

Information on the State Exam in English

Linguistics and Culture

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The State Exam of the Bachelor's Degree Programme

Overview of the State Exam

The State Exam consists of two main components: Linguistics and Culture. To pass, a candidate has to succeed in both parts. Very importantly, exam candidates will be assessed not only on the basis of their knowledge but also on their spoken English. (Candidates who have memorised a wealth of factual information but are unable to convince the committee that they are able to communicate fluently and accurately in advanced English are unlikely to pass).

The State Exam is an oral exam only, lasting for 30 minutes: 15 minutes for each part. Immediately before the exam, each candidate has 30 minutes to prepare in a separate room near the examination room. (Exam candidates should arrive with at least half an hour to spare).

Date and Time of the Exam

The times of the exams are published on the department website in the main section. The times are also emailed to the candidates by Ms. Lada Vondrušková, the departmental secretary. Candidates *must* also check the English Department's website a day or two before the exam as the times may change, usually because a student suddenly withdraws from the exam.

The Components of the Exam

The **Linguistics component** consists of a text, below which are two (or three) tasks.

A candidate should read the tasks *very* carefully and complete all of them as accurately and fully as possible. The text should be referred to where this is required. (See FAQ 4)

The examples in the text may be supplemented by others, but candidates should not ignore the text completely. Neither should it be used as a springboard to discuss a different topic. Definitions of terms and as well as detailed and specific theoretical background should be included, where appropriate.

In the Linguistics component, a candidate is asked about a specific feature of the language on a morphological, phonological, or syntactic level. The term should be defined using appropriate language and terminology and placed within its linguistic context; examples from the text should be provided.

Two tasks which are found below the (particular) text might be:

- 1. In the text, find verbs in the present form that have future meanings.*
- 2. Define the term “liaison”. Describe various linking patterns and find examples of each in the text.*

The exam candidate should deal with both tasks in the 15 minutes allotted to the Linguistics Component. Members of the Committee will not usually interrupt the candidate unless the task has been misunderstood or if it is not clear what the candidate meant. For example, the topic of discussion may be “liaison”. However, the candidate begins talking about “elision”. In such a case, the candidate will be redirected to the task.

For the **Culture component**, the exam candidate always receives a set of pictures, a single picture or a short text. TWO topics (Part A and Part B) should then be discussed with the Exam Committee.

In Part A, the exam candidate will always receive a short text, or a picture, or a set of pictures with some prompts and questions connected to a single topic. The exam candidate is expected to work with the texts or pictures and comment on a wider cultural context using the pictures or text alongside the prompts and questions.

In Part B, the exam candidate receives a broader topic (a historical or cultural period or a literary or cultural phenomenon) without any pictures, texts or questions. The exam candidate is expected to discuss this topic in a wider context and provide some examples to do with the topic. With reference to the 1950s in the USA, for example, the exam candidate should not only talk about politics but also about social changes and how these were portrayed in literature/art.

An example of Part A can be found below.

An example of Part B:

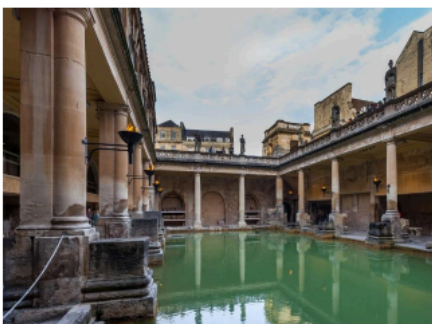
Comment on milestones of Irish history and culture.

Appendix

An Example of Part A of the Culture Unit



Discuss the pictures above focusing on the following aspects:



- name what building or artefact each picture shows
- which major historical periods they represent
- what languages are most typically associated with these periods on the British Isles
- what other major buildings, artefacts or other material remains are well-known from each period
- what major (and mostly still standing) fortifications were built during the period represented by the picture in the bottom left
- using the above, provide a brief narrative overview of the early history of the British Isles until 1066

For extra points only: what major artefact provides a monumental, graphical depiction of the 1066 battle that introduces a new era in the history of the British Isles?

