

# Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCSE English  
(5EH03) Creative English

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Publications Code UG027786

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Overall, most centres were applying standards for the various components of this unit accurately. They are to be congratulated for this given that all aspects of it are new.

## **Speaking and Listening**

Centres generally applied the criteria accurately when marking the performances observed during the moderation visits undertaken. In many centres, good use seemed to have been made of the Edexcel Standardising DVD, both to internally standardise teaching teams and also to indicate to students the standards required for the award of particular grades.

Centres are reminded of the importance of

- robust internal standardising to ensure that all teachers are applying accurate standards
- the teacher with responsibility for GCSE within the department is confident that there is sufficient detail in the notes being kept by all teachers to explain the marks given

Although the contexts are named differently and the assessment criteria are new, the tasks which had previously been used for GCSE Speaking and Listening remained appropriate for use in the new Specification. Characters from *Of Mice and Men* continued to feature in the *Creating and Sustaining Role* activity; candidates presented their ideas, interests and opinions on a range of topics to their classmates to show how they *Communicate and Adapt* their spoken language; groups of anything between two and seven pupils once again explored the established canon of topics from animal cruelty to school uniform to *Interact and Respond*.

Some centres attending Regional Network meetings have requested that a list of effective tasks is published. Centres should note a task which does not appeal to one set of candidates may appeal remarkably well to a different set of candidates or at a different time. Centres should also note contains some key principles which allowed candidates to access the full range of marks for each context, which are outlined below.

In general terms, centres should be familiar with research promoted many years ago by the National Oracy Project (NOP). Drawing on the work of the linguist M.A.K. Halliday, the NOP suggested that there were three aspects to consider when students talk to or with each other:

- Ideational aspects (what is said)
- Interpersonal aspects (how it is said)
- Textual aspects (the form chosen to say it)

Each of these will be important to moderators assessing how effective students have been in a speaking and listening task. They may provide the basis for any field notes teachers keep to back up their judgements; centres should keep a record for the purposes of moderation.

## Textual aspects

Whatever context candidates work in, the words candidates choose to use and the way in which they structure them will be key to ensuring they achieve the highest mark of which they are capable. Just as assessments in writing require a wide and interesting vocabulary and a sophistication in the way in which a piece is structured, the same is true of the *textual* aspects of speaking and listening: in all three contexts the words they use and the way they deploy them will be a key consideration when awarding a mark.

## Ideational aspects

In order to achieve in Band 5 for Communicating and Adapting for example, candidates must be engaging with “complex and demanding subject matter.” In some cases during moderation visits, very able students were constrained by being asked to give a presentation about “my hobby” or “work experience”. Whilst these could involve complex and challenging material, too often they did not; they were a general description of activities. Some excellent Band 5 work was observed where candidates had, for example, given detailed presentations about the impact of global warming, the moral responsibility of the media to present positive representations of ethnic minorities or whether violence is ever justified to promote an idea or cause.

Similarly for Interacting and Responding, in order to achieve marks in Band 5, candidates must show “understanding of complex ideas through interrogating what is said”. It is thus necessary for the task the group is set to contain sufficiently challenging material for individuals to develop the ideational aspect of their performance.

## Interpersonal aspects

Although *interpersonal* skills are important to ensure audience engagement in Communicating and Adapting and Listening and Responding, it is the third context, Creating and Sustaining a role, where there is considerable emphasis on this aspect. Candidates must use a range of skills to “become someone else in an ‘as if’ situation”. These skills will include:

- Voice: accent, pace, pitch, volume, inflection
- Facial expression
- Gesture and posture
- Using language suitable to the role
- Movement
- Idiosyncratic behaviour

It is also important to remember that this context requires students to both create and *sustain* a role. As an indication of someone who created a role but failed to sustain it, centres are reminded of Zac on the Standardising DVD. He is involved in a paired activity which lasts less than a minute and in which, although he is the main contributor, he speaks less than 100 words. Although he does use some of the skills of role play identified above to “become” Candy, because he speaks so little he does not develop *what* is said or show any range in the *textual* dimension. In short, he neither

develops or sustains his performance, which is why he was awarded a mark of 6 at the top of Band 2.

A final consideration for the Creating and Sustaining role assessment is the extent to which the task set genuinely requires candidates to “become someone else.” Some tasks used on moderation visits put the emphasis on task-focused roles which required little consideration of character. If candidates are asked to be a Youth Worker as part of a discussion on developing community facilities, there is the possibility that they present good ideas and use a wide vocabulary – but remain essentially themselves. Of course it would be possible to develop a character who is a youth worker and give them very different characteristics. However it was noticeable that, where candidates were taking a character from literature as their starting point, it was often easier for them to adopt a persona different from themselves.

