



National Qualifications 2009

Internal Assessment Report: English

Assessment Panel: English and Communication

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

Standard Grade

Element/Coursework verified

English Standard Grade Talking

Feedback to centres

General comments

Verifiers visited a number of centres. Staff and candidates involved, in all centres visited, found the procedure positive and helpful.

As they tend to, candidates responded enthusiastically to the verification, often improving on the provisional grading awarded prior to the verifier's visit.

Internal verifiers were all found to be consistent with National Standards.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

The verification of Standard Grade Talking is a requirement of the system of assessment. If a centre is unable to provide candidates for verification, then that requirement cannot be met. In such a case, the centre would need to consider an alternative to Standard Grade English.

The National Standard is exemplified on the various training tapes. Standardisation within centres is the responsibility of the individual English department. Verifiers were impressed by centres that explored Talk in a thorough and systematic way, and by those with well planned procedures for internal verification of standards. These centres had in common one or more of the following features:

- ◆ paired assessing
- ◆ visits by the internal verifier to classrooms
- ◆ partnering of inexperienced teachers with more experienced colleagues, with particular support for probationers
- ◆ internal verifier 'sampling' of classes in the department
- ◆ periodic review of SQA training tapes
- ◆ discussions within department
- ◆ a variety of 'talk situations' offered, encouraging each candidate to fulfil potential

National Units

Titles/levels of National Units verified

D8VH Language Study	(Access 3 to Advanced Higher)
D8VJ Literary Study	(Access 3 to Advanced Higher)
D8VK Personal Study	(Access 3 to Higher)
D9GV Textual Analysis	(Advanced Higher)

Feedback to centres

General comments

The following points relate to the preparation of the verification sample:

- 1 Centres should note that late submissions 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.
- 2 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.
- 3 As in previous years, there was evidence in 2009 of candidates presented at inappropriate levels. If this mismatch 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.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

Unit 1 Language Study

Close Reading

Verifiers found evidence, in a number of samples, of:

- 1 Overly-generous marking of the Close Reading Learning Outcome. This will give candidates a misleading impression of standards for Close Reading in the external examination.
- 2 Lack of proper scrutiny of borderline cases. Borderline cases should be examined carefully. The practice of referral of borderline scripts to the Head of Department or to an internal verifier was commended by verifiers.

- 3 Lack of evidence of internal verification and cross-marking. Inevitably, these practices will improve accuracy and consistency.
- 4 Particular leniency in the marking of Analysis and Evaluation questions.

Writing

At the time of writing, the proposed re-introduction of Writing to the external examination is still under discussion.

Verifiers commented on the following good practice:

- ◆ use of models for writing that link this part of the course to Textual Analysis
- ◆ candidates writing in different genres and forms
- ◆ taking contexts for writing from other subjects
- ◆ non-fictional writing demonstrating that the skills of Close Reading have been successfully absorbed

The following points summarise guidance that this year's verification sample suggests will be helpful.

- 1 The controlled conditions applying to Writing do not require the piece to be written in the teacher's presence. Drafts completed out of class, or out of school, are perfectly acceptable provided that the teacher is certain of their authorship. Drafts containing teachers' corrections and comments are acceptable samples for verification.
- 2 Writing pieces covered a good range of genres. In the main, assessments were in line with National Standards, although more helpful feedback to candidates could have been given by, for example, specific reference to Performance Criteria.
- 3 A number of pieces lacked the development required in an essay produced over a period of time, particularly some of the Higher submissions. Centres are reminded that there are minimum word limits specified for each level; if that basic criterion is not met, the piece must fail. Word limits can be found in the Unit specifications.

Well-focused redrafting is a key part of development in Writing.

Unit 2 Literary Study

Many of the centres sampled showed signs of students working with determination and commitment to produce detailed and appropriate answers. In the centres verifiers found most impressive, there was clear evidence of positive teacher support, indicating how best to improve.

Most of the marking sampled was reliable, although one or two centres, which had over-rewarded candidates for thin or under-developed answers, clearly demonstrated the benefits of cross-marking or referral to an internal verifier for standardisation. It was encouraging, in this respect, to see departments themselves correcting some rather lenient marking, and bringing markers into line with the key principles and standards of the marking guidelines for this Unit.

The National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials for the Literary Study Unit are hierarchical (as they are for Close Reading). A pass at a higher level implies one at a lower. Candidates dropping to a lower level need not, therefore, resit the NAB if they have already passed at a higher level.

At Advanced Higher, centres are reminded of the differences between the Unit assessment and the external examination:

- ◆ For the Unit assessment, candidates must have access to texts.
- ◆ Where two texts are specified in the Arrangements, the question set for the Unit assessment should require that the candidate answer only on one.
- ◆ Assuming that the conditions set for the prelim mirror those of the external exam, work produced in the context of a preliminary examination will not meet the evidence requirements of the Literary Study Unit assessment.
- ◆ Questions set for the Unit assessment should be more focused and specific than those likely to appear in the external paper.
- ◆ The Unit assessment should be marked as Pass or Fail.

Centres should note that the Literary Study Unit Evidence Requirements for Advanced Higher English specify the use of 'an unseen question' for Unit assessment. Clearly unadapted questions taken from SQA past papers, which are in the public domain, cannot be guaranteed to be unseen.

Centres presenting for Advanced Higher should also note that the use of questions from past papers for less formal assessments may be disadvantageous to candidates since they are designed not for the specific, focused demands of Unit assessment, but for the more general, broader (and, by implication, more difficult) demands of course assessment.

Unit 3 Personal Study

On the whole, submissions for Personal Study demonstrated good awareness of the Evidence Requirements of the Unit, with many candidates managing to write at length in the time allowed.

Strong essays were not over-reliant on the pursuit of too narrow an aspect of the text, but had a balanced and well-developed line of thought.

Weaker essays demonstrated one or more of the following features:

- ◆ over-reliance on narrative
- ◆ excessive exploration of analysis at the expense of the central concerns of the text
- ◆ a disjointed approach, dealing with discrete techniques but with no developed line of thought
- ◆ undue leniency in the marking of technical accuracy