



National Qualifications Course Report 2007: English

**Standard Grade, Access 2, Access 3,
Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher,
Advanced Higher**

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Introduction

The purpose of this Course report is to give centres:

- ◆ all information on internal and external assessment for the subject in the one place
- ◆ an easier way of making a comparison across levels and years
- ◆ support in achieving consistency in national standards across levels for both internal and external assessment

We will provide a link on the SQA website from the contents page of the Course report to individual sections of the report to allow for easier navigation, in addition to having access to the complete report.

We encourage you to provide feedback about the usefulness of the Course report. Please contact Bridget Loney, Qualifications Manager for NQ English, with your comments – 0845 213 5520 bridget.loney@sqa.org.uk

Summary of Findings

General

Numbers of candidates increased at all levels in 2007, in comparison with numbers in 2006.

A wide range of performance was reported at Standard Grade. There was some evidence of inappropriate presentation at Intermediate 1. Good performance was noted at Intermediate 2. Performance at Higher was broadly similar to that in 2006. Weaker performance was reported at Advanced Higher.

Examiners indicated no particular concerns with regard to the standard of written English.

Weaknesses noted in the work of a number of candidates were narrowness of preparation, concentration on insubstantial texts, and use of inappropriate 'formula' approaches in extended writing.

Wider reading by candidates is recommended to improve performance at all levels.

Entries and Awards

Entries and Awards — Standard Grade English

Year	Entries
2007	59,722
2006	58,832
2005	57,308

Grade boundaries for each assessable element

Grade Boundaries 2007

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	50	32	21	50	24	17	50	27	19

Grade Boundaries 2006

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	50	32	22	50	25	19	50	28	18

Grade Boundaries 2005

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Reading	50	32	21	50	29	22	50	33	24

Distribution of awards

	Entries	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	No Award
2007	59,722	9.2%	30.8%	33.5%	21.2%	4.1%	0.1%	0.0%	1.2%
2006	58,832	10.7%	32.7%	32.9%	19.1%	3.2%	0.1%	0.0%	1.4%
2005	57,308	11.7%	32.2%	32.7%	18.5%	3.2%	0.1%	0.0%	1.5%

The grade boundaries apply only to the examination part of the Reading element (one-sixth of the overall Standard Grade award). Direct grading is used in the assessment of the other five-sixths of the award.

Entries and Awards — National Qualification Clusters

Access 2

	Entries	Awards
2007	502	353
2006	352	220
2005	403	345

Access 3

	Entries	Awards
2007	3,139	2,796
2006	1,433	1,099
2005	1,005	747

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 1 English

Year	Entries
2007	6,808
2006	5,785
2005	5,010

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	66	55	45	40
2006	100	67	57	47	42
2005	100	67	57	47	42

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	6,808	10.1%	22.5%	29.5%	62.1%	12.0%	25.8%
2006	5,785	10.1%	21.1%	29.2%	60.4%	12.2%	27.4%
2005	5,010	11.5%	19.1%	29.3%	60.0%	11.3%	28.7%

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 2 English

Year	Entries
2007	19,103
2006	17,855
2005	16,712

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	68	58	48	43
2006	100	67	57	47	42
2005	100	67	57	47	42

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	19,103	18.2%	25.7%	29.2%	73.1%	10.0%	16.9%
2006	17,855	16.3%	24.3%	30.9%	71.5%	10.1%	18.4%
2005	16,712	14.8%	26.0%	31.3%	72.1%	9.9%	18.0%

Entries and Awards — Higher English

Year	Entries
2007	27,750
2006	27,004
2005	28,678

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	63	54	46	42
2006	100	63	54	45	40
2005	100	65	56	47	42

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	27,750	13.5%	22.0%	29.3%	64.9%	11.6%	23.5%
2006	27,004	13.7%	19.3%	31.0%	64.1%	13.8%	22.1%
2005	28,678	13.9%	20.4%	31.9%	66.1%	14.1%	19.7%

Entries and Awards — Advanced Higher English

Year	Entries
2007	1,620
2006	1,587
2005	1,573

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	70	60	50	45
2006	100	70	60	50	45
2005	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	1,620	7.8%	20.2%	37.4%	65.4%	14.4%	20.2%
2006	1,587	10.9%	25.1%	41.5%	77.6%	11.3%	11.1%
2005	1,573	8.9%	22.8%	39.5%	71.3%	13.2%	15.6%

Comments on Verification: Standard Grade

Element / Coursework moderated:

STANDARD GRADE ENGLISH – TALKING

Feedback to centres

General comments

Verification is the means by which SQA seeks to confirm, and ensure consistency with, national standards, and is a key part of the SQA's quality assurance. Agreement established, the crucial next step is the move towards consistency within the individual department, or among assessors in the same centre. Colleagues will be more familiar with the term 'Moderation' for this process; the change to 'Verification' reflects an important principle of the exercise – that the aim is confirmation of the given department's assessments. It is felt that the change to 'Verification' better reflects this principle.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

Centres are advised that all future Verification visits for Standard Grade English – Talking will be run according to the new arrangements piloted in 2005 and introduced in 2006. Verification will focus on the assessment of live candidate performance. In this respect, the Verification of Standard Grade English – Talking will be brought into line with all other verification of performance carried out by SQA. Exemplification of standards will be demonstrated, as before, on the available training tapes.

Notice of the change has previously been given in the Senior Moderator's reports for 2005 and 2006.

The following extract from the new arrangements for the Verification of Standard Grade English – Talking summarises new practice. More detailed information about procedures will be issued to centres selected for Verification.

“Verifiers appointed by the SQA will carry out the Verification of centres' internal assessments of Standard Grade English - Talking. Presenting centres must have in place procedures for the internal verification of standards. Each department should also have an Internal Verifier (who need not be the Head of Department). During the Verification visit, the SQA Verifier will work with the centre's Internal Verifier. Following the visit, the Internal Verifier will use the results of the

Verification to inform the work of the department, aiming to achieve consistency with the national standards exemplified in the SQA's training tapes.”

Centres should stress to candidates that grades awarded in the Standard Grade course prior to a Verification visit are provisional. All assessments should be reviewed following the Verification visit, taking account of the result.”

Summary of changes

- SQA Verification will be carried out by a Verifier appointed by the SQA
- Each English Department should have an Internal Verifier (not necessarily the Head of Department)
- The Internal Verifier is responsible for standardisation of assessment within the department
- Only the selected candidates and the centre's Internal Verifier will be involved in the SQA Verification. No other staff should attend.
- The SQA's training tapes will continue as the exemplification of national standards

All centres visited in 2006-2007 had assessments verified using the new arrangements. SQA Verifiers reported general satisfaction, among those visited, with the new procedures. All felt that it was a more positive exercise than moderation of the department using the training tape, largely because it related more to departmental practice and involved 'real' candidates. Encouragingly, far from finding the exercise daunting (a concern raised by some centres about to be visited), candidates involved rose to the occasion.

