



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	English
Level(s)	Standard Grade: Credit, General, Foundation

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Folio

Markers and examiners reported that, in general, candidate performance was in line with previous years. It was clear that candidates at all levels made a genuine and wholehearted effort to produce folio pieces of high quality, and that their teachers supported them conscientiously in this task. Markers commented that relatively few candidates scored Foundation grades in the Folio.

The majority of candidates' submissions showed good understanding of the requirements of the Folio: most pieces were accurately labelled and most folios fulfilled the criteria regarding both range of writing genres and of reading texts and genres. Markers commented on the generally very good quality of presentation. Most folios were word-processed.

As in recent years, the internet was used a source for many W1 pieces. Some markers commented on over-reliance on 'scaffolding', particularly in Reading pieces, which restricted candidates from showing flair in their analysis and from displaying personal response fully. There were relatively few Reading pieces based on texts personally chosen by the candidate. Some markers raised concerns regarding a number of Reading pieces that attempted to compare and contrast two texts but which struggled to provide sufficiently detailed analysis of either.

Many markers commented positively on the wide range of texts used. Popular texts were: (Drama) *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Our Day Out*, *Kes*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*; (Novels) *Of Mice and Men*, *Animal Farm*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies*; (Short Stories) *Uneasy Homecoming*, *The Telegram*, *The Test*, *On the Sidewalk Bleeding*, *The Last Spin* and stories by Ray Bradbury and Roald Dahl; (Poetry) works by MacCaig, Morgan, Duffy, Lochhead, Heaney, Owen and Scannell.

There were relatively few imaginative responses to literature, and markers expressed concerns regarding the ability of candidates to fulfil the necessary reading criteria in these. The number of responses to media texts continues to increase. Popular media texts included the films *Titanic*, *Jaws*, *Stand by Me*, *The Truman Show*, *Braveheart*, *Gregory's Girl* and Luhrman's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Examination Writing

Markers and examiners reported that the paper offered a range of engaging options which enabled candidates at all levels to perform well. Candidates' performance was in line with or slightly better than in previous years. Generally, responses showed enthusiasm, commitment and sincerity.

Candidates, largely, made appropriate choices and markers commented that relevance to the questions chosen seemed better than in previous years. There was little misunderstanding and serious irrelevance was rare. For the most part, responses had a clear purpose and appropriate length. It was clear that candidates had prepared seriously for this examination, with the conscientious support of their teachers.

Particularly popular choices were: (Narrative) Assignments 3, 9, 12, 16; (Personal) Assignments 2, 6, 8, 11 and 17. Question 11 enabled many candidates to write about 'snow days' when schools were closed, while Question 17 elicited many effective responses on the subject of preparation for competitions. Although relatively few candidates chose a descriptive assignment, markers reported that there were some excellent pieces of description by those who attempted Question 4, which asked for a description of a ruined building. Discursive assignments were less popular. There were no questions that candidates did not attempt.

Examination Reading

Markers and examiners reported that the content of the paper was suitable across all three levels, both in terms of appropriate level of difficulty and subject matter. The content of the Credit, General and Foundation papers engaged candidates. All three passages were non-fiction.

The Credit passage, 'The Statue That Didn't Look Right' was adapted from the opening chapter of Malcolm Gladwell's book 'Blink', which deals with what happens when people make quick decisions: this passage was appropriately challenging at Credit level, taking the candidates beyond their normal experience to consider areas such as archaeological techniques and human psychology. The General passage, 'Three Men and a Dog', adapted from a newspaper feature, described the experiences of a family on a walking trip through the Lake District, accompanied by their dog, Wilf. This proved particularly popular with candidates. The Foundation passage was adapted from a magazine article in which the writer described her experiences rescuing people from snakes in Swaziland.

At all levels, most candidates showed good understanding of the passage and awareness of how to tackle specific types of question. Markers commented on the ability of many candidates to identify and, to an extent, explain techniques used by writers. The Credit paper, with its focus on analysis and well as understanding, was considered to be an appropriate preparation for Higher English. There were no non-functioning questions at any level. Markers reported that the vast majority of candidates were presented at the appropriate levels (ie Credit and General or General and Foundation).

Areas in which candidates performed well

Folio Writing

- ◆ W1: a wide variety of discursive topics. A number of candidates produced fluent and well structured pieces on these.
- ◆ W2 (personal): a large number of competent pieces, showing insight and awareness, with the most able candidates achieving genuine reflection. Work experience and personal/family crises yielded materials for personal exploration.
- ◆ W2 (creative): a number of candidates made effective use of language and literary techniques, including characterisation, atmospheric description, narrative person and structure, especially in short stories.
- ◆ A number of candidates wrote in Scots.

