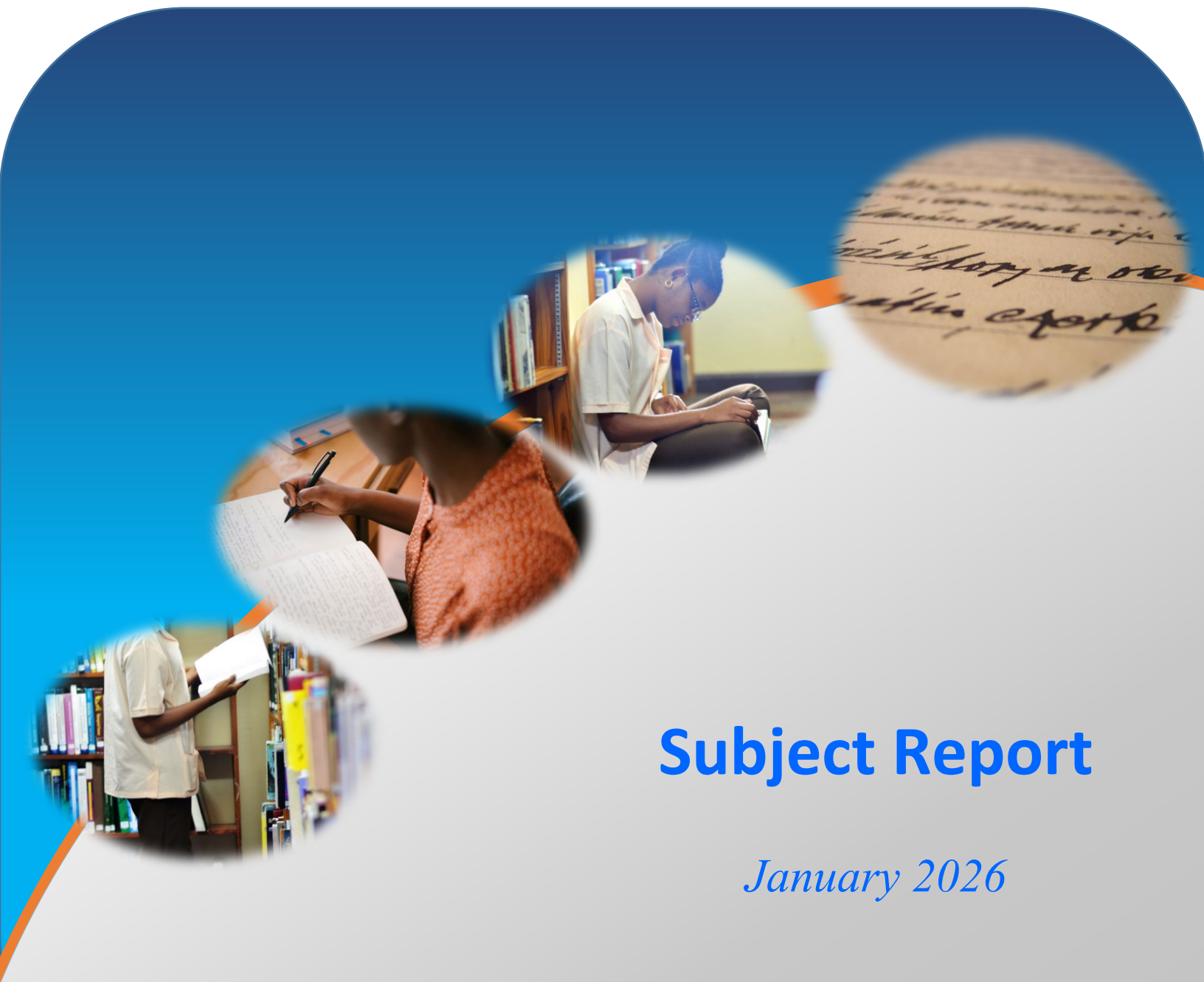




**CARIBBEAN  
EXAMINATIONS  
COUNCIL**

**CSEC<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH A**



**Subject Report**

*January 2026*

**CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL**

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE  
CARIBBEAN SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE<sup>®</sup>  
EXAMINATION**

**JANUARY 2026**

**ENGLISH A  
GENERAL PROFICIENCY**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the January 2026 CSEC English A examination. The examination comprises the following papers.

- Paper 01 — Multiple Choice
- Paper 02 — Structured Essay
- Paper 032 — Alternative to School-Based Assessment (private candidates)

Overall, the performance of candidates in January 2026 showed a notable improvement, increasing by approximately eight per cent when compared with 2025. In 2026, approximately 71 per cent of candidates earned Grades I–III, compared with 62 per cent in 2025. The January 2026 performance of candidates also exceeded that of 2024, when approximately 63 per cent of candidates achieved Grades I–III.

