



GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE A LEVEL

SUMMER 2023

Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' reports offer valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. They are written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and detail how candidates have performed.

This report offers an overall summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It goes on to look in detail at each question/section of each component, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.ⁱ

The information found in this report can provide invaluable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive annual programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 6 months after the examination.	www.wjecservices.co.uk or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the overall subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries (eduqas.co.uk)

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	www.wjecservices.co.uk
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	www.wjecservices.co.uk or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with Eduqas.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with invaluable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Exam Marking jobs Examiner & Moderator Vacancies From Eduqas

	Page
Executive summary	4
Component 1: Concepts and Issues	5
Component 2: Language change over time	8
Component 3: Creative and Critical Writing	15
Component 4	21
Component 4 NEA	27
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	32

Subject Officer's Executive Summary

The examination papers for this series were comparable in terms of demand and structure as previous series. There were no adaptations made to the qualification, and candidate performance was consistent with pre-pandemic standards. Teachers and their students are to be heartily commended for the robust teaching and learning that has taken place in preparation for this examination series.

The Principals for all four components reported that all candidates engaged well with the specification and applied their linguistic knowledge to all tasks.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Answer the question set by developing pertinent arguments	A level Component 1: Language and situation - crafting an essay using wider examples	This blended learning resource contains interactive self-study content covering A level Component 1: Language and situation - crafting an essay using wider examples. The resource is designed to complement traditional face to face teaching with an online learning pack that allows students to learn at their own pace
Focus on a wide range of textual evidence and avoiding feature spotting	How language is used to convey meaning	Three self-study blended learning resources focusing on Form and Structure, Lexis and Linguistic register.
Time management to complete all questions set	Exam walk throughs	These Exam Walk Through resources for each examined component offer practical hints and tips on how to effectively approach questions in the examination paper. Using questions from past exam papers, the PPT with audio help and audio script in the notes will walk students through a mock examination paper, aiding revision and the practice useful exam techniques.
Use a wide range of terms, beyond word classes and sentence moods	Guidance to support the teaching of the language levels across A level English language	A range of teaching materials specifically focused on highlighting use of AO1, AO2 and AO3 in learners' responses across A level English Language Components.
Make effective use of the stimulus material for creative writing	Using stimulus material to develop creative writing	This blended learning contains interactive self-study content designed to complement traditional face to face teaching with an online learning pack that allows students to learn at their own pace.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2023

COMPONENT 1: CONCEPTS AND ISSUES

Overview of the Component

- This unit contains two sections: Section A, Analysis of Spoken Language; and Section B, Language Issues. Section A assesses AO1 (methods of analysis, use of terminology, and coherent expression and discussion); AO2 (critical understanding of concepts and issues); and AO4 (connections). Section B assesses AO1 (methods of analysis, use of terminology, and coherent expression and discussion); AO2 (critical understanding of concepts and issues); and AO3 (analysis of the contexts of production and reception of 21st century English).
- In Section A, students were asked to analyse the participants' use of spoken language in two radio phone-ins. Text A was an extract from a Radio One programme called *The Surgery* in which young people call in to discuss their problems; on this occasion, a caller, Lara, is reassured by presented Katie Thistleton and You Tuber Hannah Whitton about anxiety related to exam results. Text B was an extract from a Radio Five Live programme called *606* in which fans call in to discuss football-related matters; on this occasion, a caller accuses the pundit Robbie Savage of extravagance and wastefulness. Candidates were asked to analyse and evaluate how the language used in each of these texts represented speakers' use of spoken language, with a focus on their attitudes and interactions. The question tested the candidates' ability to analyse language using appropriate terminology to evaluate how the contextual factors (for example, the purpose of the call and the general topic of conversation) have shaped meaning, and to explore meaningful connections across the texts (for example, the dynamics between hosts and guests, and the interactions between participants and hosts/experts).

In Section B, candidates were asked to apply appropriate methods of language analysis and terminology, demonstrate understanding of relevant concepts and issues, consider contextual factors and language features associated with the construction of meaning, and provide supporting examples when tackling one of three options. Question 2 was a conversation between Mark, a child, and his mother. Here candidates had to analyse and evaluate some of the ways in which children acquire language between 18 months and 4 years of age. Question 3 was a conversation between a pupil who challenges their teacher after receiving instructions concerning the completion of a written task. Here, candidates had to focus their analysis and evaluation on the ways in which one speaker might seek to challenge the authority of another. Finally, Question 4 was an extract from a piece discussing prescriptivist and descriptivist attitudes to Standard English. Here, candidates had to use the extract as a starting point in analysing and evaluating prescriptivist and descriptivist views of language, noting which of these views is more persuasive and why.

- Generally, candidates engaged well with both sections of the examination paper, with Section A being slightly stronger in terms of the quality of analysis.

