

2004 English Specialist Study Dissertation

Advanced Higher

Finalised Marking Instructions

CONTENTS

SECTION 1 ***WHAT IS REQUIRED OF CANDIDATES*** **Pages 3—8**

SECTION 2 ***WHAT IS REQUIRED OF MARKERS*** **Pages 9—21**

SECTION 1 **WHAT IS REQUIRED OF CANDIDATES**

What is required of candidates is determined by the regulations of the national course and unit specifications, key parts of which, as a reminder to markers, are reproduced below.

A. EXTRACTS FROM THE NATIONAL COURSE SPECIFICATION

1. Assessment

The award of Advanced Higher English will be based on a combination of internal and external assessment. To gain the award, candidates must pass internal unit assessments in all three of the component units that constitute the course they have chosen; and they must pass external course assessment related to these units. External course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment for the course award.

In relation to *English: Specialist Study*, one of the two mandatory component units of the course, candidates will be subject to the following external assessment requirement:

- **by 30 April**, candidates will be required to submit to SQA, as a mandatory component of course assessment, a dissertation on their approved topic, authenticated as having been produced in a manner that satisfies the evidence requirements of the unit.

The Specialist Study dissertation will carry a weighting of **40%**.

Authors, texts and topics that are central to the work of candidates in *English: Specialist Study* may not be used in any other parts of external course assessment.

Candidates will be required to record on their answer booklet(s)/folio flyleaf

- Specialist Study texts and topics

2. Guidance on grading

Guidance on grading for the course is offered in terms of additional qualities that candidates may display **beyond grade C**. For those key areas of quality beyond Grade C, performance is described at Grade A. These descriptions constitute Indicators of Excellence. Grade A performance will be characterised by overall high quality showing evidence of **at least four** of the Indicators of Excellence across **at least two** of the categories listed in the Performance Criteria and Indicators of Excellence tables for each outcome.

Where the overall quality of a piece of work goes beyond the performance criteria for Grade C, but falls short of Grade A, it will attain Grade B.

Performance criteria at Advanced Higher should be viewed in the light of the evidence requirements and support notes provided in the unit specifications. These take account of the fact that, at this level, the complexity of the tasks and the nature and volume of the materials demand advanced skills from candidates, the majority of whom will previously have achieved Higher.

3. Performance Criteria and Indicators of Excellence tables for the Specialist Study

GRADE C Performance Criteria	GRADE A Indicators of Excellence <i>At least 4 bullet points from at least two categories.</i>
<p>Understanding</p> <p>The dissertation takes a relevant and thoughtful approach to the stated topic and demonstrates secure understanding of key elements, central concerns and significant details of the texts or of the linguistic or media field of study.</p> <p>Analysis</p> <p>The dissertation makes relevant and thoughtful critical/analytical comment and demonstrates secure handling of literary, linguistic or media concepts, techniques, forms, usages.</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p>Judgements made are relevant, thoughtful and securely based on detailed evidence drawn from primary and, where appropriate, secondary sources.</p> <p>Expression</p> <p>Structure, style and language, including the use of appropriate critical/analytical terminology, are consistently accurate and effective in developing a relevant argument.</p>	<p>Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thorough exploration is made of the implications of the stated topic. • Sustained insight is revealed into key elements, central concerns and significant details of the texts or of the linguistic or media field of study. <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full and satisfying range of critical/analytical comment is offered. • Literary, linguistic or media concepts, techniques, forms, usages are handled with skill and precision. <p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptive and incisive judgements are made. • Deployment of evidence drawn from primary and, where appropriate, secondary sources is skilful and precise. <p>Expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure, style and language, including the use of appropriate critical/analytical terminology, are skilfully deployed to develop a pertinent and sharply focused argument.

B. EXTRACTS FROM THE NATIONAL UNIT SPECIFICATION

1. Outcome

Make an independent study of and produce a dissertation on an aspect or aspects of language or literature or media or some combination of these.

2. Performance Criteria

Understanding

The dissertation takes a relevant and thoughtful approach to the stated topic and demonstrates secure understanding of key elements, central concerns and significant details of the texts or of the linguistic or media field of study.

