

Syllabus

Cambridge O Level English Language

Syllabus code 1123

For examination in June and November 2011



UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

Note for Exams Officers: Before making Final Entries, please check availability of the codes for the components and options in the E3 booklet (titled "Procedures for the Submission of Entries") relevant to the exam session. Please note that component and option codes are subject to change.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Why choose Cambridge?

University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) is the world's largest provider of international qualifications. Around 1.5 million students from 150 countries enter Cambridge examinations every year. What makes educators around the world choose Cambridge?

Developed for an international audience

International O Levels have been designed specially for an international audience and are sensitive to the needs of different countries. These qualifications are designed for students whose first language may not be English and this is acknowledged throughout the examination process. The curriculum also allows teaching to be placed in a localised context, making it relevant in varying regions.

Recognition

Cambridge O Levels are internationally recognised by schools, universities and employers as equivalent to UK GCSE. They are excellent preparation for A/AS Level, the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), US Advanced Placement Programme and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. CIE is accredited by the UK Government regulator, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Learn more at www.cie.org.uk/recognition.

Support

CIE provides a world-class support service for teachers and exams officers. We offer a wide range of teacher materials to Centres, plus teacher training (online and face-to-face) and student support materials. Exams officers can trust in reliable, efficient administration of exams entry and excellent, personal support from CIE Customer Services. Learn more at www.cie.org.uk/teachers.

Excellence in education

Cambridge qualifications develop successful students. They not only build understanding and knowledge required for progression, but also learning and thinking skills that help students become independent learners and equip them for life.

Not-for-profit, part of the University of Cambridge

CIE is part of Cambridge Assessment, a not-for-profit organisation and part of the University of Cambridge. The needs of teachers and learners are at the core of what we do. CIE invests constantly in improving its qualifications and services. We draw upon education research in developing our qualifications.

1. Introduction

1.2 Why choose Cambridge O Level English Language?

International O Levels are established qualifications that keep pace with educational developments and trends. The International O Level curriculum places emphasis on broad and balanced study across a wide range of subject areas. The curriculum is structured so that students attain both practical skills and theoretical knowledge.

Cambridge O Level English Language is accepted by universities and employers as proof of linguistic ability and understanding. The Cambridge O Level English Language syllabus encourages students to develop lifelong skills, including:

- the ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively
- using a wide range of vocabulary and correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
- a personal style and an awareness of the audience being addressed.

Students are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and to further their awareness of the ways in which English can be used. Cambridge O Level English Language study also develops more general analysis and communication skills such as synthesis, inference, and the ability to order facts and present opinions effectively.

Students may also study for a Cambridge O Level in Literature in English. In addition to Cambridge O Levels, CIE also offers Cambridge IGCSE and International A & AS Levels for further study in both English as well as other languages. See www.cie.org.uk for a full list of the qualifications you can take.

1.3 How can I find out more?

If you are already a Cambridge Centre

You can make entries for this qualification through your usual channels, e.g. your regional representative, the British Council or CIE Direct. If you have any queries, please contact us at international@cie.org.uk.

If you are not a Cambridge Centre

You can find out how your organisation can become a Cambridge Centre. Email either your local British Council representative or CIE at international@cie.org.uk. Learn more about the benefits of becoming a Cambridge Centre at www.cie.org.uk.

2. Summary of revisions to the syllabus

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The Cambridge O Level English Language syllabus has been developed in response to customer feedback in a number of ways. 2011 is the first year of examination of the revised syllabus. Specific changes are detailed at the end of this booklet, but key features of the changes made are:

- **modernised aims:** to encourage communicative competence, creativity, critical skills and cross-cultural awareness.
- **clear assessment objectives:** these assess the same underlying skills as before but they are grouped as four **writing** and four **reading** objectives. The assessment objectives provide a clear link between the aims of the syllabus and the scheme of assessment.
- **balance:**
 - the two shorter reading passages, one factual and one narrative, replace one long passage;
 - the writing paper gives equal weighting to directed and creative writing.
- **transferable skills** to aid study in other subjects as well as effective communication:
 - *task* as well as *language* is emphasised across reading and writing, through reading for main ideas as well as reading for precise meaning, and through directed writing as well as creative writing;
 - summary skills have greater focus on *critical skills* in analysing information, such as identifying advantages and disadvantages. These reflect the needs of candidates in the new information age.

