

**A Manual for
Drafters, Setters,
and Assistant Setters**

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Acknowledgements

The material in this manual synthesises and updates a range of documentation previously issued to Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters by the State Examinations Commission. The manual also draws from a wide range of assessment and examination literature, and from reviews of documentation issued by other examining bodies and testing agencies.

Introduction

The procedures to be followed by all personnel involved in the state examinations are governed by the guidelines and protocols issued by the State Examinations Commission (SEC), as detailed in this manual and its appendices. The manual sets out the principles and procedures to be followed in the preparation of examination papers and marking schemes, and defines the duties and responsibilities of each person involved.

Examination papers and marking schemes are prepared by Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters, working closely with their Chief Examiner. Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters are employed annually under contract to the SEC and are required to undergo training. They receive fees for their work and it is expected that the examination papers they prepare will conform both to the assessment objectives outlined in the relevant syllabus and to the requirements of the Chief Examiner throughout the process.

All Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters must conform in every respect to the procedures in this manual and to any other instructions that may be issued from time to time by the SEC.

Examination Paper Preparation

– The process from draft to press

This chapter outlines the process to be followed and the personnel involved in the preparation of examination papers.

The SEC is a statutory body established in 2003 under Section 54 of the Education Act, 1998. The functions of the SEC are defined in the State Examinations Commission (Establishment) Order, 2003. The SEC's role is to provide a high-quality state examinations and assessment system incorporating the highest standards of openness, fairness and accountability.

The Examination and Assessment Division is responsible for ensuring the quality and standards of all the SEC's examinations. This includes taking the necessary actions to maintain the highest standards in the preparation of each examination and requiring compliance with the specified protocols and procedures.

1.1 Roles, Titles, Tasks and Responsibilities

In addition to the personnel in the *Question Paper Unit* on the SEC's premises in Athlone, the following people are involved in the preparation of test items and examination papers¹:

Chief Examiner (Examinations and Assessment Manager)

- ▶ Drafter
- ▶ Setter
- ▶ Assistant Setter
- ▶ Translator
- ▶ Irish Editor
- ▶ Translation Services Manager
- ▶ University representatives
- ▶ Graphic artists, typesetters, etc., as appropriate

The roles, tasks and responsibilities of the above personnel are described briefly below.

1.1.1 Chief Examiner

The Chief Examiner for each examination is normally an Examinations and Assessment Manager – a full-time officer of the Examination and Assessment Division of the SEC, and is responsible for maintaining standards in assigned subjects from year to year. The Chief Examiner manages

1 Throughout this manual, the term *test item* is used to refer to a single task, such as an individual part of a question. The term *examination paper* is taken to include written papers, briefs for projects and practicals, audio and video cassette tapes, CDs, etc.

the preparation of examination papers and their marking schemes and has overall responsibility for the examination papers as well as for the conduct of the marking and appeals processes.

The role of the Chief Examiner in relation to the preparation of examination papers is

- ▶ to manage the preparation of examination papers and other related materials so as to meet the requirements of the relevant syllabi and standards of assessment
- ▶ to recommend the appointment of Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters to assist in all aspects of examination paper preparation, and to manage those appointed
- ▶ to participate in the training of these personnel
- ▶ to chair and participate in subject panel meetings
- ▶ to carry out pre-press scrutiny of the examination papers
- ▶ to sign-off, certifying that the examination papers are correct in every detail and that the printing process may commence
- ▶ to carry out post-press scrutiny of the examination papers.

The Drafter, Setter, and Assistant Setter will, at all times, work under the direction of the Chief Examiner, who has overall responsibility for the content, standard and quality of the examination papers.

1.1.2 Drafter

The Drafter is an expert in the subject, and is usually an experienced teacher, nominated and trained by the Chief Examiner. The Drafter prepares a draft examination paper and accompanying assessment grid, outline marking scheme and, where appropriate, model answers, in accordance with the directions given by the Chief Examiner and within an agreed time schedule. On appointment, the Question Paper Unit will provide the Drafter with hardcopies and softcopies² of examination papers from previous years.

1.1.3 Setter

The Setter is an expert in the subject, and is usually an experienced teacher and examiner. The Setter is nominated and trained by the Chief Examiner to process the draft examination paper in accordance with the directions given by the Chief Examiner and within an agreed time schedule. Having received the draft examination materials, the Setter is responsible for setting the examination paper, for checking and revising the assessment grid, and for developing the outline marking scheme into a working marking scheme. The Setter is responsible for bringing the paper to final press-ready form, and for the provision of hard and soft copies of the marking scheme.

The Setter is responsible for confirming that the final proof of the examination paper is free from errors, and for carrying out the post-press scrutiny. The Setter deals with both English and Irish language versions of the paper, and is also responsible for preparing modified versions of the paper for candidates with special requirements under the scheme for Reasonable Accommodations. In the case of subjects involving audio or audiovisual materials, the setter is responsible for tasks related to the production of these materials.

1.1.4 Assistant Setter

In certain circumstances, the SEC will appoint an Assistant Setter. The Assistant Setter is an expert in the subject, usually an experienced teacher, nominated and trained by the Chief Examiner. The Assistant Setter reviews and suggests improvements, adjustments or alternatives to the draft examination paper within a time schedule directed by the Chief Examiner. The Assistant Setter assists the Setter at all stages in the proofing process by presenting a considered review and critique of the initial draft, and of each subsequent proof as requested by the Setter. Where required, the Assistant Setter will also assist in the pre-press scrutiny and in the post-press scrutiny of the examination paper. In some subjects, technical or other specified tasks are also assigned to the Assistant Setter by the Chief Examiner.

1.1.5 Translator

The translator provides an accurate Irish version of the examination paper. The translator is responsible for providing text that is accurate and is as accessible to candidates as the English version. The translator may need to consult or meet with the Chief Examiner and/or Setter, particularly in cases where the translator has no particular expertise in the subject. The translator submits typed hardcopy and softcopy to the SEC, as agreed with the Chief Examiner.

1.1.6 Irish Editor

The Irish Editor provides quality assurance on the Irish versions of the examination papers. The Irish Editor ensures that the Irish version is an accurate translation of the English version in all details, that the accessibility of the language used is comparable to that of the English version and that it is suitable for the reading ability of the target audience. The Irish Editor may need to consult or meet with the Chief Examiner and/or Setter for the subject, particularly in cases where the Irish Editor has no particular expertise in the subject. The Irish Editor also provides feedback on the quality of the work of the translator.

1.1.7 Translation Services Manager

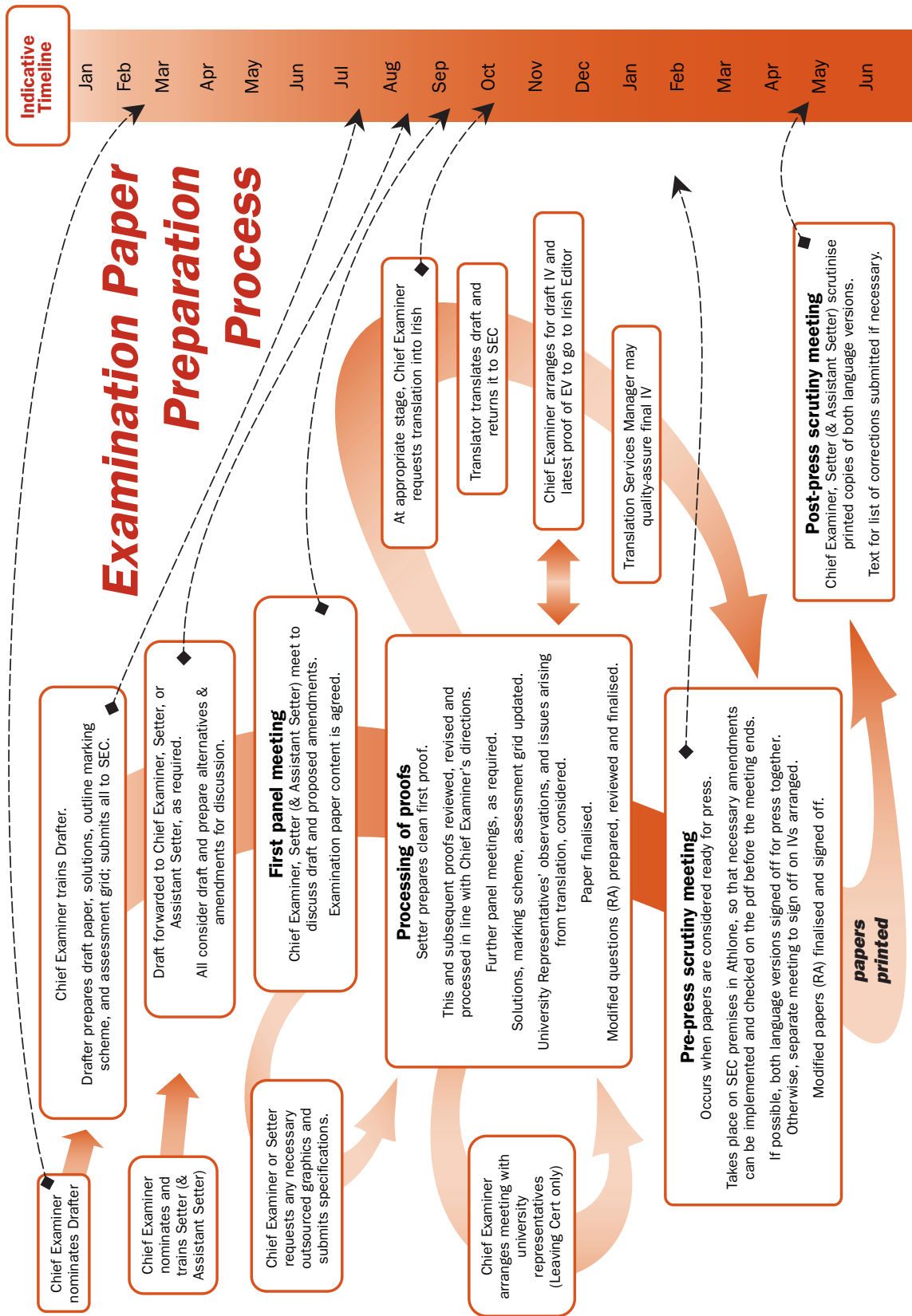
The Translation Services Manager is an Examinations and Assessment Manager with the SEC. The Translation Services Manager is responsible for managing the SEC's Irish language translation processes and for assuring the quality of all Irish language documentation produced by the SEC, including its examination papers.

1.1.8 University Representatives

In the case of the Leaving Certificate (established) examinations, the management authorities of the University of Dublin (Trinity College) and the National University of Ireland are each invited to nominate one expert in the subject. These university representatives view the draft examination papers and marking schemes at a stage in the preparation process which is determined by the Chief Examiner. The role of the representatives is to verify to the university authorities that the examinations are satisfactory for matriculation purposes. Their observations may also be helpful to the Chief Examiner and Setter in finalising the examination paper and marking scheme.

1.1.9 Graphic Artists, Typesetters and Brailers

In most instances, SEC personnel undertake the typesetting and layout of examination papers. In some instances, however, graphic artists or other outside agents are contracted for specialised work. In such circumstances, the Setter interacts with the outside agent, under the direction of the Chief Examiner.



NB: This timeline is only indicative. All deadlines specified by the SEC and the Chief Examiner must be adhered to.

1.3 The Process of Drafting

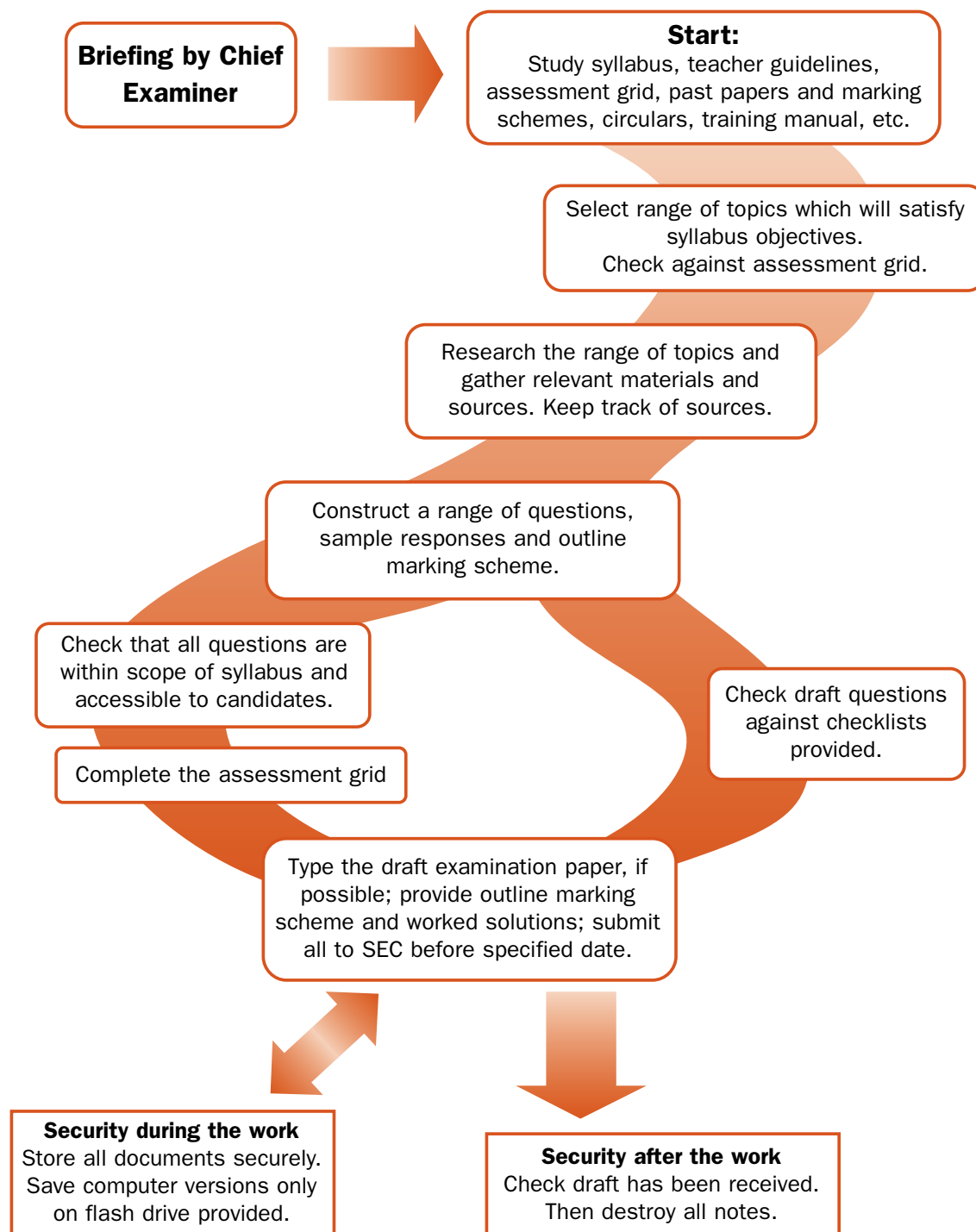
In constructing the draft examination paper, the Drafter will:

- ▶ Participate in a training session.
- ▶ Using the syllabus and relevant assessment grid, select a range of topics and questions which will
 - satisfy the relevant syllabus aims and objectives
 - be representative of the syllabus content, as defined in the published syllabus
 - take account of previous years' examinations, sample papers and ongoing system changes.
- ▶ Research the selected topics and gather relevant materials and sources.
- ▶ Construct questions which
 - are in accordance with the examination specification, (e.g. short answer, multiple choice, essay, etc.) as exemplified by sample papers, previous years' papers, and any official documentation relevant to the subject
 - are accurate with respect to content, spelling, language usage, punctuation, numbering, etc.
 - are clear, precise, intelligible to candidates, and use terminology and language appropriate to the discipline
 - are reliable (see Chapter 2)
 - provide adequate differentiation in respect of the range and ability level of the candidates
 - can be answered in the time allowed
 - are of equal difficulty where there is a choice of questions
 - are free from bias towards any group of candidates
 - avoid gender, age and other stereotyping
 - avoid unnecessary obstacles to accessibility
 - avoid, where feasible, material that might be distressing to candidates
 - take account of cultural diversity
 - show adequate variation from year to year.
- ▶ Source, prepare or specify the necessary graphics, photographs, maps, case studies, extracts, video clips, etc., for the examination paper and marking scheme, including details of sources where appropriate.
- ▶ Use rubrics³ and question formats that have been standardised by use in past papers, subject to the requirements of the SEC's house style.
- ▶ Check draft questions against the checklists provided (Appendix 1).
- ▶ Ensure that the question paper is similar in demand to that of previous years (allowing for officially approved and publicly notified changes).
- ▶ Produce an outline marking scheme, allocating marks to questions, or parts thereof, taking account of the duration of the examination and the time available for answering each question.

³ The term *rubrics* is used in this manual to refer to instructions and other items of guidance provided for candidates on the examination papers.

- ▶ Where required, provide worked solutions, exemplars, or summarised answers, with marks assigned, in order to
 - verify that the expectations of the questions are clear and reasonable
 - verify the accuracy of questions, e.g. in Mathematics, Accounting, etc.
- ▶ Complete an assessment grid on the template provided by the Chief Examiner, verifying the construct- and content-validity of the paper.
- ▶ Type the draft examination paper, if possible, and submit in hardcopy and softcopy to the SEC, along with relevant source materials.
- ▶ Take all necessary precautions to ensure the highest standards of confidentiality and security of the draft materials at all times, i.e.:
 - record all movements of the drafts
 - use secure methods to transfer confidential materials as directed
 - store all documents securely while drafting is in progress
 - destroy all notes and related materials after submission of draft
 - secure records during the drafting process
 - save electronic copies only to the secure flash drive provided by the SEC, and never create copies on any other fixed or removable medium.
- ▶ Meet all agreed deadlines.

Figure 1: Flowchart for Drafting



1.4 The Process of Setting

In processing the draft examination paper, the Setter will:

- ▶ Check the initial draft examination paper(s) against previous years' actual paper(s), sample papers, relevant circulars and guidelines to ensure that rubrics, mark allocations, format and layout are in order.
- ▶ Check the assessment grid that has been submitted with the draft, to ensure that it accurately records the content and the assessment objective being tested by each item.
- ▶ Use the grid to check that the syllabus content has been appropriately sampled and that the various assessment objectives are being tested in the appropriate proportions.
- ▶ Check all questions against the actual syllabus text to ensure that they are within the bounds of the syllabus.
- ▶ Check each question to ensure that it
 - is age appropriate
 - is examination-level appropriate
 - is in accordance with the examination specification (e.g. short answer, multiple choice, essay)
 - provides adequate differentiation in respect of the range and ability level of the candidates
 - enables effective discrimination between candidates
 - is accurate (content, spelling, language, punctuation, numbering, etc.)
 - is reliable (see chapter 2)
 - is unbiased and inclusive (see chapter 2)
 - respects cultural diversity
 - does not cause offence or distress to candidates by virtue of inappropriate language or content
 - is phrased clearly
 - indicates clearly the depth and breadth of response required
 - is sufficiently different from questions on previous years' papers
 - can be answered in the allotted time
 - does not overlap with or contradict other questions on the paper.
- ▶ Check relevance, suitability and quality of graphics, photographs, case studies, video clips, etc. Source, prepare or specify alternatives as required. Acknowledge source of copyright material and check with Chief Examiner regarding procedures for seeking permission for use.
- ▶ Construct alternative questions, as required.
- ▶ Ensure that the text of the questions matches the relevant non-text material (diagrams, photographs, etc.)
- ▶ Ensure parity of standards across optional questions in the paper.

