



Independent Schools
Examinations Board

CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH SKILLS SPECIFICATION

(For first examination in 2006)

© Independent Schools Examinations Board 2006

INTRODUCTION

The English Skills assessment is taken on line and by telephone. It is intended not only for candidates from overseas or non-mother-tongue users of English, but also for English-speaking candidates who have difficulties using English. It should enable senior schools to decide if the candidate can cope with mainstream subjects or will need additional or remedial help.

The four language skills, listening, reading, speaking and writing, are assessed by tasks of varying levels of difficulty.

AIMS

A course leading to this assessment should:

- (i) enable candidates from overseas or non-mother-tongue users of English to cope and flourish, both personally and academically, at senior school
- (ii) encourage weaker English-speaking candidates to develop their skills in their mother tongue

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

The Certificate of Achievement in English Skills should enable candidates to show:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| AO1 | how much spoken language they can understand |
| AO2 | how well they can make themselves understood in English |
| AO3 | how much written language they can understand |
| AO4 | how well they can express themselves in written English |

SPECIFICATION CONTENT

Candidates are expected to understand and manipulate material relevant to everyday school life and the subjects which candidates would be studying.

LISTENING

Candidates should be able to understand information and instructions, e.g. school announcements or a classroom talk.

SPEAKING

Candidates should be able to talk about themselves, their families and interests.

READING

Candidates should be able to understand extracts from a wide range of school subjects, including geographical, historical or scientific passages.

WRITING

Candidates should be able to write accurately and relevantly on:

- a given subject in directed form
- a topic which might include an informal letter, the opening of a story to be continued, an account of a real or imagined experience or an 'argument' essay, discussing the advantages or disadvantages of a given subject

SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

The assessment will be divided into four parts, testing the four language skills. Successful candidates will receive a certificate.

LISTENING (25 marks; approximately 30 minutes)

Section 1: (5 marks)

Candidates will hear a short talk and will be asked to complete sentences, fill in a table, or complete a diagram.

Section 2: (10 marks)

This section typically will ask the candidates to label a chart, diagram or picture.

Section 3: (10 marks)

Candidates will be asked to listen to a talk and extract information, or summarise, or fill in blanks on a table or chart.

SPEAKING (25 marks; approximately 15 minutes)

This test will be conducted by telephone. Candidates will also need to be by a computer screen during the test. Marks will be allocated for communication, fluency, accuracy, pronunciation and range of expression.

Section 1: All about You (5 marks)

Candidates will be asked basic questions about themselves and their families.

Section 2: Unprepared Discussion (5 marks)

Candidates will be asked to talk about a topic, appropriate to the age and experience of the candidates.

Section 3: Prepared Topic (10 marks)

Candidates will have two minutes to present the topic which they have chosen and prepared. Topics might be any aspect of the candidate's own life and culture, or a controversial issue. Notes are not allowed.

Section 4: Picture Stimulus (5 marks)

Candidates will be required to say what they can see in a photograph (displayed on the computer screen) and talk about it in any way they wish.

READING (20 marks; 30 minutes)

Candidates are encouraged to use an English-English dictionary for this test.

A passage will be given. Tasks might be to summarise, extract relevant information, label a diagram, complete a table, find synonyms or antonyms, or state whether an assertion is true or false.

WRITING (30 marks; 30 minutes)**Section 1: Directed Writing (15 marks)**

Candidates will be required to rewrite in text form information from a diagram, picture, graph or table. They may be asked to describe a process, write a set of instructions or draw conclusions. Help may be given with vocabulary. Marks will be awarded for structure, content and accuracy (spelling, punctuation, grammar), with equal weighting for each.

Section 2: Free Writing (15 marks)

A short essay of 100-200 words is to be written on one of three set topics. Candidates will not be penalised for exceeding the word limit if their writing is accurate and relevant. Marks will be awarded for structure, content and accuracy (spelling, punctuation, grammar), with equal weighting for each.