



OCR Entry Level Certificate in English

(formerly Certificate of Achievement in English)

Handbook for Teachers

to be read in conjunction with the specification

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Introduction

The specification forms part of the National Entry Level which in turn is a part of the National Framework of Qualifications. The framework proceeds from Entry Level, via GCSE to 'A' level and also takes a parallel vocational NVQ pathway.

All National Entry specifications are approved by QCA. QCA's requirements at this level are not complex (for example, there is no particular specification content), but a maximum of 50% coursework is specified.

The Entry Level English specification has been designed to appear familiar to teachers of GCSE English. Assessments are made of Reading, Writing and Speaking and Listening and the weighting of the components is exactly the same as in GCSE. (Please note that changes are planned for GCSE English and it may be that the Entry Level specification will need to be amended accordingly. We will, of course keep you informed of any developments.)

There is no specific testing of literature in the examination. However since all students must receive their reading entitlement as laid out in the National Curriculum, an opportunity to respond to literature is given through coursework.

The awards are based on the National Curriculum levels 1, 2 and 3, and Entry Level 1, 2 and 3 are used to describe them. It has been found unhelpful to suggest any equivalence to grades awarded at GCSE, although many students expected to achieve Grade G have also been entered for this examination.

The standards that we have established for Entry Level English have made students proud of their achievements. Our teachers have praised the examination because it motivates students and because of its flexibility.

The moderation system is unusual because it allows one Moderator to see and hear all the work of any one candidate.

The status of this handbook is strictly advisory. It suggests some of the ways in which the requirements of the specification may be met.

SECTION 1: CHOOSING THE CANDIDATES AND MANAGING THE COURSE

Suitability of the Specification

The specification has been written with a wide range of users in mind. It is chiefly targeted at students in schools who are below the level of GCSE or who will not easily achieve a secure grade. Some will not be entered for GCSE: others will be doubly entered (i) for GCSE and also (ii) for Entry Level English in which they may expect to be awarded a certificate representing the highest level.

Some candidates will be mature students who are learning to read or whose effective use of English is limited. The examination is also suitable for some students from abroad in sixth form colleges and further education institutes who are in the early stages of learning English and whose teachers want them to follow a GCSE style approach. You are reminded that the examination is restricted to a standard which is equivalent to the first three levels of the National Curriculum.

Nevertheless there may be some students who, although they are fast track learners, may require the experience of a first examination before progressing to the next level.

The Two Options - With and Without Coursework

So far, approximately half of our candidates have been entered for the **coursework option**. Advantages are that coursework can be made complementary to the teaching course as it proceeds and that candidates can complete parts of the specification as they go.

However there are reasons why, for some, coursework may not be a suitable pathway. Some candidates have poor attendance records and others attend special units, often for a short period of time before an examination is due. Some candidates from Adult Literacy classes and FE courses attend for only one or two hours a week. Since it should generally be possible to complete all three components of the **examination option** in one day, this alternative may be attractive where time is at a premium.

Teaching the Course

Candidates can be prepared for the examination either in separate classes or while they attend GCSE or other classes. The flexibility of the coursework and the variety of the elements tested in the Reading Paper mean that work done in other classes, for instance English, English Literature, Media Studies and Drama, can easily be made relevant. Depending on the way lessons are organised, some candidates could take mainstream English with a GCSE set and extra English as an option. For example, the specific needs of candidates entered for Entry Level English could be met in a designated lesson or lessons, regularly or at a fixed time in the course. It has never been assumed that candidates need to be taught in a separate group. There will have to be some specific teaching, but not before Year 11 and maybe not until a month or two before the examination. This depends partly on how convenient

you find it to manage the coursework in a GCSE class. It is likely that Speaking and Listening coursework will be the same or very similar for both GCSE and Entry Level English. For Writing coursework, we would expect tasks to be appropriate to the range of ability tested in Entry Level English. Tasks would at least have to be tailored to the requirements and the spirit of the examination. Provided that you are used to differentiated work in your classroom, this should not be a problem.

IF THE CANDIDATES ARE TAUGHT IN A GCSE CLASS THEY WILL NEED OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- complete the Writing coursework (ie a personal statement, a letter, a statement of opinion and a story)
- receive appropriate instruction in reading (Reading Paper, all sections)
- work with media texts (Reading Paper, Section 2)
- practice communication skills relevant to the world of work, analyse aspects of work experience and understand ways in which life in school differs from life at work.

