

language connection

472 Navalar Road, Jaffna

tel 076 896 7574 (021) 221 9068

e-mail languageconnection472@gmail.com

MARKING THE A LEVEL EXAM

How is your A Level exam marked? The SL Department of Examinations issues guidance to markers which you can find online. This will tell you that Part A of Paper 1, which consists of context questions, is worth 32 marks: four questions with 8 marks each, divided up as follows:

Category/Criterion	Total marks allowed	A grade (6.5 – 8)	B grade (5.0 – 6.0)	C grade (4.5)	S grade (3.0 – 4.0)	F grade (0 – 2.5)
Identification of text, author, context	1.0	1.0*	1.0*	1.0*	1.0*	0 – 1.0
Relevance to text, theme, plot, character	3.0	2.5 – 3	1.5 – 2	1.5 – 2	1.0 – 1.5	0 – 1.0
Literary features (see note below)	1.0	0.5 – 1	0.5 – 1	0 – 0.5	0 – 0.5	0 – 1.5
Language (see descriptions below)	3.0	2.5 – 3	2 – 2.5	1.5 – 2	1.0 – 2.0	0 – 1.0
	8.0	6.5 – 8	5.0 – 6.0	4.5	3.0 – 4.0	0 – 2.5

* The basic identification of context is required for consideration under the other categories.

Literary features

(Markers are told to “give marks when the answer includes appropriate references to style, vocabulary, tone etc”, including figures of speech, and poetic/literary devices.)

Language features

<u>Assessment</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Equivalent grade</u>
Outstanding writing	3.0	A+
Free of error, coherent and persuasive	2.5	A
No major errors, but contains a few minor inaccuracies	2.0	B
A smattering of errors and problems with idiom and/or style	1.5	C

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Many errors, but communicates basic ideas clearly	1.0	S
Errors adversely affect the ability to understand the student's ideas	0.5	F
Incoherent and unacceptable linguistic expression	0	F

Part B of Paper 1 contains the essay questions. You need to answer four, worth 17 marks each, for a total available of 68. The marks are allocated as follows:

Category/Criterion	Total marks allocated	A grade (14 – 17)	B grade (11 – 13.5)	C grade (9.5 – 10.5)	S grade (6.5 – 9.0)	F grade (0 – 6.0)
Understanding and addressing the question	3.0	2.5 – 3.0*	2.0 – 2.5*	1.5 – 2.0*	1.0 – 1.5*	0 – 1.0
Demonstration of overall knowledge of the text and its context; relating this knowledge to the question	2.0	1.5 – 2.0	1.0 – 2.0	1.0 – 1.5	0.5 – 1.5	0 – 0.5
Structure of response, use of quotes and examples appropriately	6.0	4.0 – 6.0	3.5 – 4.5	3.0 – 3.5	2.5 – 3.5	0 – 3.0
Persuasiveness, originality, insights, flair	2.0	1.0 – 2.0	0.5 – 1.0	0 – 0.5	0	0
Language (see descriptions below)	4.0	3.0 – 4.0	2.5 – 3.5	2.0 – 3.0	1.5 – 2.5	0 – 1.5
	17	14 – 17	11 – 13.5	9.5 – 10.5	6.5 – 9.0	0 – 6.0

* The minimum mark for addressing the question stipulated for each letter grade is a pre-requisite for assigning this grade.

Language features

Assessment	Mark	Equivalent grade
Outstanding writing	4.0	A+
Free of error, coherent and persuasive	3.5	A
No major errors, but contains a few minor inaccuracies	3.0	B
A smattering of errors and problems with idiom and/or style	2.5	C
Many errors, but communicates basic ideas clearly	1.5	S
Errors adversely affect the ability to understand the student's ideas	1.0	F
Incoherent and unacceptable linguistic expression	0 – 0.5	F

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The allocation of marks for Paper 2 can vary, depending on the nature of the questions, particularly in Part A.

Briefly, Question 1 will give you a range of options for a factual essay, review or story. This is worth **30 marks**, which are given for four criteria: Content, Organization, Grammar and Spelling, Style and Diction. The pass mark will be around 12 out of 30. The marking criteria for a review will be a little different, because you need to identify and evaluate a suitable book, film or whatever.

This will be followed by a passage with a number of short comprehension questions, which carry **10 marks**. You will then need to make a precis of the passage in a set number of words, and this is worth **20 marks**, with a pass mark of 8. The examiners are looking for inclusion of all the main ideas from the passage, the flow of your words, good paraphrasing (putting things in your own words rather than repeating), and accuracy of language.

Question 3 will be an unseen prose passage, and carries **20 marks**. The marks are generally divided equally among the comprehension questions (four each of 5 marks, or five each of 4), but one question can be given more weight. Understanding is the important thing here, and some of the questions only need short answers, so marks will not usually be lost for language mistakes in your answer.

The last part is an unseen poem, also worth **20 marks**. The marking scheme is similar to Part C, the unseen prose passage.