



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

JUNIOR CYCLE EXAMINATION 2017

ENGLISH

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

This report relates to the Final Examination of Junior Cycle English in 2017, set and marked by the State Examinations Commission. It was the first occasion when the new 2014 Junior Cycle English specification was assessed. English is the first subject to be assessed as part of the reform of learning at Junior Cycle introduced by the Minister for Education and Skills. The 2014 specification replaced the 1989, Junior Certificate Syllabus for English. The reform and related specification introduces significant change to learning and assessment at Junior Cycle, including the introduction of classroom-based assessment components (marked and reported on by the class teacher).

2017 also saw the introduction of new grade boundaries for Junior Cycle English. Junior Cycle English, at both Higher and Ordinary levels, was marked online for the first time as part of the State Examinations Commission's online marking pilot project.

As this is the first Chief Examiner's report on the external assessment components of the new specification, the State Examinations Commission hopes that the information and analysis it contains will assist teachers in their ongoing efforts to continually enhance the learning experiences of their students, and thereby assist students in their preparations for the examination.

1.2 Specification Structure

The specification for Junior Cycle English can be accessed on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's website, www.curriculumonline.ie; the examination papers and corresponding marking schemes can be accessed on the State Examinations Commission's website www.examinations.ie. This report should be read in conjunction with these documents. The specification introduces an approach to teaching and learning that focuses on the learning outcomes students will be able to achieve in English, on completion of their first three years in post-primary school.

There are thirty nine learning outcomes in the English specification, categorised in three strands: Oral Language; Reading and Writing. In addition, the elements, *Communicating as a listener, speaker, reader, writer; Exploring and using Language; Understanding the content and structure of language*¹ are integrated across the three strands. For the purpose of the final assessment twenty-three learning outcomes are asterisked in the specification and a number of these learning outcomes may be assessed in any year.

The specification aims to put students at the centre of the educational experience. By placing the focus on the quality of learning, it enables students to make a greater connection with their own learning. The specification is underpinned by the rationale that the study of

¹ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Course Overview

Language gives students the opportunity to access the understanding, knowledge and skills to promote their personal growth and effective participation in society.²

The Final Examination, taken at the completion of year three in the Junior Cycle, aims to allow students to demonstrate their own engagement with the relevant learning outcomes and to display the skills that they have acquired in the subject area over the course of their learning at this stage of their education.

The specification also introduced a model of prescription for Junior Cycle English. This is a departure from the un-prescribed open curriculum of the 1989 syllabus. The decision to introduce a model of prescription in the specification was taken to ensure students have a rich and diverse experience of reading texts, including digital, visual and multi-modal texts. It was also in part a response to what was being observed in candidates' responses in the Junior Certificate English examination, where evidence suggested that some students were having a narrow reading experience and an increasingly reduced exposure to texts.

1.3 Assessment Structure

The English examination is offered at Higher and Ordinary levels. Foundation level, available heretofore in the Junior Certificate English examination has been discontinued. At Higher level, the two examination papers assessed under the 1989 syllabus were replaced by one examination paper. A consequence of this change was the necessity to integrate the assessment of language and literature, as distinct from the previous discrete language and literature papers (Junior Certificate English, Higher level, Papers I and II). This enabled students to be *actively involved in the integrated skills of oral language, reading and writing and in discussing and comparing a wide variety of texts and forms of English.*³ In the case of both the Higher level and the Ordinary level examinations, the time allocated for the assessment was two hours. The papers at both levels are marked out of 180 marks. 20 marks are allocated to an Assessment Task. The Assessment Task offers students the opportunity to reflect on what they learned when completing their Collection of Texts (the second Classroom-Based Assessment). The Assessment Task was completed in schools and marked by SEC examiners at the same time as the Final Examination was marked.

In relation to the final assessment, the specification states the following:

The final assessment will be offered at Higher and Ordinary Levels. At both levels there will be one examination paper. It will be linked to students' learning during second and third year. The assessment will address outcomes marked with an asterisk in the tables of learning outcomes.

Students will sit a two-hour written examination paper. They will be required to engage with, demonstrate comprehension of, and respond to stimulus material. The content and format of the examination papers may vary from year to year. In any year, the learning

² National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Rationale

³ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Rationale

*outcomes to be assessed will constitute a sample of the outcomes from the tables of learning outcomes.*⁴

As the above outlines, the format of the final assessment will vary from year to year. This is a significant departure from the familiar format of the previous Junior Certificate English examinations. Aside from the practical reasons behind this change, arising as a consequence of the reduction of the examination time to two hours, it also has the objective of encouraging engagement and critical thinking, thus deterring excessive rote learning. Both assessments are no-choice examinations. In line with the published 2015 sample examination papers, the 2017 examinations were each developed around a theme.

Completion booklets were introduced for Junior Cycle English in 2017. They contained the stimulus material, the examination questions and writing space for a candidate's response. Additional writing space was provided within the booklet to allow for more detailed, developed responses where required. Each answer booklet was subdivided into sections containing stimulus and assessment material linked to the relevant learning outcomes. This approach underpinned the unit-based approach to learning that is encouraged in the teaching of the new specification. The instructions pages informed candidates as to the number of questions in each section and the mark awarded per question. Candidates are also given guidance as to approximate time allocation for each section on the instructions page.

1.4 Grade Boundaries

New grade boundaries were introduced for Junior Cycle English in 2017. These are given in *Table 1*. Some aspects of these new grade descriptors are worth highlighting. The *Distinction* grade was awarded to those candidates achieving 90% or more; the previous top 'A' grade was awarded for candidates achieving 85% or more. The *Not Graded, Partially Achieved* and *Merit*, boundaries each cover twenty percentage points on the scale; the *Achieved* and *Higher Merit* grades cover fifteen percentage points on the scale. This move away from the traditional A, B, C grades presents challenges for teachers, students, parents and examiners. It is to be expected that in time all parties will become familiar with using these grade boundaries and become adept at interpreting what they represent in terms of candidate performance.

1.5 Online Marking

Junior Cycle English at both Higher and Ordinary levels was marked online in 2017. As such, the examination was part of the SEC's online marking pilot project.

Candidates undertook the examination in the usual fashion, using a combined question paper/answer booklet. Following the examination, candidates' scripts were returned in the normal way to the SEC and then scanned into a bespoke database for marking online by examiners. Examiners then received scanned assessment material *via* the online software platform used for the pilot and marked the candidates' work onscreen. For examiners the

⁴ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, The Final Assessment

experience became a largely paper-free process. Within an online marking environment examiners are required to do far less administrative work throughout the process, and can thereby concentrate on applying their expert judgement to candidates' work. Onscreen marking completely eliminates the possibility of calculation errors by examiners as mark totals are calculated by the software programme. It also eliminates errors associated with the transfer of marks to marking sheets or in their subsequent keying onto the SEC database.