Other positive features mentioned by centres visited:

- new procedures encouraged more productive discussion, possibly because there was some room for manoeuvre in the final allocation of grades
- cover was required for only one member of department
- the exercise was felt to be much more helpful in ensuring accuracy in the awarding of grades
- candidates were involved
- centres had freedom to select candidates

In addition, some colleagues referred to items on the most recent training videotape which were clearly out of date.

In most cases, the judgments of the Internal Verifier coincided with those of the SQA Verifier. This was hardly surprising, given that the final assessment of each candidate followed useful discussion. While the final say must go to the SQA Verifier, it is unlikely that there will be much disagreement over the awarding of grades on a scale with which the profession is so thoroughly familiar.

Since 1988, six videotapes have been issued for distribution to centres.

- the videotape "Young People Talking" with the supporting documentation (issued to all centres in 1988)

and

- the videotape and further documentation "Moderation of Assessment of Talking 1989" (issued for distribution to centres in December 1989)
- the videotapes and further documentation "Moderation of Assessment of Talking 1990 and 1991" (issued for distribution to centres on 28 February 1992)
- the videotape and further documentation "Moderation of Assessment of Talking 1992 and 1993" (issued for distribution to centres on 27 May 1994)
- the videotape and further documentation "Moderation of Assessment of Talking 1994 and 1995" (issued for distribution to centres on 12 April 1996)
- the videotape and further documentation "Moderation of Assessment of Talking 1996 to 1998" (issued for distribution to centres on 15 December 1998).

The videotapes illustrate a range of talk activity and performance as set out in the GRC. Centres should acquaint themselves with the exemplification on the tapes, and use them as the basis for training in the application of national standards. Regular review of standards and consistency within the department is recommended. This will be the responsibility of the Internal Verifier and the Head of Department.

Training tapes were issued to local authorities, and it is their responsibility to ensure distribution to centres within the authority. SQA does not have a supply of past tapes.

Comments on Verification: Units which make up Courses

Titles/Levels of National Units Verified:

National Units verified (complete evidence)

D8VH	Language Study (Access 3 to Higher)
D8VJ	Literary Study (Access 3 to Advanced Higher)
D8VK	Personal Study (Access 3 to Higher)

National Units verified (incomplete evidence)

D8VJ	Literary Study (Advanced Higher)
D9GT	Specialist Study (Advanced Higher)
D9GV	Textual Analysis (Advanced Higher)
D9GW	Creative Writing (Advanced Higher)

Feedback to Centres

General comments

Verification is the means by which SQA seeks to confirm, and ensure consistency with, national standards, and is a key part of the SQA's quality assurance. Agreement established, the crucial next step is the move towards consistency within the individual department, or among assessors in the same centre. Colleagues will be more familiar with the term 'Moderation' for this process; the change to 'Verification' reflects an important principle of the exercise – that the aim is confirmation of the given department's assessments. It is felt that the change to 'Verification' better reflects this principle.

Centres selected for Verification appeared to be clear about the requirements of the exercise, with most sending, for Central Verification, correctly prepared packages of materials. Centres should note that submissions sent in late will be verified in the same way as those submitted on time. Since it is unlikely that late submissions for Central Verification will be verified before early May, centres (particularly schools) judged "Not accepted" are likely to have problems re-assessing candidates at such a time in the calendar.

Substitutions for candidates withdrawn from the examination (or for persistent absentees) are perfectly in order. Information sent out with the Verification Sample offers guidance on acceptable numbers of substitutes. Centres are welcome to contact the Senior Verifier to discuss difficulties.

As in previous years, there was evidence, in 2007, of candidates presented at inappropriate levels. If this mis-match is clear in the Units, it is likely to be more harshly exposed in the external examination.

Verifiers will look for and comment on evidence of cross-marking, departmental discussion of standards and referral of scripts to the head of department or internal verifier. It is clear, annually, that departments in which such good practice is the norm are more likely to achieve consistency with national standards.

Areas of good practice and areas for further development

Language Study

Centres are reminded that NABs should be selected from those listed on the secure website. Past papers, commercially produced materials and support materials are not acceptable for Verification.

Minor alterations to marking guidelines are permitted, and should be clearly indicated on the guidelines submitted with the moderation sample. Alterations apart, Verifiers will expect that the marking guidelines have been tightly applied.

Verifiers commented on the following good practice:

- In Close Reading, focused use of ticks to indicate exactly which parts had achieved the mark
- In Close Reading, attempts to use technical terms in responding (impressive in some cases)
- Good range of subject matter in Writing (particularly Expressive Writing)

Some problems were encountered:

- Use of half-marks in Intermediate Close Reading
- Marks awarded for thin, under-developed or unfocused answers
- Squeezing marks out of thin Close Reading scripts to pass borderline fails
- Inaccurate or loose application of marking guidelines
- Candidates entered at inappropriate levels

Centres are reminded of advice offered in previous reports on the marking of analysis questions. To gain the marks, candidates must show an understanding of connotation; mere quotation and denotative responses should receive little reward.

Half-marks should be awarded sparingly, for an under-developed answer rather than a brave effort, and should not be used at Intermediate 1 and 2.

Writing tasks should be provided for the Verification. Scripts should show why a pass has been awarded, although comment is more necessary in the event of a fail - particularly for the candidate's guidance in redrafting.

Centres are referred to the Unit Specification (support notes) for the Writing Outcome, and reminded that the Reflective Essay at Higher (and at Intermediate 2) is not simply an account of personal experience.

Literary Study

Centres are reminded that NABs should be selected from those listed on the secure website. Past papers, commercially produced materials and support materials are not acceptable for Verification.

Candidates, on the whole, performed better in more recent NABs. Centres are reminded that the earlier NABs (in which candidates had to pass in each of *Understanding, Analysis, Evaluation*) must be marked according to the original guidelines.

Marking of Textual Analysis was often generous, rewarding thin, under-developed answers. As with Close Reading, comment that fails to show understanding of connotation is given little credit in Verification. Centres should take this into account in their marking. It is clear enough in the marking guidelines that candidates have to work to earn the marks. As a rough guide, two lines of fairly thin comment will not tend to be worth 4 marks at Higher. Annually, over-marked submissions for Literary Study are returned to centres for Assessment Review.

