

*Research and Information Services*

**MONITORING STANDARDS REPORT**



# **Comparison of English Higher 2005 and English and Communication Higher 2002**

# 1 Syllabus

## 1.1 General approach to the Syllabus

Compared with previous years the general approach in the subject has not changed. Both courses teach Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation in a holistic manner.

Between 2002 and 2005 a number of changes were introduced to the way in which Higher English was assessed. It is possible to describe the effects of the re-arrangement of assessable elements but not always within the terms laid down by this reporting process. The compensatory nature of the changes, described more fully below, indicates that simplistic comparisons or conclusions are to be avoided. The level of demand remained constant: it was merely that the route by which final grades were achieved which was different. Understanding, analysis and evaluation were, and remain, the main elements of the course.

### 1.2.1 Additions to the current syllabus

In 2005, the following options were added:

- ◆ English Personal Study (Spoken Response)

In 2002 the Specialist Study (broadly the same in spirit as the Personal Study) had to be submitted in writing.

- ◆ Candidates were allowed to use their Personal Study as the basis of a critical essay in Paper 2; this had been forbidden previously.
- ◆ Paper 2 Critical Essay included a Language section

### 1.2.2 Comment on any missing elements in current syllabus and why these were dropped

In 2005 Critical Listening, Group Presentation and Individual Presentation no longer formed part of the assessment, although the Personal Study could be assessed through Spoken Response. Both National Course Specifications contain the same verbatim expectation that pupils will engage in 'individual and collaborative talk.' (Compare, for example, p.32 (1999, 4<sup>th</sup> edition) with p.21 (2002, 1<sup>st</sup> edition).)

### 1.2.3 Which parts of the syllabus or approach have changed?

For practical reasons (from 2003 there was no internal assessment of critical essay), the requirement that candidates be assessed on at least one Scottish text was removed, although there remains strong encouragement that Scottish texts be studied as part of the course. In the scripts reviewed Scottish texts were well-represented.

### 1.2.4 Changes of approach

There have been no changes which affect the *general* approach or content of the syllabus.

### 1.2.5 Level of demand

In 2002 the Oral/Aural unit was assessed as a score out of 12.5 which accounted for 12.5% of the overall grade. If candidates chose the written response in 2005, it contributed to the achievement of the course. If candidates did not elect to be examined by Spoken Response, then there was no formal assessment of their Talking and Listening skills. It is therefore not possible to comment statistically on whether the demand has become more or less difficult. Given that talking and listening are part of the syllabus, competence in them still forms part of the level of demand.

### **1.2.6 Level of demand — whole syllabus**

The level of demand of the syllabus *as a whole* in 2005 was no more or less demanding than it was in 2002; it was merely different.

### **1.3.1 Is the depth of the more recent syllabus greater or otherwise than the earlier year?**

The more recent syllabus as a whole retains the depth of the previous syllabus while concentrating a focus on critical essay writing.

### **1.3.2 Is the breadth of the more recent syllabus greater or otherwise than the earlier year?**

The breadth of the more recent syllabus is lessened by the withdrawal of the Oral/Aural unit.

## **2 Assessment instrument**

There were a number of changes in the way in which Higher English was assessed in 2005 compared with 2002. These are outlined in Appendix 1.

Apart from the mandatory assessment of Oral/Aural skills, every element which was assessed in 2002 was still assessed in 2005 but the nature of the assessment changed. In 2005 there was no internally-produced, externally-assessed folio. In 2005 the grade is wholly dependent on exam performance, yet candidates who fail any of the internal assessments are not deemed to have achieved the course, thus giving substantial weight to the internal assessments. For example, Textual Analysis must be passed in 2005 whereas in 2002, a candidate could carry a fail in that element if s/he were able to offset it by better-than-pass performances in other assessed elements. It is the *compensatory* nature of these changes which, though hard to quantify, indicates that the level of demand has not changed but is, rather, differently constituted.