As with the traditional paper-based marking process, quality assurance protocols were applied to the work of examiners to ensure that the marking scheme is applied consistently and correctly across the full candidature. This involved senior (advising) examiners reviewing and adjudicating on the quality of individual examiners' judgements. A significant advantage of the online process is that it enables this part of the process to take place in real time; in addition, the fact that both the examiner and the advising examiner can look at a piece of work simultaneously and have a discussion about it, leads to more meaningful feedback. In the paper process only one party can be in possession of the material at any one time and the process of receiving feedback can therefore be protracted.

2. Participation Trends

The breakdown for the cohort of candidates taking English in the Junior Cycle from 2013 to 2017 is shown in *Table 2*.

A number of observations can be made in relation to overall trends and in respect of the 2017 examination specifically. The examination at Foundation level was discontinued in 2017. The size of the overall cohort exceeded 60,000 candidates in 2017. The trend whereby the size of the cohort is increasing at Higher level has continued. This increase was significant in 2017 with the candidature growing by more than three per cent on the size of the cohort in 2016. At Ordinary level the decrease in candidature also continued. This was perhaps somewhat surprising given that Foundation level was discontinued. It would suggest that there was greater than expected migration to Higher level. The reasons for this can only be speculative. With a new specification and curriculum however, comparisons with previous years' trends in all respects, should be made guardedly.

Table 3 gives the breakdown of female and male candidates taking the examination at Higher level, Ordinary level and Foundation level (2013-2016). Figures for 2017 were broadly in line with previous years' figures. It remains a concern that a significantly higher proportion of male candidates are taking the Ordinary level examination. It is to be hoped, that in the future, with the reform of Junior Cycle and with the approach taken to learning, guided by the new specification for English, a greater proportion of the male cohort will opt to sit the Higher level examination.

3. Analysis of Candidate Performance

3.1 Overall Performance

There are some complexities involved when comparing candidate performance in 2017 with the performance of candidates in previous years, given that 2017 was the first year the new English specification was assessed and in the context of the additional changes outlined earlier in this report. In particular, the introduction of new grade boundaries means that outcomes are reported in a format that differs from in previous years.

Table 4 shows the results at each grade for Junior Certificate English, Higher level, from 2012 to 2016 in percentage terms. *Table 5* shows the results achieved by candidates on a gender basis in the Junior Certificate English, Higher level examination from 2012 to 2016.

Table 6 shows the outcomes at each grade for the Junior Cycle English, Higher level examination 2017, in percentage terms. *Table 7* shows the grades achieved by candidates on a gender basis in the Junior Cycle English, Higher level examination in 2017 in percentage terms.

Data for Junior Cycle English at Higher level in 2017 indicates that the disparity in performance levels between male and female candidates remains an issue. This is particularly apparent at the two ends of the grading scale with 2.7% of female candidates achieving *Distinctions*, in contrast with 0.7 % of male candidates. Similarly, while 1.2% of female candidates attained *Partially Achieved* and less, the figure for equivalent male candidates was 3.7%. The number of female candidates achieving a *High Merit* grade was almost twice the number of equivalent male candidates. It is positive to see that the percentage of male candidates achieving 55% and more, rose to 74.6%; the average C+ rate for male candidates from 2012 to 2016 was 68.9%.

Table 8 shows the results at each grade for Junior Certificate English, Ordinary level, from 2012 to 2016 in percentage terms. *Table 9* shows the results achieved by candidates on a gender basis in the Junior Certificate English, Ordinary level examination from 2012 to 2016.

Table 10 shows the results at each grade for the Junior Cycle English, Ordinary level examination 2017, in percentage terms. *Table 11* shows the grades achieved by candidates on a gender basis in the Junior Cycle English, Ordinary level examination in 2017 in percentage terms.

There continues to be a disparity in performance levels between female and male candidates at Junior Certificate Ordinary level. This trend was continued in the examination in 2017. More boys than girls take English at Ordinary level - 63.4% of the cohort is male and 36.5% female. As with Higher level, in the outcomes for the 2017 Ordinary level examination there was a significant difference between the *Distinction* rates achieved by the two genders, with female candidates achieving 4.5% distinctions while 1.9% of male candidates achieved the same grade. At Ordinary level, the number of female candidates achieving the *High Merit* grade exceeded the number of male candidates by more than 12%.

5.3% of male candidates were awarded less than 40% in the examination in contrast with 3.4% of female candidates who were awarded the *Partially Achieved* and *Not Graded* grades. At Ordinary level, a total of 79.5% of males achieved 55% or over in 2017, this compares with a mean of 73.4% achieving 55% or over for the previous five years.

3.2 Commentary on Performance at Higher Level

The 2017 Higher level English examination was based on the theme of *Mysteries*. The paper contained four sections, linked to the learning outcomes with marks awarded for each section as follows:

Section A	Reading to Analyse and Evaluate	35 marks	2 questions
Section B	Showing Critical Appreciation	45 marks	2 questions
Section C	Appreciating Character, Setting, Story and Action	75 marks	5 questions
Section D	Engaging in the Writing Process	25 marks	1 question

The examination was a no choice examination. In addition to marking the four sections of the examination paper, the Assessment Task was also marked by SEC examiners as a fifth section on the paper.

Section E	The Assessment Task	20 marks	3 questions
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Table 12 shows the performance of a random sample of 1473 candidates on an item level in the Higher level examination. The table shows the rank order of questions, from the questions where candidates performed best to the questions where candidates performed poorest. The total marks available, the mean mark awarded and the mean as a percentage for each item are shown. It also shows the number and percentage of candidates who achieved full credit for each item. The nature of each question is defined in the final column – task descriptor. It should be observed that the table includes the marks awarded for short / multiple-choice questions, awarded one or two marks, where the majority of candidates performed well. The data in *Table 13* shows the performance of the same sample of candidates on a section-by-section basis, both including and excluding the outcomes for short / multiple choice questions.

Candidates performed best in Section E (Assessment Task) indicating that candidates engaged well with their own writing when completing the second classroom-based assessment (CBA2).

Section A included two stimulus texts, one written and one visual. The mean mark achieved for this section was 24.2 out of a total of 35 marks. As the section where candidates' performances ranked second highest, it suggests that candidates were able to think critically and apply analytical skills to unstudied material. As outlined in the specification, candidates were required to *engage with, demonstrate comprehension of, and respond to stimulus*

*material*⁵ and the outcomes for Section A and for Section D indicate that this was achieved successfully.

Candidates performed least successfully in Sections B and C which focused primarily on studied material. Question B 3(b) (20 marks), which asked candidates to analyse language features in a studied poem was the extended-response question with the poorest outcome. This suggests that attainment in respect of learning outcomes, Writing 7, *respond imaginatively in writing to their texts showing a critical appreciation of language* and Writing 9, *write about the effectiveness of key moments from their texts*,⁶ is more variable and perhaps worthy of greater attention.

The sample shows that, when engaging with Section D, candidates' performance levels were the third highest of all sections. Excluding Section E (the Assessment Task) which was completed in class-time, with a mean score of 66.4 %, D was the second highest-scored section in the examination. As Section D was the final section of the paper, this suggests that candidates did not experience difficulties in completing the examination in the allotted time.