Analysis

The dissertation makes relevant and thoughtful critical/analytical comment and demonstrates secure handling of literary, linguistic or media concepts, techniques, forms, usages.

Evaluation

Judgements made are relevant, thoughtful and securely based on detailed evidence drawn from primary and, where appropriate, secondary sources.

Expression

Structure, style and language, including the use of appropriate critical/analytical terminology, are consistently accurate and effective in developing a relevant argument.

3. Evidence Requirements

The chosen topic and the materials on which it is based must be deemed by the centre to be suitable for independent study (of appropriate quality, personally selected by candidates, not the subject of teaching in this unit or of teaching or assessment in other units of this course or other courses).

Candidates must produce an extended piece of writing in the form of a dissertation on their approved topic.

The dissertation must be between 3500 and 4500 words in length, including quotations but excluding mandatory footnotes and bibliography.

The dissertation must be unassisted and produced under a system of supervision that guarantees authenticity through a process requiring candidates to submit the following at appropriate stages:

- draft title and proposals
- outline plan
- first draft
- final submission.

Draft materials must be retained as evidence of authenticity.

Candidates must meet all of the performance criteria in one dissertation.

4. Guidance on Content and Context

Several broad fields of study are open to candidates, for example:

- literature
- local literature and folklore
- literature and language
- language studies
- media studies

Candidates should select a topic that will enable them to offer a full exposition and discussion of a particular aspect their chosen field of study. For example, a literary theme might be pursued through the works of a single author, or works of several authors, or over a historical period; a language topic might focus on language acquisition, the dialect of a specific locality, the language of specialist groups; a media topic might be related to the study of language or of literature.

Studies of the works of a single author or single works by two or more authors should avoid a serial treatment in which each work is left isolated from the other(s). Studies that involve the collection and analysis of data and information should be presented in discursive form.

5. Guidance on Learning and Teaching Approaches

The demands of this substantial study—a compulsory component of the course—require close attention. The candidate must demonstrate the ability to:

- select a suitable topic
- adopt a personal stance towards the topic
- devise, structure and sustain an argument
- select evidence from primary and secondary sources to support an argument
- employ the literary, linguistic, media concepts and terminology appropriate to the exposition of the topic.

The first stage in the process is the selection of texts or topics for study and the formulation of a brief descriptive statement of what the candidate proposes to study. This proposal must be submitted to the teacher/lecturer for approval in order to ensure that the proposed materials are appropriate to an English course and worthy of study at this level, and that the study itself is manageable.

The study should explore a limited area and examine it in detail with appropriate supporting evidence.

In preparing the dissertation, candidates will engage in a range of activities that includes:

- negotiating a study programme
- establishing deadlines for the submission of work
- establishing regular opportunities for consultation
- studying source materials to locate appropriate information
- comparing aspects of source materials
- applying a knowledge of appropriate critical and analytical approaches
- acquiring an awareness of contexts—literary, historical, cultural, ideological, for example
- deploying evidence from secondary source
- drafting, editing and redrafting
- presenting collated and revised material in an appropriate form.

While candidates should be encouraged to consult secondary sources, they should be warned against excessive derivativeness and of the dangers of plagiarism.

6. Guidance on the Production of the Dissertation

Clearly, production of the dissertation will vary from candidate to candidate and from centre to centre.

The following is offered as an exemplar of good practice.

Teachers/lecturers should:

- brief candidates on the nature of the task at the outset
- illustrate the wide range of texts and topics available
- discuss candidates' individual and personal interests
- guide candidates towards consultation with librarians or other teachers/lecturers and towards use of databanks
- give practical help with final choice and location of texts and with the wording of topics and titles
- provide regular opportunities for consultation and support
- make clear to candidates the procedures that must apply in order to meet deadlines and evidence requirements
- record the progress of candidates at different stages in the production of the dissertation in order to assure themselves of the authenticity of the work.

