

## Principal Assessor Report 2002

**Assessment Panel:**

**English and Communication**

**Qualification area**

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

**English - Standard Grade  
English - Alternative Communication  
English - Spoken  
Levels - Foundation, General, Credit**

## Statistical information: update

<b>Number of entries in 2001</b>	STANDARD GRADE
<b>Pre appeal</b>	
<b>Post appeal</b>	60,090

<b>Number of entries in 2002</b>	STANDARD GRADE
<b>Pre appeal</b>	59,900
<b>Post appeal</b>	

<b>Number of entries in 2001</b>	ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION
<b>Pre appeal</b>	
<b>Post appeal</b>	11

<b>Number of entries in 2002</b>	ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION
<b>Pre appeal</b>	11
<b>Post appeal</b>	

<b>Number of entries in 2001</b>	ENGLISH - SPOKEN
<b>Pre appeal</b>	
<b>Post appeal</b>	9

<b>Number of entries in 2002</b>	ENGLISH - SPOKEN
<b>Pre appeal</b>	2
<b>Post appeal</b>	

### General comments re entry numbers

- Entry numbers for English – Standard Grade remain steady.
- The marked decrease in the numbers presented for English – Spoken is probably brought about by a move towards support through readers/scribes for these candidates.

### Cut-off Scores – English Standard Grade – Reading

<b><u>Credit</u></b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>56%</b>
<b><u>General</u></b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b><u>Foundation</u></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>34%</b>

These cut-off scores were also applied in English – Alternative Communication and English – Spoken.

## Comments on candidate performance

### Folio - General

The vast majority of Folio work was reported as being well-presented, demonstrating commitment and success in the production of “best work”. This was evident in the continued expansion in the use of the word-processor, although some markers felt that a few submissions were marred by typographical errors or an unfortunate choice of font(s).

Level of performance was felt to be impressive in many cases, and generally in line with that of previous years, although some felt that the numbers of Foundation awards continued to decrease.

The positive contribution of suitable tasks was noted; however the negative effect of vague Reading tasks, eg “Write a C.E.L. of ....” was also reported.

Some markers reported that Folio length recommendations, particularly for Reading submissions, continue to be ignored by some centres/candidates.

Markers commented (unsurprisingly) on the continuing prevalence of tried and tested “old favourites”, eg “Macbeth”, “Of Mice and Men” and “Dulce et Decorum Est” but noted the occasional appearance of contemporary Scottish texts and “new” or less well-known poems. Imaginative Responses to Literature continue to decline in number and seldom achieve more than a General award. Responses to media texts are either excellent (where features of the genre have been taught and understood) or weak, depending almost entirely on re-telling of content or story-line like poorer drama and prose submissions.

### Folio - Writing

#### Areas in which candidates performed well

- in W2 submissions recounting personal experience showing a real sense of involvement
- in W1 submissions which had acknowledged appropriate use of source material from the internet and elsewhere to produce well-structured discursive or informative writing
- in occasional skill in short-story writing

#### Areas where candidates had difficulty

- occasional confusion of W1 and W2 writing purposes, especially but not exclusively in submissions dealing with Work Experience
- insufficient re-working of W1 source material
- absence of structure/focus (eg through the use of topic sentences) in W1 writing
- where, occasionally, the summary of the context of a prose text was submitted as evidence of W1 (writing to convey information)

### Folio – Reading

#### Areas in which candidates performed well

- where submissions were based upon interesting and accessible texts supported by carefully constructed tasks which allowed responses to demonstrate competence in relation to the relevant grade related criteria
- where submissions dealt successfully with tasks within the recommended word-limit

## **Areas where candidates had difficulty**

- over-long submissions
- too much re-telling of content at the expense of analysis of relevant techniques of the genre studied
- where insufficient guidance and support were offered relative to the complexity of the text studied or to the wording of the task undertaken

## **External Test of Writing**

### **General Comments**

In general it was reported that:

