



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS BOARD

**INTERMEDIATE MATRICULATION LEVEL
2026 FIRST SESSION**

SUBJECT: **English**
PAPER: Oral
DATE: 30th March 2026

SESSION 3

EXAMINER'S PAPER

The Oral Session carries 10% of the global mark and should last approximately **15 minutes**.

1. GUIDED EXAMINER-TO-CANDIDATE CONVERSATION

(c. 3 minutes)

The examiner tells the candidate:

Good morning/afternoon. Please have a seat.

Can you tell me your index number?

Thank you.

In this part of the exam, I am going to ask you some questions about yourself. May I remind you to please speak up so that I may hear you, and remember to answer questions as fully as possible. Let's talk about you.

1. Is it important for you to stay active and exercise regularly? Why/why not?
2. Is there new physical activity or sport you would like to try in the future? Why/why not?
3. Do you listen to music or podcasts when you relaxing? Why/why not?
4. Do you prefer to listen to the same favourite songs repeatedly rather than searching for new ones? Why/why not?

(If the candidate answers a question too briefly or is unable to move beyond one- or two-word responses, the examiner should move on to the next question or to the next part of the examination.)

After the candidate has answered all the questions in the set, the examiner says:

Thank you. Now we shall proceed to Part 2.

(Total: 2 marks)

Please turn the page.

2. GUIDED EXAMINER-TO-CANDIDATE CONVERSATION

(c. 4 minutes)

The examiner tells the candidate:

In this part of the exam, you are going to be given pictures to talk about. Then I shall be asking you some questions. Here are the pictures. Please take some time to look at them.

The examiner hands the visual prompt to the candidate. After 30 seconds, the examiner prompts the candidate:

Please describe what you see in the pictures. You have about one minute, so don't worry if I stop you.



(Source: Familyapp.com)



(Source: Totalfood.com)

(If the candidate is unable to sustain his/her turn for one minute, the examiner should proceed to the second stage of this part of the examination.)

After the candidate has finished describing the pictures, the examiner asks a set of questions and prompts the candidate accordingly.

The examiner tells the candidate:

You've described two pictures which focus on food. Now let's explore the topic further.

The examiner proceeds to ask the following questions:

1. Will the 'traditional family dinner' disappear as our lives become busier?
2. In many cities, fast food chains are replacing traditional local restaurants. Is this a problem?
3. Do you think smartphones at the dinner table are 'killing' the social side of mealtime?
4. Should schools teach children how to cook traditional dishes to keep the culture alive?

(If the candidate answers a question too briefly, the examiner should move on to the next question or to the next part of the examination.)

After the candidate has answered all the questions in the set, the examiner says:

Thank you. Please turn the page. Now we shall proceed to Part 3.

(Total: 3 marks)

Please turn the page.

3. GUIDED CANDIDATE-TO-EXAMINER LONG TURN

(c. 3 minutes)

The examiner tells the candidate:

*In this part of the exam, you are to speak for about **three minutes** on the topic you've chosen. Before you start your presentation, you have two minutes to recollect your thoughts on the topic. Here's a pencil and paper to write some notes. You may refer to these notes during your presentation.*

The examiner hands a pencil and a sheet of paper to the candidate and waits for two minutes. At the end of the two minutes, the examiner tells the candidate:

All right? Which title have you chosen?

The examiner waits for the candidate to pronounce the title. The examiner then says:

You may begin.

Titles:

1. Students should be motivated more by knowledge than by grades.
2. Economic inequality is the biggest challenge facing modern societies.
3. Despite the ease of getting involved in politics nowadays, such involvement does not always bring about substantial change.
4. AI systems should never make decisions without human supervision.
5. Digital media has changed the way we experience art.

(If the examiner notes that the candidate is unable to maintain discourse for the required THREE minutes, the examiner should pose just ONE prompt to assist the candidate. If the candidate is still unable to proceed, then the examiner should bring the exam to an end.)