- ▶ Ensure that the question paper is similar in demand to that of previous years (allowing for officially approved and publicly notified changes).
- ▶ Participate in Subject Panel meetings
- ▶ Record full detail of the decisions of Subject Panel meetings.
- ▶ Amend and/or replace questions as agreed at the panel meetings.
- ▶ Send paper for proof, translation and university observations as directed by the Chief Examiner.
- ▶ Meet university representatives, if required.
- ▶ Proofread the question paper (both IV and EV) with assistance of Assistant Setter and/or Chief Examiner at each stage of the production process. Check thoroughly against previous agreed draft. Check IV against EV. Check rubrics again. Where the Setter does not have sufficient competence to take full responsibility for proofreading the IV, the Chief Examiner will make arrangements for assistance as required.
- ▶ In checking the Irish version, pay due attention to the following:
 - The emphasis should be on providing an Irish **version**, not merely a translation. The tasks to be undertaken and the manner of their presentation on the Irish version, as viewed by a typical Irish-speaking candidate, must be equivalent to those on the English version, as viewed by an English-speaking candidate.
 - The provision of an Irish version may impact on the original English version and necessitate changes to the latter.
 - Technical terms in Irish notwithstanding, the Irish version must take into account the reading level of the candidates.
 - Changes to one version must be applied to both immediately.
- ▶ Construct modified questions, consulting specialists as required. Prepare, proof and sign off on modified examination paper.
- ▶ Prepare a detailed draft marking scheme for the paper:
 - develop outline marking scheme into working marking scheme
 - check draft summarised answers submitted by Drafter, and develop or substitute as required.
 - use the marking scheme to clarify the assessment objectives being tested by each question and to clarify the expected responses.
- ▶ Continually update the assessment grid as the question paper and marking scheme evolve.
- ▶ Conduct pre-press and post-press scrutiny on both the IV and EV papers and, if necessary, propose text for inclusion in the List of Corrections.

- ▶ Take all necessary precautions to ensure the highest standards of confidentiality and security of the draft materials at all times:
 - record all movements of the draft papers
 - use secure methods to transfer confidential material, as directed
 - store all documents securely while work is in progress
 - hand over all relevant support and source materials to the Chief Examiner
 - destroy all other notes, etc., following completion of the process
 - keep electronic records secure during the process, by working only on the secure flash drive supplied, and by storing this securely.
 - ensure complete deletion of all electronic records following completion of the process
- ▶ Ensure that each stage of the setting process is carried out as per agreed procedures and within the agreed time schedule.

The Assistant Setter, where appointed, will assist the Setter in any or all of the above tasks, as directed by the Chief Examiner.

1.5 Subject Panel Meetings

The subject panel consists of the Chief Examiner, the Setter, and the Assistant Setter (where one is appointed). The personnel who will attend any particular panel meeting will be determined by the Chief Examiner.

The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that the draft examination paper and marking scheme meet the requirements of the assessment objectives as set out in the syllabus and that they conform to the principles set out in this manual. The panel meeting may also be used to provide on-going training for the Setter and Assistant Setter.

Setters and Assistant Setters should be adequately prepared for the meeting. Where they consider that a particular question requires amendment or replacement, they should have prepared a proposed amendment or substitute question in advance, for discussion and agreement at the meeting.

If amendments are required, the Setter must ensure that they are considered carefully. It may be necessary for the Setter to redraft questions or parts of questions. In such cases, these must be prepared later and must be approved by the Chief Examiner. The Setter must keep accurate records of all recommendations agreed at the subject panel meeting. The Setter is also required to update the assessment grid and marking scheme as the paper evolves. Final amendments to the examination paper, marking scheme, and assessment grid must be completed by the date agreed between the Chief Examiner and the Setter.

This chapter contains important information relating to the security and integrity of the entire examination process. It includes the Code of Practice which Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters are required to comply with in carrying out their work. This chapter should be read carefully **before** starting any work on the examination papers and, in particular, before loading any files containing material related to the examinations onto their computers, or creating such files.

2.1 Code of Practice for Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters

2.1.1 Introduction

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) is committed to maintaining and enhancing the credibility of the examination system. In order to do this it is necessary to put in place procedures which will help to ensure that principles such as trustworthiness, impartiality, consistency and fairness are central to the provision of the state examinations. Any compromise of these principles, either real or perceived, has the potential to damage the integrity of the examination system and thereby undermine the current high level of public confidence in the system. This Code of Practice sets out the procedures which Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters are required to follow in carrying out their work for the Commission.

Note: For the purpose of this Code of Practice the term *Setter* will be taken to include *Setters* and *Assistant Setters*.

2.1.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

It is imperative for the independence and integrity of the examination system that the highest standards of confidentiality and anonymity are maintained at all times. The duty of maintaining anonymity rests with the Drafter/Setter.

As Drafter/Setter you should

- ▶ exercise the highest standards of confidentiality in relation to your work
- ▶ take every precaution to ensure that work colleagues, students, family or any other persons outside of the SEC do not know that you draft/set examination papers for the SEC.

As Drafter/Setter you should not

- ▶ discuss any aspect of your work with any person other than with the Chief Examiner or other authorised SEC personnel
- ▶ divulge to any other person the identity of other Drafters/Setters whom you may have encountered at training seminars, panel meetings, etc.

2.1.3 Duality of Roles

Most Drafters and Setters are practising teachers and may be teaching students at the level for which they are preparing examination papers. Drafters/Setters may also have relatives sitting the particular examination. In order to maintain the principle of inter-candidate equity, the dual roles of Drafter/Setter and teacher/relative, must not confer any advantage on certain candidates.

As Drafter/Setter you should ensure that

- ▶ the role of teacher and that of Drafter/Setter are kept mutually exclusive at all times
- ▶ your knowledge of the examination paper does not confer unfair advantage on any candidate.

2.1.4 Fairness

The examination paper should be fair to all candidates at the level concerned. Candidates must not be advantaged or disadvantaged by biases in the examination paper.

As Drafter/Setter you should ensure that

- ▶ the items you draft/set are free from influence of particular textbooks and other teaching resources
- ▶ your use of a particular text or teaching resource, in the course of your work as Drafter/Setter, does not confer an unfair advantage on students using that text/ resource.

2.1.5 Conflict of Interest

The integrity of the examination system depends on the integrity and independence of Drafters/Setters. Engagement in certain work has the potential to compromise the independence of the Drafter/Setter and lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest.

As Drafter/Setter

- ▶ You must not undertake any work which might conflict with your responsibilities as Drafter/Setter. Until such time as the examination for which you are drafting/setting has taken place you are precluded from
 - undertaking any work related to the preparation of examination papers, in the same subject area, for a commercial examining organisation
 - setting test items, in the same subject area, for publication
 - giving advice in public media in relation to examinations in the subject area in question
 - giving advice to teacher groups, e.g. subject associations, in relation to examinations in the subject area in question.
- ▶ You must consult your Chief Examiner before undertaking any other work which might lead to a conflict of interest, e.g. authorship of texts or other teaching resources, provision of private tuition, provision of revision courses.
- ▶ You must, before commencing your work as Drafter/Setter, make a full declaration to the State Examination Commission of any professional or personal interest relevant to the particular work, using the supplied QPD2 form (Appendix 6).

2.1.6 Security

Any breach in security in relation to examination papers has the potential to damage the integrity of the examination system and thereby undermine the current high level of public confidence in the system. It is imperative, therefore, that the highest level of security is maintained at all times.

All material and draft test items submitted to the State Examinations Commission in accordance with your contract are the property of the State Examinations Commission. You may not retain a copy of all, or any part, of such material or items, nor make any use of such material or items in the future.

As Drafter/Setter you should

- ▶ Carefully observe the current security regulations pertaining to Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters as detailed in section 2.3.
- ▶ Discuss with your Chief Examiner any difficulties you may have in relation to implementing the measures outlined in section 2.3.
- ▶ Report immediately to your Chief Examiner any actual or suspected compromise of draft examination papers
- ▶ Confirm on the relevant sign-off form that you have complied with all specified security measures. (See Appendices 9 and 10.)

2.2 Copyright

The *Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000*, states that the use of copyright material on examination papers is not an infringement of copyright. However, if the examination paper is subsequently made publicly available, as all SEC examination papers are, then this may constitute an infringement unless certain procedures are followed. Furthermore, additional complications may arise in relation to material that has been adapted for examination purposes. This is because there are other legal rights that are related to, but different from, the copyright, including the right to object to distortions or modifications of one's work. Because of such considerations, the SEC has a copyright policy that must be adhered to, and which includes procedures for acknowledgement that should be followed carefully.

Drafters and Setters must record all details of material that may be subject to copyright and forward such details to SEC. This will facilitate the SEC in dealing with copyright issues after the examination and before publication of the examination papers. Particular care should also be taken in cases where the source of the material is a compendium or similar secondary source, as it is imperative to determine both who the original author is and who the copyright owner is. You must alert the Chief Examiner if there are any doubts in this regard.

Setters should consult the Chief Examiner regarding the correct format for acknowledging different types of material. Note that the acknowledgment must indicate if the material has been adapted. Furthermore, the acknowledgment must indicate that the author has not approved the adaptation (unless the exact adaptation has been previously published).

2.3 Security of Examination Materials

2.3.1 Working Environment

- ▶ All materials must be kept secure at all stages in the process.
- ▶ The materials must be kept locked away when not being worked on, and no other person should have access to the materials.
- ▶ The examination materials should only be worked on in a place free from disturbance by the movement of other people.
- ▶ All photocopying for panel meetings should be carried out on SEC premises and never on a school premises. See Appendix 11 for the procedures to be followed when photocopying materials related to examinations.

- ▶ In certain circumstances it may be necessary for a Setter to print draft examination material. If so required, this should be carried out on SEC premises or in the Setter's home. Printing should never be carried out in schools or in any other premises. See appendix 11 for the procedures to be followed when printing materials related to examinations.
- ▶ Discussions with the Chief Examiner or/and Setter regarding the content of the paper should never be conducted by telephone or radio-link.

2.3.2 Storage and Disposal of Physical Materials

- ▶ All materials must be kept secure at all stages in the process. The materials must be kept locked away when not being worked on, and no other person should have access to the materials.
- ▶ All waste materials generated during the work must be either kept with the examination paper or destroyed.
- ▶ Materials being destroyed should be shredded in a DIN level 3 (or higher) shredder (i.e. cross-cut less than 3.9×50 mm or strip-cut less than 1.9 mm). Material shredded in this manner may then be disposed of in the normal way.
- ▶ Alternatively, waste material must be returned with the examination materials to the Chief Examiner or the Question Paper Unit, marked "for secure disposal".
- ▶ Following final submission of the examination paper and marking scheme, the Setter should hand over all relevant related materials, such as source materials and unused questions, to the Chief Examiner, along with the final completed assessment grid.
- ▶ Hardcopies or softcopies of examination materials must not be retained under any circumstances.

2.3.3 Storage and Disposal of Electronic Materials

- ▶ Examination papers and marking schemes should be prepared by the Drafter or Setter in his or her own home. Computers outside the home should not be used for this task.
- ▶ Virus-protection software, a firewall, and anti-spyware protection should all be in place and be fully up to date.
- ▶ The Drafter/Setter should not work on any electronic storage medium other than the flash drive issued by the SEC. Work in progress should only be stored on the flash drive and should never be stored on the hard drive or any other medium.

- ▶ This prohibition on the use of the hard drive also applies to temporary transfer of data to the hard drive while copying to and from removable media.
- ▶ At no stage should the computer be connected to the internet or a local area network while the flash drive is in place. If you have a broadband connection, disconnect it; if your computer has a wireless connection capability, disable it.
- ▶ The marking scheme should be stored with the examination paper on the flash drive at all times and never on a hard drive. Deadlines in relation to the submission of marking schemes should be strictly adhered to. If the assessment grid is being completed electronically, then this should also remain only on the same flash drive.
- ▶ A Drafter or Setter who does not have the hardware, software and expertise to implement all of the measures outlined should not use a computer in the preparation of examination materials.

2.3.4 Transmission of Examination Materials

Different levels of security apply, depending on the circumstances of the paper concerned and the stage in the preparation process.

- ▶ Drafters in all cases should submit a hardcopy and, where possible, an electronic copy (on the supplied flash drive) of the draft examination paper, assessment grid and outline marking scheme to the Question Paper Unit by registered post using the specially designed “tamper-evident” transmission envelopes supplied. The receipt containing the “track and trace” code must always be retained for tracking purposes.
- ▶ The first onward transmission of this draft material from the Question Paper Unit to the Setter or Assistant Setter will also normally be by registered post.
- ▶ Setters and Assistant Setters should consult the Chief Examiner regarding whether materials for their examination may continue to be sent by registered post after the first panel meeting, as opposed to requiring delivery by hand. If the material can continue to travel by post, ask the Chief Examiner for details of the proper procedures to follow.
- ▶ No examination material should be sent by e-mail, fax, or regular post at any stage in the process.

Assessment Principles

This chapter outlines some of the principles underpinning the construction of examination papers and other test instruments.

3.1 Validity

Validity refers to the accuracy with which an examination paper measures what it is intended to measure.

The purpose of the state certificate examinations is to measure the extent to which each candidate has fulfilled the objectives of the relevant syllabus, in order to provide a certified record of the candidate's level of achievement in fulfilling those objectives. The examination paper and marking scheme must therefore reflect the aims, objectives and content of the syllabus. It should be noted that validity is not simply a matter of ensuring that the paper covers the syllabus **content** in the correct proportion; it is also a matter of ensuring that the intended **types of skills** are being measured.

The subject content of every question must be within the range of content outlined in the syllabus. Candidates can only be required to display knowledge and understanding of subject matter, or to demonstrate skills, which are specified in the syllabus.

The examination must be such as to minimise the effect on candidate performance of ancillary skills that are not the focus of assessment. The examination should be presented within the agreed format and at a level in language, content and clarity appropriate to the age and ability of the candidates being examined. Unless speed of answering is specifically part of the focus of assessment, the majority of candidates should be able to complete the examination within the time allocated.

Validity is potentially compromised by any factor that may affect candidates' capacity to demonstrate the relevant competencies. For example, subject material which causes distress or offence to certain candidates may interfere with such capacity and is therefore best avoided. However, this needs to be balanced against other requirements for validity. For example, the syllabuses of many subjects require the assessment of topics from within the candidates' range of experiences in day-to-day situations. The examinations therefore must, in these instances, reflect this particular emphasis on what is topical and relevant to candidates. In all cases, the Setter should draw any potentially distressing material to the attention of the Chief Examiner for discussion.

The validity of an examination paper cannot be fully considered in isolation from the marking scheme and assessment grid. The scheme and grid must be developed along with the paper, so that it can be seen in advance that, when implemented, the examination will determine, measure and reward the achievement of the agreed outcomes.

3.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of the results produced by an examination.

The basic question addressed by reliability is as follows: how confident can we be that the score obtained by a given candidate will not vary if we change various incidental features of the examination? An incidental feature in this context is one that is not directly related to what we are trying to measure.

For example, are we confident that the candidate will get a similar score if a different examiner marks the script? Are we confident that the candidate will get a similar score irrespective of the particular optional question chosen? Are we confident that the candidate will get a similar score if we choose to include a different sample of the content? Are we confident that the candidate will get a similar score irrespective of which language version of the paper is taken?

Some of the factors affecting the reliability of an examination are outside the control of those involved in the preparation of the papers. Inconsistencies in the administration of the examination, such as noise outside an examination hall, are examples of this. However, there are many aspects of examination paper preparation that can significantly affect reliability. Indeed, almost all of the other issues of quality dealt with in this manual will also impact upon reliability – the level of difficulty, the discrimination, the readability, cultural or gender bias, the complexity of the language. Note also that some features that appear to be independent of the quality of the examination paper are actually not. For example, the consistency with which examiners can implement a marking scheme can depend considerably on the care with which the question is structured in the first place.

Note that the presence of choice on an examination paper immediately introduces a reliability concern into the test. Candidates who choose different options are essentially sitting different examination papers. This imposes a duty to ensure that all of these versions of the test are similar in demand. Steps must be taken to ensure parity of standards across the optional questions and their marking schemes.

3.3 Freedom from Bias

Bias is the presence of some characteristic of an examination that results in different levels of performance by candidates of the same level of achievement, but from different groups, such as ethnic or gender.

Bias is likely to occur when the context, the language, the examples or the illustrations used in an examination are more meaningful to one group of candidates than to another. In so far as is reasonable, examinations should reflect the experiences of all candidates in a balanced way.

It should be noted that different levels of performance by different groups of candidates does not necessarily indicate bias in the examination. For example, different groups such as girls and boys, could have genuinely different levels of achievement in relation to the syllabus concerned. However, in other cases bias might arise because of an unbalanced representation of experiences which are familiar to some sections of the cohort but not to others. For example, if all essay titles in an examination were exclusively based on urban experience, this part of the examination could be biased in favour of urban candidates.

In many types of assessment, a variety of problems with test items, including bias, are discovered at a field-trial stage. However, in the case of the state examinations, no such field trial is currently possible. Nonetheless, examining differential performance on items in previous examinations can be valuable, since identifying the cause can sensitise one to future difficulties.

Identification of items that are **likely** to be biased is often possible in advance, if those designing and reviewing the items are sensitised to differences in the life experiences of different subgroups of candidates.

3.4 Inclusiveness and Equity

Examinations should reflect an inclusive view of society and a respect for diversity.

This requires examinations to contain an appropriate balance in relation to such matters as gender, religion, culture, or socio-economic factors and to have all members of society treated with respect.

Having due regard to the syllabus and assessment requirements, the tasks set in an examination, the language in which they are presented, and the accompanying illustrative material should reflect an inclusive view of society. For example, in developing a test item it is necessary to consider how the item portrays the activities which people are engaged in, the attitudes they display, and whether these activities and attitudes suggest inappropriate stereotyping.

However, there may be instances when stereotyping or negative representation can be justified for purposes of valid measurement. It may, for example, be necessary on occasion to portray stereotypical or negative representations in order to allow candidates an opportunity to comment critically on such representations. However, all such instances require careful consideration.

In order to ensure adequate consideration of question bias, equity and balance, it is important to take time to review the whole examination, item by item, checking for these alone, i.e. not while simultaneously checking some other aspect, such as grammar. Checklists are provided in Appendix 1 for two areas in particular: *gender equity*, and *cultural, racial and religious equity*.

3.5 Discrimination

Discrimination refers to the extent to which an individual test item, or an examination as a whole, effectively distinguishes between candidates of different underlying levels of achievement.

An examination must provide opportunities for candidates across the achievement range to show what they know, understand and can do.

Marks awarded in an examination are used for the purposes of grading and certification. In order to discriminate effectively, examination papers and marking schemes must be constructed to facilitate a spread of grades across the available range.

