

Cambridge O Level English Language (Brunei): a summary of the changes Video Transcript

Hazel Carmichael:

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Welcome to our video about changes to Cambridge O Level English Language. The new syllabus was released in April 2022 for examination in 2024.

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We'll begin with some introductions. My name is Hazel Carmichael and I'm the Head of English and Ministry Developments in the Qualifications Development team here in Cambridge.

And my colleagues are Jo and Peter – would you like to introduce yourselves?

Joanne Nice:

I'm Jo Nice and I'm a Development Manager in our Qualifications Development team.

Peter Johnston:

My name is Peter Johnston and I'm the Group Manager for English in the Assessment Division.

Hazel Carmichael:

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During this video, we will look at:

- the importance of updating syllabuses.
- an overview of the changes
- And the support that will be available for teachers.

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We regularly review our syllabuses and assessment to keep **improving the educational experience for students**.

We do this in a variety of ways:

- We listen and respond **to teacher feedback**. For example, teachers may suggest adjusting a particular task to make it more relevant or useful for students.
- We review the **content** so that it remains current and up to date. For example, in some subjects, we revise topic lists so that they remain relevant for students and also, when thinking about **centre demand**, we make sure they are in line with competitor qualifications.

- We ensure **validity** and **reliability**, so that Cambridge qualifications test what we say they will test, and our marking criteria produce the same results when candidates of the same ability sit the test year-on-year.
- We support **best educational practice** by keeping up with research and developments in education.
- Lastly, we look at **progression**. We think about the Cambridge Pathway, and the skills, knowledge and understanding students need to progress from IGCSE and O Level to A Level and beyond.

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Our qualification development follows a rigorous process. It involves consultation with stakeholders, such as teachers, subject experts and ministries of education, and takes up to three years to complete.

OL English Language started development in **2018**. We consulted with ministries of education and then in 2019 with schools.

From **March 2019 to March 2021**, we consolidated feedback to inform the syllabus content and the creation of the specimen assessment materials.

In April 2022 we published the syllabus and specimen assessment materials on the Brunei School Support website. These revised materials are designed for first examination in 2024.

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So Jo, tell us what the changes are for assessments in 2024.

Joanne Nice:

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The content is similar to that of the current O Level syllabus.

The new syllabus provides further detail about engaging ways of studying and practising Reading and Writing skills.

It will encourage learners to read and write a variety of text types with different themes and purposes.

For example, through studying Reading skills learners will better understand the different forms of fiction and non-fiction, and other forms of writing, such as blogs, essays, reviews or articles, short stories or extracts from longer works of prose or drama.

Study should focus on key English Language skills, such as understanding explicit meaning, implied meaning and attitudes and how writers use language and style to achieve different effects and influence readers. Learners will develop, analyse and evaluate facts, ideas and opinions. They will select information from passages and use that material for a specific context, such as summary writing. These objectives are present in the current syllabus.

Similarly, in Writing, learners should develop a range of skills, including the ability to create and compose texts with a variety of forms and purposes, for example, descriptive, narrative, argumentative and persuasive.

Encouraging learners to practise reading and writing different text types such as: emails, letters, reports, articles, speeches, and summaries is great preparation for assessment and also for their progression to further education or the workplace.

The assessment for Speaking has been updated and includes an individual talk and conversation.

English Language is a facilitating subject as the content and skills studied provide preparation for other subjects that require a depth and breadth of reading and writing, including, but not exclusively, English Literature, Geography or History.

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Here is a high-level summary of the changes to the Reading paper.

Please note that the question paper order will change from 2024 onward, so I am referring to Paper 1 as Reading and Paper 2 as Writing.

The Reading paper includes two texts: one narrative and one factual.

There is more integration of skills in the papers now. In the Reading Paper 80% of the assessment will be for Reading and 20% for Writing. We recognise that this reflects how the skills are studied in the classroom and are used outside of the classroom; they are not studied in isolation.

It now has separate sections for the assessment of comprehension and use of language.

We have removed the multiple-choice question and updated the summary task which we will look at in more detail shortly.

To reflect the question paper changes we have increased the overall exam duration by 15 minutes. It will now be a total of 2 hours.

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The new Writing paper has a similar structure to the current Writing paper.

It has two sections: Directed Writing and Composition.

Candidates produce two pieces of writing, the same as the current syllabus. One key difference is that candidates must now write in two different styles. In the Directed Writing section candidates write one compulsory argumentative or discursive style response to the task. In the Composition section, candidates write one essay choosing between a narrative or a descriptive title.

Another important difference is that the Directed Writing task now includes **stimulus** reading text(s).

As with the Reading paper, we are also introducing more integration of skills in the Writing paper. 80% of the assessment is now for Writing and 20% for Reading.

We have increased the exam time to 2 hours to allow candidates to read and respond to the texts effectively.

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Component 3 is now called Speaking.

