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## NOTE

Additional copies of this booklet can be ordered from CIE Publications. When ordering please quote the reference number to be found on the back cover of the document.



# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS?

Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) is part of the University of Cambridge. Cambridge is at the forefront of educational assessment, offering one of the world's most extensive and internationally recognised qualifications portfolios; two million candidates in over 150 countries take a Cambridge qualification every year. One of our certificates is an educational passport, enabling students to further either job prospects or an academic career.

To find out more about us why not visit our website at [www.cie.org.uk](http://www.cie.org.uk)

## THE NEW AS/A LEVEL SYLLABUS IN LANGUAGES (OTHER THAN ENGLISH)

At Cambridge International Examinations we have many years of experience in testing languages at all levels and all over the world. In the development of our new International AS/A Level Syllabus in Languages (other than English), we have been able to draw on this experience to produce a scheme of assessment that meets the requirements of different regions, universities and employers.

## THE INTRODUCTION OF ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY ASSESSMENT

The revision of the A Level Syllabus increases flexibility via the introduction of the optional Advanced Subsidiary (AS) examination, which may be taken at the mid-point of a student's programme of study, providing feedback on performance and allowing targets to be set for the A Level course. Students may also sit the AS assessment without going on to sit the A Level, thus allowing those who would otherwise be unable to progress to advanced level study to gain a post-16 qualification with recognition and value. And as the structure of the new International A Levels has been developed with co-teaching in mind, Centres will not have to alter their subject programmes to accommodate the new qualifications.

## HOW CAN THIS GUIDE BE OF USE AND WHO IS IT FOR?

As we all know there is more to doing well in examinations than simply having the appropriate subject knowledge. In order to perform to the best of their ability students also need to be able to apply that knowledge to the precise requirements of the examination they are taking. The aims of this guide are  $\supseteq$  to give a general overview of the Cambridge AS/A Level examination in Languages (other than English),  $\not\subset$  to explain what examiners are looking for in the different parts of the examination, and  $\subset$  to show students how to approach the exam in order to get the grade their ability deserves.

- ♥ If you are a **student** and are going to be taking a Cambridge A or AS Level examination in a Language other than English, this guide, written by experienced examiners, is aimed at you.
- ♥ If you are a **teacher** preparing students for a Cambridge A or AS Level examination in a Language other than English, you will also find this guide invaluable.

# BACKGROUND TO THE EXAMINATION

## THE COMPONENTS

The Languages (other than English) Syllabus consists of 4 components/question papers:

<b>Speaking</b>	20 minutes (approximately)
<b>Reading and Writing</b>	1 hour 45 minutes
<b>Essay</b>	1 hour 30 minutes
<b>Texts</b>	2 hours 30 minutes

This guide has a chapter on each of these components in which advice is provided on how to prepare for the examination and what the examiners will be looking for.

## THE QUALIFICATIONS

These components can be combined in a number of ways, according to individual requirements, to give different qualifications:

<b>A Level</b>	Speaking Reading and Writing Essay Texts	Available in: Arabic <sup>1</sup> , Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish and Urdu <sup>1</sup>
<b>AS Language</b>	Speaking Reading and Writing Essay	Available in: Afrikaans <sup>2</sup> , Arabic <sup>2</sup> , Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish and Urdu <sup>2</sup>
<b>AS Literature</b>	Texts	Available in: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Urdu
<b>AS First Language</b>	Reading and Writing Essay Texts	Available in: Portuguese and Spanish

## AVAILABILITY

Although there are two examination sessions each year, one in June and one in November, not all languages/qualifications are available in each session. Availability is as follows:

<b>June</b>	A Level	French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Urdu
	AS Language	Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Urdu
	AS Literature	French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Urdu
	AS First Language	Portuguese, Spanish

<sup>1</sup> For Arabic and Urdu Advanced Level, the Speaking component is optional, and does not contribute to the overall grade students receive. In addition to the overall grade, where students perform to the appropriate standard, certificates will record the achievement of Distinction, Merit or Pass in Speaking.

<sup>2</sup> For Afrikaans, Arabic and Urdu Advanced Subsidiary Level, the Speaking component is optional, and does not contribute to the overall grade students receive. In addition to the overall grade, where students perform to the appropriate standard, certificates will record the achievement of Distinction, Merit or Pass in Speaking.

<b>November</b>	A Level	Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Urdu
	AS Language	Afrikaans, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Urdu
	AS Literature	Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Urdu
	AS First Language	Spanish

## GRADING AND RESULTS

### Grading of the Syllabus:

The overall grade received will be based on students' total score for all compulsory components, that is the scores for each component are added together to give a total and the overall grade will relate to that total. So, for instance, an A level candidate could have two As and two Bs as paper grades and still get an A overall – the two As could be very good As and the two Bs could be near the A/B borderline.

The overall grade boundaries (A, B, C, D, E) are set according to the following information:

- ♥ advice, based on the performance of candidates, and recommendations of examiners
- ♥ statistics on the candidature
- ♥ statistics on overall candidate performance
- ♥ comparison with statistics from previous years' examination performance and candidature.

Results are reported as five passing grades (A, B, C, D, and E) and two failing grades (O, U).

### Notification of results:

Statements of results are issued through centres approximately two-three months after the examination has been taken. Certificates are issued some time after the issue of statements of results.

## SUPPORT

The following support materials are all available from CIE Publications (telephone: +44 1223 553554; fax: +44 1223 553558; email: [international@ucles.org.uk](mailto:international@ucles.org.uk)):

- ♥ Languages (other than English) Syllabus.
- ♥ Languages (other than English) specimen papers.
- ♥ Standards Booklet for the Speaking and Essay Components. This is a very useful resource consisting of:
  - ♥ a cassette of graded Speaking Tests accompanied by helpful commentaries written by the Principal moderators
  - ♥ a selection of graded essays accompanied by helpful commentaries written by the Principal examiners.

Available for the French, German, Portuguese and Spanish examinations.

## CHAPTER 1

## COMPONENT 1 SPEAKING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SPEAKING COMPONENT

The Speaking component will last approximately 20 minutes.

There is no question paper for this component. The mark scheme remains the same from year to year and can be found at the end of this chapter. For the French, German, Portuguese and Spanish examinations, a Standards Booklet, including a cassette of graded Speaking Tests with commentaries from the Principal moderators, is available from CIE Publications.

There are 100 raw marks available for Speaking. Depending on the examination you are taking, these have the following overall weightings:

♥ <b>Advanced Level (with compulsory oral)</b>	20%
♥ <b>Advanced Level (with optional oral)<sup>1</sup></b>	none
♥ <b>Advanced Subsidiary Language (with compulsory oral)</b>	30%
♥ <b>Advanced Subsidiary Language (with optional oral)<sup>2</sup></b>	none

### THE FORMAT OF THE SPEAKING COMPONENT

	Marks	Description
<b>Section 1: Presentation</b>	20	Presentation of about 3 minutes on a specific topic
	Marks	Description
<b>Section 2: Topic Conversation</b>	40	Conversation on the chosen topic lasting 7-8 minutes.
	Marks	Description
<b>Section 3: General Conversation</b>	40	Conversation on matters of general interest lasting 8-9 minutes.

### ADMINISTRATION OF THE ORAL

The test, lasting approximately 20 minutes, will normally be conducted and marked by either a teacher at your school/college, or by some other suitable person selected by your school/college. The Speaking test will take place before the written examinations, either between 1 April and 1 June for the June examinations, or between 15 October and 15 November for the November examinations.

If your school/college has fewer than 6 candidates, all the examinations will be recorded and the cassette(s) sent to Cambridge for checking by the moderator. If there are more than 6 candidates, your teacher might record all the examinations and choose 6 of them, or might choose ahead which of you to record, to show the range of ability/spread of marks at your school/college. This means that your own examination may not be recorded, but your marks

<sup>1</sup> For Advanced Level examinations with an optional oral, the Speaking component does not contribute to the overall grade students receive. In addition to the overall grade, where students perform to the appropriate standard, certificates will record the achievement of Distinction, Merit or Pass in Speaking.

<sup>2</sup> For Advanced Subsidiary examinations with an optional oral, the Speaking component does not contribute to the overall grade students receive. In addition to the overall grade, where students perform to the appropriate standard, certificates will record the achievement of Distinction, Merit or Pass in Speaking.

will be sent to the moderator, along with the cassette(s) containing the chosen examinations. The moderator will then be able to check the standard of assessment at your school/college, and compare it with that of other schools, to ensure that the same standards are observed throughout the world.

During the examination, you will need to make sure that you face the microphone and speak clearly. The moderator needs to hear both sides of the conversation, both your teacher's questions and your answers to them.

THE PRESENTATION	Duration	Marks
	about 3 minutes	20

You will be expected to give a presentation of about 3 minutes on a specific topic. This can be prepared at any time during the course, so you will have time to research a topic you are interested in. It is worth resisting the temptation to choose a topic too early on, as over-preparation may leave you feeling bored with your chosen subject.

**Subject matter of the presentation**

You may select the subject matter from any of the topic areas listed in Appendix A, or you may present a subject of particular personal interest which is not from one of the topic areas listed. Whatever choice you make, you must treat the topic in such a way as to reflect a knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage (eg a topic based on a work of art or literature) of a country where the target language is spoken. For example, you might choose to talk about drug problems in modern society, but you would need to make sure that you can quote statistics or make specific references to a country where the language is spoken. Where you do not fulfil this condition, the potential mark for the content of the presentation **will be halved**.