If all candidates answer a particular test item correctly or if all candidates answer it incorrectly, the test item is regarded as being a poor discriminator, since it is failing to distinguish between candidates of different levels of achievement. However, it is not necessary that each individual test item be equally discriminating. For example, an item designed to be accessible to candidates with lower levels of achievement will normally result in good scores by the majority of candidates across the achievement spectrum. What is important is that the test items, when taken together, should allow for overall differentiation of performance among the total candidature for that examination.

3.6 Accessibility

The accessibility of an examination refers to the extent to which all candidates are facilitated in demonstrating their achievements, in the context of the need to preserve the integrity, fairness and standards of the examination.

Accessibility, in this context, generally refers to access to the examination for candidates with disabilities. Accessibility is primarily achieved through the following strategies.

The first strategy is to ensure that due regard is given to access issues when test items are being prepared. Drafters and Setters must review all examination materials with a view to eliminating inappropriate barriers. Careful consideration should be given to whether the means of assessment relies on a skill or competency not properly part of the focus of the assessment but which would exclude candidates with certain disabilities. For example, it would not be appropriate to present information on a diagram or chart, unless the interpretation of information presented in this way is part of what one intends to assess. However, this principle must be considered in the light of the requirement for examinations to support good practice in teaching and learning, and for test items to reflect the forms of communication appropriate to the discipline.

Furthermore, a measure that improves access for one group of candidates might be deemed to be a barrier for others. For example, the provision of a diagram to assist in interpreting a written text may improve accessibility for some but could be regarded as disadvantaging others (such as those with a severe visual impairment). In such circumstances, a careful judgment must be made as to the relative merits of including or excluding the material and consideration must be given as to how any negative impact arising from such a decision might best be reduced or eliminated.

The second strategy is the provision, where possible, of alternative means of accessing the test item. Special arrangements are provided to enable candidates with disabilities to demonstrate their levels of achievement. These include, for example, the provision of enlarged and braille versions of question papers for candidates with visual impairment. Setters should be cognisant that the material they prepare will be presented to candidates in these varied formats.

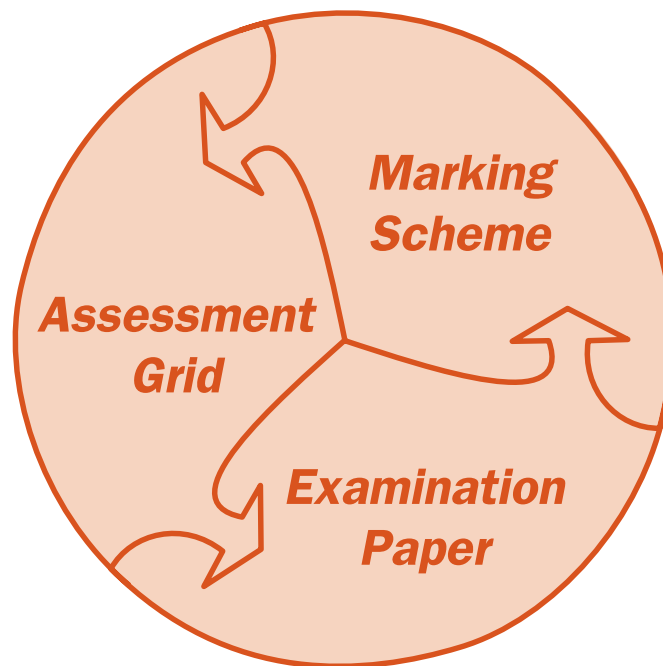
The third strategy for facilitating access is the provision, where possible, of an alternative means of examining the same syllabus objective. Special arrangements are also provided in these instances and include, for example, the provision of modified versions of test items. Setters are expected to prepare such modified versions, under the guidance of the Chief Examiner.

Despite the effectiveness of these strategies in most circumstances, there will always be cases in which assessment of one or more of the syllabus objectives cannot occur. This arises either when the candidate's disability has prevented him/her from achieving the syllabus objective(s) concerned, or when, in particular instances, the disability precludes any feasible means of assessing the objective.

Constructing an Examination – an Integrated Approach

This chapter outlines some important overarching principles governing the preparation and construction of examination papers and questions. In constructing an examination, there are three main components that must be considered – the examination paper itself, the marking scheme and the assessment grid. This chapter emphasises the importance of developing the marking scheme and assessment grid in parallel with the drafting of the examination paper.

The interrelationship between these components and the development of each component in parallel with the other two is critical to the successful construction of the actual examination.



4.1 Assessment Grids

The purpose of the examination in a particular subject is to measure the extent to which each candidate has fulfilled the objectives of the officially approved syllabus, in order to provide a certified record of the candidate's level of achievement.

The key assessment principle of validity requires that the syllabus content be covered in a balanced and proportionate manner and that the types of competencies measured in the examination are those actually intended to be measured.

The assessment grid is a means of ensuring that a particular examination satisfies the requirements of the relevant syllabus. The grid is based on the relationship between the assessment objectives, the syllabus content and the examination components, as specified in the syllabus. Some older syllabuses may require the objectives to be inferred. Some syllabuses give precise weightings to particular assessment objectives or content areas. Some syllabuses may prescribe the content to be assessed in a given year. The assessment grid will confirm that these requirements have been fulfilled in the construction of the examination.

In subjects where there is a choice between questions, it is essential to ensure that the assessment objectives being addressed are comparable.

The examination must present a fair and accurate reflection of the knowledge and skills specified in the syllabus. Every question or task must be unambiguously within the scope of the syllabus. The completion of the assessment grid during the examination design stage confirms that:

- ▶ the examination paper satisfies the requirements of the syllabus
- ▶ the questions set cover both the assessment objectives and the syllabus content
- ▶ a balanced and proportionate coverage of subject content, skills and abilities is provided.

The completion of an assessment grid for each examination component is an integral part of the drafting/setting process every year. The grid provides a clear starting point for the Drafter. It makes explicit the syllabus content, assessment objectives and the relative weightings in the examination being developed.

The Chief Examiner will provide guidance to the Drafter/Setter regarding the completion of the relevant assessment grid.

4.1.1 The Relationship between the Syllabus and the Examination

In constructing an examination, the Drafter and Setter are bound by the aims, objectives and content of the syllabus and by established practice in relation to the writing of examination papers. The practicalities of the examination impose other constraints. As the entire syllabus cannot be assessed in any one year, the examination can only assess a sample of the syllabus. The Drafter must ensure that the full range of syllabus content is adequately sampled in the examination within the context of established practice.

Where certain assessment objectives are assessed through a particular component (e.g. practical coursework, live performance) appropriate account should be taken of this when constructing the other components of the examination.

4.1.2 Assessment Grid Template

An assessment grid template will be provided by the Chief Examiner for the relevant examination or component.

The grid provides a structure for identifying clearly both the content area(s) and the assessment objective(s) being tested by each question in the examination. The columns in the grid are labelled according to the major content areas of the syllabus, and the rows are labelled according to the assessment objectives of the syllabus.⁴ The objectives may be written in terms of skills and will usually reflect a taxonomy of educational objectives, such as Bloom's Taxonomy or some other taxonomy appropriate to the subject. Each cell in the grid represents the testing of the specified objective in the context of the specified content area.

For example, in the *Economics* grid shown in section 4.1.5, the location of question 1b in the first cell indicates that this question tests whether the candidate can "recall basic economic terminology and concepts" (the objective) in the context of "production and consumption" (the content area).

In the example, the number of marks allocated to each question has also been inserted. When these marks are totalled across the rows and down the columns, it can readily be seen what proportion of marks is being awarded for each content area, and for each assessment objective. This allows us to see whether the various cognitive skills are being tested in appropriate proportions, and whether the content tested is an appropriately balanced sample of the content domain. In some examinations, the structure of the examination is such that including the mark allocations on the grid is not helpful. The Chief Examiner will tell you whether or not to include them on your assessment grid.

The assessment grid will also serve to clarify whether the cognitive demands of optional questions are comparable across those options.

4.1.3 Drafter's Role

Prior to drafting an examination, the Drafter is provided with the appropriate assessment grid template. The Drafter may also be provided with previous years' grids for guidance.

Having determined the selection of content and assessment objectives to be tested, the Drafter begins the work of drafting the examination. The draft of the examination is developed in tandem with the completion of the assessment grid and outline marking scheme.

4 These may be reversed in some subjects for convenience of layout.

In completing the grid, the following points must be considered:

- ▶ coverage of syllabus content
- ▶ coverage of syllabus assessment objectives
- ▶ weightings, if applicable
- ▶ spread of marks across the content areas and assessment objectives
- ▶ comparability of options/electives.

The completed assessment grid is forwarded by the Drafter to the SEC along with the draft examination paper and the outline marking scheme for each examination.

4.1.4 Setter's Role

The Setter receives the draft examination paper, the assessment grid and the outline marking scheme.

The Setter reviews the assessment grid to assist in evaluating the draft examination. The following points should be considered in evaluating the draft examination:

- ▶ coverage of syllabus content
- ▶ coverage of syllabus assessment objectives
- ▶ weightings, if applicable
- ▶ spread of marks across the content areas and assessment objectives
- ▶ comparability of options/electives.

In addition, the Chief Examiner may refer the Setter to relevant issues in the Chief Advising Examiner's report of the previous year.

As the work progresses, the Setter will continue to amend the assessment grid as appropriate.

At the end of the setting process, the completed assessment grid is submitted by the Setter to the Chief Examiner when signing off for press.

4.1.5 Sample Assessment Grid

Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission		Subject: Economics		Exam: L.C.	Level: Higher L	Component: Written Paper						Code: M59	Year:		
		1 Production and Consumption	2 Economic Systems and Economic Thought			3 Demand and Supply	4 Price and Output	5 Factor Incomes	6 National Income	7 Money and Banking	8 Government in the Economy			9 Inflation	10 International Trade and Payments
Content area / topic / element Assessment Objective		1	1b [35]	5a [13]	3a [25] 3b [10]	2a [15] 2c [15]	A7 [17] 1a [20]	4a [15]	A3 [16] 5a [12]	7a [5] 7b [25]	A2 [16]	8b [6]	13 Economic Growth and Development	14 Economic Problems and Conflicts	254
		2		4b [15]		4b [10]		7a [15]		8c [16]					
		3			A6 [17] 3b [15]			4a [10]			6a [25]				67
		4							5b [10]					6c [25]	93
		5	A5 [16]		3c [25]	2c [10]	1c [20]	4c [25]	5b [15]	7c [30]	6b [25]			A4 [16] 5c [25] 8a [20]	227
		Total marks for each content area:	51	28	92	109	73	60	53	75	66		30	25	86

4.2 General Principles for Writing Questions

The principles underpinning the preparation of a draft examination paper in any subject are:

- ▶ maintenance of an appropriate relationship between the examination and the syllabus, bearing in mind the constraints of the examination:
 - every question or task must be unambiguously within the scope of the published syllabus
 - the questions should be appropriately distributed over the syllabus content
 - the questions should reflect the syllabus assessment objectives with respect to the types of knowledge and skills required.
- ▶ use of clear and unambiguous language, appropriate to the discipline and to the stage of development of the candidates.
- ▶ parity of standards across optional questions in the paper.
- ▶ avoidance of excessive choice
- ▶ balanced allocation of marks to questions or parts thereof
- ▶ adherence to rubrics and question formats that have been standardised by frequent usage in past papers
- ▶ matching of the requirements of the questions to the time available
- ▶ adherence to the assessment principles outlined in chapter 3.

4.3 Question Types

An awareness of the different question types, along with a consideration of their advantages and disadvantages, will assist in the selection of an appropriate range of question formats for a particular purpose.

There are two general categories of question types: selected-response, and constructed-response.

In selected-response questions, candidates are presented with several options and must select from among these. This category includes multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, and item-matching questions.

Selected-response questions have a number of advantages:

- ▶ They can be scored accurately and reliably
- ▶ They can be both answered and scored quickly, with the result that far more items can be included, allowing broader course coverage than is possible with essay-type questions, long-response or performance tasks alone.

However, they also have a number of significant disadvantages:

- ▶ Cheating is much easier on selected-response questions – especially multiple-choice and true/false types
- ▶ It is difficult to eliminate the impact of guessing on scores
- ▶ It is more difficult to design valid selected-response questions than first appears – there are many pitfalls
- ▶ It is difficult to construct selected-response questions that test higher-order thinking skills and problem solving.
- ▶ Overuse of selected-response questions tends to have a negative backwash effect on teaching and learning; students end up spending a lot of time practising such items, often at the expense of forms of learning better suited to developing higher-order skills.

Constructed-response questions include short-answer items, where the candidate is to produce a word or phrase (e.g. cloze-test), and essay-type questions, where the candidate must produce a paragraph or longer piece of text. Constructed-response questions also include, for example, questions in which a candidate must produce an extended solution to a mathematical problem, construct a labelled diagram, or outline and sketch a design or an assembly schematic.

The advantages and disadvantages of written constructed-response questions are largely the converse of those listed for selected-response questions above. Advantages include:

- ▶ Cheating is more difficult than with selected-response questions.
- ▶ The impact of guessing on scores is easier to control.
- ▶ They more readily facilitate the testing of higher-order skills.

Disadvantages include:

- ▶ It is more difficult to achieve accurate and reliable scoring
- ▶ In the case of longer questions, the time required for answering limits the number of questions and therefore the breadth of content coverage.

If an examination consists of both selected-response and constructed-response questions, then it is usual to target the lower-order skills with the former and the higher-order skills with the latter. If the examination consists of constructed-response items only, then it is important that they contain an appropriate balance between the various skills to be tested.

Some syllabus objectives are difficult to test in a written examination. Performance tasks, which include oral and practical examinations and coursework, facilitate the testing of competencies

that cannot be readily assessed through a written paper. Performance tasks are usually categorised as constructed-response items, but they have their own particular additional characteristics. They often consist of a number of stages, and require the candidates to clarify the task, use their own judgment, plan, research, etc. As such, they can form a highly valid assessment of syllabus objectives that are difficult or impossible to assess in other ways. Depending on the manner of their implementation, they can be susceptible to malpractice and subject to significant problems of reliability. Because of the extended amount of time required to complete a performance task, it is usually not possible to test a wide range of content.

4.4 Marking Schemes

The marking scheme is one element of an integrated process which begins with the development of examination questions and continues through to the final marking. The marking scheme should always be considered at the time of formulating a test item. One should first consider the response or information that one is seeking, and only when this has been done should the question be drafted. This approach ensures that the validity of the item can be addressed from the outset.

Marking schemes provide the means by which candidates' answers are assessed accurately and consistently. They allow for the grading and ranking of candidate responses.

Fundamentally, the aim of a marking scheme is to increase objectivity in the marking and scoring processes. Marking schemes help to ensure that demonstrations of knowledge, understanding and skills are rewarded appropriately. The marking scheme

- ▶ identifies how different responses are to be valued
- ▶ confirms that the intended assessment objectives are being assessed
- ▶ provides a uniform basis for the marking process
- ▶ outlines anticipated candidate responses
- ▶ indicates how discrimination between candidates is to be achieved
- ▶ ensures that marks allocated are commensurate with the intended difficulty of each question.
- ▶ facilitates the maintenance of standards from year to year
- ▶ acts as a companion document to the assessment grid

Any inadequacy in the marking scheme can have serious consequences. It is therefore essential that great care be taken in the formulation of the scheme.

4.4.1 Formulation of the Marking Scheme

The 'command word' or 'task word' (calculate, illustrate, explain, etc.) has a direct influence on the marking scheme. Task words should be consistently used throughout the examination paper in order to elicit a specific type of response. In other words, does 'illustrate' or 'explain' mean the same thing every time it is used as a command word throughout the examination paper, and is the mark allocation consistent with each usage and with the demands inherent in the command word?

In determining appropriate mark allocations, consideration should also be given to previous practice and relative weightings in the syllabus.

Marking schemes should show the maximum number of marks available for each question in addition to the detailed breakdown of mark allocations for question parts.

In the design of the marking scheme there is a need for some in-built flexibility to allow for the finalisation of the scheme when tested on candidate responses at the marking conferences. The degree of flexibility will reflect the nature of the subject and the attributes under examination. During the marking process, the marking scheme may be amended to ensure that equally valid responses presented in different forms are awarded the same marks. The work of all candidates is marked using the final version of the marking scheme.

Marking schemes may vary depending on the type of examination and the nature of the subject. The formulation of the individual parts of the marking scheme may vary according to the question type. In general, the following applies:

Selected-response questions

- ▶ Multiple-choice questions: in this case, the marking scheme consists of a key denoting the correct response and the marks to be awarded
- ▶ Item-matching questions: in this case, the marking scheme consists of a key denoting the correct response and instructions regarding the marks to be awarded for the various numbers of correctly matched items

Constructed-response questions

- ▶ Objective completion-type questions: in this case, the marking scheme specifies the acceptable answers and the marks to be awarded. It may also specify certain unacceptable answers.

- ▶ Semi-structured questions: These create a wider variety of responses, and it may well be impossible to list them all. Marking schemes in these cases frequently include the following:
 - examples of answers that will be accepted for full marks
 - examples of partly correct answers and the marks to be awarded
 - examples of answers that are not acceptable.
- ▶ Free-response / essay-type questions: The marking scheme usually comprises general guidelines and criteria that are applied to candidates' answers. These marking schemes may be expressed as a series of mark bands. The bands should be progressive in nature. Each band will consist of a mark range that corresponds to a specified level of performance in the relevant competencies. These levels of performance will be indicated through descriptors of qualitatively different responses. For example:

A	Excellent awareness and detailed knowledge of musical features of topic. Well-researched, with excellent personal response.	77 - 90
B	Very good knowledge of musical features of chosen topic. Very well researched, with very good personal response.	63 - 76
C	Good knowledge of musical features of chosen topic, but lacking in detail. Some evidence of personal response. Adequate research in evidence.	50 - 62
D	Some general points on topic, but lacking any detail. Very little evidence of research or personal response. Choice of topic too broad to allow for appropriate detailed and personal response. Little reference to musical features of topic.	36 - 49
E	Generally inadequate response to chosen topic. No evidence of research or personal response.	23 - 35
F	Little response to chosen topic in evidence.	9 - 22
NG	No response to chosen topic in evidence.	0 - 8

Performance tasks

- ▶ Marking schemes in these cases are usually of a similar type to that described above for free-response / essay-type questions.

4.4.2 Drafter's Role

Drafters are required to produce an outline marking scheme. An outline marking scheme:

- ▶ indicates the anticipated likely answers to each question
- ▶ gives worked solutions, where appropriate
- ▶ indicates general mark allocation
- ▶ indicates the objective or target that each question is assessing
- ▶ allows for some in-built flexibility to cater for 'too demanding' or 'not challenging enough' questions.

4.4.3 Setter's Role

Setters are required to amend, edit and develop the outline marking scheme in parallel with the development of the examination paper and the assessment grid. The marking scheme prepared by the Setter should be as close as possible to the final scheme.

This chapter outlines some important principles governing the preparation of examination papers and questions. It describes the characteristics of different types of question and illustrates, with examples, ways in which examination papers can be presented in the clearest form.