We have updated the style of the topic card. Students talk on a topic followed by a conversation with the examiner.

The topic card will now include two short opinions as a stimulus for conversation.

The marking criteria have been updated and there is now one marking grid to cover both parts of the assessment.

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Here is a summary of the changes with the current syllabus on the left alongside the new syllabus on the right.

As I mentioned earlier, Paper 1 is now Reading, and Paper 2 is Writing.

The exam durations are longer for each paper; and the marks available for the Writing paper have changed from 60 to 50.

Both papers continue to be equally weighted.

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Peter, can you tell us more? What are the changes to task types in examination questions papers?

Peter Johnston:

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We'll start with Paper 1: Reading.

As mentioned earlier, there continues to be two texts in the Reading paper: Text A is a narrative style text and Text B is factual in style. This is similar to the current Reading paper which has the factual, *Reading for Ideas* text and the narrative, *Reading for Meaning* text.

Text A and B may or may not be linked by a theme.

The narrative text, Text A is used in Section A of the paper. Text A is approximately 900 words long and is from either the twentieth or the twenty-first century.

Section A is divided into two questions:

Question 1 includes a series of sub-questions that assess Comprehension. These questions test explicit and implicit meaning and attitudes. There are 16 marks available for Question 1.

Question 2 includes sub-questions that test Use of Language. There are now 9 marks assessing how writers achieve effects and influence readers. The questions relate to literal and non-literal meaning, the author's use of language and structure, and the effect these have.

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Section B of the Reading paper is based on Text B, with 25 marks available. Text B is a factual text that is approximately 550-600 words long.

In this part of the Reading Paper candidates respond to a selective summary task. They write their summary in continuous writing form of about 150 words.

The summary task has similarities with the task in the current O Level paper but there are some key differences. Candidates responses will be marked more holistically. This means that there are no longer 12 separate marks for selecting discrete points from the text as in the current question 1a. The marking criteria still credits appropriate selection of main points but this is done using levels-based marking criteria assessing performance on both Reading and Writing.

There are 20 marks available for the summary task and there is a separate 5 mark new question following the summary task which requires candidates to give a short opinion-based response using supporting evidence from the text to show their understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes. This is a new style of question for O Level.

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Next, we'll look at the Writing paper.

The structure of the Writing Paper is similar to the current paper. The first part is a Directed Writing task and the second part is a Composition.

The Directed Writing task has changed to include greater reading input. Candidates may be presented with one or two texts in the paper. The Reading material has a total of approximately 400-450 words in length.

Candidates are presented with texts on a particular topic which give opposing views. This presents students with the opportunity to evaluate and select pertinent ideas from the texts to formulate an informed opinion on the topic and produce a written response. This is a useful skill in preparation for higher level study or work.

The marking criteria for this task have been updated and there are 15 marks available for Writing and 10 marks for Reading.

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The second part of the paper is Composition. The key difference with the Composition task now is that candidates choose between writing either a descriptive or a narrative text.

Argumentative writing is assessed in the Directed Writing task.

There is benefit in this change. Giving learners the opportunity to practise the important skills needed for producing argumentative or discursive styles of writing helps their study in other subject areas, for example, in History, Sociology or Geography.

The levels-based marking criteria for this task have been also updated.

We have looked in detail at tasks in the Reading and Writing papers. We have also made some changes to the Speaking paper. Jo, can you tell us more about that?

Joanne Nice:

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For the Speaking test candidates talk on a given topic for 1-2 minutes followed by a discussion with the examiner.

The information given on the topic cards has been updated and is different in style. In addition to prompts, candidates are also given two short opinions on a topic that can help them to consider different viewpoints.

As you can see, there are a number of changes to consider as we move forward with this syllabus. Now, we'll tell you more about how we will support teaching and learning.

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We are working on a comprehensive support package to help teachers deliver an engaging and thorough teaching programme for their learners.

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The Scheme of Work provides a medium-term teaching plan from which detailed lesson plans can be produced. It covers all learning objectives in the syllabus with suggested activities and links to additional resources and is available on the Brunei School Support website.

Guidance for writing a summary is also available. The guide provides extra support for teachers delivering the course including tips for writing a summary and an annotated example task.

After the Specimen Papers are published, a set of Specimen Paper Answers are produced. They provide example answers for each of the specimen paper questions, along with examiner commentaries on the answers and marks. Teachers can use the answers, commentaries and marks to gain a better understanding of the standard required in examinations, so that learners can be better prepared when they sit their first exams.

You can download all of these resources from the Brunei School Support website.

Training will also be available ahead of first assessment.

Hazel Carmichael:

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Thank you Peter and Jo, and thank you very much for watching this video. We hope that it has given you a good overview of the changes for Cambridge O Level English and how your feedback helps shape our syllabus developments.

We wish you all the best with teaching this course and we hope you enjoy it.

Close:

All syllabus materials and teacher resources can be accessed at:

<https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/brunei>

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