Candidates should:

- write, type or word-process their dissertations on one side of A4 paper only
- use italics or underlining to indicate titles of texts
- set in from the margin all quotations of more than one line so that they are clearly distinguishable from the text of the dissertation
- use footnotes and page references where appropriate to identify quotations from and references to primary sources
- use footnotes and page references at all times to identify and acknowledge quotations from, references to and information/ideas gleaned from secondary sources
- provide an accurate bibliography
- give footnote and bibliography references in the following form:
D.Gifford and D. McMillan, A History of Scottish Women's Writing, EUP, 1997.

7. Guidance on Approaches to Assessment

In order to achieve the unit outcome, the dissertation that candidates are required to produce must meet:

- all of the evidence requirements
- all of the performance criteria.

8. Selection of texts and topics

It should be noted that texts and topics:

- must be personally selected by candidates (under the guidance of teachers/lecturers)
- must be accepted by centres as suitable choices
- must not be the subject of teaching
- must not be the subject of teaching or assessment in other units of the Advanced Higher English course or in the units of other courses.

9. Length

The dissertation which candidates produce as evidence of attainment in the Specialist Study unit must be between 3500 and 4500 words in length, including quotations but excluding footnotes and bibliography. In order to achieve consistency in this area, teachers/lecturers and candidates should note that 4500 words (including quotations) is the maximum length permissible. Dissertations which exceed this will disqualify candidates from achieving the outcome and consequently the unit. Where the dissertation is submitted for external course assessment, candidates will be required to indicate the number of words used on the Dissertation Flyleaf.

10. Authentication

Candidates will be required to sign a declaration that the dissertations they submit are their own work, and teachers/lecturers responsible for the supervision of candidates will also be required to indicate that, to the best of their knowledge, the dissertations submitted are the candidates' own work. Teachers/lecturers should retain evidence of submission at outline and draft stages to support authentication.

SECTION 2 **WHAT IS REQUIRED OF MARKERS**

What is required of markers is the exercise of professional judgement of the quality of candidate performance in the context of SQA procedural requirements with which they must comply.

A. SQA PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

The most significant of these are that markers must:

- **attend the meeting of markers**—convened to clarify the procedures to be followed and to establish the standards to be applied in the course of their marking
- **take personal responsibility for assessing each dissertation allocated to them**—fairly and consistently in accordance with the guidance and exemplars provided at the meeting of markers
- **follow SQA instructions**—for
checking that they have received the appropriate scripts
reporting any anomalies or irregularities in their allocation
recording clearly and accurately the marks they have awarded
keeping a record of marks awarded
returning scripts, marks sheets, marks sheet substitutes, PA referral sheets and any other necessary materials within notified deadlines
- **provide SQA with a report**—outlining the principal features of candidate performance and drawing attention to any other matters of assessment or procedure they consider relevant.

B. TECHNICAL MATTERS CONCERNING THE VALIDITY OF SUBMISSIONS

The key statement concerning the validity of dissertations submitted for external assessment occurs in the National Course Specification and is as follows:

“In relation to *English: Specialist Study*, one of the two mandatory component units of the course, candidates will be subject to the following external assessment requirement:

- **by 30 April**, candidates will be required to submit to SQA, as a mandatory component of course assessment, a dissertation on their approved topic, authenticated as having been produced in a manner that satisfies the evidence requirements of the unit.”

Several matters arise with regard to validity in the light of this statement.

1. Length

Matters here are very clear. As a key evidence requirement, each dissertation

“must be between 3500 and 4500 words in length, including quotations but excluding mandatory footnotes and bibliography”.

In the National Unit Specification: support notes, further emphasis is given to the importance of adhering to these regulations on length:

“In order to achieve consistency in this area, teachers/lecturers and candidates should note that 4500 words (including quotations) is the maximum length permissible. Dissertations which exceed these will disqualify candidates from achieving the outcome and consequently the unit.”

There is no flexibility here. There is no sliding scale of penalties. Either the dissertation is valid in terms of length (and can be accepted for external assessment) or it is not (and cannot therefore be accepted).

