

Moderators' Report/  
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2016

GCSE English/English Language  
(5EH3B)

Speaking and Listening  
Endorsement

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## **General Overview**

In this unit candidates must:

- present and listen to information and ideas
- respond appropriately to the questions and the views of others
- participate in a range of real-life contexts in and beyond the classroom, adapting talk to situation and audience and using standard English where appropriate
- select and use a range of techniques and creative approaches to explore ideas, texts and issues in scripted and improvised work.

Candidates must complete tasks in three contexts:

- Communicating and Adapting Language
- Interacting and Responding
- Creating and Sustaining Roles.

In moderation visits eight candidates are seen, working in all three contexts. Teacher examiners are required to offer marks for each of the candidates, as are the moderators. Detailed and productive discussions ensue, focusing on how marks are arrived at. Where there are discrepancies, it is explained to teacher examiners why and how any adjustments should be made. Moderators are also charged with the scrutiny of speaking and listening records within the centre. Teacher examiners are required to outline how internal moderation is carried out.

### **Communicating and Adapting Language**

For this context, the majority of candidates offer a prepared presentation on a topic of their own choosing. However, it is important that the topic provides scope for candidates to access the highest band possible. Teachers frequently and productively intervened in the choice of topic to ensure that there was a sufficient level of complexity inherent in the topic to go beyond the simple relaying of information. Presentations were particularly successful when they promoted and supported a candidate's point of view on a potentially controversial issue. Beyond that, the most successful candidates engaged fully with the audience, using non-verbal features and even, on some notable occasions, involving the audience through simple polls, questions and brief activities. Eye contact with the audience is important and the achievement of some candidates was limited when they relied too heavily on notes. It was extremely difficult to mark students who read out a prepared script and it is clear that, whilst candidates often need access to prompt notes, they should not rely on them too heavily. Similarly, whilst slide presentations and props can be useful tools in assisting candidates to get their points across, they should not dominate nor prevent candidates creating a relationship with their audience.

Many candidates benefited from being asked questions at the end of their presentations and it is clear that many teachers and some students are very

skilful in asking questions which draw candidates out and get them to elaborate their views on a subject. Teachers in some centres clearly taught the art of asking smart questions and this may well become more useful in future.

### **Interacting and Responding**

Groups worked well where they were not too large, giving candidates an ability to make a contribution and ensure that there was appropriate and successful listening as well as speaking. Groups of three or four worked together particularly well. The emphasis is on competence in collaborative speaking and listening work and some very able candidates found it difficult to collaborate and listen appropriately, which is a sophisticated skill. Candidates are expected to challenge, develop and respond to what they hear in thoughtful and considerate ways, seeking clarification through apt questions; analyse and reflect on others' ideas to clarify issues and assumptions to develop the discussion; identify useful outcomes and help structure discussion through purposeful contributions.

Tasks such as formal debates did not facilitate this process as there is a set-piece structure and turn-taking element to them, preventing the kind of flexibility which brings out the best in candidates. As with presentation tasks, the exploration of controversial issues worked well, especially when candidates did not wholly agree with each other.

Moderators saw a number of tasks which required a group of candidates to discuss a text, for example a poem. There was successful interaction when students had been prepared beforehand and had time to form some preliminary responses but there is a risk, when candidates are faced with a previously unseen text, that discussion takes a very long time to get going and too much time is spent on reading rather than speaking and listening.

### **Creating and Sustaining Roles**

This task appeared the most challenging for candidates to achieve the highest marks. For Band 5, candidates must be in a challenging role and show the complexity of a character, and often this was more successful done in a monologue rather than a pair/group task. Many activities were based on the set texts which candidates were studying and there are, of course, a number of very good examples of this kind of activity on the Edexcel standardisation DVDs.

The most successful candidates were those who became totally absorbed in their roles and who explored their emotional and psychological complexity. However, candidates must not simply learn a speech from a famous play, nor should they try to learn or extemporise a scene from such. A degree of creativity is expected and a 'new' scene must be created. Collaboration with the drama department proved to be very productive in a number of centres.

The assessment objective covered for this assessment is AO1:

- i. Speak to communicate clearly and purposefully; structure and sustain talk, adapting it to different situations and audiences; use standard English and a variety of techniques as appropriate.
- ii. Listen and respond to speakers' ideas, perspectives and how they construct and express their meanings.
- iii. Interact with others, shaping meanings through suggestions, comments and questions and drawing ideas together.
- iv. Create and sustain different roles.

In the majority of cases, centres applied the marking criteria accurately and paid close attention to the bullet points in each band to reach a fair mark for their students. Moderators reported very few discrepancies over marks awarded, although the views of teachers can sometimes be coloured by their knowledge and expectations of candidates formed before the moderation visit takes place.

Within centre visits there was evidence that teachers were aware that each successive grade description assumes the continued demonstration of those qualities described in the lower grades, and that candidates were being awarded the appropriate mark within any range on a 'best fit' basis, balancing strengths and weaknesses within each activity.

It is clear that candidates benefit from being very familiar with the assessment criteria and from being given several opportunities to improve their performances after feedback. However, it is recognised that the pressures of the curriculum can limit the time available for formal speaking and listening assessment, even though candidates may well be placed in stronger positions when speaking and listening activities are central to everyday work in the classroom.

Time pressures can also affect the amount of time available for internal standardisation, although most centres have worked through and discussed the Edexcel standardisation DVD in departments. Some centres are able to assess candidates in teacher-pairs and, in others, teacher-examiners are able to visit the classrooms of their colleagues. Clearly, the practice of filming the work of candidates is becoming more widespread and will continue so to do. This may well expand the opportunities for internal standardisation.

With regard to the keeping of records, there is no single favoured method. However, it is important that teachers keep a written log of each assessed activity carried out by each student, clearly dated, with the mark awarded and a brief evaluation justifying the mark. It is also helpful to have a clear description of the task carried out, giving an indication of the complexity involved, rather than a single word or short-phrase title.

## **Administration**

There was evidence of thorough and detailed internal moderation across assessors in centres prior to visits and also during visits, where evidence was often assessed by more than one assessor and the external moderator.

## **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>