DURING THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION FOR THE EXAMINATION

Work during this time may include:

- the final arrangement of the folder
- finalising records of speaking and listening
- practising group discussions and telephone calls
- practice in reading aloud
- practice in understanding examination questions which require factual answers and those which require degrees of inference and opinion.

This leads to the examination in March, which consists of:

Option C: Examination with Coursework

- The Reading Paper (component 1)
 - The Speaking and Listening Task (component 3)
- (for candidates entered for the option with Coursework)

or

Option P: Examination without Coursework

- The Reading Paper (component 1)
 - The Writing Paper (component 4)
 - The Speaking and Listening Tasks (component 5)
- (for candidates entered for the option without Coursework).

During the week of the examination, recordings are made of four candidates for moderation (see SECTION 6 of this Handbook)

FOR THOSE CANDIDATES TAUGHT IN A SEPARATE CLASS

a relevant course would be built round the skills of:

- reading for information and inference
- reading aloud
- writing for different purposes and in different genres
- Speaking and Listening

using appropriate literary, media and vocationally-related texts.

SECTION 2: COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS FOR WRITING (COMPONENT 2)

The content of the folder of writing was drawn up to take into account the considerable difference in standard between candidates working at the lowest and the highest level. For example, the criteria for the lowest mark band state that "writing communicates through simple words and phrases, is brief, and very simple meanings are comprehensible". At the highest level, the writing "shows signs of organisation and clarity and of application to task. Sentences are sometimes arranged to give a coherent sequence." You will see a similar hierarchy of performance in spelling, punctuation and grammar and handwriting. This progression through the mark bands makes it easy to assign tasks to the appropriate level. Candidates whose achievements fit the criteria fully for the highest mark band will be given the top or nearly the top mark.

Remember that some of your candidates, particularly those whom you decide to enter for GCSE as well, may well be somewhat above the standard of this examination.

Presentation

One of the prescribed pieces of writing must be in the candidate's own handwriting in order to meet the criteria. Any or all of the rest may be word-processed or desktop published, and credit given for effective presentation. Remember that candidates are still responsible for managing their own spelling and punctuation and at the highest level of achievement should be able to work independently. Remember also that candidates' standards of proof reading are notoriously bad and that mistakes in a word-processed piece may be more frequent than in a piece in the candidate's own handwriting.

Giving Help to Candidates

The rules about helping candidates are set out on page 14 of the specification under 4.7, Authentication. They follow GCSE practice, except that there will be occasions when you will find it necessary to provide words and spellings for candidates. If you do, you should indicate this in the text or in the margin with a letter H. Please read the rules in the specification and abide by them.

The Content Requirements

1 - A Personal Statement

This is an important piece of writing in a student's life. It can contain an account of achievements, interests and work experience and may also include aspects of form-filling. It may appear as a CV or in any form used by the Centre as a Record of Achievement. It can be prepared in conjunction with PSE tutors or careers staff. As a piece in an English folder it would be better completed as a sequence of sentences, perhaps in subheaded paragraphs, but candidates at the lowest level might present it as a list. This piece obviously lends itself to word processing so that copies can be made for other users. This writing follows the purposes of writing laid down in the National Curriculum and at GCSE, and is to inform, explain and describe.

2 - A Letter

There is no restriction as to the content of the letter which might be a request for information or clarification such as:

- a letter of complaint or thanks
- a letter connected with work experience (eg a request for the time of a preliminary visit and a map, or a courtesy letter after the work experience is over).

It might be useful to connect the writing of a letter with adult life, for example realising that a letter is definitive whilst a telephone call is not, and learning to be sensitive when courtesy demands a response. On the other hand the letter might be based on an imaginary experience as in the following examples:

(1) Your friend is in hospital, her birthday is on Saturday and she is longing to see you; you have been invited to play football for an up-and-coming team at the other end of the country, also on Saturday. You have a choice to make and a choice of letters to write.

(2) You have gone on an adventure holiday despite the worries of at least one of your parents. You have had an accident - not life-threatening, but enough to keep you in the hostel for a couple of days. Write a letter home proving how much you are enjoying yourself, but explaining the accident in such a way that your parent(s) will not panic.

