2008 English

Advanced Higher – Creative Writing Folio

Finalised Marking Instructions

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PART 1 ADMINISTRATIVE POINTS

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 creative writing folio allocated to them –** fairly and consistently in accordance with the guidance and exemplars provided at the meeting of markers
- **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 pieces of writing submitted for external assessment occurs in the National Course Specification and is as follows:

"In relation to *English: Creative Writing*, candidates will be subject to the following external assessment requirements:

- **by the date of the examination**, candidates will be required to submit to SQA, as a component of course assessment, a folio comprising two pieces of creative writing in different genres, 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. Number of pieces submitted

There should really be no grounds for uncertainty or confusion on the part of teachers/lecturers or candidates about what is meant by "two pieces of creative writing". It should be noted, however, that in Advanced Higher it is no longer possible to submit, as it was in CSYS, a group of poems, thematically related or otherwise. The requirement is for the submission of a "poem". Whatever form the submission of poetry takes, therefore, it must display the constraining integrity of a single piece of work and be assessed accordingly. Similar restrictions apply to submissions in other genres: each submission, however constructed (a series of diary entries, an exchange of letters, different scenes in a play, a series of monologues) must represent a single "piece of creative writing".

Where only one piece of creative writing is submitted, the marker it should be marked in the normal way, but weighted to represent a mark out of 15 (50% of the 30 marks available).

Where more than two pieces of creative writing are submitted, the marker should read all of them in order to determine the two that represent the best attainment of the candidate (consistent with the Creative Writing Folio genre requirements). Only the two pieces thus selected should be assessed. The remaining pieces should be ignored.

Any folio containing only one or more than two pieces should be referred to the Principal Assessor.

2. Length

Matters here are very clear.

"Each piece of creative writing, poetry excepted, must be at least 1000 words in length. The length of a piece of poetry will depend on the chosen form but should be sufficient to permit demonstration of all the performance criteria".

There is no flexibility here. Either a piece of creative writing is valid in terms of length (and can be accepted for external assessment) or it is not (and cannot therefore be accepted).

Pieces of creative writing which fail to satisfy minimum length requirements should be marked in the normal way and referred to the Principal Assessor.

Markers should note that there is no maximum length restriction. The expectation is that for external assessment candidates will produce work in the categories of reflective essay, prose fiction and drama that is of appropriate length. Nevertheless, it would be useful to have information on the typical length of submissions. Markers are, therefore, asked to include in the Marker's Report any significant data on length evident in their allocations.

Pieces of creative writing which markers consider to be unreasonably long should be marked in the normal way (they may well be self-penalising) and referred to the Principal Assessor.

3. Authentication

Authentication of pieces of creative writing as "having been produced in a manner that satisfies the evidence requirements of the unit" must be included on the Creative Writing Folio Flyleaf. The absence of a candidate signature should be reported to SQA.

4. Plagiarism

All creative writing may be considered to 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 drawing on the enrichment they have derived from the creative writing of others to inspire and inform their own. 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 in different parts of the writing, 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.

PART 2 THE CREATIVE WRITING 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 Creative Writing published in the Arrangements document. Key features of required performance are emboldened in the table below.

GRADE C **Performance Criteria**	**GRADE A** **Indicators of Excellence** *At least 4 bullet points from at least two categories.*
Content The central thematic concern emerges in a way that reveals **thoughtfulness, insight, imagination**.	**Content** • The central thematic concern emerges in a way that reveals **a high degree of thoughtfulness, insight, imagination**.
Structure The structure of the chosen form is **exploited to achieve desired effects.**	**Structure** • **Skilful** shaping and sequencing contribute significantly to impact. • The potential of the chosen form is exploited with **a high degree of skill and imagination**.
Stance/tone/mood The stance adopted by the writer in relation to the reader and to the material is **clear** and **appropriate**; tone or mood is **controlled** and **deliberate**.	**Stance/tone/mood** • A **distinctive** authorial voice emerges. • Tone or mood is **skilfully created and sustained**.
Expression Style and language, including the use of techniques relevant to the genre, are **deployed to achieve desired effects**.	**Expression** • Techniques relevant to the genre are deployed with **resourcefulness** and **subtlety**. • Style and language are deployed with **skill** and **originality**.

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:

- thoughtfulness
- insight
- imagination
- clear
- appropriate
- controlled
- deliberate.

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

- skilful
- distinctive
- sustained
- resourcefulness
- subtlety
- originality.

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 Arrangements 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 30-point scale (corresponding to a weighting of 30% in the final award) has been adopted for the assessment of each of the two pieces of creative writing submitted for external assessment. It applies to these (briefly described) six categories as follows:

CATEGORY 1 **27 – 30**	**Excellent –** well aligned with a significant number of the published indicators of excellence: a high degree of thoughtfulness, insight, imagination; evidence of resourcefulness and subtlety, skill and originality.

CATEGORY 2 **23 – 26**	**Still signs of excellence –** but not quite so well aligned with (or aligned with fewer of) the published indicators of excellence: not quite such a high degree of thoughtfulness, insight, imagination; not quite so resourceful or subtle or skilful or original.

