Examiner Report

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In English Language (9EN04)
Unit 4: Crafting Language

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With this being the first year of 9EN04, it is always exciting when the full two years of a qualification are completed. Overall, candidates appear to have performed extremely well with a number achieving marks which clearly met an A grade level. It was very clear from feedback received from the moderators that the majority of centres had worked extremely hard to prepare their students for all elements of this unit and I would like to thank all centres for their hard work throughout the year. The advice and information given in the body of this report is designed not only to highlight areas of good practice but also to draw attention to those areas in which some centres had not always complied with the specific requirements of the specification. The intention is also to identify the ways in which some topics and approaches did not allow all the criteria to be fully met, thus providing insufficient opportunity for students to demonstrate their abilities to the full. Ultimately, the aim of the report is to help centres to build on their understanding of the requirements of this unit and aid in its delivery over future series.

Task setting and assessment

Moderators reported that there were many original and successful pieces submitted which clearly demonstrated that centres had taken note of the guidance given in the earlier training programmes. The most successful centres were those which allowed or encouraged students to research their own genres and style models, while the least successful were those which used a 'one size fits all' approach, where a common task had been undertaken by all the students whether it suited their talents or not.

It was also clear that those centres that had taken note of the key components of the top band mark descriptors had used these to guide their students' selection of tasks and were most likely to have their marks agreed by the moderator. These key elements included: writing that was assured, accurate and highly effective, meeting the requirements of the audience and employing language that was sophisticated and highly-engaging.

The range of genres and text types submitted by centres was at times very impressive, with candidates choosing tasks such as dramatic monologues, opinion-based journalism, imaginative fiction, travel writing of various hues, speeches on various topics from the everyday to the world-changing and reviews ranging from blockbuster films to student talent shows. What distinguished the really successful pieces was the degree to which the students showed themselves to be fully conversant with the genres they were emulating, the purpose(s) for which they were writing and the precise audiences that were being addressed. Centres can guide their students towards the higher bands by emphasising the importance of choosing tasks which produce convincing examples of texts in realistic genres and which have a viable audience and purpose.

One moderator commented on opinion pieces which were just personal essays about issues which held an interest for the student, or, reviews with no real awareness of the structures and conventions of the particular publications in which they might be found. It is important for students to be encouraged to develop an awareness of the specific features of the genres within which they work and early research and preparation is paramount in understanding the construction of different genres. Another area of concern and one that needs to be avoided in future series was the creation of fictitious interviews with real music bands/personalities.

The believability of work produced clearly has a close relation to the selection of appropriate style models. In many centres, there was plenty of evidence that candidates took time and effort through independent research in selecting style models, which were chosen from reputable writers and/or publications which showed aspects of language and style which could be emulated. These students used their style models not only to influence their own pieces but also to inform their commentaries. This approach

invariably led to more successful outcomes. There were, however, some other approaches which were less likely to bring success. There were some cases where centres appeared to be advising candidates to mimic the style model chosen, producing almost identical representations of the layout and language with key words and phrases replaced to reflect the topic choice of the candidate, this approach is unlikely to produce results which match the higher-level mark descriptors. The candidates in question had focused too heavily on the graphalogical features of the articles/pieces at the expense of the language. The advice to centres is that style models should be selected from reputable sources both in terms of writers and publications, and contain stylistic features and language which can be emulated and adapted for the candidate's own work.

Commentaries
Moderators found that a large number of students were able to use their commentaries to show their understanding of the writing process, although it was also clear that some were not demonstrating a full appreciation of the requirements of this component.

In preparation for 2018 the following "dos and don'ts" should help centres to guide their candidates:

DO
➢ keep within the word count
➢ give an overview of both coursework pieces and establish the specific contextual features surrounding both texts, including purpose and audience
➢ provide an outline to the relationship between producer and receiver of each text and what effect that this has on the language chosen
➢ discuss specific genre features and link these to purpose and audience
➢ exemplify points made about the above from the style models, as well as your own writing
➢ include appropriate linguistic terminology and refer to relevant ideas from language study (theories, concepts) if appropriate.

DON'T
➢ write a line by line account of the text
➢ make claims about the writing which cannot be supported by evidence
➢ identify language/linguistic features without commenting on their relevance to the overall nature of the text.

Annotation of Folders and Internal Standardisation
It is important for all members of staff involved with the delivery and assessment of this Unit to meet and standardise their marking and to annotate the folders before their submission to the moderator. Both these aspects are requirements of the Specification, and are demanded by the Ofqual Code of Practice for GCE as well as by Pearson.

There were some reports from moderators that in some centres where adjustments of marks were recommended, there was little evidence of internal standardisation having taken place. It is always good practice for centres to have teachers marking trial pieces of work and identifying differences in marking standards. Following this series, online exemplar material will be available to centres and should act as a reference within teacher standardising meetings. Pearson will also be offering face-to-face meetings later in the year to allow teachers from different centres the opportunity to spend time discussing approaches and marking strategies and sharing best practice.

Annotation of folders - internal assessors are required to show clearly how marks have been awarded in relation to the marking criteria defined in the specification. These annotations will help the moderator to see as precisely as possible where the teacher considers that the candidates have met the criteria for the mark awarded.

Work should be annotated as follows:

➢ evidence identified throughout the work by annotation in the margin and links to the relevant AOs

➢ summative comments on the work, referencing precise sections in the work.

Moderators reported that some centres had devised their own assessment sheets which fulfil the above requirements and also, in many cases, provide evidence of internal standardising. This is very helpful to moderators as it added additional information concerning the genre/audience, word count and purpose of the coursework produced.

Administration
It was felt by the moderation team that the vast majority of folders arrived punctually, in good order and containing all the necessary components.

Future series.

➢ The deadline for submission of work and for its arrival with the moderator is 15th May.
➢ If the entry is 20 or fewer then all folders should be sent.
➢ For larger centres, all the folders requested must be sent together with the highest and lowest candidate (if they do not form part of the requested sample)
➢ Candidate Record Forms should be signed by both the student and the supervising teacher.
➢ A copy of the marks submitted via the Pearson online system must be sent with the coursework.
➢ Each folder should contain two pieces of the student's own writing, as well as their associated commentary.
➢ The coursework folders must be firmly fixed together, preferably using a treasury tag in the top left-hand corner.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has made this moderation series so successful; the moderation team, the centres and particularly the teachers who work so hard to provide the support and guidance for their candidates, and obviously the candidates who have produced some original and engaging work.

Thank you and good luck for next year.