SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

2004 English

Standard Grade - Writing

Finalised Marking Instructions

Detailed Marking Instructions

These Instructions comprise

a the Detailed Instructions for Writing

b a Marker's checklist for Writing

c detailed further instructions on specific assignments.

The Instructions should be read and fully understood by the Marker before any tentative marking is attempted in advance of the Markers' Meeting.

1.1 General Remarks on Assessment of Writing

These Instructions will be discussed at the markers' meeting when detailed guidance will be given to markers showing how to use the procedures set up according to the Revised Arrangements for Standard Grade English issued by the Scottish Examination Board. The provision of photostat copies of candidates' scripts, with detailed commentaries on these scripts, and full discussion of the points raised will give markers the support needed to fulfil the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (SQA's) requirements.

Each item of Writing is to be assessed individually against the Grade Related Criteria and a grade awarded on that basis only. **It is essential that markers dispel from their thinking previous systems of marking which entailed rank-ordering or an expected distribution of candidates based on norm-referencing.**

1.2 Applying the Grade Related Criteria

a In assessing a script, begin by assigning it to a **Level**. Ignore the differentiating factors at this stage.

b Always attempt a holistic assessment.

c Read each criterion across all three Levels and assign it to the Level which seems most appropriate. Bear in mind, particularly at this point, the **purpose** of the Writing assignment. Once this process has been completed for all the relevant criteria, it may be possible to assign the script to a Level. **However, it would be wise to re-read the script**, and the following points should always be borne in mind.

i There is no arithmetical formula for determining a Level (or grade); two criteria met at General Level, one at Foundation Level and one at Credit does not necessarily point to a final grade within the General Level; it is the holistic response which must finally decide the Level (and subsequently the grade).

ii There is no hierarchy of criteria. Any one of them may prove to be crucial in the forming and refining of the holistic response to a particular script. However, purpose is likely to be an over-riding consideration.

d If there has been difficulty in deciding between Foundation and General Levels or General and Credit Levels once the decision on Level has finally been made, there should be no question but to award the "borderline" grade ie, as follows:

Foundation in preference to General Level	:	grade 5
General in preference to Foundation Level	:	grade 4
General in preference to Credit Level	:	grade 3
Credit in preference to General Level	:	grade 2

e It is only in cases where the decision about **Level** has proved easy to make that the differentiating factors need to be applied. Again, it might be helpful to read each differentiating factor across both grades and to locate the grade that seems more appropriate: but the cautions expressed in (c) above apply with equal force here, especially the suggestion that the script should be re-read, in order to achieve a holistic assessment.

Any set of GRC is sure to raise certain problems for the users. These problems are (a) how to interpret terms which contain either a subjective or a relative element; (b) how to determine a final grade when a candidate's performance meets some criteria/ differentiating factors at one Level or grade and other criteria/differentiating factors at a different Level or grade. With regard to (a), it is hoped that the markers' meeting and photostat examples will, at least implicitly, help to gloss those terms which might be felt to be problematic. As to (b), while there is no precise formula by which a final grade may be derived, the approach described above and again illustrated at the markers' meeting will provide the necessary guidance.

f Grade 7 is available for candidates who fail to meet the criteria.

1.3 Purposes of Writing

The purposes referred to as set out in 3 2 2 of the "Revised Arrangements" are:

- to convey information,
- to deploy ideas, expound, argue and evaluate,
- to describe personal experience, express feelings and reactions,
- to employ specific literary forms (eg short story, letter, poem).

These purposes are to be found within the Writing Paper. In addition, candidates have to take account not only of purpose but also of rubric. In this sense the Writing Paper differs slightly from the Writing which candidates submit in the Folio of Coursework.

1.4 Assessment of poetry

The experience of recent years has shown that the assessment of poems written by candidates can be problematic for Markers. For example, the length of a poem alone may not be a helpful indicator of its worth.

However, the Writing GRC, as detailed on the Marker's Checklist, **must** be used in the assessment of poetry, just as they are in the assessment of any other form of writing. Thus, Markers should consider, as appropriate, the candidate's attention to purpose in terms of the ideas and/or expression of feeling contained in the poem, its imaginative qualities, its structure, as well as the use of poetic conventions and other language effects.

1.5 Handwriting, Spelling and Punctuation

Markers should note that provision for consideration of the candidate's handwriting, spelling and punctuation is made **intrinsically** in the Grade Related Criteria and that there is no specific, separate penalty to be imposed for deficiency in these aspects of Writing.

