

O Level English Language (1115,1120,1123,1124,1125)

Is there a recommended textbook for the syllabus?

There is a bibliography in the syllabus booklet, but we do recommend *The Cambridge Revision Guide* published by CUP (ISBN 0-521-6444421-6).

Is the O Level recognised for matriculation purposes by universities and other higher education institutions?

Yes! Normally, a grade C or above is required for matriculation.

Are candidates penalised for every language error they make?

In Paper 1, every error is marked by the examiner. Then, an assessment is made of the broad level of achievement of the answer as a whole, to determine which mark band is the best fit for that answer. (The mark bands are published in the back of the syllabus booklet). Examiners do not simply deduct a mark for every error- as in many cases, the candidate makes the same kind of errors several times, and we would only penalise them once for one kind of error.

In Paper 2, examiners do not penalise minor errors of spelling or punctuation if the right word or phrase is given, because here the test is a test of comprehension.

Are American spellings allowed?

Consistency is the important thing. If a candidate is consistent, the American spelling will not be marked as an error.

In general, candidates sometimes need to be reminded that they should not use 'text speak', jargon, slang or other very colloquial usage in the examination, unless it is being used for effect, for example, in reported speech in a story.

In Paper 1, do candidates need to use correct forms for the Part 2 exercise, such as a report or a letter?

Part 2 asks candidates to consider what sort of format and style they are being asked to provide. So, if they are asked to write a lively letter, examiners would expect a letter format, and an informal tone. If it is a report to a Head Teacher, examiners would expect a formal tone, and some simple indication of report layout such as a title, rather than the salutation 'Dear Principal'. However, examiners are flexible about the detail - there is more than one correct way to lay out a letter or a report, and what matters is that the candidate has shown an understanding of whether formality or informality is required and responded appropriately.

In Paper 1, should candidates make plans or drafts of their answers?

It is very sensible to think carefully about the exact wording of the title and then make a short plan before beginning to write. However, some candidates write out the full answer 'in rough' and then write it out again without any changes at all. This is clearly a waste of time.

Candidates should allow five minutes at the end of the exam to go back and check their work, making neat corrections where necessary. Where corrections are made, candidates should simply cross out the error, rather than using correction fluid.