



Examiners' Report Principal Monitor Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In English Language
Non-Examination Assessment:
Crafting Language (9EN0/04)

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General Comments

Thank you to all centres for their submissions for the 2024 series of 9EN0 04 NEA/coursework. The quality of work for the majority of submissions was of an excellent standard and demonstrates real passion, commitment and hard work by all parties involved. This report will highlight areas of best practice and suggestions for centres and candidates to enable future cohorts to fulfil their potential.

Task setting and assessment – Original Writing

Most centres allowed candidates some freedom to explore different genres of writing and tailor this to their own interests, which is very positive to see. Where centres did seem to adopt a common approach to genres, they chose genres such as 'feature journalism' or 'narrative fiction' that gave scope for students to tailor their writing to their own interests and skills in terms of content, function, audience and style. It is pleasing to see that more centres are getting candidates to explicitly state intended publication or performance contexts, supported by specific categories of audience or market segment. It is still worth reiterating that broad age categories are often unhelpful and inaccurate in writing, for example, stating that a children's book is designed for those aged 11-18 years. Most candidates produced two clearly differentiated pieces, but some had an identical voice in both pieces – it is not enough to state they are from different publications if the tone and language are virtually identical.

There are still some cases of centres allowing students to produce writing which does not have any plausible 'real-world' publication context – these tasks often held students back, especially when candidates were clearly able writers. There were still a handful of cases, for example, of writing in the spoken mode that appeared like transcripts of spontaneous speech, often skilfully replicating such interaction, but this element of the NEA is 'original writing' and spontaneous interviews and interactions between podcast presenters, for example, would not be scripted to include features such as micropauses and fillers. Tasks taking this 'scripting the unscriptable approach', together with the practice of candidates writing as if they are a different persona, or producing 'artificial' tasks as if they are real (such as obituaries of celebrities who are still alive) are far less common than they used to be, but some candidates appeared not to have been given advice about such matters that has been offered in examiners' reports over the years the specification has been running.

Moderators noted that where students were writing from experience or interest, they often performed best. Common themes this year included issues around social media use and misuse, teenage mental health, travel writing and teenage attitudes to the current political climate, both in the UK and overseas. There were some excellent pieces of writing in which utilised candidates explored their personal identity which often allowed them write very convincingly. This being said, there were some pieces whereby students had tried to emulate the language of a social group they are not part of. This can be extremely problematic and centres should advise candidates against doing this. Similarly,

students writing about areas they clearly have no experience in are often unsuccessful. For example, moderators saw candidates trying to write about Victorian societal conventions and the steps taken to dispose of a body after murdering someone.

Moderators noted some pleasing work which went beyond some of the more common forms of writing. One moderator noted that they saw a rare example of a candidate submitting a pair of poetry collections. Students should be encouraged to find genres they connect with and will enjoy writing about and should not feel boxed in by repeating tasks similar to other candidates.

Narrative writing remains very popular for candidates. Success in these pieces was achieved by candidates who understood the importance of pacing, setting and the effective and economical use of dialogue, as well as the importance of allowing for reader inference and interpretation of action, theme and character. There was better understanding of children's writing than seen previously, which was positive. Where students thoroughly understood the genre, they were often successful in emulating this, often justified and supported by their commentaries.

Most candidates producing fictional writing seemed to have taken on board advice to avoid the kind of 'overwritten' prose that is stuffed with literary and rhetorical techniques and excessive pre- and post-modification that is often rewarded positively at earlier key stages in school, and it was even rarer to find such writing over-rewarded when it did appear, this year. Some students have begun to show awareness of how publishers segment and market to different audiences, and of how most successful writers tailor their work accordingly. It would surely raise the sense of control and assurance in candidate work if more were to research, and comment on, the specific requirements of their target market; it is still very rare indeed for students to refer not only to style models, but to the clear submission guidance that many publishers and publications offer to prospective writers on the type of content, length, structure and style they expect.

It is worth reiterating that there is no requirement to produce non-typographical graphology in the original writing, which would not be the job of the writer.

Most candidates had some effective style models to enable students to write effectively. There was evidence of a small number of centres prescribing the same style model to many students or providing a range of style models for students to choose from, which often led to unsuccessfully emulating genre or form and inaccurate commentaries. Furthermore, having multiple different style models was also ineffective when not focused on the writing. Research into a topic area is very important when writing, but choosing a style model for its topic, regardless of its genre is not an effective choice.

Most centres continue to use the free resources available from Pearson Online, such previous training material and exemplar scripts to provide their students

with ideas and to help in assessing work for this component. Moderators commented that it is helpful to see where centres standardise their assessments with this exemplar material, especially where centres are new to the qualification or have no second moderator. A few centres would benefit from paying more attention to the moderator reports, the material available online and making use of the Pearson Online Advisory Service for help with genre choices and titles.