It is important to acknowledge that the appropriateness of some of the guidelines given in this chapter will vary from subject to subject. However, it is hoped that, by making the guidelines available to Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters, the quality and accessibility of all examinations will be enhanced.

The examination should cover the complete range of assessment objectives and be properly distributed over the whole content of the syllabus, while avoiding undue predictability. **Any change to the format or structure of the examination paper or any of its subsections cannot be made without the approval of the Chief Examiner.**

5.1 Readability – Visual Impact

The format and layout of the paper and of individual questions can have a significant impact on candidate performance. When they first open the paper, an attractive and familiar layout helps to settle the candidates and give them confidence. As they consider the paper more closely, a clear presentation of information and instructions assists in absorbing the information on the page. The manner in which information is conveyed to the candidates should not add to the difficulties involved in demonstrating the knowledge and skills being assessed.

One should not underestimate the potential negative impact upon candidates of being presented with a paper in a format that looks significantly different from that expected, even if such a paper is well laid out and attractive. For this reason, any deviations in layout or presentation from that of the previous year must be discussed with and approved by the Chief Examiner and must remain consistent with the house style.

The following will assist in making examination papers clear and accessible.

- ▶ Use spacing to maximise clarity.
- ▶ Ensure legibility by avoiding small font sizes; the standard font size for the body text in all examination papers is 12 point.
- ▶ Use headings, subheadings, indentation and tabs to structure information clearly.

- ▶ Define sections and subsections clearly and in accordance with established style.
- ▶ Keep instructions to the candidate separate from the text of the question.
- ▶ Place diagrams, numerical data, etc. close to the relevant question.
- ▶ Keep diagrams simple, providing the minimum information required in order to achieve the objective of the question.
- ▶ Unnecessary graphics can distract candidates; consider whether the graphic is necessary.
- ▶ Ensure that all graphic material is of high quality.
- ▶ If Drafters' or Setters' sketches are to be replaced with professionally prepared graphics, make sure the instructions are clear, and discuss the matter with your Chief Examiner so as to ensure that the Graphic Artist Protocol (see appendix 12) is adhered to.
- ▶ Where possible, avoid making questions rely on the detail of shading or colouring in diagrams. The accuracy with which this is reproduced in the printing process can cause problems. For example, avoid identifying a part of a diagram as "the dark-shaded region".
- ▶ Use text enhancements (bold, capitals, underlining, etc.) judiciously to emphasise key words or statements only in accordance with established style for the examination. Bear in mind that overuse of such enhancements reduces their effectiveness and can negatively affect the overall appearance. Note that printing a word in capitals removes the word's characteristic shape, and can therefore make it more difficult to read. Large amounts of text in italics can also be difficult to read, depending on the font family.
- ▶ Use indentation or boxes to draw attention to stimulus material or other important features. However, too many boxes, lines or grids on a page can have a negative visual impact.
- ▶ Pay attention to pagination and, where used, line numbering, particularly after amendments are made to proofs.

5.2 Readability – Clarity of Language

Some aspects of the language and presentation of examination papers may hinder rather than help candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. The language used for both questions and rubrics should be clear, precise and intelligible to the full spectrum of candidates. Short, straightforward sentences and clear, appropriate, vocabulary should be used.

For illustrative purposes, this section contains many examples of questions that are incorrect or require some improvement. In order to avoid confusion with examples of good practice, these unsatisfactory examples will always be flagged thus: ☒.

5.2.1 Sentence Construction

▶ **Use short, simple sentences; avoid unnecessary subordinate clauses.**

☒ *Example:*

Using evidence from the newspaper article above, explain why many people in the area covered by the OS map shown in part **(a)** object to the establishment of the oil refinery, even though the area suffers from a high level of unemployment.

Improvement:

The area covered by the OS map in part **(a)** suffers from high unemployment. In spite of this, many people in the area do not want the oil refinery. Explain why.
Your answer must use evidence from the newspaper article above.

▶ **Use the active voice, where possible and appropriate.**

☒ *Example:*

It was claimed by Tacitus that he was writing without bias or hatred.

Improvement:

Tacitus claimed that he was writing without bias or hatred.

▶ **Separate the question from any associated statement**

☒ *Example:*

Find the area of a rectangle of length 7 cm and width 3 cm.

Improvement:

A rectangle is 7 cm long and 3 cm wide. Find its area.

▶ **In general, follow a logical temporal progression in the question.**

☒ *Example:*

How did the company attempt to solve the cash-flow problem caused by the late payment?

Improvement:

The late payment caused a cash-flow problem. How did the company try to solve this problem?

▶ **Eliminate superfluous words.**

☒ *Example:*
Write your answer in the box provided below.

Improvement:
Write your answer in the box below.

▶ **Statements introducing questions should contain only information that is relevant to answering those questions.**

☒ *Example:*
After making a number of different home improvements to a particular house, it was found that the monthly heating bill was significantly reduced. Name three different home improvements that could have led to such a reduction.

Improvement:
Name three home improvements that reduce monthly heating bills.

Note: when attempting to simplify language, it is important to ensure that the meaning of the question is not unintentionally changed, or that unintended possible interpretations are introduced. For example, the above question could be further simplified to:

☒ Name three ways to reduce heating bills in the home.

However, dropping the reference to “home improvements” allows a wider, unintended range of answers, such as “keep the thermostat at a lower temperature”, “turn off heaters in unoccupied rooms”, etc. Also, dropping “monthly” allows answers such as “arrange to get a bill more often”.

▶ **Avoid unnecessary negative constructions**

Where possible, for example, avoid such phrases as “not uncommon”, “was not without fault”. Even though the corresponding positive may not have the same meaning, it is often possible to rephrase the sentence so as to remove these negatives and retain the intended meaning.

5.2.2 Vocabulary

▶ **Use short, simple words, where possible.**

For example: “need” rather than “require”; “use” rather than “utilise”; “find” rather than “locate”

▶ **Avoid phrases when a single word will do.**

For example: use “before” rather than “prior to”.

▶ **Do not use formal examination language unnecessarily.**

☒ *Example:*
State **three** ways in which greater efficiency can be achieved in the running of the engine.

Improvement:
State **three** ways to make the engine more efficient.

▶ **Use the correct command words.**

Candidates should be in no doubt about the expectations of the question. Consistent and accurate use of the correct command words will help to achieve this. For example, candidates can be expected to understand the difference between “sketch” and “construct”. However, phrases like “how far” and “account for” lack precision and are often misinterpreted by candidates. Use command words consistently and avoid the temptation to introduce variety through, for example, the use of the phrase “detail in your own words” to replace the command word “describe”.

Note, for example, the meanings of the following common command words.

- **Calculate** implies that a numerical answer is needed.
- **Complete** implies that the candidate needs to enter the answer(s) in spaces which are provided, such as in a diagram, table, etc.
- **Describe** implies that the candidate must state in words, or sometimes as diagrams, the important points of the topic.
- **Explain** implies that the candidate must apply reasoning to the recall of theory. This term must not be used if the answer required is no more than a list of reasons.
- **Give a reason, How, or Why** implies that a reason should be given which demonstrates the candidate’s understanding of cause and effect within an area of knowledge in the relevant subject.

Many subjects have their own standard command terms, as well as standard interpretations of generic terms. In some cases, these are given explicitly in syllabi, teacher guidelines, or other official documents. Use such terms in accordance with their definitions or descriptors in the corresponding documentation.

Particular care should be taken with question phrases that in some contexts demand short answers, and in other contexts demand long answers. For example, contrast the following two uses of “How far?”:

How far does the car travel during the next five seconds?

How far did de Valera dismantle the Anglo–Irish Treaty of 1921 during the period 1932 – 1938?

In such cases, it is essential that other features of the question or the paper make it clear what is expected.

The relationship between command words and educational objectives is dealt with in section 5.3 below, and Appendix 5 consists of a useful reference guide to command words typically used to test the achievement of particular educational objectives.

► **Be clear about whether you are testing knowledge of a term, or understanding of the underlying concept.**

Candidates often have difficulty with subject-specific vocabulary that is familiar to the teacher or examiner. Nonetheless, knowledge of the relevant subject-specific terminology may well be one aspect of what is being examined. In addressing this potential conflict, consider, in the case of each question, whether it is the understanding of the term or the application of the underlying concept that is being tested.



Example:

Which one of the following requires a non-aqueous solvent to dissolve it?

To answer this question, a candidate needs both to know what the word *non-aqueous* means and to know which of the substances listed needs a solvent other than water to dissolve it. It would be better to eliminate the first aspect of the question (and test it elsewhere if necessary):

Which one of the following needs a solvent other than water to dissolve it?

▶ **Avoid unnecessary use of metaphorical language.**

Many metaphors that might appear to be familiar and unproblematic to the writer might pose significant problems to readers of a younger generation, or from a different cultural background, or who simply are not familiar with using the language in this way.

☒ *Example:*

Name another politician who responded in the same vein.

Improvement:

Name another politician who responded in a similar way.

5.3 **Command Words and Educational Objectives**

As mentioned in section 4.2, the assessment objectives outlined in the syllabus will usually reflect a taxonomy of educational objectives that the syllabus designers deemed relevant to the subject. In constructing questions, it is important to reflect this taxonomy to the greatest extent possible. In the event that the syllabus contains insufficient detail regarding the underlying taxonomy, the following material, based on Bloom's taxonomy, may be helpful.

Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* dates from 1956, when a third-level committee led by Benjamin Bloom identified three domains (or categories) of educational activities:

- ▶ Cognitive: mental skills (knowledge)
- ▶ Affective: growth in feelings or emotional areas (attitude)
- ▶ Psychomotor: manual or physical skills (skills).

Within each domain there is a subdivision of learning objectives from the simplest behaviour to the most complex. The cognitive domain is the one most usually drawn upon in formulating questions in a written examination. The cognitive domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills. An assessment grid should chart a progression through questions that elicit the lower-order skills of knowledge, comprehension and application to those that additionally require the higher-order skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation, as appropriate to the subject and level. The subcategories allow for the generation of questions for which a chart of 'question cues' is provided in Appendix 5.

5.3.1 Learning Objectives in the Cognitive Domain

Knowledge – *Can the candidate **recall** information?*

Knowledge involves the remembering of terminology, facts, and methods. Typical knowledge assessments ask candidates to define, describe, identify, label, list, match, or name.

Comprehension – *Can the candidate **explain** ideas or concepts?*

Comprehension requires an understanding of the meaning of conceptual information. An assessment of comprehension requires candidates to classify, convert, describe, discuss, estimate, generalise, or give examples.

Application – *Can the candidate **use** the new knowledge in another familiar situation?*

Application involves the use of previously learned information in novel situations. To measure application knowledge, candidates might be asked to chart, compute, construct, develop, implement, or predict.

Analysis – *Can the candidate **differentiate** between constituent parts?*

The ability to understand the organisational structure of information is referred to as analysis. Typical analysis assessments ask candidates to break down information into component parts, develop divergent conclusions, or make inferences.

Synthesis – *Can the candidate **generate** new products, ideas or ways of viewing things?*

Synthesis involves the creative application of prior knowledge and skills to produce an original entity. To measure synthesis understanding, an assessment might ask candidates to adapt, create, design, generate, or revise.

Evaluation – *Can the candidate **justify** a decision or course of action?*

Evaluation is the ability to judge the relative value of information based on prior knowledge. An evaluative assessment involves the ability to compare and contrast, criticise, critique, defend, or judge.

5.3.2 Learning Objectives in the Affective Domain

The affective domain includes the manner in which we develop at a sense level and deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes. These objectives are particularly difficult to assess by means of a written examination, and are therefore frequently assessed in a school-based context. In many cases, objectives in the affective domain are included in the syllabus but not specified as assessment objectives for the purposes of certification. The five major categories list the simplest behaviour through to the most complex.

Receiving – *Can the candidate **focus attention and take in** what is being communicated?*

Receiving phenomena involves being aware, willing and open to taking in with respect what is being communicated. Assessments of this ability might ask candidates to choose, describe, follow, identify, locate name, point to, reply, select, or use.

Responding – *Can the candidate **attend actively and react to** a particular phenomenon?*

Responding to phenomena involves the candidate participating actively, in discussions, for example, and questioning new concepts or models in order to fully understand them. Assessment outcomes may emphasise compliance in responding, willingness to respond, or satisfaction in responding (motivation), and tasks could ask candidates to assist, comply, discuss, greet, help, present, recite, or report.

Valuing – *Can the candidate **act appropriately** in line with his cherished goals or ideals?*

Valuing reflects the worth or value a person attaches to a particular object, phenomenon, or behaviour, ranging from simple acceptance to the more complex state of commitment. For example, one informs people in authority of matters one feels strongly about, or one demonstrates that one values diversity by being sensitive towards individual and cultural differences. Valuing is a spur to demonstrate, differentiate, explain, form, initiate, invite, join, justify, propose, read, report, select, share, or study.

Organisation – *Can the candidate **prioritise among values** to resolve conflicting demands and ideals?*

Organisation prioritises between values by comparing, contrasting, relating, synthesising and resolving conflicts between them, to create a unique value system. One organises by creating a life plan in harmony with one's abilities, interests, responsibilities and beliefs. One may adhere to, alter, arrange, combine, defend, explain, generalise, integrate, modify, organise, prepare, or synthesise.

Internalising – *Can the candidate **act from a consistent value system**?*

An internalised value system directs behaviour that is pervasive, consistent, predictable, and most importantly, characteristic of the learner, such as, for example, showing self-reliance when working independently, revising judgments and changing behaviour in light of new evidence. One may act, display, influence, listen, modify, propose, qualify, question, revise, solve, or verify.

5.3.3 Learning Objectives in the Psychomotor Domain

Bloom's committee did not develop objectives in the psychomotor domain, as they felt they had insufficient reliable data or experience in teaching manual skills. The objectives given below are from Simpson (1972).⁵

5 Simpson, Elizabeth. "The Classification of Educational Objectives in the Psychomotor Domain." *The Psychomotor Domain* 3:43-56. Washington, DC: Gryphon House, 1972.

The psychomotor domain includes physical movement, coordination, and use of the motor-skill areas. Development of these skills requires practice and is measured in terms of speed, precision, distance, procedures, or techniques in execution. The seven major categories developed by Simpson list the simplest behaviour through to the most complex:

Perception – *Can the candidate use sensory cues to absorb data for guiding movement?*

Perception or awareness involves the use of the five senses, sight, taste, touch, smell, hearing, to inform movement and action. Examples of this might be: estimating where a ball will land after it is thrown and then moving to the correct location to catch the ball; adjusting the heat output of a cooking ring by the smell and taste of food; adjusting the height of the forks on a forklift by comparing where the forks are in relation to the pallet. One might detect, differentiate, distinguish, feel, hear, identify, isolate, notice, recognise, relate, see, select or touch.

Set – *Is the candidate ready to act?*

Readiness for an experience or a task: one has mental, physical, and emotional sets or dispositions – sometimes called mindsets – that predetermine one's response to different situations. An example of set would be knowing, and acting upon, a sequence of steps in a manufacturing process. One may arrange, begin, get set, move, prepare, proceed, react, show, state, or volunteer.

Guided Response – *Can the candidate imitate or follow instructions?*

Guided response denotes an attempt or the early stages in learning a complex skill that includes imitation and trial and error. Adequacy of performance is achieved by practicing. One might copy, follow, imitate, react, reproduce, respond, trace, or try.

Mechanism – *Can the candidate competently respond to stimulus for action?*

Basic proficiency where learned responses have become habitual and the movements can be performed with some confidence and proficiency. An example of mechanism would be driving a car or repairing a leaking tap. One might assemble, calibrate, complete, construct, dismantle, display, fasten, fix, grind, heat, make, manipulate, measure, mend, mix, organise, shape, or sketch.

Complex Overt Response – *Can the candidate execute a complex process with expertise?*

Expert proficiency is indicated by a quick, accurate, and highly coordinated performance, requiring a minimum of energy; it includes performing without hesitation and automatic performance. Examples might be manoeuvring a car into a tight parallel parking spot or displaying competence while playing the piano. The verbs will be as in mechanism, above, with the addition of coordinate and demonstrate, but the performance is quicker, better, and more accurate.

Adaptation – *Can the candidate **alter response to reliably meet varying challenges?***

Adaptable proficiency is attained where skills are well developed and the individual can modify movement patterns to fit special requirements. One might adapt, adjust, alter, change, integrate, rearrange, reorganise, revise, or vary.

Origination – *Can the candidate **create new movement patterns** to fit a specific situation?*

Learning outcomes emphasise creativity based upon highly developed skills. One might construct a new theory or create a new ice-skating routine, one might arrange, build, combine, compose, construct, create, design, formulate, initiate, make, modify, originate, redesign, or troubleshoot.

5.4 Writing Selected-Response Questions

Questions in which the candidate must choose an answer from a number of options are called selected-response questions. The most common form of selected-response question used in the state examinations is the multiple-choice question, although true/false questions and item-matching questions are also used. This section will deal mainly with multiple-choice questions, but the principles are equally applicable to the other types. As stated earlier, multiple-choice questions require more care in their construction than is often appreciated.

It is useful to clarify the terminology used to refer to the different parts of a multiple-choice question:

Stimulus material:	Material to which the question refers. It can be in the form of a text, diagram, photograph, recording of a conversation, etc. There will often be a number of questions based around the same piece of stimulus material. Questions need not necessarily have any stimulus material. The selection or creation of stimulus material is dealt with in section 5.7.
Introduction:	Information immediately preceding the question.
Stem:	The question itself.
Options:	All of the answers (correct and incorrect).
Key:	The correct answer.
Distractors:	The incorrect answers.

The following principles will help to ensure that questions are clear and that they discriminate effectively between candidates who have the relevant knowledge or skill and those who do not.

► **In general, the stem should stand alone.**

It should be possible to understand the question and know what type of answer is expected without reading the options. Consider the following stem:

✘ In your opinion, *Henri* is:

There is no clue in the stem as to what type of answers are coming. Are we being asked about Henri's mood? His nationality? His character? In fact, it is none of these:

In your opinion, *Henri* is:

- A. a cat
- B. a dog
- C. a cow
- D. a horse.

It would be better to rephrase as follows:

What kind of animal do you think *Henri* is?

- A. a cat
- B. a dog
- C. a cow
- D. a horse.

If the stem is a complete sentence, rather than a statement to be completed, this problem is less likely to arise. However, a statement to be completed may be favoured in some cases in order to avoid excessive repetition in the answers, or because it makes the whole question more readable.

Particular care should be taken when using definition-style completion statements to test understanding of a concept. By and large, there are several different but equally correct ways of phrasing a definition. There is a tendency for the drafter to use the phrasing in the textbook with which he or she is most familiar. This can bias the question in favour of candidates who are using that textbook and are more likely, therefore, to be familiar with that particular sentence. For example, the following are three different textbook definitions of a *budget surplus*:

- A *budget surplus* is the amount by which a government, company, or individual's income exceeds its spending over a particular period of time.
- A *budget surplus* is an excess of revenues over expenditures.
- A *budget surplus* refers in general to an excess of income over expenditure, but usually refers specifically to the government budget, where it is the excess of tax revenue over expenditure (including transfer payments).

