

Your name:

# The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2021

## Round 1



### Problem 1. Ogham (5 marks)

Ogham is an alphabet that was the earliest form of writing in Ireland; it was used between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries when it was replaced by the Roman alphabet (i.e. our alphabet). Ogham was used initially to write inscriptions on standing stones set up to commemorate people; the language of these inscriptions was an early form of Irish. The Ogham alphabet is made up of a series of strokes across a sharp edge on the stone, which is represented below by a narrow horizontal line. It does not have capital letters, accents on its letters or spaces between words.



What you see on the next page are Irish words given in the Roman alphabet and in Ogham. Unfortunately the two columns show the words in different orders.

**Q1.1.** Put letters (a-g) into the spaces below the number of the corresponding spelling in the Roman alphabet (1-7).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Q1.2.** Below is the Ogham spelling of the Irish for ‘I love you’:

III· — / ···· ···· — / / / / · — II ···· · III

Write down the Irish for ‘I love you’ in its Roman alphabet transliteration (you can ignore accents for this task).

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	Roman alphabet		Ogham
1	grá (love)	a	
2	teaghlaigh (family)	b	
3	Éire (Ireland)	c	
4	neart (strength)	d	
5	saol (life)	e	
6	síocháin (peace)	f	
7	grá mo chroí (love of my heart)	g	

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Solution and marking.

Scoring: (max 12)

- Q1.1: 1 for each correct letter. (max = 7)
- Q1.2: 1 for each correct word. (max =5)
  - No half marks.
  - Ignore word spaces and their absence.

**Q1.1.**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d	a	f	c	g	e	b

**Q1.2.**

ta me i ngra leat

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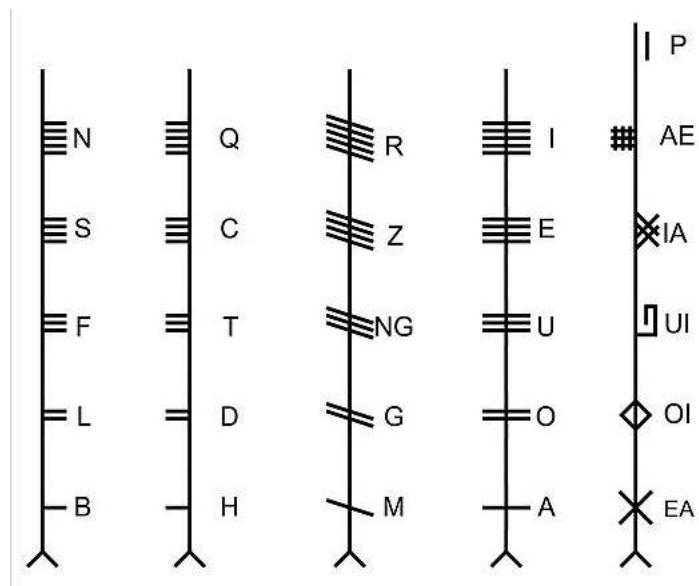
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### Commentary

Ogham is an alphabet. Each combination of dots or lines stands for a letter.

Here is the key to the alphabet as shown in Wikipedia, with the left-hand end of the line at the foot:



Since Ogham does not incorporate accents, in task 2 candidates cannot be expected to know (apart from *grá*) where accents occur. The actual Irish for 'I love you' is: Tá mé i ngrá leat.

#### Further reading:

<https://ogham.co/>

Omniglot's entry on Ogham:

[https://omniglot.com/writing/ogham.htm#:~:text=Ogham%20\(%E1%9A%9B%E1%9A%91%E1%9A%8C%E1%9A%90%E1%9A%8B%E1%9A%9C\),Old%20Welsh%2C%20Pictish%20and%20Latin.](https://omniglot.com/writing/ogham.htm#:~:text=Ogham%20(%E1%9A%9B%E1%9A%91%E1%9A%8C%E1%9A%90%E1%9A%8B%E1%9A%9C),Old%20Welsh%2C%20Pictish%20and%20Latin.)