

National Qualifications 2006

Senior Moderator Report

Subject: English

Assessment Panel: English and Communication

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on moderation which has taken place within National Qualifications in this subject.

STANDARD GRADE

ELEMENT / COURSEWORK MODERATED

STANDARD GRADE ENGLISH - TALKING (PILOT - NEW PROCEDURES)

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

During session 2005-2006, a number of schools took part in a pilot scheme of moderation of live candidate performance in Standard Grade English.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

The move towards moderation of candidate performance in Standard Grade English will bring English into line with other courses in which the assessment of live performance is moderated. Centres participating in the pilot were very positive about the exercise, regarding it as a more useful form of moderation than the assessment of items selected from the current training tape.

In the pilot, the SQA Moderator worked with the English department's internal moderator, assessing performances in Individual Talk and Group Discussion. Success in the moderation was dependent on consistency with national standards in assessments in both types of Talking.

The national standard is exemplified on the training tapes. English departments should continue to familiarise themselves with the application of the GRC by regular reference to the training tapes issued in past years through local authorities.

Under the new arrangements, presenting centres must have in place procedures for the internal moderation of the department's assessment of Talking.

NATIONAL UNITS

TITLES/LEVELS OF NATIONAL UNITS MODERATED

NATIONAL UNITS MODERATED (COMPLETE EVIDENCE)

D8VH	LANGUAGE STUDY (ACCESS 3 - HIGHER)
D8VJ	LITERARY STUDY (ACCESS 3 - ADVANCED HIGHER)
D8VK	PERSONAL STUDY (ACCESS 3 - HIGHER)

NATIONAL UNITS MODERATED (INCOMPLETE EVIDENCE)

D8VJ	LITERARY STUDY (ADVANCED HIGHER)
D9GT	SPECIALIST STUDY (ADVANCED HIGHER)
D9GV	TEXTUAL ANALYSIS (ADVANCED HIGHER)
D8GW	CREATIVE WRITING (ADVANCED HIGHER)

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

At all levels, moderators found clear evidence of

- good understanding of the Unit specifications and requirements;
- use of a wide range of appropriate and imaginative materials;
- good preparation of candidates.

Moderators also noted the following:

- internal moderation procedures are widespread, but not yet commonplace;
- there is a general tendency towards leniency in the marking of certain Units;
- there is evidence of candidates entered at levels beyond their competence.

In moderation, the assumption is that centres have made the correct judgements in their assessments. So, unless the sample provides evidence of lack of conformity with national standards, the moderator seeks to *confirm* the assessments of the centre.

In practice, this means that a certain flexibility is possible in the moderation of standards, more than will be possible in standardisation procedures for the marking of external assessments. This approach reflects an important distinction: moderation confirms that a level of competence has been achieved; external assessment measures how thoroughly it has been achieved.

Whether a particular level of competence has been achieved is the obvious question in the assessment of borderline candidates. In a 30-mark assessment, it is possible for a candidate without the relevant competence to come close to passing. The centre's marker may then, naturally enough, look for one or two additional marks to allow the pass. External assessment, however, is likely to expose the deficiency more clearly (particularly over a 50-mark Close Reading). Centres, in particular heads of department, should look carefully at whether the borderline candidate has achieved the competence. Review of borderline cases is good practice, but should not allow candidates short of the required competence to scrape a pass; rather it should be for the purpose of rewarding instances where loose expression has masked a mostly correct answer.

Moderators 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 moderator. It is clear, annually, that departments in which such good practice is the norm are much more likely to achieve consistency with national standards.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Access 3 - Higher

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 moderation.

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

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 moderation. 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.

Last year's report referred to the variation in approaches to the Outcome for Writing. Short-cuts to an Outcome are always possible in English, but the course should seek to develop skills and competencies rather than tick them off at the earliest opportunity.

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 moderation.

Marking of Textual Analysis was often generous. As with Close Reading, comment that fails to take account of connotation should be given little credit. Interestingly, Intermediate 2 submissions were the most accurately marked, with overly lenient interpretation of the guidelines evident principally at Higher and Intermediate 1. English teachers will not find this surprising, accommodating, as they do, pupils insistent on sitting Higher though unable to cope; and others qualified, on paper, for Intermediate 1 - in reality "over-rewarded" by their performance in Standard Grade.

Personal Study

In Personal Study, most candidates choose to study a novel. In many cases, the novel chosen is likely to restrict the possibilities for in-depth analysis of the text. In some cases, the choice of a novel, as opposed to a different genre, leads the candidate to a narrative-driven study of the text.

Moderators found widespread evidence of leniency in the marking of the Personal Study. In too many cases, it seemed that studies had been passed on the basis that three out of the four performance criteria had been met. Candidates must meet all four criteria in the one piece of writing, in the one sitting. In marking, particular attention should be paid to analysis, the criterion on which most candidates fail.

Teachers are reminded of the Unit Specification for Personal Study, in particular the range of genres permissible. Some good studies of Poetry and Drama have been submitted for moderation. It is also worth noting that 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 *Suggested areas for study* offer 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.

Advanced Higher - complete evidence

Literary Study

Moderators commented on the widespread design of accessible and discriminating instruments of assessment. Assessments, on the whole, were accurate and consistent with national standards.

Centres are reminded that candidates need only answer on *one* major text (play or novel) for the Unit assessment. Concentration on the single text should aid the focusing of analysis.

Only one piece should be submitted for moderation.

Advanced Higher - incomplete evidence

In Specialist Study, secure progress relied on strong foundations: an initial statement of intention and completion of preliminary reading. Thereafter, construction of notes, planning and discussion with the teacher should lead to a refining of the proposed area of study and a clear structure for the Dissertation.

In Literary Study, Moderators stressed the need for well-defined instruments of assessment likely to elicit thorough analysis.

Textual Analysis was most successfully taught when related and rooted in seen textual analysis of texts selected for study in the Literary Study Unit. This approach provides a sound basis for proceeding to unseen textual analysis.

Work in Creative Writing was, as might be expected, variable in imaginative flair, substance and quality. Successful approaches included integration with Literary Study, using texts as models or stimuli for writing.