

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(For Candidates in The Gambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia Only)

PREAMBLE

This examination sets out to test the different basic skills of communicating in English using the mediums of speech and writing. The examination will test the receptive and productive abilities of candidates. These abilities will be demonstrated in the following forms: Reading Comprehension, Summary, Vocabulary, Lexis and Structure, Listening Comprehension and recognition of different aspects of spoken English.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the syllabus is to measure the extent to which the aims of the teaching syllabuses of member countries have been realized in candidates' secondary school career. The examination sets out to examine candidates' ability to

- (i) use correct English;
- (ii) write about incidents in English that are appropriate to specified audiences and situations;
- (iii) organize material in paragraphs that are chronologically, spatially and logically coherent;
- (iv) control sentence structures accurately;
- (v) exhibit variety in the use of sentence patterns;
- (vi) comply with the rules of grammar;
- (vii) spell and punctuate correctly;
- (viii) comprehend written and spoken English;
- (ix) recognize implied meaning, tones and attitudes;
- (x) use an acceptable pronunciation that can be comprehended by others;
- (xi) recognize the physical characteristics of English sounds and the letters that represent them.
- (xii) pick out and summarize relevant information from set passages.

SCHEME OF EXAMINATION

There will be three papers – Papers 1, 2 and 3, all of which must be taken.. Papers 1 and 2 will be combined in a composite paper to be taken at one sitting.

PAPER 1: Will consist of eighty multiple choice questions, all of which should be answered within 1 hour for 40 marks.

PAPER 2: Will consist of five essay topics and a passage each to test candidates' comprehension and summary skills. Candidates will be expected to write an essay on one of the topics and answer all the questions on Comprehension and Summary passages. The paper will last 2 hours and carry 100 marks.

PAPER 3: Will consist of sixty multiple choice items on Test of Orals for candidates in Nigeria and Liberia, and Listening Comprehension for candidates in the Gambia and Sierra Leone. All the questions will be answered in 45 minutes for 30 marks.

DETAILED SYLLABUS

PAPER 1: This is an objective/multiple choice paper comprising 80 questions: 40 lexical and 40 structural items. Each question/item will have four options lettered A to D.

A. LEXIS

In addition to items testing knowledge of the vocabulary of everyday usage (i.e) home, social relationships, common core school subjects) questions will be set to test candidates' ability in the use of the general vocabulary associated with the following fields of human activity:

1. (a) Building and building construction;
(b) Agriculture;
(c) Fishing;
(d) Stock exchange;
(e) Health;
(f) Environment;
(g) Culture, Institutions and Ceremonies;
(h) Law and Order;
(i) Motor Vehicles and Travelling;
(j) Government and Administration;
(k) Sports;
(l) Religion;
(m) Science and Technology;
(n) Animal husbandry;
(o) Advertising;
(p) Human Internal Body system and function.
- II. Idioms, i.e. idiomatic expressions and collocations (e.g. 'hook, line and sinker', 'every Tom, Dick and Harry' etc.) the total meaning of which cannot be arrived at simply by consideration of the dictionary meanings of the words in the structures in which they appear.
- III. Structural elements of English e.g. sequence of tenses, matching of pronouns with their antecedents, correct use of prepositions etc.
- IV. Figurative Usage

The term 'general' vocabulary refers to those words and usage of words normally associated with the fields of human activity in A1 above which are generally known, used

and understood by most educated people who, while not engaged in that field of activity may have occasion to read, speak or write about it. Thus, for example, in the vocabulary of transportation by road, one would expect knowledge of terms such as ‘pedestrian bridge’ and ‘traffic signs’ which most educated people understand, but not ‘berm’ or ‘camber’ which are specialized.

All items will be phrased in such a way as to test the use and understanding of the required lexis, rather than dictionary definitions and explanations. In practice, the test of lexis will be so designed as to explore, not merely the extent of the candidates’ vocabulary but more importantly their ability to respond to sense relations in the use of lexical items e.g. synonyms, antonyms and homonyms.

In the test of figurative language, candidates will be expected to recognize when an expression is used figuratively and not only when it is used literally.

B. STRUCTURE

Structure here includes:

- (i) The patterns of changes in word-forms which indicate number, tense, degree, etc;
- (ii) The patterns in which different categories of words regularly combine to form groups and these groups in turn combine to form sentences;
- (iii) The use of structural words e.g. conjunctions, determiners, prepositions, etc.

PAPER 2: This paper will be divided into three sections (A, B and C).
Candidates will be required to spend 2 hours on this paper.

SECTION A: ESSAY WRITING (50 marks)

Candidates will be required to spend 50 minutes on this section. There will be five questions in all and candidates will be required to answer only one question.