After the candidate has concluded the presentation, the examiner says:

Thank you. May I have the paper back, please? This is the end of the speaking exam.

The examiner collects the pencil and paper, and the candidate's paper.

(Total: 5 marks)



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CANDIDATE'S CLASSROOM PAPER

2. GUIDED EXAMINER-TO-CANDIDATE CONVERSATION

(c. 4 minutes)



(Source: Familyapp.com)



(Source: Totalfood.com)

(Total: 3 marks)

Please turn the page.

3. GUIDED CANDIDATE-TO-EXAMINER LONG TURN

(c. 3 minutes)

Choose ONE of the titles given below and prepare a THREE-minute presentation on the topic. Before your presentation the examiner will give you two minutes to recollect your thoughts on the topic. The examiner will give you pencil and paper to make notes. You will be allowed to refer to these notes during your presentation.

Choose ONE of the following:

1. Students should be motivated more by knowledge than by grades.
2. Economic inequality is the biggest challenge facing modern societies.
3. Despite the ease of getting involved in politics nowadays, such involvement does not always bring about substantial change.
4. AI systems should never make decisions without human supervision.
5. Digital media has changed the way we experience art.

At the end of the exam, please give this paper back to the examiner, together with the pencil and paper.

(Total: 5 marks)



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CANDIDATE'S CORRIDOR PAPER

3. GUIDED CANDIDATE-TO-EXAMINER LONG TURN

(c. 3 minutes)

Choose ONE of the titles given below and prepare a THREE-minute presentation on the topic. Before your presentation the examiner will give you two minutes to recollect your thoughts on the topic. The examiner will give you pencil and paper to make notes. You will be allowed to refer to these notes during your presentation.

Choose ONE of the following:

1. Students should be motivated more by knowledge than by grades.
2. Economic inequality is the biggest challenge facing modern societies.
3. Despite the ease of getting involved in politics nowadays, such involvement does not always bring about substantial change.
4. AI systems should never make decisions without human supervision.
5. Digital media has changed the way we experience art.

At the end of the exam, please give this paper back to the examiner, together with the pencil and paper.

(Total: 5 marks)



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**INTERMEDIATE MATRICULATION LEVEL
2026 FIRST SESSION**

SUBJECT: **English**
DATE: 27th April 2026
TIME: 4:00 p.m. to 7:05 p.m.

Answer **ALL** sections. You are advised to spend about 1 hour on each task.

SECTION A: WRITTEN

(Total: 30 marks)

Choose ONE title and write 450 (+/- 10%) words.

1. You are out trekking with a friend. At one point, the air becomes chilly. In the distance, clouds roll closer, dark and restless, promising chaos. Write about your experience of being caught in a violent storm out in the open.
2. Write a story starting with these two sentences:
She had never seen him before, yet when he looked up from the bench and smiled, he spoke her name as if they were old friends. Her heart skipped a beat – not from recognition, but from fear.
3. Even before they step into their first classroom, some children are at a disadvantage – one that shapes their educational journey from the very beginning. Write about some of these disadvantages and suggest how they may possibly be addressed.
4. Happiness is a universal aspiration, yet there is considerable debate about what truly leads to a fulfilling life. What is your opinion?
5. Write an email to the University Admissions office explaining why you are drawn to a particular course, what you hope to gain by following the course and why you believe it to be invaluable for your future academic and career goals.