- the majority of candidates responded relevantly, enthusiastically and with commitment to a paper which was well-balanced and accessible to all
- there was clear evidence that candidates were aware of the purpose of the writing task chosen and planned and organised their responses appropriately and at acceptable length.
- performance was, on the whole, impressive with fewer grades 5 and 6 awarded and the Credit responses considered to be skilful, stylish and thoughtful
- very few candidates had mistakenly attempted several options, and that this was because of the clear layout of the rubrics
- most popular choices were 4, 8, 13, 15, and 17
- least popular choices were 2, 6, 10, 14, and 21
- the emboldening of “include your thoughts and feelings” in the personal writing tasks helped candidates at all levels to respond appropriately.

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

- where candidates responded particularly well to tasks involving writing about personal experience and responses conveyed a genuine sense of reflection and involvement at all levels, particularly in response to numbers 4 and 8
- in discursive writing, which, although perhaps a less popular choice than in previous years, was, on the whole, well done, showing a clear sense of structure and organisation, particularly in response to number 16 where cross-curricular knowledge contributed to well-informed, purposeful, committed writing
- in short-story and descriptive writing when selected by Credit candidates whose responses displayed some originality, sensitivity and style

### **Areas where candidates had difficulty**

- where candidates failed to respond to the requirements of the specific literary form required in number 11 (the newspaper article) and number 12 (the journal)
- where even “better” candidates were making avoidable basic errors in spelling and punctuation, perhaps due to an absence of proof-reading
- where “text messaging language” was inappropriately used
- where weak sentence structure, inaccurate paragraphing and tense confusion were evident
- where “Fallout” in number 19 was (mis?) interpreted as an argument etc

## External Test of Reading

### General Comments

Markers reported that:

- candidates generally responded well to all three papers, which were felt to be appropriately pitched, accessible and enjoyable. In particular, candidates were felt to have empathised with the central characters of the narrative at General and Credit levels
- there appeared to be fewer than normal unanswered questions or incomplete papers and that, in the main, candidates had been presented at appropriate levels
- the first page of each question paper provided an appropriate and not-too-demanding starting point for candidates.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

- engaging with the content of the passages
- answering of “content-type” questions
- completion of paper and few answers left blank
- attempting evaluative/“whole passage” questions

### Areas where candidates had difficulty

Although the majority of markers found the wording of questions to be clear and supportive to candidates,

- craft/analysis questions were, relatively, less well done, eg

#### Foundation

Q6 – second mark for recognition of humorous tone

Q11 – effect of exclamation mark

Q13 (a) – notion of comparison not specifically dealt with

#### General

Q8 – explanation of imagery

Q12(b) – sentence structure not understood/answers mainly dealt with meaning

Q15 – simile not understood

#### Credit

Q5 – technique identified but explanation not dealt with satisfactorily

Q8(ii) – sentence structure

Q13 – failure to be specific about **how** the writer continues the idea

Q14 – “comparison” often not understood; effectiveness rarely well explained.

- Failure to read questions carefully, eg:

### Foundation

Q9 – "...in the UK" not recognised

Q13a – misreading of "How" as "Why" and failure to answer in respect of something common to both women

### General

Q6 – failure to understand the instruction regarding ticking of boxes.

Q8 – failure to explain clearly (often quotation offered as answer)

Q12(c) – often two points about the man offered despite requirement of contrast between the man and the wife

Q15 – "simile" occasionally misread as "smile"

### Credit

Q11 – failure to recognise that "your reaction" was required

Q19 – failure to focus on "other way", often answering in respect of the detective.

Several markers suggested further emboldening of key words to support candidates (eg in the Credit Paper Q11 the emboldening of "your" may have prevented many candidates from answering in terms of the shoplifter's reaction or the store detective's reaction). However, a balance has to be struck between what is expected of a candidate in a test of reading and what is permissible in terms of support through emboldening of key words.

- Many markers noted that the standard of writing (including handwriting) was deteriorating.

