

End of Primary Benchmark Guidelines

June 2011

1. The Head of School is the Head of Centre and is fully responsible for the smooth running of the benchmark examinations in his/her school.
2. On each day of the examination, schools will be receiving the relevant examination papers together with a CD which will be used during the Listening Component of the Maltese and English examinations. **Schools are to ensure beforehand that the necessary electronic apparatus for playing the CD is fully functional in every classroom and that teachers are familiar with its operation.**
3. Examination scripts will be packed in envelopes containing the number of scripts needed for each particular class. An envelope containing additional scripts to replace any faulty ones will also be provided to the Head of School. At the end of the examination, the scripts must be sorted according to the Attendance List. **All scripts, (used and unused), must be put back in the appropriate envelope and sealed.**
4. Schools are to ensure that an authorised person is at the school from 7 am onwards to receive the examination material. At the end of the examination, personnel should be available to hand over the envelopes containing the scripts, including the extra papers, to the authorised driver calling for their collection.
5. The Oral Component will be assessed by two teachers, preferably the class teachers, in case the number of classes is even. If the number of classes is odd, then the class teacher has to be accompanied by a Complementary teacher or Literacy teacher or a teacher nominated by the Head of School.
6. In the case of the Oral Component teachers may voluntarily agree to start earlier and continue later than the timetable allocation and then be compensated accordingly by time off in lieu of this extra time.
7. In the case of Mathematics, the Mental Paper has to be read out by the class teacher of the respective class. It is important that the teacher reads and follows the instructions on the Teacher's Paper to ensure that the reading of the questions is carried out in a consistent way and in a way that enables children's understanding.
8. **ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS**
 - The duration of each component includes **Extra Time**. This implies that Extra Time is being provided to all candidates.
 - The class teacher has to act as a **Prompter** in the classroom being invigilated, if and whenever required.
 - For children with writing difficulties due to physical conditions (e.g. broken arm) the **Amanuensis** has to be provided by the school.
 - **Enlarged prints** and other special examination requirements will be provided as per Letter Circular CMELD 52/2011.
 - In the case of Mathematics, a **Reader** for the Written Examination may be provided as per Letter Circular CMELD 52/2011. This Reader, if needed, will have to be provided by the school. There will be no provision for a Reader in the Maltese and English examinations

- Hearing impaired candidates who can lip read may be assigned a **Communicator** for the Listening components as per Letter Circular CMELD 52/2011. The Communicator will be provided by the Students' Services Section.

9. EXEMPTIONS

All children are expected to sit the Benchmark examinations. However, children who fulfil certain requirements may be exempted from all or parts of the Benchmark examinations as per Letter Circular CMELD 51/2011.

10. EXAMINATION SYLLABUS

The benchmark examinations will be set on the State Primary Syllabi for Maltese, English and Mathematics. These syllabi may be retrieved from www.curriculum.gov.mt. In addition, the following guidelines regarding the set up of the benchmark examination papers are to be noted:

ENGLISH and MALTESE

The language papers will consist of **four** components, as shown in the table below.

Component	Weighting	Duration of Examination
Listening / Smiġħ	20 %	30 minutes
Speaking / Taħdit	20 %	10 minutes per pair
Reading / Qari	30 %	50 minutes
Writing / Kitba	30 %	60 minutes

Listening (20%)

There will be two listening tasks.

- The first task will consist of a small number of short texts such as *dialogues, conversations, announcements, monologues, instructions, directions, descriptions* and *news bulletins, including weather reports*.
- The second task will consist of *a monologue, dialogue, or conversation*.

Students will be asked to: *write words or numbers in gaps; mark a statement as True, False, or No Information Given; underline, circle, or tick the correct answer; match; complete grids with information; and label pictures or simple diagrams*.

- Students will listen to the recordings of both texts, including questions, twice. Students will be asked to:
 - listen to the text and they may begin to work out the task/s as they listen.
 - listen to the questions and answer as they listen.
 - listen to the text for a second time.
 - listen to the questions for a second time and complete the task/s as they listen.

Students will be allowed some time to check their answers.

Speaking (20%)

Students will be assessed in pairs. Each student will work on four speaking tasks.

