content, and therefore losing marks. Language marks were not on offer here, and therefore full marks were received for a communicative, comprehensible question.

- Q.7** This question gives candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to translate a short text into Welsh, again, a skill that will be useful for the future – in both the workplace and our communities. The vast majority had hazarded a response to the task, but the standard was low and disappointing. Many were unable to spell "gwyRDD" or "munud" and the imperative form "Stopiwch" or "Arhoswch" proved challenging for the majority. Every year, candidates are free to paraphrase the text if they retain the meaning, and it was nice to see some trying to translate using the vocabulary they had, and that very often pays off. This is initiative, with the skill of adapting prior knowledge still something that is to be commended.

Nevertheless, as has already been stated when referring to the proof-reading question, the standard of practical skills is not improving sufficiently, and it is vital for centres to understand the problem and take action. The element of teaching is what is missing, and the need to change this urgently is noted.

- Q.8** This was a new method of assessment responding to environmental problems. Although the vast majority of candidates attempted it, it was clear that the vocabulary of the environment was not familiar to everyone. The subject is important, current and part of the specification. Candidates' response to this question was therefore promising, and the only difficulty was the linguistic ignorance of many regarding the subject.

- Q.9** This question was successful, despite being longer and ambitious in places. In the first place, a response was expected to the fact that there was a Welsh-language school in London. The responses were honest and original, and reflected an effort to share opinions. There were more problems with the grid, as some misunderstood the difference between "cynradd" and "uwchradd", and / or did not understand the word "iaith". Nevertheless, the discussion about what was similar and different between the schools was clear and complete on the part of the majority of the candidates. Finally, there was an opportunity to respond in writing to the text, choosing to organise a visit to one of the schools. Candidates made a great effort to introduce themselves and their reasons for writing, sharing an opinion on one of the schools and explaining what they would like to see when arranging a visit. The messages were organised, following the structure of the bullet points with a clear purpose, and the language was completely understandable. There were no marks for expression here, but a concise and clear email was expected.

There were a few questionable points, with candidates thinking that London is in Wales and that 5-year-old children finish school in a few countries. The specification requires us to learn about Wales and the world, and Patagonia is an integral part of that study, along with any opportunities to demonstrate a positive use of the Welsh language outside Wales itself.

- Q.10** Unlike the last two years, there was no guidance regarding the form or context of this question this year. Still, on the whole candidates managed to respond to both choices without difficulty. A choice had to be made between writing a note discussing the school curriculum and a blog discussing voluntary work. No one topic attracted candidates' attention more than the other with both offering an opportunity to record information, express opinions and formulate advice for others.

The vast majority followed the order of the bullet points and offered a response to each one in turn, creating a structured and organised answer. Offering the amount of marks for each bullet point this year helped again with candidates understanding the specific importance of the individual points and being able to offer longer or more profound responses to some of them. It is clear that a number of candidates were trained to write sentences or a short paragraph on each bullet point, with the method paying off in terms of marks. We must remember that this question appears at the end of the paper and any assistance offered to candidates in order to create a relevant answer is to be welcomed. However, it must be noted that the word "diolch" or "hwyl" is not sufficient as an effective sign-off.

The note for the school governors was full of facts and opinions. It was pretty clear that candidates had plenty to say about the merits of the curriculum, but also the faults in the system and what should change in order to create a better school. The suggestions of the best candidates included evidence of shortcomings, but also constructive advice for the future. The majority had a tendency to discuss different school subjects and identify the good and the bad, the advantages and disadvantages and reach a clear conclusion. Others discussed the academic side but then referred to stumbling blocks such as bullying, smoking, the unacceptable canteen menu and the pressure of GCSE exams when considering the health and well-being of our young people. Indeed, the work was interesting, organised and thought-provoking for us adults.

It was good to see the number of blogs using the features of the blog format in terms of offering a catchy title to attract attention, rhetorical questions and appealing phrases in order to involve the reader as part of the work. They briefly discussed the details of their own voluntary work, identifying the strengths of helping others and encouraging young people to take advantage of the opportunity in their different communities. Nevertheless, a few only noted facts and missed the opportunity to offer opinions and references to the potential of the local area.

