

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

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General Overview

Centres and candidates have a choice of two themes to answer on set by Edexcel. For 2013-2014 these are 'Children's Literature' and 'Online Social Networking' and this was the final series using these themes.

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 coped well with the demands of the assessment. The majority of 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. Candidates engaged well with both accessible themes

and their chosen tasks and texts. Some centres entered both themes and some smaller centres seemed to have successfully let candidates choose their tasks and texts individually.

Both themes were evident although Online Social Networking was slightly more popular. For the Children's Literature theme the most popular chosen texts were the interview with Roald Dahl and the Children's Book Week webpage. All texts had been studied across centres seen. Centres focused mainly on comparing Roald Dahl and Children's Book Week, especially for low ability candidates. For the Social Networking theme the most popular texts were the Internet Safety Film 'Where's Klaus', the Childline webpage and the Childnet Leaflet. The Kansas State article and the Mail Online article were also popular, with only a few candidates choosing to study the Facebook page. For the first time all texts were used in both themes and candidates were encouraged to respond to the video text.

In the writing task for the Children's Literature theme, there was a fairly even split between writing a leaflet to persuade parents and a podcast review. There were some creative responses to the leaflet where issues such as encouraging reading and parents reading with children were covered, and some leaflets on using e-books were innovative and interesting. In Social Networking the article and leaflet were fairly evenly balanced. The articles and leaflets showed very good knowledge of a variety of online safety topics including cyber bullying, reasons to use social networks and in some cases why they are a good idea as well as a bad one. It was clear the candidates enjoyed writing about their ideas.

Most centres interpreted and applied the marking criteria accurately and consistently, and there were significantly fewer centres entering this series. Overall, while there was evidence that centres are encouraging comparison it is still the key assessment issue in this unit, despite it being the most established controlled assessment unit. Very few candidates failed to compare. In many centres it was obviously the focus of the teaching, but still in many cases there were spurious comparisons, or candidates making a wide variety of comments about e.g. all elements of language or

presentation before making a comparison. In some centres the structure of the responses across the sample got in the way of focussed comparisons. The vast majority of candidates were most confident when writing about writers' ideas/perceptions. Again detailed language analysis was generally lacking. Image was less successful overall, though in some centres it was excellent. Teachers' comments often showed a generous interpretation of the AOs especially bands 4 and 5. At the higher bands quality of comparison in bands 4 and 5 very often did not match the quality of the rest of the response. However, sound comparisons such as 'Both of the texts appeal effectively to their audiences' and 'both texts use images 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. Whilst any texts can be compared centres need to differentiate these to suit the ability of their candidates.

Centres did a cross section of the social networking texts but the Childline text still seemed to be the most popular. There were some particularly good comments on the images and presentation of the Childline text for social networking. Surprisingly, most centres who did the 'Where's Klaus' text gave disappointing responses on images and presentation. There was so much to say here, but candidates seemed to gloss over any detailed analysis of the text, in most cases just commenting on the images dialogue, and even then in with little real detail. Candidates who responded to the Children's Literature texts did so with interest and enthusiasm and compared the images and presentation thoughtfully and with insight.

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. Centres need to be aware that task setting is vital and that candidates should be primarily rewarded for the ideas and sense of purpose and audience, the top two bullets in the criteria. 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. 'Writing to persuade about social networking' is 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 leaflets. Audience and sense of purpose are key features for this task.

Candidates who responded to the Social Networking article task generally showed knowledge of how to construct this type of text and were able to organise points accordingly, although there were many repeated ideas. The best responses were where candidates attempted to persuade people to avoid social networking, often by highlighting the negative aspects. These responses often included lots of facts and figures and anecdotes of affected and traumatised adolescents. However, if there is one criticism to be made for this task it was that many candidates did not really make it clear from whose viewpoint they were writing and consequently, 'the voice' was not always as convincing or clear as it could have been. Where the task is to persuade from a specific point of view this needs to be clear.

The leaflet tasks seemed a more popular choice with lower ability candidates there were a couple of issues that this gave rise to, most notably that many responses were similar in both what points were made and how these points were structured and organised, and also with not addressing the audience of parents more directly, which in turn affected the assessment focus, 'sense of purpose and audience'. In terms of similar points made, this would suggest that the task was heavily teacher-led, and thus potentially inhibiting original ideas and candidates' notes were in the form of a paragraph plan.

Assessment criteria for AO3iii were applied consistently in most cases, although as with previous series it did tend to vary across centres as to whether it was generous or harsh, particularly between bands 2-4 where some were harshly marked while some were too generous, especially 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.

Comparison is the core part of the reading question and this should underpin all other parts of the reading response. Comparison is a key skill in this section of the paper. Centres need to be aware that the rule of thumb is that comparison fixes the mark in a band and then the quality of the other bullets determines the mark within the band.

There were minimal difficulties with administration of the moderation process this series, although there were some where:

1. some centres didn't send their moderation samples
2. some centres sent samples after the deadline
3. some centres (a minority) did not include any teacher comments at all.
4. some information was missing from candidate record sheets and these were in many cases the incorrect ones for the series
5. some record sheets identified the writing task incorrectly which impacts on achievement of purpose and audience.

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