Now consider the following multiple-choice question:

- A budget surplus is:
- A. the amount a government or person spends in a given fiscal year
 - B. the amount by which a government, company, or individual's income exceeds its spending over a particular period of time
 - C. the amount by which a country's GDP (gross domestic product) has increased in a given period of time.

Any candidate with a good understanding of the concept is likely to answer the question correctly in any case. However, candidates who are not sure, but have studied the particular text from which the definition was taken, are certainly more likely to select the correct response than candidates with the same level of knowledge who have studied another text, because the sentence “seems familiar”. Thus, they are unfairly advantaged. Even if one were confident that all students had access to the same definition, it would still be better to avoid a verbatim reproduction of the definition, since what is at issue is whether the candidates understand the concept of a budget surplus, rather than whether they have successfully rote-memorised the definition.

► **Use direct questions.**

Give a clear, concrete direction and avoid ‘padding’. Avoid such unnecessary phrases as “Try to choose the best word...” when the more direct “Choose the best word...” is perfectly clear.

► **Use as few negatives as possible.**

It has already been mentioned that double negatives should be avoided. But even straightforward negatives can cause difficulties in multiple-choice questions. In particular, even candidates with a good knowledge of the subject often have difficulty with questions of the form: “Which of the following is **not** a...”. Bear in mind that, conceptually, such questions require one to reason along the lines: “the right answer is the wrong one and the wrong one is the right one”. This structure is a barrier to accurately assessing candidate knowledge, especially when interspersed with positively phrased questions. It is rare that the same objective cannot be tested with a positively phrased question.

- Example:*
- Which of the following is **not** a feature of a *Doric column*:
- A. It has a foliated capital.
 - B. The column is fluted.
 - C. It has no base.

In the above example the negative structure is made even more problematic by the introduction of a second negative in option (c). This leaves the candidate with the unenviable task of trying to decide: “Is it true that having no base is not a feature of a Doric column?” Clearly the intention of the question is to ascertain whether the candidate knows the features that distinguish a Doric column from columns of other orders. Much better would be:

Which of the following is a feature of a *Doric column*:

- A. It has a foliated capital.
- B. The column is fluted.
- C. It has an ornate base.

► **The correct response should not stand out for the wrong reasons.**

Obviously, the correct response has to be perfect. On the other hand, it should not differ from the distractors in length or style. A frequent error in writing items is that the correct response is more carefully worded and longer than the distractors, so that it is easy to spot even for someone who has not mastered the subject. This will often be the case if the correct response is copied straight from a textbook. Formulate all options in the shortest and simplest way. For example, the correct response can be spotted in the following question without understanding it.

☒ What is the *recommended retail price*?

- A. The highest price with which a retailer is legally permitted to compare.
- B. The price mentioned in an advertisement.
- C. The price fixed by law.

After formulating the correct response in its simplest accurate form, revisit the distractors and ensure that they are similar in length and style.

It is likewise not appropriate for an incorrect answer to stand out for the wrong reason. The following is a combined multiple-choice/short-answer question that might appear on a language paper:

☒ Identify the odd word out and explain your choice.

- A. bello
- B. baño
- C. alto
- D. bajo.

In this case, the candidate would be correct to state that the answer is “bello”, because all of the other words have four letters, or that it is “alto”, because the others start with “b”. However, neither of these responses is what the question writer expects.

► **In choosing the distractors, use plausible errors.**

Thinking up options is not easy. Most of the time spent in writing multiple-choice items is spent formulating the options in such a way that they seem plausible to the candidates, but recognisably wrong for those who have mastered the subject. Frequent errors and common difficulties can serve as a starting point for finding plausible errors.

► **Make sure the differences between the options are clear.**

When the differences are not clear, candidates who know the correct response may choose a distractor, as in the following example.

- ✘ For how long should eggs be boiled to avoid the risk of salmonella infection?
- A. Less than 10 minutes.
 - B. Approximately 10 minutes.
 - C. At least 10 minutes.
 - D. More than 10 minutes.

► **Avoid repetition.**

In some cases, as in the next example, the options all start with exactly the same words. This is confusing because it tends to divert attention from the differences between them.

- ✘ What is meant by *sedimentary rock*?
- A. Sedimentary rock is formed by the consolidation of particles of existing rock deposited through erosion.
 - B. Sedimentary rock is formed by the solidification and cooling of molten matter from the earth’s interior.
 - C. Sedimentary rock is formed by the alteration of existing rocks under extreme heat and pressure.

To avoid this, the common beginning is often simply attached to the question, giving an improvement. The following is better, but still repetitive:

✘ What is meant by *sedimentary rock*?

Sedimentary rock is formed by

- A. the consolidation of particles of existing rock deposited through erosion.
- B. the solidification and cooling of molten matter from the earth's interior.
- C. the alteration of existing rocks under extreme heat and pressure.

Even better would be to reconsider what the question is actually trying to ask, and rephrase as the simpler:

By what process is *sedimentary rock* formed?

- A. Consolidation of particles of existing rock that are deposited through erosion.
- B. Solidification and cooling of molten matter from the earth's interior.
- C. Alteration of existing rocks under extreme heat and pressure.

► **Avoid overstatements in the distractors.**

Statements containing such strong qualifiers as 'always', 'never' or 'everywhere' are rarely true. Candidates will quickly discover this. The use of these expressions in a distractor can be a giveaway and should be avoided whenever possible.

► **Order options systematically.**

Candidates often think that there is a certain system in distributing the correct response over the questions, so that there are as many right A's as B's, or that A will not indicate the correct response in two successive items. This preconception will encourage guessing. Other unintended patterns in the keys may be present without the Setter being conscious of them. Research indicates that attempts by question writers to order options randomly on the basis of intuition are rarely successful in achieving randomness. Accordingly, a more systematic approach is required.

Order the options according to a system which is independent of the correct response. For example, the system could be to put numerical answers in ascending order and other answers in alphabetical order. Indeed, placing numerical responses in anything other than ascending or descending order can be disconcerting to candidates. An alternative to listing non-numerical responses in alphabetical order is to use a genuinely random process, such as rolling a die, to determine the position of the correct answer. Once a decision is taken to do this, it is important to stick with the outcomes, even if they seem to be giving a strange distribution.

In cases where the options are numerical, there is often an unintended avoidance of making the correct answer the lowest or highest option. This is especially true in the case of orders of magnitude. For example:

- Which of the following is the best estimate for the number of daisies in the field?
- A. 10 000
 - B. 100 000
 - C. 1 000 000
 - D. 10 000 000

In attempting to make the distractors plausible, it is tempting to include at least one value lower than and one value higher than the correct answer. Candidates who are guessing may suspect that such reasoning is in place and favour the two middle options, thereby greatly improving their chances of success.

One way to eliminate this phenomenon is as follows: first decide how the options will relate to each other (e.g. consecutive numbers, consecutive orders of magnitude, going up in fives, etc.); then roll a die to determine the location of the correct answer; then generate the distractors.

For example, the answer to a particular multiple choice question is the year 1929. There are to be four options in the question. Suppose it is decided that the distractors are to be three years apart from each other. A die may be rolled to determine which of the four options is to be the correct one. (If a 5 or 6 is rolled, the die will be rolled again.) Let us say that the die-roll yields a 4. The distractors are then generated so that the fourth is 1929. That is: 1920, 1923, 1926, 1929.

► **Use an appropriate number of options.**

The recommended number of options is three or four. With two options candidates will start to guess, especially if they cannot see a clear difference between the options. It may be difficult to find more than four attractive and genuine options, and the use of a greater number will certainly increase the reading time and place greater demands on candidates' memory.

► **Avoid irrelevant dissimilarities.**

To be sure that the choice of an answer is based on mastery of the subject and not on irrelevant factors, all options should be alike in approach, grammar, style and length. Consider the following example.

- Why did Kim's mother go to the kitchen?
- A. Because the cat was eating the fish pie.
 - B. Peter had asked her to do so.
 - C. She wanted to put the kettle on.
 - D. to get the sugar.

All the options have a different grammatical construction. It would be better if they all started with 'because'. Note also that option **D** above does not start with a capital letter, whereas the other options do. Make sure there is a system ensuring uniform punctuation of multiple choice questions throughout the paper (see below).

► **Use a consistent format and layout for all multiple-choice questions throughout the paper.**

For example, there should not be one section of multiple-choice questions in which candidates must tick the relevant box, followed by another section in which the candidate writes the chosen letter into a space provided, or circles the chosen option. Such changes will inevitably disconcert or confuse some candidates and should be avoided.

Unless an established style for the examination imposes a conflicting constraint, the SEC's house style is to label the options with bold capital letters starting from A, and to require the candidate to write the correct letter into a box. Text-based options should be presented vertically, as in the examples above. (If text-based options are presented horizontally, confusion can easily occur as to which box goes with which answer, especially for the middle options.) Where the options are pictures or diagrams, they should be presented horizontally, with the corresponding letter written underneath each picture.

The SEC's house style is that if the labelled options are full sentences, then they should start with a capital and end with a full stop. In cases where the options are various ways of completing a sentence that starts in the stem, each starts in lower case (unless there is some specific reason for capitalising) and only the last one ends with a full stop. If the options consist only of numbers, there is no full stop.

5.5 Writing Constructed-Response Questions

Constructed-response questions range from cloze or completion questions, which require the candidate to produce a single word or phrase, through to essay-type questions, which require a substantial piece of structured text, or a detailed solution to a problem. The following principles will assist in the writing and reviewing of constructed-response questions.

► **Target the Assessment Objective.**

In all constructed-response questions, but especially in relation to cloze, completion or short-answer questions, care needs to be taken to ensure that the questions accurately target the objective to be tested. In particular, candidates should not be able to guess the answer to a question based on knowledge or skill other than that being assessed. The following example illustrates this in relation to a modern language paper:

☒ Read the advertisement below and answer the questions that follow:

[A newspaper advertisement in the target language is presented.]

(a) What personal details do you have to send, along with your photograph?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Here, even without reading the advertisement, a candidate is likely to guess that the personal details include name, address, telephone number and date of birth, since these are standard personal details; this was indeed the case. Hence, the question is not accurately targeting the assessment objective, which is comprehension of the target language in written form.

To help ensure that a short-answer question targets the relevant objective, it is useful to ask two equally important questions:

- Can I be sure that the person who understands ... will answer this question correctly?
- Can I be sure that the person who does not understand ... will not answer correctly?

► **Formulate the model answer together with the question.**

As already referred to in chapter 4, a question and model answer should always be developed in tandem. This ensures that the question has a clear answer. Too much time can be spent on interesting problems or tasks that eventually prove to be beyond the ability of the candidates, or on unclear passages in texts which eventually prove to be so vague that no clear and reasonable answer can be found. Usually there is an interaction in which a redefinition of the answer will lead to a redefinition of the question and vice versa, until both are unequivocal.

▶ **Use the model answer as a check on the question.**

Each person working on the paper should be asked to formulate an answer without looking at the model answers given by others. These answers should then be compared, as this will clarify interpretations of the question and its requirements.

▶ **Develop the marking scheme along with the question.**

The marking scheme, along with the model answer, helps to clarify the exact expectations of the question, and may reveal that the question is inaccurately phrased or places unreasonable demands on the candidates. It should also be used to analyse whether the appropriate relative merit is being given to different questions or tasks. See section 4.4.1 for information regarding what the marking scheme for constructed-response questions should include.

▶ **Use concrete instruction and question expressions.**

Use simple and correct command terms. Indicate clearly to the candidate exactly what is required. For example, if you have a question beginning with “Why...” and if the model solution and marking scheme indicates that full marks will be awarded for three correct reasons, then rephrase the question to make this expectation explicit: “Give three reasons why...”. See sections 5.2, 5.3 and Appendix 5 for further information on using the correct command word.

▶ **Use answering restrictions, where appropriate.**

Adjustments to questions will mostly amount to clarifying what is required of the candidate. If analysis indicates that a question allows inappropriate answers, it can be amended by adding answering restrictions. These provide additional information, indicating the direction the answer should, and should not, take. In the following examples, the restrictions are underlined, (although such underlining would not appear on the actual examination paper).

What is the present predominant form of land use in...

Give one reason why maize is increasingly grown in the sandy areas of the Netherlands with large quantities of livestock. Do not give an economic reason.

▶ **Avail of all opportunities provided in the process to gain the maximum benefit from the input of the various experts involved.**

Confidentiality precludes distribution and discussion of the examination materials beyond the authorised personnel, with the consequent disadvantage that very few people review the paper

before use. Because of this, it is all the more important to take full advantage of the expertise that is available. It is virtually impossible for one person to grasp all the implications of a question and its possible answers. Setters should not be slow to revise questions in the light of feedback, both direct and indirect. For example, the different background of the university nominees may lead them to a different interpretation of the question, while their model solutions and comments may provide a valuable additional insight, leading to amendments. A difficulty with translation may draw attention to an ambiguity in the question phrasing. All of these forms of feedback help to hone the question.

Apart from leading to improvements in the question, this screening provides valuable support if there are subsequent queries about the question or its interpretation. The fact that subject experts have considered the question and its accurate interpretation, and that particular amendments were discussed and either accepted or rejected, gives confidence to the SEC in standing by the quality of the examination.

► **Never explain away a critical comment or any difficulty encountered by a reviewer.**

Candidates are certainly far less familiar with the subject matter than the Drafter, Setter, Assistant Setter, and Chief Examiner. Even a momentary hesitation on the part of these experts indicates a potentially significant problem. Value the initial reaction to the first reading of a sentence, even when a second reading satisfies the reader. Likewise, reviewers should not avoid articulating their concerns for fear of giving offence. It is important to establish a culture of constant interrogation of all aspects of quality. It is equally important to separate the paper from one's own identity, so as to remain open to comment and criticism of the paper without feeling personally undermined or criticised.

5.6 Rubrics

Rubrics give candidates vital information and so it is important that they too are clear and succinct. They should conform to the standard formats established by past practice, be printed in a consistent style, and be easily distinguished from the questions and stimulus material. A number of checks to be undertaken in relation to rubrics are dealt with in the context of proofreading in chapter 6. It is important to pay careful attention to these details, since familiarity with the structure of an examination paper can blind one to errors in the rubrics. If not rectified, these can cause great difficulties both for candidates and for the marking team.

The following will assist:

- No statement should be included in the rubrics unless it is necessary and helpful.
- Where possible, all statements should be placed at the beginning of the question paper and repeated at the relevant point inside the paper.
- Statements should be written simply and directly. For example, there is no need to write:

✘ Any **four** questions to be answered.

Instead, use the more direct:

Answer any **four** questions.

- If the examination has a complex structure, consider a number of different ways of writing the rubric, and seek opinions about which is the clearest.

For example, consider the following rubric:

The paper consists of three sections: A, B and C. Each section contains two questions. You must answer **one** question from section A, **one** question from section B, **one** question from section C, and **one** other question chosen from any of the three sections.

The rubric is quite complex, but the Setter is unlikely to be at liberty to change the structure of the paper. Nonetheless, different ways of stating the same rubric should be explored and discussed. For example:

There are six questions in this examination. Two are in section A, two in section B and two in section C. Answer **four** questions. You must choose at least one question from each section.

Answer **four** questions. You must choose at least one question from each section.

Note that the shortest version of the rubric might not necessarily be the clearest. Note also that **any** change to the manner in which a rubric is stated must be discussed with and approved by the Chief Examiner.

5.7 Selecting and Reviewing Stimulus Material

Stimulus material can be in the form of text, diagram, photograph, recording of a conversation, etc. Its function is to “set the scene” for a question or a number of questions that will be based around it. The use of stimulus material in the development of test items should enhance rather than diminish the validity of the examination. Questions based on stimulus material can test a wide range of skills and can provide an interesting and attractive method of examining.

However, since stimulus material may raise problems of accessibility and readability, it should be selected and developed from the beginning in such a way as to allow participation of the widest possible range of candidates. This will facilitate the making of valid inferences about the performance of all candidates, by minimising the need to make subsequent modifications for particular groups.

The questions based on the stimulus material must be relevant to:

- the syllabus
- the assessment objectives
- the age group of the generality of candidates.

Since the stimulus material is the very basis of the questions, it is essential that it should be carefully scrutinised and edited. To improve the readability of a text, it may be necessary to adapt the terminology and the language used, while at the same time ensuring that the value and integrity of the source is preserved. In making adaptations, Drafters and Setters should take account of the issues related to copyright that are addressed in section 2.2.

The selection of stimulus material is an area in which the overarching need to ensure fairness to all candidates requires particular consideration. Fairness, in this context, refers to the selection of stimuli and the phrasing of test items so as to allow all candidates to perform to their full potential.

As a guiding principle, care should be taken to ensure that examinations are free from needlessly controversial material, inappropriate images, content or language. At the various stages of development, all examinations should be reviewed and revised to avoid potentially insensitive content. Material for inclusion in examinations should be handled in a balanced, sensitive and objective manner. Furthermore, the least controversial, inflammatory, offensive, or upsetting material that will meet the requirements of an examination should be used. Stimulus material used should not, unless required for valid measurement, contain content which may be offensive or distressing to a particular group.

In addition, the source material, the information provided, and the questions asked should not make unreasonable or biased assumptions about:

- the general knowledge of the candidates
- the socio-economic background of the candidates
- the candidate level of attainment
- the interests of the candidate age group.

Some questions to be considered when choosing stimulus material include:

- Is the context suitable and relevant to the age cohort involved?
- Is the stimulus material necessary in order to test the relevant objective?
- Does the source material contain content which may be offensive to a particular group?
- Are the questions asked relevant to the information supplied?
- Is the source material attractive, interesting and accessible to the candidates for whom it is intended?
- Is the source material topical, where appropriate?
- Are statistical data appropriately up-to-date?
- Does the material give unintended clues to the expected response?
- Is the material misleading: does it suggest lines of approach not sought by the questions?
- Is it helpful (or not) to give information on the source of the material?
- Does the stimulus material facilitate differentiation? Does it facilitate the assessment of candidates of a wide range of achievement?
- Is it possible for the majority of candidates to process the stimulus material and answer the questions in the time available?
- is the length of the recording consistent with established practice?

Recorded stimulus material is used for aural and audio-visual examinations in Music, Irish, modern languages, LCVP Link Modules, and a number of LCA courses. It is important to remain clear about the objectives of the assessment. For example, in a modern language, the objective is to test the ability of the candidates to understand the spoken language. In the LCVP link modules, the stimulus material provides background information and context upon which candidates must bring to bear relevant knowledge and understanding acquired during their studies. In evaluating recorded material, the following questions should be considered:

- Is the recording of the highest possible quality?
- Are instructions to candidates given clearly?
- Are there adequate time intervals between the instructions and the test material?
- Are there adequate pauses to allow candidates sufficient time to compose their answers?
- Does the length of any piece of the test material present the candidates with an unreasonable test of memory?
- Is the test material free of bias towards any group of candidates?

- Has undue emphasis on authenticity caused an obstacle to understanding?
- Have adequate and appropriate instructions been provided to the Superintendent who will play the recording to the candidates?

The suitability and effectiveness of the questions set must also be evaluated. The issues to be considered are exactly the same as for written questions.

Proofreading is concerned with checking the absolute accuracy of the minutiae of the examination paper. It is important to note that even a minor error that remains at the end of the process is treated with the utmost concern. All those involved in the process of proofreading have a responsibility for checking every detail of the examination papers.

