

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2016

GCSE English and English Language
(5EH01)

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Report to Centres on 5EH01 Summer 2016

Range and suitability of topics/tasks/titles

General

Moderators generally noted that there was a bias towards Family Holidays. One moderator noted *'Two thirds of candidates chose Holidays as their focus'*. The topics were accessible, and it was noticeable that lower ability candidates in particular coped well with the texts provided on the theme of volunteering.

1) Reading

Family Holidays:

The choice of texts was fairly evenly spread but PGL and Practical Caravan were the most favoured choices. Pairings were largely PGL/CenterParcs or PGL/Practical Caravan. For some lower ability candidates the Butlins video was judiciously paired with either PGL or Practical Caravan with the main focus being on images. The responses which compared the Guardian online article to the CenterParcs blog usually had the perspectives and audience of middle-class parents as the main focus from which analysis of language and presentation/layout emerged. Comparison of PGL and Practical Caravan often focused on layout and repetition of 'togetherness' (on each page) and the idea of 10 great sites from the numbers anchored to the map of Britain which were then repeated, with more information given for each of the 10 sites. Only in a small number of responses did candidates recognise that the CenterParcs online blog, which was primarily to inform, also had a secondary and yet subtle purpose of advertising this holiday company.

Volunteering:

The three most favoured choices from this theme were Independent Age, VInspired and Projects Abroad (Why I took two gap years...). The Volunteering Guide from the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham was also chosen but to a lesser extent, as was Volunteering England. The most popular comparison was between the Independent Age and VInspired where the positive benefits of volunteering were often compared while also recognising the specific nature of the charity, Independent Age and working with older people as opposed to the broader topic of volunteering. The comparison between VInspired and Projects Abroad focused on the presentation of positive viewpoints with some responses showing an effective link between the idea of being free to choose (where and how you would like to volunteer) and the possibility of meeting new people through travel or working with different communities.

2) Writing

Writing task choices were split fairly evenly.

Family Holidays:

Writing task choices leaned favourably towards the leaflet for parents, although there was also a fair amount of candidates who chose the podcast task. The best responses for the leaflet were as a result of the topic being well-researched - usually, though not exclusively, focusing on the health benefits of family holidays. Some compelling and convincing responses were seen when candidates wrote from a particular perspective, be it a fellow parent, health professional or a representative from a charitable organisation.

Candidates who chose the podcast responded to this task with much enthusiasm, expressing their ideas through a lively and engaging voice that was well-matched to the audience. The best responses were seen when candidates focused on just one issue, as the task stipulated. By doing so, this allowed the development of ideas in much more depth than those who chose a number of issues, some of which were quite superficial: in short trying to do too much. Some issues that were characteristic for this task were embarrassing parents, arguing with younger siblings and having no input into the decision as to where to go on holiday with the family. These issues were often presented using a humorous tone that was highly amusing and enjoyable to read. Some candidates structured their responses in the form of an interview and while there were also some engaging scripts seen in this format, sometimes there was slight loss of focus through an over-reliance on irrelevant phatic talk between speakers which impeded the main focus on the issues. Nevertheless, this format did show a good focus on cohesion by using relevant discourse markers and topic sentences to develop the ideas presented.

Volunteering:

There was a fairly even split between the two tasks of writing an article for a school website and writing a newspaper article informing readers about the benefits of volunteering. One candidate writing about becoming a volunteer on a farm used the image of a tree as a metaphorical device for *'helping yourself and your country'*. Phrases towards the beginning like, *'Ascend the tree of Volunteering and snatch a large chunk of the ripe rewards'* were mirrored at the end with *'After making a small trail, your harvest basket will be filled with all the ripe rewards... Volunteering will shine towards your future, as this is a tree which is worth being tempted to pick from'*.

While perhaps a little contrived and not always accurately expressed, this is an example of where the candidate has achieved a sustained focus on the task and through conscious crafting and effectively presented ideas within a secure structure.

Overall, the candidates showed a clear engagement with the themes. When candidates had a clear sense of audience and purpose they were able to create engaging and lively pieces.

Interpretation of Assessment Criteria

General

Some centres are still reluctant to use the full range of marks for AO3(iii), preferring instead to keep to Band 4 even when sentences are convincingly structured. A good proportion of centres tended to 'play safe' and opt for Band 3. In some cases where a mark of 6 was awarded from Band 4, centre assessors seemed to have focused mainly on the quality of spelling. In this band where marking was considered generous, it was usually because punctuation devices were not used with precision and/or supported intended effects. As in previous series the issue of comma splicing remains.