Another idea is to write a letter from one character to another from a book that has been studied in class. This is a way of allowing candidates to respond to the literature element in the Programme of Study at whatever level they wish. Remember that you will not be marking this for the literary quality of the response; the literature is merely a stimulus.

Candidates working in mark band three could be rewarded for showing signs of organisation and of application to task, the appropriateness of their use of the main features of a letter and their awareness of the reader. The use of more than one paragraph where appropriate would be typical of the most able candidates. Whilst paragraphing is not required at this level, we have found that many candidates are able to use paragraphs even at level 2. This is a welcome sign of improving standards.

Candidates working in mark band one would write very brief letters but would nevertheless communicate simple meanings through phrases. At this level, you might find it useful to set a postcard task rather than a letter. There would be no objection to your doing so.

3 - A Statement of Opinion

This wording is purposely vague. It allows anything from a list of preferences to an argument that is beginning to show some coherent development. It is an opportunity to write in order to argue, persuade and advise, thus fulfilling another of the prescribed purposes for writing. You will notice that we have not required candidates to write in order to analyse, review and comment, although it would be a possibility here. For example, candidates could write about and give their opinion of a school performance in which they took part.

Bear in mind that this is potentially the most difficult piece in the folder, so you should make sure that the topic, the task and any worksheet that is used are within the grasp of the candidate. A series of questions with simple answers that reads like a comprehension is not in the best interests of a student in this examination. Nor is setting a worksheet with headings that use words foreign to their own style.

Some examples of tasks are:

- Why you like or dislike a character in a book/film of the book you have studied
- A dialogue between a butcher and a vegetarian (in the butcher's shop)
- A leaflet/broadsheet setting out a case against smoking (carefully prepared to the student's satisfaction and within his understanding)
- An advertisement giving reasons why your product is the best of its type
- An "I like..." type poem (several models, eg "I Like Noise", available in anthologies) describing different objects / features of a season / things about one's Mum etc., in each line
- A rationale for a set of Health and Safety rules appropriate to a part of the school
- A transcript of a Speaking and Listening activity in which the candidate plays a sustained part (the transcript to be made by the candidate).

This list largely avoids the exemplification of "essay" type writing. It is generally found to be easier and more effective to work in the form of a dialogue, list or broadsheet than in a connected piece of prose, and it is here that candidates could produce a simple media text. There is a strong case for adding useful graphics and working in more than one form of communication. There is an equally strong case to be made for decorative additions, since the presentation and the appearance of the coursework will be a powerful motivator for the candidate.

At the lowest level of achievement, the writing will be very brief, possibly even a single statement and without a clear context. You should (legitimately) help the candidate by providing the context in which the statement has been made, for example the stimulus material and any introductory sentences or questions that are necessary. An example might be to create a form to be filled in by someone who has been on a package holiday and is feeling dissatisfied. The form might appear real by asking candidates to tick satisfaction boxes and to add their own comment on each section of the questionnaire.

4 - Writing from Personal Experience or a Story

This gives practice in the purposes of writing to explore, imagine and entertain. The best candidates may take the opportunity to write at some length (but see the section of this Handbook headed Length of Coursework) and to show that they can work in the simple narrative structure of a beginning, a series of events and an ending. The ability to elaborate, such as to establish character or to describe a place, would be an added bonus.

Candidates in the lowest mark band will provide a simple list of events, possibly in a random order.

- Stories can take the form of diaries or journals.
- Autobiographical pieces and fragments are encouraged.
- They can be based on literature that the candidates have studied. At this level it is perfectly in order that the story should be the candidate's own retelling of the plot of a Shakespeare play.
- The story could be written for young children.
- Stories may be illustrated by drawings and/or photographs.

Length of Coursework

It is recognised that some of the coursework folders will contain extremely short pieces of writing. If the work is long enough to meet the marking criteria, this is of no matter. The second paragraph of each of the marking bands (see specification page 19) gives a guide to the increase in elaboration (and therefore length) which marks each level of achievement.

It is important that your candidates do not write at length for the sake of it. Quality is of prime importance, and those who frequently cover two sides of A4 with their stories, but who use no full stops and whose every tenth word is "I", might be persuaded to produce half the length in readable handwriting and perhaps even with a new paragraph or two.

