



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	English
Level	Standard Grade

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

Folio

General comments

The vast majority of centres/candidates showed a sound understanding of Folio requirements. Markers commented on the wide range of tasks and texts evident in the Folio submissions from across the country. Candidates continue to be taught a mix of new and more “traditional” texts (*Of Mice and Men*, *Macbeth*, *Dulce ...*, *Our Day Out*) but respond appropriately to both. Media responses continue to rise in popularity with *Jaws*, *The Shawshank Redemption* and Luhrmann’s *Romeo and Juliet* all in evidence this year. There were many examples of neatly presented work with extensive use made of word-processing.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Folio Writing

- some markers commented on an improvement in the quality of W1 Writing (*To deploy ideas etc.*) this year
- some very well-crafted short stories and thoughtfully written personal pieces
- many examples of a high level of commitment to the given task

Folio Reading

- texts and tasks which allowed candidates to offer a genuine personal response
- responding to high quality prose fiction
- responding to “new” and stimulating poetry and media texts

Areas which candidates found demanding

Folio Writing

- ensuring sufficient attention to purpose for writing tasks (evident in some confusion between W1 and W2)
- keeping to suggested word limits (as noted in previous years)
- using source material for W1 pieces effectively

Folio Reading

- responding to tasks which were too vague (“Write a C.E.L of...”; “Write a review of...”)
- using media terminology appropriately and effectively
- making sufficient allusion to the content and ideas of the original text in Imaginative Responses

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- candidates should be made fully aware of the purpose of their writing to avoid confusion between transactional and expressive pieces
- centres should emphasise the need for candidates to structure their writing effectively
- critical evaluations which slavishly follow a Point, Evidence, Explanation (or Point, Quotation, Analysis) structure can become very disjointed
- candidates need to make more effective use of appropriate media technical terms when writing about a media text
- “compare and contrast” type tasks on two or more texts may prevent candidates offering sufficiently detailed analysis of each text
- candidates should be reminded of what is allowed to be submitted in the Folio (the three Reading pieces cannot include both an Imaginative Response and a Critical Evaluation of a Media text)
- if candidates submit word-processed pieces in the Folio then an appropriate size and style of font should be used

External Test of Writing

General comments

Candidate performance was broadly in line with previous years. Markers reported that candidates seemed to respond well to the paper with most being able to select appropriate tasks. Options 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 16 were chosen by many candidates but markers noted a wide range of writing across all topics/genres. Options demanding discursive or informative responses were less popular.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- candidates observing the demands of the rubrics and writing at length where appropriate
- some excellent examples of creative writing which were “clear and stylish” in response to short story options 3, 7, 14, 21
- the best accounts of personal experience continue to display genuine insight and self-awareness

Areas which candidates found demanding

- combining the genre and format requirements for option 5 (*magazine article*)
- giving *succinct* accounts of personal experience (options 1, 8, 12) – too often introductions to these pieces were overly long
- not adhering to the demands of *all* of the rubric – some candidates ignored the “...to a city” element of the account of a school trip in option 1
- balancing the demands of time allocation in terms of planning and writing to ensure that writing is completed in the time available
- developing *setting* and *character* in narrative options

- differentiating between options requiring a short story and those requiring an account of personal experience
- producing writing of sufficient “intelligibility and correctness” in an examination context - markers continue to report some candidates having problems with spelling, paragraphing, layout of direct speech and consistency of verb tenses

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates (External Test of Writing)

- candidates should be given regular opportunities to practise their writing “against the clock”
- candidates should practise proof-reading their own work in order to do so more effectively in the context of the examination
- candidates should be made fully aware of the genre requirements of particular options in the examination
- candidates should be given opportunities to practise writing the full range of genres/options available to them in the examination

External Test of Reading

General comments

There was praise from markers regarding the high quality of responses evident from candidates and some indication that candidates had found the papers appropriate and engaging. Many candidates scored 28+ in the higher of the two papers attempted. Markers considered all three passages (all fiction) to be appropriate and stimulating and there was some very positive feedback regarding the selection of another high-quality “literary” text for the Credit passage. Some markers called for fewer 2/0 questions in the Credit paper to allow for greater differentiation between candidates.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Foundation

- candidates responded very positively to the passage and questions – very few “blank” answers left
- questions 16 and 17 – candidates at this level were able to cope with the demands of questions relating to imagery
- questions most successfully answered: 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 (although some markers felt that providing a box for the answer to question 2 would have made the “one word” instruction clearer)

General

- markers felt candidates had responded well to the intriguing nature of the passage
- questions most successfully answered: 5, 6, 7, 8, 10

Credit

- many markers felt this paper was particularly well done by candidates although some markers felt some questions required candidates to merely quote from the passage instead of asking for a suitable analytical comment (see below)
- questions most successfully answered: 4, 14, 16, 19, 20 (4, 14 and 20 in particular were regarded as being very straightforward for this level)
- some markers praised the imaginative responses made to question 22

Areas which candidates found demanding

Foundation

- Q 19 some candidates struggled to make the appropriate inference
- Q 21 many candidates gained 1 mark only (overlooking the “Explain fully...” in the question)
- Q 22 responses to this varied (some candidates gave meanings/reasons rather than the “writer’s craft” type answer required)
- Q 23 many candidates gained 1 mark only not realising that two separate points needed to be made

General

- Q 2 many candidates failed to gloss both parts of the expression and therefore gained 1 mark only
- Q 4 (a &b) some markers felt these were more challenging
- Q 11 many candidates offered only one valid reason
- Q 12
- Q 14
- Q 15 many candidates gained 1 mark only
- Q 16 difficulty in using own words and avoiding use of the word “guard” in the answer
- Q 17
- Q 19 difficulty in gaining second mark
- Q 21 some answers too vague to gain marks

Credit

- Q3 many candidates did not distinguish between “generous” and “caring” in their answers
- Q 5 many candidates failed to give two valid reasons
- Q 6 many candidates identified the parenthesis without giving the extra detail required about its function (a good discriminator)
- Q 11 difficulty in using own words
- Q 12 providing a suitable gloss proved challenging for many
- Q 17 some markers found this a difficult question to mark

- Q 18 (a &b) selection of appropriate examples and comments proved challenging for some candidates
- Q 22

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates (External Test of Reading)

- candidates should practise “in your own words” type questions – this instruction is often ignored in the Credit and General papers
- candidates should be reminded to provide sufficiently detailed responses to questions which require them to “Explain fully...”
- candidates should be taught how to “provide evidence” to support answers when required to do so at General and Credit levels
- candidates should be given the opportunity to read a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction during the two years of the Standard Grade course

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	57910
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	53927
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	10.3%
Grade 2	33.0%
Grade 3	31.7%
Grade 4	20.1%
Grade 5	3.4%
Grade 6	0.1%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	1.3%

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	38	27	50	32	25	50	33	25