Any dissertation which exceeds the maximum length should be marked in the normal way and referred to the Principal Assessor.

2. Footnotes and bibliographies

Markers should note that the provision of footnotes and bibliography is “mandatory”.

Any dissertation which fails to satisfy either part of this requirement should be marked in the normal way and referred to the Principal Assessor.

3. Authentication

Authentication of dissertations as “having been produced in a manner that satisfies the evidence requirements of the unit” (by means of declaratory signatures) must be included on the Specialist Study Flyleaf. The absence of a candidate signature on the Specialist Study Flyleaf should be accepted (circumstances may have made this inevitable), but not the absence of a teacher/lecturer signature.

Any dissertation whose flyleaf is unsigned by the teacher/lecturer responsible for supervising its production (or whose authentication is in some other way in doubt) should be marked in the normal way and referred to the Principal Assessor.

4. Plagiarism

Almost all dissertations will be to some extent derivative. This is to be expected, and markers should be careful not to penalise the efforts of candidates who are honestly using the ideas of other writers to strengthen their own arguments. Usually, the more marked this derivativeness, the weaker the dissertation will tend to be. Although candidates will not always admit the extent of their use and adaptation of key critical ideas, they do normally acknowledge direct quotation and paraphrasing. A minority, however, may attempt systematic plagiarism of a fairly audacious kind. Such plagiarism may be established if markers have access directly to the sources used by candidates. Plagiarism may also be detected from internal evidence—discontinuities in style, extreme variations in the quality of thought and comment in different parts of the dissertation, obvious and elementary failure on the part of candidates to grasp the meaning of what they have written, miscellaneous gross absurdities and tell-tale blunders. Caution, of course, must be exercised in drawing conclusions exclusively from internal evidence. Nevertheless, markers have a responsibility to treat all candidates equally. In fairness, therefore, to the vast majority of honest candidates who have not engaged in plagiarism, those who have done so (or are seriously suspected of having done so) should be reported to SQA.

Any dissertation in which plagiarism can be established with reference to actual sources (or in which plagiarism is suspected but cannot be proved by the marker) should be marked in the normal way and referred to the Principal Assessor.

C. THE SPECIALIST STUDY MARKING SCHEME AND HOW TO USE IT

Markers should develop an understanding of the rationale of the marking scheme which they are required to apply and of the various considerations that have informed its construction.

1. The decision to use category descriptions

Markers will be familiar with the use of category descriptions from their experience of assessing the work of candidates in Revised Higher Grade and CSYS English.

The decision to continue to use category descriptions as the principal means of assessing candidate performance in Advanced Higher English is informed partly by the advantage to be gained from continuing with an already familiar system and partly by other considerations. Such a system, for example:

- offers validity and reliability through assessment procedures of proven fairness and robustness
- puts in place one means of facilitating articulation of standards between “old” and “new” curricular frameworks
- requires holistic assessment that rewards the actual attainment of each candidate within each assessment component by allocating each response to the category that best describes its overall quality
- allows for refinement of assessment by requiring the placing of each response at a particular point within the limited range of marks available for each category
- contributes to consistency of assessment by requiring repeated application of familiar and agreed statements of differentiated standards
- facilitates standardisation of assessment by providing clear evidence of degrees of severity or leniency of marker response and interpretation.

2. The decision to use numerically weighted category descriptions

The decision to use numbers rather than grades in external assessment has been taken

- to allow for the refinement of assessment judgements about the quality of each candidate response within each assessment component
- to facilitate the aggregation of assessment judgements in a form that fairly represents the overall attainment of each candidate across components
- to reveal the range and pattern of the performance of the total candidature in a way that enables final judgements to be made about appropriate threshold scores and mark ranges in the determination of final grade awards.

3. The construction of category descriptions

The starting point for the construction of category descriptions is the information on Performance Criteria and Indicators of Excellence for the various assessment components for Advanced Higher English published in the Arrangements document.

In all components, there is clear consistency of statement in relation to both Performance Criteria and Indicators of Excellence.