**Content of the presentation**

You will need to show evidence that you can present relevant facts, express opinions and hypotheses and put forward points for discussion. When choosing a topic, you would be well advised to consider in what ways a conversation about it might develop: if you cannot think of half a dozen questions you could be asked about it, it is unlikely to present a fruitful source for discussion. Marks are awarded for the ideas and opinions you express, so you need to think carefully about how you can express these if the topic you choose is very factual. If the only way to continue conversation on the topic would be to ask for additional factual information, the topic is unlikely to score highly for the expression of opinions and the ability to raise issues for discussion.

**Manner of presentation**

When you prepare your topic, it is a good idea to work out a series of headings to give your presentation a structure, but **not** to write out and learn a speech by heart. You will obviously want to practise your presentation before the examination, but if you treat it as a memory test, the speech often sounds gabbled, and pronunciation and the logical linking between ideas become secondary to the need to reproduce the speech exactly as written in the shortest possible time. This is often reflected in the marks awarded, as the mark for content can be affected by the spontaneity/liveliness of the presentation, and the pronunciation/intonation mark may suffer because of

haste/lack of clarity in the delivery. The more you practise a prepared speech, the less natural it sounds: it is better to think about how you can manipulate the material you have researched to present it in different ways. If you have researched your topic thoroughly, learnt relevant vocabulary and structured your speech to fit into 3 minutes, you will be appropriately rewarded for the quality of your preparation, as this is an entirely different exercise from unprepared conversation.

You may bring in materials to illustrate your presentation. These might include maps, diagrams, statistics, pictures, short articles. If the material were in the form of an article, you should not quote extensively from it.

You **may not** bring in a script for your speech. If you wish, you may prepare, and bring into the examination room, a cue card with not more than 5 headings to remind yourself of the points you wish to make.

Your presentation should last about 3 minutes: if you show no sign of coming to the end of your prepared material after about 3½ minutes, the examiner will probably interrupt you and start asking questions. You will not be allowed to continue for longer than this, as this would change the timings set out for the rest of the examination.

The presentation will lead into a conversation about the chosen topic.

**TOPIC  
CONVERSATION**

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Marks</b>
about 7-8 minutes	40

During your delivery of the presentation, your examiner may possibly make notes and will be considering what direction the questioning might take. Although you will have thought beforehand what sort of questions you might be asked, you will probably be faced with at least some unexpected questions here. The mark scheme requires assessment of both comprehension and responsiveness, so try to develop your answers beyond simple short responses. In the course of the topic conversation, you must be prepared to substantiate, elaborate, clarify, qualify, etc, issues from the presentation. This may involve being asked to supply additional factual information where appropriate, or to express and defend a point of view. If you can develop your answers, you will have the opportunity to expand the conversation into other related areas, and to steer the conversation to some degree, which is a hallmark of the higher band of the mark scheme. In order to give you every opportunity to do this, examiners will ask questions of the “tell me more about...”, “why...?”, “how...?”, variety, rather than closed questions which may be answered by “yes/no”. The examiner’s objective will be to encourage you to contribute as much as possible to the conversation and to advance beyond simple sentence responses, without playing too large a part in the conversation him/herself.

You must be prepared to ask questions of the examiner as part of the topic conversation section. If you do not ask questions naturally in the flow of conversation, examiners will remind you to do so at the end of the general conversation section, perhaps asking “Are there any questions you would like to ask me?”. If you do not ask any questions, you **cannot be awarded** marks for the “Seeking Information and Opinions” element of the mark

scheme.

## **GENERAL CONVERSATION**

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Marks</b>
about 8-9 minutes	40

Having completed the topic conversation section, examiners will probably signal the beginning of the general conversation, with some comment such as "...fine, now let's move on to something more general...". This section will begin with some fairly straightforward questions about your background and interests and will move quickly on to a more mature conversation discussing more abstract and/or current issues within the general topic areas. For example, examiners might begin the general conversation section with questions such as "How do you spend your spare time?", leading rapidly to matters of contemporary interest/current affairs.

The subjects discussed in the general conversation will depend on your interests and the subject of the presentation. For example, it would be entirely inappropriate to discuss drugs in the topic conversation and the use of drugs in sport in the general conversation, as the examiner needs to discover whether you are able to talk easily and fluently on other, less predictable subjects.

Reference may be made to your reading, but you will not be examined in detail on the content of any set books. You should be able to discuss some matters of current interest, though it will not be assumed that all candidates will be closely informed on all matters of serious contemporary concern. If the topic asked about is not one with which you feel particularly at ease, the examiner will probably try a change of topic, or you could suggest a different area of interest yourself. The type of question is again important: the examiner may use closed questions, such as "Do you like...?" to gain some information on your interests, but "why...?", "how...?", "what do you think about...?" will give you more scope to extend your responses and opportunities to develop and guide the conversation in a direction which you find interesting.

Once again, you must ask questions of the examiner in this section and the examiner will prompt you if you do not do so during the course of the conversation.

The general conversation section might only cover 2/3 topic areas in 9 minutes, but might touch on more if the examiner has difficulty finding something you are interested in, or can talk about. It should not consist of a predetermined series of questions to which you are expected to provide a "correct" factual answer, but should rather develop into a genuine conversation, in which there may be no "correct" answers, only an exchange of opinions. You should take this opportunity of expressing your own ideas, rather than merely responding as briefly as possible to questions asked. If you find it difficult to maintain a conversation at this sort of level, this is obviously an area in which you could practise with your teacher, other students, or language assistants.

## **POSSIBLE STARTING POINTS FOR GENERAL**

When you are practising for the general conversation section, think about the sorts of things the examiner might want to talk about and try to imagine the sorts of questions you might be asked and how you might answer them.

## CONVERSATION

Remember that the examiner is trying to find things to talk about that interest you: if you show you are interested by having lots to say then you will be able to have some control over the conversation.

The following are some examples of how general conversation can develop. You will see the way in which a mature discussion can develop from a very straightforward initial question. You should also note the use of the "Why" question.

### ♥ Tell me about your school

Is it a good school? Why / Why not?

What would you like to change about it? Why?

What do you think about the education system in general?

If you were Minister for Education, how would you improve the system?

What is education?

### ♥ What subjects are you studying?

Why?

What do you think about your language course? What do you think would improve it?

Are literary/classical studies of any use in the modern world?

In this day and age, should everyone study a foreign language? ...leading on to questions of Europe, isolationism, the role of language in the world, eg French, German or Portuguese in Africa, Spanish in Latin America and Spain

### ♥ Have you visited any other countries?

Comparisons between the country visited and your own? In what way are they the same/different? ...leading to discussion of life-styles, attitudes, family life

Tell me about your experiences in other countries. Which do you prefer?

Why? Where would you live if you could choose? Why?

Do richer countries have a duty towards less developed countries? ...leading on to discussion of aid in natural disasters / settlement of disputes / intervention in wars / role of international agencies

### ♥ Have you always lived in this area?

**Answer: no**

Where did you live before?

Which area do you prefer?

Why?

What is important to you about the area in which you live?

Why?

...leading on to questions of city v country life / social problems

**Answer: yes**

What can young people / tourists find to do in this area?

What do you think of the area?

What extra facilities would you like?

Why?

What is important to you about the area in which you live?

Why?

...leading on to questions of city v country life / social problems

### ♥ What do you like doing in your spare time?

#### **Answer: sport**

Spectator or participant?

Team or individual?

Why?

School sport / amateur v professional / drugs in sport / nationalism in sport

Violence in sport / in society / role of government etc

#### **Answer: watching television**

What sort of programmes?

**News:** is it impartial? Should the government censor news? ...leading on to the topic of censorship in general

**Films:** film industry / cultural grants

**Documentaries:** Do these serve as education or amusement? Factual or polemic? ...leading on to discussion of power of the media / the Press

## ADVICE TO CANDIDATES

- ♥ Don't choose a purely descriptive topic which is not capable of development beyond the factual, as this is unlikely to score highly on ideas and opinions and may not lend itself to discussion in the topic conversation. Historical, biographical and geographical topics do have a tendency to be over-factual and if you choose such a topic, you need to broaden your approach and consider how discussion might develop.
- ♥ The Internet is a very useful source of material, but don't be tempted to choose a topic **just** because of the amount of material available. Try to choose a topic in which you have a genuine interest – you will be less likely to experience difficulties in the topic conversation.
- ♥ Do prepare your presentation thoroughly, but remember that, where this is over-rehearsed, there can be a tendency to gabble and the mark for pronunciation and intonation suffers accordingly.
- ♥ You may bring into the examination a cue card, but this should only contain 5 headings, not detailed notes.
- ♥ Remember, this examination is testing your ability to speak a language, not your factual knowledge – be prepared to volunteer information and ideas. As part of your preparation for the general conversation, consider the possibilities of discussing your future plans, leisure activities, current events, etc. Don't content yourself with a simple statement such as "I watch television." You should be prepared to develop this with why you watch television, what sort of programmes you watch, the role of television in the modern world.
- ♥ Remember that you must ask questions of the examiner in both the topic and general conversation. You should aim to ask a minimum of 2/3 questions.
- ♥ Finally, try not to feel anxious and remember that examiners seek to create a reasonable, relaxed atmosphere, in which candidates are given every possible opportunity to communicate and achieve their potential, and their efforts are marked positively.

