



الهيئة الوطنية
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

Directorate of National Examinations

Subject : English Language – Grade 9

Test Specifications

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Construct

Test Purpose

To provide a reporting mechanism for schools and the ministry on the English language proficiency of pupils at the end of Cycle 3 in the Bahraini English Language National Curriculum, with reference to the English language learning goals and international level of proficiency described in the Curriculum.

As a general principle, we believe grammar, or language knowledge, is integral to performance in a second language and is a key assessment aim at this level. In particular, candidates will require sufficient knowledge of language, both lexical and structural, to enable them to respond in an informed way to the tasks on the Writing, Reading and Listening Papers. While the emphasis in every task will be on meaning and communication, students who have knowledge of how language is used to achieve effect or express meaning will be strongly placed to perform well in this examination.

Test Level

The Grade 9 examination level is designed to be comparable to the level described in the Common European Framework as Threshold, Level B1.

For example, drawing on what is expected at Grade 9, a language user at this level can:

Speaking/Listening

- talk at some length about themselves, their daily needs and areas of interest in both rehearsed and spontaneous conditions
- identify the topic and main points of a discussion when it is articulated in standard speech
- understand and extract the general idea and specific information from recorded passages dealing with less familiar topics
- understand a limited range of accents

Reading

- employ independently the skills of skimming and scanning appropriately to facilitate understanding of a text
- understand both stated and implied meaning and lines of argument in texts related to personal interest

Writing

- write a variety of text types such as informal and formal letters and emails, stories, reports and essays, and show an awareness of audience, style and register

Balance of Marks

The skills papers are equally weighted to produce a final total for each student.

The allocation of marks in the parts of the skills papers is shown in the table below:

Skill	Part			
	1	2	3	4
Writing	33.3%	66.7%		
Reading	25%	25%	25%	25%
Listening	25%	25%	25%	25%

Relationship with the National Curriculum

These examinations reflect the requirements of the curriculum in terms of what learning a foreign language involves as well as the expected outcomes as identified in the curriculum.

The learning outcomes to be assessed are described in the Curriculum. Language learning is seen as cumulative and these examinations are based on aspects of language which will have been learnt up and including that in Grade 9.

The use of language, topics and lexical fields targeted in the Grade 9 assessment materials are designed to be appropriate to the description in the Curriculum as well as the international standard of English as a Second Language, at this level.

Students learn language when they are involved in meaningful and purposeful activities which require them to communicate using the language. Tasks in these examinations therefore identify the intended audience where appropriate as well as a reason for completing the task, most specifically in the writing examination. The purpose of these examinations is to focus on communication and outcomes, and on what learners can do with the language rather than on what they know about the language. Therefore grammar is not tested directly but indirectly through the writing tasks as well as through the processing that the students need to do in order to successfully complete the reading and listening tasks.

Relationship with Teaching and Text Books

The subject matter of the teaching materials, and hence of the assessment materials, is designed to be in accordance with the philosophy and general aims of education in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The choice of text book for the level is made by the Curriculum Directorate.

Overview

Duration 45 minutes

Format Students read and answer on the question paper.

Skills Objectives

The language objectives have been grouped under skills headings, but it is recognised that these are interrelated.

Writing

W1 Write a transactional letter/email in response to given input on a topic of personal relevance.

W2 Write a short piece of continuous prose, such as a story, a report or an essay, based on given input, demonstrating appropriate context and organisation.

W3 Show awareness of audience, style and register.

In addition to assessing lexical and structural knowledge as a key skill in the writing tasks, the need for grammatical accuracy / range including lexical range will be built into the marking criteria.

Writing Test Specification

Skill	Question	Skill Objective	Description
Writing	1	W1, W3	Candidates will be required to write a transactional letter/email in 60-80 words. The task will comprise 3 functions, for example, describe/explain/justify etc.
	2	W2, W3	Candidates will be required to write 100-120 words of continuous prose, in response to given input .