### **2.1 Question Papers, Questions and Marking Instructions**

Question Papers, Questions and Marking Instructions for Paper 1 are very similar in both years.

In 2005, Paper 2 asks for two critical essays rather than an unseen textual analysis and a critical essay.

#### **Marking Instructions**

In 2005, there was new advice to markers on what to do with unfamiliar texts. The supplementary marking instructions were longer and there was a section on advice for marking Language essays in 2005, an additional section in the Critical Essay paper that year. The Performance Criteria are identical in both years. The category descriptors for Critical Essay are identical – only the numerical values of the categories change in order to reflect a mark out of 25 in 2005 rather than 30 in 2002. There is a new definition of essays which are ‘so deficient’ that they do not meet the criteria for Category IV. These changes, important for the dissemination of standards, leave the level of difficulty of the examination and the level of demand on pupils unchanged.

### **2.2 Question Papers: Paper 1**

The format is identical. One longer passage of non-fiction prose is followed by a shorter passage. The level of difficulty of the passages is similar in both years.

## Questions

In both papers a total of 50 marks is available although in 2002 this was scaled up to 60 marks. Both papers display generic phrasing of questions e.g.

### Understanding

2002

Q.6. (a) **Using your own words as far as possible, explain** the “battle” (line 95) described by the writer in lines 93-107. 2 (U)

2005

Q. 2 (a) **Explain, using your own words as far as possible**, what is meant by “the most important driving force behind evolutionary change on the planet” (lines 17-18). 2 (U)

### Analysis

2002

Q.2 (b) **Show how the writer’s sentence structure and imagery emphasise** the contrasting musical environments of people in the Dark Ages and people today. 4 (A)

2005

Q.2 (c) **How does the language of lines 18-29 highlight** the writer’s ideas? You should refer to at least two of the following techniques: **structure**, word choice, **imagery**. 4 (A)

### Evaluation

2002

Q.11. Which passage did you find more stimulating? In your answer you should refer to the **styles and to the ideas of both passages**. 6 (E)

2005

Q.16. Which passage do you find more effective in making you think about the implications for the human race of comet and asteroid impact? Justify your choice by referring to the **ideas and style of both passages**. 5 (E)

The 2005 question provides a clearer context for the answer than does the 2002 version.

The breakdown of marks available for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation shows no appreciable difference and is as follows:

#### **Paper 1: 2002**

Understanding - 22 marks

Analysis/Evaluation – 28 marks

#### **Paper 1: 2005**

Understanding – 21 marks

Analysis/Evaluation – 29 marks

### Marking Instructions

In 2005 acceptable answers for Analysis questions are more explicit and there is more exemplification of Evaluation answers.

### Question Papers: Paper 2

The name of this paper changed from Analysis and Appreciation in 2002 to Critical Essay in 2005. The distribution of questions is as follows:

#### **Paper 2: 2002**

Unseen textual analysis (30 marks)

Plus one critical essay (30 marks)

4 on drama

4 on prose fiction

including 2 on the short story

1 on prose non-fiction

4 on poetry

4 on media

#### **Paper 2: 2005**

Two critical essays (25 marks each)

4 on drama

4 on prose fiction

including 2 on the short story

3 on prose non-fiction

4 on poetry

4 on media

4 on language

In 2005 the Personal Study could be used as the basis of an answer to a critical essay; in 2002 it was not permitted.

As with Paper 1 generic phrasing is used to construct questions in Paper 2 in 2002 and 2005 thus maintaining consistency in the level of demand and in the reliability of assessment instrument. Each essay question has a tripartite structure in which the candidate is asked to **choose** a text, briefly **outline** its content and then go on **to show how** the text is relevant to the question posed. Questions are identically or synonymously expressed in both papers as a comparison of 2002 Drama (3) and 2005 Drama (2) indicates.

2002 Drama (3)

Choose a play whose main theme concerns one of the following: power, corruption, disillusionment.