Sender's details:

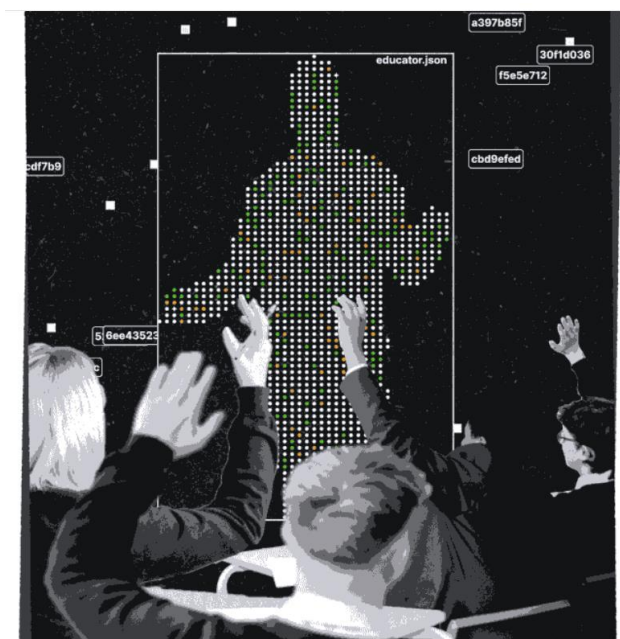
Use the fictional name: Taylor Jones

Recipient's details:

Use this email address: admissions@gmail.com

6. You are a committee member of a recently formed Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) working to create opportunities, activities and initiatives that engage young adults in the community. Write a proposal report to the local council explaining some of your aims to establish community programmes that empower young adults, foster social connections and provide opportunities for personal growth.

Please turn the page.

SECTION B: READING AND LANGUAGE AWARENESS**(Total: 30 marks)****Read the following passage and answer the questions given below.****Teacher v chatbot: my journey into the classroom in the age of AI** by Peter C. Baker*(Illustration by Jack Purling)*

Two years ago, at the age of 39, I began training to be a school teacher. I wanted to teach English – to help young people become stronger readers, writers and thinkers, with a deeper connection to literature. After 15 years of working as a freelance writer and as a novelist, I felt confident that I had something to offer. But the further I progressed in my training, the more uncertain I felt.

5 One particular question taunted me for my lack of an answer. What to do about artificial intelligence? What does it mean for English instruction that all pupils now have access to free online applications that can easily produce fluid, fairly complex prose on demand? I started frantically seeking out perspectives on AI and the English classroom wherever I could find them: podcasts, YouTube channels. My algorithmic feeds picked up on this interest and started catering to it, serving me an apparently endless supply of content. I quickly learned that this was a world of heated, often bitter, debate.

10 On one side were the AI rejectionists: teachers and education experts for whom AI was nothing less than an assault by greedy tech companies on the classroom. What students needed, they argued, was to learn how to push themselves through difficulty: to read complex texts and develop complex arguments. They needed to learn how to embrace that difficulty, rather than running away from it. Access to a one-click writing application made it too easy to run away.

15 AI rejectionists shared horror stories of students handing in AI-generated essays about which they could not answer the simplest questions, or making reference to non-existent sources their applications had “hallucinated”. They posted studies suggesting that AI use dulled students’ reasoning or even impeded the development of their brain. They raised ethical concerns such as reliance on copyrighted writing, and the power and control of big tech companies. For most rejectionists, the solution was to build a classroom that AI could not touch. They talked about shifting toward in-class essays, perhaps written by hand. They debated the feasibility of reviving oral tests and quizzes.

25 On the other side were the AI cheerleaders. I am talking about teachers and experts who argued – often quite passionately – that, for all AI’s risks, it also carried great potential. Instead of cheating machines, AI applications could be powerful assistant teachers, able to engage with every student in a classroom simultaneously, making sure everyone got personalised feedback exactly when needed, carefully nudging each student down their particular path to maximum learning. From the cheerleaders’ perspective, the rejectionists’ instinct to shun AI tools represented a lack of understanding about their possibilities; it also did a disservice to their students, who would leave school without having acquired tech skills they could use to their advantage at university and in their future careers.

