

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

November 2012

GCSE English/English Language
(5EH01) English Today

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General Overview

Centres and candidates have a choice of two themes to answer on set by Edexcel. For 2011-2012 these were 'School Meals' and 'Talent Television' and these were available for the November resit opportunity.

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 six Edexcel texts provided and prepare by making notes and planning their response to the task. Three texts are paper-based and three are digital, i.e. intended to be read on screen.

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.

All candidates in this series were taking this module again and as such coped well with the demands of the assessment. Candidates had been well prepared by centres for this component and engaged well 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. All candidates completed both tasks accordingly.

While both topics were popular the Talent Television topic had a slight edge in terms of popularity, reflecting the January and June series. There was evidence of more differentiation in choice of reading texts and writing tasks which allowed for support and stretch and challenge of candidates. 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. In School Meals texts the webpage from the School Food Trust was 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.

This series reflected the balance of January and June in the choice of writing tasks. In Talent Television the podcast was most popular for this resit, 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 information given on the judges, the prizes, the viewing time and day and the hosts. It was clear the candidates enjoyed writing about their ideas. As in previous series 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, although some did venture into trying to 'script the unscriptable' through live chat and phone-ins.

There was a fairly even balance between the School Meals article and the leaflet. Candidates drew on their experience and knowledge of School Meals in their articles, commenting mainly on school meals in their own school and changes to school meals. In some cases the leaflets lost their focus on the audience and purpose (persuading parents of the benefits of school meals) and moved into explaining why healthy eating was important. The voice was good in most and some demonstrated good sense of audience.

At the top of Band 5 there were some candidates who produced excellent pieces of analysis of two texts, but the marks given did not reflect the key part of the task, which is comparison. In some cases the assessment indicated by annotations and summative comments was very accurate, but the numerical marks did not reflect these comments. For example 'Some good understanding' was accurately assessed but given a mark at the top of a band rather than the bottom.

In the Reading task centres still need to ensure they are aware that comparison is a key skill in this section of the paper and therefore is a key discriminator. While many candidates integrated their comparisons with their analysis of the two texts, some candidates added a perfunctory comparison after their two separate analyses, perhaps a paragraph at the end. Some candidates (although these were a minority) made no attempt to make any comparisons at all and were rewarded marks in Band 4 with perhaps only one or two comparisons. The best candidates 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'. For example one candidate wrote: 'The first similarity is imperatives;

this is used to give the writer authority and is straight forward. It gives the reader an order to do something which may make them actually do it. For example 'try' is in NN and 'review and follow' are in SFT.' There are no further comments.

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 specific and detailed comparison. 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, for example, 'However in Text 2 'Got to Dance' is in white and it links to the audience because the colour white is a dual gender colour'. This is a statement about a text rather than a 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. In general, candidates continued to give limited exploration of writer's perspectives within a comparative framework.

Centre application of the marking criteria for the writing task was more accurate and it was clear that centres are more comfortable with the demands of the writing task which were familiar to teachers and candidates. The main problem with writing was where the writing task had not been completed on the coversheet or on the candidate work. The completion of accurate task titles is essential as it can impact on the candidate's achievement of purpose and audience.

Some task titles were incorrect, e.g. 'Podcast on reality TV' and 'Persuasive leaflet concerning school dinners' are not the tasks set. 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. The marks for writing showed consistency, although they could be a little generous given some pedestrian voice and essay-like organisation. Audience and sense of purpose are key features for this task.

Assessment criteria for AO3iii 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.

Some centres did not accurately assess marks for spelling, giving marks for 'mostly accurate' spelling when there were frequent errors.

Administration

On the whole, the administration of this Unit was undertaken with diligence. However, some issues were identified:

- the correct version of the record sheet should be included with the control assessment folders
- care should be taken when completing all parts of the cover sheet: centre and candidate details; separate marks and correct mark total; the marks on the cover sheet match the marks on the candidate's work; the total mark matches the one put into Edexcel Gateway
- there was some evidence of work being submitted from January and June without revision
- all awarding body guidelines should be followed as indicated in the Specification and Controlled Assessment Teacher Support Book.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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