

Moderators' Report/  
Principal Moderator Feedback

January 2012

GCSE English/English Language  
(5EH01)  
English Today

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January 2012

Publications Code UG030362

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## **Requirements of unit**

Candidates have a choice of two themes to answer on set by Edexcel. For 2011-2012 these are 'School Meals' and 'Talent Television'.

For Reading candidates must complete one reading task individually and following their preparation they have up to two hours to complete the task. The response must be a written response of up to 1000 words. For the chosen theme candidates select two texts from the Edexcel texts provided and prepare by making notes and planning their response to the task.

The reading response must show that candidates can:

- make comparisons between two texts
- select appropriate details from two texts to support their ideas
- explore how writers use presentation and language to communicate their ideas and perspectives in two texts.

In Writing candidates must complete one writing task from a choice of two on their chosen theme. Following their preparation they have up to two hours to complete the task and their response must be an individual written response of up to 1000 words. The writing response must show that candidates can:

- make choices in writing that are appropriate to audience and purpose
- spell, punctuate and use grammatical structures that are accurate and appropriate for purpose and effect.

## **Range and suitability of topics/tasks/titles**

Most candidates performed very well and coped with the demands of this module. Candidates had been well prepared by centres for this component and engaged with the given School Meals and Talent Television tasks and texts. Both topics were well received by candidates, being accessible and within their experience and these provided candidates with opinions, experience and knowledge which helped in the writing tasks. Most candidates completed both tasks accordingly; there were few incomplete folders submitted. Centres should be reminded that candidates should only be awarded zero if there is no rewardable material.

While both topics were used the Talent Television topic seemed to have a slight edge in terms of popularity, perhaps because of the many Talent Television programmes broadcast during the Autumn when folders would have been completed. It was pleasing to see that some centres had chosen themes relating to their candidates and had varied theme, although these were a minority. For the reading response most candidates responding to Talent Television used the 'Heat' magazine cover, the article from the Scotsman and the 'Britain's Got Talent' homepage, although all texts were represented in the range of candidate responses from centres. Particularly successful responses were found when comparing the 'Britain's Got Talent'

homepage and the Scotsman article, although this proved a popular choice for the lower ability range too. The shared focus of this particular show allowed for specific and detailed comparisons such as 'The webpage gives Simon an almost God-like status whereas in contrast the Scotsman article refers to him as a 'professional bully'. The 'Heat' magazine cover offered candidates with a wide range of ability the opportunity to compare language, image and presentation, with some perceptive comments such as 'the command 'Look what we've done to Miss Frank!' creates a sense that the magazine has the power over these Talent TV contestants and that readers should pick up the magazine as they can share in this power'. The article from the Scotsman allowed very able candidates to excel, although less able candidates struggled to find points of comparison between this text and the 'Heat' magazine cover. Less able candidates compared 'Heat' and the advert for 'Got to Dance' successfully.

All of the School Meals texts were also seen across the responses, with the webpage from the School Food Trust being most popular and compared mostly with 'Nora's Notes' and the article from the Times. Many candidates also compared the Times article with the blog from the Guardian. Although the secondary school menu had the fewest responses on it, it allowed for interesting language analysis such as 'the language used tries to suggest that school meals are as good and exciting as restaurant menus with words like 'au gratin' and 'sauteed'. Some candidates confused the audience for 'Nora's Notes' and thought it was aimed at school pupils. In some cases candidates had been prepared well through research into the Jamie Oliver School Meals campaign and the show 'Jamie's School Dinners' but this could end to distract them from the actual texts for comparison.

In this series there was much more balance in the choice of writing tasks. In Talent Television the article on the new Talent Television show was most popular, with the podcast also featuring, mostly reviewing the television show 'The X Factor'. The articles and podcasts for Talent Television showed excellent knowledge of the genre of Talent television, with the judges clearly identified (such as Simon Cowell, Pixie Lott, Lady Gaga, Len Goodman), the prizes, the viewing time and day and the hosts (mostly Ant and Dec, Dermot O'Leary, James Corden and Dick and Dom). The ideas were wide ranging, including those reflecting current shows on singing, dancing and talents, and new ideas such as comedy, sporting talent, cheerleading, hairdressing and some extreme ideas such as 'Alligator Survival', 'Army Camp' and 'I'm a Celebrity Afghanistan Edition'. Pets also featured with one article successfully written from the point of view of a pet, asking 'Does your pet have the Bow-wow Factor?' and telling potential contestants 'I never turn my I-Bone off'. Some tongue-in-cheek descriptions of new Talent shows were also very well received, with good sense of audience and purpose. Podcast reviews were generally slightly more successful where there was one voice, as occasionally the 'chat' between the different voices distracted the writer from the purpose. Reviews did show good sense of audience and purpose.

There was a fairly even balance between the School Meals article and the leaflet, although there were some cases where the writing task was not clearly indicated. Candidates drew on their experience and knowledge of

School Meals in their articles, commenting on school meals in their own school, the cashless system, school meals 'revamps', the history of school meals, school meals around the world and hygiene in school meals. In some cases the leaflets lost their focus on the audience and purpose (persuading parents of the benefits of school meals), although some had clear focus from the outset with titles like 'Go Head over Heels for Healthy School Meals' or 'Taking one on the Double Chin'.

Candidates made good use of time in the reading and writing assessment and there were very few folders where candidates had not finished work or where one of the tasks had not been completed.

### **Interpretation of the assessment criteria**

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently, with fewer than 10 inconsistent centres arising. All tasks achieved the required differentiation; the whole mark range was evident in moderator allocations.