Focused coursework

It is possible to produce a whole folder that is based on a particular topic or interest.

For example, one boy wrote three of the four pieces about his interest in Rugby football. The letter was about arrangements for a team that was visiting his school, the statement of opinion about wearing items of protective clothing and the story was based on one of his experiences as a player.

In another school where the candidates were unable to use their hands to write and could only word-process with difficulty, one student used the folder to demonstrate her views about overcoming disablement and how she would wish to be treated by the general public.

Candidates following the LITERATURE strand of the National Curriculum orders for English could write:

- a letter from one character to another, or a letter to a writer in response to reading something by him/her. This could include a question or two and might actually be sent;
- views about a character in a story and arguing for or against what he/she did, or about a film or a production of something that was read;
- a story about a character who has the chance to make a different decision from the one the writer decided; or an alternative ending to a story, starting at a moment of the student's choice.

Candidates following the MEDIA strand could write:

- a letter to a TV channel about a particular programme or about provision for special teenage interests, or a letter to a local newspaper about an important issue;
- a piece of propaganda, or an appeal leaflet for a charity, or an editorial in the style of the *Sun* or the *Mirror*;
- a story about someone ordinary who suddenly becomes the focus of attention from the media.

Candidates following a course about the WORLD OF WORK could write:

- a letter of introduction or thanks to the person who is hosting them for their work experience;
- opinions about health and safety rules (perhaps suggesting some for the school);
- a story or diary about a day at work.

Candidates following a CITIZENSHIP course could write:

- a letter to a local councillor or to their MP about something that concerns them (eg a school crossing or a cycle track);
- some ideas about being a good or bad neighbour, based on the *Neighbours from Hell* TV programme type;
- a story about a good turn done to a stranger.

SECTION 3: SPEAKING AND LISTENING COURSEWORK (COMPONENT 3)

It is intended that Speaking and Listening coursework assignments will be in some ways similar to those of GCSE. However the GCSE tasks are designed to allow high scoring candidates to "understand and discuss aspects of challenging content" and to "respond to a range of complex speech".

Therefore across such a wide range of ability you will normally have to differentiate by task. Where the task is the same, for example "talk about what you think this poem means", the material on which it is based will probably be different.

There are no rules for Speaking and Listening coursework except that one of the two assessed activities must involve more than one other person. You can therefore use your judgement about how best to assess each candidate. You may feel that some candidates show best what they can do in conversation with you; others may work best with a friend (provided that they do not allow the friend to do all the work). In the activity involving more than one other person, a discussion might be a possibility or candidates might be assessed while planning a short play to be performed in front of others. In a mixed ability class, some forms of group activity may be advantageous to a candidate working with more able friends, provided they are not too strong to discourage participation.

You should aim for variety in the two assessed activities. The GCSE English specification lists three different groups of purposes for talk, which are:

- explain, describe, narrate
- explore, analyse, imagine
- discuss, argue, persuade

While you are under no obligation in the Entry Level English specification to relate your work to these, you can achieve variety by arranging activities for different purposes. Other ways of achieving variety are by presenting candidates with different degrees of formality and by using pairs or groups and peers or adults.

In general, try to avoid overlaps such as two talks or two role plays. Do not use reading aloud as a Speaking and Listening activity, since this involves no listening anyway. Similarly a talk becomes a listening activity only by virtue of any discussion that ensues. Talks are in fact only really effective, specially at this level, when they arise from a genuine knowledge or enthusiasm for a subject which can be, at least to some extent, communicated. Activities that have been assessed for candidates entered for the GCSE English specification of any examination Group may be used unchanged for this examination. The final assessment must be made according to the marking criteria on page 20 of the Entry Level English specification.

Using Literature as a Stimulus

Speaking and Listening coursework assignments are an excellent means of allowing candidates to make a response to their experiences of literature in the classroom.