Exam Preparation

When the exam begins, the exam invigilator invites the candidate into the preparation room. The candidate selects two numbered slips of paper: one for the Linguistics and one for the Culture components. Based on that selection, the Exam Invigilator then hands the candidate two numbered A4 sheets of paper, one for Linguistics and one for Culture, respectively. These should not be written on. The candidate is provided with a pen, paper, and a dictionary, but no mobile devices are allowed. The candidate must not request a different number or ask the invigilator for help in answering the question. No one may leave the room once the exam preparation has begun. The 30 minutes of preparation time should be divided into 15 minutes for each component. For this reason, it is advisable to take a watch to the preparation room. Alternatively, the candidate may ask the invigilator to indicate when 15 minutes have passed.

Dos and Don'ts

- Do stay calm and think clearly about the tasks. Try not to start panicking.
- Do write on the blank sheets of paper provided, not on the numbered exam paper (the text).
- Do make comprehensive notes to refer to when you face the Exam Committee. However, do not write out a speech in complete sentences.
- Do think of *more* to say, rather than less. Don't worry about having too *much* information. The exam committee will usually interrupt the candidate if they overrun the first 15 minutes and request that the second component be addressed. (It is far better to be interrupted and redirected than to run out of points to make before the first 15 minutes are up).

The State Exam itself (Before the Committee).

After the 30-minute preparation time, a member of the Committee will come to collect the candidate and take them to the exam room. The Committee will stand, and the chairperson then introduces the members. Greet them, but there is no need to shake hands with them. You will be asked to sit at a table at the front of the exam room. Water and a plastic cup are provided. Make use of this!

The Committee will ask the candidate which questions have been selected. During the exam, the candidate can choose which order the components should be dealt with. Breathe deeply and put your best foot forward! Address the whole Committee, speaking clearly, confidently and more slowly than you would do if you were addressing just one person. Do not rush through the answers. If you make a mistake, simply repeat the word or phrase correctly.

The Committee will seldom interrupt the candidate while they are speaking but will try to direct the discussion to (try to) draw out what the candidate knows.

Speak very precisely. Statements that are too vague, too general, or simply inaccurate are not acceptable. One such example is: “In the Modernist era, there were new resources like glass, steel, and iron.” However, this is incorrect since by the first half of the 20th century, glass and iron had been around for centuries. Likewise, steel was not “a new resource”; its modern production dates from the mid-19th century. What the candidate (presumably) meant was: “Glass, steel, and iron were used in new ways in *Modernist architecture*.” This is a vast difference!

An example of imprecision from the Linguistics component is this statement: “The *-ed* form can be used as a verb.” This is phrased inaccurately since the “*-ed* form” is not “a verb”; rather, it is a *suffix* used to create past simple or past participles.

If you are asked to talk about some concepts of cultural theory *and* comment on a certain text/image, do both, not just one. Do not forget that each question (both in the Culture and in the Linguistics component) has two parts. Follow-up questions may be asked by any member of the Committee. This does not mean that the initial answers were not good enough; the Committee might ask searching questions to determine whether a candidate deserves, say, a grade 1- or 2.

Regurgitating lists of items/distinctions is not enough. “Omáčka” is equally important because you need to show you understand what the list is, how it was made, what criterion a distinction is based on, and how the individual items are related to each other. You also need to show that you can speak English fluently and accurately. The level of your English is also assessed; if you make many mistakes (in grammar or pronunciation) or if you can hardly put a sentence together, this will affect the outcome negatively.