## PAPER 01 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

Paper 01 consists of 60 compulsory multiple-choice items; each item is worth one mark. In January 2026, the mean score was 41.55, which represented an improvement over 2025 (37.68) and 2024 (37.37).

Paper 01 is divided into two sections. Section I comprises 25 discrete items, while Section II consists of 35 reading comprehension items based on a single stimulus. The stimulus may be one of the following types.

- Poem
- Literary extract (taken from a novel, short story, biography, diary or letter)
- Expository extract (such as an encyclopedia entry, a report, a set of instructions, a newspaper article, a speech text or a conversation transcript)
- Argumentative extract (for example, an advertisement, a speech or a letter to the editor)
- Visual extract (such as a table, chart, form, diagram, map, cartoon or advertisement)

## PAPER 02 — STRUCTURED ESSAY

Paper 02 comprises four sections.

- Section A — Summary Writing
- Section B — Expository Writing
- Section C — Narrative Writing or Short Story Writing
- Section D — Argumentative Writing

Each section assesses Profile 1: Understanding (15 marks) and Profile 2: Expression (90 marks). The mean score in January 2026 was 47.24, compared with 42.58 in January 2025 and 46.72 in January 2024.

### Section A

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#### Question 1

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The stimulus was an article on farming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Candidates were required to identify five main points and then write a single-paragraph summary of no more than 120 words, incorporating a minimum of seven relevant points. This task assessed their ability to identify key ideas and opinions, organize and synthesize information logically, and express ideas in their own words, using accurate grammar, sentence structure, spelling and punctuation.

#### Content

Candidates generally showed an understanding of the passage, as most of them were able to identify at least three relevant ideas. However, many candidates experienced difficulty distinguishing between central ideas and supporting illustrations, which significantly affected their scores. Only a small percentage of candidates earned four or five marks for the Content profile.

Since the same points listed in the content section are often reproduced in the summary, weak point selection also negatively impacted scores for organization. Additionally, many candidates copied sections directly from the passage rather than restating ideas in their own words. Despite these challenges, most candidates earned at least three out of five marks for content.

#### Organization

Most candidates structured their summaries logically, presenting selected ideas in a generally coherent sequence. However, some responses were in excess of the 120-word limit. This adversely affected the performance of some candidates. In some cases, candidates delayed the introduction of their main ideas, resulting in poor management of the available word count. Greater emphasis on planning prior to writing would have improved clarity, conciseness and overall organization.

## Language

Generally, candidates were awarded between two and four marks for the criterion of Language. Many candidates relied heavily on wording taken directly from the passage rather than paraphrasing ideas. Some candidates who attempted to rephrase content altered the meanings of key points. Only a few candidates successfully expressed ideas clearly, accurately and independently, and consequently earned high language scores.

## Overall Presentation

Several scripts contained excessive erasures and untidy corrections, which detracted from the overall presentation of the responses.

## Recommendations

To address the deficiencies observed in candidates' summary-writing skills, teachers are encouraged to implement targeted instructional strategies. The following recommendations are proposed.

- Content
  - Emphasize the identification of central ideas rather than examples or supporting details.
  - Strengthen students' analytical skills so that they can determine what is essential to the writer's argument.
  - Desist from instructing students that the first sentence in each paragraph is automatically a main point, as this is not always the case.
- Organization
  - Encourage pre-writing planning to ensure coverage of required points within the word limit.
  - Teach students to begin their summaries with clearly stated key ideas.
  - Promote careful editing to manage word count and improve coherence.
- Language
  - Provide regular practice in restating information using different wording.
  - Expand students' vocabulary to support accurate paraphrasing.
  - Incorporate frequent summary-writing exercises to build fluency.
  - Emphasize clarity and precision in expression.

Candidates are encouraged to improve their ability to paraphrase effectively while remaining within the prescribed word limit. Greater attention to neatness and overall presentation will further enhance the quality of responses. Targeted and consistent instruction in summary-writing skills is strongly recommended to address these recurring areas of weakness.

## Section B

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### Question 2

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Question 2 assessed candidates' ability to write a formal letter in an appropriate format, to select and include relevant and complete information based on a given situation and to organize ideas effectively in continuous prose. Candidates were also evaluated on their use of appropriate grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.

#### Content

Most candidates were able to identify the key points required for the business letter. These included the following.

- Ronnie Boodram requires urgent medical attention in Martinique.
- His family lacks the financial resources necessary to fund the required treatment.
- The letter was to be addressed to the Commissioner of Police, seeking permission to host a fund-raising event on 19 June 2026, between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.
- The proposed venue was the local community centre.
- Proceeds from the event were intended to cover travel expenses to Martinique and medical costs.

While most candidates successfully included the required content, some of them provided inaccurate information, particularly regarding the recipient of the letter, the date of the event or the addressee. For example, one candidate incorrectly addressed the letter to Ronnie Boodram's mother.