Commentaries (AO1, AO2, AO3 and AO4)

Many candidates handled their commentaries well and were able to discuss their own writing effectively. The most effective commentaries focused very clearly on the most salient features of their writing and explored these against the assessment objectives. There was some evidence of centres guiding candidates in what to say, for example, specifying elements of terminology to find and talk about or encouraging students work systematically through each linguistic 'level'. Whilst for some candidates, this may be a useful starting point, this approach can often lead to some ineffective and occasionally inaccurate discussion. A solid understanding of genre should underpin the discussion students have in their commentaries.

The best commentaries had the specification requirements firmly in mind that students should:

- discuss the findings of their initial research into their chosen genre
- make connections between the techniques used in the style models and those they have adopted in their own writing
- evaluate language choices they made, through the drafting process, to achieve effects appropriate to the chosen function and target audience- any concerns/praiseworthy areas

That first bullet point is now more frequently addressed than the third. The specification amplifies this point, saying "They should be prepared to draft and redraft as part of the writing process and to reflect on and critically evaluate this process in their commentary." Very few candidates discussed the drafting process and this is an area centres may wish to focus on in future. One moderator noted that in some cases, it may have been useful to 'test' the writing on potential audiences and then critically evaluate changes made in the drafting process.

Some candidates wrote two separate commentaries for each piece (i.e. 500 words on each piece of original writing) which is not what the specification requires. Furthermore, there were some candidates who wrote a single commentary but which discussed their writing consecutively. A far better approach came from those that integrated discussion of both pieces, showing what they had in common in terms of genre characteristics, and how they had been distinguished by audience and/or function.

Most candidates were able to achieve some effective discussion addressing AO2. Some researched specific studies into their genre and used this to discuss their creative process. However, for some candidates, there was an overreliance on theories taught on their course regardless of their relevance to the discussion. Candidates should avoid using tenuously linked theory in their commentaries and caution should be exercised in the application of spoken language theories to written language. Moderators noted that blanket statements about theory should also be avoided, for example, labelling every use of 'you' as evidence of synthetic personalisation.

Assessment, annotation and administration

Moderators were generally very pleased with the quality of annotation and internal standardisation seen. The very best practice in this area saw detailed comments either on the work itself or on a separate assessment sheet, in which the assessors clarified how and why marks had been allocated by referencing (though not copying verbatim) the relevant aspects of the marking criteria. Sometimes the current standardisation folders were used for comparative purposes, and the deliberations of second (or even third) markers were appended to provide evidence of internal standardisation, which was excellent practice. Where marks have changed during internal standardisation, it is helpful for centres to flag up the original mark and the new mark and the reason for its move.

Although there is more than one way of meeting minimum requirements for annotation, it would benefit both teachers and their students to adopt the best practice that has been repeatedly shared. Very few centres now use the separate marking sheet where they state a page and paragraph number with a comment next to it: this must be more awkward to complete for teachers than writing the comment on the work itself at the appropriate place and is certainly tricky for a moderator having to cross reference the comments with the work by scrolling through the work on screen. It is recommended that this approach is avoided, along with the also rare practice of offering only summative comments with little or no annotation in the body of the work or vice versa.

Though rare, some centres are still awarding a separate mark for each piece of writing and then trying to 'split the difference' to reach a final mark. Previous reports have cautioned against this approach and centres should be reminded that this is not seen as an accurate way of arriving at a final mark. Assessment should reflect a holistic overview of the candidate's work.

This was the third year of electronic submission of NEA via the Learner Work Transfer (LWT) portal. The vast majority of centres had uploaded their students' work, including the highest and lowest marked folders by the deadline (15th May). The entry of marks on the Pearson website was also excellent with very few centres having to be chased for marks or advised about incorrect entries. Some centres uploaded multiple files for each candidate which is unhelpful for the moderation process. Furthermore, centres are reminded that style models should not be submitted with the portfolio – these can often be confusing and

distracting when moderating. It is a good idea to check through the guidance provided for uploading work before uploading to ensure requirements are being met.

The completion and submission of Authorisation Sheets was very good, and any errors were actioned promptly by the centres concerned. This year saw the introduction of new cover sheets related to the rise in popularity of AI. Most centres used the updated cover sheet, but some used the old sheet, likely owing to the nature of the course being two years. Centres are reminded that Summer 2025 entries should be submitted using the new coversheet.

Overall, moderators were very pleased with the work sampled this series and have enjoyed reading candidate work. My thanks go to all those involved with ensuring this was a successful moderation series.