



## **JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS**

**1999**

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES (E.S.S.)**

**HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT  
ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT**

# INTRODUCTION

## Origins

Environmental and Social Studies had its origins in two courses which previously formed part of the Day Vocational (Group) Certificate and the Intermediate Certificate programmes. These courses were the City of Dublin Humanities Programme and the Shannon Social and Environmental Studies Programme (SESP).

In 1991 the new subject, Environmental and Social Studies, was introduced into schools and examined for the first time in 1994. The subject is examined at Junior Certificate level only, and is taken by students as an alternative to History and Geography.

The subject is offered at both ordinary and higher levels and the same structure, format and mark allocation is applicable for both levels.

## Structure

Environmental and Social Studies is comprised of three components: a two hours written examination; a personal research project on a historical topic; a portfolio of practical work comprising of a geographical field study.

The constituents of the subject, together with the weighting of marks for each component, is shown hereunder.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Marks</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Written Examination	120	60
Research Project – History	40	20
Field studies – Geography	40	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

## ORDINARY LEVEL

### 1. Examination Results

The following were the grade results for the written component of the examination which attracted 120 marks or 60% of the total mark allocation for this subject.

#### Written Examination Results – 120 marks

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	N/G	Total
Number	13	75	168	193	21	17	5	492
%	2.6	15.2	34.2	39.2	4.3	3.5	1.0	100

When the marks obtained for the school-based components – research project and field studies – were added, the following were the final grade results for this subject.

#### Final Examination Results – All Components – 200 marks

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	N/G	Total
Number	3	69	214	146	54	17	7	510
%	0.6	13.5	42.0	28.6	10.6	3.3	1.4	100

Certain distortions arise between numbers and grade awards for the written examination component and for those pertaining to the final examination results. These distortions arise from the fact that not all students presented all three components of the examination. A total of 18 students did not sit the written examination. In addition, of those students who sat the written examination, 42 students did not present a research project in history, a further 16 students did not present a field studies project in geography, while a further 28 students did not present either a research project in history or a field studies project in geography.

The following chart presents in diagrammatic form the number and percentage of students who failed to present all three components of the examination.

### Failed to present each component

Component	Number	% of Total
Written Examination	18	3.5
Research Project – History	42	8.2
Field studies – Geography	16	3.1
Both Projects – History and Geography	28	5.5
Total	104	20.3

Thus, a total of 104 students, or 20.3% of all students, failed to present one or more components of the examination.

## 2.(A) Analysis of Written Examination Paper

### Question 1

Part	Mark	Mean Score	Mean % Score	Popularity
1A	12	7.7	64.2	100%
1B	6	4.4	73.3	95%
1C	6	2.7	45.0	95%
Q.1	24	14.8	61.6	100%

**A.(i)–(xiv)** Part A on multiple-choice answers was satisfactorily answered by the great majority of students. However, numbers 1, 2, 9 and 10 were often incorrectly answered and, on occasions, omitted. In number 9 many students opted for “Ireland” as the first country to have factories, while in number 10 many students opted for “the Ulster Plantation” as the plantation that took place in 1652.

**B.(i)–(iii)** These questions were stimulus driven, giving visual and numerical facts on developing and developed countries, and practically all students were competent in extracting the relevant facts.

- (iv) For this question a small minority of students failed to select a developing and a developed country from the given list.
- C. This part on Irish settlement was stimulus driven, giving visual representations of an early Irish monastery and of a Norman castle.
- (i) The great majority of students failed to recognise an early Irish monastery and gave “ring fort” or “crannog” instead.
- (ii) The great majority of students answered correctly and recognised the castle.
- (iii)-(iv) Many students gave the materials from which the settlements were built – instead of naming the people who built each settlement.
- (v) Almost all students answered correctly and understood that settlement A was older in time than settlement B.
- (vi) Very few students could accurately give an example of settlement A : an early Irish monastery. This was due to the fact that they had already failed to recognise settlement A at (i) above.

