

Moderation Feedback – Visiting & Central

Assessment Panel:

English and Communication

Qualification area

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

**English
Standard Grade and Access 3 — AH**

English

Standard Grade English (Talking) 2004

Feedback to centres

Observations and recommendations

The high degree of conformity with national standards is hardly surprising. It is now sixteen years since the full implementation of Standard Grade English, and most centres visited by Moderators are clearly familiar with the GRC and their application.

Once again, Moderators commented on the courtesy extended to them during the visit. It is not necessarily expected that a member of senior management will meet the Moderator, but, given the importance of the moderation in ensuring consistency with national standards, the interest of a senior manager is a welcome indication of the importance attached to the procedure by the centre.

No problems were encountered in the arrangements for the visit. Accommodation and equipment provided were at least adequate and often much more. Centres should ensure that the TV and video provided for the Moderator's use are in good working order: the occasional difficulty in the quality of sound on the training tape is attributable to faulty or sub-standard equipment.

In discussions about the items selected, Moderators were impressed by the awareness of the GRC. It is particularly encouraging that new entrants to the profession frequently demonstrate a high degree of consistency with SQA standards, indicating sound and relevant preparation as part of their training.

Those departments most closely in line with national standards had in place some means of internal standardisation or moderation. Departments without such procedures should consider the value of cross-marking, team-teaching, internal moderation, and the partnering of inexperienced with more experienced colleagues. In addition, familiarity with the training tapes is an obvious priority — not merely for consistency with standards, but for “fine-tuning” of those with more experience.

Centres are selected for future moderation on two main criteria:

- 1 marked tendency towards leniency or severity in assessment of the selected pieces
- 2 lack of cooperation, or difficulty in reaching agreement about assigned grades.

Further selections are generated randomly.

English

Senior Moderator Report — National Units

Access 3 — Advanced Higher 2004

Feedback to Centres

Units moderated

National Units

D8VH Language Study	Access 3 — Higher
D8VK Personal Study (written response)	Access 3 — Higher
D8VL Personal Study (spoken response)	Access 3 — Higher
D8VJ Literary Study	Advanced Higher
D9GV Textual Analysis	Advanced Higher

Observations and recommendations

Moderation of incomplete evidence

This year, for the first time, there was a pilot moderation of incomplete evidence (ie of work in progress rather than of the end-of-unit product). Centres were approached following consideration of three criteria:

- 1 some visits were to look specifically at work in Advanced Higher;
- 2 a selection of schools offering National Courses or Units in S3/4 was to be visited;
- 3 the selection of centres should be geographically varied.

The last of these would include centres not necessarily meeting the first two criteria.

In general, centres welcomed the emphasis on provisional assessment of work in Units, and all visited were very positive about the initiative.

In Advanced Higher, there was widespread evidence of good practice. Questions for critical essays were well designed, and application of assessment criteria was often careful and thoughtful. Other areas noted during moderation will be helpful for departments to consider. In the Specialist Study — Dissertation, centres should note that the “broad-sweep” approach is often unsuccessful: narrowing the scope of the study can help to focus the candidate’s attention on key aspects of texts. Centres should also bear in mind the difficulties in attempting to effect a comparison between different genres (for example, a novel and a film). Finally, the 40-point assessment scale for the Dissertation and the 30-point scale for Literary Study are more accurate and flexible assessment instruments than A–D, and their use is recommended.

A few schools have considered a move towards National Units and Courses in S3 and S4. At the time of writing, presentation for National Courses is permissible one year early, but

candidates can be presented for National Units in S3. The centres visited had opted for a course in S3 constructed around the work of the National Units, but without formal registration with SQA. Such matters are for decision by individual centres. There were evident advantages, however, in terms of progression.

In sampling a range of work from centres, Moderators were able to judge more fully the effectiveness of assessment procedures. For example, consistency across a department might be a matter of good fortune; or it might reflect good practice — with procedures in place to ensure (continuing) consistency, eg cross-marking, team-teaching, mentoring, agreement trials. The same point could be made about conformity with national standards.

Visiting Moderation

In Personal Study (spoken response), some centres had entered candidates for both written and spoken response, with the final decision made at the appropriate point in the course. This strategy is unnecessary, and may incur an additional cost. Entries should be for either spoken or written. Centres may then withdraw an individual from either and enrol for the other, at any point prior to 31 March.