Personal Study

The Unit Specifications require that the Personal Study be produced unassisted and under supervision. Since it will *normally* be unlikely that this regulation could be satisfactorily met by a teacher supervising a large group of candidates working on computers, it is expected that most submissions will be hand-written (except by those with learning difficulties). However, it is possible that the supervising teacher is able to guarantee that the requirements have been met, and that spell-checks, syntax checks, earlier drafts, files, websites and the other many aids accessible on computer have not been used in the word-processing of the study. Despite that, it is possible that Verification staff will contact centres submitting word-processed Personal Studies. This should not be taken as suspicion of anything improper – rather as confirmation that the centre is aware of the regulations. For candidates entitled to use a word-processor, it would be helpful if a brief covering letter from the responsible teacher were to be included with the submission.

Verifiers were impressed by centres in which candidates writing on fiction had been encouraged to consider good quality literary fiction other than the ‘usual suspects’. In one centre, candidates had selected from recent Booker nominees; in others, there was a good balance of recent literary fiction and the ‘classics’. Such practices are to be commended. English teachers are keen readers, and are encouraged to share their own interests in the teaching of Personal Study.

Personal Studies on memoirs of childhood abuse (many to choose from, and many chosen) tend to fare badly. Studies of genre fiction can work well, but the texts need to be approached with care. Both types of study are often tackled by weaker candidates and will, generally, be narrative-led.

Teachers (of Higher particularly) are advised to steer candidates away from the compartmentalised approach to the Personal Study (‘I will look at character, setting and symbolism’). In itself, this will not, of course, lead to a fail in the Personal Study, but it is a formulaic approach to essay writing which will not do well in the Higher external examination. Teaching Personal Study as a skill separate from the Critical Essay is an opportunity for integration missed; candidates writing the Personal Study should have in mind the requirements of the Critical Essay.

Centres are reminded, once again, that all four Performance Criteria must be met in the Personal Study which passes. Verifiers found widespread evidence of candidates awarded a pass for demonstrating good understanding of a given text, but with little attention to analysis. In many cases, too, technical inaccuracy had been over-looked.

Teachers are reminded of the Unit Specification for Personal Study, in particular the range of genres permissible. Some particularly good studies of Poetry and Drama have been submitted for Verification. A further point made in this report last year is worth repeating: the study is not restricted to the study of a chosen *text*. The outcome states:

Write critically about chosen text(s) or topic(s).

Later in the Unit Specification, the section on *Suggested areas for study* offers further guidance. The choice of a topic as the area for study would probably remove the possibility of a back-up text for the external examination (exercised, anyway, by few candidates), but may be of interest to teachers looking for options for candidates with little interest in the personal study of literature. Note that the Performance Criteria are the same: the topic study would need, for example, to include detailed analysis and evaluation of sources used.

Candidates pursuing a comparison of two or more texts should ensure that the comparative analysis is detailed. The time constraints on the writing of the study appear to encourage analysis spread too thinly over the texts chosen for comparison.

Comparison of texts from different genres (eg a novel and a film) is not, generally, a good idea, since the key points of analysis are likely to differ.

Once again, few centres opted for the spoken version of Personal Study. This was reflected in the small number of centres verified.

Advanced Higher – complete evidence

Literary Study

In Literary Study, assessments of scripts submitted for Verification suggested general conformity with national standards, and use of appropriate and well-designed instruments of assessment.

Once again, centres are reminded that candidates need only answer on *one* major text (play or novel) for the Unit assessment. It should be stressed that this will *not*, in every case, provide adequate coverage for the external examination, for which all texts specified for each author must be prepared.

Advanced Higher – incomplete evidence

Specialist Study

Verification of incomplete evidence revealed strong awareness of the requirements of the Specialist Study. Centres are reminded that candidates are best served by a process which involves negotiation of appropriate choices, independent study, compliance with deadlines, and ongoing monitoring of progress.

Literary Study

Centres are reminded of the benefits of the study of a broad range of texts. In Unit assessments, consideration should be given to a more focused question than past papers provide.

Textual Analysis

Centres are reminded of advice given in this report in previous years.

Creative Writing

In Creative Writing, there was, once again, clear evidence of systematic and thorough teaching, at its best when candidates were encouraged to explore a variety of genres.

Course Assessment: Standard Grade

In Standard Grade English, the Course assessment consists of a Folio, Question Papers and a Talking assessment.

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

Folio

General comments

As in previous years, the submitted folios contained a wide range of performance from candidates. There was clear evidence that most candidates had been well prepared by centres and were responding to tasks which allowed them to demonstrate their abilities in Writing and Reading. A number of markers felt that there were fewer folio pieces at Foundation Level and that as a consequence more candidates were achieving General grades.

The majority of markers commented favourably on:

- the high quality of presentation of candidate work
- the interesting variety of Writing tasks
- the considerable range of literary texts being studied, including “new” prose and poetry
- a continued increase in the number of media responses
- the overall standard of written English

Areas in which candidates performed well

Folio Writing

- responding to discursive tasks on topical issues (ASBOs, Healthy Eating, Obesity, Size Zero)
- responding to discursive tasks on “local” issues
- W1 pieces conveying information which showed more able candidates’ ability to “recast” source material rather than being overly reliant on the internet
- accounts of personal experience including clear evocation of candidates’ thoughts and feelings
- creative writing (usually short stories) produced by the most able candidates

Areas which candidates found demanding

Folio Writing

- difficulty in responding to “generalised” tasks e.g. “Write a short story”
- using source material effectively in W1 pieces conveying information
- keeping to suggested word limits – candidates’ work would often benefit from being more concise
- allocation of submissions to the appropriate Writing purpose e.g. submitting what should be a critical evaluation of a media text as a W1 Writing piece conveying information

Areas in which candidates performed well

Folio Reading

- responses to “challenging” texts (in some instances texts more usually associated with Higher)
- providing appropriate textual evidence/quotation to support a line of argument in response to the given task
- responses to media texts which showed clear evidence of candidates’ being taught about media techniques

Areas which candidates found demanding

Folio Reading

- providing genuine personal responses to texts – too often candidates’ work was overly formulaic/shaped by a given framework
- keeping to suggested word limits
- providing quality responses to “limiting” tasks – some tasks by their nature constrained candidates to offer nothing more than an account of plot
- providing quality responses to “vague” tasks eg “Write about a novel you have studied”
- comparing two or more texts (sometimes from more than one genre)
- providing quality responses to “hackneyed” texts – some markers commented on the rather uninspired critical evaluations which resulted
- the need to link points effectively within critical evaluations