Indeed, the standard of the content of the writing has risen but the expression of many candidates contained mistakes. There was a lack of accuracy in the work, especially when considering the importance of the six unchanging rules. Candidates did not mutate correctly, and there was a tendency to stick to the present tense when writing. There were obvious difficulties when moving from the first person to the third person and when using the plural form.

In closing, we must refer to the handwriting problem again this year, as this has an adverse effect on the work of candidates at times, as they present incomprehensible work, even to a sympathetic examiner. The use and influence of technology has meant less writing by hand, and the effect can be seen clearly when working under exam conditions. However, the implications of this cannot be ignored either.

GCSE WELSH SECOND LANGUAGE

GCSE

Summer 2024

UNIT 4 DESCRIPTIVE, CREATIVE AND IMAGINATIVE

Overview of the Unit

In this unit, 60% of the marks are awarded for writing and 40% for reading.

Due to the weighting, candidates' ability to express themselves communicatively using a wide range of constructions was vitally important, and the grammatically correct use of language was rewarded in the writing questions and in one of the reading questions as well.

As in the previous series, there were a variety of methods for answering the reading passages.

There was also a variety in the written questions to ensure accessibility for candidates of all abilities, and an appropriate level of challenge across the ability range.

On the paper, candidates were offered opportunities to discuss a wide range of topics within the three broad themes set out in the specification.

The later date of the exam on the exam timetable had meant that this had an effect on the language standard of candidates as a whole, due to a lack of contact with teachers after candidates from a large number of centres had left on independent study leave and due to the timing of the Whitsun half term holidays.

In general, the efforts of the candidates of all abilities must be applauded, whether they are less able or the most able. The best candidates' use of language bodes well for their use of the Welsh language in the future in AS Welsh Second Language lessons and in their use of the language in the wider community.

It is clear that teachers need to do more to ensure that the 6 Unchanging Rules are presented in lessons because candidates lose expression marks for their inability to mutate correctly. The quality of language, in general, seemed weak this year and there were few opportunities to reward the highest marks in terms of expression.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1 (a) (i)** The majority of candidates completed this basic, non-language task by proving an understanding of simple words on familiar topics such as the Welsh language and outdoor activities.
- (ii + iii + iv)** There was generally a good response to these questions, with candidates making an effort to underline the correct sentences. A small number of candidates underlined more than one sentence out of the three options, so it wasn't possible to award marks.

- (v) There was a good response to this part of the question, with candidates of all abilities trying to respond to the question that was solely in Welsh, which proves that there has been progress in candidates' efforts to respond to such questions compared to last year's series.

Here there were two content marks, one for indicating whether they would like to go to Glan-llyn or not, and the second mark for giving a reason including information from the poster. The remaining two marks were for communicative use of two constructions that were not necessarily grammatically correct.

- Q.2 (a) (i)** This question was generally answered well with a number of candidates attempting to note the correct names in the blanks. Only a very small number of candidates left blanks or did not answer at all. Often, the words "cyfleoedd" and "yn ddiweddar" seemed to confuse several candidates, with the third and fifth part of the question seeming to be the ones that caused the most trouble for them. As such, attention should be paid to these words moving forward.

- (ii) It was very encouraging to see that most candidates attempted this part of the question due to the fact that the passage was solely in Welsh. A large number of candidates tried to answer in full sentences even though there was no need for them to do so - they just needed to note the correct information, or tick the correct names, because there were no expression marks available to be awarded.

- Q.3 (a)** A high number of candidates attempted to respond to this part, but a number had difficulty answering using the expected vocabulary. Candidates' response to this type of question has improved, but candidates need to get used to answering questions using the correct vocabulary.

The following answers were rewarded with a mark: 'Ydw', 'Nac ydw', 'Ydw a nac ydw', 'Na', 'Wrth gwrs', 'Yn bendant', 'Heb os', 'Heb os nac oni bai', 'Ddim o gwbl', 'Rydw i'n cytuno', 'Rydw i'n anghytuno', "Dydw i ddim yn cytuno."