Essential literacy skills and question types have been retained, which give the syllabus its worldwide recognition of first language English standards and minimise the need for re-training.

3. Assessment at a glance

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All candidates take **two** papers.

	Paper 1: Writing 1 hour 30 minutes		Paper 2: Reading 1 hour 45 minutes	
Marks	60 weighted to 50		50	
Weighting	50%		50%	
Candidate response	On separate answer sheet		On the question paper	
Focus	Task	Language	Task	Language
Section title	Directed Writing	Creative Writing	Reading for Ideas	Reading for Meaning
Mark allocation	30 marks (15 marks for task fulfilment, of which 6 marks weighted to 5 are for reading; and 15 marks for language)	30 marks (combined language and content)	25 marks (15 marks for content points of notes, 5 marks for language of summary; 5 marks for main ideas questions)	25 marks (content only)
Weighting for writing skills: 50%	20%	25%	5%	-
Weighting for reading skills: 50%	5%	-	20%	25%
Assessment objectives	W1, W2, W3, W4	W1, W2, W3, W4	R3, R4	R1, R2

For details of the marking criteria, please refer to the specimen mark schemes. Specimen question papers are also available.

This syllabus is available for examination in June and November.

4. Syllabus aims and assessment

4.1 Aims

A qualification in this syllabus demonstrates to universities and employers that candidates can communicate effectively in Standard English through:

- **communicative competence:** the ability to communicate with clarity, relevance, accuracy and variety
- **creativity:** the ability to use language, experience and imagination to respond to new situations, create original ideas and make positive impact
- **critical skills:** the ability to scan, filter and analyse different forms of information
- **cross-cultural awareness:** the ability to engage with issues inside and outside own community, dealing with the familiar as well as the unfamiliar. (This is not an assessment objective but forms the context of writing tasks and reading passages.)

	Writing to:	Reading to:	speaking	listening
Communicative competence	✓ Communicate precisely and appropriately	✓ Understand exact and implied meaning	✓	✓
Creativity	✓ Develop ideas effectively		✓	
Critical skills		✓ Identify and respond to main ideas		✓
Cross-cultural awareness	✓ Reflect on the familiar	✓ Have strategies to deal with the unfamiliar	✓	✓

Speaking and listening are not tested but the development of these vital communication skills is encouraged across the curriculum.

Reflecting the communication demands facing candidates in the real world, the syllabus distinguishes between **task** and **language** as the focus of Section 1 and Section 2 respectively in each paper:

Section	Focus	Writing	Reading
1	Task	Directed Writing	Reading for Ideas
2	Language	Creative Writing	Reading for Meaning

4. Syllabus aims and assessment

The **Task** aspect of Paper 1 is **Directed Writing**, where communication of key information is required to achieve a specific purpose for a certain audience in a particular situation. **Language** (as well as content) is tested in the **Creative Writing** section, where candidates have an opportunity to display their English language skills in order to express their opinion, experience or imagination.

The **Task** aspect of Paper 2 is **Reading for Ideas**, where, for example, scanning for and summarising specific information is required to achieve and convey a global understanding of a text. **Language** is tested in the **Reading for Meaning** section, where there is a greater demand for English language skills in order to demonstrate more in-depth understanding of a text.

In this way, it is hoped that candidates will develop strategies to be able to transfer these communication skills to other subjects and to their future careers/studies as they encounter a variety of texts and are required to make a positive impact through the written word.

4.2 Assessment Objectives

READING

- R1 Understand **explicit** meanings, through literal and vocabulary questions.
- R2 Understand **implicit** meanings and nuances of language, through inferential questions and questions on writer's craft.
- R3 **Scan and analyse text**, by identifying and summarising required information, such as similarities and differences, or advantages and disadvantages, or problems and solutions, or causes and effects, or actions and consequences.
- R4 Identify and respond to **main ideas** of a text, such as follow a sequence or argument, identify conclusion, distinguish fact from opinion, and give a personal response to a theme in a text.

WRITING

- W1 Communicate **appropriately**, with a clear awareness of purpose, audience and register.
- W2 Communicate **clearly** and develop ideas coherently, at word level, at sentence level and at whole text level.
- W3 Use **accurate** spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- W4 Communicate **creatively**, using a varied range of vocabulary, sentence structures and linguistic devices.

