L-Università ta' Malta

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS BOARD

ADVANCED MATRICULATION LEVEL
2026 SECOND SESSION

SUBJECT:	**English**
PAPER NUMBER:	I
DATE:	31st August 2026
TIME:	9:00 a.m. to 12:05 p.m.

Answer ONE question from Section A, ONE from Section B, and Section C.

SECTION A: SHAKESPEARE SET TEXTS (33 marks)

In Section A, essays must **NOT** be shorter than 500 words.

Essays responding to a gobbet (1a or 2a) should:
- identify the immediate context of the extract and its relation to the play as a whole;
- focus primarily on the given extract while also referring to the play as a whole;
- relate the extract to **AT LEAST TWO** of: characterisation, theme, imagery, and setting.

1. ***Romeo and Juliet***

EITHER

a. Gobbet.

JULIET The clock struck nine when I did send the Nurse.
In half an hour she promised to return.
Perchance she cannot meet him. That's not so.
O, she is lame! Love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glides than the sun's beams,
Driving back shadows over louring hills.
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love,
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.
Now is the sun upon the highmost hill
Of this day's journey, and from nine till twelve
Is three long hours, yet she is not come.
Had she affections and warm youthful blood,
She would be as swift in motion as a ball;
My words would bandy her to my sweet love,
And his to me.
But old folks, many feign as they were dead,
Unwieldy, slow, heavy, and pale as lead.

Enter Nurse and Peter.

O God, she comes!—O, honey nurse, what news?
Hast thou met with him? Send thy man away.

NURSE Peter, stay at the gate. *Peter exits.*

JULIET Now, good sweet nurse—O Lord, why lookest thou sad?
Though news be sad, yet tell them merrily.
If good, thou shamest the music of sweet news
By playing it to me with so sour a face.

NURSE I am aweary. Give me leave awhile.
Fie, how my bones ache! What a jaunt have I!

Please turn the page.

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JULIET I would thou hadst my bones, and I thy news.
Nay, come, I pray thee, speak. Good, good nurse,
speak.

NURSE Jesu, what haste! Can you not stay awhile?
Do you not see that I am out of breath?

JULIET How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath
To say to me that thou art out of breath?
The excuse that thou dost make in this delay
Is longer than the tale thou dost excuse.
Is thy news good or bad? Answer to that.
Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance.
Let me be satisfied; is 't good or bad?

NURSE Well, you have made a simple choice. You know
not how to choose a man. Romeo? No, not he.
Though his face be better than any man's, yet his leg
excels all men's, and for a hand and a foot and a
body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they
are past compare. He is not the flower of courtesy,
but I'll warrant him as gentle as a lamb. Go thy
ways, wench. Serve God. What, have you dined at
home?

OR

b. What draws audiences to *Romeo and Juliet* are characters that passionately assert their individuality. Discuss by referring to at least **THREE** characters in the play.

OR

c. A central theme in *Romeo and Juliet* is that of defiance against authority. Discuss.

2. ***Othello***

EITHER

a. Gobbet.

Enter Othello and Attendants.

OTHELLO O, my fair warrior!

DESDEMONA My dear Othello!

OTHELLO It gives me wonder great as my content
To see you here before me. O my soul's joy!
If after every tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have wakened death,
And let the laboring bark climb hills of seas
Olympus high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven! If it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

DESDEMONA The heavens forbid
But that our loves and comforts should increase
Even as our days do grow!

OTHELLO Amen to that, sweet powers!
I cannot speak enough of this content.
It stops me here; it is too much of joy. *They kiss.*
And this, and this, the greatest discords be
That e'er our hearts shall make!

IAGO, *aside* O, you are well tuned now,
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
As honest as I am.

OTHELLO Come. Let us to the castle.—
News, friends! Our wars are done. The Turks are drowned.
How does my old acquaintance of this isle?—
Honey, you shall be well desired in Cyprus.
I have found great love amongst them.

OR

b. Desdemona has often been described as a passive victim. How far do you agree with this assessment of her character?

OR

c. Shakespeare's *Othello* is a play rich in symbolism. Discuss at least **THREE** symbolic elements in the play.