The questions will test candidates’ ability to communicate in writing. The topics will demand the following kinds of writing:

- (i) letter;
- (ii) speech;
- (iii) narration;
- (iv) description;
- (v) argument/debate;
- (vi) report;
- (vii) article;
- (viii) exposition;
- (ix) creative writing.

Marks will be awarded for:

- (i) Content: relevance of ideas to the topic;

- (ii) Organization: formal features (where applicable), good paragraphing, appropriate emphasis and arrangement of ideas;
- (iii) Expression: effective control of vocabulary and sentence structure;
- (iv) Mechanical Accuracy: correct grammar, punctuation, spelling etc.

The minimum length will be 450 words.

SECTION B: COMPREHENSION (20 marks)

Candidates will be required to spend 30 minutes on this section. The section will consist of one passage of at least three hundred and fifty (350) words. Candidates will be required to answer all the questions on the passage.

The questions will test candidates' ability to

- (i) find appropriate equivalents for selected words or phrases;
- (ii) understand the factual content;
- (iii) make inferences from the content of the passage;
- (iv) understand the use of English expressions that reveal/reflect sentiments/emotions/attitudes;
- (v) identify and label basic grammatical structures, words, phrases or clauses and explain their functions as they appear in the context;
- (vi) identify and explain basic literary terms and expressions;
- (vii) recast phrases or sentences into grammatical alternatives.

The passage will be chosen from a wide variety of sources all of which should be suitable for this level of examination in terms of theme and interest. The passage will be written in modern English that should be within the experience of candidates. The comprehension test will include at least four questions based on (ii) above.

SECTION C: SUMMARY (30 marks)

Candidates will be required to spend 40 minutes on this section. The section will consist of one prose passage of about five hundred (500) words and will test candidates' ability to

- (i) extract relevant information;
- (ii) summarize the points demanded in clear concise English, avoiding repetition and redundancy;
- (iii) present a summary of specific aspects or portions of the passage.

The passage will be selected from a wide variety of suitable sources, including excerpts from narratives, dialogues and expositions of social, cultural, economic and political issues in any part of the world.

PAPER 3: ORAL ENGLISH (30 marks)

This paper will test candidates' knowledge of Oral English. There will be two alternatives for this paper: Alternative A for School and Private Candidates in The Gambia and Sierra Leone, and Alternative B for candidates in Nigeria only.

ALTERNATIVE A

(For school and private candidates in The Gambia and Sierra Leone)

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

This paper will be a Listening Comprehension Test.

This will be made up of 60 multiple choice objective questions on:

Consonants, consonant clusters, vowels, diphthongs, stress and intonation patterns, dialogues and narratives.

Section 1: Test of word final voiced-voiceless consonants in isolated words mainly, but other features such as consonant clusters may also be tested.

Section 2: Test of vowel quality in isolated words.

Section 3: Test of vowel quality and consonant contrasts in isolated words.

Section 4: One of three options below will be used in different years:

- (i) test of vowel and/or consonant contrasts in sentence contexts;
- (ii) test of vowel and consonant contrasts in isolated words- to be selected from a list of at least four-word contrasts;
- (iii) test of vowel and consonant contrasts through rhymes.

Section 5: Test of rhymes

Section 6: Test of comprehension of emphatic stress

Section 7: Test of understanding of the content of longer dialogues and narratives

NOTE: CD players will be used for the administration of this Listening Comprehension Test.

Features to be tested

1. CONSONANTS

- (a) Single Consonants – Candidates should be able to recognize and produce all significant sound contrasts in the consonantal system of English. For the guidance of candidates, a few examples of such contrasts are given below.

| Initial | Medial | Final |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| they – day | buzzes – buses | boat – both |
| ship – chip | parcel – partial | breathe – breed |
| fan – van | sopping – sobbing | wash – watch |
| pit – fit | written – ridden | leaf – leave |
| pit – bit | anger – anchor | cup – cub |
| tuck – duck | faces – phrases | cart – card |
| card – guard | prices – prizes | |
| gear – jeer | | |

- (b) Consonant Clusters – Candidates should be able to produce and recognize consonant clusters which may occur both initially and finally in a syllable. They should also be able to recognize and produce the consonant sounds in a consonant cluster in the right order. For the guidance of candidates, a few examples are given below.

| Initial | Final |
|-----------------|----------------|
| play – pray | rains – range |
| sting – string | felt – felled |
| scheme – scream | sent – send |
| crime – climb | nest – next |
| flee – free | ask – axe |
| three – tree | lift – lived |
| true – drew | missed – mixed |
| blight – bright | seats – seeds |
| tread – thread | hens – hence |
| drift – thrift | lisp – lips |
| glade – grade | coast – coats |
| | marks – masks |

