

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

English and Communication

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

English and Communication – Intermediate 1

English and Communication – Intermediate 2

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	Int. 1	Int. 2
Pre appeal		
Post appeal	3,578	11,344

Number of entries in 2002	Int. 1	Int. 2
Pre appeal	4,432	13,605
Post appeal		

General comments re entry numbers

The trend in both Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 presentation numbers is for the rate of growth to slow down so that while a future increase may be expected, it is likely to be more modest than that seen in 2001/2002 or 2000/2001.

General comments

Intermediate 1

The increase in the numbers of those presented was accompanied by a decline in the mean performance of the candidates.

Performance in the oral/aural component and performance in the Folio component have remained steady between 2001 and 2002.

Performance in the Close Reading and Textual Analysis examination paper was disappointing.

As was suggested in 2001, an increasing number of candidates, who can cope with the demands of the Folio and oral/aural components, cannot perform sufficiently well to meet the standard expected in the external examination of Close Reading and Textual Analysis.

Intermediate 2

As in 2001, mean performance in all component parts of the examination was above 50%, and the overall ability of the candidature was felt to be much the same.

A slight improvement was noted in performance in the Close Reading paper; however this was offset by lower mean scores in the Analysis and Appreciation paper, the Personal Studies Folio, and the oral/aural component of the course.

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

A	70%
B	60%
C	50%

General commentary on grade boundaries

Notional percentage cut-offs for each grade

Question papers and their associated marking schemes are designed to be of the required standard and to meet the assessment specification for the subject/level concerned.

For National courses the examination paper(s) are set in order that a score of approximately 50% of the total marks for all components merits a grade C (based on the grade descriptions for that grade), and similarly a score of 70 % for a grade A. The lowest mark for a grade B is set by the computer software as half way between the C and A grade boundaries.

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Grade boundaries were set at *a priori* levels for both Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Intermediate 1

Folio

- The vast majority of markers felt that there was an overall improvement over last year in the understanding of the Folio requirements in Writing and Specialist Study.
- Most markers found the candidates' ability to write appropriately and accurately satisfactory.
- Submissions, in the main, were found to be generally relevant to the stated purpose or intention. Where irrelevance occurred it was because tasks were too wide or unfocused or where narrative took the place of analysis in Specialist Studies, which were mainly based on prose texts.

Close Reading and Textual Analysis

This paper was felt to be appropriately challenging for Intermediate 1 candidates. Candidates, in general, had difficulty with both sections of this paper but markers were divided in their opinions as to the reason(s).

- Some felt that candidates performed marginally better in the Textual Analysis section.
- Some 41% felt that a number of candidates had been presented at the wrong level and faced with an examination paper which was beyond them.
- Some 31% felt that the paper was pitched at the correct level.
- Some felt it was asking too much of candidates to answer questions in two reading papers at one sitting.

Intermediate 2

Folio

A sound understanding of the requirements of the Folio was demonstrated by most candidates. Folios were, in the main, clearly and accurately labelled, and most submissions were word-processed, within recommended word-limits, and met the required level of technical accuracy.

Folio – Specialist Study

A wide range of (mainly prose) texts had been selected by candidates and there was an encouraging level of honest, apparently genuine, personal engagement. There was one Specialist Study in Oral Communication.

Close Reading

The majority of markers felt that the paper was appropriately challenging and fair and many commented that candidates seemed to have enjoyed the humour, and were, on the whole, successful in tackling most questions.

Analysis and Appreciation: Part 1 – Textual Analysis

A wide range of ability was evident and the paper drew a mixed response from markers. Some felt that candidates in answering Question 9 did not fully understand the ideas in the poem while, of those who did, some were able to identify the poetic techniques questioned while being unable to explain fully their effect. On the whole, however, it was felt to be a fair test for Intermediate 2 candidates.

Part 2 – Critical Essay

Most candidates chose to answer on poetry.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Intermediate 1

Folio – Writing

- in many excellent reflective pieces showing insight and sensitivity
- in some good report-writing
- where most candidates achieved or surpassed the criterion of “mainly accurate”

Folio – Specialist Study

- where most candidates showed a genuine and relevant engagement with their chosen texts
- where a clear line of thought was evident in relation to a statement of intent
- where studies were produced in response to a task framed in the form of a question
- in clear, neat presentation and layout
- where sufficient analysis of chosen texts was evident

Close Reading

- in answering some questions testing understanding of the ideas in the passage

Textual Analysis

- in answers showing an understanding of the content and ideas in the poem
- in identifying some techniques

Intermediate 2

Folio – Writing

- evidence of a better understanding of the difference between argumentative and persuasive writing
- in reflective essays (done by the majority of candidates) allowing them to display a high level of insight and sensitivity
- a few excellent examples of creative writing

Folio – Specialist Study

- where candidates who based their studies on poetry often achieved a high mark due to the more analytical and evaluative approach adopted
- in analytical comparison of thematically linked texts
- where the choice of challenging texts enhanced their analytical and evaluative comments

Close Reading

- Candidates were felt to be better prepared at this level for analysis and evaluation questions this year.

