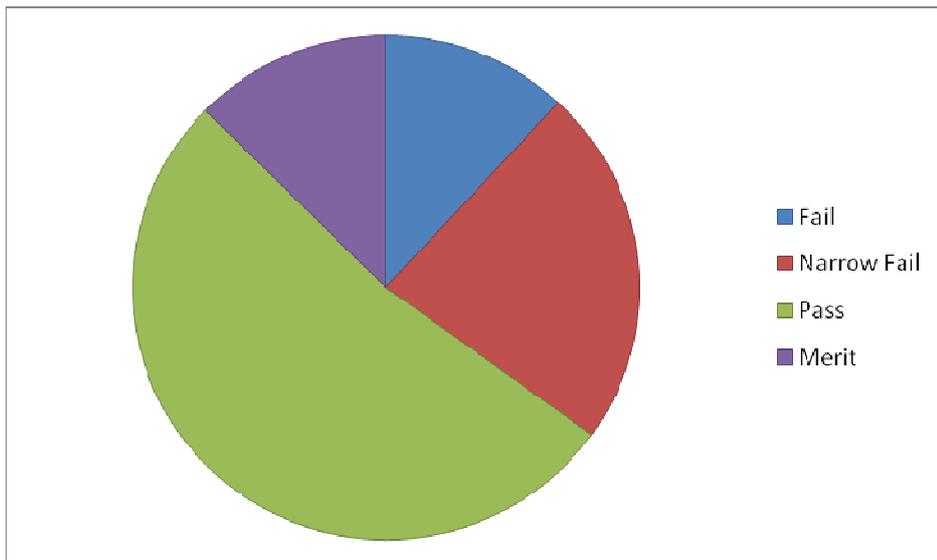


TELT Exam Report for March 2011

1. Introduction

143 candidates sat for the TELT March 2011 examination session. The distribution of results obtained is illustrated in the chart below, with the percentage details as follows:

Fail	12%
Narrow Fail	23%
Pass	52%
Merit	13%



2. General Remarks

The TELT March 2011 session was the first sitting using the newly revised syllabus. Candidates were on the whole well-prepared for this exam and benefited from the increased transparency of the new syllabus. In particular, it was felt that candidates had better opportunity to demonstrate a range of writing skills in Part Two Section E and while candidates scored broadly similarly in both essays, there were instances where a candidate performed better in one essay format than another. This was felt by all three examiners to

be advantageous to the candidates, who thus had greater opportunity to demonstrate their varied abilities. At the risk of repetition, it is important to note that while candidates have shown increased understanding of language terminology (evidenced in Part 1, Section A), the greatest overall weakness is clearly in exercises testing vocabulary, including word formation (Part 2 Section B) and collocation (Part 2 Section C) and this in turn, often affects a candidate's score in the free writing section, if the task is compromised by a poor range of vocabulary. We would reiterate, therefore, the need for prospective candidates and TELT preparation courses to seek out opportunities to increase exposure to English in various registers, contexts and media.

The paper was set in such a way as to rigorously follow the new syllabus, its recommendations and its sample sections. As regards the weighting of each exercise, and taking into account that this examination is pitched at 'A' level standard, it was unanimously felt by the examiners that the two essays should receive a shared 40% (20% for each essay) weighting, rather than the current 100%.

3. Section Analysis

Part 1 Language Description, Sensitivity and Awareness

Section A - Language Terminology

In this section candidates experienced some difficulty in the following areas: inability to recognise the passive voice in context; not able to distinguish between adverbs (whether of time, manner, place). Most candidates found question 17 which distinguished between adjective/noun/ verb phrases challenging and marked it incorrectly.

Sections B, C and D (Phonology and Sound Patterns)

Overall, a general improvement was noted over the performance in previous exam sessions.

However problems were noted in the following areas:

- the word stress section still proved to be difficult for many, regardless of the length of the word (i.e. the number of syllables). For example, the word 'hotel' is a widely used, short word, in comparison to, for example, the word 'accommodation' but was still surprisingly often marked wrongly for word stress.
- in Section C, many candidates lost marks because of careless spelling mistakes, especially 'bland', 'vegetarian' and 'fattening'.
- though Section D registered a marked improvement over recent exams, a number of candidates still chose to ignore it completely.

Section E—Odd one out

Candidates were generally very well prepared for this section and approached the task methodically. In particular candidates showed quite a good understanding of tenses and their functions, noting quite regularly, for example, the distinction of present tense with future meaning, rather than for a current situation. Surprisingly, a number of candidates failed to note the difference between a comparative and superlative adjective in best/tallest/happier/longest. Another question causing difficulty tested the awareness of different word categories, as in the noun/verb contrast of 'start' in question 10. Overall, candidates seemed better prepared to notice differences in grammar, and less prepared to identify differences in vocabulary and spelling.