II. VOWELS

- (a) Pure Vowels
- (b) Diphthongs
- (c) Triphthongs

Candidates should be able to recognize and produce all the significant sound contrasts in the vowel system of English. For the guidance of candidates, a few examples of such contrasts are given below.

| | | |
|------|---|------|
| seat | - | sit |
| sit | - | set |
| peck | - | pack |
| pack | - | park |
| cart | - | cat |
| load | - | lord |

| | | | | | | |
|--------|---|-------|---|--------|---|------------|
| pair | - | purr | | | | |
| park | - | port | | | | |
| hard | - | heard | | | | |
| word | - | ward | | | | |
| let | - | late | | | | |
| cheer | - | chair | | | | |
| pet | - | pat | - | part | - | pate |
| hat | - | heart | - | height | - | hate - hut |
| caught | - | cot | - | cut | - | curt |
| pool | - | pull | - | pole | | |
| bird | - | bed | - | bared | | |
| but | - | bat | | | | |

III. STRESS

(a) **Word Stress** - Candidates should be able to contrast stressed and unstressed syllables in words which are not otherwise distinguished. In addition, they should be aware of the possibility of shifting stress from one syllable to another in different derivations of the same word with consequent change in vowel quality. For the guidance of candidates, a few examples of changing word stress are given below.

| | | | |
|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|
| 'increase | (noun) | in'crease | (verb) |
| 'import | " | im'port | " |
| 'rebel | " | re'bel | " |
| 'convict | " | con'vict | " |
| 'extract | " | ex'tract | " |
| 'record | " | re'cord | " |
| 'subject | " | sub'ject | " |

(b) **Sentence Stress** – Candidates should be aware that stress in sentences in English tends to occur at regular intervals in time. English is therefore called a stress-timed language. They should also be aware that in most sentences, unless some sort of emphasis is introduced, only nouns, main verbs (not auxiliaries), adjectives and adverbs are stressed. Final pronouns should not be stressed, unless some kind of contrast is intended: relative pronouns should not be stressed, nor should possessive pronouns. Thus, for example, the following sentences should be stressed as indicated:

He 'went to the town and 'bought some 'oranges.

I 'told him to 'go to the 'station to 'ask when the train would 'leave.

Did you 'ask him?

I 'read it but I did not understand it.

They ar'rived yesterday.

I 'fetched his 'book.

NOTE: There are a few words in English that are pronounced differently depending on whether or not they are stressed in the sentence. These are usually called strong and weak forms.

(c) **Emphatic stress** – Candidates should be aware of the use of emphatic stress, most commonly to indicate a contrast, which is realized partly as a change in pitch within the intonational pattern. This falling pitch illustrated below is one of the common ways of indicating this:

He borrowed 'my newspaper. (i.e. not hers)
He' borrowed my newspaper. (i.e. he did not steal it)
He borrowed my 'newspaper.(i.e. not my book)
'He borrowed my newspaper.(i.e. not someone else's)

IV. INTONATION

Candidates should be made aware of the different forms that English intonation takes in relation to the grammar of the language and the attitudes conveyed by the speaker. There are two basic intonation patterns or tunes: the falling and rising patterns. They should also realize that whereas the normal place for the changing pitch in an intonation is the last stressed syllable of the utterance(as indicated below), placing the changing pitch elsewhere implies a contrast to the item on which this changing pitch falls. For example:

(a) Falling Pattern

They ar'rived to'day. () Statement
'Where did he 'go? () WH question
'Come 'here () Command

(b) Rising Pattern

Did he 'see the 'principal? () Yes/No question
When the 'train arrived. () Incomplete
They arrived to'day? () Question

Note that (i) the two patterns indicated above may be combined in longer sentences, e.g.
When the 'train ar'rived, the passengers were on the platform. ()

(ii) candidates should note, in addition, that any unstressed syllable following the last stressed syllable of the sentence is said on a low level pitch when the pattern is falling, but continues the rise if the pattern is rising. The same rule applies to tags following quoted speech.

ALTERNATIVE B: TEST OF ORALS (For School and Private Candidates in Nigeria)

A test of orals format is a multiple-choice paper of 60 items testing a wide range of areas or aspects of orals as contained in the syllabus.

The Test of Orals will cover the following areas:

1. Vowels – pure vowels and diphthongs;
2. Consonants and clusters;
3. Rhymes;
4. Word stress/Syllable Structure;
5. Emphatic Stress/Intonation Patterns;
6. Phonetic Symbols.