## MARK SCHEME FOR SPEAKING

### SECTION 1: PRESENTATION

The presentation will be marked out of 20 marks: Content / Presentation (10 marks); Pronunciation / Intonation (5); Language (5).

Candidates who make no reference to the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the language is spoken will have their mark for content/presentation halved.

Content / Presentation Knowledge of facts; ability to express opinions and raise issues for discussion.	Pronunciation / Intonation	Language
<b>9/10</b> Full and well organised coverage of the topic; ideas and opinions included as well as factual points; lively presentation; examiner's interest sustained.	<b>5</b> Outstanding pronunciation and intonation; an occasional slight mistake or hesitation. Not necessarily a native speaker.	<b>5</b> Has a very good feeling for the language; speaks fluently and accurately; shows good use of relevant idiom and uses a wide range of structures and vocabulary.
<b>7/8</b> Good exposition and sound organisation of the topic; makes relevant factual points though may be less good in ideas and opinions; presentation somewhat stilted though keeps examiner's interest.	<b>4</b> Good pronunciation, makes a fair attempt at correct intonation and expression; some mistakes and/or hesitation.	<b>4</b> Speaks fairly fluently and accurately; uses idiom with reasonable range of structures and vocabulary.
<b>5/6</b> Adequate exposition of the topic; few ideas or opinions; evidence of preparation but presentation pedestrian.	<b>3</b> A fair degree of accuracy in pronunciation; quite a number of errors; some attempt at intonation and expression.	<b>3</b> May speak with hesitation; adequate range of structures and vocabulary; no ambiguity of meaning.
<b>3/4</b> Material thin; rambling, repetitious; hardly any ideas or opinions; in danger of losing the examiner's interest.	<b>2</b> Intelligible but shows marked influence of mother tongue and very many errors of pronunciation.	<b>2</b> Marked hesitation; limited range of structures and vocabulary; leading to some ambiguity of meaning.
<b>0/1/2</b> Very little factual information; material irrelevant; vague, arguments incoherent; little effort at presentation; examiner confused.	<b>0/1</b> Very poor; many gross errors; frequently incomprehensible.	<b>0/1</b> Very marked hesitation; severe limitations of structures and vocabulary; thought processes basically influenced by mother tongue.

### SECTIONS 2 & 3: TOPIC AND GENERAL CONVERSATION

Examiners will give marks out of 40 for each part: Comprehension and Responsiveness (10 marks), Accuracy (10), Feel for the Language (10), Range of Vocabulary and Structures (10 marks, divided between Providing Information and Opinions and Seeking Information and Opinions – see next page).

<b>Comprehension &amp; Responsiveness</b>	<b>Accuracy</b>	<b>Feel for the Language</b>
<b>9-10 Very good</b> No problems of comprehension. Prompt response to examiner's questions. Very forthcoming in developing topics: able to guide the discussion, offering/seeking opinions as appropriate.	<b>9-10 Very good</b> Consistently accurate. Only occasional minor slips.	<b>9-10 Very good</b> Has a very good feeling for the language and is able to express concepts fluently in appropriate idiom. Negligible influence from the mother tongue.
<b>7-8 Good</b> Few problems of comprehension. Responds readily and without undue hesitation. Reasonably forthcoming but tends to follow examiner's lead.	<b>7-8 Good</b> Accuracy generally good, with more frequent errors than in the very best candidates. Shows a sound basic understanding of grammatical usage.	<b>7-8 Good</b> Has a very good feeling for the language. Shows competent use of relevant idiom. Avoids significant influence from mother tongue.
<b>5-6 Satisfactory</b> Understands questions on basic situations and concepts, but has difficulty with more complicated ideas. Some delay in response. Needs encouragement to develop topics.	<b>5-6 Satisfactory</b> Accuracy indicates a measure of competence but with some obvious and significant gaps in grammatical usage.	<b>5-6 Satisfactory</b> Feeling for the language evident with some occasional use of relevant idiom. Thought processes and expression are influenced by mother tongue.
<b>3-4 Weak</b> Has general difficulty in understanding. Limited response to questions on the majority of topics raised.	<b>3-4 Weak</b> Generally inaccurate use of the language.	<b>3-4 Weak</b> Has scant feeling for the language. Generally translates literally from the mother tongue.
<b>0-2 Poor</b> Severe problems of comprehension. Very marked hesitation. Limited responsiveness.	<b>0-2 Poor</b> No grasp of grammatical accuracy. Errors constant and repeated.	<b>0-2 Poor</b> Has no feeling for the language.

### Range of Vocabulary and Structures

<b>Providing Information and Opinions</b>	<b>Seeking Information and Opinions*</b>
<b>5 Very good</b> Extensive range of appropriate vocabulary. Able to use a wide range of structures with confidence.	<b>5 Very good</b> More than one question asked with confidence. Spontaneous or prompted, but arising out of conversation and relevant to topic under discussion. High level of accuracy, using a range of question forms.
<b>4 Good</b> Has sufficient range of vocabulary and structures to handle reasonably mature subjects.	<b>4 Good</b> Asks more than one question confidently. Spontaneous or prompted, but arising out of conversation and relevant to topic under discussion. Questions largely accurate, but forms may be limited.
<b>3 Satisfactory</b> Limited expression of ideas (but not ambiguity) caused by limitations in range of vocabulary and some structures.	<b>3 Satisfactory</b> Capable of asking a minimum of one question. Spontaneous or prompted, but arising out of conversation and relevant to topic under discussion. Has difficulty in formulating questions, but questions comprehensible.
<b>2 Weak</b> Severe limitations of vocabulary and structures restrict discussion to a very basic level.	<b>2 Weak</b> Severe limitations in asking questions – possibly one question only. Question(s) will probably not arise naturally or be relevant to the topic under discussion. Question(s) difficult to understand.
<b>0-1 Poor</b> Very restricted vocabulary. Only simple sentences and no variety of structure.	<b>0-1 Poor</b> Questions attempted, but incomprehensible. (1) No questions, even when prompted. (0)

\* With candidates who do not ask any questions by the end of the topic conversation, examiners will prompt by asking "Do you have any questions?" in the appropriate language. The same prompt should be used at the end of the general conversation. Candidates will not be penalised for being prompted in this way.

## CHAPTER 2

## COMPONENT 2 READING AND WRITING

### INTRODUCTION TO THE READING AND WRITING COMPONENT

The Reading and Writing component will last 1 hour 45 minutes.

Specimen question papers for this component can be found in the Specimen Paper Booklet to accompany the Languages (other than English) Syllabus, as can mark schemes.

There are 70 raw marks available for the Reading and Writing component. Depending on which examination you are taking, these raw marks have the following overall weightings:

♥ <b>Advanced Level (with compulsory oral)</b>	35%
♥ <b>Advanced Level (with optional oral)</b>	45%
♥ <b>Advanced Subsidiary Language (with compulsory oral)</b>	50%
♥ <b>Advanced Subsidiary Language (with optional oral)</b>	70%
♥ <b>Advanced Subsidiary First Language</b>	60%

### THE FORMAT OF THE EXAM

Section 1		
Exercise	Marks	Task type
Ex 1	5	Test of vocabulary recognition and grammatical manipulation based on Passage 1.
Ex 2	5	Test of vocabulary recognition and grammatical manipulation based on Passage 1.
Ex 3	20	Comprehension questions based on Passage 1: 15 marks for content and 5 for quality of language.
Section 2		
Exercise	Marks	Task type
Ex 4	20	Comprehension questions based on Passage 2: 15 marks for content and 5 for quality of language.
Ex 5	20	Directed summary using information from both passages and adding your personal opinion: 15 marks for content taken from the passages, 5 for personal opinion and 5 for quality of language.

### WHAT EXACTLY IS READING COMPREHENSION AND HOW DO WE TEST IT?

This seems a rather obvious question to ask, but in fact, reading comprehension can operate at several levels. It might mean understanding individual words or it might extend to larger units such as short phrases, sentences and, finally, a grasp of the whole text. This paper sets out to test reading comprehension at each of these levels, so there are tasks which focus on words and other exercises which test comprehension of longer sequences.

To test comprehension of the more advanced reading skills, one can also bring together two texts on a related theme so that questions can be set which ask for comparison and evaluation of differing approaches to the theme.

So the answer to our question, "What is reading comprehension?" is linked to another question "How do we test reading comprehension?", and we might

list quite a number of different activities which are involved in the process of testing reading comprehension. Some of those activities are listed below. Not all these activities are represented in every examination paper, but this is the sort of thinking that lies behind the questions that examiners may set on a pair of texts.

## ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN TESTING READING COMPREHENSION

<b>Locate</b>	identify, recognise, select ... one or several elements of information already present in a text
<b>Reorganise</b>	classify, order ... information explicitly present in a text
<b>Compare</b>	distinguish, associate ... information with a view to extracting similarities or differences present in one or several texts
<b>Infer</b>	deduce, predict, interpret, extrapolate ... the information contained explicitly as a function of the text
<b>Appreciate</b>	distinguish a fact from an opinion or a feeling ... evaluate the correctness of a piece of information; judge whether an action is good or bad.

## HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS?

After the two questions "What exactly is reading comprehension?" and "How do we test reading comprehension?", a third question follows quite naturally, "What can I do to improve my reading skills so that I achieve the best possible performance in the exam?" There is no magic formula for instantly improving reading skills and the answer has to be **(i)** read a wide variety of material and **(ii)** read as regularly as possible. Reading in the target language will not only develop comprehension skills, but will also help you become familiar with the sort of vocabulary you are likely to encounter in the examination, consolidate grammatical structures, keep in use language you have already learnt and help you acquire a feel for what is grammatically correct. These benefits will also be felt when you come to tackle other components of the examination.

If you are a First Language candidate and already read regularly in your own language then you should continue to do so. If you are a Foreign Language candidate and read regularly in your own language it will be quite straightforward to transfer some of your reading into the target language. If you do not enjoy reading it will be more difficult, but try to develop an interest in reading in the target language, perhaps by selecting topics in which you are interested and then searching for information on these topics or making an effort to read material in the target language relating to other subjects you are studying.

## WHAT SHOULD I BE READING?

Although a certain amount of difficulty will not prevent you from making progress in your reading, initially, you will need to choose reading material carefully as trying to understand material which is far too difficult will be disheartening. The following are examples of the sorts of things you could usefully read.

### For Foreign Language candidates:

- ♥ Newspapers and magazines in your own language  
Knowing what is going on in the world around means you start from a position of strength as you will already know something about the subject matter of the foreign language texts you encounter.

### For all candidates:

- ♥ Newspapers and magazines in the target language  
If you have regular access to a newspaper or magazine in the target language you can use it to follow up a topical theme or a place or person of interest.  
If you are a Foreign Language candidate, you could build up your confidence by starting off with items/sections you find more accessible, ie reports of events in the news about which you already have a background knowledge or the letters page which will provide shorter less complex passages.
- ♥ The Internet is a useful source of reading material in places where it is difficult to buy newspapers in the target language.
- ♥ Short stories, poems, novels, plays  
If you are a Foreign Language candidate, it may be possible to locate simplified versions of authentic texts which you could start with.
- ♥ Biographies
- ♥ Reference books, encyclopaedias  
If you are a Foreign Language candidate, to begin with you could try junior encyclopaedias which are intended for younger readers.
- ♥ Books on natural history, geography, history etc  
Again, a way of building confidence, for Foreign Language candidates, would be to start with textbooks aimed at younger readers.
- ♥ Advertisements, instructions.

## HOW SHOULD I BE READING?

There are two types of reading that you will do: **(i)** reading to improve your general fluency and **(ii)** the more intensive reading you will be required to do in the Reading and Writing component.

- (i)** With the first type of reading, the main aim is to read with interest and fluency. To this end, remember that you don't need to know the meaning of every word to understand what a text is about. Try to take in groups of words and blocks of meaning rather than concentrate on every individual word. Often the meaning of a sentence/paragraph will become clearer as you read on or after a second reading when you have a clearer idea of what the logic of the passage is. When you meet words you don't understand try to infer the meaning from the context, instead of immediately looking them up in the dictionary. This will help you develop your comprehension skills and will be invaluable practice for the examination when you will not have access to a dictionary. However, when a passage contains too much unknown vocabulary and too many unfamiliar structures you are forced into concentrating on every word, which is why it is important to start your reading at an appropriate level and build up.

- (ii) The second type of reading is the close, analytical reading you will have to do in the context of the examination, where you are being tested on your ability to read the text and to be alert to all its levels of meaning. With this kind of reading you will have to practise "reading into" texts in order to comprehend them fully. Ask yourself not only what does a particular sentence mean, but how does it work in relation to the other sentences in the text and what does the way the writer has used the sentence tell you about the attitude or feelings s/he is trying to convey. The skills you have required through your general reading, for instance picking out the main points from the less important material, scanning a text to find a specific piece of information, will prove invaluable.

It is possible that you will encounter unfamiliar vocabulary and constructions in the examination. Do not panic! Instead, use the skills you have developed in your general reading to try and work out meaning.

- ♥ Re-read the problem passage again carefully. Often, the context will provide clues to the meaning of an unknown word and the surrounding sentences may even contain a synonym. On the whole, the more important the meaning of a word is to a passage, the more likely it is that there will be enough clues in the surrounding sentences to enable you to work out its meaning.
- ♥ Use your knowledge of grammar to establish whether the word is a noun, adjective or verb. It will be easier to work out meaning once you know what the function of a word is in a sentence.
- ♥ Use everything you know about the ways words are constructed, such as endings that are added to change the function of a word, for instance in English the addition of "ly" to adjectives changes them into adverbs, slow/slowly, main/mainly etc.

It will be difficult for you to work out the meaning of idiomatic expressions that you have not come across before. However, once you are able to decide that a particular group of words does form an idiomatic expression you may be able to work out the meaning from the context; if not, at least you are less likely to misinterpret the text as a result of attempting a word-for-word translation of the phrase.

## **INTEGRATING THE READING AND WRITING SKILLS**

When we think about language skills, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, we sometimes separate them as if they were quite distinct. And yet, language skills in real life are rarely separate. We may want to speak in response to something we have heard, or write a reaction to something we have read. The idea that language skills are actually integrated lies behind the approach in the Reading and Writing paper.

The paper starts by testing reading and investigative skills and then moves towards writing answers to questions and finally to a piece of writing drawing from the comprehension of the two reading passages. This means that the writing is guided and firmly based in the reading process.

The two reading passages of Sections 1 and 2 will deal with alternative aspects of a common theme. The first passage is tested firstly by a task involving vocabulary recognition, eg true/false; recognition of synonyms; selection of words on the basis of dictionary definitions. Different texts lend

themselves to different forms of test, and the first test-type may therefore vary between examinations. The second task will be an exercise requiring grammatical manipulation. There then follows a set of questions to test comprehension and requiring answers in the target language. The tests in Section 1 are intended to allow you to get into the theme of the passage and to explore the first text. The aim is to provide an initial foothold in the paper accessible to everyone. The second passage takes this process a stage further, requiring a further set of responses to questions in the target language and finally a piece of composition in the target language (140 words) which asks you, firstly to provide a summary which draws ideas from each passage, and secondly, to express a personal point of view on the topic. In this way reading and writing are integrated by a carefully graded sequence of tasks developing comprehension and leading to personal expression.

## **TEACHING AND TESTING – HOW ARE THEY LINKED?**

Apart from the value of this approach for the process of assessment, it may also be said to follow closely the most likely approach to texts in the classroom, for example:

### **Stage 1 – Discovering the text**

Anticipation:	eg using headlines, pictures, layout etc.
Scanning:	eg locating specific information
Reading for general sense (= gist reading):	eg true/false tasks; gist questions
Language analysis and collection:	eg find words from definitions; find synonyms
Structure and sequencing:	eg study relations within sentences; fill gaps

### **Stage 2 – Working around the text**

Written consolidation:	eg question and answer
Grammar practice:	eg manipulation and rephrasing

### **Stage 3 – Working away from the text**

Summary	
Comprehension questions	
Composition writing:	eg argue pros and cons of an issue raised in the text

## **HOW TO APPROACH THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF QUESTION YOU WILL ENCOUNTER IN THE EXAMINATION**

Doing well in exams is not only about having a good knowledge of your subject: in order to perform to the best of your ability, you need to be familiar with the format and requirements of the examination. The grid on the first page of this chapter gives you the format of the examination, the specimen papers (and past papers where they are available) show you what this means in practice and in this section we suggest how you should approach the different types of question on the paper in order to get the best possible mark.

### **SECTION 1**

Section 1 of the paper will be based on the first text/passage. There will be three exercises on Passage 1. The first two exercises (worth 5 marks each) will test vocabulary recognition and grammatical manipulation/reformulation of items from the text. The third exercise will test comprehension of the text via a series of questions in the target language (worth 15 marks for content and 5 marks for quality of language):

#### **Exercises 1 and 2**

##### **Vocabulary recognition**

###### **(i) True/False**

It is intended that the True/False task, when used, should offer all candidates a manageable first step into the paper. Even so, it would be wrong, as sometimes is the case, to see True/False tasks as undemanding and even easy. Some items may be straightforward, and will give you an initial sense of success. Other items may require quite a complex process of deduction and close matching of the item from the text with the wording of the question. Of course, some candidates guess without taking the time to think through their answer. But an attempt to work out the correct answer is a positive aid, not only to gaining the marks, but also to understanding the passage and being able to tackle later questions.

###### **(ii) Matching of items of vocabulary; dictionary definitions to locate items of vocabulary**

You can be sure that items of vocabulary (words/phrases) for which equivalents are requested in an exercise of this kind will always occur in the reading passage in the order presented. Although the task concentrates on comprehension at the level of individual words and phrases, and does allow at least an element of guesswork (by a process of elimination), it provides a step towards the more extended comprehension of the passage as a whole. Try and see this sort of task as a positive help in identifying unknown items in the text, and thus as an aid to answering questions later in the paper.

##### **Grammatical manipulation/reformulation of items from the passage**

The normal form for such a test is for the candidate to be asked to rewrite a sentence from the passage substituting a given word or phrase and making the necessary changes to the structure of the sentence.

### Exercise 3 **Comprehension questions with answers in the target language**

Some may relate directly to information in the passage, whilst others may ask you to draw conclusions or give further explanation of information provided in the passage. (See the comments below for Exercise 4, the equivalent task on Passage 2.)