35 As I waded through arguments between the rejectionists and the cheerleaders, my anxiety increased. I have noticed something about teachers, including myself. Because we take our responsibilities so seriously, we often fear doing the “wrong” thing. We believe that good teachers can change people’s lives; but also know bad teachers leave a mark too, especially in English, where they are often a culprit of “readicide”: the killing of good feelings about reading. We long to be in the right category, and dread being in the wrong one. Beneath this fear, I think, is a more fundamental one: the fear of being seen as out-of-touch losers. I know this fear well. I was determined not to get fooled by all the AI hype, but I also did not want to refuse considering it a potentially useful new tool. All I needed was a provisional ruling. I did not need to decide if AI was an evil scam or the future of everything. I did not need to decide what AI meant for the future of education. What I had to decide was what AI meant for the high-school English classes I was on the verge of teaching. I nervously downloaded more podcasts and watched more YouTube videos, hoping that by absorbing more material on the subject I could increase my chances of getting it right, or at least lessen my terror of getting it all wrong.

45 Last spring I started spending 15 hours a week observing Emily, a veteran teacher of English in a large high school. What I saw in her classroom immediately disposed me to join the rejectionists. I witnessed all the disruptive effects one read about in articles about AI and the classroom: fully AI-generated essays and AI-invented quotes. I sat with Emily while she marked essays and joined her in stressing over trying to sort student nonsense from AI nonsense, student improvement and good work from AI-powered polish. I had become a teacher in large part because I wanted to spend time with young people’s writing, honouring it with close attention. 55 Watching over Emily’s shoulder, I saw how AI’s presence interfered with this process. I understood the despair of looking at a student’s essay and, rather than figuring out how to best respond to it by giving the right feedback, trying to determine its origins.

Emily told me that most of the reading she assigned now had to happen in class and that she read much of it aloud, especially toward the beginning of the year. I was shocked. When I decided to become a teacher, my head had been filled with visions in which I led students into literature and its connections to life. In these visions, the reading itself took place mostly at home, beyond the walls of the classroom. What did it mean for my teacherly ambitions that so many of my students appeared unequipped to read on their own – and that, when it came time to write, so many of them turned reflexively to AI? I wondered, depressively, if I had signed up for something that unstoppable forces of history were on the brink of wiping out.

65 But then I watched Emily read to the class and my spirits lifted. Shortly after I had arrived, the class started *All Quiet on the Western Front*, an anti-war novel based on the experiences of a young German soldier in WWI. Students began by expressing disbelief: We’re really reading another whole book? Then, with Emily’s help, they got their bearings: first world war, young German soldiers, the loss of innocence, the psychological effect of daily proximity to death. Laptops were away, as were mobile phones. Everyone knew they could raise a hand any time to ask for clarification or make an observation. Sometimes, Emily stopped to highlight moments that she suspected were producing confusion or to explain sentences ripe with multiple possibilities for interpretation. Day by day, the book transformed from an imposing challenge into a familiar companion.

Passage continues on the next page.

At some point the students stopped complaining and started getting into it: expressing a desire to know how it all turned out, gasping at dramatic turns, wondering aloud, and with feeling, why characters were doing what they were doing. And then, one day, it happened: a room full of American students in 2025 was inside a story about a German 19-year-old in WWI, simultaneously viewing the book through the lens of their lives and their lives through the lens of the book. I could feel it on my skin: the room quietly crackling with the energy between students and teacher and words written almost a century before.

The use of AI in students' writing was depressing: the AI-free teaching I witnessed was inspiring. Before my observation period ended, Emily let me lead some of the readings myself, and a couple of times I experienced a full-body high. I felt ready to scream it from the rooftops: I am an AI rejectionist – and proud of it!

(Adapted from The Guardian)

Answer ALL the questions. With the exception of Question 1, use your own words at all times. Write accurately and with clarity.