- The first is *the Warmer / it-Thejjja* which is not assessed.
- The second is *an Interview / l-intervista* and each student will be asked questions on two topics.
- The third and fourth tasks will consist of two of the following: *Compare and Contrast / Qabbel, Inverted Interview / Staqsini Inti, Single Picture / Stampa Wahda, Picture Story / Stampa Storja, or Thematic Picture / Stampa dwar Tema.*

More information can be found on <http://schoolnet.gov.mt/oraltests/OralTestsHandbook.pdf>

Reading (30%)

The reading component will consist of two texts.

- The first text will consist of one of the following: *a diagram or picture or set of pictures with some text, simple timetables and schedules, short texts such as notices, signs, posters, instructions, directions, advertisements, blurbs, and messages.*

Students will be asked to carry out any of the following: *write words or numbers in gaps, underline, circle, tick, match, complete grids with information, and label pictures or simple diagrams.*

- The second section will consist of a text, factual or literary, of approximately 500 words. The text will be split up into sections with questions set on each section, and also on the whole text.

Students will be asked to answer a range of comprehension questions requiring them to *write words or numbers in gaps; underline, circle, or tick the correct answer; match; mark a statement as True, False, or No information given; complete a grid, and construct a response.* Knowledge about language may also be assessed. (For the constructed response questions, answers need not be in full but sufficient to show comprehension as explained in the Marking Schemes of the specimen papers – <http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/default.htm>)

Writing (30%)

There will be a short writing task (10%) and a long writing task (20%). Conventions of spelling, punctuation, and grammar apply in both writing tasks and will be assessed accordingly. The pre-writing task (the plan) will not be assessed for accuracy.

The short writing task will require the students to write between 50 and 60 words on one of the following: *a note / message, an informal email, an invitation, a notice, an advertisement, a short dialogue, instructions, directions, or a short paragraph about a topic.*

- Students will choose one out of two writing tasks. The writing tasks will both represent the same text type (for example, a short dialogue) but will consist of two content areas (such as, a dialogue about a missed school outing or a dialogue about planning to meet for sport practice).

The long writing task will require the students to write between 140 and 200 words on one of the following: *a letter, a write-up of an event, an article, or a short story for the school magazine or a similar publication intended for young students.*

In the case of Maltese, in line with the current official primary syllabus, the long writing task may also include *a dialogue*.

- Students will also have a choice from two writing tasks both representing the same text type but having a different content area. Students will be asked to plan their writing. The pre-writing task (the plan) is to allow students to use the range of strategies available to them to plan their work. The pre-writing task carries a maximum of 4 marks out of a total of 20 marks allotted to the long writing task. (More information on the pre-writing task can be found on <http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/prewriting.pdf> .

MATHEMATICS

The Mathematics Benchmark Examination is made up of two papers:

- a **mental paper** which carries 20% of the marks and is 15 minutes long;
- a **written paper** which carries 80% of the global mark and is 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

The Mental Paper (20%)

The Mental paper is made up of twenty short questions which are read twice, in succession, by the class teacher. Code-switching is permitted **only** for giving out instructions before reading out the Mental paper. Instructions will therefore be read in both English and Maltese. The questions must be read out in English **exactly as written**. The questions are graded and divided into three sections. There are some easy questions at the beginning and some harder ones at the end.

The time interval between one question and another for answering each question in each section is as follows:

the first 5 questions 5 second intervals

the next 10 questions 10 second intervals

the remaining 5 questions 20 second intervals

The class teacher reading the mental paper must strictly adhere to these set intervals. The paper will be read out in English and no code-switching/mixing is allowed.

The Written Paper (80%)

The written paper covers all the four strands of the mathematics curriculum, that is, Number and Algebra; Measures, Shape and Space; Data Handling and Problem Solving.

The paper is made up of sixteen questions. The first four questions carry a total of 16 marks and test simple basic skills. The following eight questions carry a total of forty marks and test the pupils' mathematical competences in the four strands of the syllabus. The last four questions have a total of 24 marks and are more demanding non-routine questions. These questions require the application of mathematical knowledge and reasoning to solve more challenging problems.

11. **RETURN OF SCRIPTS**

A sample of scripts will be kept by the Educational Assessment Unit for archiving and research purposes. The rest of the scripts will be returned to schools after September 2011 to be used formatively by each school.

The school may request a review of performance if there is evidence of a discrepancy between the student's performance throughout the year and the performance in the benchmark examinations. Such request for the review of the performance must be received by the Educational Assessment Unit within 5 working days after the school receives the result.