- Whilst the paper was challenging on the whole, it was pleasing to see that candidates were able to access the full range of marks available, including a few candidates who were able to achieve close to full marks. Centres had addressed some of the key messages arising from previous summers' examinations. In particular, the culture of embedding connections for AO4 in Section A seems well established in many centres. Furthermore, for Section B there was less evidence that students had been drilled in advance with ready-made responses which simply did not meet the full requirements of the specific task they had been given, and which were used by the student to set down everything they had been taught about a particular topic. This is particularly pertinent to the question on child language acquisition, where a degree of prepared material appears still in evidence in student responses. It is still worth reminding candidates that for Section B they are allowed to include in their discussion prior knowledge of key critical concepts and issues, such as theories relevant to child language acquisition or to Standard and Non-Standard English. However, in order to avoid bunching of marks around the top of Band 2 and bottom of Band 3, centres would be advised to encourage candidates to provide specific links between aspects of the question, relevant theories, and pertinent situations (for AO3) exemplifying these theories or views, rather than making more general points. Finally, it was encouraging to see that on the whole in Section B, there was some variety of scenarios for AO3, although in some centres it was evident that particular scenarios had been taught in class, because all candidates in the centre had used them. It would be useful for candidates to be enabled to bring their own examples, in addition to teacher-supplied ones.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- In Section A, candidates on the whole demonstrated a solid grasp of the key language constituents, with many establishing sensible and even purposeful connections in the dynamics between the speakers in the two conversations.
- Connections were strongly considered on the whole, with candidates teasing out connections in the roles played by the respective callers to the two programmes, for example, seeking advice versus engaging in face-threatening strategies by admonishing Robbie Savage. Candidates were also able to knowledgeably examine the respective roles of the presenters in the two texts, comparing the reassuring presence of the host in Text A to the peacekeeping role played by the host in Text B.
- In more successful responses, discussion was anchored by use of relevant speaker strategy, such as turn taking or the use of interrogatives or declaratives. Selection of textual evidence was often precise and purposeful. A balanced selection of linguistic features typical of spoken language and more general linguistic features was demonstrated. Clear links were established between language features and the dynamics of the specific conversations.
- In less successful responses, candidates simply made general points about the conversations, ignoring specific speakers' strategies. There was also some misreading of Text B, where some candidates mistakenly believed Robbie Savage to have stolen the trainers under discussion, when in fact the issue was that in purchasing seven pairs of trainers, Savage had come across as being excessively lavish. As usual, centres should discourage candidates from focusing on only a narrow range of textual evidence and avoiding feature spotting.

Section B

- Candidates appeared to apportion their time well, spending enough time to tackle Section B. Generally, there was a solid understanding of concepts, issues and theories relevant to the three situations presented.
- Encouragingly, in Section B, more candidates anchored their discussion within specific examples of scenarios exemplifying issues from the texts. For example, in Question 4 many candidates examined the emerging popularity of Multicultural London English (MLE) as compelling evidence in support of the view that descriptivism was more persuasive as a view on use of Non-Standard English than prescriptivism.
- On the whole, successful analysis teased out specific aspects of factors affecting the construction of meaning, for example, speakers' strategies in challenging authority in Question 3 and status undermining. Furthermore, a feature of successful candidate responses was some imagination in the use of scenarios, such the children's programme character Rastamouse, and the controversy surrounding that programme's depiction of characters' use of Non-Standard English.
- In unsuccessful responses, candidates produced vague discussions that were not anchored in any scenario, leading to generic and generalised responses. Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to be individual and creative in their deployment of personally chosen scenarios based on their own observations of language use in the world around them.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2023

COMPONENT 2: LANGUAGE CHANGE OVER TIME

Overview of the Component

This year's genres (slang dictionary prefaces and text messages) elicited some strong candidate responses which demonstrated sound knowledge and skills of analysis and interpretation. Most candidates managed to attempt all questions on the paper, although, for a few, time management may have been an issue as some responses to Question 3 were a little undeveloped. As last year, there was some impressive close engagement with the texts' meanings in context and the relevant concepts and issues presented within them. It was pleasing to see far fewer candidates writing about language change in general terms for Question 2 where, for example, reference to non-standard capitalisation was productively linked to meaning via thematic importance rather than as a point in itself. As has been mentioned here previously for Question 3, discussion of other 21st-century language media (for example, Twitter, Facebook) is a distraction from purposeful analysis of the set medium of text messages, and is best avoided.

As mentioned in last year's report, there was still some tendency to apply conversation theory on both of the extended responses. While this was often effective for Question 3 due to the proximity to spoken language of text messaging (Grice, Accommodation Theory, and Face were all used purposefully), this was less productive for Question 2, where claims that, for example, the author of Text A was threatening the face of criminals through pejorative language felt rather forced.

Finally, candidates should be reminded to read all provided contextual material carefully: it was important that the genre of Question 2 was dictionary prefaces, rather than dictionaries themselves. Taking note of this may have prevented some unnecessarily general overviews about the purposes and cultural importance of dictionaries. Likewise, the fact that all of the text messages were received by one mobile phone was a very helpful steer for candidates regarding the manner in which the relationship between sender and receiver shapes language use.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Language Change Over Time

Four equally weighted assessment objectives are covered in Section A with AO1 linked to the short questions and AO2, AO3 and AO4 linked to the extended response. In Question 2, marks are awarded for each separate assessment objective.

AO2 (20 marks)

Candidates were required to demonstrate conceptual knowledge of the genre of dictionary prefaces: persuasive and informative language, audience engagement, differing levels of formality, and to explore relevant issues such as attitudes to social class expressed through attitudes to standard/non-standard forms, for example, prescriptivism/descriptivism. Other relevant issues like the influence of religion, the status of the writer and their relationship with their intended audience, growing literacy levels, and attitudes to gender also helped to inform strong responses when specifically linked to the content of the texts. Well-selected and concise textual evidence, embedded into analytical sentence structures was required in support of all points.

AO3 (20 marks)

As always, close, detailed engagement with the texts was the key to success here, using the material from the contextual rubric as a pointer towards close analysis of meaning. Many candidates were able to construct a compelling argument for the shifting attitudes towards Non-Standard English over time, identifying the intrinsic link between criminality and prescriptivism in the Early Modern English text, through to the rather more accepting attitudes of the Late Modern English text (which nevertheless certainly saw slang as negative), through to the fully paid-up descriptivism in the Present Day English text. Some candidates made productive links to social contexts such as the influence of urbanisation, Britain's international position, and the 'invention' of the teenager on language, as reflected in the texts.

The use of 'relatable', and its recently coined variant 'relatability' was again a frequent and unwelcome presence in many responses, both for this question and Question 3. Please re-visit my comments on this in the last two reports, as its use often inhibits precise and productive contextual discussion.