This sample corroborates data generated later on in the marking process when analysis of 10,000 scripts, roughly 20% of the cohort, also showed the second highest mean score for section D at 67.6%. This data is shown in *Table 14* below.

3.3 Commentary on Performance at Ordinary Level

The 2017 Ordinary level English examination was based on the theme of *Following your Passions*. The paper contained four sections, linked to the learning outcomes, with marks awarded for each section as follows:

Section A	Reading and Responding Imaginatively	50 marks	3 questions
Section B	Appreciating Visual Genres	60 marks	5 questions
Section C	Choosing the words and Tone to Use	35 marks	4 questions
Section D	Writing for a Variety of Purposes	35 marks	4 questions

The examination was a no choice examination. In addition to marking the four sections of the examination paper, the Assessment Task was also marked by SEC examiners, as a fifth section on the paper.

Section E	The Assessment Task	20 marks	3 questions
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Table 15 shows the performance of a random sample of 614 candidates, on an item level, in the Ordinary level examination. The table shows the rank order of questions - from the questions where candidates performed best to the questions where candidates performed poorest. The total marks available, the mean mark awarded and the mean as a percentage for each item are shown. It also shows the number and percentage of candidates achieving full credit for each item. The nature of each question is defined in the final column – task descriptor. It should be noted that the table includes the marks awarded for short /

⁵ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, The Final Assessment

⁶ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

multiple-choice question, where the majority of candidates performed well. The data in *Table 16* shows the performance of the same sample of candidates on a section-by-section basis, both including and excluding the outcomes for short / multiple choice questions.

There was a greater number of assessment items on the Ordinary level paper. Candidates at this level give shorter responses and need encouragement to develop more considered responses. In this respect the provision of a level of 'scaffolding', in particular for questions on studied material was useful. This was the case in questions 3, 8 and 15. Candidates' responses improve when they are given clear discrete tasks to work through, as opposed to being required to give a more global response.

It has previously been the case that Ordinary level candidates are less successful in their responses to questions on studied material than in their responses to unstudied stimulus material. This trend appears to have continued, as borne out by the data for 2017. As *Table 15* indicates, the highest ranked significant response to studied material was for question A 3(c) with a mean score of 76% of the available marks (placed thirteenth out of thirty-five items). It is also noteworthy that questions B 8(d), D 15(c), B 8(e), A 3(e) and D 15(d) are all ranked at the lower end of the table. All of these questions assessed studied material.

As *Table 16* indicates, Section A was the section most successfully attempted by candidates, with a mean score of 78.6% of the available marks. Section E, the Assessment Task was the second most successfully attempted part of the assessment with a 74.7% mean score.

Ordinary level candidates did best in Sections A and B, and did less well in Sections D and C. Questions C 10A and C 10B were the lowest ranked questions. Feedback from examiners noted that candidates struggled to engage with the questions on newspaper reporting styles.

There is no evidence to suggest that completion of the Ordinary level examination within the allotted time was an issue for the cohort.

4. Meeting the Requirements of the Specification

4.1 Context

The specification for Junior Cycle English is in line with the new template for all Junior Cycle subject specifications and is structured around its Rationale, Aims, Strands, Elements and Learning Outcomes. The following is a distillation of the salient parts of same, in respect of the Final Examination.

4.1.1 Rationale:

- Through language learning and use, students discover information, develop thinking, and express ideas and feelings
- As learners, it is important that students become aware of where and how they are improving in their use of language and conscious of where further improvement is necessary
- As a route to this knowledge they develop greater competence in the

conventions of spelling, punctuation procedures, sentence structures and text organisation

- The ability to appreciate literature from different cultures is important... read literature with insight and imagination.

4.1.2 Aim:

- To be creative through language
- To develop control over English using it and responding to it through the interconnected literacy skills of oral language, reading and writing
- To engage personally with and think critically about... a broad range of spoken, written and multimodal texts
- To develop an informed appreciation of literature
- To use literacy skills to manage information needs, and find, use, synthesise, evaluate and communicate information.

4.1.3 Strands, Elements, Learning Outcomes:

The three strands of *Oral Language, Reading and Writing* are grouped by reference to three Elements:

- Communicating as a listener, speaker, reader, writer
- Exploring and using language
- Understanding the content and structure of language

Twenty-three of the learning outcomes outlined in the three Strands were designated for assessment in the Final Examination.

4.2 Overview

As outlined in the specification, in all sections of both the Higher level and the Ordinary level examinations, candidates were required to engage with a number of learning outcomes from the three strands. In all responses, it is expected that candidates *use and apply their knowledge of language structures and use language conventions appropriately, especially punctuation and spelling, to aid meaning and presentation,*⁷ with the exception of candidates who are granted certain reasonable accommodations. This is reflected in the detail of the marking scheme.

Both of the 2017 English examinations assessed samples of learning outcomes from the Oral Language, Reading and Writing Strands. The examinations provided opportunities for a candidate to demonstrate their skills of written communication, their ability to explore language use and their ability to display an understanding of the content and structure of language.

4.3 Higher Level Examination

Through completing the Higher level examination candidates were required to *engage personally and think critically about... a broad range of written and multimodal texts*⁸ at an appropriate level.

⁷ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes, W10,11

⁸ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Aim

Section A asked candidates to engage with two stimulus texts, one written and one visual. It primarily assessed a candidate's ability to *read texts with fluency, understanding and competence*.⁹ It involved candidates displaying a number of higher order skills, specifically writing, *to analyse, evaluate... what they have heard, viewed and read*.¹⁰

This section also engaged with an outcome from the Oral language strand, as one of the texts was a transcript taken from a radio documentary and candidates were invited to evaluate the *effectiveness of... media broadcasts* and analyse register... *text structure and word choice... in spoken texts*.¹¹

Whereas the two stimulus texts were linked thematically, the two questions asked were entirely standalone. Incorrect reading of the instructions and rubrics led to confusion for some candidates who either misunderstood the notion that the stimulus for question one was a radio documentary transcript or who believed that the cinema poster was an advertisement for the documentary in question one. Candidates who demonstrated the ability to maintain focus on the task at hand, to develop ideas and to provide supportive evidence were most successful in this section. Candidates who deviated from the task at hand or who failed to make their points explicitly scored less well in this section.

