

# Examiners' Report Winter 2008

IGCSE

## IGCSE English as a Second Language (4357)

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## 4357/01 - Reading and Writing

### General comments

On this paper the reading sections are taken from authentic texts with very little adaptation. The writing sections aim to provide candidates with opportunities to write texts which they could be called upon to write in their learning lives.

On the whole, the candidates did well on this paper. The written work was of a high standard and showed evidence of thorough preparation and more practice prior to the examination.

### Detailed comments

#### Section A

In this part candidates were asked to read a text from How Stuff Work on tips for saving money when they are students. Students were asked to match the statement to the paragraph in which the information occurred (Questions 1 - 10). It is important that candidates read the questions before starting the task, so that they are aware of the main points that they will need to find in the text. In tasks such as this, they will generally have more texts to look at than questions, and they may need to choose a particular section of the text more than once. Candidates should also follow the instructions for completing the task carefully as they will not be awarded a mark if their selection is not clearly indicated or if they have make more than one selection for the same statement.

#### Section B

In this part, candidates were given a text to read about student support and guidance. Candidates were asked to answer 10 true/false/not given questions (Questions 11 - 20). A further five questions required the candidates to complete sentences (Questions 21 - 25).

For questions 11 - 20, candidates need to read the questions very carefully and identify the main points before going back to the text to locate the information and then to decide whether the information is true or false according to the text. The not given option is difficult as candidates have to decide whether there is anything in the text that allows them to make judgements about the statement. This means that candidates have to analyse the text quite carefully. Many candidates found that part of the paper challenging.

For questions 21 - 25, candidates need to consider the information in the question very carefully before going back to the text. This is because the sentences are a paraphrase of the text. Candidates need to adhere to the word limit and make sure that the words they have selected to complete the sentence fits grammatically.

#### Section C

In this part, candidates were required to read a text about how laughter works and complete 15 sentences based on information in the text. The skills required for completing questions 21 - 25 of the paper should also be used applied in this section. Candidates should also ensure that they adhere to the word limit and pay attention to the grammatical fit of the word/s they have selected.

Generally, the more able candidates scored well in all sections. Weaker candidates struggled with Section B and Section C.

#### **Section D**

In this task, candidates were expected to write a report about their town for some students who were intending to visit it. They were given a number of areas which they were expected to mention in the report.

It is essential that candidate address all aspects of the task given in the bullet points. Many candidates did not show an awareness of the audience they were supposed to be writing for. They did not always consider the correct tone or register in their writing. This is intended to be a semi-formal piece of writing.

On the whole, candidates performed well. Able candidates showed an awareness of audience and gave good descriptions of their town. Weaker candidates did not address all aspects of the tasks or provided a limited description of their town.

#### **Section E**

In this part, candidates were asked to write a letter to a friend who had decided to learn a foreign language. On the whole, candidates found this task assessable. They all had things to say about why learning a new language is a good idea. Some candidates, however, digressed from the task and tended to write too much for this section. Sometimes candidates wrote considerably more than the required number of words.

Able candidates showed an awareness of the audience and wrote a letter that they would normally write to a friend. Others were a bit too formal in their style. Weaker candidates tended to overlook the context of the letter.

#### **Section F**

In this section, candidates were asked to summarise information about recycling and include it in a school magazine. Many candidates overlooked the audience for this writing task. This was the most difficult section of the paper. It is important to bear in mind that the task will always indicate particular pieces of information that candidates should include in their summary and that the text will always contain information that will be irrelevant and unnecessary.

Candidates are getting better at writing the summary task, but there are still some who copy large sections from the text. This was penalized in the marking; marks were also lost for including irrelevant details in the summary.

## 4357/02 - Listening

### General comments

Generally candidates did well or very well on this paper. Marks tended to be in the mid-teens to mid-twenties range. Each part of the paper presented challenges for the candidates.

### Detailed comments

There were two general types of questions on this paper: multiple choice and note/sentence completion.

#### Multiple Choice

As a rule, candidates followed the instructions given in the rubric for this type of question.

#### Note/sentence completion

Generally these questions were well attempted, although there were some candidates who did not adhere to the three-word limit given in the rubric.

Two issues arose out of these types of questions which require candidates to provide the word or words for the answer themselves.

#### *Spelling*

This proved to be a problem for some candidates. The general rule applied during marking was that if the answer affected communication, candidates were not awarded a mark. Candidates were not penalised for misspelling a word if it sounded like the target word. For example Q 5 (answer beach), a spelling such as 'beache' was accepted. However, if the word sounded like a different word or was a different word (e.g. Q5 breach), candidates were not awarded a mark.

#### *Grammar*

In a few questions e.g. Q23, candidates were required to complete a sentence using the correct grammatical forms. Although these forms were given in the recording, many candidates made errors in their answers. These were the most demanding of all the questions on this paper.