Part 2 Language Proficiency

Section A Identifying and Correcting Errors

Candidates with a good range of knowledge of English managed this task relatively well. Others struggled to correctly identify the errors and in many cases attributed error wrongly. In particular, many candidates missed the spelling error in 'We loved long walks when we **where** young' and also regularly missed the wrong collocation of '**In** the face of it, this shouldn't cause too many problems'.

Section B - Word Formation

This exercise was a clear indicator of strength or weakness in vocabulary and understanding of morphological patterning in English words, in that candidates could either easily provide almost all answers correctly or almost all answers incorrectly. In particular, questions causing most difficulty were 'migrant' and 'cooking'. 'Tyrannical' also proved impossible to deduce in instances where candidates were unfamiliar with the word and tried to guess the word formation pattern.

Section C – Cloze Test – Selective Deletion

In this section the candidates were asked to think of a word which would fit into a gap within a text. This tested grammar, collocation and also reading ability. In terms of grammatical errors typically prepositions were used incorrectly. In terms of reading comprehension it could be noted that often incorrect collocation occurred due to poor reading of the text, as certain answers would have made sense in alternative contexts but did not make sense in this text, for instance in the case of gap number (9).

Section D – Sentence Transformations

Section D -- A better performance was expected here. Many candidates lost precious marks and even failed in this section because of a basic inability to manipulate sentence structures within the given parameters. This may be another illustration of a general trend among candidates to indicate a lack of reading and exposure to modern written (and spoken?) English.

Section E— Writing

In the free writing section, candidates often proved to be more fluent than accurate. In particular, misuse of prepositional phrases and tenses was common as were spelling errors for frequently used words.

Candidates should note that marks are awarded for appropriacy of format, style and register chosen. Of the range of formats offered, the report (Option 3) was the least well executed, with candidates often unaware of the register and layout that a report should take. The short story (Option 4) was also often mistaken for a personal narrative. The distinction between a personal narrative and a fictitious short story should be noted. Similarly, it should be noted that Option 1 requesting a book review did not require candidates to give a summary of a book they have recently read. The syllabus sets out clearly that questions should provide a context for writing and candidates will probably be more successful in this task if they read the context of their chosen title carefully.

4. Recommendations

Candidates and course coordinators are commended for their efforts to prepare thoroughly for this exam. In particular, it was noted that candidates made considerable effort to give succinct and clear answers, for example in Part 1 Section E (Odd One Out) which requires extended explanation of language patterns. Candidates also made some attempts to use appropriate registers and formats in their free writing, although this is one area that requires closer attention in future .

It is clear that while students are preparing/being prepared for grammar tasks quite thoroughly, less effort and attention is given to extending and broadening vocabulary. The repercussions of this lack of attention can easily be felt in a range of tasks throughout Part 2.

It should also be noted that many candidates obtaining a narrow pass in the written paper (65%) struggled to cope with the speaking task largely due to a poor range of vocabulary.

We therefore recommend that prospective candidates should continue to focus on developing their understanding of language terminology, and should try to increase their chances of success by making more effort in the phonology sections (word stress and

phonemic script), which are considered an integral part of any effective language teaching syllabus.

Above all, candidates and TELT course coordinators are advised to focus on tasks which will help to broaden and deepen vocabulary and a knowledge of how words are used (appropriacy, register, collocation), how they are formed (morphology/word formation) and how they combine to form idioms, fixed expressions and collocations.

Addendum

A number of speaking test examiners present for the March 2011 session strongly recommend that prospective candidates and course coordinators begin to allocate time towards focused preparation for the speaking component. This will also necessitate a published and agreed format as part of the new syllabus.

In the previous syllabus, the speaking component was considered a formality to ensure that the speaking ability of successful candidates matched their written ability. However, this last session clearly illustrated that while the majority of candidates had no difficulty demonstrating their speaking skills, a number of candidates struggled to complete their tasks and could not pass for fluent speakers of English. This was generally felt to be a result of a poor range of vocabulary and in some cases, only a tentative grasp of more complex grammatical structures. Given that these candidates are prospective teachers it was felt that this should be addressed. The speaking test format could be made available (perhaps together with samples, following the published syllabus of the written format) and candidates should be made aware that this component is no longer a formality but requires passing along with the rest of the exam.