Explain how the dramatist introduces the theme and discuss to what extent you found the way it is explored in the play enhanced your understanding of the theme.

2005 Drama (2)

Choose a play which features **one** of the following themes: appearance versus reality; good versus evil; dreams versus reality; youth versus age.

Show how the dramatist develops one of these themes and discuss how the exploration of this theme enhances your appreciation of the play as a whole.

### **2.2.1 Do candidates perform to the same standard in these questions or sections, over both years?**

Candidates perform the same way in the questions in Paper 1 and the marking of scripts demonstrates a high degree of consistency from candidates and from markers in understanding, analysis and evaluation across both years.

### **2.2.2 Are there any discernible trends in particular parts and what is their effect on the level of demand**

In terms of critical essay, candidates in 2005 perform slightly better in the examination. These candidates did not have to sit an unseen textual analysis. The demand to produce two critical essays shows a better understanding of the requirements of the critical essay: less obsession with lists of techniques and more thorough preparation for the task.

### **2.3 Coverage of syllabus in Question Papers**

The coverage of the more recent syllabus in the more recent Question Paper with regards to Paper 1 is comparable. The coverage of the more recent syllabus in the more recent Question Paper with regard to Paper 2 is different. It is less extensive in that it does not include unseen Textual Analysis. It is more extensive in that it requires two critical essays rather than one. The focus on understanding, analysis and evaluation remains constant in both question papers surveyed and the performance criteria relevant in both years are identical.

### **2.4 Level of demand of Question Papers and Marking Instructions**

Questions are formulated, and often expressed, in synonymous or identical language. The guidance in the marking schemes in 2005 is more explicit than it was in 2002 for both papers. The performance indicators are identical. The questions and marking scheme of the more recent Question Paper are therefore comparable with the same elements in the earlier ones.

#### **Scripts**

The assessed elements in 2002 are different from those assessed in 2005.

2002	
6 constituent marks for grading purposes	Percentage of total
1 Close reading 50 marks (scaled to 60)	30%
2 Unseen textual analysis (30)	15%
3 Critical essay (25)	12.5%
4 Folio: Specialist study (30)	15%
5 Folio: writing piece (25)	12.5%
6 Talk (25)	12.5%
Total 200 marks	100%

2005	
3 constituent marks for grading purposes	Percentage of total
1 Close reading (50 marks)	50%
2 Critical Essay 1 (25)	25%
3 Critical Essay 2 (25)	25%
Total 100 marks	100%

The scripts of 3 candidates for each grade for each year were scrutinised. A-grade scripts were examples of the A-grade Band 2 boundary in the range table for their year. B-grade scripts were examples of the Band 3 boundary. C-grade scripts were examples of the Band 6 grade boundary and D-grade scripts were examples of the Band 7 boundary.

However, it is important to grasp the following points about the overall dynamics of the blend of folio and examination assessment in Paper 2 in 2002 before a comparison can be attempted:

#### 2002

- ◆ The unseen textual analysis tended to depress the overall performance of a majority of candidates in the scripts surveyed.
- ◆ The Folio grade tended to offset a less strong examination performance. A strong mark for Folio (Specialist Study and Writing) could offset a weak unseen textual analysis mark and a satisfactory critical essay mark. A contrary motion was observable at grade D.
- ◆ All of the scripts surveyed achieved a Talk Grade which varied between 9 and 12.5.
- ◆ Folio and examination marking was completed in line with the relevant performance indicators.
- ◆ No evidence of the Talk/Critical Listening products on which assessment was based was available for scrutiny.

#### Paper 1

There was no difficulty in making a direct comparison as the papers were very similar in form and content. In order to achieve an A, candidates had to do well in both Understanding and Analysis/Evaluation. A high score in the latter category was the predictor of a secure grade at either A or, proportionately, at B. Candidates who scored A/B in 2002 would have scored A/B in 2005.

