

# The 'A' Level Examinations

The 'A' Level examinations in Modern Languages have recently been subjected to close scrutiny by teachers, lecturers and the Examinations Boards, and, as a result, many changes have been made. Emphasis is now placed on the student's making use of the language in realistic contexts, as well as appreciating the finer points of language, literature and culture.

## Aims

Taking a synthesis of the views of the Examinations Boards, the aims of 'A' Level in Modern Languages may be seen as the following.

(1) To develop in the candidates a range of practical skills which will enable them to understand and communicate in the written and spoken language, understanding and using a variety of registers for a variety of purposes in the worlds of work and leisure.

(2) To foster an awareness and understanding of the cultural, social and political background of the country in which the language is spoken, and to encourage first-hand contact with that country.

(3) To offer enjoyment, intellectual stimulation and challenge appropriate to an advanced course at this level, and to encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning.

(4) To further intellectual and personal development by promoting learning, social and study skills, thus equipping candidates to further their study of a language and/or undertake the study of others.

## The Examinations

Traditionally, language learning is divided into the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The new examinations will examine all of these skills, but not necessarily individually. At least one Board (Oxford) will require all texts and questions to be in French, and all answers to be in French. Thus, students will have to use various skills simultaneously. Other Boards will require French answers to questions on an English text, or English answers to English questions on a recorded text in French. It is impossible to cover here all the requirements set by the various Boards, but the following outline of the types of tests to be set will give the student an idea of some of these requirements. Examples of tests taken from the Boards' sample papers follow at the end. As stressed in the Author's Preface, it is essential that the student should register with an Examinations Centre, and see which Board's papers are to be set.