



Course Report 2014

Subject	English
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question paper (Reading)

The Question Paper (Reading) is worth 70 marks, is composed of two papers, and lasts 2 hours 30 minutes. Paper 1 is Reading for Understanding, Analysis, and Evaluation (in which candidates apply reading skills in understanding, analysis and evaluation to one unseen non-fiction text), and Paper 2 is Critical Reading (in which candidates apply Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation skills to questions on previously studied Scottish texts, and write a Critical Essay on a further previously studied text from one of the following contexts: drama, prose, poetry, media or language).

Paper 1 is worth 30 marks.

Paper 2 is worth 40 marks (20 marks for the extract based textual analysis on a Scottish text, 20 marks for Critical Essay).

Component 2: Portfolio

The Portfolio (Writing) is made up of two pieces of writing which are submitted to SQA for external marking.

The Portfolio is worth 30 marks (15 marks for each piece). Candidates submit two pieces of writing in different genres — one broadly creative or personal, and one broadly discursive, covering information and opinion.

The course assessment calls on a wide range of skills, giving the opportunity for strengths to outweigh weaknesses, and achievement to be recognised and rewarded. The Portfolio is worth 30% of the overall award. A further 40% comes from extract-based textual analysis and critical essay, meaning that 30% is given to the assessment of how a candidate can apply his or her reading skills to unseen material.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper

Candidates coped very well with the new examination arrangements, and with the new elements of the Course. A significant number of candidates accessed the top end of the mark range. The high pass rate mirrors previous years' combined S4 attainment in Standard Grade, Credit and Intermediate 2 (SCQF level 5). In this first year of presentation, candidates were mostly drawn from S4. S5 candidates at a similar stage in their learning were generally entered for Intermediate 2 this session.

Only a small proportion of candidates achieved no award. This suggests that commendably appropriate levels of presentation were achieved by centres.

Candidates coped well with the high tariff questions throughout the question paper. There was clear evidence that teachers had prepared candidates well for the demands of these questions.

In Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation, candidates found the passage to be accessible, relevant and interesting. Candidates approached the questions with commitment, and succeeded in answering all questions.

In Paper 2, centres had prepared candidates thoroughly and effectively for both the extract-based textual analysis and the critical essay.

Performance was very similar across the options in the extract-based textual analysis. Options in this section proved to be of equal demand. In terms of uptake, the most popular option in this section, overall, was Duffy. In Drama, most candidates opted for *Sailmaker* followed by *Bold Girls* then *Tally's Blood*. In Prose, the most popular was *The Cone Gatherers*. Donovan and *Kidnapped* were similar in uptake, then Crichton Smith and *Gideon Mack*. In Poetry, most candidates chose Duffy, but MacCaig was very close behind, followed by Morgan and Kay.

Some candidates opted to answer on Scottish texts for both the extract based textual analysis and the critical essay, but most candidates did not use Scottish writers for both sections. The range of literature covered was very similar to that of Intermediate 2 in recent years.

Some questions in the Scottish text section were slightly more accessible than anticipated and this was taken into account when setting the Grade Boundary.

Most candidates opted for Prose in the critical essay section, with roughly equal numbers choosing Drama and Poetry. There was a reasonable uptake for Question 7 (Film and Television Drama), but very few candidates chose from the Language section.

Component 2: Portfolio

This element is familiar to centres in slightly different forms: centres have worked with the Standard Grade Folio for many years (two pieces of Writing within a larger five piece submission), but the National 5 Folio is closer to the Intermediate 2 Folio (both have two pieces of Writing). However, the Portfolio makes up a larger proportion of the overall award than the Intermediate 2 Folio, with a weighting of 30 marks, as opposed to 20.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Paper 1

- ◆ Question 3: Most candidates were able to make two references to the writer's use of language, and accompany the references with appropriate analytical comments.

- ◆ Question 4: Almost all candidates successfully glossed the meaning of the word 'neglect;' many candidates also glossed 'benign;' but fewer identified the paradoxical, contrasting nature of the expression.
- ◆ Question 5: Many candidates successfully identified and analysed three examples of the writer's word choice.
- ◆ Question 7: Most candidates successfully identified the difference between the father's apparent and actual attitude, often supporting the identification with an appropriate reference.
- ◆ Question 9: Most candidates made a commendable effort to summarise the writer's main points in this article. Many used bullet points to lay out their answers.

Paper 2

Candidates had been very well prepared by their centres for the extract-based textual analysis. Their answers to the questions on the extracts were full and detailed. Candidates approached the final, comparative question of this section with confidence, often offering more than was required to achieve full marks.

Candidates showed signs of having done significant amounts of revision: most were able to support their points in both Textual Analysis and Critical Essay sections with direct quotation from, or clear references to, the texts they had studied.

Candidates did not appear to have difficulty in finding a suitable question from Section 2 Critical Essay. Essays were, in the main, full, detailed and relevant, displaying a thorough knowledge of text.

On the whole, candidates managed their time well for this paper, completing both tasks within the time allocated.