They can, for example:

- discuss what they like and dislike about characters and their reactions to what happens to them
- role play a discussion between two characters, or an interview for radio or television
- make up a play to show their understanding of a short story
- take part in a trial of a character in a book or play
- construct a quiz about the plot of a play or plan the design of a board game
- discuss and prepare a reading of a poem
- re-enact a scene from a Shakespeare play in their own words to show their understanding of the play and the ways in which characters react
- decide on a design and copy for a book jacket, Ceefax/Teletext page or Web site: the finished product might be suitable for the statement of opinion in the writing coursework
- work on a poem that has had some of the more powerful descriptive words blanked out. Decide which of their own words to include and keep a list of rejected suggestions
- work on alternative endings to a story or a play in discussion and drama.

Using Media Studies as a Starting Point

One of the three sections of the reading examination paper will be set on a media text, so it would give the course some coherence if some of the speaking and listening activities were also media based. Here are some examples:

- design a page of a school newspaper/publication (IT or handwritten) : discuss headlines, pictures to use, simple reports to write, interviews to transcribe, letters to include (such a project might be adapted for use in the writing folder)
- making a commercial for video filming
- In the News: Newscasts - on the spot descriptions - interviews
- Desert Island Discs
- talk about photos: what you can see; what you can guess about people in the photo; how well a photo fits a news story
- invent a Soap: plan the contents of an episode; act a scene, eg the last in an episode
- save the whale! (or anything else): work in pairs or groups of three to design a striking poster promoting a cause
- work in pairs to make a storyboard.

Using Vocational Education as a Starting Point

Activities may be based on vocational work with the co-operation of tutors and other staff involved with vocational programmes. Candidates may:

- arrange and attend mock interviews set up in the classroom (role playing both interviewers and interviewees); this is a useful and authentic way of giving opportunities to use Standard English
- discuss and draw up codes of health and safety in the classroom/school
- give anecdotes of work experience and opinions on the worth of their experiences
- use the telephone to get information, to arrange interviews, etc.; also to deal with customer enquiries and complaints
- take part in discussions with adult visitors to the school (such as the police, representatives of industry, local councillors).

Option with Coursework: Speaking and Listening Task (component 3)

Why should OCR set a task when it could be another coursework activity? You will remember that QCA allows only 50% coursework overall and that 40% is devoted to writing. That leaves 10% and the weighting for Speaking and Listening is 20%. The assessment of the task set by OCR therefore takes up the rest of the marks available for Speaking and Listening. In fact the task is very similar to coursework; it is managed and marked in exactly the same way, although it cannot be dovetailed into schemes of work so easily as real coursework. It is also given a timetable slot so that it must be carried out during the week of the examination.

OCR sets a choice of task. Some are small group discussions where the favoured number of participants is three; others are telephone calls to be made between the candidate and the teacher. If a candidate does badly in one task, another (of either type) may be offered. The higher mark is to be awarded.

OCR strongly recommend the group discussion as a starting point. Its formality is a reminder of adult life and it allows more freedom than the telephone call, especially where the task can be made specific to the candidates' interests.

There has been much discussion about making the telephone calls into real experiences. We leave this to individual Centres. There is no objection to the teacher facing the candidate. If real telephones can be used, so much the better.

Preparation for the Task

All candidates should have been given adequate practice before attempting the group discussion or the telephone call as an examination activity. Otherwise they will not understand the conventions of either and will no doubt under-achieve.

On the day of the examination it is important that each candidate understands the task before it begins. You should therefore discuss together what is to happen, and you should provide the candidate with the cue card provided as part of the task, having explained its contents. Candidates are free to develop the task as they want. Some like to follow the cues, while others improvise.

Levels of Achievement in Speaking and Listening

It is likely that some candidates will be working at an appropriate level for this examination in reading and writing but at a higher level in Speaking and Listening. However, there is no way of recording any achievement higher than that which appears in the mark band descriptions. In such cases the top mark should always be given.

SECTION 4: THE EXAMINATION PAPERS

Explanation of Time Slots

The examination is flexible, if a little complex: for example, the Reading Paper is a mixture of reading aloud and written response, and candidates at the lowest level of achievement may respond orally. The Speaking and Listening task also has to fit into the allotted timespan of the examination.

The timespan will be:

Week of the examination (March): Speaking and Listening tasks (components 3 and 5)

Monday: Reading Paper (reading aloud may take place before or after the answering of the questions)

Tuesday: Writing Paper (candidates may have time with their peers or their teacher to discuss what they wish to write)

We have allowed up to 75 minutes for the completion of the Reading and the Writing papers, although most candidates will take less time. Although normal examination conditions must apply, candidates may receive help as laid down in the specification and they may start and finish the papers at your discretion.

