

Moderation Feedback – Visiting and Central - 2005

Assessment Panel:

English

Qualification area

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

**Standard Grade English Talking
NQ Access 3 to Advanced Higher**

General comments on moderation activity

In session 2004-2005, moderation in English covered a variety of areas.

In Standard Grade, 7 moderators visited 23 centres.

50 centres were moderated at central moderation. 15 moderators attended.

This year, Advanced Higher was not moderated centrally. Submissions were sent by post to a nominated moderator, and reviewed by the Senior Moderator on their return.

The pilot of moderation using incomplete evidence at Advanced Higher was extended into a second year. Two moderators visited 10 centres around the country. Once again, feedback from centres was very positive.

One centre was subject to retrospective moderation.

Two centres requested development visits. Two moderators were used for these.

The intention was to carry out some visiting moderation of Personal Study (spoken response). In the event, however, all centres with candidates entered had withdrawn and entered them (perfectly properly) for the written version. There was, therefore, no moderation of the spoken version of this Unit.

National Units/Courses moderated (complete evidence)

Standard Grade Talking		(Visiting)
D8VH	Language Study (Acc3–Higher)	(Central)
D8VK	Personal Study (Acc3–Higher)	(Central)
D8VJ	Literary Study (Advanced Higher)	(Postal)

Problems encountered were rare. Overall, eight centres were judged 'not accepted' (all at central moderation). Of these, four had incorrectly, or incompletely, compiled the moderation sample. Inconsistencies in assessments in the remaining four were discussed with the Senior Moderator and satisfactorily addressed.

Specific issues identified

Moderation activities this year provide clear evidence of the following:

- 1 good understanding of the Unit specifications and requirements
- 2 use of appropriate, often stimulating, texts and classroom materials
- 3 good preparation of candidates
- 4 a high level, nationally, of consistency with national standards in assessment
- 5 growing awareness of the need for procedures for the standardisation of internal assessment.

Guidance on specific aspects of the Units is offered in section 4 of this report.

There continue to be misunderstandings about some areas of moderation procedures. Clarification is offered in section 4.

Feedback to centres

Moderation activity in 2004-5

Visiting moderation

Moderation of Standard Grade Talking

Pilot of moderation using incomplete evidence in Advanced Higher English:

Literary Study;
Creative Writing;
Specialist Study.

Central moderation

Language Study (Access 3 to Higher)

Personal Study – written response (Access 3 to Higher)

Literary Study (Advanced Higher)

Retrospective moderation, in September, targeted a limited sample of centres.

Moderators carried out a number of development visits to discuss aspects of SQA moderation procedures and to offer advice on assessment.

General comments

At all levels, moderators found clear evidence of the following:

- 1 good understanding of the Unit specifications and requirements
- 2 use of appropriate, often stimulating, texts and classroom materials
- 3 good preparation of candidates
- 4 a high level, nationally, of consistency with national standards in assessment
- 5 growing awareness of the need for procedures for the standardisation of internal assessment.

Feedback and advice – general

Annually, moderators see the evidence of the benefits of internal moderation of standards. The point has been made in previous reports, but continues to emerge at central moderation. Consistency in the application of standards in assessment will not occur unless the department has in place procedures for internal moderation. Where cross-marking, referral to PT or internal moderator, departmental discussion of standards, agreement trials, review in the light of SQA guidance are normal practice, assessment across a department is much more likely to achieve consistency with national standards.

Materials moderated show a range of practices in correction, from a simple indication of 'Pass/Fail' to detailed correction of errors and indicators of areas for improvement. Whatever the department's preference,

candidates who have failed and need to be reassessed will find invaluable clear indications of strengths, weaknesses and errors.

In feedback to moderators, some centres have asked that comments be added to materials in moderation, prior to return to centres. SQA markers will be aware of the prohibition on adding comments to candidates' scripts. This regulation applies also to moderation.

Centres are reminded of the importance of using current Unit specifications and assessment criteria. These are available on the SQA website.

Feedback and advice on Units and Courses

Standard Grade Talking

Little need be added to advice provided in recent annual reports on moderation.

Colleagues around the country are secure in their assessments, in most cases conforming with the standards demonstrated on the SQA video-tape.

Agreement is reached readily on the 'borderline' items. Discussions are positive and constructive.

Moderators have commented on the professionalism of departments during the moderation exercise, and on the courtesy extended towards them.

Language Study Unit (Access 3 to Higher)

Close Reading

NABs should be from the up-to-date stock (see SQA's secure website). Past papers, commercially produced materials, or support materials are not acceptable. Colleagues will find *Tragic Beauty*, *Shoulder to Shoulder* and *Reaching for the Moon* particularly helpful in providing prelim papers, Unit Outcome assessments and evidence for appeals.

Half-marks should not be used in the marking of Close Reading at Intermediate 1 and 2.

There is a general tendency towards leniency in the marking of analysis questions. Colleagues are reminded of the advice offered at the Professional Development Workshops.

Changes to the SQA marking guidelines are permitted, but should be clearly indicated.

The time allocation indicated for the Close Reading NAB should be followed.

Writing

There is a considerable variation in the teaching and learning of writing around the country. The strongest examples are seen in centres where the final product emerges from a structured writing programme. Alternative approaches include the other extreme: as soon as a draft meets the criteria to pass, the Outcome is completed. While the latter approach is acceptable, one casualty of the minimalist approach is sophistication, and the articulation with Advanced Higher must suffer as a result.

It would be helpful to moderators if each submission were to carry a clear indication of the writing task and purpose.

To assist with the checking of assessments, moderators welcome a justification for the decision to pass or fail – a comment, a checklist or feedback to the candidate.

On those writing scripts which fail, it would seem logical to note the next steps which would allow the candidate to pass.

Personal Study – written response

Centres are reminded that the Personal Study should be completed under controlled conditions.

Candidates will benefit from a frank discussion about the suitability of texts. At the time of writing, many borderline candidates opt for memoirs of a variety of society's victims and casualties. These studies are often particularly badly done, since little in the way of analysis is offered.

The task set should have a clear focus. The relative importance of analysis should be stressed to candidates, particularly those likely to be borderline. Failure to address the stated task will often lead to limited success.

The chosen focus should not encourage a narrative-driven approach to the study.

Advanced Higher

Three Units were moderated, two of them mandatory and one optional:

Specialist Study
Literary Study
Creative Writing.

1 In Specialist Study, candidates are best served by a process which involves negotiation of appropriate choices, independent study, compliance with deadlines, and ongoing monitoring of progress.

2 In Literary Study, candidates will benefit from the study of a broad range of texts. In Unit assessments, consideration should be given to a more focused question than past papers provide – reflecting what candidates have actually studied. In some submissions moderated centrally there was no clear indication of how decisions to pass or fail had been reached. The use of a summative assessment sheet indicating the extent to which each of the criteria has/has not been met would be useful for moderation and for feedback.

3 In Creative Writing, there was clear evidence of systematic and thorough teaching, at its best when candidates were encouraged to explore a variety of genres.