Please turn the page.

SECTION B: POETRY SET TEXTS **(33 marks)**

In Section B, essays must **NOT** be shorter than 500 words.

1. **Elizabeth Bishop**

a. One of the striking features of Elizabeth Bishop's poetry is her innovative use of verse forms. Discuss by making reference to **THREE** poems of your choice.

OR

b. By making reference to Elizabeth Bishop's **'The Shampoo'** and at least **TWO** other poems you have studied, explore the poet's preoccupation with time and timelessness.

2. **Carol Ann Duffy**

a. It becomes evident when reading Duffy's poetry that childhood and/or adolescence can be quite a precarious stage in one's life. Discuss this by referring to **'In Mrs Tilscher's Class'** and **TWO** other poems you have studied.

OR

b. Duffy is considered to have quite a strong poetic voice. Discuss what contributes to this by making reference to **THREE** poems of your choice.

3. **Seamus Heaney**

a. Seamus Heaney's poetry often transforms complex and difficult thoughts and experiences into intense yet beautiful verse. Discuss by making reference to **THREE** poems you have studied.

OR

b. Seamus Heaney's poetry has been described as being accusatory in purpose. Explore the validity of this statement by making reference to **'Casualty'** and **TWO** other poems of your choice.

SECTION C: POETRY CRITICISM **(33 marks)**

Write a critical appreciation of the poem below.

- Your essay must **NOT** be shorter than 400 words;
- Focus on theme, imagery, form and poetic language;
- You may also comment on any other literary aspects of the poem that you consider to be worthy of discussion.

'September Tomatoes'

The whiskey stink of rot has settled
in the garden, and a burst of fruit flies rises
when I touch the dying tomato plants.

Still, the claws of tiny yellow blossoms
flail in the air as I pull the vines up by the roots
and toss them in the compost.

It feels cruel. Something in me isn't ready
to let go of summer so easily. To destroy
what I've carefully cultivated all these months.
Those pale flowers might still have time to fruit.

My great-grandmother sang with the girls of her village
as they pulled the flax*. Songs so old
and so tied to the season that the very sound
seemed to turn the weather.

by Karina Borowicz

**flax: textile fibre obtained from the flax plant.*

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MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD

ADVANCED MATRICULATION LEVEL
2026 SECOND SESSION

SUBJECT:	**English**
PAPER NUMBER:	II
DATE:	1st September 2026
TIME:	9:00 a.m. to 12:05 p.m.

Answer **BOTH** Section A **AND** Section B.

SECTION A: NOVEL SET TEXTS **(Total: 66 marks)**

- Answer **TWO** questions (**NOT** on the same novel) from this section.
- Essays in this section must **NOT** be shorter than 500 words.
- Avoid simply narrating the plot. Remember to provide evidence and explanation for your points.

1. ***The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood**

a. Discuss how Atwood uses religion in *The Handmaid's Tale* to explore the novel's themes of oppression and control.

OR

b. "In *The Handmaid's Tale*, although Serena Joy and Moira are fundamentally different characters, they are both trapped by the society they inhabit." Discuss.

2. ***Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens**

a. "In *Great Expectations*, Dickens develops the power dynamic between Miss Havisham and Estella to illustrate the way victims become victimisers in society." Discuss.

OR

b. Discuss the way Dickens develops the theme of punishment in *Great Expectations* to critique Victorian society.

3. ***Atonement*, Ian McEwan**

a. "McEwan suggests that injustice is caused less by what is said than by what remains unsaid, especially at critical moments." Discuss the significance of silences and omissions in *Atonement*.

OR

b. Discuss the significance of Lola in *Atonement*, showing how her portrayal and role in the narrative contribute to McEwan's broader concerns.

4. ***Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë**

a. In *Wuthering Heights*, betrayal is both personal and societal. Discuss.

OR

b. Discuss the role of Linton Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, showing how he acts as a foil to both Heathcliff and the younger generation characters.

Please turn the page.

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5. ***To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee**

a. Discuss the importance of the Maycomb setting in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

OR

b. "Through the characters of Miss Caroline and Calpurnia, Lee explores attitudes to education." Discuss.