#### Format

Many candidates knew the required format of a business letter so they correctly included the following.

- Address of the sender
- Recipient's address
- Date
- Salutation
- Complimentary close

However, some candidates erroneously used the memorandum format, while others omitted key elements such as the date or the sender's address. Both block and semi-block formats were accepted.

#### Organization

Organization was worth a total of ten marks. Assessment of this criterion was focused on the logical sequencing of ideas, coherence, conciseness and awareness of audience. Many candidates performed well in this category; however, coherence remained a recurring challenge. Some candidates merely reproduced ideas from the stimulus

without establishing clear links between them. In addition, a few candidates failed to indicate that the writer was addressing an audience. Tone was also a critical consideration, as a business letter is expected to be written in a polite and cordial manner.

## Language

Under the Language category, candidates were assessed on sentence structure and mechanical accuracy. This category was worth ten marks. Some candidates performed poorly because their responses were written as a single paragraph, which in some cases consisted of only two or three lines. Additionally, errors in punctuation and spelling, along with run-on sentences, negatively affected the overall quality of writing.

## Recommendations

- Teachers must ensure that students are taught the format for the following types of writing, as there is a possibility that students' knowledge of such could be examined.
  - Letters of enquiry, apology and complaint
  - Memoranda
  - Articles
  - Email
  - Notices
- Teachers are encouraged to use the process approach to the teaching of writing. This strategy can significantly improve the overall quality of students' written responses through planning, drafting, revising and editing.

## Section C

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### Question 3

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The stimulus for this question was the usual pictorial stimulus. In this instance, candidates were required to write a story based on a picture depicting a boat, several people on the seashore and a small child climbing a heap of stones. Compared with previous years, this question proved to be a popular choice among candidates.

A small percentage of the responses were within the very good to excellent range, while most others were determined to be in the upper range of fair and the lower range of good according to the marking key. Many candidates experienced difficulty with the craft of story writing. Although most candidates demonstrated an understanding that the task required a narrative based on the picture and the basic elements of story writing were present, many candidates relied heavily on telling or reporting rather than showing through descriptive and narrative techniques.

Several narratives featured simplistic and uninspiring plots, underdeveloped characters and settings that were poorly described or entirely absent. In many scripts, there was a noticeable lack of storytelling language, including vivid imagery, dialogue and sensory detail. In some cases, the narrative focused solely on the presence of a boat, with little or no attention given to character development, theme, setting or plot progression.

A few candidates were not awarded any marks. In these instances, candidates failed to utilize narrative or reflective writing and instead produced responses that were wholly expository in nature. Persistent weaknesses in grammar and mechanics were also evident. The most common errors included inconsistent use of the past tense, subject–verb agreement errors, and frequent spelling and punctuation mistakes.

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## Question 4

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This question required candidates to write a story based on the prompt “Jenna was a fun-loving and ambitious lady who motivated many of us.” Candidates produced varied responses to this task. The observations outlined for Question 3 regarding candidates’ ineffective story-writing skills are also applicable to this question.

Many candidates appeared to believe that the given sentence had to be used verbatim in their responses. While, in general, the statement was appropriately woven into the narratives, some candidates relied too heavily on it. This limited their creativity and the narrative development of the story. Errors in language usage mirrored those identified in Question 3, including weaknesses in grammar and mechanics.

Many candidates produced expository pieces, focusing on Jenna as a role model in society, rather than writing a narrative. In other cases, responses were based on an image or general commentary rather than a story. Of concern was the number of candidates who failed to submit a narrative response altogether.

Additionally, this question posed some challenges for candidates as many of them struggled to creatively produce a scenario surrounding the given prompt. Often, some aspect of Jenna’s personality was omitted. Those who did a craft tale in response to the prompt, tended to produce stories that were predictable and pedestrian in nature. It is noteworthy, however, that a few candidates were able to produce engaging and well-crafted narratives, successfully integrating the prompt while demonstrating control of plot, character development and language.

## Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below apply specifically to Questions 3 and 4, which required candidates to write narrative responses based on given stimuli.

- Content and Relevance of Story
  - Students require exposure to a variety of short stories to broaden their imagination and creativity.
  - Teachers should focus students’ attention on specific elements during story writing sessions, for example, how to create a plot that presents significant challenges for the central character, which must be satisfactorily resolved.
  - Students should be exposed to different kinds of stories such as those that revolve around plot as the central element driving them, stories whose development hinges on character or setting and reflection. Special effort must be made to teach writing the latter type of story.
  - Students should be provided with a variety of stimuli, beyond those found in past examination papers, to help them generate suspense, surprise endings or ironic twists in their stories.
  - Teachers should provide students with examples of stories in which characterization is a dominant element.
  - Students should be taught how to develop story characters through description and dialogue.