AO4 (20 marks)

This year, many candidates approached making connections between texts by dealing with the three texts individually and making comparisons back to material already mentioned in the analysis of the earlier texts, which was often productive. It is important to remember that the most purposeful connections are those made by meaning, rather than by linguistic feature, which tend to be less effective. A strong overview that interprets the texts in comparison and does not simply repeat or rephrase the context rubric also sets a strong answer up well, as does a pithy conclusion that avoids a simple repetition of points made in the essay. Also awarded under this AO is the accurate application of linguistic terminology: at its best, this is relevant to the analysis of the texts, has a wide range across the language levels, and suggests a secure understanding of how language works.

Q. 1 Short questions

These questions are marked under AO1. The approach to the short questions continues to develop, as mentioned in the 2022 report, and most candidates are producing responses that demonstrate understanding of how these questions operate. Candidates should be encouraged to respond to (b), (c), and (d) in full sentences in order to ensure sufficient detail is included to achieve all available marks.

- (a) This question tests knowledge of word class and archaic spelling patterns. There are 3 marks for identifying the basic word class, and 3 marks for an appropriate explanation for the orthographical variation in each case.

Most candidates did well in this first question, although identifying 'theyr' as a determiner, rather than a pronoun, proved challenging. This had a knock-on effect regarding the correct identification of the i/y interchange as the spelling pattern. Candidates are reminded always to locate the example within the text (line reference is provided for ease) in order to check their answer here.

- (b) This question tests the candidate's knowledge of word classes, language variation over time and language change concepts. There are 2 marks for identifying the form, and 2 marks for two distinct points relating to language change. Candidates cannot be rewarded for repeating the same point (for example, a lack of standardisation) for each example.

Most candidates did well on this question. As both examples this year were orthographical points, many were able to, for example, explain 'part/parte' as inconsistent spelling, and 'compleat' in relation to Johnson's 1755 dictionary. Some misidentification of 'compleat' as a verb again suggested that its internal context within the text had not been checked.

- (c) This question tests the candidate's knowledge of word classes and archaic grammatical features. There are 2 marks for identifying form, and 2 marks for an appropriate explanation of the linguistic variation in each case. The correct reference to 'present tense' was required for the verb 'hath', while the identification of random capitalisation in the possessive noun phrase 'a Rogues Company' was not accepted, as this is not a grammatical issue. Reference to apostrophe needed, at some point in the response, mention of possession/possessive.
- (d) This question tests the candidate's ability to identify and describe EME grammatical structures and punctuation features. There are 3 marks for identifying distinctive EME usage and 3 marks for selecting and describing an appropriate example. Responses needed to be analytical rather than observational, with clear evidence of language study. Candidates should again be reminded that references to EME spelling are not relevant in part (d), although happily this issue was less frequent than in previous series.

References to subordination or, complex or compound/complex sentences were valid as features typical of EME, as long as types of clause were accurately identified. The term 'multi-clausal' lacks the specific knowledge required and is therefore considered too vague to achieve reward. Random capitalisation was a frequent valid choice, where the second mark was earned through identification of word class. The use of the omissive apostrophe in 'Damn'd' and/or 'robb'd' was not accepted, as apostrophe is still used for omission in PDE (as compared to the lack of possessive apostrophe in (c)). Likewise, the comma preceding coordination conjunction 'and' is still in use in PDE with the Oxford comma.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Concise and focused
- Accurate application of linguistic terms
- Clear knowledge of EME features
- Well selected and labelled examples for (d).

Areas for improvement:

- Checking internal context of examples for word class within the text, particularly on (a) and (b)
- Tenses for verb forms for (c)
- No spelling references for (d)
- Accurate identification of clause types for (d) when discussing sentence types.

Q.2 Essay

This question tests the candidate's ability to analyse and evaluate the content and meaning of the texts in context, to establish meaningful connections between the texts, and to apply knowledge of relevant concepts and issues in order to explore the writers' language choices. Candidates needed to consider three prefaces from slang dictionaries written at different times.

The majority of candidates identified the shifting attitudes to slang over time as the key point of focus across the three texts, often introducing ideas about social class and religion (particularly in A) that underpinned these attitudes. Other interesting areas of exploration included writer identity, relationship with audience and the purposes and features of the preface as a specific writing genre. It was pleasing to read responses that engaged thoughtfully and productively with specific meaning within the texts, linking the contexts of their production and reception to the dominant attitudes of their respective social settings. There was also insightful discussion of how prescriptivist and descriptivist attitudes sat alongside the broader societal attitudes of the texts. Indeed, this proved to be a very productive approach for much perceptive argument construction, helping to shape some confidently structured responses, with Text A's formal, moralising perspective contrasting sharply with Text C's casual, but rather arch, deployment of slang mixed in with moments of linguistic sophistication, via Text B's rather more cautious separation of slang into separate categories defined in broad terms of morality. Particularly effective responses identified the fact that all three texts alluded to the transitory nature of slangs.

Rather less successful were responses that occasionally quoted out of context; for example, in the final paragraph of Text A, the noun phrase 'unimaginable pains' was attributed as negative language related to slang itself, rather than the writer's experience of collecting it, and, from Text B, 'Pedlars French' and 'St. Giles's Greek' were described as evidence of the sophisticated influence of other European languages, rather than descriptors of the unintelligibility of criminal slang. As mentioned above, use of conversation theory was not particularly helpful in developing responses to these written texts, but theory relating to persuasion in writer/reader dynamics, such as Fairclough's synthetic personalisation, worked well.

In general, it was pleasing to see what certainly felt like an increased focus on the productive use of relevant linguistic terminology this year: almost all responses contained at least some demonstration of this knowledge. Obviously, the strongest responses were those that applied the widest range of terms. Please continue to encourage candidates to be precise in their labelling of features, however, either through concise quotation or underlining of words within quoted clauses/sentences that are relevant to the term(s) deployed.