The Reading Paper is the more difficult to administer, but only when you have many candidates and/or when a number of them are likely to take the paper orally. Since the paper should normally be completed by all candidates on the day on which it is set, you have to ensure that you have enough staff to run the examination smoothly and with sufficient security. You could for example have a number of staff examining the reading aloud section first and then start all the candidates for the rest of the paper together, or you might run the written part of the paper in shifts. You might decide to use more than one classroom teacher working with the candidates they normally teach: one teacher would be reserved for the candidates working at level 1, who answer the Reading Paper orally.

You may deploy classroom assistants as you wish, but you must ensure that they fully understand the administration of the examination.

You should normally carry out the testing within the allotted time. However, if you cannot do this, you should ring Andrew Bradford at OCR on 01223 553222 stating your problem and how you wish to solve it. This might include Centres with large numbers of candidates, or Centres with holiday or work experience arrangements that clash with the dates. Absent candidates can be accommodated if you ring OCR. We are very anxious not to exclude candidates for any reason.

Timing of Speaking and Listening Tasks

All testing of the tasks for each option must normally be completed during the week of the examination in March. You might decide that it would be better if the testing were scheduled for one day, since there are implications for staff cover. Decisions also have to be taken about who is to conduct the tasks. If you decide to use one teacher for all the candidates there are no problems of standardisation; if set teachers are all responsible for their own candidates, you must ensure that they are all marking at the same standard.

The Reading Paper, Component 1

This is divided into three sections: literary texts, media texts and vocationally related texts, to provide a range of reading for assessment. There is no particular type of question dedicated to any one section.

However, overall, there are three types of question:

1 - Location/summary: eg Section C (specimen papers): *Write a list of five things you must not do at the interview.* Candidates find the relevant information and write it down.

2 - Interpretation/inference: eg Section A: *What sort of person is the lorry driver?* Candidates locate relevant information and draw conclusions from it.

3 - Personal judgement and response: eg Section A: *What might happen next in the story?* Candidates use the evidence of the passage and make informed judgements and sensible guesswork.

Questions are often subdivided into answers and reasons for those answers.

We have tried to avoid setting questions that merely involve finding an answer and repeating it from the text. It is our intention to test a range of thinking skills similar to those of GCSE, but at an appropriately lower level.

The Writing Paper, Component 4 (Option without Coursework)

There are two tasks. It would be impracticable to duplicate all the features of the writing coursework in an examination paper, so we have contented ourselves with one example of transactional prose (which will always be a letter) and a story (from a choice of one traditional title and four others, based on colour photographs). You will need to make sure that candidates answer the letter question and just one of the stories. It is perfectly in order to check what they are doing and to offer appropriate advice. You may also read the examination paper to them. We want the candidates to be free to write at their best and not to lose marks because they do not understand what to do.

The Speaking and Listening Tasks, Component 5 (Option without Coursework)

The tasks are to be conducted with pairs of candidates. The teacher will as far as possible take the part of listener. The first task will always be the same and is designed to give the candidates confidence. They talk to each other about themselves, without the intervention the teacher, asking questions and answering in turn. Questions may be simple, for example, about hobbies or families, but may also be more adventurous, for example, about attitudes and future hopes and fears. Candidates will have practised this exercise, preferably not with the person with whom they will take the test. Please guard against anyone trying to "learn" a script.

The second task is a planning exercise such as making arrangements for the visit to the school of some pupils from a local junior school. Here the teacher starts the task and the candidates discuss it, using the cues on the examination card if they wish. The teacher will not normally intervene unless the candidates find it difficult to proceed.

The third activity consists of two telephone calls conducted entirely by the candidates. Each has a chance to initiate and to respond. Examples are arranging for a group of pupils to visit a local firestation and ordering some flowers for Mother's Day.

These activities normally run consecutively and take about fifteen to twenty minutes.

SECTION 5: MARKING THE WORK

Because you are so closely involved with the conduct of the examination, it is logical that you should mark it. For example, you are the only person who knows the amount of help that each candidate has received and, as you are aware from the mark schemes, this needs to be accounted for.