The second section of the examination required candidates to engage with studied poetry and to show an ability to read literature with insight and to demonstrate *an informed appreciation of literature*.¹² This section proved the most challenging for candidates and this is supported by the mean figures presented in *Table 13*. Candidates were required to analyse a studied poem both in terms of meaning / understanding and in relation to the poet's effective use of language and poetic techniques, *showing a critical appreciation of language, style and content*.¹³ Better responses showed an ability to explore complex ideas, to reveal layers of meaning in poetry and to appreciate that one's interpretation of meaning in poetry can develop and alter over time and with perspective. The ability to discuss a poet's use of poetic techniques and in particular to explore the relationship between language use and meaning, was rewarded highly and some candidates demonstrated impressive insight in their responses. Less successful responses merely identified poetic features without exploring their impact or the extent to which they were used effectively. Candidates who struggled were often unable to address this area in any depth. This suggests that, in general, students would benefit from greater exposure to poetry than they may be getting presently. The quality of candidates' responses to these questions could be compromised by the limitations of the material they choose for their discussions. Many of the most commonly discussed poems from the Junior Certificate English programme resurfaced here suggesting that, to some extent, an opportunity for richer engagement with the genre is not being fully exploited. It is important that candidates read instructions for these questions and follow them correctly. Candidates were provided with both parts of the

⁹ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

¹⁰ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

¹¹ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes, Oral Strand

¹² NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Aim

¹³ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

question from the outset so that they could choose and manage their material appropriately. The explicit assessment of punctuation in question four, on the use of the apostrophe, was welcomed and in line with the relevant learning outcome, *use language conventions appropriately, especially punctuation and spelling*.¹⁴

In Section C candidates were asked to analyse both prescribed and un-prescribed Shakespearean texts. When it arose in the past (Junior Certificate English, Paper 2), candidates could choose not to engage with unseen Shakespearean drama as there was the option of responding to non-Shakespearean material. This was not the case in the 2017 examination.

It should be noted that when answering questions seven, eight and nine, candidates were expected to use one of the Shakespearean plays prescribed for study in 2017 as outlined in the Department of Education and Skills, Circular 32/2014.

A range of question types was used in this section including multiple choice questions which enabled candidates to demonstrate understanding and competence in decoding text. Candidates were required to engage in an imaginative way with the stimulus material and to show an awareness of stagecraft.

The questions on studied drama required candidates to demonstrate *understanding and appreciation of character*¹⁵ and more globally, asked candidates to *analyse, synthesise and evaluate*¹⁶ the Shakespearean play that they had engaged with in the classroom. It was noted that in responding to question seven, some candidates were unaware of what constituted an adjective. Others offered physical attributes demonstrating a lack of understanding of the question asked, which invited the nomination of a character's 'essential qualities'. The nature of the adjective subsequently chosen to answer question eight could be a factor in the success or otherwise of a candidate's response. Question nine, which asked candidates to nominate material for a poster advertising a film version of their studied play, was managed with varying degrees of success. Some candidates treated the task in a rather superficial manner. Others availed of an opportunity to posit what was, in their view, the essence of the play through visual representations. The question also allowed candidates an opportunity to be creative, while also displaying knowledge of their selected play. These most successful responses also engaged with the concept of the poster as a means of promotion for the hypothetical film. Having completed question two earlier in the examination paper, some candidates modelled their responses on what they had learned from their critical analysis of the cinema poster for *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*, thus demonstrating effective examination technique and transferrable critical-thinking skills.

The final section in the examination, asking candidates to produce a dialogue, required a particularly creative and controlled approach to writing. A word-cloud was provided which candidates were free to use as stimulus to whatever extent they wished. They were only

¹⁴ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

¹⁵ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

¹⁶ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

required to use one reference from the stimulus text. Some candidates who attempted to include most or all of the words in the stimulus compromised the coherence of their responses. The question required candidates to, *write for a variety of purposes, for example to... imagine, explore, engage, amuse, narrate etc.*, and to use *appropriate vocabulary, tone and a variety of styles to achieve a chosen purpose for different audiences*.¹⁷ Most candidates engaged with this task successfully. It was perhaps familiar territory to many. Evidence of an appreciation of register and an ability to write with a clear sense of audience was rewarded. Equally, the ability to give structure and shape when writing and to create a sense of a coherent scene was given due recognition. Candidates' success, or otherwise, in composing a scene from a drama, that had some sense of a coherent unit or completeness, proved to be useful for differentiating between responses. Some candidates had difficulty with formatting and were uncertain whether or not to use inverted commas and the conventions of direct speech.

The Assessment Task, linked to the second classroom-based assessment, was completed at two intervals in schools in 2016 and 2017. As stated above, it was marked by SEC examiners and presented as Section E in the marking process. Twenty marks were allocated to the Assessment Task, representing 10% of the total for the final assessment. The task allows students / candidates to reflect on their own writing, demonstrating the *knowledge and skills developed... during this classroom-based assessment* and a *growing awareness of the process of writing*.¹⁸ Candidates identified two texts from their collection of texts by title and genre. A small number of candidates misinterpreted the phrase 'collection of texts' naming texts that they had studied, written by others. A small number of candidates did not understand the term 'genre' albeit a broad interpretation of the term was allowed for in the marking scheme. This had an impact on the quality of a candidate's response to question two where they were asked to identify features of their writing in line with their chosen genre.

Evidence suggests that there was some confusion around the use of the audio-visual stimulus material shown to students in advance of completing the assessment task. Albeit that it is expected this material will be discussed in the first period of the task, some candidates believed that they were expected to write about or refer to the stimulus material in completing the written task. This is not the case.

Evidence of genuine engagement by candidates with their own writing was well rewarded. It is recognised that the task allowed candidates to showcase and reflect on work they had completed. It was evident from the Assessment Task that, following the second classroom-based assessment and through engagement with the Assessment Task, *students will have developed an awareness of key features of a range of texts, such as purpose, register and audience and will have developed some familiarity with the process of drafting and editing*.¹⁹

¹⁷ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

¹⁸ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, The Assessment Task

¹⁹ NCCA, *Guidelines for the Classroom- Based Assessment and Assessment Task*, 2015

4.4 Ordinary Level Examination

When completing the Ordinary level examination, candidates were required to *engage personally and think critically about... a broad range of written and multimodal texts*²⁰ to a level that was appropriate for this examination. The most successful candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the task involved with each question and produced relevant and engaging material in their responses.

Section A assessed both prescribed and un-prescribed material. The stimulus material was used to assess both multiple-choice questions and extended-answer questions. Candidates were required to, *use a wide range of reading comprehension strategies appropriate to texts... to retrieve information; to link to previous knowledge... to question, analyse, synthesise and evaluate.*²¹ Questions on a prescribed drama or film asked the candidate to engage with a character from one of their chosen studied texts, to evaluate that character in the context of a key moment and to engage with performance. A concern in relation to use of appropriate texts was highlighted by candidates' responses to this question. In the case of question three, some candidates struggled in trying to answer part (e), where they were asked to give advice to an actor playing the part of a chosen character, because they had chosen to base their response on a studied biopic or documentary. These candidates would have been better served applying the question to a studied play, as allowed by the question. Some candidates, particularly at Ordinary level are not always discerning enough, nor sufficiently accomplished in effective exam technique, to make choices of this nature. Evidence suggests that some candidates are using the same text in responding to questions relating to different genres, for instance when a film version of a work of fiction has been made. This suggests a more limited exposure to texts than is desirable.