1) Reading

Comparison

Overall there was once again evidence that centres are encouraging comparison. Comparison remains the key assessment issue in this unit, despite it being the most established controlled assessment unit. Very few candidates failed to compare and there seemed to be more centres in this series where the level of comparison was the main focus when awarding marks. 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, for example, all elements of language or presentation before making a comparison. There was still evidence of the structure of responses inhibiting candidates in reaching higher bands where texts were analysed separately first then comparisons drawn in the conclusion; candidates analysing one text then attempting to draw comparisons when writing about the second text or writing about all features of language or presentation in one text before attempting to compare. Where the marks were lenient it was most often because of the degree of comparison being over-valued, but there was also evidence of comments being over-valued.

As was the case last year, there were very few discriminating comparisons seen although many were internally moderated as such.

One moderator wrote:

'For Band 4, I noticed an increase in this year's series of candidates making specific comparisons but the level of detail to secure a sharp focus on what was being compared was lacking. It was as if candidates had been taught to draw specific comparisons on a particular aspect which could be rhetorical questions or use of facts and opinions for example, but then did not seem to know how to develop this comparison into any significant analysis of effects - beyond them being persuasive devices. As such there were many missed opportunities for extending such comparisons into meaningful and detailed analysis.'

Ideas and perspectives

The vast majority of candidates were most confident when writing about writers' ideas/perceptions. A particular weakness appeared to be the writers' ideas and perspectives. Many candidates, particularly those at Band 2 and 3, did not understand the purpose/ideas/perspectives of the *Independent* article. Most candidates were able to identify an audience and purpose for the chosen texts, but less able to explain in convincing detail the impact this had had on the texts. Unusually, in a handful of centres there was close analysis of the writer's ideas/perceptions but a lack of analysis of specific techniques with appropriate textual support. Comments on ideas and perspectives were once again of better quality than the comments on language which were again a weakness across the entry.

An example of a discriminating response towards the top of Band 5 when comparing the PGL brochure and the CenterParcs blog can be seen in the following example:

'The PGL text to begin with mainly deals with family holidays and aims at attracting the readers through their numerous activities that are provided. Since it is a brochure, the target audience is mainly for adults of both genders as they are ones who set up the whole trip and carry the financial expenses. The brochure does not only aim for normal families but adventurous families, which is clearly evident through the headline, 'Family Adventures'. The words, 'if your family...our holiday', states one of the many advantages as a start to force the readers to continue reading and take up one of the offers.

Similar to PGL, Center Parcs blog also deals with family holidays and has the same target audience. However, PGL is rather objective whereas Center Parcs blog is informative as well as subjective. As such, it does not deal with any holiday plans or offer anything but provides the readers with the information needed to execute a successful holiday plan, whether they have to come up with it on their own or pay an organization to do so. It also warns the readers of repercussions of the wrong choices taken when selecting a holiday, such as, when travelling 'there is nothing worse than...let you know all about it'. Not only does this state the problem but it also offers alternatives to solve it, for example, "We always...the airport'. In this respect, the blog extensively differs from the PGL because the latter has no problems introduced but it rather stresses the advantages of their services and offers.'

Here, the candidate presents a perceptive view about how the two texts have similarities and differences when comparing writers' perspectives that are linked closely to the target audience. The tight focus on what is being offered (or not) within the two texts is cleverly supported by a discriminating selection of examples.

Images and presentation

As in previous series there was an over-emphasis on the effects of colour with comments like the green on the CenterParcs images show that it is a natural environment or that the blue in the image of a beach showed that it was cool and calm or even the pink on the Independent Age leaflet showed that it was for

female volunteers because pink 'is a girly colour'. At best comments like these can only be classed as sound from Band 3 but more often were of Band 2 quality which indicated lack of development. A typical response did not really get to grips with comparing images and presentation and was largely commentary rather than analysis. This can be seen in the following example of comparing Independent Age and VIInspired:

'Next, I will talk about the colours of the two pieces. Independent Age is one where the colours are very simple but yet effective. The colours on it are mainly neutral ones including baby pink and blue. These colours are simple and provide comfort along with the text. The people pictured are wearing muted clothing. VIInspired, on the other hand, has four colours and those are red, white, purple and black. The background is purple and is a dark colour. The header is red with 'why volunteer' written in white. The red colour gives the sense of danger and anger. All of the writing is in black and so this is a very standard piece of blog writing with a white background.'