1.6 Consistency

Markers must be consistent in their assessment. The practice of extracting every 10th script for preliminary assessment is valuable. The marker should read every 10th script, use the criteria checklist to arrive at a grade, pencil in the grade and replace the script. Then, when it is reached again in its proper order the script should be re-assessed.

1.7 Use of GRC Checklist

A single copy of the checklist of Writing GRC is contained within these Instructions **as a reference sheet** for the use of markers when they are applying the GRC. Obviously, it should not be annotated with reference to particular scripts. A further supply of approximately 15 checklists for Writing is provided. Markers may find these useful during the marking process for notation purposes. These checklists should not, however, be returned with any individual scripts.

1.8 Marker Standardisation

The SQA's Examiners are required to check the consistency of standards being applied by markers. The procedure involves the sampling of each marker's work, initially across a range of 3 packets of scripts. Examiners will proceed to check more scripts to verify consistency as required.

1.9 Recording of Grades

For all scripts, the grades awarded should be entered in the appropriate box on the front cover of the script as well as on the Mark Sheet and the Mark Sheet (Substitute).

Writing

	Credit	General	Foundation
	The work displays some distinction in ideas, construction and language. This is shown by a detailed attention to the purposes of the writing task; by qualities such as knowledge, insight, imagination; and by development that is sustained. Vocabulary, paragraphing and sentence construction are accurate and varied.	The work shows a general awareness of the purposes of the writing task. It has a number of appropriate ideas and evidence of structure. Vocabulary is on the whole accurate, but lacks variety.	The work shows a few signs of appropriateness and commitment to the purposes of the writing task.
As the task requires. The candidate can	convey information, selecting and highlighting what is most significant;	convey information in some kind of sequence;	convey simple information;
	marshall ideas and evidence in support of an argument; these ideas have depth and some complexity; he/she is capable of objectivity, generalisation and evaluation;	order and present ideas and opinions with an attempt at reasoning;	present ideas and opinions in concrete personal terms;
	give a succinct account of a personal experience : the writing has insight and self-awareness;	give a reasonably clear account of a personal experience with some sense of involvement;	convey the gist of a personal experience;
	express personal feelings and reactions sensitively;	express personal feelings and reactions with some attempt to go beyond bald statement;	make a bald statement of personal feelings or reactions;
	display some skills in using the conventions of a chosen literary form, and in manipulating language to achieve particular effects.	use some of the more obvious conventions of a chosen literary form, and occasionally use language to achieve particular effects.	display a rudimentary awareness of the more obvious conventions of a chosen literary form, and occasionally attempt to use language to achieve particular effects.

A combination of these qualities may be called for by any one writing task.

Intelligibility and Correctness	Writing which the candidate submits as finished work communicates meaning clearly at a first reading. Sentence construction is accurate and formal errors will not be significant.	Writing which the candidate submits as finished work communicates meaning at first reading. There are some lapses in punctuation, spelling and sentence construction.	Writing which the candidate submits as finished work communicates meaning largely at first reading: however, some further reading is necessary because of obtrusive formal errors and/or structural weaknesses, including inaccurate sentence construction and poor vocabulary.

Length	When it is appropriate to do so, the candidate can sustain the quality of writing at some length. Pieces of extended writing submitted in the folio of coursework should not normally exceed 800 words in length. The overriding consideration is, however, that the length should be appropriate to the purposes of the writing task.		Length is appropriate to the purposes of the writing task.		100 words is to be taken as a rough guide to the minimum length expected for each finished piece of work, but the overriding consideration should be that the length is appropriate to the purposes of the writing task.	
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Differentiating Factors	The finished communication is not only clear; it is also stylish. Attention to purpose is not only detailed; it is also sensitive. Writing shows overall distinction in ideas, construction and language. Vocabulary is apt and extensive, and paragraphing and sentence construction are skilful. In these respects performance transcends the level of accuracy and variety acceptable at grade 2.	Evidence of one or more of the qualities of distinction in ideas, construction or language is present but these qualities are less well sustained and/or combined than at grade 1. In the main writing is substantial, accurate and relevant, but it lacks the insight, economy and style which characterises achievement at grade 1.	Writing is characterised by overall adequacy of communication. It conveys its meaning clearly and sentence construction and paragraphing are on the whole accurate. There is a reasonably sustained attention to purpose, and structure shows some coherence. Where appropriate there is a measure of generalisation and objectivity in reasoning.	Writing approaches the qualities of adequacy required for grade 3 but is clearly seen to be impaired in one of the following ways: there are significant inaccuracies in sentence construction. or the work is thin in appropriate ideas. or the work is weak in structure.	Writing rises a little above basic intelligibility and rudimentary attention to purpose. Formal errors and weaknesses are obtrusive but not as numerous as at grade 6. Attention to the purposes of the writing task is weak but the quality of the writer's ideas is perceptibly stronger than at grade 6.	Writing contains many formal errors and structural weaknesses but they do not overall have the effect of baffling the reader. The conveying of simple information is marked by obscurities and extraneous detail, and the presentation of ideas, opinions and personal experience is somewhat rambling and disjointed.