Many centres opting for Personal Study (spoken) had often done so because of particular strengths of candidates. In some cases, however, it had clearly been viewed as a soft option for weaker candidates unable to cope with the controlled conditions imposed on the written response — a strategy with an evident flaw, given the nature and over-riding importance of the external examination. That apart, the performance criteria are identical for understanding, analysis and evaluation. Most candidates who failed did so on analysis.

There are several additional points that centres should note:

- 1 candidates should not be failed on the basis of their plans or notes for the talk;
- 2 the Moderator will expect to see a copy of the centre's instrument of assessment for each candidate;
- 3 the time lapse between the original assessment and the moderation is of no consequence: the Moderator and the centre's assessor are to agree (pass or fail) on the presentation given on the day;
- 4 candidates must conform to the arrangements for assessment.

The most successful presentations had a clear structure (with a statement of purpose in the introduction and clear reference throughout), detailed and in-depth analysis, and evident engagement with the text.

In those centres which most impressed Moderators, there were strong internal procedures — paperwork and checklists clearly related to SQA requirements, and some form of internal moderation.

Central Moderation

Central Moderation focuses on the end-of-unit assessments, and is the SQA's means of checking the conformity with national standards of the internally assessed written components of the National Courses and National Units. The presence, at Central Moderation, of the Principal Assessors for Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher provides an important link with external assessment.

Centres should note that incorrect entering of information on the *Moderation Sample* form, or the submission of an incomplete sample, will result in a delay in notification of the result — inevitably, since the sample will need to be returned to the centre. Delays of any kind, including late submission of the moderation sample, may lead to further action by the moderation section of SQA.

Information on the correct entering of details on the form is sent to the centre with the form. If it is not clear what is required, it should be checked with moderation staff in Hanover House. On occasion, they will refer an enquiry to the Senior Moderator.

In Close Reading, NABs are available for the Unit assessment. Support materials, other commercially produced papers and internally produced papers which have not had prior moderation are all perfectly valid means of checking progress in National Courses, but are not acceptable as evidence of completion of the Unit. In marking, departments should adhere closely to the marking schemes (allowing for the degree of flexibility indicated in each Close Reading NAB), especially in the analysis and evaluation questions.

In Writing, there were many centres in which the practice of sampling and re-marking scripts had helped to ensure standards and consistency. This commendable practice was often used as an appeal, within the centre, for candidates on the borderline between pass and fail. Comments on scripts should make clear why a piece has passed or failed, indicating areas of strength and next steps for improvement. Submissions for moderation need not be final drafts.

In Personal Study (written response), many tasks set were vague, resulting in unfocused essays in which the reader struggled to assess the merits of the argument. It is assumed in moderation that work has been produced under controlled conditions. In normal circumstances, the Personal Study should be hand-written, unless the candidate qualifies for special arrangements. If the piece is word-processed, centres must be able to confirm that all necessary conditions have been met: that it was completed in one hour; that the piece itself was not a redraft; that no software, spell-checks or “tools” have been used to improve expression, and that the writing of the essay was closely supervised throughout.

Many of the submissions for moderation indicated that confusion about the assessment of the Personal Study (written) persists. Some of this has undoubtedly arisen as a result of the use of out-of-date criteria. Some centres continue to refer to “Specialist Study”, the criteria for which differ from those for Personal Study (written) in at least one important respect: because the specialist study was a redrafted piece, the requirement under “Expression” was that it should be “consistently accurate”. At Intermediate 2 and Higher, Personal Study has the requirement of “sufficiently accurate”, a shift in emphasis reflecting its production under controlled conditions.

Overall, there is a noticeably stronger set of responses from those centres which understand the demands of analysis, in Close Reading and in Personal Study. In Close Reading, there was a tendency in some centres to over-mark analysis questions, giving too much credit for denotative comment; in Personal Study, the ability to discuss connotation was often lacking. In other words, the most impressive candidates had learned the distinction between denotative and connotative comment, and applied that knowledge to Close Reading and to Personal Study.

In Advanced Higher, moderation of Literary Study indicated thorough teaching of complex texts and sound preparation of candidates. Centres should note that only one critical essay should be submitted for moderation. In Textual Analysis, there was evidence throughout the responses that the requirements of Textual Analysis had been fully understood. Assessments were often not merely accurate, but provided unambiguous guidance on the decision to pass or fail.