### **Poetry (Reading) and Creative Writing**

Centres are advised, that when using the *Assessment Criteria for Poetry (Reading)* grid, teachers need to see the criteria statements as relating to the *creation of meaning*. The use of “*literary techniques to create effect*” should be interpreted as concerning the poets’ choice of language in order to convey ideas, attitudes and feelings – i.e. how meaning is made. The second bullet point, *how techniques contribute to the effects created*, concerns the extent to which students are able to explicitly discuss language choices and poetic devices and thus links strongly to the fourth bullet point requiring *clear, relevant textual reference to support response*. It is these interconnected criteria which teachers need to apply in a holistic way when reaching a judgement about how well their students have understood the three poems in the controlled assessment response.

In general, teachers had applied the criteria accurately and few centres had their marks adjusted. There were some candidates who were not sufficiently rewarded for producing strongly perceptive and discriminating work. Centres need to note, that unlike the coursework units on the GCSE legacy specifications where candidates could spend considerable time on drafts of their coursework, they are now required to respond in a time limited period with only minimal notes: in turn the work produced for this specification will be slightly different in nature.

Application of standards by centres was generally accurate across all mark Bands. Where discrepancy occurred, this was most often in marking the AO3(iii) element. There is inevitably a need to apply “best fit” approaches which balance the constituent bullet points of spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. Where candidates are using an ambitious and wide-ranging vocabulary, they may make more spelling errors than candidates who are restricted to a basic lexicon of common words. This should not prevent them from being awarded marks in the upper Bands if the responses are using punctuation in an interesting way and where there is a high degree of crafting and control in terms of sentence structure. Centres were generally more secure in applying the wider terms of the AO3(i) and (ii) criteria.

## Poetry (Reading)

A lively range of responses from across the ability range was produced in response to the Poetry Tasks. *Clashes and Collisions* and *Relationships* were the most popular, but there were responses to poems in all four collections. In almost all cases candidates followed the rubric of the task and responded to three poems. In the very few cases where they did not, candidates had usually met the requirements of the criteria and so were awarded a mark by the centre which recognised positive achievement but made a reduction of a few marks to reflect the infringement.

A pleasing majority of the responses appeared to be individual interpretations based on the candidates' own reading, which is what should be produced for this Controlled Assessment. The best candidates had developed sophisticated personal responses which clearly displayed Band 5 qualities. Although there is no requirement to compare the three poems, there is also no restriction on this approach being adopted. Where comparisons were made, it often helped candidates to display the sophistication and discrimination necessary to achieve at the highest level. In a few cases, responses were over-structured and there was some concern that some candidates had pre-learnt set meanings about poems, for example, where all candidates made the same points about the same three poems, often using the same quotations to back up their ideas. Centres need to be aware that this may mean that candidates marks are capped in the higher mark bands.

## Creative Writing

The specification was structured to allow centres a stimulating starting point for ideas to be developed; this appears to have been positive in its impact on outcomes. The range of responses produced were interesting, varied and engaging.

The most successful work indicated an understanding on the part of the candidates (and by implication their teachers) that this task is about producing the best quality writing, not necessarily a large quantity of it. Although there is a suggested word limit of 1000, the best responses were often shorter. It was evident from marginal notes made by candidates that many centres had used two sessions of one hour to conduct this Controlled Assessment. In some cases candidates appeared to have been advised to spend a large part of the first session planning and rough drafting and the remaining time writing up a final version. These responses thus often showed many drafting changes, making the work look untidy in presentation, but of a higher quality in terms of crafted end product.

## Administration

Many centres were very helpful in ensuring that they included the highest and lowest marked candidates within their samples sent to the moderator - even when these were not requested - which helped the moderation process run more smoothly. Centres who submitted the sample initially requested

and subsequently had to be asked to send top or bottom or both are thanked for doing so punctually.

Most centres did provide the correct paperwork to enable the process of moderation to proceed smoothly.

Although centres are not required to provide annotation is necessary on controlled assessment work, it is extremely useful to moderators where this is provided. It provides an indication of how marks have been arrived at and assists with the process of moderation.

Some centres' made arithmetic errors when totalling up the various components. In the worst case this had very seriously disadvantaged the students, who had marks entered on the system which were well below the actual marks given for the work. In some cases, the whole cohort had been affected. It is important for the centre to carry out an additional check that marks entered match those given to the candidate.

## **Grade Boundaries**

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Order Code UG027786 June 2011

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