**SECTION 2** There will be two exercises in this section. Exercise 4 will test comprehension of Passage 2 via a series of questions in the target language (worth 15 marks for content and 5 for quality of language). This will be followed by the final exercise in which you will be asked to produce a piece of guided writing in the target language. You will be expected to draw ideas from both passages and express a personal point of view (worth 10 marks for items from the texts, 5 marks for personal opinion and 5 marks for quality of language).

### Exercise 4 **Comprehension questions with answers in the target language**

Exercise 4 will be based on Passage 2. Some questions may relate directly to information in the passage, whilst others may ask you to draw conclusions or give further explanation of information provided in the passage. (For this task and the comprehension questions on Passage 1, the same remarks can be made.)

In these questions you are being tested on **(i)** your understanding of the passages (the content marks) and **(ii)** your ability to express that understanding accurately (the quality of language marks). Although marks for comprehension and quality of language are awarded separately, they are clearly linked: for comprehension to be demonstrated the examiner has to be able to understand what you have written – this will prove difficult if the quality of language drops below a certain level; answers which are grammatically correct but which show no understanding of the text cannot not gain marks for quality of language.

Whenever a comprehension task requires questions and answers in the target language, the problem of "lifting" from the text can occur. In order that the examiner can be sure that the passage has been understood, you are asked to answer the questions on the text "in your own words". But it is not always clear what are one's "own words", since some of the words of the original may be essential and unavoidable. If you need to re-use material from the text, do so sensibly:

- ♥ A word for word copying from the original **does not** show the examiner that you have understood.
- ♥ A rewording or rephrasing of the original **will** demonstrate understanding.

Ask yourself if there are any words that it is impossible to put in another way and if there are, then there is no need to change them. Sometimes a change in the construction will be all that is required, but be careful not to just replace every word with a synonym as you could end up with a sentence that means something quite different from the original.

*Content marks* For each set of comprehension questions a total of 15 marks will be given for content which demonstrates understanding of the original passage. Marks for each individual question will vary, and the total possible score for each

question will be indicated on the question paper. You need to take note of the mark available in order to estimate how much detail is required in your answer. If you omit necessary details or fail to express your answer precisely enough, you will not gain full marks for your answer. If you include too many details, you will be wasting valuable time, though you will not be penalised unless the extra information distorts the meaning of the correct answer. The important thing is to choose the relevant information.

*Quality of language marks*

In addition to the 15 marks for content, each set of questions may score up to 5 marks for quality of language. These 5 marks will be awarded globally for the whole performance on the set of answers to a passage. The grid for awarding these 5 marks is as follows:

<b>5 Very good</b>
Consistently accurate. Only very few errors of minor significance. Accurate use of more complex structures (verb forms, tenses, prepositions, word order).
<b>4 Good</b>
Higher incidence of error than above, but clearly has sound grasp of the grammatical elements in spite of lapses. Some capacity to use accurately more complex structures.
<b>3 Sound</b>
Fair level of accuracy. Common tenses and regular verbs mostly correctly formed. Some problems in forming correct agreement of adjectives. Difficulty with irregular verbs, use of prepositions.
<b>2 Below average</b>
Almost all sentence-patterns are simple. Expression very forced and pedestrian. Vocabulary limited and pedestrian.
<b>0-1 Poor</b>
Little or no evidence of grammatical awareness. Most constructions incomplete or incorrect. Consistent and repeated error.

The length of an answer does not determine the quality of language mark – a concise answer which contains all the elements for content is scored on the full range of marks for language.

An answer scoring 0 for content cannot score any language marks, and the total available on the whole set of answers will therefore be affected.

**Exercise 5 Continuous writing task**

This test takes the form of a guided composition where you are expected:

- (i) to draw material from both passages and reformulate it in your own words
- (ii) to express a personal response to the issues raised by the passages.

The 15 marks for content are allocated positively: 10 marks for specific points summarised from the passages; 5 marks for an expression of personal response. Additionally, five marks are awarded for quality of language.

*Word limit*

Unless you are able to write very concisely, you should aim for the number of words specified in the rubric. In general, compositions that fall short of the

number of words required by the rubric do not cover all the content points and therefore do not score highly on that scale.

You should also ensure you do not exceed the word limit by more than a sentence or so as if you do so you will end up losing marks because examiners will not mark anything beyond the upper word limit. So, for example, if your personal response to the text falls outside the word limit given on the paper, it will receive no marks.

#### *Content*

As regards content, it is important to read the task with care, and not just assume that you can write any 140 words on the topic of the reading passages. Plan your answer so that you include all the elements required and do so within the word limit.

- ♥ The first part of your answer must be a summary which meets the demands of the task set. You will be expected to draw material from both the passages on the question paper.
- ♥ The second part of the answer, the response to the text, is a short piece of directed writing on the theme of the two passages, marked as follows:

<b>5 Very good</b>
Varied and interesting ideas, showing an element of flair and imagination, a capacity to express a personal point of view.
<b>4 Good</b>
Not the flair and imagination of the best candidates, but work still shows an ability to express a range of ideas, maintain interest and respond to the issues raised.
<b>3 Sound</b>
A fair level of interest and ideas. May concentrate on a single issue, but there is still a response to ideas in the text.
<b>2 Below average</b>
Limited range of ideas; rather humdrum. May disregard the element of response to the text, and write a largely unrelated free-composition.
<b>0-1 Poor</b>
Few ideas to offer on the theme. Banal and pedestrian. No element of personal response to the text.

#### *Quality of language marks*

The quality of language is marked on the same scale as that given earlier for answers to the comprehension questions in Exercises 3 and 4.

### **WHAT ARE THE MAIN PROBLEMS CANDIDATES ENCOUNTER ON THE READING AND WRITING PAPER?**

The main problems candidates encounter on the Reading and Writing paper are:

- ♥ Failure to understand parts of the passages.
- ♥ Word for word quoting from the passages without any evidence of comprehension.
- ♥ Failure to provide sufficient detail in the answer for all marks to be awarded

## ADVICE TO CANDIDATES

By the time you enter the exam room, you will have had lots of practice in reading and writing, and you will have done everything possible to improve your vocabulary and follow the rest of the advice given in the earlier section "How to improve reading comprehension".

So what is now the best advice for actually tackling the exam paper? Here are a few tips:

- ♥ Read and follow all instructions carefully.
- ♥ Don't be in too much of a hurry to get to the questions. First read the passage all the way through, trying not to linger over details which do not seem immediately clear, in order to arrive at an overall understanding of what the writer is saying. Once you have an outline of the reading passage in your mind, it will be easier to work out the meaning of individual paragraphs, sentences and words.
- ♥ Once you have the feel of the passage, study the questions carefully, paying attention to every word.

Now read the passage again; this time, because you have read the questions, you will have a better idea what to focus on in your reading.

Now start to answer the questions. You may find it useful to make brief notes in rough before you write each answer.

- ♥ Answer the question set.  
Remember that you are required to give all relevant information in answer to a question.  
Sometimes the way in which the question is framed will indicate that you may have to make an inference or supposition.  
Concentrate on answering the question and do not be satisfied with locating what seems to be the relevant section of the text and copying it on to your answer paper.  
Remember that the order of the questions will follow the order of the text.  
Express your answer as clearly and as simply as you can and ensure that it says what you mean.  
If a question really does seem ambiguous then indicate in your answer that it could be reasonably interpreted in two ways.

- ♥ Be sure to answer all parts of each question.
- ♥ Look at the mark allocation by the question: a two-word answer will not be enough for three or four marks. If the question asks for causes in the plural then expect to find more than one.
- ♥ Don't panic if you don't understand a word. Try and work out its meaning from the context.
- ♥ Don't leave any question unanswered.
- ♥ Keep to any word limits specified in the question.

## CHAPTER 3

## COMPONENT 3 ESSAY

### INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAY COMPONENT

The Essay component will last 1 hour 30 minutes.

Specimen question papers for this component can be found in the Specimen Paper Booklet to accompany the Languages (other than English) Syllabus. The mark scheme is printed at the end of this chapter.

For the French, German, Portuguese and Spanish examinations a Standards Booklet containing graded essays and helpful commentaries from the Principal examiners is also available.

There are 40 raw marks available for the Essay component. Depending on which examination you are taking, these raw marks have the following overall weightings:

♥ <b>Advanced Level (with compulsory oral)</b>	15%
♥ <b>Advanced Level (with optional oral)</b>	c20%
♥ <b>Advanced Subsidiary Language (with compulsory oral)</b>	20%
♥ <b>Advanced Subsidiary Language (with optional oral)</b>	c30%

### THE FORMAT OF THE EXAM

Syllabus	Examination
6 Set Topics are published each year in the syllabus.	6 questions are set on the question paper: one on each of the Set Topics listed in the syllabus.  The candidate chooses 1 question in the examination and writes an essay in the target language of 250-400 words.

### THE WRITING PROCESS

The process of writing an essay in an examination differs considerably from that which is involved in preparing an essay in the classroom. The opportunities for brainstorming, discussion, drafting and re-drafting, evaluating and re-evaluating in a group are lacking in the silence of the examination room. Nevertheless, the fact remains that you need to go through a series of steps in order to produce a thoughtful and well-organised piece of writing.