6.1 General Approaches

The following may assist in the effective proofreading of examination papers:

- ▶ Allow an interval of time between the creation of the examination paper and its proofreading.
- ▶ Read slowly, because otherwise your eyes will not physically see the print and so will not detect the errors. Do not let your eye move from any word until you have seen it and read it fully. To assist in this process, read with a cover: create a template from paper or card that allows you to reveal only one word at a time as you read through the paper.
- ▶ Read aloud, even if reading alone. That will involve the sense of hearing and two senses are better than one.
- ▶ Put yourself in the place of the candidate. Consider how the candidate will navigate through the question paper, and how he or she will switch attention between the question paper and the answerbook.
- ▶ Cultivate a healthy sense of doubt; you must doubt every word to catch every mistake.
- ▶ It is much harder to detect mistakes in your own work than in that of someone else. Never explain away a critical comment.
- ▶ When proofreading with someone else, it is better for the person who did not produce the text to read aloud.
- ▶ When a correction is made, read the whole sentence again.
- ▶ Mark all corrections on the margin, using the standard proofreading words and symbols. (See Appendix 4.)

6.2 Proofreading Procedures

The proofreading process must be carried out at each stage of paper preparation from draft to post-press scrutiny. Begin by checking that all of the changes requested on the previous proof have been correctly implemented. Such a check is, however, by no means sufficient, since other items on the paper, which were satisfactory on the previous proof, may have been unintentionally changed. This is one of the reasons why a full proofreading of the whole paper must be undertaken at each stage.

The following key practices will help to eliminate errors:

- ▶ Start by reading the front cover, word by word, top to bottom. Then, recheck the following:
 - that the date, starting time and finishing time are correct; ensure that they match the current timetable.
 - that the title includes the paper level and, if applicable, “Paper 1” or “Paper 2”.
 - that the rubrics on the front cover are correct and that they match the section rubrics inside.
 - in the case of combined question-and-answer books, that there are boxes for the candidate’s examination number, total marks, and centre stamp; that the mark grid and grid for examiner’s cumulative tot check are correct.

- ▶ Go through the examination paper as a whole and do the following:
 - Check the pagination.
 - Check rubrics regarding carry-over of questions onto next pages.
 - Check that section rubrics are consistent with those at the front and/or other information.
 - Check that questions are numbered correctly and consecutively, in bold.
 - Check that sub-sections **(a) (i), (ii)...**(b) (i), (ii) are numbered consecutively within each question.
 - Check that the layout has consistent spacing between the sections, rubrics, and questions. Ensure that there are no unnecessary gaps in the overall use of space. Check the overall shape of the text on the page by holding the page at a distance.
 - Check the alignment and especially the right hand margins where marks are printed.
 - Where diagrams or figures are numbered, ensure that these are numbered consecutively throughout the paper, and consistently bold or italicised in accordance with established practice.
 - Check all instructions, formulae, symbols, illustrations, tables, graphs, and cross-references for clarity and accuracy.
 - Check the size, position, clarity, markings and legends of all diagrams, visuals and maps.
 - Check and total all mark allocations ensuring that sub-totals sum to question totals, question totals sum to paper totals and the mark allocations match those given in relevant circulars and sample papers.

- ▶ Then go through each individual question again and do the following:
 - Check that any topic titles mentioned in the questions or rubrics are an exact match for the text used in the relevant syllabus.
 - Check that the question makes sense when read through.
 - Check for grammatical accuracy, considering in particular:
 - plurals and possessives (its...it's, etc.)
 - active/passive voice
 - subject-verb agreement
 - subject agreement of relative clauses
 - consistency and appropriateness of tense
 - noun-pronoun agreement
 - sentence fragments.
 - Check punctuation, with special reference to accuracy in the use of commas. Check for the appropriate use of colons and semi-colons.
 - Check all spelling, paying special attention to proper names, technical terms, abbreviations, foreign words and accents.
 - Check the accuracy of subscripts, superscripts and numerical indices, especially in formulae.
 - Check for appropriate paragraphing.
 - In the case of combined question paper and answerbook papers, check that the space is appropriate for the expected answer and that it gives a reasonable indication of the length of answer required.
 - If errors are found during post-press scrutiny and if they require inclusion in the Errata List, the wording for entry in the Errata List must be provided by the Chief Examiner or Setter.

Note: in many cases, Chief Examiners have designed paper-specific proofreading checklists. Such checklists should encapsulate all the items of proofreading procedures appropriate to that specific subject, and be designed to ensure an accurate and thorough proofing of the draft. Setters and Assistant Setters should use such checklists in all cases where they are provided.

6.3 Proofreading Irish Versions

Candidates using the Irish version are entitled to a true translation of the English version, presented without errors or omissions. They are also entitled to the same level of accessibility in the paper. All of the principles of readability outlined in sections 5.1 and 5.2 apply equally to the Irish version.

The Setter and Assistant Setter are responsible for proofreading both the Irish version and the English version of the draft examination paper. In the case of the Irish version, this involves checking the proof against the translation provided by the translation service and cross-checking both versions. It is acknowledged that not all Setters and Assistant Setters will have a thorough knowledge of Irish. Consequently, the Chief Examiner will arrange for assistance with the task, where necessary. Setters and Assistance Setters should apprise the Chief Examiner of any difficulties that arise during the process.

The following additional proofreading procedures should be followed with the Irish versions of examination papers

- ▶ The Irish version must be checked line by line against the English version.
- ▶ Particular attention should be paid to combinations of consonants with a 'h', especially in the middle of a word; such words as “Laghdaigh”, “Tadhg”, “athdhréachtaigh”, “comhdháil” and “íochta” can cause confusion.
- ▶ As with the English version, if errors are found during post-press scrutiny that require inclusion in the Errata List, the wording for the entry in the Errata List must be provided by the Chief Examiner or Setter.

Appendix 1: Checklists for Equality

Examination papers should offer all candidates an equal opportunity to demonstrate their attainment. The tasks, the language in which they are presented, and any associated illustrative material should reflect an inclusive view of society. Care should be taken to ensure that examination papers are inclusive with respect to all of the nine grounds referred to in the Equal Status Act: gender, marital status, family status, age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community.

When referring to people with disabilities, avoid patronisation, pitying terms or defining terms (e.g. ‘the blind’, ‘epileptics’). Do not depersonalise older people by referring to them as ‘the elderly’; be careful with terms such as ‘pensioners’. Avoid the use of derogatory or stereotyping language in relation to sexual orientation; language carries many assumptions about the characteristics of gay and lesbian people and can easily be used negatively. Be inclusive and sensitive with reference to the concept of the family unit.

Checklists are provided below for some areas that can cause particular difficulties in examination papers: *gender equity*, and *cultural, racial and religious equity*.

Checklist for gender equity

While this checklist does not claim to be definitive it should assist in the preparation of fair and inclusive examination questions. The relevance of the items mentioned will vary according to the subject and it is not intended that the list be followed slavishly. Nonetheless, if used in the intended spirit, the checklist should assist in the setting and vetting of question papers.

Taking the examination paper as a whole, you should be able to answer “yes” to the following questions, subject to any possible constraints of the nature of the study involved:

- ▶ Are both sexes equally represented in the texts, illustrations and examples?
- ▶ Are both sexes shown taking an equal and active part as parents and members of families?
- ▶ Are both sexes shown participating equally in physical and practical activities? In scientific and technological activities? In artistic and creative activities? In domestic activities?

- ▶ Are both sexes portrayed as being equally competent in both intellectual and practical activities?
- ▶ Are both sexes portrayed as having equal status (e.g. in decision-making) at work and at home? (Check not only the role assigned, but also any additional information such as illustrations, which might suggest authority through body posture or positioning of males and females.)
- ▶ Are both sexes treated in a balanced way when being described in terms of role relationships (e.g. wife, husband, mother, father, manager, assistant)?
- ▶ Is the respective contribution of both sexes to the shaping of society, and their impact on history, adequately presented?
- ▶ Are situations and contexts used in questions equally within the experience of both sexes?

Taking each question separately, you should be able to answer “no” to these questions:

- ▶ Are occupations referred to in a gender-biased way (e.g. policeman rather than police officer; fireman rather than fire-fighter)?
- ▶ Is the masculine pronoun used to refer to all people?
- ▶ Are women and men shown only in stereotyped roles (e.g. women as housewives, carers, secretaries, and men as managers, scientists, engineers)?
- ▶ When questions are contextualised, are males and females shown to have stereotypical interests (e.g. girls liking soft toys and magazines, boys liking computers)?
- ▶ Are females portrayed in more passive roles (sitting, watching) and males in more active roles?
- ▶ Are males shown in more aggressive roles and females in more sensitive roles?

The following suggestions will assist in minimising some of the difficulties referred to above:

- ▶ As far as possible use gender-neutral rather than gender-specific terms where reality is best described in gender-neutral terms.
- ▶ When referring to people check whether the use of the plural, ‘they’ or the generic term, ‘manager, economist’ etc., can obviate the need to use ‘he or she’ or ‘she or he’ repeatedly.
- ▶ Replace expressions such as ‘the man in the street’ with terms such as ‘the average citizen’, ‘typical person’, etc.
- ▶ The word ‘man’, used as an adjunct, occurs frequently in the language. Be alert to usage which encourages non-inclusive thinking e.g. ‘businessman’, ‘chairman’, ‘charwoman’ ‘gentleman’s agreement’, ‘headmistress’, ‘woman doctor’, ‘manning’. Instead use terms such as ‘business executive’, ‘convenor’, ‘informal agreement’, ‘head’, ‘staffing’.

Checklist for cultural, racial and religious equity

Every possible effort must be made to ensure that examination papers are free of cultural, racial or religious bias and that they promote positive images of all groups in society. Examination papers must reflect the diversity of modern society. Stereotypes, even 'positive' ones, can be pervasively destructive.

There should be no racist or derogatory language in any assessment situation, even in an anti-racist context.

Taking the examination paper as a whole, you should be able to answer “yes” to the following questions, subject to any possible constraints of the nature of the study involved:

- ▶ Where people are portrayed in illustrations and examples, do they reflect a multi-racial society; do they represent a variety of cultural backgrounds, and in reasonable proportions?
- ▶ Is the portrayal of other cultures balanced, and not characterised as 'poor', 'primitive', 'backward' or 'exotic'?
- ▶ Are people from a variety of cultural backgrounds shown to be taking an equal and active part as parents and members of families?
- ▶ Are people from a variety of cultural backgrounds shown to be participating equally in physical and practical activities? In scientific and technological activities? In artistic and creative activities? In domestic activities?
- ▶ Are people from a variety of cultural backgrounds portrayed as being equally competent in both intellectual and practical activities?
- ▶ Are people from a variety of cultural backgrounds portrayed as having equal status (e.g. in decision-making) at work and at home?
- ▶ Are the situations and contexts used in questions equally within the experience of students from different cultural backgrounds?
- ▶ Where illustrations of different racial groups are used, do they reflect the distinctive physical features of such groups, rather than presenting everyone as merely with darker or lighter skin colour? And is stereotypical dress avoided?
- ▶ Is racist language and words with racially sensitive connotations avoided?

Within subject-related contexts:

- ▶ Are the customs, lifestyles and traditions of people of developing countries presented in a manner that reflects the value, meaning and role of these customs in the life of the people?

- ▶ Is the role of people in developing countries in shaping their society, and in historical events - both in their own country and in the world - accurately presented from their perspective?
- ▶ Where a text does reflect a biased view or a cultural stereotype, does the question seek comment on this portrayal? (This may occur with authentic texts, for example.)
- ▶ In creative and aesthetic subjects, within the constraints of the syllabus, are the examination papers as multi-cultural as they can be?

Taking each question separately, you should be able to answer “no” to the following questions:

- ▶ Do the text and related questions or assignments make assumptions about cultural, class or religious backgrounds which will make them inaccessible to any candidate?
- ▶ Do the text and related questions or assignments make assumptions about cultural, class or religious backgrounds which will make them offensive or off-putting to any candidate?

Within subject-related contexts:

- ▶ Do the passages and/or questions exclusively endorse Western values, levels of development, concepts, lifestyles and institutions and deem them to be automatically superior, without inviting comment on the viewpoint expressed?
- ▶ Are power, leadership and competence to make decisions or initiate development represented solely as attributes of Western societies?

Note that the use of real texts as stimulus materials should not be ruled out as a result of the above considerations. Some of the questions set on such stimulus material may draw candidates' attention to the issues of equity inherent in the text.

Appendix 2: Checklist for Marking Schemes

The following questions will assist in reviewing and amending the marking scheme, and thereby help to improve the quality of the examination paper.

- ▶ Does the marking scheme adhere to the syllabus and the specified weightings of content and objectives?
- ▶ Is the marking scheme accurate, consistent and unbiased?
- ▶ In the case of each question, does the marking scheme reflect the specific objective-related target on which the question is focused? Do the answers that attract full marks correspond to the question asked? If not, is it the question or the answer that needs to be changed?
- ▶ Are the solutions in the scheme correct?
- ▶ Does the marking scheme minimise the amount of subjective judgement that the marker has to exercise?
- ▶ Does the marking scheme encourage examiners to use the whole range of marks available, so that full marks do not correspond to unattainable theoretical perfection, but rather to the level of achievement anticipated?
- ▶ Where marking schemes are expressed as a series of bands:
 - do the bands relate to the target identified for the question?
 - do the bands reflect a clear qualitative progression?
 - do the bands reflect, in positive terms, how candidates may respond?
 - does the marking scheme reflect the number of bands likely to be generated by the question?
 - does the marking scheme avoid mark ranges that are too narrow to enable examiners to clearly differentiate between the bands described?

Appendix 3: Grammar and Punctuation

Commas, semi-colons, colons, full stops, exclamation marks and question marks are never preceded by a space.

Comma

A comma is used to separate words or word groups in a series:

He is a bright, energetic, healthy teenager.

When the last two items are linked by *and*, conventions differ regarding including a comma before the *and*. The SEC convention is to include this comma, as it serves to give equal weight to each of the items in the series and it helps in avoiding confusion in cases such as those illustrated by the following two examples:

The material is available from Celtic Press, Gill and Macmillan, and Edco.

Methods of illustration used included questions and answers, anecdotes, and gestures.

A comma is used when a co-ordinating conjunction (such as *but*, *for*, *yet*, *and*) is being used to join two independent clauses:

He was aware of the problems, but he went ahead anyway.

Note that the second clause above could stand alone as a grammatical sentence if the conjunction were removed. In the following example, however, the second clause is not independent, as it relies on the first for its subject; there is therefore no comma before the word “and”:

Key words were repeated and were written on the blackboard for emphasis.

A comma is usually used after a subordinate clause that precedes the main clause in a sentence:

When he arrived back, the papers had been shredded.

A pair of commas is used to bracket an interruption in a sentence:

The initial results, based on surveys conducted this year, indicate widespread support for the scheme.

The English teachers pointed out that, because their classes are generally timetabled in prefabs, role-playing and dramatic improvisation are difficult for them.

When using commas in this way, care must be taken to check that there is a comma both before and after the words inserted in the middle of the sentence. Note that removing the text between the two commas does not destroy the structure of the sentence. This is a useful check on the correctness of the punctuation:

✘ She groped for her bag, and finding it, pulled out her mobile phone.

If we remove the words “and finding it” from the sentence, the remainder is not a proper sentence structure. This indicates that something is wrong. The correctly punctuated version is:

She groped for her bag and, finding it, pulled out her mobile phone.

A pair of commas is used to bracket a non-defining (non-restrictive) relative clause in a sentence:

This is a particular case of the previous point, but warrants separate mention because of the distinction between defining and non-defining relative clauses. Consider the following two sentences, which are significantly different in meaning:

The residents who depend on tourism for a living are disappointed with the decision.

The above sentence states that those particular residents who depend on tourism are disappointed. Other residents may not be.

The residents, who depend on tourism for a living, are disappointed with the decision.

This sentence states that all the residents in question are disappointed. It also states, only by way of adding information, that they depend on tourism for a living.

It is useful to note that in American usage, the word *that* is always used instead of *which* to introduce a defining relative clause, whereas *which* and *that* are both acceptable in British usage.

The grammar checker in *MS Word* does not recognise this British usage and hence often leads users astray. For example, the following sentence is correctly punctuated:

All the examination papers which I prepared were perfect.

Nonetheless, the grammar checker does not like the use of *which* here and suggests either inserting commas around the clause *which I prepared* or replacing *which* with *that*. If we accept the first suggestion, as many people are inclined to do, we significantly change the meaning of the sentence. This problem can be overcome by avoiding the use of *which* in the case of a defining relative clause. This problem illustrates that, while a grammar checker may be a useful tool for alerting you to *possible* grammatical problems, it should always be used critically.

Other notes in relation to the use of the comma

A comma is not required between the month and year in dates.

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Commas are not normally used in writing addresses on typed letters.

Commas that might otherwise seem optional may be required in order to remove ambiguity, momentary or otherwise, from a sentence.

For that week only, he was allowed to use the computer.

For that week, only he was allowed to use the computer.

In the preparation of examination papers, if the correct meaning of a sentence relies heavily on the reader's correct interpretation of commas, consider restructuring the sentence to improve accessibility.

Semi-colon

The semi-colon has only one major use. It is used to join two complete sentences into one written sentence when all of the following conditions are met:

1. the two sentences are to be considered to be more closely related than would be conveyed by separating them with a full stop;
2. there is no connecting word which would require a comma, such as *and* or *but*;
3. the particular conditions requiring a colon are not met.

The meeting planned for Saturday is cancelled; the one planned for Monday is going ahead.

A less common use of the semi-colon is to divide and clarify a series of items that would otherwise be separated by commas:

The members of the committee include Dr John Smith, Chairman; Mr James Brown, Psychologist; Mr Joseph Key, Training Manager; and Ms Sandra Murphy, Finance Officer.

Colon

A colon is used to introduce a part of a sentence that explains or expands on a preceding part of the sentence:

In reading the reports, two major issues became clear to me: staffing levels are inadequate, and additional accommodation is needed.

A colon is often used to introduce direct speech or quoted material:

In his opening speech, the Minister, Mr Smith, said: 'It is essential that we upgrade and improve facilities in all schools.'

Note that a comma may also introduce direct speech.
(See below for further notes on insertion of quotations into text.)

A colon may be used to introduce a list, or to indicate that fuller detail follows:

The approved course for recognised junior pupils must include the following subjects:

- (i) Irish
- (ii) English
- ...

A colon should not be followed by a hyphen or dash.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are used to enclose direct speech:

The applicant said, "I have been waiting here since eight o'clock this morning."

Note that quotation marks should *not* be used when reporting indirect speech:
The applicant said that he had been waiting since eight o'clock.

Quotation marks are used to introduce an unfamiliar word or phrase:

We should try to eliminate ‘gobbledegook’ from our writing.

Quotation marks are sometimes used to emphasise a particular expression, or to indicate disagreement with the use of the expression.

He referred frequently to ‘the voices’ that told him he should leave.

He described himself as a ‘student’ but there was no evidence that he had enrolled in any school or college.