CATEGORY 3 **19 – 22**	**More than competent –** in some significant ways beyond some of the published performance criteria: glimmers of a high degree of thoughtfulness, insight, imagination; occasionally resourceful or subtle or skilful or original.

CATEGORY 4 **15 – 18**	**Competent –** in overall quality firmly anchored to the published performance criteria: thoughtfulness, insight, imagination; clear and appropriate; controlled and deliberate.

CATEGORY 5 **10 – 14**	**Less than competent –** in some significant ways not quite achieving all of the published performance criteria: some weakness in – thoughtfulness or insight or imagination or clarity or appropriateness or control.

CATEGORY 6 **00 – 09**	**Incompetent –** well below Advanced Higher level as required by the published performance criteria: deficient in (probably) more than one of – thoughtfulness, insight, imagination, clarity, appropriateness, control.

4. Using the Category Descriptions

The following (fully described) categories are founded on the published performance criteria and indicators of excellence for Creative Writing. 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: 27—30**

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

Content
- The central thematic concern emerges in a way that reveals a high degree of thoughtfulness, insight, imagination.

Structure
- Skilful shaping and sequencing contribute significantly to impact.
- The potential of the chosen form is exploited with a high degree of skill and imagination.

Stance/tone/mood
- A distinctive authorial voice emerges.
- Tone or mood is skilfully created and sustained.

Expression
- Techniques relevant to the genre are deployed with resourcefulness and subtlety.
- Style and language are deployed with skill and originality.

CATEGORY 2 **MARKS: 23—26**

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

Content

As for Category 1, but
- there may not be quite such a high degree of thoughtfulness or insight or imagination in the way in which the central thematic concern emerges**.**

Structure

As for Category 1, but
- shaping and sequencing may not be quite so skilful or contribute so significantly to impact
- there may not be quite such a high degree of skill or imagination in exploiting the potential of the chosen form.

Stance/tone/mood

As for Category 1, but
- the authorial voice that emerges may not be quite so distinctive
- tone or mood may not be quite so well created or sustained.

Expression

As for Category 1, but
- techniques relevant to the genre may not be deployed with quite the same resourcefulness or subtlety
- style and language may not be deployed with quite the same skill or originality.

CATEGORY 3 **MARKS: 19—22**

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

Content

As for Category 4, but
with glimmers of – a high degree of thoughtfulness or insight or imagination in the way in which the central thematic concern emerges.

Structure

As for Category 4, but
with glimmers of – skilful shaping or sequencing or skill or imagination in the handling of the chosen form.

Stance/tone/mood

As for Category 4, but
with glimmers of – the emergence of a distinctive authorial voice or of tone or mood being skilfully created or sustained.

Expression

As for Category 4, but
with glimmers of – resourcefulness or subtlety or skill or originality in the deployment of style or language or techniques relevant to the genre.

CATEGORY 4 **MARKS: 15—18**

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

Content

The central thematic concern emerges in a way that reveals thoughtfulness, insight, imagination.

Structure

The structure of the chosen form is exploited to achieve desired effects.

Stance/tone/mood

The stance adopted by the writer in relation to the reader and to the material is clear and appropriate; tone or mood is controlled and deliberate.

Expression

Style and language, including the use of techniques relevant to the genre, are deployed to achieve desired effects.

CATEGORY 5 **MARKS: 10—14**

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

Content
As for Category 4, but
with some weakness in – thoughtfulness or insight or imagination.

Structure
As for Category 4, but
with some weakness in – exploitation of the structure of the chosen form or achievement of desired effects.

Stance/tone/mood
As for Category 4, but
with some weakness in – clarity or appropriateness of stance or control of tone or mood.

Expression
As for Category 4, but
with some weakness in – style or language or use of techniques relevant to the genre.

CATEGORY 6 **MARKS: 00—09**

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

Content
The piece of creative writing is deficient in – thoughtfulness or insight or imagination.

Structure
The piece of creative writing is deficient in – exploitation of the structure of the chosen form or achievement of desired effects**.**

Stance/tone/mood
The piece of creative writing is deficient in – clarity or appropriateness of stance or control of tone or mood.

Expression
The piece of creative writing is deficient in – style or language or techniques relevant to the genre.

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 piece of creative writing 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 each piece of creative writing will meet, at least, the requirements of category 4. While there may be some pieces 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 piece of creative writing will be so incompetent as to require assignment to category 6.

Any piece of creative writing 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 piece of creative writing 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 piece of writing 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 submission awarded the lowest mark in the higher category.

Any piece of creative writing 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) Within the flyleaf, against the title of each piece of creative writing, a mark out of 30 should be entered. The two marks thus noted should be added together then divided by two. Resultant half marks should be rounded up. The final mark (representing the total attainment of the candidate out of 30) should be entered in the Mark box on the front of the flyleaf and against the candidate's name on the Marks Sheet.

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]