



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2007

HEBREW STUDIES

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----------|
| 1. General Introduction | 3 |
| 1.1 The Syllabus | 3 |
| 1.2 The Examination | 3 |
| 2. Ordinary Level | 4 |
| 3. Higher Level | 4 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 4 |
| 3.2 Performance of Candidates | 4 |
| 3.3 Conclusions | 5 |
| 3.3 Recommendations to Teachers and Students | 5 |

1. General Introduction

1.1 The Syllabus

The format of Hebrew Studies at both levels in the Junior Certificate Examination has remained the same for over twenty years. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is currently preparing a new syllabus, Jewish Studies, to replace Hebrew Studies.

1.2 The Examination

In the Junior Certificate examination, Part I of both Ordinary and Higher Level papers comprises four sections: A, B, C and D. Each of these sections has three subsidiary questions based on passages of Hebrew. One question, usually (b), differs at each level.

At Ordinary Level, the candidate is required to translate part or all of the passage. At Higher Level, there is an emphasis on the accuracy of the translation, on the ability to translate into good English, and for the candidate to make his/her own of that translation.

At Ordinary Level, answers to the subsidiary questions are expected to show that the candidate understands the Hebrew (or the Hebrew term) in the question and a little of the background to the passage. At Higher Level, sound knowledge of the historical and/or the religious context of the passage is expected.

At Higher Level, where an appropriate Hebrew title is required for the passage, there is an emphasis on a title that is creative, as well as grammatically correct.

Part 2 of both the Ordinary and Higher Level papers requires essay-type answers. At Ordinary Level, candidates are expected to present narrative or descriptive summaries of the biblical stories, while at Higher Level, examiners also require a knowledge of the historical perspective or context.

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination papers and the marking schemes for 2007. These are all available for downloading from the website of the State Examinations Commission at www.examinations.ie.

2. Ordinary Level

No candidate has sat Hebrew Studies at Ordinary Level in recent years.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

The numbers of candidates taking Hebrew Studies at both Junior and Leaving Certificate levels have been very low and, in some cases, non-existent in recent years. The following table shows the number of candidates taking Junior Certificate Hebrew Studies at Higher Level in recent years.

| Year | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total | 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 |

Table I: Number of candidates taking Hebrew Studies at Junior Certificate (Higher Level) 2002-2007

3.2 Performance of Candidates

The following table shows the results gained by candidates at Higher Level. Figures are given in percentages.

| Year | Total | A | B | C | ABC | D | E | F | NG | EFNG |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 2002 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 2003 | 5 | 0.0 | 60.0 | 0.0 | 60.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 40.0 |
| 2004 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 2005 | 1 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 2006 | 3 | 66.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 66.7 | 33.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 2007 | 4 | 25.0 | 50.0 | 0.0 | 75.0 | 25.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

Table II: Grade outcomes Hebrew Studies at Junior Certificate (Higher Level) 2002-2007.

3.3 Conclusions

Due to the very small number of candidates taking this subject, it is considered inappropriate to discuss the performance of these individual candidates. However, a number of comments extrapolated from the past number of years may be made.

- In recent years, there has been a trend to disregard the Ordinary Level paper as an option for students. This may not always be the best option for all candidates.
- Examiners have observed that in recent years candidates are using square script (as stipulated in the syllabus) and the parsing questions are answered well. This is to be commended.
- In Part I of the paper, (a) of each question demands a detailed knowledge of the short Hebrew passage on the paper. Examiners have observed that, occasionally, candidates are too general in their responses, rather than answering specifically and to the point. Question (b) often looks for background information, and, again, there is sometimes a lack of precision in the answers.
- In Question (c), there is some evidence that occasionally candidates present prepared notes rather than engaging with the subject matter in depth. Also, in some instances, the essay type answers in Part II of the paper could be longer.
- The standard of the Hebrew (language elements) has improved in recent years and this improvement is to be commended.

3.4 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Teachers and students are commended on the manner in which questions on Hebrew grammar are answered at Junior Certificate Level.

- Teachers should encourage their students to be more analytical in those sections of the syllabus that deal with background – historical or literary.
- Students should be encouraged to avoid general responses to questions and they should try to be more precise, informative and analytical in their answers.
- Students should try to ensure that their essay answers are sufficiently detailed. Occasionally, they are too brief.