External Test of Writing

General Comments

Overall the paper was well-received. Markers commented on the enthusiastic responses of candidates which displayed strong commitment to the selected writing purposes. This was a fair paper with a wide range of options appealing to the range of candidates sitting it. In the main, candidates coped well with the demands placed on them in the examination e.g. timing. Examples of well-structured responses were clearly in evidence although some markers also noted less evidence of planning and editing. Some markers commented on an apparent reduction in the number of candidates attempting discursive options.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- some extremely high quality responses at Credit Level
- personal responses (options 1, 4, 9, 11, 13, 16, 20, 22) were generally strong
- some highly creative/metaphorical responses to options 12 and 18
- descriptive pieces were of a very high standard (option 20)
- the successful inclusion of the development of “setting and character as well as plot” in the best short stories

Areas which candidates found demanding

- option 7 – many candidates did not include the idea of “inspiration”
- a number of candidates chose to write about a summer holiday in response to option 8 despite the fact that the picture was described as being “a lake in winter”
- the need to use a register or style appropriate to the task – conversational speech patterns sometimes intruded into candidates’ writing
- the need to develop setting and character as well as plot as demanded by the short story rubrics
- adhering to the demands of the rubrics and so offering inappropriate responses – e.g. producing a short story when an account of personal experience was required (options 13, 16); providing a piece of informative writing when a short story was required (option 12)
- producing writing of sufficient technical accuracy

External Test of Reading

General Comments

In the main, markers commented that the papers were engaging at all levels. Passages were generally felt to be appropriate in terms of difficulty and that most candidates had found them stimulating and enjoyable. Some markers commented favourably on the fact that all three of the selected passages were non-fiction. Most candidates seemed well-prepared for the examination and markers commented on candidates' ability to deal successfully with questions relating to writers' techniques.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Foundation

- candidates responded positively to the accessible subject matter of the passage – a “rescued” greyhound
- candidates responded well to the *variety* of questions in the paper
- candidates responded well to the format of Q 6 (True/False/Cannot Tell)

General

- candidates responded well to the interesting passage full of information about riding a motorcycle on the “wall of death”
- as in previous years, candidates most successfully handled “understanding” type questions

Credit

- interesting non-fiction passage with a Scottish setting to which most candidates responded well
- candidates displayed knowledge of writer's craft including simile, word choice, sentence structure
- markers felt the following questions had been most successfully answered: 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11(a), 12, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23
- where candidates were able to answer Qs 6, 15 and 19 successfully – clear discriminators

Areas which candidates found demanding

Foundation

- Q 7 - although many candidates scored (1), few gained the second mark
- Q 10 - “out of school” not often mentioned
- Q 11(b) - difficulty in naming technique(s) demanded by the question
- Q 14 - difficulty in gaining the second mark
- Q 19 - difficulty in naming technique(s) demanded by the question

General

- Q 1 - difficulty in using own words
- Q 5 - difficulty in using own words
- Q 12 - difficulty in explaining connotations of “squelching”/ recognising onomatopoeia
- Q 13 - failure to identify “long” sentence
- Q 15 - difficulty in using own words
- Q 16 - failure to identify appropriate techniques and support with appropriate evidence (the layout of the question – “grid” format designed to help candidates - did not work)
- Q 17 - difficulty in explaining connotations of “The Black Baron”
- Q 19(a) - inability to identify correct meaning of “misnomer” from list of options
- Q 22 - many candidates scored (1) only – few offered two points in their answers

Credit

- Q 1 - failure to understand/gloss “interred”
- Q 2 - failure to give a second example of contrast
- Q 4 - few candidates gained second mark – full quotation of simile not always given when the candidate had not named the technique
- Q 6 - difficulty in glossing “re-calibrates”
- Q 11(b) - failure to recognise inversion
- Q 13 - difficulty in glossing “appreciation of stone”
- Q 15(a) - difficulty in identifying writer’s style
- Q 15(b) - difficulty in providing appropriate evidence
- Q 19 - few candidates gained two marks – most correctly identified the idea of shock/surprise only
- Q 21 - failure to make correct inference

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

While, as in previous years, most markers commented favourably on the commitment and achievement of the majority of candidates in general, attention, where necessary, should be given to the following:

Folio Writing

- ensuring candidates are given sufficiently detailed tasks which allow them to meet the requirements of the GRC
- encouraging candidates to write more concisely where appropriate – too many submitted pieces are overly long
- encouraging discursive writing on topical and/or local issues
- avoiding inappropriate submissions (see comments on Folio Writing above)
- where pieces are word-processed, care should be taken to use an appropriate font
- the accurate proof-reading of word-processed pieces

Folio Reading

- ensuring candidates are given sufficiently detailed tasks which allow them to meet the requirements of the GRC
- encouraging candidates to write more concisely where appropriate – too many submitted pieces are overly long
- ensuring appropriate submissions are included – candidates **are not permitted** to submit an Imaginative Response along with a Critical Evaluation of Media as two of the three required Reading pieces
- tasks which ask candidates to compare two texts often result in the insufficient analysis of either to the detriment of the candidate's overall grade
- ensuring texts chosen for study are appropriate to the needs and abilities of candidates
- encouraging effective linkage between points being made by the candidate in critical evaluations
- awareness that print material is not acceptable as the basis for media critical evaluations
- avoidance of over-direction of candidates' responses (which prevents candidates from being able to display a genuine personal response to a text)

External Test of Writing

- the careful reading of rubrics to ensure an appropriate piece of writing is produced

- the need to ensure *all* of the rubric is addressed in candidates' writing (see comments on option 7 above)
- the writing of many candidates would benefit from more effective planning
- candidates should be warned of the pitfalls of attempting to reproduce a "prepared" response in the examination
- candidates should take care to write in the register appropriate to the task and to avoid the use of conversational speech patterns where this is not appropriate
- candidates need to be aware of the different demands made by tasks requiring an account of personal experience and those requiring a short story to be written
- the need to develop setting and character as well as plot in short stories

External Test of Reading

- at all three levels, recognition of the need to develop a wide vocabulary through the reading of a range of different texts so that candidates have the confidence to answer questions on understanding
- the need to be able to provide suitable glosses of particular words and expressions in questions requiring candidates to use their own words at General and Credit levels (General Qs 1, 5 15; Credit Qs 1, 6, 13)
- at General and Credit levels the need for candidates to identify correctly language techniques used by a writer and to make appropriate comment on the connotations of particular expressions (General Qs 12, 13, 16, 17; Credit Qs 4, 11(b), 15(a))
- the ability to draw appropriate inferences from a passage (Credit Q 21)

Course Assessment: Intermediate 1

In Intermediate 1 English, the Course assessment consists of 2 Question Papers.