Writing Test Format

Question	Task Type	Text length
1	Letter/email writing	Compulsory letter/email question. Candidates will be required to write 60-80 words.
2	Continuous prose	Compulsory writing task. Candidates will be required to write 100-120 words. Each year, the task will require candidates to write one of the following: a story, a report or an essay. Students will not be given a set of tasks to choose from.

Mark Scheme

Examiners mark the Writing Parts 1 and 2 following coordination sessions which set the standard and ensure the correct application of the mark schemes. The live mark schemes may be expanded, revised or amended as required from one session to the next.

Candidate performance is to be assessed at the Grade 9 level.

There is no penalty for over-length responses, but digression (or failure to address the content points) is penalised according to the mark scheme.

Question 1

The mark scheme is divided into bands; there are two marks available within each band.

Markers should first decide which band the piece of writing fits into best, and then refine and adjust the mark further by deciding whether the performance merits the top mark within the band.

Marks	
10 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All 3 content points successfully addressed within the specified length/number of words.Message is communicated effectively at Grade 9* level (B1).
8 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">3 content points adequately addressed within the specified length/number or words.Message is generally communicated effectively at Grade 9* level (B1), but with some errors which may hinder communication.
6 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">3 content points addressedMessage partially communicated, errors hinder communication <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">2 content points addressedMessage is generally communicated effectively but with some errors which may hinder communication
4 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 or 2 content point only addressedMessage is inadequate
2 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Little relevant contentMessage is unclear and does not communicate the required information
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Completely irrelevant contentMessage is incomprehensible and possibly illegible.

* Please refer to the curriculum document for a description of the Grade 9 level.

Question 2: The Story

Examiners should begin by looking at the Task Achievement criterion first and decide on a mark for this before considering the other three criteria. A mark should be given for each of the four criteria, which are then added up to get the complete mark for each candidate. To allocate marks 2 and 4, examiners should consider the descriptions for marks 1 and 3, and marks 3 and 5 and decide how far the candidate's performance falls between the two sets of descriptions. Candidates may have a very flat profile, scoring 3 marks for each of the criteria for example, or may have a very ragged profile, scoring higher marks for some criteria and lower marks for others.

Band	0	1	2	3	4	5
Task Achievement	Insufficient sample at Grade 9 level/completely incomprehensible and/or illegible/irrelevant	Fails to gain reader's interest Fails to address storyline prompted by initial sentence	Combines aspects of bands 1 and 3	Reader's interest sustained despite occasional strain Attempts to address the prompted storyline but does not wholly succeed	Combines aspects of bands 3 and 5	Reader's interest sustained throughout Fully addresses the prompted storyline
Lexical Range		Very limited evidence of vocabulary at Grade 9 level Vocabulary is used inappropriately		Satisfactory evidence of vocabulary at Grade 9 level Vocabulary is appropriate for the task with occasional errors		Wide range of vocabulary appropriate at Grade 9 level Vocabulary is fully appropriate to the task
Grammatical Range		Repetitive, simplistic structures marred by basic, frequent errors Little attention paid to spelling and punctuation Lack of control impedes communication		Satisfactory range of structures at Grade 9 level is present with some noticeable errors There are some spelling and punctuation errors The story is communicated despite errors		Wide range of structures at Grade 9 level with few or no errors Spelling and punctuation is mostly accurate throughout The story is communicated successfully through effective use of structures
Organisation and Coherence		Writing is lacking in organisation Incoherent in places Requires effort from the reader		Writing is generally well organised and coherent Basic linking devices used Requires some effort from the reader		Writing is effectively organised and coherent Linking devices used to effect for Grade 9 level Requires no effort from the reader

Question 2: The Report

Examiners should begin by looking at the Task Achievement criterion first and decide on a mark for this before considering the other three criteria. A mark should be given for each of the four criteria, which are then added up to get the complete mark for each candidate. To allocate marks 2 and 4, examiners should consider the descriptions for marks 1 and 3, and marks 3 and 5 and decide how far the candidate's performance falls between the two sets of descriptions. Candidates may have a very flat profile, scoring 3 marks for each of the criteria for example, or may have a very ragged profile, scoring higher marks for some criteria and lower marks for others.