- ◆ Candidates approached the final redrafting of their writing conscientiously, supported by their teachers.

Folio Reading

- ◆ Candidates demonstrated genuine engagement with literary and media texts at all levels.
- ◆ Challenging texts elicited high quality analysis from the more able candidates.
- ◆ Appropriate tasks enabled candidates at all levels to demonstrate understanding and analytical skill.
- ◆ The vast majority of candidates managed to go beyond merely recounting events in a text to commenting on eg character and theme.

Examination Writing

- ◆ Markers reported that, at all levels, candidates made wholehearted attempts to produce substantial pieces of a high standard.
- ◆ Many markers commented on the quality of stylish and perceptive writing achieved by some candidates at Credit level, which is particularly noteworthy under exam conditions.
- ◆ There were some excellent short stories, in which character, setting and narrative structure were developed and utilised effectively, for example responses to Assignments 9, 12, 16 and 23.
- ◆ There were some sensitive and insightful examples of personal writing, for example Assignments 2, 6, 8, 11 and 17.
- ◆ When attempted, descriptive assignments tended to be well handled, particularly Assignment 4.
- ◆ Some of those candidates who attempted discursive assignments ('Give your views...'), for example Assignments 10 and 18, tackled these well.
- ◆ Markers commented on the confident handling of language, including complex punctuation, by many candidates and the effective use of techniques such as narrative person and structure, atmospheric description, dialogue and imagery. It was clear that teachers had supported candidates successfully in the development of their writing skills in preparation for this examination.

Examination Reading: Foundation

Although Foundation candidates often respond well to a fiction passage, this year's non-fiction passage successfully engaged candidates, who, overall, performed well at this level. The subject matter, catching snakes in Swaziland, with dramatic events such as daring rescues of children, perhaps accounted for this. The passage was challenging in places at Foundation level, but candidates seem to have risen well to the challenge.

- ◆ Questions 1, 6 and 18: a good number of candidates were able to make the logical deduction demanded in a 'Give two (or one,) reasons why...'
- ◆ Questions 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 and 20 were dealt with particularly successfully by candidates. These questions required candidates to demonstrate understanding by, for example quoting accurately from the passage or explaining a point made.
- ◆ Question 15: many candidates were able to fulfil the demands of this question, ie 'Explain fully'.
- ◆ Question 21: most candidates were able to identify a technique (short sentence) used to make this sentence stand out.

Examination Reading: General

- ◆ Questions 1, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 20 required candidates to demonstrate understanding of the passage by, eg picking out specific information, selecting the correct definition of a word or commenting on ideas in the passage. These were well done by many candidates.
- ◆ Question 2 required candidates to use own words in their explanation. This was dealt with successfully.
- ◆ Question 7: most candidates were able to identify the contrast.
- ◆ Question 8: most candidates were able to explain the idea of limited daylight in winter.
- ◆ Question 17: many candidates correctly identified the technique of alliteration.
- ◆ Question 19: most candidates correctly identified the word 'horror' in the 'word choice' part of this question and some commented well on sentence structure.

Examination Reading: Credit

The Credit paper presents significant challenges for candidates, both in the level of difficulty of the passage and in the types of questions asked: at this level there tends to be a greater number of 'analysis' questions, 'use your own words' questions and questions demanding specific and full explanations. This year, as in previous years, candidates may have done well in parts of questions, but failed to gain full marks due to vagueness of expression or providing an answer to only part of the question. Thus, in many cases, candidates scored 1 out of 2.

- ◆ Question 1: most candidates were able to deduce the art dealer's aim.
- ◆ Question 2: most candidates correctly commented that 'he said' suggested doubt.

- ◆ Question 3 (a) and (b): many candidates quoted accurately, showing awareness of contrast, and demonstrated understanding of why the kouros was 'extraordinary'.
- ◆ Question 6: most candidates commented correctly on the time taken for calcite to form and some deduced that the kouros was, therefore, very old.
- ◆ Question 11(a): most candidates correctly identified the technique of onomatopoeia
- ◆ Question 18: many candidates correctly identified the technique of parenthesis and some explained the writer's use of this

Areas which candidates found demanding

Folio Writing

- ◆ Making appropriate use of source materials in W1 pieces, especially avoiding over-reliance on the actual wording of internet sources.
- ◆ Effective proof-reading of word-processed pieces, avoiding errors in eg expression and spelling (the latter often caused by spell checkers).
- ◆ Careful checking of expression and punctuation to avoid errors eg incorrect tenses, comma splices, lack of or inappropriate use of capitals, inconsistent direct speech punctuation.
- ◆ Achieving appropriate register, eg formal language for some W1 tasks.
- ◆ Achieving their best when responding to vague or over-detailed tasks, in some cases.

