

Moderators' Report/  
Principal Moderator Feedback

January 2013

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 2012-2013 these are 'Travel' and 'Festivals' and this was the first series using these themes.

### **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.

### **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.

This is the fifth series of Unit 1 and all candidates coped well with the demands of the assessment. Candidates had been well prepared by centres for this component and engaged well with the given 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, slightly more candidates selected the Travel topic. For the reading response, most candidates responding to Travel used the rail information leaflet, the article from 'Coach and Bus Week' and the 'Free Your Feet' poster. In Festivals the poster for 'Sundae on the Common' was compared with the 'LolliBop' webpage in the main.

This series had a fairly even balance in the choice of writing tasks. In Travel the article was slightly more popular than the webpage text. The articles and webpages showed very good knowledge of a variety of Travel topics including air travel, congestion, safety issues such as wearing seat belts, travelling on the London Underground and petrol prices. It was clear the candidates enjoyed writing about their ideas. In the webpages there were some clear and effective ideas with a good range of advantages and disadvantages of using public transport shown – environmental, social, independence, financial, safety and health. There was a fairly even balance between the Festival article and the review. Candidates drew on their research of festivals and fairs and their own experience. The voice was good in most and some demonstrated a good sense of audience.

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently and there were very few severely inconsistent centres. 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. This remains a key factor as in previous series. Some candidates again had sound comparisons (Band 3) while other bullet points were Band 5, and this needed to be reflected in the marks given. 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.

Sound comparisons such as 'Both of the texts use their fonts and logos effectively' and 'both texts use colour to great effect' were seen across the scripts. This series it was noted that there were candidates who had been taught to use discourse markers such as 'On the other hand', 'whereas', and 'however' to start statements which were not comparisons. Centres need to ensure that candidates are genuinely making comparisons between texts rather than starting a statement about a text with a comparative term, e.g. 'On the other hand Sundae on the Common is aimed at adults it is a poster'.

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. One issue with this controlled assessment was that the writing task had not been indicated 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. 'website review' was not the task set. The marks for writing showed consistency, although they could be a little generous given some pedestrian

voice and essay-like organisation, particularly in the articles. Audience and sense of purpose are key features for this task.

Assessment criteria for AO3(iii) were applied consistently in most cases. These marks were variable across some centres and there was some 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.

Centres must emphasise to their candidates 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 paper.

There remained some difficulties with assessment this January albeit with a smaller number of centres than in previous series. Centres do need to check they are using the correct tasks for the series. There was some evidence of internal moderation but centres may need further guidance on this.

In this series it was pleasing to note that there were again very few cases of comments on scripts being addressed to candidates rather than to the moderator. There were also fewer instances of folders and individual pieces being awarded a grade by teachers.

## **Administration**

There were continued difficulties with administration of the moderation process despite reminders and checklists being shared extensively. Centres are reminded of the following points concerning the administration process:

- Include the correct record sheet, together with a signature to indicate that the work is new.
- Candidates' notes taken into the controlled assessment should not include full sentences, paragraphs and teacher structured notes sheets.
- For candidates with special consideration, centres should include the JCQ coversheets or indicate whether the candidates had earned marks themselves for AO3(iii).
- Ensure that candidates do not copy verbatim from webpages.

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