Language

Detailed language analysis was generally lacking. Exploration of language features was very well done by a minority of candidates, though most had clearly been prepared with a number of points that they were able to make, so that there was often a similarity of points made by whole cohorts. One moderator commented:

'It was pleasing to see that in some cases candidates were commenting on a specific phrase from a text and then zooming into a particular word from it to show a more heightened depth of analysis. This was usually seen when candidates wrote about a text being written in the first person, subsequently focusing on the personal pronoun of 'I' or 'my'.'

Another commented:

'Many candidates found it difficult to explore language any deeper than at a sound level. Most commented on the use of direct address. Many referred to the use of adjectives in the texts, though did not often follow this up with detailed analysis. Many identified and commented on examples of hyperbole, but there was infrequent mention of other sorts of imagery. When candidates said that a text was difficult for teenagers, the main reason given for this was that it was long and boring or used difficult words, but there was little analysis beyond these kinds of statements.'

There were some effective and sometimes sophisticated examples used as seen in the following response that compared the Independent Age leaflet to the Barking and Dagenham leaflet:

'Both leaflets share an element of being personal, familiar and chatty. For example, in Independent Age, in the middle of the first page there is text which quotes, '...perhaps dropping by for a coffee and chat, checking that someone is alright...' This is important because 'coffee' is something that is done leisurely; it is a laid-back luxury which people most usually do in their free time. This follows on with 'chat' which implies that again, it is laid back and the situation does not

require effort; also indicating the same with 'checking' because instead of saying 'look after' the writer uses this word to imply that there is hardly any hassle and it is a one-off thing to do. The writer has also used triplets which is strong because the three phrases begin with 'c' and 'chat', 'coffee' and 'chatting' are words done on a daily basis and are friendship like words... suggesting that there is no straight burden you are responsible for.'

An example of a discriminating response is seen in this response where the candidate compares the language used in the PGL brochure to that within the Holidays Matter text. Although the selection of examples for the PGL text is not wholly discriminating and there is some awkwardness in the syntax, nevertheless this is an example of where there is some perceptive insight into the use of language and how this is linked to the purposes of both texts. This would achieve a mark towards the bottom of Band 5:

'PGL uses emotive language in order to reach the goal of getting people interested in their expensive holiday package. They use phrases such as 'loads of fun' or 'fantastic for the whole family' in order to manipulate the audience into paying for their 'fun-filled' holiday. This use of emotive language differs from the purpose for its use in Holidays Matter where the aim is to psychologically manipulate the readers of the pamphlet into doing good and donating, rather than to make the business/charity a profit. [The quote] 'Social tourists face many difficult and complex issues in their daily lives....' shows that the purpose for using emotive language here contradicts its use in PGL. This is because PGL aim to make profit, and do this by using language that convinces the audience to purchase this holiday package. Whereas Holidays Matter uses emotive language in order to persuade individuals into donating for a person's subjective well-being.'

Annotation and summative comments

There were many cases where 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 the June 2015 series, especially at C and A. For example 'Some sound comparison' was accurately assessed but given a mark at the top of Band 3 rather than the bottom, 'some specific comparison' given a mark at the top of Band 4 rather than the bottom of the band or top of Band 3.

Teachers' comments often showed a generous interpretation of the AOs, especially in Bands 4 and 5. Quality of comparison in Bands 4 and 5 very often did not match the quality of the rest of the response. A persistent and recurrent problem is when internal moderators' comments often accurately pinpoint the quality of comparison, for example 'sound' comparisons are recognised and yet the numerical mark awarded corresponds to Band 4 criteria instead of Band 3. The summative comments mostly were accurate, for example one did identify that there were 'some sound comparisons' which would indicate top Band 2 or bottom Band 3, awarded top Band 3. 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. Although there were many marks that indicated discriminating comparisons, in most cases these were over-valued. Discourse markers such as 'whereas' and 'however' were frequently annotated

as 'specific and detailed comparisons' where only a brief comparison (at best) had been made by the candidate.

A comment from one moderator was:

'There was a real mix seen in this year's series. Many centres rooted their comments in the assessment criteria judiciously but others seemed to use comments from individual criterion without any thought – or indeed, sometimes when the evidence was not there. While not a requirement, many centres did annotate at the point of reference which was very helpful to the external moderation process. One centre used a highlighter to indicate where comparisons were being made, both in terms of the connectives used and the level of detail which followed, demonstrating that this criterion was at the forefront when awarding marks. There were some centres who included copies of the marking criteria and highlighted the bullets achieved within the bands. This is acceptable practice, as long as summative comments appear on each candidate's responses. There were fewer centres this series where no marks or comments appeared on the responses, although this was seen occasionally on some responses within a sample.'