Folio Reading

- ◆ Analysing two (or more) texts in one critical response.
- ◆ Achieving their best when responding to vague or overly detailed tasks.
- ◆ Demonstrating flair and genuine personal response when following overly-prescriptive 'scaffolds' provided by teachers.
- ◆ Producing analytical pieces of high quality when responding to texts which lacked depth.
- ◆ Fulfilling the text-related criteria in imaginative responses to literature.
- ◆ Producing pieces on media texts which adequately dealt with analysis of media techniques.

Examination Writing

Markers noted the following areas of difficulty, experienced by those candidates who performed poorly in this aspect.

- ◆ Technical accuracy issues, such as comma splicing, misuse or omission of capitals, problems in paragraphing, punctuation of direct speech, confusion of tenses, spelling inconsistencies, misuse of apostrophes.

- ◆ Inadequate planning.
- ◆ Insufficient proofreading.
- ◆ Some candidates diverged from the imposed opening to produce pieces of questionable relevance.
- ◆ When responding to 'free choice' options ('Write in any way you choose...') some candidates failed to establish a clear relationship between the picture and their response.
- ◆ Insufficient development of character and setting in short stories: too great a focus on developing complex and, in some cases, unrealistic, plots.
- ◆ Overuse of dialogue in short stories, at the expense of effective narrative and descriptive writing.
- ◆ Insufficient attention paid to the demands of the rubric, eg in Assignment 2, some candidates did not deal with 'an occasion' when they 'felt the need to buy something new'.

Examination Reading: Foundation

- ◆ Question 5: some candidates gained 1 mark for explaining why houses are suitable places for snakes to hide in summer, but did not gain the 2nd mark for explaining why this is so in winter.
- ◆ Question 11: a number of candidates struggled with the deduction that it is 'surprising' that a snake which is not black should be called 'black mamba'.
- ◆ Question 14: some candidates experienced difficulty in identifying the statements in the question as 'True', 'False' or 'Cannot Tell'. Candidates tended to have most success with the 'True' statements, some success with the 'False' statements and most difficulty with the 'Cannot Tell' statements, presumably because concluding that an idea is not present or contradicted in the passage is more difficult than spotting it, or its contradiction, if present.
- ◆ Question 19: many candidates gained 1 mark for explaining that anti-venom is too expensive for many people, but failed to gain the 2nd mark for its lack of availability.
- ◆ Question 22: although most candidates correctly identified the 'message' of the passage, some struggled to provide appropriate evidence from the passage for their choice.

Examination Reading: General

- ◆ Question 3: many candidates experienced difficulty in identifying the style of language.
- ◆ Question 10: many candidates quoted an appropriate word or expression from the passage for 1 mark but failed to explain it for the 2nd mark.
- ◆ Question 13: many candidates gained 1 mark for spotting a reference to the past, but failed to score the 2nd mark for identifying windfarms as a reference to the present.
- ◆ Question 14: many candidates identified the mood of the walkers at one point but not their change of mood. In addition, many candidates failed to express the answer in their own words.

- ◆ Question 21: many candidates scored 1 or 0, some experiencing difficulty in pinpointing what was meant by 'later in the passage'.
- ◆ Question 22: many candidates scored 1 mark for commenting on the 'fell terrier'/breed part of the answer but failed to mention Wilf's pride/ positive feelings.

Examination Reading: Credit

- ◆ Question 8: many candidates failed to answer this 'link' question successfully by dealing with the specific words of the linking sentence. Some gained 1 mark for making the connection between 'problem' and paragraph 5, but relatively few made the link between 'however' and paragraph 4.
- ◆ Question 10: a significant number of candidates did not demonstrate understanding that the statue 'seemed' wrong by providing a full enough quotation.
- ◆ Question 14: many candidates experienced difficulty in explaining the impact of direct speech.
- ◆ Question 15: few candidates gained 2 marks: some identified an appropriate feature of context for 1 mark but failed to deduce the meaning correctly.
- ◆ Question 16: many candidates experienced difficulty in explaining the image of a 'wave'.
- ◆ Question 19: few candidates gained 2 marks: some gained 1 for identifying two techniques or identification of one technique plus explanation.
- ◆ Question 22: many candidates scored 1 or 0 due to vague answers or failure to use their own words in the answer.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Folio

- ◆ Ensure labels for folio pieces are completed in full and attached to the correct pieces.
- ◆ Take care to fill in folio flyleaves correctly.
- ◆ Ensure that all teachers' grades and comments have been removed.
- ◆ Avoid submitting critical evaluations, for example on media texts, as W1 pieces (informative).
- ◆ Urge candidates to avoid lifting actual text from internet sources, as appropriate.
- ◆ Select texts carefully at appropriate levels for candidates.
- ◆ Provide appropriate support, avoiding 'over-scaffolding' in critical responses to texts: overly prescriptive planning can lead to several very similar pieces being submitted by a centre, as well as limiting the opportunities for more able candidates to demonstrate their individual flair and genuine engagement.