It was a pleasure once more to see lively engagement with these texts, demonstrating sophisticated understanding of the prefaces themselves, and the contextual conditions in which they were produced. It was clear that candidates' work elsewhere on the course, particularly perhaps for Component 1 Section B Standard and Non-Standard English, helped them to respond to this question with such confidence and thoughtful engagement.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- well-shaped essay responses that clearly address the question
- a clear, purposeful comparative overview that establishes the position of the argument
- close engagement with specific meaning through textual detail
- well-chosen textual evidence engaged with closely
- productive and frequent comparisons between texts
- context linked closely to meaning
- the identification of attitudes as important to constructing a purposeful argument
- wide range of linguistic terminology from across the language levels.

Areas for improvement:

- the context rubric should not be copied out verbatim as an overview
- analysis of meaning in context is important: evidence should not be quoted out of the context in which it is used in the texts
- quoting, and labelling with terminology, should be concise and precise
- a wider range of terms, beyond word classes and sentence moods, is to be encouraged
- technical accuracy and fluency of written expression.

Section B: English in the Twenty-First Century

Three assessment objectives are covered in Section B: AO1, AO2 and AO3. The marks for these are not equally weighted. Since AO3 is worth double, it is important that candidates spend sufficient time exploring context and the construction of meaning (AO3). In Question 3, marks were awarded for each separate assessment objective.

AO1 (10 marks)

Candidates needed to demonstrate their ability to use a range of terminology, both specific to text messages as a 21st-century medium, and general linguistic terms. This facilitated the development of an appropriately critical approach. Fluency and technical accuracy were also specifically assessed under AO1.

AO2 (10 marks)

Candidates needed to demonstrate explicit conceptual knowledge of genre and medium, in addition to wider concepts such as audience and purpose here, using this knowledge to explore issues such as informalisation, status and power, and self-representation. Relevant theories, such as attitudes to language change, Face, Accommodation and politeness were rewarded here when deployed productively and specifically. The quality of selection of evidence to support analysis was also considered under this AO.

AO3 (20 marks)

Close engagement with meanings, shaped through the varying contextual relationships between text senders and single receiver, and the reasons for their texting, were key to success under this AO. The application of the contextual detail provided concerning text writers' identities and their use of language as a reflection of their language choices was important to purposeful evaluation of the effectiveness of language use in context.

Q.3 Essay

This question tests the candidate's ability to analyse language using accurate terminology and an appropriate style, to evaluate the construction of meaning in context, and to apply knowledge of relevant concepts and issues in order to explore the writers' language choices.

Candidates responded with confidence and enthusiasm to the data, demonstrating clear understanding of text messaging, its history and influence on much 21st-century language.

While, as last year, there was some reference to prescriptivist and descriptivist theorists, it was pleasing to see that this was dialled down significantly, with the texts themselves very much at the heart of the majority of the responses. This year's medium also prompted some productive, and often very interesting, personal examples of candidates' own text message usage in different contextual circumstances. Most candidates grouped the texts according to relationships between writer and receiver, which proved a highly effective manner in which to organise responses, considering differing levels of formality and familiarity in light of this.

For instance, the high levels of informality in Text 3, from the receiver's 9-year-old daughter, was productively discussed both in terms of her age, from both a literacy and informalisation perspective, while the use of emojis in Text 6 reflected a polite closing strategy in an interaction between friends, compared to those in Text 9 provided a lighter tone to the interaction between neighbours, where the use of the introductory opening token 'hey its Andrea' intimated positive politeness. Most candidates identified the tell-tale signs of unintended non-Standard language in Text 2's spam message, purporting to be from Apple, while others discussed the triad of simple imperatives used in Text 8 by the government as a means to persuade and enforce instrumental power.

One minor slip that occurred with some regularity was the misidentification of 'you must stay at home' in Text 8 as an imperative clause, rather than a directive with imperative force shaped by the obligation modal auxiliary verb 'must'.

- As in previous years, it was a pleasure to read responses that demonstrated a strong understanding of language as we use it today, clearly informed by personal experience.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- clear organisation and fluent, accurate expression
- wide range of terminology, both linguistic and medium-specific
- clear connections between contexts and texts, using groupings effectively confident understanding of concepts and issues applied productively to analysis.

Areas for improvement:

- ensuring good time management to allow for a developed response
- avoid discussing other C21st media outside of relevance to the question
- always quoting in support of points made.

Summary of key points

Section A: key considerations for centres

- Responses should give equal attention to all three texts.
- While it is acceptable to deal with each text in turn, comparisons in the strongest responses will be frequent and productive.
- Candidates should be encouraged to double-check word classes in the texts themselves of 1(a) and (b) and to ensure response for short tariff questions are detailed enough in terms of the application of knowledge to access all available marks.
- The application of theory should be approached with caution and only used if specifically relevant and adding value to analysis.
- Overview for Question 2 should not simply repeat the context rubric.

Section B: key considerations for centres

- Maintain focus on the texts themselves, and use contextual information to inform discussion of them.
- Careful planning and grouping of texts facilitates the most productive analysis, and prevents unnecessary repetition.
- A wide range of terms, both C21st and linguistic, underpins the strongest analysis.

Conclusion:

As always, it was a pleasure to read responses that engaged with the paper in such a thoughtful, positive, and informed manner. Candidates had clearly been well prepared for this exam, and this preparation was evidenced through engaging responses from across the marking bands. There were some pleasing personal responses, productive and thought-provoking interpretations of the material and some real clarity and flair in the expression of ideas.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2023

COMPONENT 3: CREATIVE AND CRITICAL WRITING

Overview of the Component

Component 3 offers candidates a choice of two questions, each with two creative tasks (a and b) and a commentary (task c) on one of the creative pieces the candidate has produced.