Detailed Instructions directed towards Groups of Options

2.1 These instructions are directed towards assignments which have common features of rubric, purpose or genre.

2.2 When reaching a decision as to the relevance of a piece of writing, markers should keep in mind the task specifications set by the rubric as well as the purpose of the writing task. The choice of task imposes certain constraints, not only of adherence to the rubric, but also of awareness of the purpose of the task. Therefore, in coming to a judgement in respect of relevance, markers must maintain a balance between the demands of the rubric (content, genre, length) and the purposes of the writing task (tone, style, awareness of audience).

2.3 If the candidate offers **content** that seems to be completely inappropriate or irrelevant, markers should nevertheless grade the piece of writing according to the instructions overleaf, using the checklist to note whether there are **few** or **no** signs of appropriateness.

Narrative Numbers 2, 7, 15, 16, 22

Task specifications/rubric/purposes

The criteria demand appropriate ideas and evidence of structure which in the narrative genre involve **plot** or **content** or **atmosphere**.

No 2	short story –	a mobile phone must be clearly evident in the narrative.
No 7	short story –	imposed title **No Time to Spare** must be reflected in the narrative.
No 15	short story –	imposed title **Crossing the Line** must be reflected in the narrative.
No 16	short story –	the idea of **ONE** character being isolated must be reflected in the narrative. The word 'society' could be interpreted narrowly. ie peer group.
No 22	short story –	imposed title **Appearances Can be Deceptive** must be reflected in the narrative.

Grade Differentiation

1 : 2 Grade 1 narrative will show **overall distinction** in IDEAS, CONSTRUCTION and LANGUAGE, and will be both **stylish and skilful**, while Grade 2 narrative will fall short both in the quality and in the **combination** of skills.

3 : 4 Grade 3 responses will have an **appropriate plot**, will make use of appropriate **register** to create ATMOSPHERE or SUSPENSE and should include NARRATIVE or DESCRIPTIVE details to establish the main lines of the plot. Do not forget that lack of variety in plot and language skills is typical of Grade 3. Accuracy is the criterion to establish here.

Grade 4's **simple plot** will approach the adequacy of Grade 3 but may be poorly organised or have significant inaccuracies.

5 : 6 Grade 5's **very basic plot** will occasionally try to achieve particular effects, and it will also be poorly organised and have significant inaccuracies.

Grade 6 will have a combination of negative features, will be **rambling**, or have **obscurities** in the plot and the marker will have difficulty in decoding because of very poor spelling, sentencing, or handwriting.

NB If candidates ignore the rubric in respect of plot or character this may place them in Grade 5 in terms of purpose ('few signs of appropriateness'), unless there are other strong compensating features ('accurate', 'varied', 'sensitive'). Where there are no strong compensating features, this may tip the balance overall into Grade 6.

Discursive/Informative Numbers **1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20**

Task specifications/rubrics/purposes

The rubrics cover controversial issues which are likely to elicit emotional responses. Objectivity is not required but clear, straightforward presentation of a point of view is required. At all levels, candidates must deal with the specific topics.

No 1 **agree/disagree or balanced view**. Candidates may choose to deal with the topic from one particular point of view or take a more balanced approach to the topic. Some background knowledge is required. Personal/anecdotal evidence may figure but should be used to support the candidate's line of argument.

No 3 both advantages and disadvantages **must** be covered as this is made explicit in the task.

No 4 either city or country **must** be chosen. Personal/anecdotal evidence is likely to feature but must be used to support a line of thought.