### Question 2

In this question students had a choice of answering on (A) Plantation in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland **or** on (B) Brazil in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Part	Mark	Mean Score	Mean % Score	Popularity
2A	24	13.0	54.2	70.0%
2B	24	21.2	88.3	85.0%

- A (i) Only a very small minority of students could define or explain the given term in relation to the Ulster Plantation.

(ii) This question was stimulus driven and students easily were able to pick out two defensive features of the planter's house.

(iii)-(iv) These questions caused difficulties for many students who were unable to name accurately the English King who planted Ulster, or name two of the six planted Ulster counties.

(v) The phrase "To Hell or to Connacht" was understood by almost all students as not referring to the Ulster Plantation.

(vi) Many students failed to answer this question, while those who did attempt an answer often wrote not more than three relevant statements.

**B** (i)-(vi) These questions were stimulus driven and students were capable of extracting the relevant information in order to answer the questions.

(vii)-(ix) These questions were stimulus driven and, again, students did not find any difficulty in interpreting the pictures and in drawing the correct conclusions.

### Question 3

In this question, students were required to answer on (A) The Industrial Revolution and on (B) either World War I or World War II.

Part	Mark	Mean Score	Mean % Score	Popularity
A	12	7.7	64.2	90.0%
B <sub>1</sub> (W.W.I)	12	3.9	32.5	70%
B <sub>2</sub> (W.W.II)	12	6.1	50.8	75%

- A**      **(i)-(iv)**      These questions were stimulus driven and in general students were competent in extracting the relevant information on coal mining. However, in (ii) many students wrote down “from eight in the morning until six at night” instead of giving the requisite number of hours.
- (v)**              The majority of students were able to give two reasons why coal was important in the Industrial Revolution, while many students gave only one reason.
- B<sub>1</sub>**      **(W.W.I)**
- (i)**              As this question was based on true or false statements, it was attempted by almost all students and the majority were correct in four or more of the six statements.
- (ii)**             This question was omitted by many students. “Trench Warfare” and “New Weapons of War” were highly popular choices and, when attempted, answered satisfactorily.
- B<sub>2</sub>**      **(W.W.II)**
- (i)**              As this question was based on true or false statements, it was attempted by almost all students and the correct responses were given.
- (ii)**             With the exception of “Soviet Russia” and “World War II”, the remaining three options were equally popular and answered sufficiently in relation to the given mark allocation. However, a certain number of students continue annually in their answers to confuse World War I with World War II, while about 10% of students answer each of these two mutually exclusive options.

#### Question 4

Part	Mark	Mean Score	Mean % Score	Popularity
A	8	6.2	77.5	85.0%
B	7	5.1	72.8	90.0%
C	9	3.1	34.4	85.0%
Q.4	24	14.8	61.6	90.0%

- A. (i)-(iv) These questions were stimulus driven and students showed a relatively high degree of sophistication in interpreting the cartoon and in giving plausible answers.
- B. (i)-(iv) These questions were stimulus driven and students were clearly able to interpret the cartoon and give reasonable answers.
- C. (i)-(iv) These questions were stimulus driven and all students were correct in their answers to (i) and (ii). However, in (iii) and (iv), where a higher degree of calculation was required, only a small percentage of students answered correctly.
- (v) This question was omitted by the great majority of students. However, those who attempted an answer were generally able to give one action that might remedy the unequal distribution of goods and services between the developed and the developing worlds.

#### Question 5

Mark	Mean Mark	Mean % Mark	Popularity
24	5.3	22.0%	75.0%

This question was stimulus driven and was based on an ordnance survey map and colour aerial photograph.

- (i) Many students omitted this question, and of those students who attempted



it, many failed to identify and count the number of ring forts in the given grid reference.