- Each question comes with a stimulus text, which candidates have to use to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the specific creative writing task. Question 1's stimulus text is an adapted excerpt from Rutger Bregman's book *Humankind*, which describes the real-life story of a group of schoolboys being marooned on an island in 1965, leading to collaboration in order to survive until their rescue 15 months later. Question 2's stimulus is an extract from a blog about the British weather, listing some interesting and possibly surprising UK weather facts.
- Question 1a asks candidates to write a diary entry for one day from the point of view of Stephen, one of the shipwrecked boys featured in the stimulus text. Candidates can invent and add details, but they can also use details included in the stimulus to create a convincing diary entry. Question 1b asks candidates to write a review of an adventure film or book that they would recommend for a teenage audience. Again, candidates can use the stimulus for inspiration, but they can also come up with their own ideas for books or films to review.
- Question 2a asks candidates to write an extract from a short story in which a group of friends meet for a special occasion on a summer's evening, where the weather affects events and relationships. Here, candidates can use ideas from the stimulus, but equally, candidates can come up with their own ideas. Question 2b asks candidates to write an online article for holidaymakers staying in Britain. The article must provide suggestions for activities for a local area and must include some practical advice to prepare tourists for unpredictable weather conditions.
- Creative writing tasks' word counts total 600 words, and in the case of this series, the word count for both a) and b) tasks for questions 1 and 2 is 300 words each. Word counts are always approximate, and candidates will not be penalised for slightly lower or higher word counts. However, where a word count is significantly less or significantly over the word count, candidates' responses will be self-penalising, as their responses are unlikely to meet the task's requirements.
- Each creative task is assessed on **AO5** only, with a maximum number of 30 marks per creative task available.
- **AO5** assesses candidates' ability to write engagingly for a range of different audiences, purposes, and genres, covering both fiction and non-fiction genres. This means that candidates are expected to write in standard English, with accurate spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, and grammar.
- The commentary task is only assessed on **AO3**, with a maximum of 20 marks available here.
- **AO3** assesses candidates' ability to discuss how they have used language and shaped it to suit contextual factors, including audience, purpose, and genre, as well as comment on the effect of their linguistic and stylistic choices, and how these contribute to the construction of meaning. There is an expectation that candidates apply accurate and appropriate linguistic terminology in their commentaries and cite relevant examples in support.

- Candidates must complete the a and b creative tasks for their chosen question, so 1a and 1b, or 2a and 2b. Combining 1a with 2b, or 2a with 1b is a rubric infringement and will result in the candidate's b response being awarded 0 marks.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Candidates appeared well prepared to make a prompt and apt choice between the two questions this year, with very few false starts or rubric infringements. Candidates responded with creativity, flair and skill to the set tasks to both routes through the paper, which seemed to be equally accessible to candidates of all levels of ability, with Question 1 seeming to be the slightly more popular option. There was evidence that candidates had considered carefully the specifics of the tasks, with few having approached the exam with pre-prepared ideas. The stimulus material was clearly understood by the majority of candidates. It was used appropriately as a reference or jumping off point by most candidates, and encouragingly very few candidates copied whole sentences, which is always self-penalising. Nearly all managed their time effectively to allow for the commentary. These continue to be thoughtful about language choices made, which would seem to reflect an increased focus on this in class, yet there is work to be done in ensuring candidates are concise and purposeful in their selection of evidence from their own writing for the commentary.

Question 1

Task a

Candidates approached the diary from Stephen's point of view with confidence, with almost all responses demonstrating understanding of the diary genre, producing a convincing entry in the voice of Stephen. The majority of candidates selected details from the stimulus and used these effectively such as references to the boys' food, their home-made gym, and their original desire to escape their strict boarding school. Some successful candidates drew on the stimulus material to develop Stephen's character and voice, such as including references to homesickness, strict teachers, and the need to protect the younger boys marooned with Stephen.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Adopting a distinctive voice from the character of Stephen.
- Appropriate use of diary entry features such as references to dates, the act of writing the diary, references to previous entries, addressing the diary as if a confidant, sustained use of past tense and chronological discourse structure which focuses on key events for that day.
- Apt selection of details from the stimulus material to develop character, voice, and events for the entry.

Areas for improvement:

- Some less successful candidates clearly had not understood the stimulus text and confused the events of Golding's *Lord of the Flies* with those of the real-life marooned boys described in the stimulus.
- Some less successful candidates did not make sufficient use of the stimulus, by for example, re-inventing names for the marooned boys and Stephen, and adding details that were not plausible.
- Very few unsuccessful responses consisted of a prose fiction extract rather than a diary entry. These were often also responses where candidates had not made sufficient use of the stimulus, resulting in horror or murder stories.

Task b

Candidates generally chose to write a review of a well-known film, and many demonstrated typical features of review writing with some outstanding responses reading like a professional review. Fewer candidates wrote a book review, but again, these were at times as impressive as the successful film reviews. It was clear that for many of these candidates they were writing about a film or a book that they themselves knew well and had enjoyed. Some candidates wrote a review of a made-up film or book, often relying on the stimulus material, imagining a film made about the marooned boys, which also resulted in engaging and successful reviews.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Engaging reviews clearly aimed at a teen audience, with the writer's personal voice very much in evidence.
- Typical characteristics of review writing such as references to cast and director or author, plot summary with sensitive management of possible spoilers.
- Expression of opinions supported by clear reasoning, which demonstrates knowledge of the film or book under review.

Areas for improvement:

- Understanding of the review genre: a number of unsuccessful responses did not mention a title of the book or film under review at all, whereas others just heaped on the praise without explaining why the film or book was deserving of such high praise.
- Lack of control in structuring reviews, with some unsuccessful responses written almost as a stream of consciousness.
- Lack of detailed discussion of the film or book resulting in repetition.

