



EXAMINERS' REPORT ON 2001 TERTIARY ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

SUBJECT: ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

STATISTICS

Year	Number Who Sat	Non-Examination Candidates	Did Not Sit
2001	716	29	69
2000	748	20	54
1999	726	42	62

The Examiners' Report is written by the Chief Examiner (or another examiner on their behalf) to comment on matters relating to the Tertiary Entrance Examination in their subject. The opinions and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the Chief Examiner and not necessarily representative of or endorsed by the Curriculum Council.

The Marking Guide provided at the end of this report was prepared for markers and substantially amplified by discussions held in the pre-marking meeting. It is not intended as a set of model answers, and is not exhaustive as regards alternative answers. Some of the answers are less than perfect, but represent a standard of response that the examiners deemed sufficient to earn full marks. Teachers who use this guide should do so with its original purpose in mind.

SUMMARY/ABSTRACT

The 2001 ESL Examination was consistent with the format that has been in place since 1993.

Overall, candidates, markers and teachers received the paper very well. Its unifying theme, child-raising and children's rights, worked well and generated solid and original responses from the candidates. Many markers noted that the texts, questions and language of the paper were pitched at the right level to ensure that candidates' literacy skills and language proficiency could be assessed fairly.

While slightly more difficult than last year's paper, the statistical data indicate that this year's paper was highly reliable (.80) with all five sections producing high correlations (.78 or above) with the entire paper. The average mark of the entire cohort was 59.49, in total agreement with Curriculum Council guidelines in relation to level of difficulty of the paper.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The ESL examination tests the proficiency of second language learners in terms of listening, reading and writing skills, as well as higher order skills such as comprehension, the ability to integrate, manipulate and synthesize information, etc. Many candidates demonstrated they have acquired these skills. They can use language with ease and a high degree of sophistication, appropriate for tertiary studies. The candidates must be congratulated for the good levels of language proficiency they acquired in a relatively short period of time.

The marking process proceeded smoothly and the marking team should be praised for the fairness and thoroughness with which they have approached, as always, this difficult and demanding task. At two meetings, markers deliberated on the marking process, discussed the different sections of the paper, evaluated sample scripts and entered a reconciliation procedure to ensure comparability. Detailed group discussions of the salient features of quality answers were held and the Chief Marker distributed written guidelines for the entire marking process.

COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC SECTIONS/QUESTIONS

Part One: Listening Comprehension

Two spoken texts were offered in this section: one on first language acquisition and the second, a mother's account of a shopping experience in a toy supermarket. The candidates were encouraged to make notes while listening to the recording and make use of them when selecting their answer. The strong performance in the fifteen multiple-choice questions of this section proves that candidates were well prepared for the task and that the texts were pitched at an appropriate level of difficulty.

Part Two: Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension texts were all news article or feature articles, a text type in widespread use in the ESL classroom and, therefore, one whose conventions candidates are familiar with. The three texts dealt with various issues concerning child-raising and children's rights. The candidates' answers to this section demonstrated a high level of comprehension of overall, specific and implied ideas and arguments. It remains for future examining panels to raise the level of difficulty of the multiple choice questions due to better than expected responses in this section.

All but one of the 35 questions in the multiple-choice sections were highly successful. Question 32 was cancelled due to an editing error that had erroneously removed the correct answer. The mean score for *Part One* and *Part Two* was 22.47 and the correlation with the entire paper was .81.

Part Three: Written Comprehension

This section assessed the candidates' ability to summarise, synthesise and evaluate textual information through an authentic response to the ideas and viewpoints of three given texts. It remains a reliable indicator of the candidates' reading comprehension abilities.

All markers have commented favourably on the choice of texts and found the level of difficulty of the task to be pitched appropriately. The task required candidates to identify the main ideas of the three printed texts in *Section Two*, to compare and contrast their main viewpoints, to evaluate their validity with reference to other views presented in the texts and the candidates' own experience. The requirements of this question were demanding but fair. They were clearly stated and rendered the section an excellent tool in assessing the candidates' ability to understand instructions and respond accordingly. In the words of one marker, "The choice of texts of this section effectively engaged the candidates not only in ideas and information that they found accessible and could understand, but also in eliciting genuine and sometimes impassioned opinions and experiences in response. Question 36 was demanding and worked well as a discriminator. It was pleasing to see that most candidates attempted all three parts of the question in answers that were well organized and clearly expressed. This comprehension elicited the best standard of answers I have seen over the years of marking TEE ESL."

Many markers responded favourably to the inclusion of a cartoon in the paper. One marker felt, though, that its visual dominance resulted in a number of candidates giving priority to Michael Leunig's views over the other views expressed in the text or concluding erroneously that Leunig had written the whole article.

This year, a larger number of candidates have displayed appropriate textual referencing skills and academic acknowledgement in their responses. Teachers should continue to stress the importance of these skills in this section of the paper and overall in academic language required for tertiary studies.

The mean for this section was 8.89 and the correlation with the total was .78.