Examples of answers where a mark could not be awarded: 'Ydy', 'Nac ydy', 'Ydyn', 'Nac ydyn', 'Ydych', 'Nac ydych', 'Oes', 'Nac oes'.

In this part, candidates needed to justify their response to the first part of the question by offering reasons. A good number of candidates managed to offer communicative reasons stating why speaking Welsh is a good or bad idea. For each of the two reasons, there was one content mark for offering a sensible reason, and then an expression mark for communicative use of syntax, which was not necessarily grammatically correct.

- Q.4 (a)** Five marks were awarded for presenting five facts in response to the three discussion points in the question. Five marks were awarded for the correct use of constructions, with reasons to support an opinion for the second discussion point. In order to get the 5 expression marks, the candidates needed to use three different constructions, including two verb tenses.

The question ensures that three different constructions are required in order to answer the question successfully. In terms of awarding language marks, the emphasis is on using basic sentences correctly, and because the six unchanging rules were introduced this year when marking, the correct use of soft mutation after 'am', 'on' 'to' and with adjectives after 'yn/'n' is necessary in order to be able to award expression marks. This had an impact on the number of candidates who succeeded in getting full marks and therefore, teachers need to pay attention to the six unchanging rules moving forward.

A number of candidates managed to respond to all discussion points of the question quite successfully, gaining marks for content and expression. Candidates are clearly able to discuss the subject successfully, and can consider advantages and disadvantages effectively.

- Q.5 (a)**
- (i)** This question was generally answered well and a good number of candidates successfully gained marks for noting the three correct answers, although the plural form of the noun "bwyd" confused several candidates. In contrast to questions A1 and A2, the poem offered more of a challenge on the topic of "Y Ffair".
 - (ii)** This was a question where a high number of candidates had failed to receive marks due to the fact that the questions in the grid were solely in Welsh, and the use of perhaps less familiar vocabulary. Candidates should be given opportunities to familiarise themselves with vocabulary related to feelings.
 - (iii)** A question where the candidates were required to determine whether 4 questions arising from the poem were correct or incorrect. The method of answering this question was to tick "Ydy" or "Nac ydy" when considering the 4 questions. There were few scripts where candidates had not made an effort to answer these questions.

- Q.6 (b) (i)** A question where candidates were required to determine whether 5 statements arising from the poem were correct or incorrect. The method of answering this question was by ticking if a statement was correct or incorrect. There were only a few scripts where candidates made no attempts to answer this question, but candidates need to practise and get used to words such as 'cywir' and 'anghywir' and responding to statements solely in Welsh in a non-language way. The vocabulary in the grid did not seem to cause issues for a high number of candidates.
- (ii)** There was a good response, on the whole, to this part of the question, with a large number of candidates understanding and recognising the word 'manteision'. In order to gain the marks, candidates needed to note the verbs 'dysgu', 'cael', 'gwisgo', 'gwneud', 'helpu siarad' in their answers.
- (iii)** There were no expression marks available in this part. A content mark was awarded for stating which of the days/celebrations the candidates would like to celebrate, and an additional content mark for stating their reason why. Because expression marks were not available here, communicative Welsh-language responses were rewarded.

Due to the more ambitious nature of the reading passage, more candidates tended to respond to the question in English, but no marks are given for responses that are not in Welsh.

- Q.7** Eight marks were awarded for submitting eight facts in response to the four discussion points in the question. Seven marks were awarded for correctly using constructions in full sentences.

The question ensures that five different constructions need to be used, including three verb tenses, in order to answer the question correctly. In terms of awarding language marks, the emphasis is on using basic sentences correctly and as with A4, due to emphasis on the use of the six unchanging rules, the correct use of soft mutations after 'am', 'ar', 'i' and with adjectives after 'yn/n' was necessary in order to be able to award expression marks.

The ability to respond effectively, and to use correct grammatical constructions for discussion points in the past tense continues to cause trouble for many candidates. The need to teach candidates to respond to question forms in the past tense using the short form of the past tense has remained a target since the 2019 series.