SECTION B: PROSE CRITICISM **(Total: 33 marks)**

Write a critical appreciation of the passage below.

- Your essay must **NOT** be shorter than 400 words;
- Focus on theme, imagery, and point of view;
- You may also comment on any other literary aspect or aspects of the passage that you consider to be worthy of discussion, such as style, tone and setting.

The drummers took up their sticks and the air shivered and grew tense like a tightened bow.

The two teams were ranged facing each other across the clear space. A young man from one team danced across the center to the other side and pointed at whomever he wanted to fight. They danced back to the center together and then closed in.

There were twelve men on each side and the challenge went from one side to the other. Two judges walked around the wrestlers and when they thought they were equally matched, stopped them. Five matches ended in this way. But the really exciting moments were when a man was thrown. The huge voice of the crowd then rose to the sky and in every direction. It was even heard in the surrounding villages.

The last match was between the leaders of the teams. They were among the best wrestlers in all the nine villages. The crowd wondered who would throw the other this year. Some said Okafo was the better man; others said he was not the equal of Ikezue. Last year neither of them had thrown the other even though the judges had allowed the contest to go on longer than was the custom. They had the same style and one saw the other's plans beforehand. It might happen again this year.

Dusk was already approaching when their contest began. The drums went mad and the crowds also. They surged forward as the two young men danced into the circle. The palm fronds were helpless in keeping them back.

Ikezue held out his right hand. Okafo seized it, and they closed in. It was a fierce contest. Ikezue strove to dig in his right heel behind Okafo so as to pitch him backwards in the clever ege* style. But the one knew what the other was thinking. The crowd had surrounded and swallowed up the drummers, whose frantic rhythm was no longer a mere disembodied sound but the very heartbeat of the people.

The wrestlers were now almost still in each other’s grip. The muscles on their arms and their thighs and on their backs stood out and twitched. It looked like an equal match. The two judges were already moving forward to separate them when Ikezue, now desperate, went down quickly on one knee in an attempt to fling his man backwards over his head. It was a sad miscalculation. Quick as the lightning of Amadioha*, Okafo raised his right leg and swung it over his rival's head. The crowd burst into a thunderous roar. Okafo was swept off his feet by his supporters and carried home shoulder high. They sang his praise and the young women clapped their hands.

This is an extract from a novel.

** ege: Nigerian Igbo word for “games” or “tricks”.*
** Amadioha: Nigerian Igbo god of justice and thunder.*

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EXAMINATIONS BOARD

ADVANCED MATRICULATION LEVEL
2026 SECOND SESSION

SUBJECT:	**English**
PAPER NUMBER:	III
DATE:	2nd September 2026
TIME:	9:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.

Answer **ALL** sections.

SECTION A: LANGUAGE ESSAY **(Total: 33 marks)**

Write an essay of not less than 500 words on ONE of the following topics:

1. Write a short story that might be contained in a published book titled: 'The Adventures of Denise and Diana: Daring Detective Duo'.

2. Blossoming.

3. How the world ends.

4. A social stereotype you would like to challenge.

5. Unfortunately, the development of emotional intelligence does not always have a central place in education. How can schools further contribute the integration of emotional intelligence in the curriculum?

6. The transition from education to employment is fraught with challenges. Write about some of the challenges young adults may face on their first job.

7. Food waste is a significant issue because it has economic, environmental, and social consequences. Write about some of the causes leading to food waste at family or household level and what may be done to reduce the problem.

8. Is there some truth to the concept of "generation gap"?

Please turn the page.

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SECTION B: SUMMARY **(Total: 15 marks)**

Write a summary of the following passage in between 150 and 200 words.

The Debate Over Homework

Homework has long been a defining feature of formal education, often viewed as a necessary extension of classroom learning. Yet in recent decades, educators, parents, and researchers have questioned how much homework is beneficial, for whom, and under what conditions. The debate is complex because homework can reinforce learning and support student independence, but it can also heighten stress, reduce well-being, and widen inequalities. A balanced perspective must consider both its academic value and its social, psychological, and developmental implications.