Band	0	1	2	3	4	5
Task Achievement	Insufficient sample at Grade 9 level/completely incomprehensible and/or illegible/irrelevant	Fails to address the requirements of the task Fails to present required information clearly and concisely	Combines aspects of bands 1 and 3	Addresses the requirements of the task but does not wholly succeed Attempts to present the required information but does not succeed fully	Combines aspects of bands 3 and 5	All requirements of the task are addressed All required information is presented clearly and concisely
Lexical Range		Very limited evidence of vocabulary at Grade 9 level Vocabulary is used inappropriately		Satisfactory evidence of vocabulary at Grade 9 level Vocabulary is appropriate for the task with occasional errors		Wide range of vocabulary appropriate at Grade 9 level Vocabulary is fully appropriate to the task
Grammatical Range		Repetitive, simplistic structures marred by basic, frequent errors Little attention paid to spelling and punctuation Lack of control impedes communication		Satisfactory range of structures at Grade 9 level is present with some noticeable errors There are some spelling and punctuation errors The report is comprehensible despite errors		Wide range of structures at Grade 9 level with few or no errors Spelling and punctuation is mostly accurate throughout The report is presented successfully through effective use of structures
Organisation and Coherence		Writing is lacking in organisation Incoherent in places Requires effort from the reader		Writing is generally well organised and coherent Basic linking devices used Requires some effort from the reader		Writing is effectively organised and coherent Linking devices used to effect for Grade 9 level Requires no effort from the reader

Question 2: The Essay

Examiners should begin by looking at the Task Achievement criterion first and decide on a mark for this before considering the other three criteria. A mark should be given for each of the four criteria, which are then added up to get the complete mark for each candidate. To allocate marks 2 and 4, examiners should consider the descriptions for marks 1 and 3, and marks 3 and 5 and decide how far the candidate's performance falls between the two sets of descriptions. Candidates may have a very flat profile, scoring 3 marks for each of the criteria for example, or may have a very ragged profile, scoring higher marks for some criteria and lower marks for others.

Band	0	1	2	3	4	5
Task Achievement	Insufficient sample at Grade 9 level/completely incomprehensible and/or illegible/irrelevant	Fails to address the requirements of the task Fails to present a clear discussion and the conclusions reached is unsatisfactory	Combines aspects of bands 1 and 3	Attempts to address the requirements of the task but does not fully succeed Discussion may be confused in places and/or the conclusion is unclear	Combines aspects of bands 3 and 5	All requirements of the task are addressed Discussion is clear and concise and there is a comprehensible conclusion reached
Lexical Range		Very limited evidence of vocabulary at Grade 9 level Vocabulary is used inappropriately		Satisfactory evidence of vocabulary at Grade 9 level Vocabulary is appropriate for the task with occasional errors		Wide range of vocabulary appropriate at Grade 9 level Vocabulary is fully appropriate to the task
Grammatical Range		Repetitive, simplistic structures marred by basic, frequent errors Little attention paid to spelling and punctuation Lack of control impedes communication		Satisfactory range of structures at Grade 9 level is present with some noticeable errors There are some spelling and punctuation errors The essay is comprehensible despite errors		Wide range of structures at Grade 9 level with few or no errors Spelling and punctuation is mostly accurate throughout The essay is presented successfully through effective use of structures
Organisation and Coherence		Writing is lacking in organisation Incoherent in places Requires effort from the reader		Writing is generally well organised and coherent Basic linking devices used Requires some effort from the reader		Writing is effectively organised and coherent Linking devices used to effect for Grade 9 level Requires no effort from the reader

Paper 2 Reading

Overview

Duration 60 minutes

Format Candidates read and answer on the question paper.