Section B also assessed both prescribed and un-prescribed material. The first part of this section used adapted content from a graphic novel to assess comprehension and aspects of visual literacy. The general subject material for the graphic novel was viewed as relevant to this age group and candidates produced developed and engaging content. More sophisticated responses to question four demonstrated good visual literacy. The material enabled candidates to demonstrate an ability to *use a wide range of reading comprehension strategies appropriate to texts.*²² The questions asked candidates to appreciate, evaluate and demonstrate an understanding of *different literary, digital and visual genres and sub-genres.*²³ Candidates with an ability to synthesise information and apply knowledge were rewarded. When responding to questions on studied fiction, some candidates offered texts that were not on the prescribed list of fiction. There was, once again, some evidence of candidates trying to get multiple uses out of a single text. Candidates are advised to use texts prescribed for study in a given year as outlined in the relevant Department of Education and Skills, Circular 32/2014. Limiting the reading experience of students, is contrary to the spirit of the specification which, in adopting Statements of Learning, three

²⁰ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Aim

²¹ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

²² NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

²³ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

and six: underlines the aspiration that *students will engage critically with texts in a wide range of forms* and *students will encounter diversity through wide reading*.²⁴

The questions on prescribed fiction encouraged higher order engagement and some candidates struggled with the analytical and language skills required. Common errors included incorrect identification of text titles and writers, a reliance on summary and a failure to develop ideas.

Section C required candidates to, *demonstrate an understanding of how syntax, grammar, text structure and word choice may vary with content and purpose* and to *appreciate a variety of registers and understand their use in the written context*.²⁵ Some candidates struggled to utilise the stimulus material, two newspaper reports in two different styles, in an effective way. Question nine, proved to be challenging for many candidates – who were neither able to identify the event reported on, nor to describe it in a single sentence. The two final questions in this section required candidates to *write competently in a range of text forms... and a variety of styles to achieve a chosen purpose for different audiences*.²⁶ These tasks in particular, assessed a candidate's ability to appreciate audience and register and to write appropriately.

The fourth section in the examination presented a poem as stimulus material and assessed comprehension of texts in poetic form, *decoding groups of words / phrases and not just single words*.²⁷ A subsequent question on studied poetry required candidates to evaluate one of the poems that they had studied and to apply their knowledge of the chosen poem in a visual medium, by suggesting content for a short film based on the poem. This intervention-style question was welcomed. Some candidates were over reliant on a limited range of poems in their responses to these questions, suggesting a limited reading experience of poetry – which is regrettable.

In the final question on the examination paper, candidates were required to write an interview with a person who has followed their passions. Candidates engaged well with this task, having been given the freedom to choose any person they wished as interviewee. The task offered candidates an opportunity to compose an extended piece where they could,

demonstrate how register, including grammar, text structure and word choice, varies with context and purpose in spoken texts.²⁸

The Assessment Task was marked by SEC examiners and presented as Section E in the marking process. The task allows students / candidates to reflect on the writing they completed as part of the second classroom-based assessment. In completing the task candidates could demonstrate the *knowledge and skills developed... during this classroom-*

²⁴ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Statements of Learning

²⁵ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

²⁶ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

²⁷ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

²⁸ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

*based assessment and a growing awareness of the process of writing.*²⁹ Twenty marks were allocated to the Assessment Task, representing 10% of the total for the final assessment.

Candidates were required to identify two texts from their collection of texts by title and genre. As in the case with Higher level, some candidates at Ordinary level did not understand the term 'genre'; as stated in the published marking scheme, examiners were instructed to allow a broad interpretation of the term. This had an impact on the quality of their responses to question two where candidates were asked to identify features in their writing that were typical of their chosen genre. As noted above, some confusion was apparent in relation to the appropriate use of the stimulus material in the first period assigned to the task.

Candidates who showed evidence of genuine engagement with their own writing achieved the highest marks. Some candidates at Ordinary level struggled to engage effectively with the Assessment Task.

5. Reasonable Accommodation

In line with the SEC Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations (RACE) procedures, the following candidates were marked using a modified marking scheme:

- Candidates who were granted a waiver from spelling and written punctuation
- Candidates who availed of a scribe
- Candidates who recorded their responses on a recording device
- Candidates who typed their responses on a laptop or PC with the spellcheck facility enabled.

Examiners did not consider the standard of spelling and written punctuation when forming their impressions of these candidates' work and making judgements on it. Modified indicators of quality were provided in the marking scheme. The numbers of candidates marked using the modified scheme were 1548 at Higher level and 2541 and Ordinary level, respectively.

6. Appeals

Three candidates appealed their provisional result at Ordinary level English 2017. One of the three received an upgrade post appeal. 369 Higher level candidates appealed their provisional results. 87 of these received upgrades. No candidate was upgraded by more than one grade. *Table 17* shows data for English appeals at Higher level from 2013 to 2017 in the Junior Cycle.

The mean total of candidates, at Higher level who appealed, from 2013 to 2016 is 826; this represents on average, 1.86% of the total cohort. The 2017 figure represents 0.8% of the

²⁹ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, The Assessment Task

cohort. In terms of the outcomes at appeals, 2013-16, the mean figure for upgrades as a % of total candidates is 0.59%; the equivalent figure for 2017 is 0.18%.

7. Conclusions

Candidates taking the Higher level English Final Examination and Assessment Task in 2017, were required to: *engage personally and think critically; to demonstrate an informed appreciation of literature; to use literacy skills to manage information... to find, use, synthesise evaluate and communicate; to be creative through language.*³⁰

Candidates sitting the Ordinary level English Final Examination and Assessment Task in 2017, were required to: *to find, use, synthesise evaluate and communicate; to be creative through language; to use literacy skills to manage information; engage personally and think critically; to demonstrate an informed appreciation of literature.*³¹

In the case of both examinations candidates were assessed in line with the Specification for Junior Cycle English. To an extent that was appropriate at each level, candidates were required to think critically; they were also required to demonstrate the skills they have acquired as part of their experience of studying English in the Junior Cycle. The examinations at both levels required candidates to engage with unseen stimulus material as well as to demonstrate critical thinking skills and to apply them to the texts that they had studied. In line with the aspirations of the specification, rote-learned responses did not command the same marks as genuine candidate responses.

As suggested above and based on the figures in *Table 2*, a significant number of candidates who would perhaps have been better suited to the Ordinary level examination, took the Higher level examination. Their responses tended to lose focus and often lacked clarity and development. Many of these candidates did not fully understand the focus of some of the tasks they were required to complete.

At both levels, effective comprehension skill is required as candidates must engage with the rubrics of the examination; good examination technique and effective time management are critical. Unlike the previous Junior Certificate English examination, the format of the Junior Cycle English final assessment is subject to change year-on year.

In order to be successful, all parts of a question must be addressed by a candidate. Better responses by candidates demonstrated the ability to address more complex and higher-order aspects of questions. For instance, in question three, of the Higher level examination, candidates were required to discuss *how the poet makes effective use of these {poetic} techniques*. Similarly, in question nine, the extent to which candidates addressed the concept of elements of a poster that would create a *sense of anticipation*, for the release of

³⁰ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Aim

³¹ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Aim

a film version of a studied Shakespearean play, aided examiners in discriminating between levels of response.

The standard of a candidate's expression, syntax, spelling and punctuation also influenced the outcome for that candidate.