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

The standard of the examination was maintained, and the performance was similar to that of recent years. However, some candidates were presented inappropriately at this level.

Close Reading

The passage was well received by Markers, and by candidates who approached the paper with commitment. Most candidates offered responses to all questions, but a few were unable to complete the paper.

Candidates did best in Understanding questions. Analysis questions often remain challenging for many at this level.

The practice of highlighting key aspects of the questions in bold continued to assist candidates.

The passage contained some Scots words/expressions. These did not appear to form a barrier to candidates' understanding. When given the opportunity (Q 18), many candidates offered the opinion that the Scots words added to their enjoyment of the piece.

Critical Essay

The range of questions offered was sufficient to allow candidates to answer on the texts they had studied. The accessibility of the questions was demonstrated in the increased relevance of the responses. The choice of texts was similar to recent years: most candidates wrote on Prose (novels such as 'Of Mice and Men', 'Stone Cold'; or, more frequently, Scottish short stories). A similar number of candidates chose Poetry (frequently Duffy, Morgan, MacCaig). Some candidates chose the Drama section (often 'Educating Rita', 'Macbeth', or something by Miller). Few opted for Film and TV Drama. Only a handful of candidates chose from the Language section.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Close Reading

Candidates answered most strongly in the area of Understanding. Candidates showed some ability to use their own words when required (Q5, Q7), and were successful in retrieving an expression from the passage (Q2). Some success was evident in attempts to analyse selected word choice (Q9, Q13). Many candidates were able to identify contrast in word choice (Q16).

Critical Essay

Overall, candidates wrote with better technical accuracy than in previous years. Most candidates attempted to develop their essays as fully as possible. There was improved length and accuracy this year. Most candidates were able to write appropriately and accurately. A personal response/reaction to texts was evident in most responses. Although not chosen by many candidates, answers to the Film and TV section were better: candidates discussed the techniques of Film and TV effectively.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Close Reading

Candidates found it difficult to offer reasonably extended explanations/comments where required (in Understanding, Analysis, Evaluation). Explanations offered were often too brief or imprecise. Question 14 proved to be too demanding for most candidates at this level (many candidates not achieving even one mark out of three). Most candidates were unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the aspect of structure identified. Candidates did not do well in evaluating the effectiveness of the conclusion to the passage. A few candidates were unable to complete the paper in the time allocated.

Critical Essay

Analysis was not a strong feature in some candidates' responses. There was evidence that some candidates were relying on 'learned essays'. This affected the relevance of some responses. A number of candidates applied their knowledge of texts to questions from an inappropriate Section: relevance was again affected. Candidates found Q2 for the Drama Section to be demanding. Responses to this question did not deal fully with the ending. Some candidates did not indicate the number of question selected.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Close Reading

Candidates should be encouraged to read widely in preparation for this paper. (In particular, non-fiction).

While concise answers are to be welcomed in Close Reading, candidates should attempt to provide more in the way of comment/explanation where required.

Centres should ensure that candidates are presented at the appropriate level, in terms of NQ courses.

Candidates should practise time management.

Critical Essay

Candidates should be reminded of the importance of relevance. Relevance has to be sustained throughout the response.

Candidates should be familiar with the different Sections contained in the paper, in order to make an appropriate selection of question.

There should be a commitment to Analysis in all responses.

The choice of question should be indicated clearly at the beginning of the response.

The learning of full essays should be avoided as relevance and personal engagement are affected.

Course Assessment: Intermediate 2

In Intermediate 2 English, the Course assessment consists of 2 Question Papers.

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

The two papers were well received, and thought to be fair and accessible. The performance was similar to last year; however, a significant number achieved high marks across both papers. Standards were maintained. Candidates came from S4-S6 depending on the presentation policy of individual centres. Candidates were presented at the appropriate level, and approached the papers with commitment.

Close Reading

Candidates did not have difficulty in reading and understanding the passage selected. Vocabulary did not, on the whole, present difficulties. There was clear engagement with the writer's style and ideas. Almost all candidates attempted to answer all questions.

The emboldening of key words/phrases was again found to be helpful.

Critical Essay

There was a good range of questions which allowed candidates to respond on the texts they had studied in preparation for the exam. Questions were clearly accessible to the vast majority of candidates. Almost all candidates completed two substantial essays in the time allocated. The standard of written English was good: there were signs of an improvement here.

Candidates selected questions fairly evenly from Sections A, B, C. There was, perhaps, a slight increase in responses to Section D – Film and TV Drama. There were very few responses to Section E – Language.

Texts used for Section A – Drama were often Shakespeare ('Macbeth' and 'Romeo and Juliet'), a Miller play, or (less frequently) 'Bold Girls'. For Section B – Prose, candidates wrote on 'Of Mice and Men', 'Cal', 'To Kill A Mockingbird', 'Lord of the Flies', 'The Cone-Gatherers', or often a Scottish short story. A small number of candidates wrote on non-fiction texts. The poetry chosen for Section C was often Duffy, Heaney, and MacCaig.

Some quite demanding literature had been studied. Responses to these texts were often very good.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Close Reading

Candidates showed commitment in their answers to all questions, and marks were spread reasonably well throughout the paper. Candidates demonstrated that they were prepared in all areas examined: Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation. Candidates were able, for the most part, to meet the challenges required by the vocabulary contained in the passage. When asked to provide their own words (eg Q6, Q11), candidates answered effectively.

When required, explanations were often full and effective. There seemed to be some improvement here.

Critical Essay

There were signs of increased relevance to the question in many responses. It is hoped that the recent change to the format of the questions has helped.

Candidates showed an ability to analyse writers' techniques. There was also clear engagement with the texts studied.

Most candidates were able to complete two reasonably extended essays in the time given. Fewer candidates offered a thin second essay.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Close Reading

Some candidates found difficulty with Q1 (maybe expecting the opening question to test Understanding, rather than Analysis). Perhaps difficulty was found in the use of the word 'ironic' in the question; however, use of this word should be expected at Intermediate 2 level, and is contained in the Arrangements. (A clue to the meaning of 'ironic' was given in the question with the inclusion of the word 'odd').

Some difficulty was found over the identification of a precise meaning of the word 'trivial' in Q9(a); however, a majority of candidates gained the one mark available.

Many candidates had problems addressing the Analysis required in Q15. Again, this may have been due to uncertainty over irony, or uncertainty over the function/effect of inverted commas in this example.