Question 2

Task a

Many candidates approached this task from their own personal experience, with many writing about friends celebrating the end of their A level exams. Other successful responses included gatherings to remember a dead friend or celebrate a special birthday. A small minority of candidates produced specific sub-genres of fiction, such as romance or horror, and many were successful in creating such genre fiction that was highly engaging. Most candidates produced an extract, but a small number wrote a piece of fiction that was complete, which often was self-penalising as the narrative moved too fast to be developing interesting features, such as characterisation.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Clear focus on ALL aspects of the task: group of friends, special occasion, summer evening setting, and a focus on how the weather affects both narrative event(s) and relationships.
- Clear evidence of the response being an extract, allowing candidates to flesh out characters and relationships and to develop a narrative in which the weather impacts on events and character relationships.
- Controlled writing with paragraphs that enhance meaning and narrative.

Areas for improvement:

- Writing a fiction response that incorporates ALL aspects of the task specified, which relies on candidates reading the question carefully and then unpicking the demands of the task.
- Controlled writing with paragraphs to aid narrative structure, and effective use of dialogue (where dialogue moves narrative on or provides insight into characters or relationships).

- Accurate tense management and expression.

Task b

Most candidates adopted an engaging voice, with many writing from their point of view as locals of a particular town, making the most of their specialist knowledge to make interesting suggestions, such as local sights and restaurants. The best responses anticipated audience needs and offered a variety of activities, incorporating some that were suitable for all weather conditions. The most successful candidates included the advice about the weather as part of the advice about activities or local features.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Engaging personal voices that demonstrate local insider's knowledge.
- A clear awareness of the audience that is being targeted from foreign tourists to UK tourists on a staycation, or from young adults to families with children.
- Suitably light-hearted to entertain, but always combined with a sensible advisory/informative note.

Areas for improvement:

- Clear focus on ALL aspects of the task: a significant number of less successful responses wrote about Britain as a holiday destination generally, lacking the local voice.
- A clear understanding of the audience who the candidate is writing for. While the task specifies "holidaymakers who plan to stay in Britain", this gives candidates plenty of scope to focus on particular age groups or nationalities and shape their writing accordingly.
- Controlled writing with clear structure, effective referencing and accurate expression.

Question 1 and 2: task c

Candidates chose one of their two creative pieces for comment. Several examiners commented that candidates seem to focus more on the creative tasks than the commentary; this issue has been noted in previous reports on examination series. The highest-scoring candidates were able to own and investigate the language choices they had made purposefully. Using precise terminology, they could select and identify the features which shaped their writing. They gave brief, apt examples and linked effects with other techniques used in topic paragraphs e.g. the use of imagery for mood in 1a, or the use of point of view and narrative voice to shape the story extract in 2a. Writers of the best commentaries were able to range through the levels of language, for example by detailing unusual syntactical features, pragmatic references and implied meaning (sometimes derived from close reading of stimulus materials), and the effects of lexical choices to construct a tone appropriate for the task.

Evaluation is embedded in thorough analysis and does not need to be considered separately. Yet, it is useful for candidates to convey a sense of the 'big picture' of the creative pieces, whilst using specific linguistic detail to exemplify how this was achieved.

As noted previously, less successful candidates tended to limit discussion to identification of word classes with little meaningful discussion.

As in previous years, there was inaccuracy in the identification of quite basic features; for example, adverbs, adjectives and even nouns were regularly confused. There is still a confusion between exclamative and exclamatory sentences, and possessive pronouns and possessive determiners. Similarly, deontic modal verbs (such as “must”) are regularly mistakenly identified as imperative verb phrases, while negative verb phrases are often labelled as declarative mood. Some candidates engaged in a feature-spotting exercise with little conviction behind discussion of how each technique suited the genre or engaged the audience.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Ownership of the creative piece with a confident, first person investigation of language choices made for the given task.
- An apt selection of key linguistic techniques and features which construct meaning.
- Topic paragraphs linking language features which combine to create effect, for example, to persuade, or to create humour or empathy.
- Accurate identification of selected, specific linguistic features, apt illustration and exploration and evaluation of their effects in context.

Areas for improvement:

- A lengthy, unfocused overview reciting the set task.
- Feature-spotting by identifying and labelling features but with a failure to explore their significance, for example, ‘I used the stative verb ‘feel’ and the abstract nouns ‘hope’ and ‘despair’ in the third paragraph.’
- A narrow range, often limited to word classes.
- An inappropriate attempt to evaluate by discussing what else might be included were they to write the piece again.

Summary of key points

Key considerations for centres teaching Component 3

- A successful creative response will consider what the audience needs to know and use stylistic techniques and an appropriate tenor to guide the response.
- The word count is advisory and the precise counting of words undertaken by some candidates is unnecessary and distracting for them.
- Encourage candidates to read the stimulus carefully, and encourage them to take a step-by-step approach in unpicking the creative tasks, so that they are completely clear as to what they are required to write and for whom and why.
- Practise writing different genres and text types, with a focus on the technical aspects of writing, such as paragraphing, structuring texts (whole text discourse), and accuracy such as tense management.
- Similarly, direct speech is used effectively at times to create a sense of characters, relationships or plot development. Yet, dialogue frequently hinders the narrative development or, as a result of poor paragraphing and punctuation, dialogue sections tend to lack in clarity and engagement.
- Encourage candidates to develop the habit of proof-reading their creative pieces and commentaries.

Creative Writing: key considerations for centres

- Many successful candidates made highly effective use of the stimulus material for task 1a and 2b, and sometimes task 2a and 1b, too.
- Unsuccessful responses, however, were often the result of misreading the stimulus or ignoring the stimulus altogether.