4. Syllabus aims and assessment

4.3 Exam combinations

Candidates can combine this syllabus in an exam session with any other CIE syllabus, except:

- syllabuses with the same title at the same level
- 0500 First Language English
- 1119 English Language (Malaysia)
- 1120 English Language (Brunei)
- 1125 English Language (Mauritius)
- 1126 English Language Syllabus B (Mauritius)
- 1127 English Language (Singapore)

Please note that O Level, Cambridge International Level 1/Level 2 Certificates and IGCSE syllabuses are at the same level.

Candidates for Cambridge O Level English Language **MUST** enter as follows:

- Candidates in **Brunei** *must* enter for **Subject 1120**
- Candidates in **Mauritius** *must* enter for **Subject 1125 or 1126**
- Candidates in **Singapore** *must* enter for **Subject 1127**
- Candidates elsewhere (including previous subject 1115) *must* enter for **Subject 1123**.

No candidate may enter for more than one English Language subject.

5. Description of components

5.1 Paper 1: Writing

1 hour 30 minutes, 60 marks

This paper has two sections and candidates **answer on a separate answer sheet**.

Section 1: Directed Writing (30 marks)

- Candidates are presented with a **task**, e.g. write a letter, speech, report, article, fit for purpose and relevant to the world of study, work or community.
- Candidates should write 200–300 words to inform or persuade a particular audience.
- 15 marks are allocated for task fulfilment and 15 marks for language.

Section 2: Creative Writing (30 marks)

- This is an **essay**, testing language and content combined.
- Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of 5 narrative/descriptive/argumentative essay titles and should write 350–500 words.

Both sections test Assessment Objectives W1, W2, W3, W4.

5.2 Paper 2: Reading

1 hour 45 minutes, 50 marks

This paper has two sections and candidates **answer on the question paper**.

Section 1: Reading for Ideas (25 marks)

- Candidates scan a **factual** communication (or communications) of approximately 700 words – e.g. report(s), article(s), advertisement(s), email(s), letter(s).
- They **identify and note down required information** – e.g. similarities and differences, or causes and effects, or advantages and disadvantages, or problems and solutions, or actions and consequences.
- 15 marks are allocated for content points.
- Candidates use these notes to **write a summary** of 160 words. 5 marks are allocated for language.

This task tests Assessment Objective R3 (also implicitly R1, R2).

5. Description of components

- Candidates then answer questions on the **main ideas** in the communication(s) – e.g. follow an argument/sequence or identify a conclusion, distinguish fact from opinion, give personal response to a theme in the passage.
- These will be **short answer** questions worth 5 marks.

This task tests Assessment Objective R4 (also implicitly R1, R2).

Section 2: Reading for Meaning (25 marks)

- Candidates read a **narrative** passage (e.g. report, article, story) of approximately 700 words.
- They then answer **short answer** questions testing their ability to understand the language (both explicit and implicit meanings).

This section tests Assessment Objectives R1, R2.

6. Appendix

6.1 Changes to the syllabus

General

Item changed	Old syllabus	2011 syllabus	Reason
Skills weighting overall	Writing 56%, reading 44%	Writing 50%, reading 50%	To balance
Skills distribution between papers	Paper 1 writing 46%, reading 4% Paper 2 writing 10%, reading 40%	Paper 1 writing 45%, reading 5% Paper 2 writing 5%, reading 45%	To balance: 5 (weighted) marks in Paper 1 are for reading the directed writing task; 5 marks in Paper 2 are for writing the summary

Paper 1

Item changed	Old syllabus	2011 syllabus	Reason
Title	Composition	Writing	More direct
Question types	Composition and directed writing	Largely unchanged. Changes concern weightings, word limit of essay, number of content points in directed writing task and mark scheme – see below	Positive feedback from many centres
Terminology	Composition Directed writing	Creative writing/essay Directed writing	'Creative' strengthens idea of original writing; 'directed' reflects tasks given in real world
Order of questions	A. Composition B. Directed writing	A. Directed writing B. Creative writing	To ease candidates into the paper
Task weighting	Composition 40 marks, directed writing 20 marks	Composition ('creative writing') 30 marks, directed writing 30 marks	Feedback from many centres that tasks equally important
Directed writing task: breakdown of marks	5 marks content 15 marks language	15 marks task fulfilment 15 marks language	To make an impact in the real world, writing that is fit for purpose is equally important as accurate language
Directed writing task: content points	5 content points	3 content points	Easier to tackle fewer content points well in limited number of words