A few candidates made an error in their answer to Q5 – they responded to the use of a colon in line 18, not, as indicated, in line 19.

Critical Essay

Some candidates did not address all parts of the question (often the second half of the question's second line).

A number of candidates made selections from an inappropriate Section of the paper (eg based a response to Q1 from the Drama Section on material from a novel).

Perhaps Q5 presented the candidates with too many options – some seemed to find this confusing.

Responses which did not meet the requirements for a Grade C tended to fall down on relevance, or were simply too thin.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Close Reading

Candidates should be encouraged to read widely in preparation for this paper (especially non-fiction pieces).

Candidates should be aware of the kind of techniques (published in the Arrangements), which may be addressed in the Close Reading paper.

Careful attention should be given to line references, where indicated. They are used to help candidates, but care is required.

Critical Essay

Candidates should be reminded that they must address all parts of the question: they must pay special attention to all that is asked for in the second line of the question.

Careful selection must be made from two different Sections of the paper. Each text chosen should be appropriate to the genre requirements of the Section.

The kind of micro-analysis which would be a feature of an essay on a poem is not essential to - and often not appropriate to - a response on a 'large' text, eg a novel.

Course Assessment: Higher

In Higher English, the Course assessment consists of 2 Question Papers.

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

Performance, as reported by Markers and Examiners, was broadly similar to that in 2006.

In Close Reading, the improved performance noted for 2005 was maintained. Candidates' approach to Analysis questions shows signs of effective and systematic teaching. The passages, which dealt with the proposal to make the contents of major libraries available on the internet, were felt to be accessible and of interest to candidates; questions were similar in style and content to those in previous years.

In Critical Essay, the recent years' improvement in attention to relevance has been maintained. Many Markers felt it was a definite strength that candidates focused well on the key thrust of the question. Some candidates continue to rely on a minimalist approach and consequently have difficulty in writing relevantly and convincingly about their chosen texts.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Close Reading

- Candidates responded well to the subject matter, which was topical and within their general understanding.
- Questions on Understanding were approached correctly, with candidates striving to use "own words".
- Key ideas were well understood in questions such as 1(a), 4(b), 10(a) and 10(b). Question 3 was answered well, although the distinction between "less" and "fewer" came under sustained attack in many answers.
- Question 5(a), a "summary" question, was well answered by nearly all candidates.
- Question 2 drew a large number of sensible and well-argued answers.

- Analysis in questions 6(b), 8(b) and (9) was generally good.
- The approach to Analysis questions in general has maintained the improvement seen in recent years. Nearly all candidates go beyond mere quotation (or quotation + bald assertion) and attempt genuinely to analyse. In imagery questions especially, the idea of working from the literal “root” of the image is now well established in most centres.
- The majority of candidates completed the paper, albeit with some rushing in the final questions in many cases. Markers reported fewer unfinished papers than in recent years.
- Responses to question 13 which took a good overview of both Passages scored well.

Critical Essay

- Most candidates were able to write two substantial essays in the time available.
- Almost all candidates chose questions from Sections A – C. There was a slight improvement (in quantity and in quality) in responses to questions from Section D.
- Candidates who were well prepared knew their texts in some depth, could select appropriate details/incidents from them and could quote accurately.
- Most candidates seem fully aware of the need for relevance to the chosen question, and that mere narration of events or unfocused, line-by-line analyses of a poem are not acceptable approaches.
- Successful candidates continue to pay attention to the structure of their essays, striving to shape them relevantly to the key part(s) of the question.
- Candidates who took a broad view of a text as a whole, and did not get bogged down in constant “analysis”, performed well; such candidates were often able to contextualise their comments by effectively narrating key details of selected events.
- The range of texts offered by candidates remained as wide as in previous years: in Drama, Shakespeare and Arthur Miller were, as usual, pre-eminent, with two plays by Tennessee Williams also featuring strongly; an increasingly wide range of Shakespearean texts was noted; in longer Prose, all the “standard” novels were widely used; in shorter Prose and in Poetry, there continues to be a pleasing and remarkably wide range of material being studied. There was evidence of a slight increase in use of literary non-fiction.
- Scottish texts were used widely in all main areas except Drama.

- Markers and Examiners noted an increase in the number of candidates attempting a question requiring a comparison/contrast between two texts. There were some strong answers to question 13.
- Markers who commented about candidates' expression and technical accuracy were mostly positive and noted "no change" or "a slight improvement". There was no evidence whatsoever of "textspeak" in candidates' written English.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Close Reading

- Question 5(b) elicited a number of disappointing responses; many candidates who had demonstrated in earlier questions that they could handle discussion of word choice with ease merely identified the contrast, without exploring the connotations of the relevant words.
- In questions 3, 9 and 12 there was a tendency for some candidates to overlook the specific focus in the question ("wonder of the library as a physical space", "the importance of libraries", "reference to the film *Desk Set*") and embark on somewhat decontextualised analysis.
- Some answers to Analysis questions in general continue to be vague and rather unanalytical. There is evidence that the approach to this aspect of Close Reading varies significantly from centre to centre.
- There is a tendency for some candidates to use "automatic" responses to features of sentence structure, eg identifying every question as a "rhetorical question", assuming that wherever there is more than one comma there is a "list", or calling every short sentence a "minor sentence".
- Question 13 was not done well by many candidates. While this may have been because the passages were broadly similar in style and line of thought, it was felt that there were sufficient areas of contrast to allow candidates to construct a reasonable argument.

Critical Essay

- Markers continue to report candidates who appear to have prepared only two texts and are therefore led to implausible lines of argument in order to force a text to "fit" a question. In Poetry especially, where questions are of necessity "focused" (in order to allow the Performance Criterion of relevance to be met), candidates should have studied a range of poems.