### BACKGROUND LEARNING

The preparation for any essay begins long before the examination and, very often, outside the classroom. An essay is a persuasive piece of writing, and if the writer is to succeed in persuading his or her audience, it is essential to have both a knowledge of the world and to have ideas and opinions of one's own. In order to obtain such knowledge and to develop such opinions, it is important that the writer should be aware of current affairs and to have read some literature, both of which are revealing of human nature, and perhaps even to have dipped into the works of the great thinkers of the world. In a society increasingly dependent on electronic media, there are endless opportunities offered on TV, film, radio and the Internet to broaden one's horizons and become aware of other people, other cultures and other modes of thought. It is on knowledge accumulated in this way that the writer will draw when presenting an essay and it is such knowledge that will both form and influence opinions.

### THE TITLE

The examination essay usually presents a title which requires commentary.

Often the title is a quotation, or appears to be so. You are then asked to agree or disagree with the sentiments expressed, or to express your opinion on the subject matter. Typical examples are:

- 1 Laws, even bad ones, have to be obeyed. What do you think?
- 2 Rather than promoting a spirit of cooperation, sport encourages aggression. Discuss.

There is also a style of title which encourages you to think about a subject in an unusual way:

- 3 Fortunately, we are all capable of violence.

Some titles appear to be more open, but still require you to express an opinion on the sentiments expressed.

- 4 Should we dread the passing of youth?

In looking at the examination paper, you must first ensure that you understand the title and what is being asked of you. A question such as number 3 (above), requires you to examine a view which is the very opposite of that which is generally held. Consequently, you may have to adopt a position which you would not normally assume.

Once you have carefully checked the titles, you will need to make an evaluation of the relative ease or difficulty of the questions. This will in part be dependent on your knowledge of a particular subject, the degree to which you have studied this or a related issue, and your ability to marshal sufficient supporting evidence. Only when this evaluation has been made should you choose a title.

## **POINTS OF VIEW**

Whatever form the title takes, you are invited to present a point of view to the reader and justify it. At this point, it should be stressed that there are no right or wrong answers to any title. Each student has an opinion on the subject matter and it is the manner in which the opinion is offered and the language in which it is presented that will be judged by examiners. A well-argued essay presented in idiomatic and accurate language will always receive good marks, however controversial or unusual the opinions expressed.

## **PLANNING**

The time allotted for an examination does not give the writer the leisure to produce endless drafts and re-drafts. It is essential to marshal the information needed as quickly as possible, to decide on a format for the essay (see Structure, below), and to draft a plan. It is also extremely important to decide on the point of view to be presented, and to ensure that all your writing leads ultimately to the presentation of that point of view. The time spent thinking and drafting is equally as important as the writing of the essay itself.

A brief note should serve as the draft for the introduction. For each paragraph which follows, a topic sentence should be drafted. This gives the main point of the paragraph and all other sentences in the paragraph will follow from it. The conclusion should be drafted as a single sentence which contains the essence of all that the you wish to say.

Once this plan has been drafted, look critically at it, consider if anything has been omitted, delete any superfluous material and substitute better material where appropriate. Only when this procedure has been completed should

you begin to write your essay.

## **STRUCTURE**

The structure of an essay will in part depend on the essay title and the manner in which the title is treated. Any essay, however, will need an introduction, a middle and a conclusion.

The introduction may make a direct reference to the title and the writer may express his/her point of view immediately (eg "Respect for the law is essential, whether the law is a good or a bad one"). Alternatively, the introduction may describe some fact or event that is related to the title and which serves as an example of the case to be debated (eg "A burglar breaks into a farmhouse and is stabbed to death by the owner, who receives a life sentence for this act of violence. Result: a general outcry against the judicial system, of course").

### **The argumentative essay**

Essay titles such as **1** and **2** above suggest a certain viewpoint to be debated. An essay of this nature must be balanced if it is to persuade the reader, ie it is necessary to discuss both sides of a point of view and not just your own opinion. This is known as the argumentative type of essay, and it is important that the arguments for and against a particular case should be set out clearly.

There are a number of ways in which this may be done. Firstly you may present the points in favour of a particular case (the thesis), followed by all the points against that case (the antithesis). If, however, you would like to leave a positive impression with the reader before drawing a conclusion, the antithesis may be presented first, followed by the thesis. A third section, balancing the thesis and the antithesis, and known as the synthesis may provide a viewpoint somewhere between the two extremes.

The second way in which both sides of a case may be debated is to present a positive point followed by its antithesis, a further positive point followed by its antithesis, etc. Again, a negative point could be presented first, followed by a positive point, and so on. Such an approach, however, tends to give the reader a fragmented impression of the case, and is likely to be less persuasive than the two- or three-part structure described above.

### **The discursive essay**

Titles such as **4** (above), "Should we dread the passing of youth?" invite an examination of an issue from various points of view. This type of essay is known as the discursive type and you may prefer to approach it by looking at various aspects of the problem, eg in this case, health, work, pastimes, responsibilities, finances etc. Within each sub-section, the advantages and disadvantages involved may be debated. Having examined the various issues, you then need to reach a conclusion which answers the question in the title.

## **STYLE**

An essay is a formal piece of work, and it is appropriate to ensure that your style, ie the tone which you use in your writing, is appropriate. It would certainly be inappropriate to fill an essay with current slang or jargon, to address the reader casually or to use grammatical constructions which are typical of the spoken language.

A formal style is characterised by a seriousness of tone and an exactness of grammatical form. A parallel may be drawn with letter-writing. An informal letter may end with "A big hug from..." or "Lots of love", and a formal letter with "Yours sincerely". The writer must learn which form to use in a particular

context. Similarly, the essay writer must learn to distinguish between, "At the end of the day, I think it's a bad idea" and "On reflection, one has to conclude that this is not the solution to the problem we are facing".

There is sometimes a temptation to fill an essay with set phrases which have been drawn from text-books and guides to essay-writing. Such set phrases should be used judiciously and sparingly. An essay that is full of such phrases is, after all, not entirely the candidate's own work. Too many set phrases can lead to meaningless sentences composed of clichés, such as "Whatever one thinks, and having considered this question from all possible angles, the only conclusion one can draw is...".

## **ASSESSMENT**

The essay is assessed on Language and Content. Out of a total of 40 marks, 24 are given for Language and 16 for Content.

### **Language marks**

The Language element is assessed under three headings:

Accuracy, Fluency and Range.

*Accuracy* Accuracy refers to the grammatical element of the language and the greater the grammatical accuracy in the work, the higher the number of marks will be awarded. You are expected to show a grasp of grammatical structures which have been learnt at the post-16 stage, as well as mastery of the grammar learned previously.

*Fluency* Fluency refers to the quality and sophistication of complex sentence patterns and the demonstration of a sense of style (see above, Style). The more fluent your use of complex sentence structure and the better your demonstration of an appropriate style, the greater the number of marks that will be awarded.

*Range* Range covers vocabulary and idiom. If your vocabulary is extensive, varied and appropriate, then high marks will be awarded. If your vocabulary is limited, repetitious and inappropriate, or, in the case of Foreign Language candidates, if it is very influenced by the mother tongue, then few marks will be awarded.

### **Content marks**

The Content marks are awarded under two headings:

Information/Focus/Relevance and Organisation/Structure/Argument.

#### *Information/Focus/ Relevance*

The first heading is used to assess the quality of the material and your ability to make a clear and relevant response to the question. If you can show an extensive knowledge and a real understanding of the issues raised by the question, and your answer is relevant to the question and is well supported by specific examples and references, you will receive high marks. Candidates who make only generalised statements of a vague kind which have limited relevance to the question, or fail to attempt to answer the question which has been set, will receive only low marks.

#### *Organisation/Structure/ Argument*

Under the second heading your ability to use paragraphs to introduce and develop ideas and to draw conclusions is assessed. If your essay is well-planned and structured, if the argument is coherent and if the material is well-evaluated and leads to a logical conclusion, you will receive high marks. If ideas are presented at random, or in an illogical sequence, or if there is no introduction or conclusion, or if the argument is not properly developed, then only low marks will be awarded.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

The essay offers you an opportunity to put forward your views on a number of topics which you have studied and in which, it is to be hoped, you will have some interest. The point must be made that the essay is written within the context of learning a foreign language and being assessed on that learning. For this reason the quality of the language receives a greater proportion of marks than the content of the essay. Whatever you have to say on any given topic, you should aim to write in a way that shows great grammatical accuracy, a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and idiom and a real sense of appropriate style. Any candidate who meets these criteria cannot fail to score high marks under the Language category. In writing an essay that is both relevant to the title and logical in its argument, and which demonstrates strong textual organisation, candidates also ensure they will receive very good marks for Content.

## MARK SCHEME FOR THE ESSAY

Language (out of 24)	Content (out of 16)
<p><b>21-24 Very good</b></p> <p>Confident use of complex sentence patterns, generally accurate, extensive vocabulary, good sense of idiom.</p>	<p><b>14-16 Very good</b></p> <p>Detailed, clearly relevant and well illustrated; coherently argued and structured.</p>
<p><b>16-20 Good</b></p> <p>Generally sound grasp of grammar in spite of quite a few lapses; reads reasonably; some attempt at varied vocabulary.</p>	<p><b>11-13 Good</b></p> <p>Sound knowledge and generally relevant; some ability to develop argument and draw conclusions.</p>
<p><b>10-15 Adequate</b></p> <p>A tendency to be simple, clumsy or laboured; some degree of accuracy; inappropriate use of idiom.</p>	<p><b>7-10 Adequate</b></p> <p>Some knowledge, but not always relevant; a more limited capacity to argue.</p>
<p><b>5-9 Poor</b></p> <p>Consistently simple or pedestrian sentence patterns with persistent errors; limited vocabulary.</p>	<p><b>3-6 Poor</b></p> <p>Some attempt at argument, tends to be sketchy or unspecific; little attempt to structure an argument; major misunderstanding of question.</p>
<p><b>1-4 Very poor</b></p> <p>Only the simplest sentence patterns, little evidence of grammatical awareness, very limited vocabulary.</p>	<p><b>1-2 Very poor</b></p> <p>Vague and general, ideas presented at random.</p>

# CHAPTER 4 COMPONENT 4 TEXTS

## INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTS COMPONENT

The Texts component will last 2 hours 30 minutes.