- ◆ Ensure that tasks are appropriately worded and allow candidates the opportunity to demonstrate understanding, analytical skill and personal response.
- ◆ Ensure that all tasks meet the folio requirements for writing or reading, avoiding eg comparison of book and film.
- ◆ Ensure that length of pieces submitted is appropriate: over-long pieces can be self-penalising.
- ◆ Ensure that responses to media texts deal adequately with analysis of media techniques.
- ◆ Ensure that W1 tasks (informative) are sufficiently challenging and provide opportunities for stylish writing: some tasks, eg biography or information leaflet can be limiting.

Examination Writing

- ◆ Technical accuracy is an important aspect of the Writing examination: focus on those areas of difficulty identified in the first point under 'Areas which candidates found demanding'.
- ◆ Ensure that candidates are aware of the importance of relevance: their response should be relevant to the whole wording of the assignment they have chosen.
- ◆ If candidates choose a 'Write in any way you choose...' assignment, their response must demonstrate clear relevance to the picture stimulus.
- ◆ Ensure that candidates are encouraged to take time making appropriate choices, eg some discursive assignments benefit from the candidates' having background knowledge of the topic to support their views.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to spend time planning and proofreading their work.
- ◆ Practise developing character and setting in short stories, avoiding clichéd, unrealistic and over-complicated plots.
- ◆ Although practising writing skills is obviously important, candidates should be advised against using a complete prepared response in the examination.
- ◆ Handwriting should be clear and legible and writing in pencil should be avoided if possible, as it is often unclear.

Examination Reading

- ◆ As in previous years, centres are advised that candidates should read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts to prepare for this examination. Passages used in the Credit, General and Foundation Reading papers are likely to be taken from novels, short stories, memoirs, travel writing, newspaper articles or magazine features. There is no pre-arranged 'pattern' for non-fiction or fiction texts.
- ◆ Care should be taken in deciding on levels of presentation, to avoid the danger of candidates' failing both Credit and General and thus scoring Grade 7 for the Reading exam.
- ◆ Candidates should not waste time writing out parts of the question in their answers.

- ◆ Although poor presentation is not penalised, candidates should take care that their handwriting is legible, to enable markers to spot all points they have made.
- ◆ Although spelling is not penalised, candidates should be aware that markers must be able to understand what they have written in order to award marks.
- ◆ Candidates should be urged to use their own words if directed to do so (General and Credit levels): the 'locate and translate' formula may help in teaching this skill.
- ◆ Candidates should be taught how to deal with the 'link' question, quoting specific words/expressions from the linking sentence and connecting these to the paragraphs in question.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded that 'Explain' or 'Explain fully' means that they must do more than quote from the passage.
- ◆ Candidates should be taught that 'word choice' questions require a 'quote and explain' type answer, particularly at Credit level.
- ◆ Candidates should be taught that 'sentence structure' questions require an 'identify and explain' type answer, particularly at Credit level.
- ◆ Candidates should be urged to quote and explain if asked to 'Comment on...' a particular technique.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded that answers should be full and precise, especially at Credit level.
- ◆ Candidates should be urged to attempt all answers, rather than leaving any blanks.

Thanks and Appreciation

- ◆ The Standard Grade team wishes to express appreciation to teachers for the conscientious and supportive way in which they have guided their pupils through the course, enabling them to produce their best Folio work and preparing them for the examination.
- ◆ We wish to take this opportunity to thank markers (Folio, Writing Exam and Reading Exam) for the thoroughly professional job they have done upholding the consistent national standards, providing a rigorous and fair assessment system for all candidates.
- ◆ Markers are also to be thanked for their clear and detailed comments in markers' reports, which have helped inform this report.
- ◆ Members of the examining team are to be thanked for their extremely conscientious and professional approach to all procedural tasks. Markers have, in particular, expressed their appreciation of the usefulness and clarity of presentations at markers' meetings.

Statistical information: update on Courses

STANDARD GRADE ENGLISH

Number of resulted entries in 2011	50297
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	49089
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	10.7%
Grade 2	33.3%
Grade 3	33.9%
Grade 4	18.6%
Grade 5	2.7%
Grade 6	0.1%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	0.6%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
R	50	33	22	50	32	25	50	31	22