



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

## **Directorate of National Examinations**

**English Language – Grade 12**

**Test Specifications**

**2014**

**Kingdom of Bahrain**

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All details in this document are correct at the time of publishing, but may be subject to change as a result of ongoing efforts to ensure the quality of the examination product.

# 1 PURPOSE

The main purpose of the examinations is to provide information about the performance of students in English in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Their performance on subject content aims to identify what students should be able to do after 12 years of formal schooling and to establish whether they have the skills and the knowledge to be able to find work within the global marketplace of the 21st century using problem solving and higher thinking skills.

Additional purposes of the National Examinations are to:

- to be of use in the selection processes for Further Education, Higher Education or employment;
- provide a beacon of good assessment practice;
- provide robust information for the monitoring of standards over time.

## 1.1 Aims of the Grade 12 English examinations

The aims of the Grade 12 English examinations are:

- to measure core areas of literacy (defined as Writing, Reading, and Listening);
- to help develop the ability of Grade 12 students to use English effectively for the purposes of practical communication;
- to form a sound base for the skills required for further study or employment using English as the medium;
- to provide information which will aid selection processes for further or higher education or employment.

## 1.2 Relationship with International Standards

The Grade 12 examination level is designed to be comparable to the level described in the Common European Framework as Vantage, Level B2.

In assessing English language skills at this level, there is a strong focus on assessing higher order thinking skills in comprehending texts (and recordings) and ideas, as well as the ability of students to produce appropriate written responses to stimuli which may take the form of textual or visual input.

## 2 DEFINITIONS

### 2.1 Major competencies

The major competencies at Grade 12 are:

- Writing
- Reading
- Listening

### 2.2 Skills

Within each major competency, a number of skills will be assessed.

#### 2.2.1 The Writing paper will assess the following skills:

- write a formal transactional letter or email to cover functions specified according to the context, for example advising, complaining, enquiring, etc;
- write a report based on a given context and short prompts or headings;
- write a discursive essay in order to present an argument for and/or against a point of view.

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.

#### 2.2.2 The Reading paper will assess the following skills:

- locate specific information;
- demonstrate comprehension of gist;
- focus on organisation, cohesion and coherence;
- demonstrate comprehension of detailed information;
- extract information in order to complete a set of notes.

#### 2.2.3 The Listening paper will assess the following skills:

- identify gist, detail, function, purpose, attitude, opinion etc;
- identify main ideas, and specific and detailed information;
- identify main points (including attitude or opinion) in an extended talk or lecture from an academic context;
- identify detailed information in an extended discussion on a work related topic.

#### 2.2.4 While the emphasis in every task will be on meaning and communication, grammar is a skill which is assessed in the English language examinations. 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. Correct spelling is also considered very important for successful communication and is therefore assessed in the English language examinations.

## 2.3 Questions and items

A task (or question) is a collection of items which is linked by a common written or spoken text. An item is the smallest separately identified testing point within an assessment to which a mark is allocated. Each item must assess one (and only one) major competency, and must also assess one (and only one) skill. A question may consist of several items or just one item.

# 3 TEST CONSTRUCT

## 3.1 Description of papers

There will be 3 question papers each assessing 1 of the major competencies: Writing, Reading and Listening. Students answer on the question paper.

The purpose of these examinations is to focus on content and communication, 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.

### 3.1.1 Writing Paper

Students have 90 minutes to complete 3 tasks, worth a total of 40 marks. On this paper, marks are awarded for content and language according to a banded criterion-based mark scheme.

Part	Major Competency	Skill(s)	Available marks	Description	Word Count
1	Writing	Write formal transactional letter/email	10	This will always be discursive in nature, and involves writing a letter/email.	100-120 words
2	Writing	Write a report based on a given context and short prompts or headings	10	This will always be based on factual information.	100-120 words
3	Writing	Write a discursive essay	20	This will always involve presenting an argument for and/or against a point of view.	170-200 words

### 3.1.2 Reading Paper

This paper consists of 5 parts, each part focusing on a text. Students have 90 minutes to complete all the tasks, worth a total of 40 marks. Each part begins with an example for the students and is then followed by the items.