It is to be hoped that students will engage with more of the texts that are on the prescribed lists. Evidence in 2017 suggests that texts commonly used by candidates in the previous Junior Certificate examination, paper two, continued to feature prominently in the 2017 Junior Cycle English examinations. This suggests that the opportunity to engage in reading as a rich and diverse experience is not being availed of to the greatest extent possible.

Evidence at Higher level suggests that candidates' engagement with poetry is not as comprehensive as is desirable and as envisaged in the specification. Questions 3(a) and 3(b) on studied poetry achieved the lowest mean mark of all the long-response questions scoring just 11.4/20 and 11.3/20, respectively. Many responses lacked depth and development. Many Ordinary level candidates used a limited range of poems in the responses offered to answer question 15.

The use of completion answer booklets for the English, Junior Cycle examinations in 2017 meant that candidates had to, *use editing skills continuously during the writing process to enhance meaning and impact... manage content*,³² in effect to edit their responses as they planned and wrote them. It is hoped that over time students will improve their skills in this area. In 2017 many candidates did show adaptability and an ability to think in-the-moment. This is welcomed. Candidates who used the *Optional Rough Work* boxes effectively, were rewarded as such planning improved the standard of their finished response.

With any examination, there will be some candidates who do not successfully complete all of the questions asked. However, the data cited in *Table 14* and *Table 15* would indicate that completing the examination at Higher level was not an issue for candidates. Given that Ordinary level candidates tend to offer less developed responses, it was not an issue at this level either.

8. Recommendations for Teachers and Students / Candidates

8.1 During the learning

- It is recommended that candidates carefully consider the appropriate level when choosing between the Higher and Ordinary level examinations. This should be done in consultation with teachers and parents to ensure that all students choose the examination level that will allow them best display their abilities in the subject.

³² NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

- As indicated on the instructions page of the examinations, candidates are strongly advised to prepare texts in line with what is prescribed for any given year when answering on studied texts.
- Teachers are advised to refer to the relevant circular from the Department of Education and Skills in this regard. The use of texts that are not prescribed for any year's examination will affect the outcomes for a candidate.
- The use of the same text to answer questions in different genres is discouraged, for instance the use of a novel to answer a question on fiction and a question on film where a film version of the novel has been made. This will encourage engagement with a wider range of texts by students.
- The diverse range of texts on the prescribed list should be explored more; texts that are appropriate to both the interests and the ability levels of students should be chosen. By exploring a greater range of texts the opportunity for students to have a richer reading experience can be availed of.
- It is also recommended, where open choice is allowed by the model of prescription that teachers not choose texts prescribed for and more appropriate to the Leaving Certificate English examination. This will ultimately serve to limit a student's engagement with texts and experience of reading over the course of their study of English at post-primary level.
- It is recommended that students be exposed to a broad range of poetry that encourages personal response and critical thinking while also enabling them to appreciate the nuances of language use and poetic technique. The requirement of the specification, that students should study at least twenty-six poems for English at Junior Cycle should be complied with and opportunities to exceed this minimum level of engagement should be taken - if possible and feasible. The possibility of introducing many more poems into the learning experience should be considered, bearing in mind that texts can be engaged with to greater or lesser extents and that poetry can be accessed in many different ways. Poetry should be seen as a gateway into many potentially rich learning experiences.
- The importance of sustaining focus, developing ideas, structuring responses and supporting answers should be highlighted regularly during the course of a student's learning.
- The importance of accuracy in relation to grammar, spelling and punctuation should be underlined regularly during the course of a student's learning.
- Students should be encouraged to practise writing in many genres and to develop an appreciation for writing in all forms. The second classroom-based assessment should

be seen as an invaluable opportunity in this respect. The development of writing skills will invariably lead to better outcomes for candidates in the examinations.

- Teachers are advised to make themselves familiar with the detail of the relevant marking schemes available at www.examinations.ie. The features of quality outlined, both in general terms and specific to individual questions are good indicators as to the standard expected of high, medium and low-level responses.
- Teachers would be advised to familiarise themselves with the *Guidelines for the Classroom-based Assessments and Assessment Task* in order to avoid any confusion about the implementation of the Assessment Task and in particular the use of the stimulus material. They should familiarise themselves with the relevant instructions for carrying out the Assessment Task on the NCCA's website www.curriculumonline.ie and guide their students accordingly.

8.2 During the examination

- Candidates should read the instructions on the inside cover of the relevant examination with great care. These instructions suggest approximate timings for the completion of each section of the paper. They also indicate how many questions there are in each section and the number of marks awarded for each question. Candidates should be guided by all of this information in completing the examination.
- Effective time management is an important skill in any examination. Candidates should also see the space allocated to any question as an approximate guide to the length of the response they are expected to give. In so doing candidates will demonstrate the ability to, *edit their own writing as appropriate*.³³ If time allows, candidates may supplement initial responses with additional material where appropriate, using the spaces allocated in the examination booklets for this purpose.
- Candidates are advised to complete the sections of the paper in the order that they are presented. This will help them adhere to the suggested timing and will make it less likely that they will omit a question in error.
- Candidates should read all questions completely before responding. This is particularly important when answering multi-part questions on studied texts, as later parts of a question may help to determine the most appropriate text/s to use when answering.
- Candidates should identify the key issue/s to be addressed with every task. In their responses they should adhere to the focus of the task and show evidence of developed thought. A good quality, coherent response will maintain focus and not deviate into other areas or, as is sometimes the case, rely on summary when it is not

³³ NCCA, *Junior Cycle English Specification*, 2015, Learning Outcomes

appropriate. Candidates should take great care to address all of the key terms of any question.

- It should be reiterated, as observed above, the stimulus material for the Assessment Task does not need to be addressed or discussed when completing the Assessment Task booklet. It is recommended that students concentrate their reflection on relevant aspects of their own writing, compiled in their own collections of texts.
- Candidates should be conscious of the language and terminology used in any question and are encouraged to think carefully about how they address all terms or aspects of questions when responding.
- Greater use of the rough work boxes is recommended. Planning will enable a candidate to maintain a focus in any response and to have some oversight of the extent and depth of their answer. Effective use of these planning spaces in the examination, allow a candidate to see how many points they are addressing and may prompt new ideas and improved responses.
- Candidates are encouraged to develop their ideas fully in their responses. Merely stating a view without any development or substantiation will not be rewarded to the highest level.
- Views and ideas should be substantiated with supporting evidence when required. The effective use of supporting material is important. When answering on both stimulus and studied material, candidates should be judicious in their choice of appropriate material as supporting evidence. The material used should serve to underline the point or view being proposed. Candidates should resist the inclination to use an excessively long quotation that serves little or no purpose or that is not relevant to the point being made. Quotation should be used with fluency.
- When answering questions on style or language techniques in any genre, candidates are encouraged to explore the relationship between technique and meaning. Recognising and identifying a feature of language in writing should be seen as only a starting point. A deeper exploration of the impact or effect or effectiveness of a writer's use of that technique should be the corollary.
- Some of the tasks in the examinations invited candidates to show originality and creativity in their writing. These opportunities should be grasped with enthusiasm. Candidates should see them as opportunities to showcase the quality of their writing and the writing skills they have developed through studying English at Junior Cycle.
- At all times candidates should be conscious of recognising register and appreciating audience; it is important to be conscious of the audience that a piece of writing is addressing. Every effort should be made to use language and register appropriate to a specific task.