- (ii) Many students were unable to calculate the correct distance between the given two points.
- (iii) A majority of students were able to name two services provided to the people by the town.
- (iv) A great number of students were unable to give reasons for settlement.
- (v) Students in general were able to state correctly two ways of showing height on an Ordnance Survey map.
- (vi) This question was incorrectly answered by many students who were unable to locate Kilrush Wood.

(vii)-(viii) These questions, based on the colour photograph, were attempted by the greater number of students who were generally able to answer the given questions.

## **2.(B) Analysis of Research Projects (History) and Field Studies (Geography)**

The external monitors for research projects and field studies confirm that from an administrative perspective, there was a marked improvement from previous years in terms of availability of projects and field studies, accuracy of all paper-work, school organisation and preparedness for monitors' visits, and general overall presentation and quality of research projects and field studies.

Monitors' reports attest to the fact that in general research projects in history did not reach the general standard prevailing in field studies. This arose primarily from the fact that in history projects there was an over-reliance on transcribed material with little apparent attempt to paraphrase or to knit two or more sources together into a coherent whole. In addition, there appears to have been some evidence of 'over-management' by teachers, while the stating of precise aims and the reaching of valid conclusions were sometimes vague or absent.



Despite these inadequacies, however, monitors attest to general high standards and much evidence of good practice. These include: good lay-out; attractive illustrations; clear aims and objectives; relevant conclusions.

There was also a wide range of research topics chosen. Typical examples of the range of studies undertaken include: various civilizations - Romans; Egyptians; Vikings - plantations; Kilmainham Gaol; famous people; historical buildings; local history; family history.

It is noted that where students researched their local area, or family history, the projects were invariably of better quality than that prevailing in the more general type project such as a plantation or an aspect of the Industrial Revolution. This can be attributed to the fact that in the former cases, students 'identify' with their research projects and take greater ownership and pride in their work.

In general, the standard of work in geography field studies was of a higher order than that prevailing in research projects in history. This is due primarily to the fact that in field studies students must go out into their locality and investigate specific issues, which leads to greater originality and leaves less room for plagiarism or transcription from textbooks.

Monitors also report favourably on the wide range of field studies chosen and on the depth and originality of many such studies. Typical examples of the range of studies undertaken include: an urban renewal study; a land use study; a study of a local area; a farm study; a seashore; a tourism study; a shopping centre; a traffic survey; the zoological gardens.

However, despite much evidence of good practice, monitors report that in a minority of cases there was evidence of transcription and/or dictation in certain sections of the work. In addition, insufficient emphasis on presentation skills was apparent and some field studies displayed inadequate headings, poor layout, and inappropriately placed diagrams. Accordingly, while there is increasing evidence of good practice, the standard variation between schools is significantly greater than that which might be expected in the school-based component of this subject.

### 3. Overall general comment

From the above examination results, and from the above analysis of the written and the school-based components of the examination, certain salient features emerge.

- (a) The fact that some 17% of students failed to submit either one or both components of the school based projects, and that a further 3.5% of students failed to sit the written examination component, must give cause for grave concern. Not only does this failure create a significant distortion in the overall examination results for this subject, it also renders it practically impossible for such students to gain anything but a very low grade as a final outcome to the examination in Environmental and Social Studies.

In addition to these considerations, students fail to enjoy the undoubted and acclaimed benefits that accrue from participating in personal research projects and field studies. Not least of these are the skills of information management, the acquisition of social and personal abilities, and the development of a positive perception of self.

Perhaps more importantly, since research projects are more ‘skills based’ than ‘information driven’, and since field studies necessitate active engagement with the local environment, students fail to gain the benefits of the interactive nature of the work and of the more dialectical and dialogical forms of teaching and learning associated with these school-based components of the examination.