6. Appendix

Paper 1 (continued)

Item changed	Old syllabus	2011 syllabus	Reason
Creative writing (composition): wording of questions	Succinct	Unchanged, but, where appropriate, minimal guidance may be added to a question to stimulate thinking or to give an extra 'steer' to candidates on what is expected for a particular question	Minimal change requested as many centres wary of increasing the reading load
Creative writing (composition): mark scheme	Descriptors for mark bands intertwined language with content	Descriptors for mark bands specify language and content features separately (but still a single 'best fit' mark given)	To help teachers and candidates understand better what examiners are looking for
Creative writing (composition): mark scheme	Content briefly mentioned	More detail given about expected content	To guide teachers and candidates on what makes good content as well as language
Creative writing (composition): number of words	Approx. 350 to 600	Approx. 350 to 500	500 words is adequate for the task in the time available

Paper 2

Item changed	Old syllabus	2011 syllabus	Reason
Title	Comprehension	Reading	More direct
Candidate response	Candidate wrote on answer paper	Candidate writes on question paper	Suits short answers, gives indication of expected length answer
Question types	Explicit meaning, implicit meaning, own words, writer's craft, vocabulary, summary	Unchanged, but reduction from 10 to 5 marks for language in writing summary, summary broken down into two stages (notes testing content, and summary testing language) and addition of 5 marks for new 'main ideas' questions	Language element reduced as this is a reading paper; also to balance reading and writing skills overall and to emphasise relevance of 'main ideas' as well as traditional comprehension questions

6. Appendix

Paper 2 (continued)

Item changed	Old syllabus	2011 syllabus	Reason
Terminology	Comprehension questions Summary	Reading for meaning Reading for ideas	More user-friendly, signifies purpose and different types of reading
Order of questions	A. Comprehension questions B. Summary	A. Reading for ideas (notes, summary and main ideas questions) B. Reading for meaning (comprehension questions)	To ease candidates into the paper
New question types	-	5 marks allocated to new questions identifying and responding to main ideas of the passage	To help candidates get gist of passage; to facilitate teaching
Number of passages	1 passage approx. 1400 words, sometimes factual, sometimes narrative	2 passages approx. 700 words each, first passage factual, second passage narrative	Favoured by many centres, variety suits different candidates
Purpose of passages	Same passage was used for comprehension questions and summary	First passage is for main ideas tasks, second passage is for more detailed language comprehension questions	To separate out two types of useful reading skill; to provide a template of main ideas questions that can be used by teachers on any text
Exam duration	1 hour 30 minutes	1 hour 45 minutes	Requested by some centres. Additional time to engage with two separate passages and two stages of summary

6. Appendix

6.2 Resource list

Teachers may find the following books helpful.

Author	Title	Publisher	ISBN
Angela Burt	<i>A Guide to Better Grammar</i>	Stanley Thornes	0 7487 0537 6
Angela Burt	<i>A Guide to Better Spelling</i>	Stanley Thornes	0 7487 1234 8
Angela Burt	<i>A Guide to Better Punctuation</i>	Stanley Thornes	0 7487 1122 8
Robert M. Glover, Gordon Rodway, Patrick Shirley & Helen Toner	<i>Revision English for O Level</i>	Cambridge	0521 644 216
A.R.B. Etherton	<i>General Certificate English</i>	Nelson	Student's book 0 17 433326 9 Teacher's key 0 17 433327 7
A.R.B. Etherton	<i>Nelson's Target English</i>	Nelson	Student's book 0 17 433071 5 Teacher's key 0 17 433072 3
Nigel Kent, ed	<i>The Student Writer's Guide</i>	Stanley Thornes	0 7487 0499 x
P.S. Morrel	<i>Secondary Certificate English</i>	Nelson	11 – 16 0 17 433001 4
Rachel Redford	<i>Oxford Progressive English, 9 and 10</i>	OUP Pakistan	9780195473209 9780195473216
Edward Redmayne & Joan Redmayne	<i>Basic English</i>	Nelson	11 – 14 0 17 422730 2
Elaine and Peter Robins	<i>Watch Your English: A Students' Guide to Language</i>	Oxford	0 19 553430 1
Helen Toner & John Reynolds	<i>O Level English</i>	OUP India	9780521720021

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