Skills Objectives

The language objectives have been grouped under skills headings, but it is recognised that these are interrelated.

Reading

- R1 Identify and understand the main ideas and details of texts in a variety of text types such as articles, reviews and brochures.
- R2 Identify and transfer key information from a text to another format such as notes or a table.
- R3 Understand implied meaning, personal opinions, attitudes and ideas (e.g. advice, recommendations).
- R4 Employ the skills of skimming, scanning and reading for detail and information appropriately to facilitate understanding of a text at word, sentence and whole text level.
- G1 Recognise the appropriate grammatical and lexical item for a given context.

Reading Test Specification

Skill	Part	Skill Objective	Description
Reading	1a & 1b	R1, R4, G1	2 x 5 item 4-option MCQ lexical cloze tasks including initial examples, focusing on a selection from the following: verbs, phrasal verbs, idioms, collocations, fixed phrases, prepositions, appropriacy of vocabulary items, etc.
	2	R1, R4	Multiple matching reading exercise for specific information and detailed comprehension. Matching exercise with five items (including an initial example) in the form of descriptions of people to match to seven short texts.
	3	R1, R3, R4	Text followed by 5 x 4-option MCQ questions, including an initial example. Questions to test comprehension of detail, main ideas, attitude, opinion, implied meaning.
	4	R1, R2, R4	Note completion. Candidates will be required to complete brief notes (under a supplied heading or headings) relating to a text printed in the question paper. 10 items, including an initial example.

MCQ = multiple-choice question

Reading Test Format

Part	Task Type	Text length
1a & 1b	2 x 5 item cloze tasks with 4-option MCQs	2 x unrelated texts of 115-130 words each, from different sources, each with five gaps. Candidates must choose one word or phrase from a set of four to fill each gap.
2	Matching	For each of the descriptions of people, 25-35 words. For each of the texts, 40-50 words.
3	4-option MCQs	Text of 290-320 words.
4	Note completion	Text of about 390-420 words.

Paper 3 Listening

Overview

Duration	Approximately 45 minutes
Format	Candidates listen to a series of recordings while looking at the question paper. Each recording is heard twice.
Voices	A range of adult (including young adult) voices, styles of delivery and accents will be heard in each Listening paper to reflect the various contexts presented in the recordings, as appropriate to the level of the test takers.

Skills Objectives

The language objectives have been grouped under skills headings, but it is recognised that these are interrelated.

Listening

L1	Listening for detail (informal contexts and typical daily situations) and responding through objective questions (e.g. indicating a place on a map).
L2	Listening for detail and writing down key information.
L3	Demonstrating general comprehension, for example of attitude/opinion/agreement, or by identifying the topic of a conversation (informal contexts and typical daily situations).

Listening Test Specification

Skill	Part	Skills Objective	Description
Listening	1	L1	Short recordings (three or four sentences), some involving two speakers, tested mainly by visual material (pictures, line drawings, etc.). The 8 items share a common context, and include an initial example. For example, a series of brief exchanges which all take place between people in a train station / school / airport / restaurant / home / etc.
	2	L1, L2	An exercise testing listening for detail based on a longer spoken text involving two speakers (interview or prompted monologue). Candidates listen and complete 8 sentences. Initial example included.
	3a & 3b	L1, L2	A factual monologue. Candidates listen for specific information and complete gaps in notes printed on the question paper. Initial example included.
	4	L1, L3	An informal conversation between two people/friends (male and female) testing factual information, detail, attitude, opinion. Candidates answer 6x3-option MCQs. Initial example included.

Listening Test Format

Part	Task Format
1	M/F dialogue snippets, 2-3 turns per snippet 8 x 4-option MCQs with visual input Each dialogue is 70-80 words long.
2	M/F dialogue (450-500 words) 8 sentence completion items
3a & 3b	M/F monologue (450-500 words) 8 form-filling, note-taking, or table completion items
4	M/F dialogue (450-500 words) 6 x 3-option MCQs