- (b) It is apparent that in questions which are stimulus driven – in terms of documentary, statistical and pictorial stimuli – students invariably score higher marks than in non-stimulus driven questions. However, not all questions are, or can be, informed with such materials and students are equally expected to have acquired, at an appropriate level, the skills of factual recall, judgement, evaluation, and analysis of cause and effect.
- (c) In Question 5, which deals with an ordnance survey map and an aerial photograph, some 25% of students failed to attempt any part thereof, while those students who did attempt this question scored very poorly relative to the

other four questions. It is apparent that many students at this level have not acquired the basic skills of map reading nor the interpretation of symbols, features and terminologies relevant to ordnance survey maps and aerial photographs.

- (d) In questions which have options from which the student is free to choose one topic against another, it is apparent that many students attempt all options and do not seem to be aware of the given requirements of the examination.

In question 2, where students had a choice of answering on (A) 17th Century Ireland or on (B) 20th Century Brazil, some 60% of students answered on both, and in question 3(B), where students had a choice of answering on (i) World War I or on (ii) World War II, some 50% of students answered on both. While students do not lose anything, in terms of marks obtained, by this practice, it can have a negative effect in terms of time management, and in part may account for the relatively high proportion of students who failed to attempt all five questions on the examination paper.

#### **4. Recommendations**

From desiderata emerging from the analyses and overall comments, the following recommendations are put forward for consideration.

1. Recognising that the failure to submit components of the examination is systemic, teachers and school authorities could consider as a priority certain strategies for the elimination or minimising of the number of students who fail to submit either or both parts of the school-based components of the examination. This may be achieved through the employment of a simultaneous four-pronged interlocking approach as follows:
  - (a) Recognising that not all students exhibit the desired level of motivation, that some students may have a less than satisfactory level of school attendance, and that students may lose or mislay their project work and field notes, school authorities could provide safe storage space for such work. These could be accessed only by students and teacher at the appropriate times.

- (b) Parents and students could be advised that, unlike most other school projects, the research projects and field studies for Environmental and Social Studies form an integral component of the examination and attract 40% of the total marks. Accordingly, the enlistment of parental support and encouragement, arising from a raised level of consciousness in regard to the Junior Certificate examination, may contribute significantly in many cases.
  - (c) In schools where the field studies element is carried out by the class on one particular day, students who are absent should be facilitated and encouraged to carry out an individual field study – such as a traffic survey or the evaluation of services in a local shopping centre.
  - (d) With specific regard to research projects in history, a greater emphasis on topics such as family histories tends to allow the students to identify more readily with their work and thus ensure a greater probability that such research projects will be completed.
2. In relation to the written examination, teachers could ensure that students are thoroughly familiar with the format and mark allocation of the examination paper. This will ensure that students do not “waste” valuable examination time answering questions which are mutually exclusive. In addition, a greater teaching emphasis could be placed on the symbols, concepts and terms associated with the question on the ordnance survey map and aerial photograph.
3. Finally, as the number of students taking Ordinary Level as opposed to Higher Level, is inversely proportional to that prevailing in almost all other Junior Certificate subjects, students showing aptitude and ability should be strongly encouraged to enter for the Higher Level examination.

# HIGHER LEVEL

## 1. Examination Results

The following were the grade results for the written component of the examination which attracted 120 marks or 60% of the total mark allocation for this subject.

### Examination Results – Written Component - 120 Marks

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	N/G	Total
Number	25	36	30	16	3	3	0	113
%	22.1	31.8	26.5	14.2	2.7	2.7	0	100

When the marks obtained for the school-based components - research projects and field studies - were added, the following was the final grade results for this subject.

### Final Examination Results - All Components - 200 Marks

Grade	A	B	C	D	E	F	N/G	Total
Number	15	48	28	15	7	0	0	113
%	13.3	42.4	24.8	13.3	6.2	0.0	0.0	100

In the final overall grade results a slight distortion arises from the fact that four students failed to present a research project in history.

The following chart presents in diagrammatic form the number and percentage of students who failed to present each component of the examination.