<b>Part</b>	<b>Major Competency</b>	<b>Skill(s)</b>	<b>Available marks</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Reading	Locating specific information	10	4 related texts (300 words in total) with 10 statements. Multiple matching
2	Reading	Demonstrating comprehension of gist	6	1 long text (450 words, 7 paragraphs) and 8 heading. Multiple matching of headings
3	Reading	Focusing on organisation, cohesion and coherence of paragraphs	6	1 long text (450 words, 6-7 paragraphs). 8 options. Gapped text – sentences
4	Reading	Demonstrating comprehension of detailed information	8	1 long text (700 words). 4-option multiple-choice, variety of focus
5	Reading	Extract information in order to complete a set of notes	10	1 long text (700 words). Note/table completion

### 3.1.3 Listening Paper

This paper consists of 4 parts, each part focusing on a different text. Students have 45 minutes approximately to complete all the tasks, worth a total of 35 marks. Students listen to a series of recordings, and answer questions on the question paper. Each recording is heard twice. Each part begins with an example for the students and is then followed by the items.

Part	Major Competency	Skill(s)	Available marks	Description
1	Listening	Identify gist, detail, function, purpose, attitude, opinion, etc. in a series of short monologues on everyday topics	10	Five short monologues (120-130 words each) 500 words (excluding example). 10 x 3-option MCQ items (2 items per monologue)
2	Listening	Identify main ideas, and specific and detailed information in an extended interview on a general topic	7	One long conversation / interview 550-650 words. Sentence completion 1 example plus 7 items
3	Listening	Identify main points (including attitude or opinion) in an extended talk or lecture from an academic context	8	One long talk/lecture (academic) 550-650 words. 7x3-option MCQ 1 example plus 8 items
4	Listening	Identify detailed information in an extended discussion on a work related topic	10	One long transactional conversation (work) 550-650 words. Note taking 1 example plus 10 items

### 3.2 Additional materials

There are no additional materials required. Dictionaries are not permitted in any of the examinations.

### 3.3 Balance of marks

The Writing, Reading and Listening papers are equally weighted to produce a final total for each student.

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

<b>Papers</b>	<b>Part</b>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Writing	25%	25%	50%		
Reading	25%	15%	15%	20%	25%
Listening	28.5%	20%	23%	28.5%	



## 4 PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS

The results of the Grade 12 examinations will be reported in the form of one of the following grades: A, B, C, D, E and Ungraded (U). Grades are awarded on the basis of 'best-fit', i.e. where *all or most* of the descriptors apply.

<b>Productive skills</b>		
	The <b>Grade A</b> student can:	The <b>Grade E</b> student can:
<b>Quality of Content</b>	Communicate content with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail, showing some evidence of effective structuring of the content	Describe content within a given context in order to cover functions specified, describe information from prompts, heading or data, and present an argument for and/or against a point of view.
<b>Paragraphing</b>	Use paragraphs, although not always accurately, while spelling and punctuation are consistently accurate with some non-systematic mistakes	Use occasional paragraphing and spelling and punctuating with reasonable accuracy with signs of Arabic influence
<b>Cohesion and Coherence</b>	Mark relationships between ideas clearly using a range of connectors and cohesive devices	Mark simple/linear relationships between ideas using basic cohesive devices
<b>Lexico-grammatical/ Functional Features</b>	Be mainly consistent in using grammar and express a range of functions with a high degree of accuracy as well as draw on a good range of vocabulary with few significant errors in word choice and demonstrate awareness of word formation and synonyms	Be reasonably consistent in using grammar and express a range of functions with frequent signs of Arabic influence and errors which do not impede understanding as well as draw on a sufficient range of basic vocabulary to outline main points in an idea with reasonable clarity on familiar topics

<b>Receptive skills</b>		
	The <b>Grade A</b> student can:	The <b>Grade E</b> student can:
<b>Short written and spoken texts</b>	Identify gist, detail, function, purpose, attitude, opinion in everyday topics (familiar and unfamiliar)	Identify gist, detail, opinion where these are clearly signposted in familiar everyday topics
<b>Longer written and spoken texts on work- and academic-related topics</b>	Identify gist, main ideas (including attitude and opinion) detail and text organisation	Identify main ideas where there is clear signposting
<b>Understanding arguments</b>	Recognise the line of argument, stated with occasional understanding of implied opinion, in issues presented	Recognise the line of argument and stated opinion in issues presented, although not necessarily in detail

## Notes:

- Grade **A** is at or above the standard of an excellent level B2 on CEFR with elements of C1. Clearly ready to begin courses taught through the English medium.
- Grade **E** is at or above B1 overall, with signs of level B2 in one or two skills. Would require some further study before being ready to engage in study or work in English.