Specimen question papers for this component can be found in the Specimen Paper Booklet to accompany the Languages (other than English) Syllabus. The mark scheme is printed at the end of this chapter.

There are 75 raw marks available for the Texts component. Depending on which examination you are taking, these raw marks have the following overall weightings:

♥ <b>Advanced Level (with compulsory oral)</b>	30%
♥ <b>Advanced Level (with optional oral)</b>	35%
♥ <b>Advanced Subsidiary First Language</b>	40%
♥ <b>Advanced Subsidiary Literature</b>	100%

## THE FORMAT OF THE EXAM

Syllabus	Examination
A list of 8 Set Texts is published each year in the Syllabus. These are the Set Texts that will be examined in the year to which the Syllabus refers.	<p>Candidates must answer 3 questions as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♥ 1 question from Section 1 <i>and</i></li> <li>♥ 1 question from Section 2 <i>and</i></li> <li>♥ 1 further question from <i>either</i> Section 1 <i>or</i> Section 2.</li> </ul> <p>Candidates <b>must not</b> answer more than 1 question on any Set Text.</p> <p>Candidates should aim to write 500-600 words in the target language for each answer, and certainly no more than 600 words. Candidates who write more than 600 words for an answer cannot be placed higher than the 16-17 category in the mark scheme for that answer.</p>
In the Syllabus, 4 Set Texts are listed under Section 1 and will appear in Section 1 of the question paper.	<p><b>Section 1</b></p> <p>2 questions are set on each Set Text in Section 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♥ 1 question is passage-based</li> <li>♥ 1 question is an essay question.</li> </ul> <p>Candidates <b>must not</b> answer more than 1 question on any Set Text.</p>
In the Syllabus, 4 Set Texts are listed under Section 2 and will appear in Section 2 of the question paper.	<p><b>Section 2</b></p> <p>2 questions are set on each Set Text in Section 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♥ both questions are essay questions.</li> </ul> <p>Candidates <b>must not</b> answer more than 1 question on any Set Text.</p>

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For many of you, studying literature probably seems difficult and challenging. Novels are long and complicated; poetry and plays are rarely written in everyday language; there can be problems when texts are set in remote times and places. Once they have overcome some of these difficulties, most readers find it immensely exciting to acquire an insight into other cultures, and are pleased to discover that, in spite of all the differences, literary works from France or India, the seventeenth century or the twentieth, reflect ideas and feelings they can all understand.

The differences are important, however, and you need to be aware of the historical and social background to any text you study. Literature has always played an important part in questioning or satirising the society of its time: comedy often makes fun of social pretensions by making servants look cleverer than their aristocratic masters. In novels such as *Hard Times* or *Dombey and Son*, Dickens shows up the horrors of early 19th century industrial society – the appalling situation of the poor and especially children. Attitudes to women and social position have obviously changed. It is difficult for us now to understand the shock felt by 19th century readers when *Jane Eyre*, the "poor, obscure, plain" governess, speaks as an equal to her rich employer, Mr Rochester. Again, when looking at the many novels depicting the wretchedness of wives trapped in unsatisfactory marriages (*Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karenina*) the reaction of many modern readers is to say: why doesn't she stop complaining, divorce her husband, find a job? But in Europe until at least 1914, women rarely had financial independence or, in bourgeois society, could work for their living, and divorce would have been seen as deeply shameful. It is just as essential to understand the background to much 20th century writing, such as the effects of the first World War, or the situation in Europe and position of the Jews in the second World War.

## NOVELS

When you come to look more specifically at a novel, for instance, it is vital not to stop short at a synopsis of the plot and brief sketches of the main characters. You will obviously need to know about these, but at the same time ask yourself how important they are in illustrating the writer's principal themes and ideas. We are interested in *Oliver Twist* as a character and what will happen to him but, through him, we also share Dickens' horror at the shocking treatment of children at this time. Ask yourself about the setting of the novel – what does this contribute? In a work such as *Moby Dick*, the sea is itself almost a "character", a participant in the battle between Captain Ahab and huge natural forces. Does the author present the setting in a detailed, realistic manner? Think of *Robinson Crusoe* and the careful, day by day description of his desert island and of all the strategies he uses to survive there. Or is the background in some way exaggerated or heightened to create a particular emotional effect? In an early chapter, the child Jane Eyre is made ill by being locked in the Red Room, full of dark, menacing furniture and nightmare visions of dead relatives.

You need to think too about some aspects of structure. Is the novel narrated in a straightforward chronological way? Sometimes there are flashbacks or even stories-within-stories, where perhaps a new character relates past experiences. Often there is a first person narrator, like Jane Eyre or David Copperfield. You could ask how this affects the reader: to what extent are you made to sympathise with the narrator? Do you sometimes share his

blindness to what is really happening? In Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Pip has snobbish misconceptions about the origin of the money given to train him as a "gentleman" and endures a painful psychological education before accepting that it comes from the convict Magwitch. Or, if there is no autobiographical narrator, how does the author present events and characters? There may be hints in the language used: sometimes the author is clearly ironic, implying criticism of hypocrisy or pretentiousness. He may even be sentimental, as Dickens often is in presenting children such as Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*.

## THEATRE

When you are studying a play, you still need to think of some of these points, particularly of the social or historical context in which the play was written. It is important to remember too that it was intended for presentation in a theatre, to be watched by an audience rather than read. If you remember this, it is easier to imagine the full effect of some of the physical activity on stage. In comedy, a character hiding under the table, visible to the audience but not to other characters, has a much more robust comic effect than when you are simply reading the scene. All sorts of other details of costume or presentation are also more effective in the theatre. Think always of how the audience is meant to respond: how is suspense created, or the powerful emotional climax when some secret is revealed or the heroine tragically dies? Even if you cannot visit a theatre, it may occasionally be possible to see a play in a film or television version and this could be very helpful.

Again ask yourself what are the author's central themes: is he intending a satire of bourgeois values, a critique of Communism or of the behaviour of lawyers? These may be only part of the background of the play or important central issues. Perhaps s/he is concerned with the tragedy or absurdity of the human situation, the arbitrary cruelty of gods controlling human destiny. How do the central characters illustrate these ideas? Even minor characters may have an essential dramatic function: think again of the part played by comic servants in making their masters look ridiculous.

## POETRY

If you are reading poetry, it is important not to waste too much time counting syllables. On the other hand, try to identify the structure of the poem. Is it a poem with a set pattern, such as a sonnet? If not, is the poet deliberately writing in an irregular way, with little or no use of rhyme and in lines of different lengths? If so, what effects is s/he trying to achieve? Is s/he trying to shock or simply to suggest a plain conversational tone?

Think first of the theme or mood of a poem – perhaps it is summed up in the title, eg *Ode to Autumn*. Then try to analyse all the elements which help to convey this mood, the choice of words, repeated patterns of imagery, possible musical effects produced by rhythm, assonance or rhyme. In the following quotation from Keats, look for images which contribute to a sense of mysterious loss:

Oh what can ail thee, Knight at arms,  
Alone and palely loitering;  
The sedge has withered from the lake  
And no birds sing?

Notice the pattern of words and expressions suggesting abandonment, wintry silence and absence of life. The lack of descriptive adjectives in the third and fourth lines intensifies this effect, as do the bare monosyllables of the last

line. Look too at the unemphatic rhymes contrasted with the plaintive assonance of *ail, palely, lake*. Clearly, these remarks can only be a beginning but will perhaps help you to focus on central elements in many poems.

## QUESTIONS

Now for the questions on the paper. If a question looks unfamiliar, you should not immediately feel that it is impossible. Before abandoning it, try to analyse exactly what it is asking you: does it perhaps consist of a quotation you have never seen before? The quotation may be an oblique way of leading into a quite straightforward question. Whatever the wording, it will be encouraging you to focus on central characters or themes which you will certainly have studied and, if you know your texts, you will find you can use this knowledge for almost any question that is likely to appear. This is far better than contorting a memorised essay to fit the question – "recycled" answers hardly ever work and are bound to contain irrelevant material.

## PLANNING

Once you have understood the question, start to plan your answer. This does not mean spending time writing an entire rough version of the essay. But a simple plan should help you focus your ideas and ensure that your work is coherent – not just a patchwork of scraps you happen to remember from the text. You need an introduction, a list of central points in your argument, whether for or against the statement in the question, and then your conclusion.