The extracts presented on the following page, in which key features of required performance are emboldened, illustrate this consistency. Virtually identical statements are made about characteristic Performance Criteria and Indicators of Excellence for each of the assessment components—although it should be noted that the criterion of Expression does not apply to the assessment of Textual Analysis and that criteria different from those presented in this document apply to the assessment of Creative Writing.

GRADE C Performance Criteria	GRADE A Indicators of Excellence <i>At least 4 bullet points from at least two categories</i>
<p>Understanding The response takes a relevant and thoughtful approach to the prescribed task and demonstrates secure understanding of key elements . . .</p> <p>Analysis The response makes relevant and thoughtful . . . comment and demonstrates secure handling . . .</p> <p>Evaluation Judgements made are relevant, thoughtful and securely based on detailed evidence . . .</p> <p>Expression Structure, style and language, including the use of appropriate critical/analytical terminology, are consistently accurate and effective in developing a relevant argument.</p>	<p>Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thorough exploration is made of the implications of the prescribed task. • Sustained insight is revealed into key elements . . . <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full and satisfying range of . . . comment is offered. • Literary/linguistic . . . techniques . . . are handled with skill and precision. <p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptive and incisive judgements are made. • Deployment of evidence . . . is skilful and precise. <p>Expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure, style and language, including the use of appropriate critical/analytical terminology, are skilfully deployed to develop a pertinent and sharply focused argument.

The words that best strike the note that is characteristic of **competence** of performance (equivalent to Grade C) at the level of Advanced Higher are:

- relevant
- thoughtful
- secure
- consistent
- accurate
- effective.

At this level, **excellence** (equivalent to Grade A) is indicated by words such as:

- thorough
- sustained
- insight
- full
- satisfying
- perceptive
- incisive
- skilful
- precise
- pertinent
- sharply focused.

It may be relatively straightforward to find qualitative words that will differentiate—for each criterion—between candidate work that is competent (Grade C) and candidate work that is excellent (Grade A). It is clearly more difficult to find qualitative words to describe the range of performance (Grade B) that may lie between these two well-defined points.

The Arrangement document recognises this difficulty by noting: “Where the overall quality of a piece of work goes beyond the performance criteria for Grade C, but falls short of Grade A, it will attain Grade B. In this case, it may show only **one or two** of the A characteristics or it may show **three or more** of the indicators of excellence without reaching A quality for any”.

In response to this flexibility, the following external assessment framework of four “pass” categories and two “fail” categories has been adopted for the grading of candidate performance in each of the Advanced Higher English assessment components:

- Category 1** **Excellent**—well aligned with a significant number of the published indicators of excellence.
- Category 2** **Still signs of excellence**—but not quite so well aligned with (or aligned with fewer of) the published indicators of excellence.
- Category 3** **More than competent**—in some significant ways beyond some of the published performance criteria.
- Category 4** **Competent**—in overall quality firmly anchored to the published performance criteria.
- Category 5** **Less than competent**—in some significant ways not quite achieving all of the published performance criteria.
- Category 6** **Incompetent**—well below Advanced Higher level as required by the published performance criteria.

A 40-point scale (corresponding to a weighting of 40% in the final award) has been adopted for the assessment of the dissertation. It applies to these (briefly described) six categories as follows:

CATEGORY 1	40 39 38 37 36 35	Excellent —well aligned with a significant number of the published indicators of excellence: thorough exploration and sustained insight; full, satisfying comment and skilful handling of technique; perceptiveness/incisiveness and skilful use of evidence; a sharply focused argument.
CATEGORY 2	34 33 32 31 30	Still signs of excellence —but not quite so well aligned with (or aligned with fewer of) the published indicators of excellence: not quite so thorough or sustained; not quite so full or satisfying or skilful; not quite so sharply focused.
CATEGORY 3	29 28 27 26 25	More than competent —in some significant ways beyond some of the published performance criteria: glimmers of insight or perceptiveness or incisiveness; occasionally satisfying critical comment; occasionally skilful deployment of evidence in support of argument.
CATEGORY 4	24 23 22 21 20	Competent —in overall quality firmly anchored to the published performance criteria: relevant and thoughtful secure and consistent accurate and effective.
CATEGORY 5	19 18 17 16 15	Less than competent —in some significant ways not quite achieving all of the published performance criteria: some weakness in relevance or thoughtfulness or security of understanding or accuracy or consistency or effectiveness in the development of argument.
CATEGORY 6	14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00	Incompetent —well below Advanced Higher level as required by the published performance criteria: deficient in (probably) more than one of— relevance or thoughtfulness or security of understanding or accuracy or consistency or effectiveness in the development of argument.