The marking for **Writing** and for **Speaking and Listening** follows the same procedure: you make holistic "best fit" judgements, using descriptions of performance related to the three levels.

Remember that, normally, you give one mark only for a complete folder and one mark only for the Writing Paper.

You match the quality of the work against the descriptions and decide which level is the most appropriate. To help you do this, you should always consult an adjacent description. If both seem to some extent appropriate, then the work should receive a borderline mark. If one only seems appropriate, you will award a mark nearer the middle of that level. If the work appears better than anything in the descriptions, you should award the top mark. These principles cover all Writing, Speaking and Listening and Reading Aloud.

When you mark writing, it is a good idea to put the candidates in rank order, although when you consult the markscheme, it is likely that you will change the order at least slightly.

There are only three mark bands to consider, so the most important decisions are about the boundaries of level 1/level 2 and level2/level3. However, writing is not easy to mark, and you should start by assessing the linguistic ability of the candidate. If there is a discrepancy between language and the content and structure of the writing, you can adjust the linguistic mark by not more than one level. Do not forget to double the mark you have given out of twenty. You may then decide to fine tune the result upwards or downwards, according to your general impression.

Specific Guidance

Reading Paper, Component 1 (all candidates)

The markscheme for this paper is prescriptive. We originally wanted to use a set of descriptions similar to those for the other papers, but it proved hard to use and led to disagreement between teachers. We need to agree on the award of marks where so many little items are involved. Hence it is very important that teachers obey the markscheme and do not award marks for wishful thinking, particularly in Section A where some of the answers are inferential. As a result, sometimes an unfairness may appear to have been done, but you should remember that where many marks are added up overall, it is unlikely to have a significant effect on the final total.

Reading aloud is marked by description of performance. Decide on a level first and then award the higher or the lower mark.

Do not forget to write four marks on the front page of the Reading Paper, section A+ section B+ section C+ reading aloud, in that order.

Writing Coursework, Component 2 (Option with Coursework)

1 - Arrange folders in rank order according to ability in language, structure organisation, and content. Bear in mind the amount of guidance you have given to candidates: the more the ability to work independently, the greater the likelihood of a mark in the top band.

2 - Assign marking bands/levels to the folders, taking care over the borderlines. Then assign marks, using the whole range of the marks in each band.

3 - Remember that all writing marks must be **doubled**. The marking scheme is out of 20, but the weighting is 40%.

Inconsistent folders

Where one piece of work is weaker or stronger than the others, award a mark on the basis of the other three and then adjust it, typically by three marks out of forty.

Where two pieces are weak and two strong, you may need to give two marks, one for each pair, add them together and divide by two.

Writing Paper, Component 4 (option without coursework)

A single judgement has to be made of the candidate's performance in the letter and the story combined. Each of the marking band descriptions starts with the degree of skill typical of each level and then gives specific guidance on both the letter and the story.

Inconsistency between the two pieces of writing should not prevent your awarding a mark in a particular band, but you will have to make an adjustment to the final mark. For example, you might start by awarding a mark based on the quality of the writing in the letter task, and then adjust up or down by a few marks depending on whether the story is better or worse.

Speaking and Listening Tasks, Component 3 (Option with Coursework) and Component 5 (Option without Coursework)

Component 3 comprises a single task and specific marking criteria. You fit the candidate's performance to the criteria. The range of ability will be from simple, monosyllabic responses to what is said and asked to some degree of success in making coherent and elaborate contributions.

Component 5 is a single judgement made on performance in three varied activities. You are looking for evidence of ability to communicate. This will vary from the very basic to the ability to explain oneself and to start to use effective vocabulary. You may find candidates' performance in Section A better than in Sections B and C owing

to their practising and memorising details. Where this is so, you should not allow your final mark to be over-influenced by Section A which is only a third part of the test

Incomplete folders (specification 4.6, p14)

This rather legalistic part of the specification involves the reduction of the mark awarded for writing coursework by a quarter for every piece of prescribed writing that is missing. However, in theory, the presence of a piece of work could be proved by the writing of a very few words, and it is better to employ this means than to have to make 'formula' reductions.

Recording marks and performance

You will receive marksheets (MS1) for each component. These three separate sets of marksheets have to be completed. The top copy goes to OCR via your Examination Officer, the second goes to the Moderator with your sample, and the third you keep in your Centre.