1. Read the following sentence and attempt the **THREE** tasks (a, b and c). Write each of your answers on a separate line.
 'Two years ago, at the age of 39, I began training to be a school teacher.' (line 1)
 - a) How would you describe the phrases 'Two years ago' and 'at the age of 39'?
 - b) Identify the part of speech/word class for each word in the phrase 'a school teacher'.
 - c) Is the sentence simple, complex or compound? Explain your answer.

(4)
2. What paradox about training and understanding does the author mention/suggest in the first paragraph?

(2)
3. Briefly describe the logical sequence in paragraphs 2 and 3 (lines 12-24). In your response, clearly explain the reasoning behind the progression in the two paragraphs.

(3)
4. Which fears trouble the author in paragraph 5 (lines 34-47)? Give your answer in a **SINGLE** sentence.

(3)
5. Why does the author's observation of Emily correcting essays challenge his desire to honour students' writing efforts?

(4)
6. Write **TWO** separate sentences to explain how the image illustrates ideas that emerge from the article. Make sure that your response clearly shows the relationship between the image and the content in the article.

(4)
7. Limiting your answer to paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 (lines 66-86), summarise in a **SINGLE** paragraph of between 80 and 100 words, the author's shift in perspective concerning reading in class.

(10)

SECTION C: LITERARY AWARENESS**(Total: 30 marks)****Choose only ONE question. The response must amount to a total of 500 words (+/- 10%).****EITHER**

1. Discuss the use of imagery and symbolism in Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Rough Crossing'. (30)

OR

2. It started as a challenge, the unforeseen outcome of an absurd conversation at a writers' festival in Western Australia. There was the usual panel on stage, and an audience made up of the sort of people who frequent crime panels—predominantly women with a sprinkling of men, highly educated, highly literate, and highly imaginative. They were a group bound together by a fascination with the gory details of behaviours in which they themselves would never engage. These people would never commit murder, not in their wildest dreams. Nor would they mix with people who did such things, no matter how fascinating they might find their company on the page. But they loved to read about murder, about the sudden, violent termination of human life, and of how it was done.

The panel was discussing realism in crime fiction. Two practitioners of the art, writers of well-received *Policières*, had been pitted against the literary critic of a local paper. The critic, who read very little of such fiction expressed the view that there was a surfeit of realistic gore in the contemporary mystery.

"Look at the average crime novel these days," he pointed out, stabbing at the air with an accusing finger. "Look at the body count. Look at the compulsory autopsy scenes. Some actually start with the autopsy, would you believe it! The autopsy room, so familiar, so comforting! Organs are extracted and weighed, wounds examined for angle-of-entry, and it's all so ... well, it's all so graphic." He paused. From the audience came a brief outbreak of laughter. It could not be graphic enough for them.

The critic warmed to his theme. "But there are crimes other than murder, aren't there? There's fraud and theft and extortion. There's tax evasion, for heaven's sake! And yet all we read about in books of this genre is murder. Murder, murder, murder." He paused, then looked accusingly at the two authors beside him. "Why not write about more mundane offences? Why not write about things that actually happen? Murder's very rare, you know. Not that one would think so to read your books."

One of the authors grinned at the audience. "Weak stomach," he said, gesturing to the critic. "Can't take it."

The audience laughed. They had no difficulty taking it.

"Seriously, though," said the critic. "How about it? How about a realistic crime novel dealing with something day-to-day, some commonplace low-level offence."

"Such as?" asked one of the authors.

The critic waved a hand in the air. "Oh, anything," he said lightly. "Parking violations, perhaps. Those happen all the time."

Everybody joined in the laughter, even the critic. "Go on," he said to the authors. "Why don't one of you people do something like that? Give up murder. Get real. Start a new genre."

One of the authors, George Harris, a successful crime writer from Perth, stared at him. He had been laughing, but now he looked thoughtful.

- a) Limiting your answer to the given passage, explain how McCall Smith uses language to establish the central debate concerning crime fiction in the short story 'No Place to Park'. (12)
- b) Explain how this opening debate foreshadows what follows in the short story. (18)