Supporters of homework typically argue that it reinforces knowledge and skills taught in class. For many subjects — particularly mathematics, sciences, and languages — mastery requires repeated practice. Homework provides structured opportunities for students to work with concepts beyond the limited time of the school day. Studies of older students often show a positive correlation between moderate homework and academic achievement, suggesting that assignments can help them deepen understanding and perform better on assessments. In this sense, homework acts as an additional learning scaffold, especially when it is thoughtfully designed and clearly connected to curriculum goals. Another argument in favour of homework is its role in promoting independence. When students work alone, they develop time-management strategies, self-discipline, and problem-solving skills that are valuable far beyond school. Homework also encourages students to take ownership of their learning by seeking out resources and revisiting class materials. These habits are especially important for students preparing for higher education or entering careers that require self-directed work.

Despite these advantages, critics emphasise significant drawbacks, particularly for younger learners. Research frequently shows that homework has little to no measurable academic benefit in elementary school. Young children learn best through play, exploration, and social interaction — activities that can be constrained when evenings are filled with worksheets or reading tasks. Instead of enhancing learning, homework for young students can become a burdensome routine that limits rest and diminishes joy in learning. A major concern is the impact of homework on student well-being. Heavy workloads are linked to heightened stress, reduced sleep, and fewer opportunities for extracurricular pursuits, physical activity, and family time. For adolescents, who already face rising academic pressure and mental-health challenges, excessive homework can exacerbate anxiety and burnout. Critics argue that if homework undermines mental and emotional well-being, its academic benefits — if present at all — come at too high a cost. Another key argument against homework is its potential to increase inequality. Not all students have access to quiet workspaces, supportive adults, or reliable internet. Those from disadvantaged backgrounds may be responsible for household duties or part-time work, leaving less time for assignments. When homework demands exceed a student's available resources, the gap between high-income and low-income learners widens.

Given the mixed evidence, many educators advocate for a balanced approach rather than eliminating homework altogether. This may include limiting or replacing homework in early grades, prioritizing reading at home, and focusing on high-quality tasks that extend learning meaningfully. For older students, homework can remain valuable when it is purposeful, manageable, and aligned with clear learning objectives. Schools can also coordinate workloads to prevent overwhelming students and address inequities by offering after-school support or homework clubs.

(Adapted from Cooper, 2006)

SECTION C: LINGUISTICS **(Total: 33 marks)**

Choose **ONE** question from this section.

1. Answer tasks a, b, c **AND** d.

a. Write **ONE** sentence with each of the words in the list below. Use each word in the sentence according to the part of speech indicated in the brackets. You may change the tense of a verb (**table** and **ghost**) if necessary, but all the other given words must remain unchanged.

The first word, **(i) back (verb)**, is given to you as an example.

(i) back (verb)
Answer: They <u>backed</u> what they were saying with solid evidence.

(i)	**back (verb)**	(ii)	table (verb)	(iii)	ghost (verb)
(iv)	alternate (adjective)	(v)	wound (adjective)	(vi)	since (adverb)
(vii)	advance (adjective)	(viii)	once (conjunction)	(ix)	as (conjunction)

(8)

b. A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of language which cannot be divided further without losing meaning. Write words to satisfy the suggestions given below. Separate the morphemes in your answer by using the + sign.

The first one has been worked out for you as an example.

(i) A word with a prefix and an inflectional suffix.
Answer: dis + like + s.

(i) A word with a prefix and an inflectional suffix.
ii. A compound word.
iii. A compound word with an inflectional suffix.
iv. A word with a derivational suffix that does not change word class.
v. A word with a derivational prefix that changes meaning and a derivational suffix that changes word class.
vi. A word with a derivational suffix that changes word class and an inflectional suffix.
vii. A word with two derivational suffixes that change word class.
viii. A word with three suffixes.
ix. A root word/free morpheme. (7)

c. Briefly explain these cohesive devices. Support your explanations with examples.

i. Repetition
ii. Collocation
iii. Reference (10)

Question continues on the next page.

d. Copy the following sentences, then:
   - say whether a sentence is Simple, Compound, or Complex, **AND**
   - underline the subordinate clause/s if a sentence is complex