No 8 the main purpose is to convey information on a career choice. Personal/anecdotal evidence may appear.

No 9 **agree/disagree/balanced.** Some background knowledge is required. Personal/anecdotal evidence may be present but this should follow a line of thought.

No 10 **agree.** Imposed letter format. Some background knowledge is required. Candidates should indicate the reasons behind their opinions. Personal/anecdotal evidence may be present.

No 13 **agree/disagree or balanced.** Some personal/anecdotal evidence may be present but this should be used to support the line of thought adopted by the candidate.

No 14 **agree/disagree or balanced**. Some personal/anecdotal evidence may be present but this should be used to support the line of thought adopted by the candidate.

No 19 **agree/disagree or balanced.** Candidates may choose to deal with the topic from one particular point of view or take a more balanced approach to the topic. A clear line of thought/argument should be present with supporting evidence.

No 20 **agree/disagree or balanced view.** Personal/anecdotal evidence may feature heavily but this should support the line of thought adopted by the candidate.

Grade Differentiation – Discursive

1 : 2 Grade 1 responses will show a **combination of depth, complexity and skilful deployment** of ideas, and will marshall evidence in support of an argument.

Grade 2 responses will lack this combination of technical skill and confident tone, presenting ideas in a **less developed** or **sustained** manner.

3 : 4 Grade 3 will attempt an orderly flow of ideas, which may not succeed logically, whereas Grade 4 will be typically **weak in structure**, or **have thin ideas** or poorly constructed sentences.

5 : 6 Grade 5 will present ideas and opinions in **concrete, personal terms** which may be anecdotal, but are more than a bald series of unsupported **disjointed** or **rambling** statements, the hallmarks of Grade 6.

Grade Differentiation-Informative

1 : 2 Grade 1 will convey information in a **clear sequence**, **selecting and highlighting** what is most significant. Grade 2 responses will be **less well sustained** in terms of the qualities of distinction in **ideas**, **construction and language**.

3 : 4 Grade 3 will convey the relevant information **in some kind of sequence** which may not succeed logically, whereas Grade 4 will be **weak in structure** or have **thin ideas** or **weak sentence construction.**

5 : 6 Grade 5 will convey only **simple information**. Formal errors will be obtrusive but the writing will not be marked by the **rambling** and **disjointed** statements which define Grade 6.

Personal Experience/Descriptive Numbers 6,11, 12, 18, 21

Task specifications/rubric/purposes

Each of the above calls for a personal response; while there are no genre requirements here, content must be specific and appropriate.

No 6 a **single** specific view is required. Description of the chosen place is explicit in the rubric and candidates should concentrate not only on the narrative but also on associated thoughts and feelings.

No 11 the rubric restricts the candidate to a specific occasion when teamwork was important. The evocation of associated thoughts and feelings is explicitly required in the task.

No 12 the rubric restricts the candidate to a single achievement although other achievements may be mentioned to highlight the significance of the one chosen.

No 18 description of the characteristics of the candidate's ideal choice is required. Personal feelings and reactions should be evident.

No 21 candidates must choose one of the quotations. Description is explicit in the rubric.

Grade Differentiation

1 : 2 Grade1 will be a well crafted, stylish account and will deploy a range of skills to express perceptiveness and self-awareness and to achieve or create effects, while a Grade 2 account will be soundly constructed and show a **measure of insight** and self-awareness expressed accurately. Grade 2 may not be succinct but will be **substantial**.

3 : 4 A Grade 3 response will be reasonably well sustained, with easily grasped structure, and will on the whole be correct but with a certain dull monotony.

Grade 4 will be structurally weak and thin in ideas but will still **attempt involvement, approaching the overall adequacy** of Grade 3.

5 : 6 Grade 5 may have positive features such as a runaway enthusiasm which may detract from the stated purpose but it will present the **gist** of the experience without **ramblings** and **incoherence** which, along with **numerous errors** and near-illegible handwriting are the mark of Grade 6.

Free Choice Numbers 5, 17

Task specifications/rubric/purposes

Each of the above calls for the candidate to determine the purpose of the writing and format. It is therefore important that the candidate's writing purpose is made clear in the course of the response. Markers should assess according to the appropriate criteria.

No 5 the rubric restricts the candidate to **one or both** picture stimuli.

No 17 the rubric restricts the candidate to a choice of **one** of the titles offered.

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]