#### Advice to centres

It is recommended that centres prepare candidates for the listening examination by familiarizing them with the style of the tests and with the types of questions they can expect to find on the paper.

Candidates should make good use of the time before the tape is played to predict possible answers and consider the context when providing their answers.

Candidates should be advised to follow the instructions in the rubric when answering questions and to adhere to the word limit.

Candidates should consider the grammatical fit of their answers in sentence completion questions.

Candidates should consider the spelling of words when providing their answers.



## 4357/03 - Speaking (Optional endorsement)

### General comments

Generally the candidates did well on this paper. The paper is designed to become increasingly difficult, and this proved to be so for less able candidates, who struggled the most with Part 3. Candidates responded well to the structure of the test and seemed engaged by the content. The topics were ones which were familiar to them and they could call on their life experience to answer the questions.

### Detailed comments

#### Interlocutors

Several of the interlocutors carried out their functions most effectively. However, there were others who did not follow the instructions contained in 'Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations'. All of the wording and questions are provided either in the instructions or on the frame cards, yet some interlocutors did not keep to the questions in Part 1 and Part 3. Furthermore, a number of interlocutors did not ask the supplementary prompt in brackets on the frame cards when a candidate was less forthcoming with an answer.

In Part 1, some interlocutors extended and developed the theme here and then allocated a short time for Part 3. The aim of Part 1 is to try to put the candidate at his/her ease by asking questions on a familiar topic.

In Part 3, some interlocutors did not ask questions in groups as indicated on the frame card but selected questions somewhat haphazardly. Each group of questions is generally based around a theme and questions become gradually more challenging as they progress through the group. When interlocutors did not follow the grouping of the questions they overlooked the advantages of graduating the questions they asked, and how the abilities of stronger candidates could be exploited by giving them the opportunity to answer some more challenging questions within the groups.

In Part 3, some questions had a follow-up question to encourage candidates to talk more. Some interlocutors failed to ask the second part of the question and this prevented candidates from developing their ideas more fully and thereby displaying their ability to use more complex language. Furthermore, some interlocutors did not allow for pauses to encourage candidates to expand on their responses.

#### Question frames

Some interlocutors chose to use a very limited number of question frames for the entire cohort of candidates.

#### Equipment

Some of the recordings were of very poor quality and it was hard for assessors to hear what candidates were saying. Sometimes there was a lot of machine noise, particularly when the recording level was set too high. On occasion, the interlocutor was more audible than the candidate.

#### Room

The room selected for the examination was not always a quiet one, and many distracting noises, such as shouting and bells ringing, can be heard on the tapes.

### **Stopping of the recording**

There were instances when the recording was stopped during testing.

### **Recommendations to centres**

#### **Interlocutors**

It is recommended that interlocutors spend more time preparing for the speaking examination so that they have a clear understanding of how it is organized and what the questions are before the start of the test. They should also ensure they are using the latest version of the 'Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations'. Time should also be taken to examine the structure of the examination and thereby gain an insight into the function of the various parts of the test.

Interlocutors are required to adhere to the questions and wordings contained on the frame cards and in the 'Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations'. They must not deviate from the script provided.

Interlocutors should avoid using words of encouragement such as 'that's good' and 'that's very interesting' as these mislead candidates about their performance. They should not paraphrase more difficult questions without being asked to by the candidate.

For reasons of fairness, all candidates should receive the same amount of preparation time (1 minute) in Part 2.

Interlocutors should listen to what candidates are saying during the test to avoid irrelevant and repetitive questions being asked. They should also allow the candidate time to respond to questions. This allows the examination to become more of a conversation rather than a question and answer session.

Interlocutors should not alter the speed at which they speak when conducting the interview. They should talk to candidates at their normal speaking speed. When interlocutors reduce their speaking speed they can become rather stilted and this effect can rub off on the candidates.

Interlocutors need to ensure that each examination has a clear start and end (as per the script). At the start of each performance, they should repeat the candidate's name and number fully and clearly.

#### **Question frames**

All frames should be used. Frames should never be shown to the candidates to read. Candidates should not be invited to choose the frames in Part 2.

#### **Equipment**

Prior to the start of recording, interlocutors should conduct thorough pre-checks to ensure that the position of the microphone favours the candidate and that the volume on the tape is checked so that the best possible recording of the candidate can be obtained. It is further recommended that the best quality recorder and microphone available be used for the speaking test.

If a candidate is speaking quietly or indistinctly, he/she should be asked to speak up.

Interlocutors should make sure that there is enough space on a tape before they start recording a candidate. This avoids situations where the test has to be interrupted in order to turn over the tape. Interlocutors should also check the recordings of the candidates before sending them off.

### **Room**

Centres should allocate a quiet room for speaking examinations where extraneous noise is at a minimum and where there will be no interruptions during the course of the examination.

## Statistics

<b>Grade</b>	<b>A*</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Boundary Mark (Overall)</b>	86	76	66	56	49	43	37	31

**Boundary mark:** the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.



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