Component 2: Portfolio

Many candidates wrote effectively on aspects of their own experience. They wrote with skilful sensitivity.

More candidates attempted personal writing than attempted creative writing. However, there were some very strong creative writing submissions: short stories often had clearly established narratives and characterisation.

There were some very strong submissions in poetry and in prose writing in Scots.

Many candidates showed clear engagement with current issues. This was apparent in their pieces of discursive writing.

The techniques of persuasive writing were handled well by many candidates.

Some candidates made effective use of rhetorical techniques.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Paper 1

- ◆ Question 1: For this question candidates were asked to address the expression 'wretchedly indulgent.' Most candidates were able to paraphrase 'indulgent,' but fewer were able to comment on the intensification suggested by 'wretchedly.'
- ◆ Question 2: Some candidates clearly understood the idea of a structural link, but were unable to make an appropriate accompanying selection from the passage.
- ◆ Question 3: A few candidates mis-read the expression 'hard up' as meaning 'strict.'
- ◆ Question 6: There was missing punctuation (commas) in the short section of the passage (lines 49-50) that was relevant to this question. The Marking Instructions were amended, and widened, so that candidates were not disadvantaged by this. There were several ways in which candidates could have provided acceptable answers to this question.
- ◆ Question 8: Some candidates did not make sufficient use of their own words in response to this question.

Paper 2

- ◆ A few candidates had difficulty with following the genre requirements of the paper. They did not follow the instruction for Critical Essay that 'Your essay must be on a different genre from that chosen in Section 1.'
- ◆ Question 7: A few candidates did not recognise the term 'sequence' as being a synonym for 'scene.' They interpreted the question as meaning any sequence from a film or TV drama, rather than an 'opening or closing scene or sequence.' This interpretation was permitted.
- ◆ Question 32: It was felt that this question contained sufficient ambiguity to cause candidates difficulty. As a result, Marking Instructions were widened and an adjustment of marks was made where appropriate.

Component 2: Portfolio

- ◆ Some candidates did not adhere to the published word limit of 1,000 words.
- ◆ Some candidates submitted pieces of writing which were dual purpose with National 4 Added Value Unit written responses. These pieces were often not very successful as they were prepared for a different level of demand, and tended to be evaluative reviews rather than discursive essays with a clear line of thought.
- ◆ Some weaker discursive writing tended to be anecdotal rather than ideas/research based.
- ◆ Some biographical writing was thin in terms of the candidates' ideas, opinions and reactions.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question Paper

Paper 1

In a question about a writer's use of language, remember that marks tend to be allocated on the basis of: reference (1 mark), analytical comment (1 mark).

Candidates should take care to use their own words where required. (Questions requiring own words will offer a reminder.)

Candidates should revise the uses and effects of common punctuation.

In a question that requires candidates to summarise a writer's main ideas, it is acceptable to use bullet points to structure a response.

Paper 2

It should be noted that the final question of the extract-based textual analysis has three distinct parts:

- ◆ identification of commonality between an aspect of the extract and how this aspect operates in another text by the same writer, or elsewhere in the larger text
- ◆ how this aspect operates in the published extract
- ◆ how this aspect works in the wider text or in at least one other text by the writer

Candidates can approach this question in any way they like, but it should be remembered that there are several tasks to be done here.

Candidates should be reminded to follow the instruction for Critical Essay: 'Your essay must be on a different genre from that chosen in Section 1.'

Candidates should cover all aspects of the question selected in the Critical Essay paper. Relevance is a key requirement for the essay.

Allowances are made for the fact that critical essays are written under exam conditions, but candidates should remember to maintain technical accuracy when writing their essay.

Component 2: Portfolio

Candidates must be reminded to adhere to the published limit of 1,000 words (a reminder is given on the Portfolio cover-sheet).

Added Value Unit evaluative pieces of writing are perhaps limited in usefulness for the demonstration of writing skills in a National 5 Portfolio as they are written for a different level, with different purposes in mind.

Candidates should take care with sentence construction. The 'comma splice' is a common error.

Candidates should try to develop good research habits by consulting several sources and clearly identifying and acknowledging sources consulted.

It is hoped that the Portfolio will encourage writing in different forms; for example, it is acceptable to submit: broadly informative pieces, accounts of personal experience, poetry, pieces written in Scots. (While it might be desirable for personal writing to be reflective in nature, it has to be accepted that many S4 pupils will find this to be very challenging, and their writing may be more an expression of thoughts and feelings rather than mature reflection).

Biographical writing is acceptable for Portfolio submission, but candidates should attempt to include their own ideas, opinions and reactions in the piece, and should take care to concentrate on the production of a good piece of writing.

The sharing of resources is, of course, acceptable in the planning and preparation stages in writing for the Portfolio. However, centres should remind candidates that final submissions must be candidates' own work.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	28798
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	38.7%	38.7%	11133	72
B	28.9%	67.6%	8329	62
C	19.5%	87.1%	5629	52
D	5.4%	92.6%	1568	47
No award	7.4%	-	2139	-