Analysis and Appreciation

Part 1 – Textual Analysis

- Most candidates showed commendable commitment and effort in answering the questions.
- Most candidates displayed a grasp of the ideas in the poem, and the majority, its central message or theme.

Part 2 – Critical Essay

- where candidates showed a genuine engagement with their text
- where “sufficient accuracy” was demonstrated under examination conditions
- where some excellent, perceptive and full responses were seen

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Intermediate 1

Folio – Writing

- where writing submitted under the heading Expressive was neither clearly Argumentative nor Persuasive in purpose
- where sources were not always clearly acknowledged
- where Expressive pieces could have been more fully developed to include more reflection

Folio – Specialist Study

- in too much re-telling of the plot or content with a consequent absence of sufficient analytical or evaluative comment
- where tasks were too wide or unfocused
- where language studies were adequately researched and surveyed but failed to investigate adequately through analysis

Close Reading

- answering questions requiring analysis and/or evaluation skills (Questions 1,4,5,7,8(d),9(a) and 10)
- failure to understand technical terms, eg colloquial (Question 10), pun (Question 9(a))
- failure to recognise the purpose of questions from the wording or the code U/A/E
- failure to gloss/use own words
- answering at excessive length

Textual Analysis

- in dealing with analysis questions requiring explanation of the effect of technique, eg Questions 3(b),4(c),7(a) and (b)

Intermediate 2

Folio – Writing

- absence of acknowledgement of sources (argumentative, persuasive, report)
- vague understanding of the demands of report-writing
- where candidates submitted reflective writing which went little beyond an account of personal experience

Folio – Specialist Study

- where there was clear evidence of personal engagement but it was not always insightful or well-developed
- where candidates who selected non-fiction simply provided a narrative account
- where language studies relative to print media did not focus on the language features but rather focused on layout, photographs and general presentation
- where tasks were poorly designed, vaguely defined and, consequently, unhelpful

Close Reading

- Questions on structure, eg Question 8
- Question 7, involving metaphor/connotation
- Question 6(b), requiring knowledge of the meaning of “retiring”
- Question 2, where there was an inability to recognise the humour or to explain the formal/informal contrast present in the language
- Question 4(b), where the word “olfactory” was not located

Analysis and Appreciation

Part 1 – Textual Analysis

- questions requiring skills of analysis, especially:
 - Question 6 – identification/explanation of the literal/metaphorical use of “pick up”
 - Question 8 – understanding/explanation of effects of techniques of repetition/use of hyphen/reversal of cliché
 - Question 7(b) – identification/explanation of effect of use of repetition/enjambement/dashes/alliteration/imagery/oxymoron
 - Question 4 – comment on unusual use of “alive”

Part 2 – Critical Essay

- where engagement/personal response was rather vague or generalised and “tagged on” at the end of essays
- where prepared answers (usually, but not exclusively, on poetry) lacked relevance and evidence of genuine personal engagement
- where candidates’ ability to write with “sufficient accuracy” under timed conditions was not clearly demonstrated (Mistakes in syntax and spelling were cited as major weaknesses.)
- where candidates chose the wrong genre, eg Question 6 used for an answer on fiction

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Intermediate 1 and 2

Folio

A sound understanding of the requirements was demonstrated by most candidates and word-limits were respected in the majority of cases. There was, generally, evidence of care and commitment in the production and presentation of pieces, and some markers felt that there was an overall improvement on last year.

Although the Folio is to be discontinued, the following points are worth noting.

Folio – Writing

- Many candidates did not clearly distinguish between argumentative and persuasive writing.
- Although reflective submissions were, on the whole, most impressive, many failed to go beyond accounts of personal experience to reflect adequately with any degree of insight.
- Sources consulted were often not acknowledged, particularly where report-writing was submitted.
- There were some excellent creative submissions which demonstrated skill in the features of the chosen genre.

Folio – Specialist Study

- Most candidates made appropriate choices (mainly prose texts) for study and revealed a genuine personal engagement in their submissions.
- More successful studies had a clear statement of intent or task (in some better studies in the form of a question) which allowed candidates to analyse and evaluate, and, generally, go beyond recounting of the plot or content.
- Less successful studies of language (mostly based on print media) did not focus on the language features, but rather on layout, photographs and general presentation.

Close Reading and Textual Analysis

Candidates' performance could be improved in the following:

- conciseness in answering
- in questions requiring analysis, besides ability to recognise techniques, ability also in explaining their effect or effectiveness
- observing the instruction to use their own words
- reading questions more carefully and recognising the degree of depth required in answers either from the wording of the question or from the available marks
- awareness of the different demands of U, A and E questions and how to set about satisfying the particular demands of each.

Critical Essay (Intermediate 2)

While there was evidence of thorough preparation and careful selection of and response to rubrics, the performance of many candidates could be improved by observing the following guidance.

- Answers should be carefully checked to ensure “sufficient technical accuracy”.
- Engagement or personal response should be less vague or generalised and not merely “tagged on” at the end of an answer.
- Over-emphasis on content, at the expense of analysis and evaluation, should be avoided.
- Answers should be more clearly relevant to the demands of the questions.