A. Using the category descriptions

The following (fully described) categories are founded on the published performance criteria and indicators of excellence for the Specialist Study. They should be used as the basic “map” by which markers arrive at the category and the numerical mark within that category which best represents the attainment of each candidate.

CATEGORY 1

MARKS: 35—40

Excellent—well aligned with a significant number of the published indicators of excellence.

Understanding

- A thorough exploration is made of the implications of the stated topic.
- Sustained insight is revealed into key elements, central concerns and significant details of the texts or of the linguistic or media field of study.

Analysis

- A full and satisfying range of critical/analytical comment is offered.
- Literary, linguistic or media concepts, techniques, forms, usages are handled with skill and precision.

Evaluation

- Perceptive and incisive judgements are made.
- Deployment of evidence from primary and, where appropriate, secondary sources is skilful and precise.

Expression

- Structure, style and language, including the use of appropriate critical/analytical terminology, are skilfully deployed to develop a pertinent and sharply focused argument.

CATEGORY 2

MARKS: 30—34

Still signs of excellence—but not quite so well aligned with (or aligned with fewer of) the published indicators of excellence.

Understanding

As for Category 1, but

- the attempt made to explore the implications of the topic is not quite so thorough
- insight is not quite so well sustained.

Analysis

As for Category 1, but

- the range of critical/analytical comment is not quite so full or satisfying
- relevant techniques, concepts, forms, usages are not handled with quite the same level of skill and precision.

Evaluation

As for Category 1, but

- judgements made are not quite so perceptive or incisive
- deployment of evidence is not quite so skilful or precise.

Expression

As for Category 1, but

- expression is not quite so skilfully deployed or argument quite so sharply focused.

CATEGORY 3**MARKS: 25—29**

More than competent—in some significant ways beyond some of the published performance criteria.

Understanding

As for Category 4, but
with glimmers of—awareness of implications or thoroughness or insight.

Analysis

As for Category 4, but
with glimmers of—fulness or skill or precision of critical/analytical comment.

Evaluation

As for Category 4, but
with glimmers of—perceptiveness or incisiveness or skilful deployment of evidence.

Expression

As for Category 4, but
with glimmers of—skilful deployment of language in the development of argument.

CATEGORY 4**MARKS: 20—24**

Competent—in overall quality firmly anchored to the published performance criteria.

Understanding

The dissertation takes a relevant and thoughtful approach to the stated topic and demonstrates secure understanding of key elements, central concerns and significant details of the texts or of the linguistic or media field of study.

Analysis

The dissertation makes relevant and thoughtful critical/analytical comment and demonstrates secure handling of literary, linguistic or media concepts, techniques, forms, usages.

Evaluation

Judgements made are relevant, thoughtful and securely based on detailed evidence drawn from primary and, where appropriate, secondary sources.

Expression

Structure, style and language, including the use of appropriate critical/analytical terminology, are consistently accurate and effective in developing a relevant argument.

CATEGORY 5**MARKS: 15—19**

Less than competent—in some significant ways not quite achieving all of the published performance criteria.

Understanding

As for Category 4, but with some weakness in—relevance or thoughtfulness or security of understanding of key elements, central concerns, significant details.

Analysis

As for Category 4, but with some weakness in—relevance or thoughtfulness or accuracy or range of critical/analytical comment.

Evaluation

As for Category 4, but with some weakness in—relevance or thoughtfulness or substantiation of judgements made.

Expression

As for Category 4, but with some weakness in—accuracy or effectiveness of structure or style or language or critical/analytical terminology in the development of argument.