You also have a Candidate Assessment Form for each candidate. This shows what the candidate has done, the marks that have been given and reasons why you have given your marks. The Moderator needs to check the work, the marks and any information that is not immediately apparent from the evidence.

It is very important that you **record how much help has been given and the nature of that help**. For example, the Moderator wants to know the role of classroom assistants, drafts that have been made, by whom and what help has subsequently been given with them, and what sort of prompts have been given to enable candidates to proceed with the work.

For example, teachers at a recent meeting agreed that the folder work of one candidate was worth 23 marks on the page, but after guessing the amount and nature of help that had been given but not recorded, gave 17 marks. The teacher had given it 19, clearly making a reduction, as the specification demands.

SECTION 6: MODERATION ARRANGEMENTS

If you are using an out-of-date specification you will find the requirements for the sample a little different from this handbook. **Please follow what is set out below:**

The Moderator needs the work of **six** candidates (or all your candidates if your entry is fewer than six) as follows:

- The Reading Paper
- The Writing coursework OR the Writing Paper

and for **FOUR** of these candidates, an aural recording (tape provided by OCR) of

- The Reading Aloud
- The Speaking and Listening task (component 3) or tasks (component 5)

Your sample should be drawn from as wide a range of ability over all the components as possible and should be accompanied by:

- The Candidate Assessment Form of each candidate in the sample;
- The marksheets (MS1) for all your candidates.

Before sending the sample, ensure that:

- You have doubled the writing marks to make them out of 40
- You have written four marks on the front of each reading paper (to include the reading aloud)
- There is a recording on the tape, and that you have given a list of names, with marks, in the order in which they are heard.

The recording

Some Centres like to record all their candidates. We have specified four in order to keep this chore to a minimum. If you do record all and wish to send the recordings of all six in the sample, feel free to do so.

Please give advance thought to the quality of the recording. You need a good machine, not the smallest portable, that records without undue hiss or internal motor rumble. You also need a sensitive omnidirectional microphone that will pick up over a reasonably wide area. Make sure that the microphone is near to the candidates.

Try to avoid:

- very weak signals
- intrusive electrical noise from external motors (eg fan systems, heaters)
- one speaker more difficult to hear than another

Be careful to identify candidates on the tape clearly if they are working in pairs. You should identify them (eg "John has the lower voice" or "Mary speaks with a Scottish accent") and they should identify themselves on the tape when they first speak.

Finally, listen to the tape you have made in case there are any faults. We have had tapes that have not recorded at a constant speed and some that have not recorded at all. It is wise to play the tape back on a different machine since some faults repeat themselves on record and playback. If you are satisfied, there is no need to record any further candidates.

If all these things have been done correctly, the Moderator will not bother you at all, although we have been told that some teachers have enjoyed contact with their Moderators whom they have found enthusiastic and kindly. Long may this continue!

When the results are released, you will receive a report based on your sample. This will indicate good practice and comment on your marking. We do not adjust marks until they are outside fairly generous tolerances. However, if you have been generous or severe in your marking, but without the need to adjust your marks, the Moderator will tell you.

Training and Help

We hope that this Handbook makes everything clear. If you need further help, ring Andrew Bradford on 01223 553222. He is the Subject officer responsible for this specification and is based at the OCR Birmingham Office, Mill Wharf, Mill Street, Birmingham B6 4BU. You will find him very helpful.

A standardisation video with commentary will be on sale from Autumn 2001. This gives examples of candidates' performances in all Speaking and Listening tasks set by OCR. It makes marking standards quite clear and demonstrates the role of teachers. It was filmed in five different schools. It is highly recommended for use just before you conduct the tasks for each examination session.

Occasional meetings for Special Schools are held to introduce teachers to the complete OCR Entry Level package.

A series of meetings is held in different parts of the country each January and February to give teachers practice in marking the components. They are not introductory, but teachers new to the course find them extremely useful since they are working with live papers each year. We trial the papers in October so that we have real scripts to be marked before they are used in March. The meetings are conducted by the three Principal Examiners for Entry Level English.

Details of all these meetings are available in good time from your Examinations Officer, and we hope to have the opportunity to meet you at one of them soon.

Tony Parkinson, Chief Examiner
March 2001