## **English – Spoken**

The small number (two) of candidates presented makes general, meaningful comment difficult. As in previous years, however, the taped folios contained the required range of submissions in response to Communicating and Understanding tests which allowed the candidates to demonstrate appropriate competence in relation to the grade related criteria.

As with the main cohort, the Communicating examination paper seemed to offer candidates the opportunity to demonstrate appropriate competence while in the test of Understanding there was evidence of engagement and ability to cope at the levels attempted.

## **Feedback to centres**

As in 2001, there is much evidence of the positive contribution of good practice in raising standards. Several points, however, continue to need to be addressed.

## **Folio – Writing**

- Care should be exercised in the selection and wording of tasks so that the writing purpose being addressed is clear to the candidate and to the eventual marker. The confusion or merging of Writing Purpose 1 (...to convey information) with Writing Purpose 3 (...to describe personal experience) occurs often, but not exclusively, in writing about work experience topics or eg in writing about a visit or holiday where a factual account is given with little or no attempt to describe or reflect upon the experience involved.
- Sources used as a basis for W1 submissions should be acknowledged and there should be evidence that the source material has been re-worked and structured so as to produce an informative (WP1) or discursive (WP2) submission which is clearly the candidate's own work.
- The recommended word-limits are part of the grade related criteria and should be observed. While there is no stated penalty for over-long submissions, failure to meet any specific criterion (eg length) is taken into account when deciding upon grades.
- The increasing use of the word-processor in production of final versions is welcomed. Its increased use, however, has apparently been accompanied by an increase in the number of typographical errors which ought to have been corrected at the re-drafting stage.
- The content (eg of a short story) should not be submitted as evidence of Writing Purpose 1 (“...to convey information”)
- While one of the features of a “specific literary form” (eg a letter or a newspaper report) may be its particular form or layout, the decision as to which writing purpose such a piece addresses depends upon whether the writing is substantially transactional (W1) or expressive (W2).

## **Folio- Reading**

- Tasks should be clearly and appropriately worded to allow candidates to engage critically with the text, and to demonstrate competence in terms of the GRC. Many prose and drama evaluations deal too much with content and not enough with critical analysis of, and engagement with, the genre chosen for study.
- Tasks such as “Write a C.E.L. of...” or “Write an appreciation of ....” are vague and generally unhelpful to all but the most able candidates. Tasks should be worded to allow pupils to investigate and write about genre features particular to drama, prose, poetry or media texts.
- Where tasks are too heavily structured, particularly for classes offering responses to the same texts, submissions can often appear so similar as to suggest malpractice.

## **External Test of Writing**

In the main, candidates responded positively and successfully to the paper. Candidates should, however, be reminded:

- to use the features of the “specific literary form” when required by the rubric, as in No 11 (the newspaper article) and No 12 (the journal)
- to avoid using “text messaging language” unless it is a required feature of the style of writing suggested by the rubric
- that short-story writing has certain features which should be evident when this type of writing is attempted.

### **External Test of Reading**

- Most candidates were well prepared and appropriately presented in respect of levels.
- Candidates should expect and be prepared for questions on language features/techniques/imagery/sentence structure at all levels (but particularly at Credit and General levels). This is, relatively, the weakest part of candidates' responses.
- Candidates should read questions carefully.
- Candidates should be made aware of and understand the importance of key words in the Reading papers, eg
  - use of "explain/explain clearly/explain fully"
  - what is meant by "evidence/detailed reference"
  - use of "write down/quote"
  - what is meant by "an expression"
  - the difference between "how" and "why".

### **English - Spoken**

As in 2001, guidance is offered as follows.

- Care should be exercised so that Folio submissions are clearly structured so as not to become repetitive, hesitant, or over-long.
- In the external test of Understanding, time should be managed carefully so as to record answers clearly and to ensure that none is omitted accidentally.
- Communicating responses in the external test should be carefully compiled so as to give evidence of an overall coherence in which due attention is paid to pace, tone, and the required communicating purpose.