- Students must be taught how to inject the action of the story early in the writing rather than provide lengthy background details that add little to the development of the plot.
- Teachers must encourage students to write stories that are terse, which do not extend beyond two and a half pages. They should note that stories must be written based on the picture or the sentence(s). There is no requirement for the sentence(s) in Question 4 to be included verbatim in the story, nor for all details of the picture to be used. However, story' link to the stimulus must be clear and relevant.
- Language Usage
  - Teachers should continue to use differentiated instructional strategies to provide students with the with the practice they require to appropriately use the grammar and mechanics of standard English.
  - Exemplars must be provided to help students understand how effective writers use word choice and language techniques to create characters, settings and atmosphere in their stories.

## Section D

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### Question 5

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Candidates were required to write an argumentative essay based on the prompt “Children under 13 years of age should be allowed to have social media accounts.” What are your views?

#### **Content**

The topic, which was both relevant and relatable, was addressed by most candidates in a general manner. Many candidates referenced concepts such as the internet, smartphone usage, the media and social media accounts. Some candidates were able to present well-developed arguments, clearly supporting their views on social media use and the age appropriateness of owning or not owning a social media account before the age of 13.

However, some candidates equated having a social media account with general access to the internet, which weakened the quality of their arguments. Others demonstrated confusion between social media platforms and internet use. Many candidates disagreed with the prompt and relied on similar arguments to support their positions. Overall, the manner in which the topic was handled suggested that candidates were either personally experienced with or familiar with the issues and therefore had much to contribute.

#### **Organization**

The organization of arguments continues to be an area of concern. A considerable number of responses lacked effective paragraphing, a clear introduction and/or a conclusion. While these challenges persist, examiners noted an improvement in candidates’ understanding of the structure of an argumentative essay, the use of transitional devices and persuasive techniques. Candidates also need to be made aware of the concept of paragraphs and how paragraphs are necessary to the organization of an argument.

#### **Language**

An analysis of candidates’ writing indicates that many candidates require a clearer understanding of the concept of a sentence, appropriate tense usage, subject–verb agreement and the accurate use of punctuation. Grammar remains a significant challenge for many candidates and negatively affects clarity of expression. Spelling is also an area in which students experienced difficulty.

### Recommendations

- Teachers should employ the process approach to writing, as this will support idea generation, drafting, revising and editing.

- Models of good writing should be utilized in classroom instruction so that students can try to emulate such.
- Spelling should be taught systematically using the test–study–test method.
- Digital media resources, including platforms such as YouTube, should be incorporated into instruction so students can listen to and analyse sample debates and persuasive speeches.

## Question 1

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In Part (a), most candidates displayed an understanding that the extracts focused on the differences in the treatment of male and female sports. However, many candidates were unable to clearly outline the main idea, often providing only a phrase or an incomplete sentence. In responses to the cartoon, several candidates described what they saw in the image rather than identifying and articulating the underlying main idea.

Part (b) continued to be one of the most challenging parts for candidates. Many of them were unable to explain why the chosen medium was appropriate for conveying the message. Instead, most candidates either reiterated the main idea or summarized the extract without addressing the suitability of the medium. Where candidates clearly understood the requirements of this part, responses were comprehensive and explicit.

In Part (c), many candidates appeared unfamiliar with the term *language technique* and were therefore unable to provide appropriate examples from the media. Even when a correct technique was identified, some candidates struggled to explain its effectiveness. The concepts of appropriateness and effectiveness, as well as the identification and explanation of language techniques, require greater emphasis during classroom instruction.

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## Question 2

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In Part (a), many candidates were unable to list and explain three factors that presenters should consider when making an oral presentation. Instead, many of them focused primarily on issues related to the content of the presentation and in some cases, the composition of the audience.

In Part (b), most candidates were able to list three relevant points for an oral presentation on gender discrimination in sports. However, some responses included points that were too general or not directly related to the topic.

In Part (c), there was evidence of continued misunderstanding of the requirements of the question. Many candidates appeared confused by the wording and incorrectly listed groups of people (for example, parents, children or officials) as features of a group, rather than identifying and explaining characteristics of a specific group. Consequently, no relevant characteristics were provided in these responses. For the second part, which required candidates to identify techniques to engage an audience, some candidates instead repeated factors associated with Part (a), such as eye contact and voice projection.

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### Question 3

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This question was handled well by the candidates who attempted it. Once again, poetry emerged as the preferred genre, and in several instances, candidates produced competent and engaging poems. Many of the responses, prose, poetry, and drama, reflected candidates' awareness of the issues related to gender discrimination in sports. Notably, some candidates who performed poorly on Questions 1 and 2 were able to manipulate the elements of writing and composition effectively enough to produce credible responses. However, the organization of ideas in the prose responses was occasionally weak, as some candidates appeared to have a limited understanding of the elements of paragraphing.