Quotation marks can be either *single* or *double*. The SEC convention is to use double quotation marks for direct speech, and single quotation marks for the other circumstances indicated above. For quotations within quotations the opposite type of quotation mark is used for the embedded quote:

As they left, the tutor announced: “Next week we’ll explore Henry Ford’s remark, ‘History is bunk.’ ”

Apostrophe

An apostrophe is used to indicate possession:

A single noun or name is followed by apostrophe and s:

The Chairman’s report.

A single noun or name ending in *s* is followed by apostrophe and *s*, unless the name is such that the possessive is not pronounced with an extra *s*:

Charles’s account

but

Ulysses’ companions.

A plural noun or name is followed by apostrophe *s*:

The children’s books.

A plural noun or name ending in *s* is followed by an apostrophe only:

The inspectors' views were sought on all issues involved.

An apostrophe is no longer used in the plural of shortened forms of words such as TDs, CEOs. It is, however, used in plurals where clarity calls for it, such as the plurals of single letters:

Dot your i's and cross your t's.

Possessive pronouns (*yours, hers, its*) are written without apostrophes. The only exception to this is *one's*.

An apostrophe is used to indicate a missing letter or letters in a contraction:

she'll	for	she will
can't	for	cannot
it's	for	it is

Other notes in relation to the use of the apostrophe

Note the difference between *it's*, the contraction for *it is*, and *its*, the possessive pronoun. Both are used in the following sentence:

Mary said, "It's not my fault the toaster blew its fuse."

Beware of incorrect use of the apostrophe with ordinary plural nouns, as often appears incorrectly in signs such as:

☒ Shoe's repaired

The apostrophe is rapidly disappearing in company names and in other commercial uses. Its inclusion or omission generally reflects the strength of the possessive sense in the title, and the owners of such companies should be granted the courtesy of having the names spelled as they wish, to the extent that such wishes are clear. If the organisation itself consistently omits the apostrophe, then follow that convention. Otherwise, retain the apostrophe.

Jurys Hotel, Roches Stores, Niall's Coffee Shop.

Dash

A dash can be used to separate parts of a sentence or to introduce an explanation of something:

The meetings take place on the last Friday of the month – the only day on which all the members of the team are in Dublin.

Dashes are often used to mark off a parenthesis or an aside in the middle of a sentence, especially in cases where the interruption is stronger than would be suggested by commas:

An honest politician – if such a thing exists – would never agree to such a plan.

As with commas, when dashes are used to mark off a parenthesis or an aside care must be taken that two dashes are used, unless the aside is at the end of the sentence.

Parentheses (round brackets)

Parentheses are used to separate off comments and asides from the rest of the sentence:

On the (rare!) occasions when you use a Latin phrase, be sure to punctuate it correctly.

They may be similarly used to mark off a brief explanation of an unfamiliar term:

Forward the softcopy (computer file) to the SEC.

Parentheses are primarily used to de-emphasise the explanatory matter, whereas dashes are primarily used to emphasise the explanatory matter.

Parentheses are used to distinguish parts of a sentence by marking them off by letter or number:

The most important functions of the board are: (1) to appoint the Chairman, (2) to elect a committee, and (3)....

Note that square brackets [] have a separate function from those of round brackets. Inside a quotation, they are used to enclose a comment or explanation not in the original text.

Hyphen

Hyphens are used to link multi-word phrases preceding the noun (compound modifiers):

The chairman asked for an up-to-date copy of the report.

The school has a well-stocked library.

It is a hard-wearing fabric.

The hyphenation of compound modifiers is often essential in conveying the correct meaning. For example, *our first-class performance* is not the same thing as *our first class performance*. Note that without hyphens, the adjectives or other modifiers are assumed to work outwards from the noun. If the first word of such modifiers is *well*, *better*, *best*, *ill worse* or *worst*, then the modifiers are not hyphenated when they come after the noun. Other modifiers usually are.

The library is well stocked.

The fabric is hard-wearing.

Present or past participles preceded by an adverb ending in *-ly* are not linked to the adverb with hyphens in any position in the sentence:

It is a beautifully decorated room.

The room is beautifully decorated.

Hyphens are used to link multi-word phrases functioning as nouns:

Editor-in-Chief.

Hyphens are used in certain compound words

This can be a difficult matter, because, as the compound words become more familiar, they tend to lose the hyphen and become single words. For example, the original *electro-magnetic* is now much more rarely used than *electromagnetic*. Consult a good dictionary if you are unsure, but

bear in mind also that, while the omission of the hyphen in certain words may be acceptable, its retention may aid readability. For example, although *cooperate* and *coordinates* are well-established words, many students find *co-operate* and *co-ordinates* easier to read, because they more clearly reflect the sounds of those words.

Hyphens are used to link numbers from 21 to 99 and fractions:

There were thirty-five people in the room.

Two-thirds of the electorate voted.

Slash (Oblique Stroke, or Solidus)

A slash is often used to present alternatives, but this usage is not recommended on examination papers:

✘ When a temporary teacher arrives, he/she is introduced to his/her class.

One should instead write out the full meaning of the slash, as you would intend the sentence to be spoken:

When a temporary teacher arrives, he or she is introduced to his or her class.

It should be noted, however, that it is usually possible to rephrase or restructure the sentence so that the need to use “he or she” repeatedly is either reduced or eliminated:

Upon arrival, a temporary teacher is introduced to his or her class.

When temporary teachers arrive, they are introduced to their classes.

In the latter reconstruction, a slight ambiguity has been introduced regarding whether each teacher has one class or more than one. This may or may not be significant in the context.

Note that the use of ‘they’ when the referent is singular does not conform to the house style and should therefore be avoided on examination papers:

✘ When a temporary teacher arrives, they are introduced to their class.

A slash is used in certain abbreviations:

Some specific abbreviations include a slash, such as *c/o* for *care of* and *a/c* for *account*. In measurements, a slash may be used to express rates or ratios, such as *km/h* for *kilometres per hour*.

Capital Letters

Capitalise job titles when they refer to specific individuals, but not when the reference is general and descriptive:

The Prime Minister called a cabinet meeting.

but

How many prime ministers has the UK had since 1960?

Capitalise the specific titles of programmes, documents or sections of documents:

the Leaving Certificate English Syllabus,

General Objective (B) of the Mathematics Syllabus

When referring to a plan or a syllabus in a general way, lower-case letters are used:

The teacher had no plan for the lesson and was clearly unfamiliar with the relevant syllabus.

Capitalise days of the week and months of the year, but not seasons:

Monday, January, spring, summer.

Capitalise the first word and all major words in titles of books, plays and publications; (lower-case letters are used for the definite and indefinite articles and for unstressed prepositions and conjunctions):

The Wind in the Willows; The Irish Times.

Report on In-Service Training Provision, 2002

Note the use of capitals for both parts of the hyphenated words in this last title.

Capitals are used for the full names of government agencies, departments and units within an organisation:

the Department of Education and Science; the Question Paper Unit.

Note that in referring to such organisations, it is desirable, when their names are repeated in shortened form, to retain the capital for the shortened title. The issue is whether the term is being used as an ordinary noun or as shorthand for the full title.

The Department of Education and Science...; [followed by]...the Department has approved...

but

This circular applies to all government departments.

Capitals are used for points of the compass that name recognised geographical areas, but not otherwise:

the Far East; Northern Ireland (the political entity); northern England; a man from the west of Ireland; we drove south from the city; elected T.D. for Galway West.

Capitals are used for family relationship words, when used as proper nouns:

I told Mother that my sister would be late.

She described her father to me perfectly.

Capitals are used for nationalities when they have their literal meaning, but need not be otherwise:

I bought a German car.

I like danish pastries.

In the first case, the car is actually from Germany. In the second, the adjective describes the type of pastry, and does not indicate that it is from Denmark. Note that usage differs on this latter point – the Oxford English Dictionary capitalises in both of the above cases.

Note that racial groups may be lowercased or capitalised. The only firm rule is to be consistent. If you capitalise one racial group, capitalise the others as well.

Names of currencies are not capitalised, with the exception of Deutschmark.

The pound sterling, the euro, the Japanese yen.

Capitals are used for languages. They are also used for other school subjects, provided that the reference is clearly to a particular programme of study in the subject:

French; English; Business Studies; Social, Personal and Health Education

If referring generically to a field of knowledge then capitals are not used.

I was always amazed by the geography of Africa.

Many people say that they are poor at mathematics.

The History syllabus has an interesting history.

Capitals are used for religious names and terms, for denominations and religious movements:

Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Methodists, Jehovah's Witnesses

Political movements or ideologies are not capitalised, unless they are based on the name of a person.

communism, Marxism, Stalinism, socialism.

Capitalising Scientific Terms

The rules for capitalising scientific terms, particularly the divisions of plants and animals, can be complex and bewildering. This section presents some general rules for capitalising the more common terms that are likely to be used.

Common Names of Plants and Animals:

Usually, lowercase the names of plants and animals, capitalising only proper nouns and adjectives used with the names. Check with a dictionary to be sure of accuracy.

border collie, rhesus monkey, golden retriever, Rhode Island red, mustang, rose of Sharon, Persian cat, white leghorn fowl.

Where a scientific or biological name is being used after a common name, it is written in round brackets and italicised, generic name in capitalised, specific name in lower case.

A flock of barnacle geese (*Brenta bernicla*).

Geological Terms:

Capitalise the names of eras, periods, and epochs, but not the words era, period, and epoch, even when used as part of the term.

Pliocene epoch, Lower Jurassic period, Precambrian period, Paleozoic era.

The word “age” takes a capital in “Bronze Age”, “Stone Age”, etc. The term “ice age” is not capitalised when used generically (to refer to any period of time when ice sheets and glaciers covered large portions of the earth) but is capitalised when referring specifically to the Pleistocene epoch: “the Ice Age”.

Medical Terms:

Lowercase the names of diseases, syndromes, symptoms, tests, drugs, and the like. Capitalise only proper nouns and adjectives or trade names used with these terms.

Aspirin, Parkinson’s disease, finger-nose test, poliomyelitis, Guillain-Barré syndrome, Salk vaccine, infectious granuloma, tetracycline, Metamid, Tylenol.

Physical and Chemical Terms:

Lowercase laws, theorems, principles, and the like, capitalising only proper nouns and adjectives used with these terms. Chemical symbols are also capitalised in accordance with their correct symbols, and written without full stops.

Boyle’s law, Maxwell’s equations, Newton’s second law, carbon-14, sulfuric acid, general theory of relativity, uranium-238, H₂SO₄, Lorenz transformations.

Shortened Forms of Words and Phrases

These include *abbreviations, contractions, initialisms, acronyms, clipped forms* and *symbols*.

Use of Full Stops with Shortened Forms

While full stops can be used with most shortened forms of words, (Mr. Smith, e.g., i.e., Grafton St.), it is now usual to omit the full stops from shortened forms that retain the last letter of the word they are derived from (Mr Smith, Grafton St). The full stops should be retained in other cases (e.g., i.e., viz., Prof., etc.) On examination papers, these latter abbreviations will normally be avoided in any case. Full stops may be omitted from acronyms and initialisms (NATO, RTÉ).

Use of Capital Letters in Shortened Forms

Shortened forms consisting of the initial letters of two or more words are usually written completely in capitals: OECD, RTÉ.

Words that were originally acronyms but are now common words are not capitalised: radar, laser.

A few shortened forms, not the names of countries or organisations, are written with lower-case letters: agm (also AGM), plc (also PLC).

Some shortened forms of measures such as *mph*, *lb*, *km* are written in lower case. In the case of SI units, take care to use the correct case – there is no discretion.

If more than the first letter of a word is taken into a shortened form, only the first letter is capitalised: *BSc* (*Bachelor of Science*), *PhD* (*Doctor of Philosophy*), *BMus* (*Bachelor of Music*).

Do not capitalise a.m. or p.m.

Plurals of Shortened Forms

An apostrophe is no longer usually used in the plural of shortened forms of words such as TDs, CEOs. However, if full stops are used in the shortened form, then the apostrophe should be included.

Writing Numbers

The ‘Rule of Ten’

In general, use the ‘rule of ten’ in determining whether to spell out a number or express it in figures. Under the rule of ten, spell out numbers ten and under (eg two, five, seven) and any number that is divisible by ten (eg twenty, sixty, eighty). All other numbers over ten are written in figures.

He stayed nine months in Italy.

The journey took twenty days.

The applicant is 25 years of age.

Round numbers

Numbers used as approximations in place of specific figures are usually spelled out, even when expressed as hundreds of thousands.

About three hundred thousand people were left homeless.

Large Numbers

Very large numbers are usually expressed in figures followed by *million*, *billion*, *trillion*, and so on.

It would cost €1.5 million to build the stadium.

The city contains more than 1.5 million people.

Note also that an American billion is a thousand million, whereas a British billion was traditionally a million million. The American meaning is now almost universal, but the ambiguity remains. It would be better to avoid the word in an examination context, unless the meaning is clarified. There is a similar issue in relation to a trillion.

Ordinal Numbers

The same rule of ten holds for ordinal numbers (first, second, third) as well:

She ranked fifth in the class.

The 25th article of the bylaws was revised.

Consistency

The exception to the rule of ten occurs when numbers under and over ten are used in the same paragraph, in a series, or to refer to the same item in a sentence. For the sake of consistency, numbers under ten are frequently expressed in figures.

The group consisted of 5 children, 13 teenagers and 17 adults.

Numbers Together

In some instances, numbers are used for more than one item in a sentence. Generally, the smaller of the two figures is expressed in words.

We presented twenty-five 35 mm slides of the scene.

First word in a sentence

Spell out numbers that begin a sentence, regardless of any inconsistency this may create in the rest of the sentence or paragraph. If the sentence contains more than one figure, or if the figure is large, try to rephrase the sentence so that the number does not come first.

Twenty-seven people attended the meeting.

Ages

Express exact ages in figures (unless including 'years old'). Approximate ages can be expressed in words or figures, but be sure to use the same style throughout.

Andrea is 7 and Alan is 14.

She was about sixty when she first travelled to Africa.

Time of day

When time is expressed in even, half or quarter hours, the numbers are generally spelled out.

The meeting started at a quarter past four.

He did not get home until midnight last night.

Figures are used when the exact time is given or in designations of time with a.m. or p.m. Use a colon to separate the hours and minutes.

The train pulled into Lisbon at 12:33 a.m.

The full report was on the 6:30 news.

In the 24-hour time system, figures are always used. There was traditionally no punctuation between the hour and minutes, but the use of a colon is becoming more prevalent and is also the ISO standard. It should therefore be used unless particular circumstances dictate otherwise (for example, if duplicating a real timetable in which the original does not use colons). Note that a leading zero must be inserted if the hour is a single-digit number.

The ship docked at 06:15 on Wednesday.

Centuries and Decades

References to particular centuries and decades are spelled out in lower-case letters.

Social upheaval during the sixties gave way to political conservatism in the eighties.

Insertion of Quotations into Text

Direct speech

Direct speech quotes the words actually spoken, introduced by *said* (or a similar word) and without the use of *that*. The quotation may be preceded by a colon or a comma. Punctuation belonging to the quoted text remains inside the final quotation mark; other punctuation goes outside. If the end of the quotation is not the end of the sentence, then a comma replaces a full stop at the end of the quotation. If the end of the quotation is also the end of the sentence in which the quotation occurs, then the second full stop is omitted.

The applicant said: "I have just returned from overseas."

The applicant said, "I have just returned from overseas."

"I have just returned from overseas," the applicant said.

"Do I have to go?" he asked.

"What do you mean by 'bird brained'?" he asked.

Short Quotations

A short quotation is generally punctuated in the same way as direct speech and incorporated within the surrounding text within quotation marks, but it is not usually preceded by a colon. Capital letters are used for the quotation if it is a complete sentence, but not if it is just a fragment:

In his preface to the revised third edition of *Fowler's Modern English Usage*, R. W. Burchfield states: "A usage manual of the *MEU* kind reflects its sources."

The applicant said that he had "just returned from overseas".

Note that the last example above, without the quotation marks, would be a correct example of indirect speech; the use of the quotation marks indicates that this was the actual phrase that the applicant had used.

Long Quotations

A longer quotation should generally be separated from the rest of the text by being indented slightly from the left-hand margin, by having a half-line or one-line space above and below, and by being preceded by a colon.

This point is clearly illustrated by Daniel:

All the facts with which a grammar deals are to be found in the language to which the grammar belongs; and it is in the language itself, not in books, that these facts are primarily to be sought. Grammarians do not impose rules on a language; they merely collect them from the language rules already in existence and set them forth in an orderly way.

This assertion is often surprising to the lay person.

Note that long quotations are not marked off by quotation marks.

Appendix 4: Proof Correction Symbols

Correct proofs with a red pen. Always give the margin mark as well as the textual mark, as otherwise the correction may be missed. Margin marks can be included on both sides. If two or more margin marks apply to the same line, separate them with a slash.

Instruction	Textual mark	Margin mark	Comment
Insert new matter	The use of more resources	of	The margin mark consists of the matter to be inserted.
Delete character	He sp o oke about	o	
Delete word or string of characters	into the the room.	o	The bars help to define the boundaries.
Substitute character	to r orrow	m	The margin mark consists of the matter to be inserted.
Substitute word / string of characters	When the firemen arrived,	fire-fighters	
Insert new matter supplied separately	discussed. Following this,	⊠ A	The material to be inserted is supplied separately and labelled with the corresponding letter.
Insert full stop	Find its area ,	⊙	The circle helps to identify the characters, which might otherwise be mistaken for a blemish on the proof.
Insert colon	one thing , he is not going	⊙	
Insert space	to the g irl he had met	#	
Insert single quotes	himself as a wayward lad	‘ / ’	Double quotes and apostrophes are treated similarly
Insert superscripted or subscripted characters	(x 2 - x 1) 2	2 / 1 / 3	This indicates that the first two numerals are to be subscripted and the third superscripted.
Insert single blank line	to do it after all. The next day, he	⊠ #	Separate margin mark not required, since this is to the side anyway, and is between lines.
Change to italics	is <u>definitely</u> not going	⋪ or (ital)	The symbols (listed first) are the new standards, but the older versions, using the words, are still very common.
Change to bold	is <u>definitely</u> not going	⋪ or (bold)	
Change to bold italics	is <u>definitely</u> not going	⋪ or (bold ital)	
Change to capitals	joined <u>nato</u> forces	≡ or (caps)	

Instruction	Textual mark	Margin mark	Comment
Close space	doing it him self.	∩	
Start new paragraph	it after all. The next day, he	┌ or (n.p.)	
Run on, (join paragraphs)	to do it after all. The next day, he	↪ or (run on)	
Transpose characters	recjept of the	↔ or (trs)	
Take back to preceding line	launched a wide range of]	
Take forward to next line	launched a wide range of	[
Indent by amount indicated	The next day, he	┌ 10mm	
Remove indent	← The next day, he	└	
Stet, (leave as printed)	well/intentioned effort. -----	✓ or (stet)	Used when you change your mind about a correction.