### Failed to present each component

Written Examination	Number	% of Total
Written Examination	0	0.0
Research Project – History	4	3.5
Field Studies – Geography	0	0.0
Both Projects – History and Geography	0	0.0
Total	4	3.5

## 2.(A) Analysis of Written Examination Paper

### Question 1

Part	Mark	Mean Score	Mean % Score	Popularity
A	12	10.2	85.0	100
B	6	2.5	41.7	100
C	6	5.0	83.3	100
Q.1	24	17.6	73.3	100

**A (i-iv)** These questions were based on multiple-choice answers and were attempted by all students. Marks obtained were significantly high as students have mastered the techniques of multiple-choice questions.

**B** This question, based on life in a named civilisation, was quite poorly answered by almost 50% of students. This would suggest that this area of the syllabus is not receiving sufficient attention.

**C (i-iv)** These questions on a developing country (Tanzania) were based on stimulus material, and the answers here indicate that the students have acquired the appropriate skills of reading comprehension, interpretation of pictorial data, and the extraction of relevant information.



## Question 2

In this question students had a choice of answering on (A) Plantation in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland **or** on (B) Brazil in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Q.	Mark	Mean Score	Mean % Score	Popularity
2A	24	16.5	68.7	70%
2B	24	15.3	63.7	75%

- A**
- (i)** This question was answered satisfactorily. Most students understood the basic concepts associated with plantations in Ireland.
  - (ii)** Only a small minority of students could accurately name three Ulster counties that were planted. The vast majority, however, could name one or two.
  - (iii)** Many students did not attempt this question on the Cromwellian Plantation. However, those students who did so used the suggested headings intelligently and scored well.
- B**
- (i)-(v)** These questions were based on stimulus material, and students were generally able to extract the information and gain substantial marks.
  - (v)** Practically all students were able to explain one of the given terms associated with Brazil.
  - (vi)** Many students failed to attempt an answer, while the majority wrote not more than three relevant sentences.

### Question 3

In this question, students were required to answer on (A) The Industrial Revolution and on (B) either World War I or World War II

Part	Mark	Mean Score	Mean % Score	Popularity
A	12	10.1	84.2	100%
B <sub>1</sub> (W.W.I)	12	6.9	57.5	65%
B <sub>2</sub> (W.W.II)	12	6.7	55.8	35%

**A.** (i)-(iii) These questions were stimulus driven. Students had no difficulty with the written passage and were able to extract the relevant facts.

(iv) This question on child labour during the Industrial Revolution was not attempted by a significant number of students, while those who did answer the question wrote only about two significant relevant statements.

#### **B<sub>1</sub> (W.W.I)**

- (i) Very few students could state two causes of World War I.
- (ii) The great majority of students were able to name two countries that fought on the side of Britain.
- (iii) Almost all students could name two new weapons of the war.
- (iv) All four options were popular, while “War on the Western Front” and “The Consequences of World War I” were answered best.

#### **B<sub>2</sub> (W.W.II)**

- (i) Most students understood and explained the general terms.
- (ii) All three options were equally popular and students had little difficulty in gaining the allocated marks.

#### Question 4

This question was part stimulus driven and related to the developing and developed worlds.

Mark	Mean Mark	Mean % Mark	Popularity
24	14.8	61.6	85%

- (i)-(iii) These questions were based on stimulus material and students had no difficulty in extracting the relevant information.
- (iv) The great majority of students were able to give two reasons why people migrate to urban areas.
- (v) This question, based on problems facing the developing world today, was not attempted by a significant minority of students. On the other hand, those who attempted it obtained good marks.

#### Question 5

This question was stimulus driven and was based on an ordnance survey map and a colour aerial photograph.

Mark	Mean Score	Mean % Score	Popularity
24	13.3	55.4	100%

- A. (i)-(iv) These questions, based on the ordnance survey map, were relatively well answered and students could extract the relevant information.
- (v) Many students were unable to give two reasons why the camping site had been located at the particular place.
- B. (i) Students were unable to give correct location, such as foreground, centre, etc., and gave direction instead, e.g. south-west.
- B. (ii)-(iii) These questions were relatively well answered by the majority of students.