Commentary: key considerations for centres

- Encourage candidates to own the language choices they have made by using the first person in their commentary and by explaining their writing process as a response to the task.
- Remind candidates to apply the knowledge and skills used in other parts of the course, for example, the language levels and precise terminology.
- While identifying and illustrating each feature selected, candidates should tease out how these individual features aid the overall genre and purpose of the creative task or its 'big picture' effects.
- Advise candidates to use topic sentences to link exemplified points with effects.
- Practise accurate identification of linguistic features in own writing.
- Evaluation should be embedded in analysis.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2023

COMPONENT 4

Overview of the component

As in previous years, there was a great deal to admire in the work submitted and seen by moderators this series. On the whole, candidates had been well prepared and supported by centres in producing their NEA folders. The hard work of both students and their teachers was evident across the work submitted and centres are thanked for their work in preparing and submitting the work.

It is strongly recommended that centres pay careful attention to the advice given through the individual moderator reports as they provide valuable guidance on the work submitted by individual centres. The purpose of these reports is to offer guidance on the best ways to support candidates, to give advice based on good practice seen and read during the moderation process and to provide recommendations for future submissions.

In addition, this report and previous Principal Moderator Reports also provide helpful advice and guidance to centres. These reports, alongside individual moderator reports, should be used as a tool to support candidates as they approach their investigations and to guide them throughout the NEA process. It is also good practice to consult the WJEC standardising material for Component 4 (available on the website) to draw information that can further support candidates. Centres are encouraged to make full use of all these documents before approaching the non-examination assessment component.

Candidates were generally very well prepared for this component. As a result, they demonstrated a good understanding of the assessment objectives and a significant number of folders across the top bands were seen. The bands are distinguished through careful evaluation of the application of the assessment objectives outlined above but distinctions between the bands can be made through the indicators below:

Band 5 – sophisticated, perceptive, detailed, confident

Band 4 – effective, secure, focused, consistent

Band 3 – competent, sensible, clear, relevant

Band 2 – straightforward, valid, uneven, inconsistent

Band 1 – limited, basic, inaccuracies

This component tests candidates' skills, knowledge and understanding across three Assessment Objectives (AOs):

AO1: Apply appropriate methods at language analysis using associated terminology and coherent written expression (30 marks)

AO2: Demonstrate critical understanding of language concepts and issues relevant to language use (20 marks)

AO3: Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning (20 marks)

Centres showed a clear understand of the requirements across the three different strands of AO1 with AO1a focusing on appropriate methods of language analysis, AO1b focusing on associated terminology and apt selection and AO1c focusing on coherent written expression and structure.

Candidates being awarded in the higher bands for AO1 demonstrated the ability to effectively discuss the rationale for the collection of their data (AO1a). Higher achieving folders demonstrated a wide range of carefully selected examples from their data, analysing across language levels and including analysis at word, phrase, clause and sentence level (AO1b). The majority of folders in this series displayed coherent written expression which was academic and engaging (AO1c).

AO2 requires candidates to demonstrate critical understanding of language concepts and issues relevant to language use. Higher achieving folders clearly demonstrated critical and perceptive exploration of their chosen identity topic. They were able to apply and discuss a range of theories and concepts in an intelligent manner. As with previous years, some investigations relied heavily on dated theory; this was again most evident in investigations exploring Gender and Identity.

AO3 focuses on the analysis and evaluation of how contextual factors such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity, situation, etc, affect the production and reception of meaning. The highest achieving folders displayed a confident understanding of a range of contextual factors which were closely linked to their data and to their area of study. They avoided general contextual description often demonstrated in lower achieving folders.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

The titles were generally well thought out. However, as identified in the previous Principal Moderator's report, there were still some investigations where the word 'identity' did not feature in the investigation title and some with very implicit reference to this focus. At times, candidates used terms such as stereotyping, ideology and representation instead of identity both in the titles and in the main body of their work. As a result of this lack of focus in the titles, the quality of analysis and evaluation of the data was hindered. This prevented some students from being able to access the higher Bands 4 and 5 where secure and perceptive interpretations of the topic and concepts/issues are required. Centres are strongly encouraged to revisit the WJEC Eduqas guidance in respect of task setting located on the WJEC Eduqas website.

The best titles posed a question which supported candidates to focus their study. The best folders then questioned and/or tested their own hypothesis in relation to identity. The higher band folders focused their hypotheses on identity and not on the area of study, for example, gender. Again, this ensured that tight focus and helped candidates to remain on track. Centres should encourage this approach as this helped the candidates focus and supported the structure of the investigations.

As in the 2022 series, the majority of candidates chose the Culture and Gender aspects of study as the specific focus for their language investigation. A few students chose Self-representation and Diversity as their area of study, but these were few and far between. Centres had encouraged candidates to explore different aspects of study and most centres had effectively encouraged candidates to produce investigations that represented their areas of interest and therefore candidates' engagement with the task was evident in the vast majority of folders seen. It was great to see that, in almost all centres, candidates had clearly made their own informed, independent decisions about what to investigate.

Language and Gender

This was the most popular aspect of study again this series. A range of very interesting primary data was collected covering media representation in advertising, female journalists and sports. The higher achieving folders demonstrated a sophisticated range of language features from across language levels. Lower achieving folders were often characterised by sweeping generalisations with loose reference to more limited data sets. There was a tendency for candidates to focus on more outdated gender theorists such as Lakoff. Higher achieving candidates engaged effectively with other theories such as Butler's performativity models and Eckert and McConnell's communities of practice.

Examples of focused titles:

- Analyse and investigate how the language in toy adverts reflects attitudes to gender identity.
- Using relevant data analyse and evaluate the ways in which the language is used by male and female characters in animated cartoons to construct gender identities.

Examples of less focused titles:

- An investigation into how language is used to target specific genders in advertising skin care products.
- Using relevant data investigate and analyse gender stereotypes portrayed through music.