- All candidates should take due care to ensure that their spelling and use of written punctuation is accurate.
- Candidates should know the titles and authors of the texts they have studied and should take care to spell same correctly.
- When responding to multiple-choice questions candidates should indicate their preferred response in a clear and unambiguous way. Attempts to 'fudge' the answer will create confusion for assessment purposes and could prove to be counterproductive for the candidate. For instance, if a letter is to be entered, to indicate a response, the use of a handwritten lower case letters 'a' and 'd' could be confusing if not entered clearly.
- When entering responses in the completion booklet, care should be taken to write within the parameters of the space provided.
- When using additional writing space, the number of the question being answered should be distinctly noted on the left margin in this space. Candidates are advised, where possible, to place additional writing in the space that is closest to the main body of their answer.
- Candidates should take due care to present their work in a neat and well-organised manner. All efforts should be taken to ensure that handwriting is legible.

9. Appendix: Tables

Table 1 – Grade descriptors for Junior Cycle Final Assessments

GRADE	RANGE (%)
Distinction	≥90 to 100
Higher Merit	≥75 and <90
Merit	≥55 and <75
Achieved	≥40 and <55
Partially Achieved	≥20 and <40
(not graded)	≥0 and <20

Table 2 – Participation in Junior Certificate / Cycle English

	Total English Candidature	Higher level	Ordinary level	Foundation level	HL (%)	OL (%)	(FL %)
2013	59,255	43,332	14,633	1,290	73.1	24.6	2.1
2014	59,785	44,688	13,929	1,168	74.7	23.2	1.9
2015	59,020	44,333	13,627	1,060	75.1	23	1.7
2016	59,716	45,057	13,551	1,108	75.4	22.6	1.8
2017	60,990	48,235	12,755	-	79	20.9	

Table 3 – Gender composition of cohort, Junior Certificate / Cycle English

Year	Female						Male					
	Higher	%	Ordinary	%	Foundation	%	Higher	%	Ordinary	%	Foundation	%
2013	22791	52.5	5774	39.4	462	35.8	20541	47.4	8859	60.5	828	64.1
2014	23195	51.9	5402	38.7	424	36.3	21493	48	8527	61.2	744	63.6
2015	23324	52.6	5309	38.9	364	34.3	21009	47.3	8318	61	696	65.6
2016	23811	52.8	5238	38.6	390	35.1	21246	47.1	8313	61.3	718	64.8
2017	25406	52.6	4664	36.5	-		22829	47.3	8091	63.4	-	

Table 4 – Outcomes for Junior Certificate English Higher level

Year	Total	% A	% B	% C	% ABC	% D	% E	% F	%NG	%EFNG
2012	41,724	10.7	27.3	38.5	76.5	21.7	1.6	0.1	0.0	1.8
2013	43,350	10.5	26.1	38.5	75.1	22.5	2.2	0.2	0.0	2.4
2014	44,699	9.8	26.4	39.0	75.3	22.2	2.3	0.2	0.0	2.5
2015	44,335	9.3	25.9	40.3	75.4	22.4	1.9	0.2	0.0	2.1
2016	45,069	9.6	27.2	39.6	76.4	21.1	2.2	0.2	0.0	2.5

Table 5 – Outcomes for female / male candidates, Junior Certificate English Higher level

Year/gender	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2012									
% Female	13	30.7	38.4	82.1	17.2	0.7	0	0	0.7
% Male	7.9	23.7	38.7	70.3	27.2	2.2	0.2	0	2.4
2013									
% Female	13.3	29.9	38.5	81.7	17.1	1.1	0.1	0	1.2
% Male	7.5	22.2	38.4	68.1	28.6	2.9	0.3	0	3.2
2014									
% Female	12.5	31.3	38.8	82.6	16.3	0.9	0.1	0	1
% Male	7	22	39.3	68.3	28.2	3.1	0.4	0	3.5
2015									
% Female	11.8	30.3	39.5	81.6	17.5	0.9	0.1	0	1
% Male	6.6	21.3	40.9	68.8	28.3	2.5	0.3	0	2.8
2016									
% Female	12.2	31.7	39.2	83.1	15.8	1	0.1	0	1.1
% Male	6.8	22.6	39.8	69.2	27.4	2.9	0.4	0	3.3

Table 6 – Outcomes for Junior Cycle English Higher level 2017

Year	% Distinction	% High Merit	% Merit	% Achieved	% Partially Achieved	% Not Graded
2017	1.8	20.2	59.7	15.9	2.3	0.1
	1.8	79.9		18.2		0.1

Table 7 – Outcomes for female/ male candidates, Junior Cycle English Higher level 2017

Year	Distinction	High Merit	Merit	> Merit	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Graded
2017	1.8	20.2	59.7	81.7	15.9	2.3	0.1
% Female	2.7	26.2	59.1	88	10.7	1.2	0.0
% Male	0.7	13.5	60.4	74.6	21.7	3.5	0.2

Table 8 – Outcomes for Junior Certificate English Ordinary level

Year	Total	% A	% B	% C	% ABC	% D	% E	% F	% NG	% EFNG
2012	15,039	7.3	30.2	41.8	79.3	18.9	1.5	0.3	0	1.8
2013	14,633	6.5	31.0	43.2	80.7	17.7	1.2	0.2	0.0	1.4
2014	13,929	6.1	30.2	43.1	79.4	18.9	1.2	0.4	0.1	1.7
2015	13,627	6.1	29.0	42.4	77.5	20.4	1.6	0.3	0.1	2.0
2016	13,551	6.0	29.1	41.7	76.8	20.7	2.1	0.4	0.1	2.6

Table 9 – Outcomes for female / male candidates, Junior Certificate English Ordinary level

Year/gender	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2012									
% Female	9.6	36.3	39.8	85.7	13.2	0.9	0.2	0	1.1
% Male	5.8	26.4	43.0	75.2	22.4	1.9	0.4	0.1	2.4
2013									
% Female	10.3	39.1	38.5	87.9	11.2	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.9
% Male	4.1	25.7	46.2	76	22.0	1.6	0.3	0.1	1.9
2014									
% Female	6.1	30.2	43.1	79.4	18.9	1.2	0.4	0.1	1.7
% Male	3.8	24.2	44.0	72	25.3	2.1	0.4	0.1	2.6
2015									
% Female	9.5	36.5	39.9	85.9	12.8	0.9	0.2	0.1	1.2
% Male	3.8	24.2	44.0	72	25.3	2.1	0.4	0.1	2.6
2016									
% Female	9	35.5	40.3	84.8	14.1	1.0	0.2	0	1.2
% Male	4.1	25.1	42.6	71.8	24.9	2.7	0.6	0.1	3.4