It was clear from the annotations and summative comments from some centres that marks were not being led by the comparison. This has been an issue throughout the life of this specification.

Summary

Overall, a significant number of centres were generous in their application of the assessment criteria for the reading task. There was clear evidence on attempting to compare the two texts, but the same problems have applied as has been the case in previous series:

- comparisons which formed little more than a connecting phrase indicating that the candidate was now discussing a different text
- comparisons being quite generalised and not being focused on specific features, yet marks being awarded in Band 4 or even 5
- a clear issue with the difference between the various bands. This was most notable between Bands 4 and 5, and between Bands 3 and 4
- teacher comments often did not match the evidence in the text. As seen in last year's series, the overuse of 'discriminating' was particularly prevalent this year (and often seemed to be a reward for the length of a candidate's response)
- the words, 'perceptive' and 'insightful' were often used to describe the quality of comparison in conjunction with awarding marks from Band 5.
- some centre assessors chose not to mention the quality of comparison in their summative comments – particularly when awarding marks from Bands 4 and 5 where other criteria had been achieved but where comparison was not of the same quality.
- candidates had been clearly instructed to comment on one text in detail and then the other, hindering the opportunity for close and discriminating comparison
- a small minority of centres had clearly advised quite able candidates to leave comparison to the end of the response, resulting in discriminating comments

on language, presentation and ideas being penalised by brief and partial comparisons

- the mark for reading was too often heavily influenced by the candidates' writing ability: eloquent, fluent writers were given awards in Band 5 despite the response not really analysing the text in detail, whereas a smaller number of candidates were given marks in Band 2 despite clear and effective comparisons
- when writing a leaflet in the Family Holidays theme, some candidates relied heavily on bullet points and while these are relevant for this form and task, using these interspersed with only short sentences instead of paragraphs, hindered candidates' ability to demonstrate that ideas could be sufficiently developed and structured showing cohesion within and between paragraphs.

Writing

Generally the marks for writing were accurate. There were many enjoyable and amusing tasks in the Writing and candidates were obviously engaged with and knowledgeable about their chosen topics. Candidates wrote particularly effectively about Family Holiday tasks, and there were many personal experiences coming through these pieces of writing. Candidates had been given a real opportunity to write from their own experiences and there many units of work where candidates were achieving Band 5. Many writing tasks were a pleasure to read. Unfortunately, there were still some centres where candidates focused on decorating and designing leaflets, rather than writing the text itself. In one centre, candidates had spent some considerable time sticking in pictures which is not part of the assessment.

Centre application of the marking criteria for the writing task was accurate overall 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. In a minority of cases the writing task had not been completed on the candidate record sheet 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. Audience and sense of purpose are key features for this task, as one moderator noted:

'The writing for Family Holidays, especially the script for the podcast, provided an opportunity for students to really 'vent' and explore their personal frustrations with family holidays. This was done with varying success. The lower band candidates simply retold a holiday disaster or kept repeating simple ideas such as irritating siblings or embarrassing parents. The leaflet for parents provided some excellent examples of persuasive writing and emotive language. Some pieces sounded really heartfelt and passionate about the benefits of all going on holiday as a family instead of working all the time or being stuck to iPhone or tablets. There was more variety in the ideas provided in the leaflet to parents than the podcast.'

The writing for Volunteering was varied in its success. The article for the school website, although well developed in its ideas, often wasn't clearly addressed to a young audience. The most common issue raised was how it would help your chances in future employment, which is relative to the young audience but rarely

discussed any possible doubts or drawbacks volunteering might have for young people (time away from studies for example) and therefore the pieces sounded quite generic. The newspaper article proved to be more successful in terms of a variety of ideas but sometimes candidates veered off into talking about the drawbacks instead of all the benefits, or focused more on the importance of the charity than the volunteering. Often the benefits to the volunteer were more clearly expressed than the benefits to society or those in need.

An example of a particularly compelling response for Family Holidays was when the candidate wrote from the dual perspective of a travel writer for the Independent travel section and as a parent. In a section on Family Bonding, the student wrote:

'The average family in the UK doesn't think they spend enough time together. So much so, that 72% of British families talk to each other less than an hour a day, a survey by the Guardian reported. And that is precisely where holidays come in. Holidays are the perfect time for a family to talk and spend time together. Leading psychologist, Susan Knowles, found that families spent 30% more time talking together in the first three months after a holiday. [Therefore] Holidays are imperative for family bonding.'