#### Paper 2

It was harder to make a direct comparison here as there was no second critical essay in 2002 and no unseen textual analysis in 2005. The position was complicated by the fact that, in 2002, critical essay writing was also assessed for grading purposes through the Specialist Study.

In order to effect some basis of comparison it was decided compare the 2005 scripts with the 2002 scripts by doubling the critical essay mark and adding it to the close reading mark to give a score out of 120 which could then be turned into a percentage and compared with the score out of 100 for the 2005 examination. When this process was undertaken,

examination scripts from 2002 appeared to be slightly weaker when compared with examination scripts in 2005.

The comparison still lacks accuracy as difference is more than compensated for by the generally stronger Folio grades and Talk grades which candidates were expected to achieve, and did achieve, in that year's syllabus in order to accumulate credit. The effect of the changes in assessment is not that one year's course is more easy or difficult than the other but that in 2005, all candidates have their entire grade awarded under the same controlled conditions of the examination. Thus in 2005 candidates' performance across both papers tends to consistency and does not show the difference between Folio/Talk performance and examination performance which can be seen in 2002. Effort is more consistent in 2005 and the process by which credit is gained is more transparent.

### **3**      **Scripts**

#### A/B graded scripts

In both years A and B grades were awarded correctly according to the relevant performance criteria or marking schemes. Thus the grades, though differently achieved, are comparable, accurately reflecting the grade boundaries in the range table. Script 1A: 2002 seemed anomalous because it showed a difference of more than 5% when compared with 2005 scripts. However, this could be remedied by doubling the textual analysis score instead of the critical essay score for a candidate who, against the run of play, did better in textual analysis than critical essay.

#### C/D graded scripts

The same comments apply proportionately to C/D graded scripts. Script 1C:2002 was compared using the textual analysis score rather than the critical essay score, in the same way as script 1A:2002. Script 3C: 2005 shows evidence of review procedures instituted by SQA in order to ensure fairness in that candidates at grade boundaries are protected from severe markers and not unduly advantaged by lenient ones.

# Appendix 1

Changes in manner of assessment between 2002 and 2005

## 2002 English and Communication

### External Assessment

Exam Paper 1 Close Reading: 2 passages; total 50 marks but scaled as if out of 60

Exam Paper 2 Analysis and Appreciation: unseen Textual Analysis (30 marks); one critical essay (from any of four sections – use of Specialist Study forbidden) (30 marks)

Folio Specialist study (30 marks)

Writing piece (25 marks)

The folio was internally produced but externally assessed

### Internal Assessment

Oral element centre-submitted mark out of 12.5 which was doubled to become out of 25

Total 200

## 2005 English

### External Assessment

Exam Paper 1 Close reading: 2 passages; total 50 marks

Exam Paper 2 Critical Essay: 2 essays; 25 marks each; total 50 marks (from any 2 of 5 sections – Language added; use of Personal Study permitted)

Total 100 marks

### Internal Assessment

4 outcomes from 3 units

Unit 1 Language Study Writing piece (Pass/Fail)

National Assessment Bank: Close Reading (30 marks)

Unit 2 Literary Study National Assessment Bank: Textual Analysis (30 marks)

Unit 3 Personal Study The end product of a 40-hour unit. Broadly the same in spirit as the Specialist Study (or its predecessor, the Review of Personal Reading), ie an essay on a text/topic chosen by the candidate and studied independently, with a teacher/lecturer monitoring progress and plans, but with key differences as follows:

- ◆ Not drafted/redrafted
- ◆ Written under test conditions (60 minutes; access to text(s); access to up to 2 A4 pages of notes)
- ◆ May be assessed by Spoken Response
- ◆ Written response assessed as Pass/Fail using the same performance criteria as Critical Essay

- ◆ Spoken Response assessed by performance criteria which are the same as those for Individual Presentation in 2002

None of the internally assessed units is counted in the final mark for grading purposes but unless the candidate passes these units s/he cannot achieve the course even supposing s/he passes the exam.