At the top end there were some candidates who produced excellent pieces of analysis of two texts, but where the marks given did not reflect the key part of the task, which is comparison. Some candidates had sound comparisons (Band 3) while other bullet points were Band 5, and this needed to be reflected in the marks given. In quite a few cases marks at the top end were inflated because all bullets had been marked at Band 5 with sound comparisons such as 'both texts are about Talent TV, the way they approach their audience is totally different', 'Both texts use images cleverly to get across their ideas' or 'the language used in the blog is different because it makes the reader think.' In some cases the assessment indicated by annotations and summative comments was very accurate, but the numerical marks did not reflect these comments and in some cases were fixed just into a grade boundary from a previous series. In some cases the inflated marking of the highest folder led to the whole sample having to be moderated when marks in Band 2 and 3 were generally accurate.

In Reading the interpretation of the assessment criteria varied according to whether the centre had entered in the previous series or not. Centres entering for the first time need to understand that comparison is a key skill in this section of the unit. While many candidates integrated their comparisons with their analysis of the two texts, some candidates added a perfunctory comparison after their two separate analyses. Some candidates (although these were a minority) made no attempt to make any comparisons at all.

The best candidates, the majority, analysed and compared the two texts, making a number of speculative judgements, always related back to the target audience and purpose of the texts. Some analysis of language use was mature and original. The weakest candidates described the features of the two texts and made no attempt to analyse any of the features that they described. Candidates were still sometimes rewarded too highly for comparison across the band boundaries where 'some' had been credited as 'sound', 'sound' as 'detailed' and 'detailed' as 'specific'. Several centres

rewarded 'no comparison' with a Band 2 mark and some centres did not match comment to summative mark. At the upper end of the mark range there was evidence of discriminating overview and comparison in a sustained manner.

At the lower end of the range candidates tended to spot similarities and differences and then to draw the two sources together in a final paragraph, or assume that starting a statement with 'however' or 'on the other hand' will mean a sound comparison. There does need to be more focus on the difference between 'describe' and 'analyse' – for example, candidates offered detailed descriptions of images and presentational features without explaining what effects had been achieved by them.

Candidates need to be aware of time constraints and manage their time to focus on purpose and audience as well as analysing language and presentational features. In many cases there was little understanding that texts can have more than one audience and more than one purpose. Some candidates struggled because they tried to 'pin down' one audience to the text, resulting in superficial comments such as 'children do not wish to read large blocks of text as they have short attention spans'. The key to successful comparison is the selection of two comparable texts and many centres rightly identified that differentiating texts according to candidate ability was the key to success. Some text selections (for lower ability candidates this was the Scotsman article and the Heat magazine cover) meant that candidates struggled to say things such as 'Heat has pictures while Fear and Loathing doesn't', or 'the cover has more pictures and bright banners'. Some candidates are still including comments on their own preferences – which text they thought was 'best' or 'most successful', which is not necessary.

Centre application of the marking criteria for the writing task was more accurate and it was clear that centres were more comfortable with the demands of the writing task which were familiar to teachers and candidates. There was a tendency in the leaflets to lose focus on the purpose – persuading parents of the benefits of school meals. Some candidates tended to focus on the benefits of healthy eating and how parents can encourage it. Centres are reminded to indicate the task title clearly on the coversheet and to ensure that candidates are answering the task set as this can impact on the marks for purpose and audience.

Assessment criteria for AO3(iii) were applied consistently in most cases. These marks were variable across some centres and there was inconsistency between Bands 2-4 where some were harshly marked while some were too generous, particularly in relation to punctuation and sentences. For high achieving candidates in Bands 4 and 5, there was a tendency to award 6/7 marks where there was clearly not enough evidence of using punctuation devices with precision and sophistication, and for deliberate effect, whilst in some centres there was a clear reluctance to award 7 marks if only minor errors had occurred.

## Advice to centres

INSET needs to identify that comparison is the core part of the reading question and that this should underpin all other parts of the reading response. Comparison is a key skill in this section of the unit.

There were very few difficulties with assessment. There was some evidence of internal moderation but centres may need further guidance on this as occasionally they inflated marks with no rationale. Comments on scripts were very often written to candidates rather than to the moderator and in some cases folders had been graded. One of the benefits of controlled assessment is that there is no need to give the work back to candidates with comments once completed, and grading them may be misleading as grade boundaries are set after every series.

There were some continued difficulties with administration of the moderation process despite reminders and checklists being shared extensively. Some candidate notes taken into the controlled assessment did not follow awarding body guidelines and had full sentences and paragraphs. Some centres did not follow procedures for candidates with special consideration and did not include JCO coversheets or indicate whether the candidates had earned marks themselves for AO3(iii). Some centres that had entered in previous series had not followed the advice on administration or assessment given in their feedback reports and centres are reminded to ensure they use this E9 report feedback which is accessible online.

The moderation process was made difficult by the administrative issues and the following problems were identified:

- Some centres didn't send their moderation samples.
- Some centres sent samples after the deadline.
- Some centres had not completed the tasks on themes set for 2011-2012.
- Some centres did not include front sheets on their candidates' work.
- Many centres did not include their top and bottom candidates.
- Some centres did not include any teacher comments at all.
- Some centres did not include the EDI.
- Some information was missing from coversheets.
- Some candidate notes were teacher structured or contained full sentences (sometimes preceded by a bullet point).

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Order Code UG030362 January 2012

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