## INTRODUCTION

When writing your answer, start with an introduction which shows you understand the question, and without giving away your conclusion at this stage, give a rough idea of the direction you are choosing for your argument. It is tempting here to fill up a page with all the background information you have carefully learnt, general comments on love, war or whatever, or details of an author's childhood and unhappy love affairs. Be very careful if you choose to do this. However fascinating a writer's life, it may not illuminate the particular text you have studied or have anything to do with your examination question. We may not need to know that a writer is an overweight alcoholic, but it could be useful to understand, as with English poets of the first World War, such as Wilfred Owen, how his own traumatic experiences in the trenches influenced the way he writes about war. Such experiences may colour the work, either overtly or by providing an undercurrent of pessimism and loss. However, you only need to refer to this quite briefly before concentrating on the text itself. After all, we know very little about Shakespeare the man, yet his plays still have extraordinary power over us four hundred years later.

## CENTRAL POINTS

When you reach the central section of your answer, it is essential to illustrate each point you make with solid reference to the text. This can be a quotation, although there is no virtue in being able to write out a whole speech from, say, *Hamlet*. A few words or a line or two may be all you need to show that you are capable of picking out something which exactly pinpoints Hamlet's hesitancy, for example, or his sardonic wit. Equally, you could use a specific action or event from the text: when Oliver Twist asks for more food, this shows up his own innocence and faith in humanity at the same time as the cruelty of the world in which he now finds himself. But there is no need to tell the whole story.

Never be afraid to express your own ideas – providing again that you can

back up these ideas with well chosen examples from the book you are discussing and that what you say remains clearly linked to the question. This always sounds fresher, less "second-hand", and is preferable to reproducing memorised notes by other people. You may well gain higher marks too. Except when you are answering specific questions on a passage (Who said this and when?), there is rarely one "right" answer. You are at liberty to disagree with a statement in a question: sometimes it is put there to provoke you into thinking harder or into showing that you can see two sides of an argument. Is David Copperfield right to marry his first wife Dora? On the one hand his decision shows romantic impulsiveness and lack of common sense; on the other, it teaches him a great deal about responsibility and suffering. Again, when a question states simply that an author is "obsessed" by the horrors of war, by all means illustrate the horrors, but try also to find examples of an opposite view – that the writer nevertheless can depict comic events or shows confidence in human nature.

## CONCLUSION

In your conclusion, you will need to sum up the points you have made in the course of the answer and to show clearly why you agree or not with the original question. At this stage one hopes that the urge to tell the story and put down everything you know has not made you lose the thread of your argument.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

You may choose to answer a question on a passage from your set text. This can sometimes be more straightforward than a general essay as you will be asked specific questions and much of the material is on the paper in front of you. Keep a clear focus on the passage. It is essential that you **read** it carefully and make full use of the material in it. It is hardly ever necessary to tell the whole story but you could be asked why the particular incident described is important or in what way it links up with the author's main ideas. If asked to comment on a character, you need to pick out precisely what this passage tells you about him or her. Look for revealing words or phrases and explain why you think these are important. Do not be tempted to give a more complete character study unless later questions ask whether the situation or events described in the passage give a typical impression of the character.

If it is a descriptive passage, you may be asked about the atmosphere or mood and how the author conveys it. It is important that you do not simply say, for instance: this is gloomy, the writer is depressed and writes about negative events. Look for expressions and images which help to intensify the idea of sadness, as in the earlier quotation from Keats. There may be effects which suggest something beyond the mere events of the passage, hints even of a tragic future. Again in *Jane Eyre*, in the garden where Rochester asks Jane to marry him, there is the moment where lightning strikes a chestnut tree. As well as being on the surface a very dramatic happening, this is clearly also intended to symbolise the storminess of their relationship, the possibility that some destructive act may end it and even that Rochester himself will end up crippled, like the tree.

It is a good idea to learn some basic literary terms in whatever language you are using: tragic, comic, irony, farce, narrator, dialogue, plot, rhyme... Make sure you know what they mean and do not feel it is necessary to impress the examiner with grandiose expressions you have not understood. A clear, straightforward style of writing is always acceptable: no slang, but no flowery phrases borrowed from critics. You also need a basic vocabulary for

describing character: it is useful to be able to make subtle distinctions, saying not simply that a character is good or bad, but explaining how they are timid, jealous, vindictive, dishonest, affectionate, ambitious. Last of all, always make sure that you can spell the names of your chosen authors, the titles of their works and the names of important characters.

# MARK SCHEME FOR THE TEXTS COMPONENT

Candidates will write their answers in the target language. Examiners will look for a candidate's ability to communicate effectively and will ignore linguistic errors which do not impede communication.

## PASSAGE BASED QUESTIONS

Examiners consider the extent to which candidates have been able to identify the significant issues raised in the passage and, where appropriate, have applied these to the text as a whole. The passage is a stimulus passage, to be used as a springboard to give candidates a starting point for their answer. Examiners allow candidates to use the passage as they choose, and ask themselves how successfully the candidates have manipulated their material and to what extent they have shown depth of awareness and knowledge of the workings of the text under discussion. This is not an exercise in literary criticism: examiners reward candidates whose answers show good understanding of how a text works and how an author has conveyed the key issues.

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

A prime consideration is that candidates show detailed knowledge and understanding of the text.

## EXTRACTS FROM EXAMINERS' NOTES

This paper is intended to test candidates' knowledge of a text and their ability to use this knowledge to answer questions in a clear and focused manner. A sophisticated literary approach is not expected (though at the highest levels it is sometimes seen), but great value is placed on evidence of a firsthand response and thoughtful, personal evaluation of what candidates have read. Candidates may have been encouraged to depend closely on prepared notes and quotations: quotation for its own sake is not useful, though it will not be undervalued if used appropriately to illustrate a point in the answer.

Candidates do not tend to show all the qualities or faults described in any one mark-band. Examiners attempt to weigh all these up at every borderline, in order to see whether the work can be considered for the category above. At the lower levels, the answer may mention a few "facts" but these may be so poorly understood, badly organised and irrelevant that it falls into category 10-11; or there may be just enough sense of understanding and focus for the examiner to consider the 12-13 band. Again, at a higher level, an answer may be clear, solid and conscientious (perhaps 18-19), without showing quite the control and attention to perceptively chosen detail which would justify 20 or more.

Examiners take a positive and flexible approach and, even when there are obvious flaws in an answer, reward evidence of knowledge and especially any signs of understanding and careful organisation.

## LENGTH OF ANSWERS

Candidates are expected to write 500-600 words for each of their answers. Candidates who write more than 600 words cannot be placed higher than the 16-17 category in the mark scheme.

<b>Marks</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>22+</b>	Exceptional work. Excellent ability to organise material, thorough knowledge, considerable sensitivity to language and to author's intentions, understanding of some literary techniques. Really articulate and intelligent answers should be considered in this band even if there are still flaws and omissions.
<b>20-21</b>	Very good. Close attention to detail of passages, controlled structure, perceptive use of illustration, good insight when discussing characters. Ability to look beyond the immediate material and to show some understanding of author's intentions and of underlying themes.
<b>18-19</b>	Thoroughly solid and relevant work. Candidate does not simply reproduce information: can discuss and evaluate material and come to clear conclusion. Good focus on passages. Some limitations of insight but coherent, detailed approach and aptly chosen illustrations.
<b>16-17</b>	Painstaking. Sound knowledge of texts; mainly relevant. Some attempt to analyse and compare, some sense of understanding. Possibly not in full control of material; solid but indiscriminate. Many very conscientious candidates fall into this category: they tend to write far too much as they are reluctant to leave out anything they have learnt.
<b>14-15</b>	Fair relevance and knowledge. Better organised than in previous band: the candidate probably understands the demands of the question without being able to develop a very thorough response. Still a fairly simple, black and white approach. Some narrative and "learnt" material but better control and focus than above. Many candidates probably fall into this category.
<b>12-13</b>	Sound, if simple and superficial, knowledge of plot and characters. Makes assertions without being able to illustrate or develop points. Probably still too dependent on narrative and memorised oddments but there may be a visible attempt to relate these to the question. Can extract one or two relevant points from a set passage.
<b>10-11</b>	Some very basic material but not much sense of understanding or ability to answer question. The candidate rarely reads the set passage but uses it as a springboard for storytelling and memorised bits and pieces about characters. Very general, unspecific approach. Random, bitty structure. Signs of organisation and relevance should be looked for in case the answer can be considered for the next category.
<b>6-9</b>	Marginally more knowledge here. The candidate may have read the text but is probably unable to see beyond the barest bones of the plot or half-remembered notes. Insubstantial; very little relevance. The candidate may have problems with the language and will be unable to express ideas comprehensibly.
<b>0-5</b>	No discernible material. Often very inadequate language. Marks in this section are awarded almost on the basis of quantity: up to 3 for a sentence or two showing a glimpse of knowledge, 4 or 5 where there is also a hint of relevance to the question. It is possible for a candidate to write a whole page demonstrating no knowledge at all (have they read the book?), or only misunderstood background facts or very vague general remarks unrelated to either text or question.

## APPENDIX A

### TOPIC AREAS FOR THE LANGUAGES (OTHER THAN ENGLISH) SYLLABUS

All textual material used in the examination will be drawn from the topic areas below, with reference to the country/ies where the language is spoken:

Human relationships

Family

Generation gap

Young people

Patterns of daily life

Urban and rural life

The media

Food and drink

Law and order

Religion and belief

Health and fitness

Work and leisure

Equality of opportunity

Employment and unemployment

Sport

Free time activities

Travel and tourism

Education

Cultural life/heritage

War and peace

The developing world

Scientific and medical advances

Technological innovation

Environment

Conservation

Pollution

Contemporary aspects of the country/ies where the language is spoken