- There was an increase in the number of “genre infringements”, especially in Section B – Prose, the most common being when candidates used a short story to answer on a question on a novel. While this might be an accident induced by examination nerves, it is hard not to conclude that in most such cases candidates are simply under-prepared and are forced to desperate measures – not infrequently claiming that well-known short stories are in fact “novels”.
- Inappropriate “micro-analysis” of novels and plays caused some candidates’ essays to be unsatisfactory. Analysis of such texts should be in terms of such relevant features as structure, characterisation, setting, etc, and not by looking at word choice and sentence structure, etc.
- Where a question asks candidates to do two things (eg “Explain ... and then discuss ...”) a number of candidates continue to pay insufficient attention the second, often more important, element.
- Markers and Examiners felt that some of the texts offered by candidates were of insufficient depth and complexity for Higher level, and that a number of candidates offering a response on a short story appeared to see this as an easy option and demonstrated no appreciation of the subtlety and sophistication of the short story genre.
- Markers are increasingly concerned about handwriting which is difficult to read. This is a particular problem in a Critical Essay, which might extend over five or six pages, making it hard to follow and concentrate on the candidate’s line of thought.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Close Reading

Candidates should be reminded that:

- extended advice on many aspects of the Close Reading paper can be found on SQA’s website (see “Candidate Guidance Documents” on the dedicated English page);
- careful time management is essential in the Close Reading paper – not only should all questions be answered, but all should be given an appropriate amount of time; attention should be paid to the number of marks available, eg a 1-mark “Understanding” question (of which there were four in this year’s paper) should be answered briefly and concisely;

- summary skills are a key part of Close Reading at this level (see pages 9 and 18 of the Arrangements document – Performance Criteria for Close Reading: “summarise adequately the main concerns of the text”); answers to questions such as 5(a) and 10(b) in this year’s paper should be concise – bullet points are recommended for answers to questions of this type;
- answers to questions on imagery should show an understanding of the literal “root” of the image and of how this is being developed figuratively by the writer;
- in questions about word choice, imagery, sentence structure, etc, mere identification of a word, image or feature of sentence structure will gain no marks in itself at Higher level; marks are awarded for the quality of comment and the depth of insight;
- they should avoid “automatic” responses to Analysis questions and study carefully the context in which certain features are being used; the term “minor sentence” is not a substitute for “short sentence”;
- they should pay careful attention to the “focus” given in most Analysis questions (eg questions 3, 9 and 12 in this year’s paper) and avoid analysing in a vacuum;
- the Question(s) on both Passages will contain clear and specific instructions about what is to be answered and these should be followed closely; also responses to comparison questions should be focused and structured (recent examination Marking Instructions and NAB Marking Guidelines make it clear that marks are not awarded “point by point” but for the overall quality of the answer);

Critical Essay

Candidates should be reminded that:

- extended advice on many aspects of the Critical Essay paper can be found on SQA’s website (see “Candidate Guidance Documents” on the dedicated English page);
- thorough preparation of a range of appropriate texts is essential – candidates who rely on just two texts (especially if one is a short story or a fairly brief poem) are taking a sizeable risk;
- the distinctions in prose genres should be fully understood and the terms of the question adhered to; infringements, whether accidental or deliberate, are always penalised, often quite substantially;

- in order to allow Markers to assess relevance (one of the Performance Criteria), all Critical Essay questions have a defined focus; a prepared, memorised essay is not an option;
- essays should be carefully structured to respond to the task set, but simplistic formulae such as “Throughout this essay I will ...”, “I will be writing about ...” and “A book I have read is ...” should be avoided;
- “analysis” should support, not dominate, the line of thought in a Critical Essay; when attempting to analyse, they should deal with features/techniques which are appropriate to the genre;
- while merely narrating the events or re-stating the content of a text is not acceptable, some narration is often useful in order to contextualise comments; appropriate, limited narration of events can be a strength;
- studying a short story should not be seen as a “soft” option – attention should be drawn to the current Specimen Question Paper and this year’s paper, in each of which there is a question requiring reference to more than one short story;
- care should be taken with the layout of quotations; while there are no absolute rules for this, basic conventions (such as paragraphing and indenting longer quotations, integrating shorter ones into a sentence) should be observed; they should avoid following a quotation with “This quote shows ...”;
- while due consideration is given for the pressure under which they are writing, they should take every care to maintain “sufficient technical accuracy”;
- while due consideration is given for the pressure under which they are writing, they should ensure that their handwriting is legible to Markers; in the Critical Essay paper especially, centres should explore the provision of appropriate alternative arrangements for candidates whose handwriting is seriously weak (or is known to become so under examination pressure).

Course Assessment: Advanced Higher

In Advanced Higher English, the Course assessment consists of 1 Question Paper and submitted dissertation (Specialist Study) and submitted folio (if the Creative Writing option is chosen).

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

The performance of candidates in 2007 was not as impressive as in 2006.

Compared with 2006,

- performance in Specialist Study was weaker
- performance in Literary Study was significantly weaker and
- performance in Options was marginally weaker.

Since both markers and correspondents judged the examination paper to be generally fair, no more or no less demanding than in previous years (and since the examination is the only variable assessment component), the same grade boundaries as in previous years were applied, producing the following differences in grade distribution from 2006:

- a reduced pass rate
- marginally fewer candidates achieving grade C
- significantly fewer candidates achieving grade B
- marginally fewer candidates achieving grade A.

Comments on individual assessment components

1. Specialist Study

As always, there were some very accomplished, scholarly and erudite specialist study dissertations.

Almost all candidates displayed commendable enthusiasm for and commitment to their chosen studies. There were no significant breaches of length requirements. Bibliographies and footnotes were usually included (but only rarely used constructively). The presentation of dissertations was of a pleasing standard (despite some evidence of lack of proof-reading). The majority of dissertations were judged in terms of the assessment criteria to be adequate or more than

adequate in understanding and expression and at least adequate in analysis and evaluation.

Notwithstanding these positive features, however, the general impression of markers was of an encouraging and widespread potential that all too often was unrealised because candidates were being handicapped from the outset by inappropriate choices or groupings of texts and/or by undefined or far too loosely defined topics.

The following table provides data relevant to the nature and scope of the specialist studies undertaken in 2007. The figures for 2007 are in bold and beneath them, for comparison but not in bold, are the figures for 2006. These continue the pattern of previous years: a clear preference (81%) for specialising in prose fiction and, within that, for studying the work of two or more than two novelists.

Drama	77 84	Poetry	114 82	Prose fiction	1298 1309	Other	105 97
One dramatist	34	One poet	49	One novelist	167	Mixed genres	71
Three or more texts	42	Wide range (7+ poems)	31	Three or more texts	217		76
One dramatist	26	One poet	29	One novelist	169	Language study	0
Two texts	21	Narrow range (-4 poems)	19	Two texts	138		5
Two or more than two dramatists	17 21	Two or more than two poets	35 25	Two or more than two novelists	929 934	Non - fiction	19 14
Other drama	0 0	Other poetry	1 7	Other fiction (including short stories)	33 20	Film or other media	15 2

2. Literary Study

Candidate responses to questions in the Literary Study section of the examination paper were not as impressive as they were in 2006.

Nevertheless, markers noted:

- generally secure textual knowledge and understanding
- evidence of commitment and honest grappling with the general thrust of questions
- fairly good work on Chekhov, Pinter, Shakespeare, Hogg and Joyce.