## **2.(B) Analysis of Research Projects (History) and Field Studies (Geography)**

Monitors' reports attest to a relatively higher standard of work in field studies than in the personal research projects in history. This is attributed to the over-reliance on transcribed material in the research project as opposed to original fieldwork in geography. In research projects and field studies, common weaknesses included: lack of fieldwork evidence; failure to retain field notes; poor maps/charts; no content/source acknowledgements; transcription; lack of originality.

Despite these weaknesses, there is increasing evidence of good practice in both research projects and field studies.

In the research projects, monitors comment favourably on the quality and range of many projects. These include such examples as: georgian houses; world wars; famous people; various civilisation; family history.

In field studies, the depth and range of topics chosen were equally imaginative and relevant. These included such examples as: a farm study; a named river; the seashore; urban renewal; an industrial estate.

## **3. Overall General Comment**

From the above examination results, and from the above analysis of the written and the school-based components of the examination, certain salient features emerge.

- (a)** It is apparent that in questions which are stimulus driven, and are answerable without recourse to factual recall, students invariably score higher marks than for those questions which require recall of syllabus content and/or some level of evaluation or judgement. Accordingly, the acquisition of skills and competencies, as outlined in the syllabus objectives, may not be taken into sufficient consideration in teaching methodologies and in classroom practice.
- (b)** Certain areas of the syllabus may not be receiving sufficient attention which is reflected in the performance of students. This is especially evident in such areas as Ancient Civilisations and the Industrial Revolution.

- (c) In questions where options are given, many students attempt mutually exclusive questions. This practice is apparent in about 10% of cases, and its elimination could be achieved by ensuring that students are made familiar with the format and question requirements of the examination paper. At the other extreme, about 15% of students fail to attempt all five questions on the examination paper.
- (d) The fact that all students completed and presented their portfolio of field studies in geography, and that 96.5% of students completed and presented their personal research projects in history, suggests a satisfactory outcome to the school based components of the examination.
- (e) All areas of the syllabus should require equal treatment and special attention should be paid to those identified areas which are specifically related to the higher level course.

#### **4. Recommendations**

1. Students should be made conversant with the format and question requirements of the examination paper in order to eliminate or minimise the number of students who (a) attempt mutually exclusive questions or (b) fail to attempt all five required questions on the examination paper.
2. A greater emphasis should be placed on the teaching of map reading and interpretation, and also on the acquisition of the necessary skills related to the understanding and interpretation of the aerial photograph.
3. In relation to the school-based components of the examination, a greater adherence to the marking criteria is crucial. In the field studies project, evidence of work carried out in the field is paramount and carries 37% of the mark allocation. In the personal research project, evidence of personal initiative and originality is crucial and should be apparent to external monitors.

# Appendix

## Final Examination results for 1996-1997-1998-1999

### Higher Level Percentage Grade results

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>N/G</b>
<b>1996</b>	218	8.3	46.8	36.2	8.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>1997</b>	174	1.7	24.1	46.0	24.7	2.9	0.6	0.0
<b>1998</b>	117	4.3	21.4	46.2	21.4	6.0	0.9	0.0
<b>1999</b>	113	13.3	42.4	24.8	13.3	6.2	0.0	0.0

### Ordinary Level Percentage Grade Results

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>N/G</b>
<b>1996</b>	595	0.5	18.2	40.8	29.9	6.4	2.7	1.5
<b>1997</b>	497	0.2	4.0	26.9	45.4	15.5	6.8	1.2
<b>1998</b>	542	0.7	11.3	40.8	32.1	9.0	4.8	1.3
<b>1999</b>	510	0.6	13.5	42.0	28.6	10.6	3.3	1.4

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