There was little correct use of the conditional and therefore, attention should be paid to this linguistic element, as well as the past tense, when looking at how to raise language standards.

Despite this, it was very pleasing to see that most of the candidates had attempted to answer the question and that teachers had coached the weaker candidates to express an opinion even if they did not know how to respond fully to the text to gain a few marks.

Q8 (12 Content + 13 Expression = 25 Marks)

Q.8 There were interesting responses to the two optional texts on the paper, a portrait of a family member and a letter to their headteacher responding to a proposal to ban the use of social websites in their schools.

Of course, the standard varied due to the wide range of linguistic ability sitting this non-tiered paper. The work of the best candidates was excellent and it was pleasing to read the candidates' views and to test their ability to use language freely, confidently and creatively. A number of them had a good grasp of the basics of the language, and it was often possible to see that they had planned their work methodically.

Nevertheless, the effect of the later date, lack of contact with teachers, independent revision without Welsh lessons, the Whitsun half-term holidays and the emphasis on the six unchanging rules was clearly visible in the general language standard of the responses to this question.

It was very encouraging to see that just a small number of questions showed no trace of effort. Also, there were fewer examples than ever of questions not being answered at all.

In terms of content we were looking for:

- interesting and comprehensive treatment of the text
- logical progression of ideas and views
- an effort to express opinion and support their views with various and ambitious answers
- an effort to be ambitious in terms of ideas and responding creatively to the chosen text.

In terms of expression we were looking for:

- the ability to convey ideas and views successfully
- the ability to vary the pattern of a sentence for a purpose
- suitable and pertinent vocabulary to deal with the text
- accuracy and an attempt to achieve consistency in terms of verb tenses
- an attempt to create appropriate mood and atmosphere through the use of idioms, comparisons and rhetorical questions.

To raise standards, candidates should try to raise the standard of correctness of their basic constructions, avoiding mistakes such as:

- Using the soft mutation after the prepositions 'am', 'ar', 'i', 'o' in accordance with the six unchanging rules.

e.g.

Es i Llundain. = X

Es i i Lundain. = ✓

Dw i'n dwlu ar mynd ar triplau ysgol. = X

Dw i'n dwlu ar fynd ar driplau ysgol. = ✓

- Using the soft mutation for adjectives after 'yn' + 'n' in accordance with the six unchanging rules.

e.g.

...achos mae'n bendigedig. = X

...achos mae'n fendigedig. = ✓

Mae fy mam yn pert. = X

Mae fy mam yn bert. = ✓

- A nasal mutation after 'fy' in accordance with the six unchanging rules.

e.g.

Fy hoff ddathliad ydy fy pen-blwydd. = X

Fy hoff ddathliad ydy fy mhen-blwydd. = ✓

Enw fy tad ydy Arwyn. = X

Enw fy nhad ydy Arwyn. = ✓

- Correct use of the past tense, especially when responding to the past tense question form.

e.g.

Rydw i'n dathloch fy mhen-blwydd ar y penwythnos. = X

Dathlais i fy mhen-blwydd ar y penwythnos. = ✓

- There has been a decline in candidates' use of apostrophes, even when using familiar, simple constructions. This should be addressed in lessons to avoid losing easy expression marks.
e.g.

Dw in mwynhau rafftio. = X
Dw i'n mwynhau rafftio. = ✓

...achos maen hwyl. = X
...achos mae'n hwyl. = ✓

- The marking scheme for the 10-mark writing question states the difference between good reasons and confident reasons. This difference should be taught in lessons to ensure that candidates can get the highest marks.

Good reason – a reason that includes an adjective
e.g.

...achos mae'n hwyl.
...achos mae'n ecogyfeillgar.
...achos mae'n wrthgymdeithasol.

Confident reason – a reason that includes a verb or idiom
e.g.

...achos rydw i'n mwynhau cadw'n heini.
...achos mae ailgylchu yn bwysig.
Sôn am ddiflas!

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

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