

Principal Moderator Feedback

January 2011

GCSE

GCSE English 5EH01
Paper 01 English Today

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January 2011

Publications Code UG026279

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GCSE English 5EH01: English Today

The first external moderation process for Unit 1 went very smoothly. Controlled Assessment folders were generally well presented. There was some adjustment of centre marks but in the main this reflected a lack of focus on the key part of the reading task, comparison.

Comments on the individual units follow. Overall most text choices allowed candidates to fulfil the various assessment objectives. There were very few incomplete folders throughout the range, including the lowest level of attainment. Candidates made good use of time. There were few unfinished pieces.

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

There were few difficulties with assessment. There was some evidence of internal moderation but centres may need further guidance on this as it varied in amount and quality.

Some difficulties with administration of the moderation process and notes taken into the controlled assessment could be reduced with further professional development.

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

- (1) Some centres didn't send their moderation samples.
- (2) Many centres did not include front sheets on their students' work.
- (3) Many centres did not include their top and bottom candidates.
- (4) Some centres did not include any teacher comments at all.
- (5) Some centres did not include the print out of marks from Edexcel online
- (6) Some information was missing from coversheets
- (7) Some marks on Edexcel online did not in some cases match those on coversheets.

A minority of candidate notes were teacher structured or contained full sentences and centres should ensure that notes follow Awarding Body guidelines. In a few cases scribes were used but no scribe coversheets were included - these should always be attached as this is a JCQ requirement. Some centres offered written feedback to candidates with targets and grades. This is not necessary as once the controlled assessment has been administered there should be no feedback to candidates.

Task

Candidates have a choice of two themes to answer on set by Edexcel. For 2010-2011 these are 'Animal Welfare' and 'Extreme Sports'.

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.

General Comments

Most candidates performed very well and coped well with the new demands of this unit. Candidates had been well prepared by centres for this component and engaged well with the given Animal Welfare and Extreme Sports tasks and texts. Both topics were well received by candidates, being accessible and within their experience and these provided candidates with opinions and knowledge which helped in the writing tasks. Most candidates completed both tasks accordingly; there were few incomplete folders submitted.

While both topics were popular, the Animal Welfare topic seemed to have a slight edge in terms of popularity. All centres had chosen one topic or the other and did not vary topic within classes.

Reading

For the reading response, most candidates following the Animal Welfare theme used PETA and Go Veggie with a few referring to the WWF and RSPCA texts. Particularly successful responses were found when comparing the PETA fur advert and the Animal Aid, 'Go Veggie' in Theme 1, although this proved a popular choice for the lower ability range too. For the Extreme Sports topic, the 'Go Big' advert and the Telegraph article also invited some interesting responses from a full range of candidate abilities. There were few, if any, responses to the Snowboarding video and the Red Bull Project video. The responses for Extreme sports mainly used sources 2 and 6, 2 and 4 or 4 and 6. The "Go Big" source lent itself very well to language analysis and candidates engaged well with this in particular. Candidates should be advised that offering a view on which text is most successful is not required in the reading comparison.

In Reading, centres need to understand that comparison is a key skill in this section of the paper. While many students integrated their comparisons with their analysis of the two texts, some students added a perfunctory comparison after their two separate analyses. Some students 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. In most cases such centre marks tended to be on the generous side. Candidates were 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 weak responses with "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.

Writing

In the writing task for both themes, the article was the most popular choice. A wide range of topics indicated very good response from candidates to the writing task. Topics covered in Animal Welfare included fox hunting, bear baiting, dog fighting, fur, animal testing, battery farming, meat eating, circuses and zoos. Topics covered in Extreme Sports included skiing, bungee jumping, skateboarding, surfing, hand gliding, scuba diving, BMX riding, base jumping and a few tongue in cheek responses such as cheese rolling and shin kicking which were very entertaining. There were very few responses to the script for a video for Extreme Sports and a very small number of podcast scripts for Animal Welfare. Although most students today are very familiar with the media of podcasts and video websites, significantly fewer students opted or were directed to write using the form of a script which seemed like a missed opportunity. Tasks were accessible to the full range of candidate ability and marks had been awarded using the full mark scale.

Centre application of the marking criteria for the writing task was mostly accurate and it was clear that centres were more comfortable with the demands of the writing task which were familiar to teachers and students. Writing responses were varied and used the whole range of tasks with fewer candidates choosing to write the script of a podcast - those who did so managed this task well. Centre assessment of writing AO3i and ii was generally sound. Candidates wrote well persuasively about an animal welfare issue; there was evidence of conscious crafting for effect here and strong candidate voice and opinion was expressed. Most candidates chose to write the article option for extreme sports responses and again fared well - some sports were not "extreme" (e.g. football) but valid in the fact that candidates made them appear so with language and example. Some chose the video script option and sustained voice, viewpoint and register successfully.

AO3iii

Assessment criteria for AO3iii were generally applied cautiously, with candidates able to achieve band 2 often being placed in band 1. These marks were variable across some schools 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 students 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.

Grade Boundaries

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Order Code UG026279
January 2011

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