Appendix 5:

Question Cues and Bloom's Taxonomy (Cognitive Domain)

Level	Learner Ability/Action	Typical Command Words	Typical Question Cues
Knowledge (recall and recognition)	Simple recall of previously learned material. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Remembering ▶ Memorising ▶ Recognising ▶ Recalling identification ▶ Recall of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ List ▶ Define ▶ Label ▶ Identify/Name ▶ Name ▶ Draw ▶ Find ▶ Match ▶ Recite ▶ Mention ▶ Quote ▶ Describe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Which one? ▶ How much? ▶ What is the best one? ▶ Who, what, when, where, how?
Comprehension (translating, interpreting and extrapolating)	Ability to make sense of the material. Restate in own words; recognise previously unseen examples of a concept; grasp meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Describe ▶ Associate ▶ Categorise ▶ Summarise ▶ Translate ▶ Retell ▶ Demonstrate ▶ Identify ▶ Paraphrase ▶ Report ▶ Discuss ▶ Interpret 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ State in your own words ▶ Give an example ▶ What seems to be? ▶ Which statements support? ▶ Is this the same as? ▶ Explain what is happening ▶ What do you think he meant when he said? ▶ Show in a graph/ table ▶ What part doesn't fit? ▶ Select the best definition? ▶ Which is the odd one out?
Application (to situations that are new to, or have a new slant for students)	Ability to use learned material in a new situation with a minimum amount of help or direction. Apply rules/principles to a problem, without being given the rule; problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Apply/Use ▶ Demonstrate ▶ Calculate/Compute ▶ Illustrate ▶ Solve ▶ Dramatise ▶ Role-play ▶ Select ▶ Show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Predict what would happen if ▶ What would result? ▶ Identify the results of ▶ According to our definition of ..., which of the following would be considered to be? ▶ How is ...an example of? ▶ How much change would there be? ▶ Why is ... significant? ▶ Judge the effects
Analysis (breaking down into parts, forms)	Break material into component parts so that its structure may be understood. Break complex concepts down to component parts and analyse how parts are related to each other, seeing patterns, recognising hidden meanings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Analyse ▶ Compare/Contrast ▶ Separate ▶ Order/Classify ▶ Explain ▶ Characterise ▶ Develop ▶ Distinguish ▶ Examine ▶ Outline ▶ Debate ▶ Deduce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What assumptions ▶ Make a distinction ▶ What is the relationship between ▶ What conclusions ▶ What is the main idea, theme ▶ Implicit in the statement is ▶ What persuasive technique ▶ What statement is relevant ▶ What evidence can you list for ...? ▶ What ideas justify conclusion ? ▶ What does the author believe, assume? ▶ State the point of view of ▶ What is fact, opinion? ▶ Implicit in the statement is ▶ What is the function of? ▶ What motive is there? ▶ What literary form is used?

Level	Learner Ability/Action	Typical Command Words	Typical Question Cues
Synthesis (combining elements into a pattern not clearly there before)	Put parts together to form a plan new to the learner; generalise Rearrange component parts to form a new whole; may be in verbal form or a physical object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Combine ▶ Modify ▶ Rearrange ▶ What-if ▶ Generalise ▶ Compose ▶ Construct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How would you test? ▶ Propose an alternative ▶ How else would you? ▶ What would you infer/predict from?
Evaluation (according to some set of criteria, and state why)	Ability to judge the value of material based on certain criteria. Evaluate, make judgments on the worth of a concept for a purpose; resolve controversies/differences of opinion...; verify value of evidence; recognise subjectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assess ▶ Decide ▶ Grade/Rank ▶ Recommend ▶ Explain ▶ Judge ▶ Conclude ▶ Summarise ▶ Appraise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Which is more important, moral, logical, valid, appropriate ▶ What fallacies, consistencies, inconsistencies appear ▶ Find the errors

Appendix 6: Declaration of Interest Form

QPD2

This form must be completed and submitted to the Question Paper Unit, The State Examination Commission, Athlone, before commencing your work as Drafter/Setter

1. Position for which you are nominated: Drafter <input type="checkbox"/> Setter <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Setter <input type="checkbox"/> Examination: LCE/LCA/JC _____ Examination Year (e.g. 2006) _____ Subject _____ Examination Paper, Code No(s) _____	
2. Name:	PPS Number:
3. Address: E-mail Address	
4. Telephone: Home School Mobile	
5. University degree or other qualifications Final Year subjects Please give details – (College, Year, Honours, Pass)	
6. Are you currently employed as a teacher? If the answer is “YES”, please state: (i) the name of the school in which you teach; (ii) whether you are employed in a permanent or temporary capacity; (iii) what classes are currently taught by you.	
7. Please give the names of your children (if any) currently attending post-primary school.	
8. In respect of each child listed in 7, please state: (i) the school at which he/she attends; (ii) the certificate examinations (if any) that he/she is sitting in the current session.	
9. Do you provide or intend to provide private tuition to post-primary students? If so, please give full details.	
10. Please give details of any textbook(s) or any other publication (if any) written by you.	
I certify that the above information is true to the best of my knowledge and I agree to undertake my work as Drafter/Setter in accordance with the Code of Practice for Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters and the terms and conditions set out in the letter of appointment and accompanying documentation.	
I undertake that, until such time as the examination for which I am drafting/setting has taken place, I will not engage in any of the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ any work related to the preparation of examination papers, in the same subject area, for a commercial examining organisation ▪ setting test items, in the same subject area, for publication ▪ giving advice in public media in relation to examinations in the subject area in question ▪ giving advice to teacher groups, e.g. subject associations, in relation to examinations in the subject area in question ▪ any other activity that might conflict with my responsibilities as drafter/setter. 	
Signed..... Date.....	

**Appendix 7:
Cover Note for Proofs**

Exam Material Cover Note

**N.B. A copy of this form MUST accompany any paper being sent or brought to the Question Paper Unit (QPU). All four sections must be completed.
(This form should NOT be attached to a paper being signed off for press.)**

1	Paper Details	
	Paper Code:	Exam, Level, Subject & Component:
2	Instructions to Question Paper Unit (Tick A or B):	
	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B
	Latest version is on the enclosed flash drive. The QPU should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remove old version from QPU system ▪ Transfer file from enclosed flash drive to system ▪ Convert to pdf ▪ Provide a hardcopy (delete if not required) ▪ Put new pdf on flash drive (delete if not required) 	Latest version is NOT on the enclosed flash drive The QPU should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ignore files on the enclosed flash drive ▪ Amend existing file on QPU system to reflect changes written on the attached proof ▪ Convert to pdf ▪ Provide a hardcopy (delete if not required) ▪ Put new pdf on flash drive (delete if not required)
3	Follow-on Instructions	
	After doing the above, the QPU should: <input type="checkbox"/> Notify: _____ <i>(and / or)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Other instructions: _____ _____ _____	
4	Certification	
	Signed:	Date:
Further comments (optional)		

Appendix 8: Form for Signing Off for Press

Sign-Off for Press

N.B. A copy of this form MUST accompany any paper being signed off for press. All four sections must be completed.

(This form should NOT be attached to any paper that is not ready for press in all respects.)

1	Paper Details	
	Paper Code:	Exam, Level, Subject & Component:
2	Readiness for Press (Tick)	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	I/We certify that the attached proof is ready for press and is not subject to any further check or amendment
3	Source of proof (Tick A or B):	
	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The attached proof was supplied by the Question Paper Unit. ▪ It was generated from a pdf file on the QPU's system. ▪ The "last modified" date/time on the pdf is: _____ (as notified by QPU when supplying this proof). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The attached proof was generated from a pdf supplied by me/us. ▪ This pdf conforms to the specifications laid down by the QPU regarding image resolution, font embedding, etc. ▪ The "last modified" date/time on the pdf is: _____
4	Certification	
	Signed:	Date:
	Signed:	Date:
	Signed: <i>(Chief Examiner)</i>	Date:

**Appendix 9:
Record of Work (Sample)**

Setting Process – Record of Work											
Examination Subject: <i>Technical Drawing - Paper 1</i>		L.C.	J.C.	L.C.A.	Level:	H.L.	O.L.	Com.	Paper Code(s):	E.V.	I.V.
		✓				✓				1021	10877
Number and Date of Panel Meeting											
Meeting No. _____		Setter	Asst.S.	Setter	Asst.S.	Setter	Asst.S.	Setter	Asst.S.	Setter	Asst.S.
Date _____											
<p>I confirm that I have:</p> <p>1 Checked paper against previous years' papers ✓</p> <p>2 Checked against examination specification and syllabus (Using Ass. Grid) ✓</p> <p>3 Checked intellectual challenge and level of demand of each question ✓</p> <p>4 Checked freedom from bias ✓</p> <p>5 Checked accessibility ✓</p> <p>6 Checked readability ✓</p> <p>7 Amended or replaced unsuitable questions/material ✓</p> <p>8 Addressed copyright issues ✓</p> <p>9 Completed/revised the assessment grid as required ✓</p> <p>10 Checked mark allocations ✓</p> <p>11 Prepared or made necessary amendments to draft marking scheme ✓</p> <p>12 Checked paper against previous proof (where applicable) ✓</p> <p>13 Checked subject-specific vocabulary, terminology, notation etc. ✓</p> <p>14 Checked rubrics, pagination and numbering ✓</p> <p>15 Checked punctuation, spelling and grammatical accuracy ✓</p> <p>16 Checked all non-text elements ✓</p> <p>17 Checked all alignment throughout examination paper ✓</p> <p>18 Prepared and checked modified versions (Reasonable Accommodations) ✓</p> <p>19 Complied with all security and confidentiality requirements ✓</p> <p>20 Fulfilled all other requirements as directed by the Chief Examiner ✓</p> <p>21 Returned Flash Drive to SFC ✓</p> <p>22 Checked first proof of IV against draft from translator ✓</p> <p>23 Compared Irish and English versions in detail ✓</p> <p>24 Checked rubrics of IV against EV ✓</p> <p>25 Checked all non-text elements, pagination, numbering, alignment, etc. ✓</p> <p>26 Applied changes arising from translation ✓</p> <p>27 Applied changes arising from Irish Editor ✓</p>											
Pre. Press Sign-Off											
<p>Setter ✓</p> <p>Asst.S. ✓</p>											
Tick to indicate task completed at panel meeting or since previous meeting											
<p>12 Checked paper against previous proof (where applicable) ✓</p> <p>13 Checked subject-specific vocabulary, terminology, notation etc. ✓</p> <p>14 Checked rubrics, pagination and numbering ✓</p> <p>15 Checked punctuation, spelling and grammatical accuracy ✓</p> <p>16 Checked all non-text elements ✓</p> <p>17 Checked all alignment throughout examination paper ✓</p> <p>18 Prepared and checked modified versions (Reasonable Accommodations) ✓</p> <p>19 Complied with all security and confidentiality requirements ✓</p> <p>20 Fulfilled all other requirements as directed by the Chief Examiner ✓</p> <p>21 Returned Flash Drive to SFC ✓</p> <p>22 Checked first proof of IV against draft from translator ✓</p> <p>23 Compared Irish and English versions in detail ✓</p> <p>24 Checked rubrics of IV against EV ✓</p> <p>25 Checked all non-text elements, pagination, numbering, alignment, etc. ✓</p> <p>26 Applied changes arising from translation ✓</p> <p>27 Applied changes arising from Irish Editor ✓</p>											
I/We confirm that all of we have carried out the tasks as indicated above											
Asst. Setter: _____									Setter: <i>M.E. Fein</i>		Date: <i>20/02/07</i>

Appendix 10: Sign-Off Form – Drafter

Sign off of Drafter in preparation of Draft Examination Paper

Subject Examination Level Paper code

I confirm that I:

- have read the relevant syllabus – aims, objectives and content
- have read the *Manual for Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters*
- am familiar with the standard and the content of previous years' examination papers
- have researched appropriate topics and compiled a folder of relevant materials.
- I confirm that I have constructed questions which:
 - are in accordance with the examination specification and syllabus
 - are accurate with respect to content, spelling and language usage
 - are accurate in punctuation and numbering
 - are clear, precise and intelligible to candidates
 - use terminology and language appropriate to the discipline in question and to the age of candidates
 - provide adequate differentiation in respect of the range and ability level of the candidates
 - can be answered in the time allocated for the examination
 - are of equal difficulty where there is a choice of questions
 - are free from bias
 - avoid gender, age and other stereotyping
 - take account, where appropriate, of cultural diversity.

I confirm that I have

- sourced /provided the necessary graphics, maps, photographs, video clips etc., as appropriate
- cross-checked the rubrics, layout and question format with past papers
- ensured that the question paper is similar in standard to that of previous years
- provided worked solutions / summarised answers, as required
- submitted a draft outline marking scheme
- submitted a completed assessment grid.

Security and Confidentiality of Materials

I confirm that I have

- adhered to the Code of Practice for Drafters, Setters, and Assistant Setters and ensured the highest standards of confidentiality and security of the draft materials at all times
- destroyed or returned to the EAM all notes and related materials upon submission of draft
- not worked on any electronic storage medium other than the flash drive issued by the SEC
- submitted draft in hardcopy
- submitted draft in electronic copy
- fulfilled all other requirements as stipulated by the Chief Examiner.

Signed:(Drafter)

Date:

I confirm that the Drafter has carried out all work according to requirements and I authorise payment.

Signed:(Chief Ex.)

Date:

Appendix 11: Photocopying and Printing Protocol

Protocol for the Use of Photocopiers and Printers in the Preparation of Examination Materials

This protocol should be considered in tandem with other security arrangements for examination paper preparation. In particular, note that panel meetings should be held on SEC premises whenever possible.

- ▶ Photocopying of examination materials for panel meetings should be carried out on SEC premises and never on school or commercial premises. Printing may be carried out in a Drafter or Setter's own home, provided the working environment is secure and private.
- ▶ Whenever possible, photocopiers located in areas that are shared with other organisations (such as the Department of Education and Science) should not be used for photocopying examination materials.
- ▶ Where photocopiers for exclusive SEC use are not available, and where the relevant material is available electronically, copies should be produced by printing, in preference to using a less secure photocopier. Only local printers should be used – not network printers.
- ▶ Communication features, such as fax capabilities, should be disabled before using a photocopier or printer for examination material.
- ▶ Following the photocopying of any examination material, a blank sheet should be copied. This blank sheet should **not** be included as an additional page in the initial copying job, but instead be processed through as a separate job. This will ensure that nothing has jammed or otherwise been left behind in the machine, and will help to ensure that any internal memory is cleared of sensitive material. The photocopier should then be powered off.
- ▶ Similarly, a blank page should be printed as a separate print job after printing any examination material, and the printer should be powered off.
- ▶ Particular care should be exercised if using all-in-one printer/scanners for photocopying, as may be the case in home-based or small offices. Images are often retained by such machines until they are next used, even when the equipment itself and connected computers are powered off. Accordingly, the requirement to copy a blank page is all the more important.
- ▶ Immediately after copying, the materials should be carefully counted and numbered to ensure that the original and all copies are accounted for. One person (EAM, Setter or Assistant Setter) must take responsibility for tracking all copies from their creation to their destruction.

- ▶ In the event that a photocopier jams or otherwise malfunctions during the photocopying of examination materials, the machine must not be left unattended until such time as the problem has been fixed, all jammed paper has been removed, and a blank page has been processed through. If this is not possible, the security of the materials should be deemed to have been compromised, and a comprehensive analysis of the security risk should be undertaken.

Appendix 12: Graphic Artist Protocol

In the interest of security all graphic artists involved in the production of examination papers must be formally appointed by the Question Paper Unit (QPU) each year. To this end the following protocol should be followed in relation to the appointment of graphic artists.

- ▶ The EAM will nominate the graphic artist to the QPU as soon as it is known that a graphic is required but, in any case, no less than 6 weeks before work is to commence.
- ▶ The QPU will officially appoint the artist and issue them with the relevant documentation. The artist must accept the appointment and return a signed declaration of interest form to the QPU.
- ▶ Work should not commence on the artwork until such time as the QPU is satisfied that all documentation has been signed and returned and the relevant EAM has been notified.
- ▶ As a general rule the graphic artist should only be given sufficient information to produce the graphic and should not be given access to the full content of any question.
- ▶ Where artwork is returned to the QPU by registered post it should not identify the paper for which it is intended. Instead it should be returned with the reference “as commissioned by...*[name of person who commissioned the artwork]*”.
- ▶ All material should be returned to the QPU by Registered Post or by hand.

Appendix 13: **Camera Ready Protocol**

Protocol for preparation of examination papers using specialised software

(N.B. This does not apply unless you have been so informed by your Chief Examiner)

The specific nature of certain subjects requires that some examination papers are processed entirely outside of the Question Paper Unit. This includes the production of the final PDF copy.

In order to ensure that the setting process in the case of these papers adheres to the same high standards, in terms of quality assurance and security, the protocol outlined below should be applied.

- ▶ The Chief Examiner will nominate an individual who will be responsible for producing the “press ready” examination paper. In many cases this person will be the Setter for the examination concerned. However, in some instances it may be a third party who possesses the necessary technical skills. In the case of the latter, the Chief Examiner will request the QPU to formally appoint the individual concerned.
- ▶ The QPU will supply a suitable password-protected flash drive for the preparation of the examination paper. An electronic copy of the draft examination paper will generally be stored on the flash drive.
- ▶ As is the case with all examination papers, all work should be carried out on the secure flash drive. No work should ever be stored (even for a brief period) on a hard drive. In the event of capacity issues arising, the QPU, in consultation with the relevant Chief Examiner, will supply a larger capacity drive.
- ▶ It is not necessary to send the examination paper to the QPU at each proof stage, as to do so would present an unnecessary security risk. It is essential, however, that an electronic backup copy of the examination paper is kept in a separate location at all times from first proof stage onwards. In most instances the Chief Examiner will be in a position to store this copy in one of the following locations:
 - On the Chief Examiner’s hard drive (desktop or laptop). The file should be stored in protected format using the encryption software provided.
 - On a separate password-protected flash drive. Care should be exercised in the transfer of the backup copy to the second flash drive. The file should be copied directly to the drive and never via a hard drive. A USB hub should be used if necessary.

- ▶ The Chief Examiner will ensure that the backup copy is as up to date as is practicable at all stages throughout the setting process.
- ▶ The Chief Examiner will inform the QPU, after each panel meeting, of the state of preparation (proof stage) of the examination paper.
- ▶ When the examination paper is finalised a PDF copy should be generated. This may be done by either the individual who is preparing the examination paper or by the Chief Examiner concerned.
- ▶ Prior to the creation of the final PDF copy, all necessary blank pages should be included (blank pages should not be numbered) to ensure that the examination paper conforms to the agreed format. E.g. most papers must contain a multiple of four pages.
- ▶ In order to ensure that the PDF copy is compatible with the system used by the contract printers, the PDF should be distilled using *Adobe Acrobat* and using the settings provided in (electronic format) by the printers. These settings and instructions pertaining to their use will be provided by the QPU to all Chief Examiners.
- ▶ No password should be applied within the PDF file itself.
- ▶ It is essential that the PDF copy does not refer to any member of contract staff as the author of the document. (The author information can be accessed via the *File* and *Document Properties* menus.) The author of the document should be recorded at all times as “State Examinations Commission”.

The above protocol is primarily concerned with the processing of electronic copies of the examination papers. It is essential, however, that all other procedures, as outlined in other relevant documentation are adhered to. Such procedures relate to the working environment, the storage and destruction of hardcopies and the transmission of material.