   The first one has been done for you as an example.

   i. The new tool <u>that I bought</u> made the work really easy. (Complex)

   ii. The big wooden boat in the marina belongs to a friend of mine.
   iii. He did not call me, nor did he send a message.
   iv. When supper was over, he went into the yard to check on the puppy he had saved that morning.
   v. After the rain, the small village clearing becomes a sea of dark brown mud.
   vi. When the rain stopped, the small village in the middle of the jungle clearing had become a sea of dark brown mud we could not possibly cross.
   vii. Who typed the article we sent to the press?
   viii. Will you be attending the meeting, or are you sending someone in your place?
   ix. Jack and his father cut and piled the wood for winter.

(8)

OR

2. In language, political correctness generally refers to vocabulary that reflects prejudice against marginalised groups in society. In about 400 words, write an essay on political correctness explaining:

   - What political correctness is,
   - How language usage may evidence prejudice and how this prejudice may be avoided, AND
   - Some of the arguments in favour and against political correctness.

(33)

OR

3. In about 400 words, write a detailed commentary of this advertisement by Hayman-Joyce (on page 5). You are expected to analyse its stylistic features in terms of:

   - Graphology/Visual elements
   - Form and Structure
   - Attitude toward the reader and audience
   - Grammar
   - Vocabulary
   - Content

   The text of the article is reproduced on page 6 for ease of reading.

(33)

HAYMAN-JOYCE

RESIDENTIAL LETTINGS & MANAGEMENT

Our multi award-winning lettings team covers the North Cotswolds and surrounding countryside including Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire.

Headed by Adam Sambell MARLA, the team of Emma Cattell MARLA, Sue Maaz FARLA, Gill Tillott and Anna MacCurrach, has 73 years combined property industry experience and with invaluable market know-how, they are able to consistently deliver the very best service and results to our landlords.

With our targeted marketing and unrivalled list of potential tenants, your property will reach a global audience ensuring the best selection of tenants. The UK's largest search engine for property consistently places Hayman-Joyce ahead of all competition with statistics such as property views, property available, and most importantly, property let.

2024 saw another record year for the department, maintaining the company's position as the market leader for residential lettings in the North Cotswolds. The team successfully repeated the winning of the 'Lettings Gold Award' at the EA Masters in London. Adam, Emma and Sue were also shortlisted in the top ten in the country at the EA Masters People Awards, which Sue won outright as the 'Best Negotiator Lettings' in the country.

Being accredited members of the ARLA Propertymark and RICS gives our team the ability to continually learn and develop in their roles, as well as being up to the minute with the ever-changing and evolving legislation which is part and parcel of the industry.

Our highly-rated service covers everything from full property management to tenant finding. With our abundance of experience and professional approach, we make sure we always find exactly the right tenants to suit you and your property perfectly.

Our full management service offers complete peace of mind for you, knowing your biggest asset - your investment - is in no safer hands, as well as removing the stresses of property letting from you. Building good relationships with your tenants is very important to us, so we can competently and efficiently maintain your property and your tenancy for you.

Being on hand six days a week in our High Street office in Moreton-in-Marsh and having a dedicated manned out-of-hours telephone line, WhatsApp and email means, we truly are available to our tenants if the unexpected happens.

Our client base is large and varied, from individuals taking a sabbatical from their own homes and exploring the lettings market for the first time, to large multi-property estate landlords. We manage everyone with the same professionalism and efficiency understanding everyone's differing needs.

If you are thinking of letting a property for the first time or would like to discuss our management service for your portfolio of properties, or indeed anything in-between, we would be delighted to hear from you. You can be assured of the very best guidance, industry knowledge and residential lettings service from Hayman-Joyce.

Please call us on 01608 653606, pop into our office in Moreton-in-Marsh, book a letting valuation appointment on our website or email Adam at asambell@haymanjoyce.co.uk

Please turn the page for the text of the article.

HAYMAN – JOYCE

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Please call us on 01608653606, pop into our office in Moreton-in-Marsh, book a letting valuation appointment on our website or email Adam at asambell@haymanjoyce.co.uk