By using statistics and 'expert voice' as endorsements of the point being made, the candidate ensured that ideas presented were convincing and confidently expressed. Placing the subordinate conjunction at the beginning of a sentence, not only created effective cohesion, but also ensured sophisticated control of expression and meaning by adding weight and emphasis to the issue of family time being important. Writing from the perspectives of various holiday company representatives did not produce the required focus on the task of promoting the benefits of family holidays. Instead, such cases were presented as a holiday advertisement which had the potential to affect bullets 1 and 2 of the assessment criteria. One moderator commented:

'The most successful candidates created humorous podcasts about issues surrounding holidays and I often found myself smiling whilst reading those – it was a shame that more schools hadn't been confident enough to allow their students to do these. Issues ranged from packing, being dragged around cultural and historical sites, car journeys and embarrassing parents and most candidates had a good understanding of the audience and purpose of the task. The leaflets were less effective as the candidates often persuaded families to visit their site, instead of informing or advising on the benefits of family holiday – a lot of schools didn't seem to register this element of the task and still awarded high marks. Weaker students sometimes failed to address their correct audience.'

An effective podcast example that was lively and engaging with a sustained focus on the task was when a candidate wrote from the perspective of a radio presenter giving top tips on how to improve family holidays:

'...I'm M J and I'm talking to you on the Fun Radio Channel 3.... So today, I'm going to talk to you about Family Holidays. Well, actually this podcast is about 'How can adolescents survive family holidays?' I'm sure you know what I'm talking about.....we all know those holidays where you spend your days visiting every stupid museum or palace and looking at every single masterpiece your

parents run into. I completely understand how boring and uninteresting it can be. I had to go through it too, haha! Sometimes you would rather be at school than visiting the ninth museum of the day.... After a day like this, your body is in pain and your feet are so red they look like tomatoes. You know what, I truly believe this extreme kind of holiday should be punished by law! But to be serious I'm going to give you some awesome tips on how your family holidays can become real holidays, so listen carefully....'

AO3(iii)

As in previous series the assessment criteria for AO3iii were applied consistently in most cases, although there did seem to be a marked reluctance on the part of some centres to give an award in the top band unless a response was 'note-perfect'. Where a top band mark was awarded, the distinction between a mark of 6 and 7 was not clear to centres (again, a reluctance to give 7 marks to anything but completely error-free responses). A number of candidates at the lower end of the spectrum were also quite harshly given a mark of 1 where there was clear evidence of some control of spelling, punctuation and sentences.

One moderator reported:

'Marking of AO3iii overall tended to be very accurate, although teachers did tend to be slightly harsh, particularly with able candidates who were being awarded 12 or 13 but only 5 for AO3iii. Some centres failed to give more than a 5 for even the most able candidates.'

Administration

As with previous series the same administration issues were evident, but not to such a significant extent. Centres are reminded to look back at previous E9 reports and Principal Moderator reports to reflect on any areas for improvement. Training for centres still needs to emphasise 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. Centres need to be aware that comparison fixes the mark in a band and then the quality of the other bullets determines the mark within the band. As comparison is a core assessment objective for the new GCSE specifications from all awarding bodies this will be useful.

There remained some difficulties with assessment, where assessment objectives were not met. There was evidence of internal moderation but centres still need further guidance on this as occasionally they inflated marks with no rationale, or did not internally moderate the whole required sample which devalues the process. In this series there were again fewer cases of comments on scripts being written to candidates rather than to the moderator and folders and individual pieces being graded. One moderator commented:

'I had some wonderful centres where staff annotated the responses using the wording from the appropriate bands, but others where they wrote 'lang' 'comment on image' or 'this is great'. A few had no annotations at all. (it's not a requirement, but it does help!). Most centres wrote summative comments many

of which did use the words from the AOs. I'm, still surprised with the comments on reading which do not lead with, or even contain a reference to, comparison.'

There were 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, paragraphs and teacher structured notes sheets. Some centres did not follow procedures for candidates with special consideration and did not include JCQ coversheets or indicate whether the candidates had earned marks themselves for AO3(iii).

Key areas for centres to check are:

1. moderation samples are sent or candidates are withdrawn
2. deadlines are met – a considerable number of centres sent samples after the deadline with no evidence of extension or reasons for lateness
3. there are teacher comments on the work - at the very least a summative comment on each assessment objective
4. the EDI is included and candidate record sheets are completed fully, identifying the writing task correctly and fully
5. candidate notes are not teacher-structured and do not contain full sentences
6. use of IT is within awarding body regulations
7. the full required sample for the centre size has been sent
8. highest and lowest candidate folders are sent if not included in the requested sample.

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>