Table 10 – Outcomes for Junior Cycle English Ordinary level 2017

Year	% Distinction	% High Merit	% Merit	% Achieved	% Partially Achieved	% Not Graded
2017	2.9	33.2	46.8	13.0	3.7	0.5

Table 11 – Outcomes for female/ male candidates, Junior Cycle English Ordinary level 2017

Year	Distinction	High Merit	Merit	> Merit	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Graded
2017	2.9	33.2	46.8	82.9	13.0	3.7	0.5
% Female	4.5	41.6	42.5	88.6	9.1	2.3	0.1
% Male	1.9	28.3	49.3	79.5	15.3	4.6	0.7

Table 12 – Performance at item level, Higher level examination

Item level outcomes for Junior Cycle English, Higher Level, random sample					n=1473		Task Descriptor
Name	Mark	Mean	Mean as %	#FC	%FC		
E1	2	1.9	96.6	1392	94.5	Titles / genres texts	
C7	5	4.7	94.0	1215	82.5	Identify character qualities	
C5b	2	1.8	92.5	1362	92.5	Comprehension MCQ	
C5c	2	1.8	90.2	1328	90.2	Comprehension MCQ	
B4c	1	0.9	89.1	1312	89.1	Punctuation MCQ	
B4b	1	0.9	88.9	1309	88.9	Punctuation MCQ	
E3i	5	3.9	78.7	510	34.6	Reflection on writing	
C5d	2	1.5	77.1	1135	77.1	Comprehension MCQ	
E3ii	5	3.8	76.7	472	32.0	Reflection on Writing	
B4a	1	0.8	75.8	1117	75.8	Punctuation MCQ	
E2	8	5.9	73.1	337	22.9	Reflection on writing	
A1	15	10.6	70.9	153	10.4	Analysis and Evaluation	
A2	20	13.5	67.6	111	7.5	Analysis and Evaluation	
D10	25	16.6	66.4	72	4.9	Create dialogue/scene	
C5a	2	1.3	64.2	946	64.2	Comprehension MCQ	
C5e	2	1.2	61.8	911	61.8	Comprehension MCQ	
C8	20	12.4	61.8	67	4.5	Analysis/studied drama	
C9	20	12.2	60.8	74	5.0	Analysis/studied drama	
B3a	20	11.4	57.1	85	5.8	Analysis/studied poetry	
C6	20	11.3	56.6	41	2.8	Stagecraft stimulus	
B3b	20	11.2	55.9	101	6.9	Analysis/studied poetry	
B4e	1	0.6	55.5	817	55.5	Punctuation MCQ	
B4d	1	0.5	45.8	675	45.8	Punctuation MCQ	

Table 13 – Performance at section level, Higher level examination

Outcomes by section, Junior Cycle English, Higher Level, random sample				Section
Section	Mark	Mean	Mean as %	
E	20	15.6	77.8	Assessment Task
A	35	24.2	69.0	Reading to Analyse and Evaluate
D	25	16.6	66.4	Engaging in the Writing Process
C	75	48.3	64.3	Appreciating Character, Setting, Story, Action
C Q6-9	65	40.5	62.4	Appreciating Character, Setting, Story, Action
B	45	26.1	58.1	Showing Critical Appreciation
B Q3 only	40	22.6	56.5	Showing Critical Appreciation

Table 14 – Analysis of outcomes at section level for 10,000 whole scripts, Higher level

Section	Item	Total Mark Available	Mean mark (as a % of Total Mark Available)
A	1	15	71.9%
A	2	20	67.6%
B	3a	20	57.5%
B	3b	20	55.6%
C	6	20	55.8%
C	8	20	62.3%
C	9	20	60.9%
D	10	25	67.6%

Table 15 – Performance at item level, Ordinary level examination

Item level outcomes for Junior Cycle English, Ordinary Level, random sample				n =614		Task Descriptor
Name	Mark	Mean	Mean as %	#FC	%FC	
A3a	1	1.0	97.2	597	97.2	Identify play or film
A1b	5	4.7	95.0	583	95.0	Comprehension MCQ
A1a	5	4.7	94.5	580	94.5	Comprehension MCQ
A3b	1	0.9	93.6	575	93.6	Identify character
D13	5	4.5	90.6	506	82.4	Analysis/ stimulus poetry
E1	2	1.7	86.2	490	79.8	Titles / genres texts
B8a	1	0.9	85.5	525	85.5	Identify story
A1c	5	4.2	84.5	519	84.5	Comprehension MCQ
D15a	1	0.8	83.4	512	83.4	Identify poem
A2	10	7.9	79.3	250	40.7	Comprehension
B5	5	3.9	78.1	329	53.6	Comprehension / Evaluate
A1d	5	3.8	76.2	468	76.2	Comprehension MCQ
A3c	6	4.6	76.0	250	40.7	Character in studied text
E3i	5	3.8	75.9	264	43.0	Reflection on writing
B7	5	3.7	74.6	296	48.2	Evaluate /stimulus text
E2	8	5.8	72.5	213	34.7	Reflection on writing
E3ii	5	3.6	72.2	255	41.5	Reflection on writing
B4	10	7.0	70.2	144	23.5	Comprehension / description
D15b	1	0.7	69.9	429	69.9	Identify poet
A3d	6	4.2	69.7	203	33.1	Character in studied text
B8b	1	0.7	69.7	428	69.7	Identify author
B6	10	6.9	69.4	126	20.5	Create / stimulus text
D14	5	3.4	68.0	241	39.3	Analysis/ stimulus poetry
C11	10	6.7	66.9	102	16.6	Writing report
D16a,b,c	10	6.5	64.6	139	22.6	Writing interview
B8c	8	5.1	63.4	150	24.4	Describe key moment -studied
C9	5	2.9	58.5	184	30.0	Comprehension
C12	10	5.7	57.0	62	10.1	Writing – register
B8d	10	5.6	55.9	90	14.7	Evaluate – studied fiction
D15c	6	3.3	54.5	113	18.4	Evaluate – studied poetry
B8e	10	5.4	54.3	91	14.8	Evaluate – studied fiction
A3e	6	3.2	53.4	106	17.3	Character / performance
D15d	7	3.4	48.6	98	16.0	Evaluate – studied poetry
C10B	5	2.1	41.3	94	15.3	Comprehension / register
C10A	5	2.0	40.3	94	15.3	Comprehension / register

Table 16 – Performance at section level Ordinary level examination

Outcomes by section, Junior Cycle English, Ordinary Level, random sample			
Section	Mark	Mean	Mean as %
A	50	39.3	78.6
E	20	14.9	74.7
A Q2&3	30	21.8	72.6
B	60	39.2	65.4
D	35	22.6	64.6
C	35	19.4	55.4

Table 17 – Junior Cycle English Appeals

Year	Total appeals	Appeals as % of candidates	Upgrades as % of appeals	Upgrades as % of total candidates
2013	880	2.03	33.09	.67
2014	802	1.79	27.14	.49
2015	856	1.93	32.83	.63
2016	767	1.70	34.03	.58
2017	369	0.8	23.6	.18