Part Four: Extended Writing

This section offered candidates a choice of five topics and four genres: essay, report, article for a magazine and letter to an Internet discussion group. The Examining Panel tried hard to ensure an equivalent degree of difficulty among the five topics offered in this section. It was very pleasing to note that the choice of topics among candidates was more evenly spread and, as a result, the average mean mark awarded to candidates who chose Questions 37, 38, 40 and 41 were much closer than in previous years, ranging from 17.90 to 18.53. Question 39 had a lower mean, i.e. 16.75, but was only chosen by a small number of candidates. One marker commented: "The fullness of topic and instruction given in this section worked well in stimulating candidates to write more original

and engaged responses. Detailed wording and originality of the questions also prompted a more even spread of choice across the range of topics. Whilst the report was the only topic that was rarely chosen, it was pleasing to see a wide spread that also encompassed the literature question, which was often ignored in previous exams.”

Question 37

The question required the answer to be presented in the form of a letter to an Internet discussion group, a public forum or a bulletin board on the Net, where interested parties contribute and promote their opinions on a topic of common interest with others in the group. Most answers displayed a good sense of audience and situation and better answers had a good balance between causes and solutions concerning the problem of difficulties in communication between teenagers and their parents.

Question 38

Most candidates who chose this question did not focus on a single innovation and presented either a number of technological applications of the computer or a number of modern innovations. Given the large number of candidates who read the instruction in this way, the marking team decided to allow this as a valid interpretation of the topic and not to penalise the candidates who did not concentrate on ONE example of a technological innovation only. A chief discriminator was the extent to which candidates discussed advantages and disadvantages as well as future impact of the technologies/innovation they described, in other words, how they followed the structure and the overall direction of the questions.

Question 39

Very few candidates chose this topic, though, in hindsight, the examining panel acknowledges it to have been a less appealing choice given the other good options available. The topic required some thinking and deliberation on possible changes to high school subjects and courses and assessment procedures, in light of a changing labour market. It is for future panels to consider the suitability of a report option in this section, without giving the candidates either the factual material or the opportunity to research it.

Question 40

Race relations was the most popular topic of the five options, given its relevance in the light of current world events, unforeseen by the examining panel at the time when the paper was being written. Although it was apparent to many markers that racism was a topic many candidates had clearly studied, most answers to this question have developed a clear line of argumentation closely following the direction of the question, i.e. impact of racism in modern societies and ways in which individuals and communities can improve race relations. The topic was generally well-handled with better candidates clearly stating a thesis in the introduction and developing the argumentation in the body, in an intelligent, cogent manner, closely following the conventions of an essay.

Question 41

Again, a popular topic, it was pleasing to note that the literary topic was handled better than in the past, with many candidates proving they were able to embed text detail in a discussion of how reading or viewing changed their world view. Candidates should be made aware that this topic is not an invitation to regurgitate plot or storyline of a literary piece studied in the course; it must be interpreted as an opportunity to draw on the outline plot and/or characters in order to develop a personal viewpoint or response to the specific thrust of the question.

The mean for this section was 18.18 and the correlation with the total was .85.

Part Five: Language Practice

The language practice was consistent with the theme of the paper. The Examining Panel endeavoured to pitch all four questions at a comparable level of difficulty, given the inherent difficulty and ease, respectively, of Question 44 and 45. This section’s high correlation with the rest of the paper i.e. .87, the highest of all sections in the paper – and the appropriateness of having a language component when testing second language proficiency make *Language Practice* an excellent discriminator of the cohort. It is worthwhile to remind teachers and candidates that legibility of handwriting and correct spelling are of utmost importance in this section. Many markers were disappointed not to award points to a clearly intended correct answer, marred by ambiguous or obscure lettering and/or spelling errors. This examination is, after all, a competition and only those answers that satisfy all criteria of correctness are awarded the full marks of the scale.

The mean for this section was 9.94 and the correlation with the total was .87.

POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE SYLLABUS COMMITTEE

Given the lengthy process involved in making significant changes to the paper, I urge teachers and members of the Syllabus Committee to consider the following:

- A reduction in the number of choices in *Section Four - Extended Writing*, given the difficulty of ensuring year after year that each of the questions is comparable to all other options offered in the section, given that both genre and topic vary from question to question. The status quo makes it very difficult for the examining panel to ensure that comparable choices, in terms of appeal and level of difficulty are offered to the candidates. Keeping in mind the enormous range of candidates' responses, the variability of both genre and topic only add to the complexity of marking this section.
- That each year all topics offered in this section be handled as a single genre, e.g., essay or report only, again, in order to ensure a higher degree of comparability between options. It is arguable that the demands of an essay, in terms of both linguistic as well as argumentation development are deemed "more complex" than, say, a personal letter.
- The total predictability of options available, especially the literary question, allows some candidates to regurgitate a pre-prepared piece of work, which they slightly adapt to suit the question.
- Candidates should be prepared to expect some change in both format and content of the paper. It has been noted that every time some innovation appears in the paper, candidates either don't choose it, if they have the option, or get confused by it. This year, for example, the exercise in Question 45 appeared for the first time on two pages. A substantial number of candidates did not answer the last two items in the exercise, which appeared overleaf, notwithstanding clearly marked instructions to continue the exercise on the next page, and thus failed to complete the task and missed on one out of five marks in this section.