The above serves as advice to heed *long* before you enter the Examination Room. Most importantly, though, at no stage during the State Exam itself should you entertain the slightest thought of failing, however poorly you may think you are performing. Give it your absolute best at *every single moment*. [“It ain’t over till the fat lady sings!”](#)

After 30 minutes (or slightly more but never less), the exam is over. The candidate will be informed and asked to leave the examination room, so that the Committee can discuss the final grade among themselves. After several minutes, the candidate will be invited to return, and the final grade will be announced. The Committee then shakes the candidate’s hand if they are successful.

Afterward this announcement, simply thank the Committee (whatever the result), and exit the room so the next candidate can enter. Do not remain in the room or the adjacent corridor talking with friends or family, disturbing the other candidates. If you do not pass the exam,

you will have an opportunity to discuss the Examiner's Report with one of the members of the Committee at a later date. Then make an appointment to find out why you did not pass. Whatever you do, do not give up at any stage!

Sitting in on the State Exam

By law, all Czech State Exams are open to the public*. Students who are not taking the State Exams during that particular examination session are strongly encouraged to sit in on an exam - to observe and learn. Should anyone wish to do so, please contact the exam candidate beforehand, out of courtesy. (The list of names is posted on the Departmental Website: <https://kaj.fp.tul.cz/news>). If that student shows reluctance (though it is your "right" to attend), it would be considerate to approach another (less nervous?) student. It is not essential, but you are welcome to inform a member of the Committee via email, especially if more than one student plans to sit in on a particular exam.

On the day of the exam, be punctual. However, be aware that the times of the exam and the candidates might not accord with the schedule for unexpected reasons. Wait outside the exam room and enter when you are asked to do so. You will be told where to sit (usually at the back of the room) and must remain there for the entire examination session. All devices, such as mobile phones or tablets, must be switched off. Students are not permitted to make an audio recording or any written record during the exam. (The latter task falls to the Committee Secretary). Under no circumstances must visitors who sit in on the State Exam disturb the exam process. The Committee reserves the right to ask a person to leave the exam room if their conduct is considered "distracting" or if the above rules are infringed.

When the exam is over, *all* students must leave the room. The State Exam Committee discusses the candidate's performance and grade behind closed doors. However, you may enter the room with the candidate and stand discreetly at the back or to one side for the

summing up and the announcement of the candidate's grade. Then leave the room and exam area quietly. Do not forget to thank the exam candidate for letting you sit in on their State Exam, but do not remain chatting in the corridor. Think of others; one day, the exam candidate will be you!

** Státní zkouška se koná před zkušební komisí; průběh státní zkoušky a vyhlášení výsledku jsou veřejné. [§ 53 \(1\)](#)*

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Exam and Preparation for It

Q1: Is it possible to take the State Exam of the minor subject before the BA paper defence?

A: Yes. The thesis is defended on the same day as the State Exam in your major subject.

Q2: Do I have to defend my bachelor's thesis in English at the same time as I take my State Exam in English?

A: No, you don't. The English State Exams are held three times a year. (These are usually: May/June, August/September, January). You can defend your thesis in English at any of those three times, regardless of whether you are taking the English State Exam on that date.

A: If the bachelor's thesis is written in English, the defence is on the same date as the State Exam itself.

Q3: Are the State Exams only in the form of oral examinations?

A: Yes, there is no written exam. However, during the exam, you will have to analyse a text for the linguistic part and pictures/text for the cultural part. For more information, see above.

Q4: How should the text be used in the Linguistics Component?

A: The numbered lines on the side of the text should be noted when referring to examples of a particular linguistic feature.

Example question: *Define word stress. Identify different English word stress patterns in the text.*

A response might be: "In line 12, there is an example of antepenultimate word stress. The word *biology* has the primary stress on the second syllable. It is followed by two unstressed syllables. Antepenultimate word stress is defined as..." (Or, "Antepenultimate word stress is a pattern whereby... The word *biology* in line 12 is an example. Here, the stress is on...")

Q5: Can I use my own examples?

A: Yes, but begin with those you find in the text and refer to them by their line number.

Q6: How many times can I resit the exam if I fail?

A: Students have three attempts to pass the exam.