CATEGORY 6**MARKS: 00—14**

Incompetent—well below Advanced Higher level as required by the published performance criteria.

Understanding

The dissertation is deficient in—relevance or thoughtfulness or security of understanding of key elements, central concerns, significant details.

Analysis

The dissertation is deficient in—relevance or thoughtfulness or accuracy or range of critical/analytical comment.

Evaluation

The dissertation is deficient in—relevance or thoughtfulness or substantiation of judgements made.

Expression

The dissertation is deficient in—accuracy or effectiveness of structure or style or language or critical/analytical terminology in the development of argument.

N.B. It should be noted that, in the category descriptions provided, where performance in one category is described as “significantly” different from performance in an adjacent category, this may be demonstrated by:

- marginally stronger or weaker performance **in a range of aspects**
or
- very much stronger or weaker performance **in one or two aspects**.

Several factors should be taken into account before assigning each candidate's dissertation to a particular numerical mark within a particular category.

- (a) Categories are not grades. Although derived from the performance criteria for Grade C and the indicators of excellence for Grade A, the six categories are designed primarily to assist with the placing of each candidate response at an appropriate point on a continuum of achievement. Assumptions about final grades or association of final grades with particular categories should not be allowed to get in the way of objective assessment.
- (b) The expectation is that the vast majority of candidates will already have demonstrated in unit assessment a level of competence that has merited achievement of the unit outcome. Markers should begin, therefore, with the expectation that the dissertation will meet, at least, the requirements of category 4. While there may be some dissertations that for various reasons fail to demonstrate the level of competence required by category 4, the likelihood is that they will prove characteristic of category 5—and it is hoped that no dissertation will be so incompetent as to require assignment to category 6.

Any dissertation which is assigned to Category 6 should be referred to the Principal Assessor.

- (c) For each category, a range of marks is available within which markers may refine their assessments, for example within a mark or two at the upper end, the middle or the lower end of the category. The marks range within each category should prove sufficiently generous to allow markers scope for fair and justifiable discrimination. Markers are encouraged to make full use of the ranges of marks available to them.
- (d) Mixed profiles of attainment will occur. Normally, these will represent variations within the range of performance that is characteristic of a particular category. In some instances, however, performance may be so uneven as to require markers to weigh up strengths and weaknesses of performance that extend across categories. Markers are reminded that their assessment should at all times be **holistic**—assigning each dissertation to the category (and to the numerical point within that category) that best describes its overall achievement. In instances where there is genuine doubt as to whether a dissertation should be placed at the lower end of a higher category or at the upper end of a lower category (and only in such instances), candidates should be given the benefit of the doubt, and their dissertations awarded the lowest mark in the higher category.

Any dissertation which presents such a mixed profile of attainment (or some other such difficulty) that it cannot be assessed fairly in terms of the category descriptions should be referred to the Principal Assessor—with explanation of the nature of the difficulty encountered and with justification of the numerical mark awarded.

- (e) **NO ANNOTATIONS OR COMMENTS SHOULD BE ADDED TO THE SUBMISSIONS OF CANDIDATES (including flyleaf forms). The entry of a mark (which carries its own meaning in terms of the category descriptions provided) is all that is required—and all that is permitted.**
- (f) All referrals to the Principal Assessor concerning the validity of submissions or difficulties encountered in the assessment of submissions must be clearly identified by writing the letters **PA** in two places:
- on the front of the Specialist Study Flyleaf immediately below the boxes marked **FOR OFFICIAL USE**
 - beside the candidate's name on the Attendance Register/Marks Sheet.
- For each referral thus identified, a PA Referral Sheet must be completed.
- (g) PA Referral Sheets and the Marker's Report (not, in any circumstances, the submissions of candidates) should be used as the sole means of communication between the marker and the Principal Assessor.
- (h) The Marker's Report should include comment on
- the main features of the performance of candidates
 - the validity and reliability of the marking scheme
 - the manageability of SQA procedural requirements
 - any other matters considered relevant by the marker.

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]