CONCLUSION

The examination results, the statistical data, teachers' and markers' comments all indicate that this year's paper worked very well and has achieved its aims.

Liliana Leonte
December 2001

2001 Examining Panel

Chief Examiner: Ms Liliana Leonte

Deputy: Mrs Norma Smith

Third Member: Mr Ilan Zagoria

Chief Marker: Ms Liliana Leonte

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APPENDIX - MARKING GUIDE

PART ONE: Listening Comprehension - Multiple Choice - 15 marks

Listening Text 1: The Miracle of Speech

1–b, 2–c, 3–a, 4–b, 5–c, 6–d, 7–d, 8–c,

Listening Text 2: The Ball

9–d, 10–a, 11–d, 12–c, 13–b, 14–a, 15–b

PART TWO: Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice – 20 marks

Text 3: All Care

16–c, 17–a, 18–d, 19–d, 20–c, 21–c, 22–b

Text 4: Why Our Family Life Is Going Out Of Style

23–c, 24–b, 25–a, 26–d, 27–b, 28–d, 29–a

Text 5: Not Wrong To Deny Rights

30–b, 31–a, 32–cancelled, 33–c, 34–a, 35–b

PART THREE: Reading Comprehension – Written – 15 marks

Question 36 – Reading Comprehension

Good answers will:

- demonstrate genuine understanding of the texts and ability to engage in a convincing manner with the issues they raise.
- compare and contrast the opposing viewpoints in the texts. Judgements about their validity will be supported with examples from the texts and from the candidates' own experience.
- demonstrate good referencing skills.

Main ideas and viewpoints in the three texts:

Text 3

Controversy on the subject of day care centres for infants.

Leunig's view: The sanctity of the mother–infant relationship is more important than any of the other needs of the mother.

Opposing Leunig's view – Oberklaid: What is important is the quality of the care given to an infant, not who gives it.

Other views expressed by working mothers etc. attacking Leunig and Leunig's supporters.

Text 4

Voices in the community raise concern about discrimination of children in Australian society, which is seen as increasingly intolerant of children.

ABS data – Australians are having fewer babies and are having them later in life.

Viewpoints expressed by D. & S. Moore: childless lifestyle.

Concern about the place of families in Australia: Muehlenberg deplores the promotion of individualism and the anti-child messages of popular culture; Schetzer believes children are in danger of becoming second-class citizens.

Text 5

Australian law is changing to allow greater autonomy for children, in line with the principles expressed in UNCROC.

CIS vs. UNCROC – CIS raises concern that UNCROC could undermine parental authority.

Maley believes UNCROC will further weaken the two-parent family and, as a result, children's welfare. He believes children can use UNCROC to challenge their parents' authority.

Conflicting issues: On the one hand, children are given more rights (Text 5), on the other, society is limiting children's presence/rights in the community (Text 4).

PART FOUR: Extended Writing – 30 marks

General marking guidelines for questions 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41

- Addressing the key requirements of the topic.
- Use of the genre required, with appropriate language, structure, sense of audience and purpose.
- Development of ideas – logical sequencing, clear line of argumentation, coherent discourse.
- Relevance and appropriateness of structure and language to genre and task.
- Structure: introduction with clear thematic statement developed through following paragraphs (body) to a logical conclusion.

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- Language: level and appropriateness of vocabulary; accuracy of grammatical features, such as use of tenses, subject–verb agreement, sentence length, variety of sentence types; correct spelling and punctuation.

PART FIVE: English Practice – 20 marks

- Incorrect spelling counts as a mistake in all four tasks. Use of capital letters or lower case is disregarded as a factor in spelling.

Question 42: Cloze

1. is
2. them
3. child's/children's/individual's/individuals'/infant's/infants'/baby's/person's/persons'/general/fundamental/wider/overall
4. both/their/two
5. Between
6. this/employment/working/work
7. while/whilst/when/as
8. looking
9. age
10. can/may/could/might/will/would/must

Question 43: Find errors – The Society of Children

1. have – has
2. It's – Its
3. violate – violates
4. in – on
5. increasing – increasingly
6. child – children
7. skill – skills
8. serving – serve
9. accept – accepted
10. willing – willingness

Question 44: Original Text to Changed Text

1. Anthropological
2. variation/difference
3. generations
4. West/west/westerner/westerners/Westerner/Westerners
5. meet/re-unite/reunite/gather
6. rare/uncommon/unusual
7. nearby/near/close/close-by (no hyphen, as two words, wrong)
8. scatter/scattered/scattering/separate/separated/separating/disperse/dispersed/dispersing/part/parted/parting/split/splitting
9. move/travel/go
10. weakening/loosening/unravelling/unraveling

Question 45: Multiple Choice

- 1 – b (that), 2 – d (Although), 3 – c (to change), 4 – d (criticism), 5 – a (than),
6 – b (as), 7 – b (Additionally), 8 – d (benefit), 9 – a (unfortunate), 10 – c (a)