Q7: Is there a dress code for the State Exam?

A: This is a very formal event, so wearing appropriate clothing is strongly recommended.

Q8: Some of the questions in the list concern topics that weren't covered in the classes. Will such questions be changed, or is the list final, and we have to learn even what wasn't originally covered?

A: All topics are available to students. It is their responsibility to review all questions. If they don't know how to approach a particular task, they should ask members of staff or MA students well before the exam itself.

Q9: Are the questions on the websites up-to-date?

A: The questions for the State Exam can be found [on the websites](#) and are updated.

Q10: Is there a list of books we are required to read?

A: No, you should be able to discuss all topics broadly and provide several examples (authors, works). In other words, knowing all the plots and characters is unnecessary. However, you should familiarise yourself with the most well-known literary works (*Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Old Man and The Sea*, *The Great Gatsby*). There are several links that might be helpful for the study, for example, [Sparknotes](#) or [Litcharts](#).

Q11: What happens if I feel unwell on the day of the exam?

A: In this case, it is extremely important to contact the Secretary, Lada Vondrušková, the Departmental or Deputy Head (ideally all three) to inform them that you cannot attend.

Q12: Is it possible to choose which Committee I have to face?

A: No. The Committee will be chosen based on staff availability and their specialisation.

Q13: What happens if I have an issue with someone on the Committee? Can I choose to come at another time?

A: If this is the case, contact the Head of the Department, Dr. Zénó Vernyik, and inform him of your reasons. He will deal with this discreetly; your concerns will not negatively influence the likelihood of your passing. A solution will always be found.

Q14: Should I tell the Committee if I suffer from epilepsy?

A: Inform the secretary and a Committee member beforehand of any physical or mental disabilities that might influence your performance during the exam.

The Exam Itself

Q1: What is provided for us during the exam?

A: In the preparation room where you choose the questions for the exam, you are provided with:

- A monolingual dictionary
- Pens and paper
- A plastic cup and water

Q2: What if I don't agree with the result?

A: You can ask to see the Examiners' Report, at a later date. Here, the reasons for not passing the exam will have been recorded in writing.

Performing Poorly in the Exam (Learn from the mistakes of others!)

Q1: What are the most common mistakes students make during the Exam?

A: Some candidates do not read the instructions properly and do not complete *all parts* of the task. Another mistake is: writing out entire sentences when preparing for the oral exam, then talking *at* the Committee rather than *to* it. The exam is not a monologue, so write separate bullet points with accompanying notes. Thus, always make sure you have addressed all tasks. In terms of linguistics, check if you have all examples from the text (all questions are based on analysing and finding examples from a given text).

Q2: Why does a candidate fail the State Exam?

A: One of the most common reasons is that the student clearly has not spent enough time revising properly. Thus, the questions were answered superficially, if at all. (It is essential to plan your preparation strategically. Create specific aims and deadlines).

Q3: If I fail the State Exam from one of the components, do I then need to sit just the part I failed, or do I need to retake the whole exam?

A: The whole exam needs to be taken again. You must pass both parts, as both are awarded a single final mark, an average of both components.

Q4: Can I fail the English exam if the factual information is correct but I make mistakes in my English when I speak?

A: Proficiency in English is one of the requirements to pass the State Exam. The level of language is C1+, so a few mistakes are acceptable, particularly when the focus is on the content, not the form. On the other hand, if the language level is below this in terms of fluency and accuracy (grammar and vocabulary), this will be taken into consideration when awarding the final grade. In rare cases, a student may fail because they produce persistent or basic grammatical errors such as:

third person singular: ** this show, *English have, *this novel mention*

Articles: ** Second World War, * The World War I, *Tudors, *An information*

Syntax: ** He describes how does it look like.*

Miscellaneous Questions

Q1: If I have to extend my studies, can I take the State Exam for my minor degree subject this year?

A: Yes, the order of the State Exams is up to the student.