The principal debilitating weaknesses appeared to arise from:

- a less than secure understanding of texts as literary constructs
- a failure to engage fully with the specific terms of some questions (“profound waste” in Shakespeare, “settings” in Williams, “narrative

voice” in Morgan, “the rhythm of change” in Hardy, “questions of identity” in Stevenson)

- an inability (or reluctance) to adopt a critical stance, support critical comment with apt textual reference and analysis or sustain critical focus for the duration of time available.

The following table provides information on the uptake of questions in Literary Study. The figures for 2007 are in bold and beneath them, for comparison but not in bold, are the figures for 2006. The wider and slightly more even uptake of questions noted in Poetry and Prose Fiction in 2006 continued in 2007, as did the preference of almost half of all candidates for Shakespeare or Williams.

Drama	873 884	Poetry	379 349	Prose Fiction	341 326	Prose Non-Fiction	1 13
1 Bridie	0 0	13 Chaucer	26 37	25 Achebe	4 5	37 Autobiog.	1 1
2 Byrne	1 6	14 Coleridge	33 38	26 Austen	38 32	38 Autobiog.	0 11
3 Chekhov	40 29	15 Donne+.	46 55	27 Dickens	41 34	39 Travel Wri	0 0
4 Glover	0 0	16 Duffy	40 30	28 Forster	11 25	40 Travel Wri	0 1
5 Lindsay	0 5	17 Dunbar	2 0	29 Galloway	13 24	41 Writing Sc	0 0
6 Lochhead	33 32	18 Dunn	3 20	30 Gray	6 5	42 Writing Sc	0 0
7 McLellan	0 0	19 Fergusson	0 2	31 Gunn	0 8		
8 Pinter	29 42	20 Heaney	118 68	32 Hardy	82 95		
9 Shakes.	476 485	21 Hopkins	10 18	33 Hogg	20 20		
10 Shaw	8 4	22 Morgan	53 42	34 Joyce	36 27		
11 Stoppard	13 18	23 Plath	40 33	35 Spark	35 22		
12 Williams	273 263	24 Scot Ball.	8 16	36 Stevenson	55 29		

3. Options

Approximate percentage uptake figures for the four optional components showed little change from previous years:

Creative Writing	75.8%	(76% in 2006)
Textual Analysis	21.5%	(23% in 2006)
Reading the Media	2.1%	(1% in 2006)
Language Study	0.6%	(0% in 2006)

In 2006, no candidates were presented for Language Study. Encouragingly, in 2007, there were nine responses to the Language Study option from two centres. Nearly all were very competent, showing a good understanding of aspects of the linguistics of English. The best responses were narrow in focus, but highly detailed, paying a great deal of attention to specific examples in order to make more general claims. Four of the responses focused on a particular variety of English. The other five dealt with variations in the use of English related to gender.

Of the 34 candidates opting for Reading the Media, 23 chose to answer a question on Film, 5 on Print Journalism, 5 on Advertising and 1 on Television. Although the quality of candidate responses ranged widely, work done on Film and on Advertising was generally adequate or more than adequate, with some particularly impressive responses in each category. Responses to questions on Print Journalism and to questions on Television were less satisfactory.

In Textual Analysis, a significant majority of candidates chose to respond to the effectiveness of John Updike's short story *Poker Night* or to write a critical response to Louis MacNeice's poem *The Sunlight on the Garden* and, in doing so, produced generally secure and occasionally very sensitive answers. Andro Linklater's foreword to a biography of his father was less popular but, on the whole, adequately understood and analysed. Least popular and least well done was the requirement to make a detailed study of the dramatic means used by Alan Bennett in the extracts provided from his play *The History Boys*.

Work submitted to satisfy the requirements of the Creative Writing folio proved generally competent, but not significantly more competent than in 2006. Performance in each of the four genres varied widely from the breathtakingly excellent (often associated with clear evidence of genre familiarity and a structured approach taken within a centre to the stimulation and teaching of creative writing) to the depressingly inept (more often than not associated with haste or carelessness or work so weakly conceptualised and realised as to be deficient in thoughtfulness, awareness of audience or semblance even of creative crafting). As in 2006, the Reflective Essay and Fiction proved the most popular categories, accounting for approximately 70% of all submissions. The best work was usually, but not exclusively, found within these categories. The poorest work occurred in Poetry and in Drama, particularly among the plethora of submissions purporting to be "dramatic monologues". Overall, the impressions of Creative Writing formed by markers in previous years were confirmed: centres should

actively teach creative writing, insist on genre familiarity and avoid setting for all candidates common creative writing tasks; and candidates should avoid the “personal experience essay”, the falsely perceived “safety” of groups of poems and the construction of drama that is reliant mainly on stage directions.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Advice issued in previous years continues to be relevant. Points reckoned to be particularly important in the light of the performance of candidates in 2007 are highlighted in **bold**.

Specialist Study

Teachers/lecturers should ensure that

- **texts of appropriate substance and quality are selected**
- **groupings of disparate texts are avoided**
- **studies of novels and films, films and plays, plays and poems, etc are clearly established as valid and manageable**
- **specific and manageable topics are constructed**
- **unambiguous statements of intent are included (as headings to dissertations)**
- **the analytical thrust of each study is incorporated into the statement of intention or title**
- length is between 3500 and 4500 words (including quotations)
- mandatory footnotes and bibliographies are provided
- dissertations are free from plagiarism
- candidates are acquainted with **all** of the advice and regulations provided by SQA.

Literary Study

It is recommended that candidates are thoroughly prepared in the art of critical essay writing. In particular, they should be

- **given ample practice in making effective use of the time available (1.5 hours)**
- **provided with strategies for addressing the terms of the question and for appropriate planning of their responses**
- **equipped with a precise and extensive critical vocabulary**
- reminded that “analysis” need not always be “inserted” (often inappropriately) in the form of extensive quotation that is then subjected to micro analytical comment on individual words and phrases
- **shown how valid analysis may well reside (often by implication) in a permeating thread of relevant critical comment that informs an emerging argument.**

Creative Writing

It is recommended that candidates enrich their own experience by reading extensively in the work of other writers (including their peers) in order to familiarise themselves with genre conventions and the range of approaches that might be taken in their own writing.

The submission of pieces generated by common stimuli or arising from whole-class exercises should be avoided.

The submission of groups of unrelated (or loosely related) poems should also be avoided.

Textual Analysis

It is recommended that, through guided reading, essential familiarity with genre conventions should be acquired and that, through extensive practice and teaching, candidates should be provided with the critical apparatus necessary for the analysis and evaluation of complex text(s).