Q2: In addition to the major and minor subjects, does the BA State Exam consist of a Pedagogy and Psychology part?

A: Yes, you must pass the State Exam's "Pedagogy and Psychology" component. This is not something difficult. It consists of producing a plan for one particular lesson from either your major or minor degree subject. You will be systematically prepared to write it successfully. More information is given in the UPP-B course, which takes place in the summer semester of the third year.

Q3: If I take the state exam in August/September, will I have to sit for MA entrance exams?

A: No. You will be accepted automatically onto the MA degree course if you pass the State Exam in the August before.

Ten Revision Tips for the State Exams

1. Start revising *well* in advance. A month beforehand is not usually enough, but do not fret if you do not have more time. Worrying achieves nothing.
2. Create a realistic revision plan. Establish and keep all deadlines. Work systematically and not erratically and sporadically.
3. Set yourself goals for every day, e.g. study 7 questions from Culture per day and go through questions from phonology in one day. If possible, go through each question more than once, with a time gap between.
4. Ideally, cooperate with at least one of your fellow students. Motivate and hold one another accountable. You have a common goal: to pass the State Exam. Work hard and consistently together to achieve this.
5. Prepare all your materials. Do this during and at the end of each course you take. When you start revising, highlight and summarise your notes. Rewrite them if necessary on revision cards.
6. Read your notes aloud to yourself. Then practise speaking from memory. Make sure you know how to pronounce every word correctly, particularly proper nouns. For examples of commonly mispronounced words and their correct pronunciation, see page 17.
7. If there are gaps in your knowledge, take time to fill them. Contact your peers, use the library or the internet, and consult the course teacher – all while there is still time, not at the eleventh hour.
8. Do not neglect to work on your spoken English. Pay attention to grammar, appropriate vocabulary use, and pronunciation.
9. Once you have revised a particular topic, “role-play” with your study buddy/buddies. Practise speaking aloud as if you were talking to the Committee. Answer the questions

on the website:

https://www.fp.tul.cz/images/fakulta/SZZ/KAJ/2022/okruhy_2022_B0114A300068_KAJ.pdf. Give one another detailed feedback on the content as well as your ability to

express your ideas fluently and accurately in English.

10. Drink, eat, exercise and sleep regularly – you need to stay in good health. Never stay up all night revising, particularly just before the exam.

Commonly Mispronounced Words and Names

Culture

	correct pronunciation	incorrect pronunciation
Columbus	/kə'ʌmbəs/	/'kɒlʊmbʊs/
The Great Gatsby	/ðə greɪt 'gætsbi/	/ðə greɪd 'getzbi/
The Tudors	/ðə 'tju:dəz/	/ðə 'tu:do:s/
W. B. Yeats	/'dʌbəlju: bi: jeɪts/	/dʌbəlvi: bi: ji:ts/
Ronald Reagan	/rɒnəld 'reɪɡən/	/rɒnælt 'ri:gæn/
Franklin Roosevelt	/'fræŋklɪn 'rəʊzəvelt/	/'fɹeŋklɪn 'ru:zevelt/
Theodore Roosevelt	/'θi:ədɔ: 'rəʊzəvelt/	/təɒdɔ:r 'ru:zevelt/

Linguistics

vowel	/vaʊəl/	/waʊwəl/
consonant	/'kɒnsənənt/ (aspirated /k/)	/'kɒnzɒnənt/
liaison	/li'eɪzən/	/laɪjeɪzən/
elision	/ɪ'lɪʒən/	/e'laɪzən/
pronunciation	/prəˌnʌnsi'eɪʃən/	/prɒˌnaʊnsi'eɪʃən/
(to) pronounce	/prəˈnaʊns/	/prɒˈnʌns/
modal	/'məʊdəl/	/'mɒdɔ:l/
determine	/dɪ'tɜ:mɪn/	/de'tɜ:maɪn/
thesis	/'θi:sɪs/	/'teɪzɪs/