Language and Culture

This was again a popular aspect of language study chosen by candidates. A range of very interesting data ranging across written and spoken modes was collected covering politics, sporting communities and criminal identities. These included investigations into how Benjamin Zephaniah uses language to explore his cultural identity and how language and identities are conveyed by the royal family.

High achieving folders demonstrated analysis of a range of sophisticated language features covering grammar, morphology and semantics. Lower achieving folders were limited to word level analysis with some references to sentence functions. Higher achieving folders engaged with speaker behaviour and identity issues and concepts and made good use of theory. There was strong, confident contextual awareness in the higher achieving folders. In the lower achieving folders, contextual awareness was more generalised and lacked precise linking to language features and the chosen data.

Examples of closely focused titles:

- Investigate the professional identities created by boxers through their language use in pre-match press conferences.
- An investigation into how identity is created by teachers through their language use when speaking to pre-school children and teenagers.

Examples of less focused titles:

- Investigate and analyse the ways in which the issue of mental health is conveyed in song lyrics.
- Analyse the language used by the cast of Love Island.

Language and Self-Representation

There were few investigations focusing on this topic. This is a shame because this is an interesting area of study and, when done well, candidates produce intelligent and thoughtful investigations on this topic. Interestingly, data included multimodal forms as well as spoken transcripts. However, centres are encouraged to be mindful that, while data such as WhatsApp messages can be interesting and can be analysed effectively, they do not always yield the richest data. Centres should ensure that, where these multimodal forms are used, the data provides the richness to allow candidates the opportunity to effectively apply the assessment objectives thoroughly across the higher bands.

This series again provided examples of theories such as Goffman's/Brown and Levinson's face theory, Leech's 'Banter Principle' and Lakoff's politeness principles, and these were explored well (AO2). Less successful explorations were evident with concepts, issues and theories at a more general level or where the concepts and issues led the investigations rather than a clear focus on identity.

Examples of closely focused titles:

- In what ways do I alter my identity through use of language when in conversation with a family member in comparison with to a friend?
- An investigation into how my language use with family and friends in spoken discourse creates my identity.

Examples of less focused titles:

- Investigate my language use in verbal communication and written social media communication with friends and family.

Language and Diversity

Again, there were few candidates selecting this area of study. Higher achieving folders discussed a range of sophisticated language features from across language levels. Theories were used to discuss language issues, for example, Giles' accommodation theory. Lower achieving folders use of linguistic terminology was very limited, often at word class level. There was a straightforward discussion of language concepts and issues with little or no reference to theory. There was some sensible discussion in these folders of how context shaped meaning.

Examples of closely focused titles:

- How is identity reflected in the way in which Nigerians use English?
- Investigate how speakers from southwest London show their identity through language and adapt their language in different situations.

Examples of less focused titles:

- An investigation into how slang in Zimbabwe developed and its similarities and differences to the standard conventions of slang in the UK.
- Analyse and evaluate how native and non-native speakers differ from one another.

Characteristics of successful pieces of work

- Well focused titles referring specifically to both language and to the theme of identity.
- Well selected, high quality, rich data collected and analysed.
- A sophisticated range of accurate language terminology covering word, phrase, clause and sentence level analysis.

- Sophisticated engagement with concepts and issues and exploration of contemporary research.
- Intelligent and coherent lines of argument in relation to the title/question.
- Proof-read, edited and accurate written expression.
- A well organised, academic style of writing adapted.
- Language concepts, issues and theories carefully selected and discussed.
- Confident, subtle interpretations of how identity is constructed.
- Perceptive understanding of how data can be affected by different contextual factors.

Common misconceptions and recommendations

- Some titles did not have 'language' and/or 'identity' in their titles. Both should be explicitly referenced in the title and analysed/evaluated throughout the investigation.
- At times, the primary data did not have the breadth, depth and richness required. Students should avoid relying on one or two sources. However, a few students had data sets that were too broad and this is also to be discouraged.
- Candidates should be encouraged to explore language across all levels.
- Too often, gender investigations relied too heavily on Lakoff's deficit approach and/or other outdated theorists.
- At times, there was a greater focus on the topic area (gender, culture, etc) and not on identity. Clearly focused titles can help to avoid this.
- A range of language concepts and issues with underpinning theories should be analysed and discussed in direct relation to the data set.
- Candidates should aim for analysis and evaluation of data rather than description.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Administration and presentation of samples was very good. There were very few errors with submissions. There were, however, a few NEA cover sheets missing information, for example, centre names, candidate numbers, dates, aspect of study and descriptions of the data. Also, in a small number of cases, there were some clerical errors in respect of the addition of the different assessment objectives for the total folder mark and discrepancies with what was entered on WJEC's secure website. It must be acknowledged that these errors were very rare.

Centres are reminded to make use of the NEA checklist as these ensure that no elements are missed in preparing the sample for the moderator. Where these were used, samples were well presented.

Centres are reminded not to use plastic wallets or folders in submitting their candidates work for moderation as this can be a hinderance to the process. Folders were presented to moderators in a variety of ways and centres are reminded that guidance on submitting folders can be found in the specification including the fact that the sample should be sent to the moderator in rank order.

Some centres used assessment criteria grids by both the main assessor and as part of the internal standardising/moderating process. This demonstrated good, rigorous practice and was helpful for external moderators to establish how centres had made decisions with regard to the application of the marking criteria and assessment objectives. Many folders displayed evidence of robust and effective internal moderation which was again helpful to ascertain how marks had been awarded.

The team of moderators and I would like to thank all the students and staff for their time and hard work in producing an A level English Language NEA submission which was a pleasure to moderate. We look forward to next year's submission.

For internally assessed NEA/CA components

COMPONENT 4

Overview of the component

As in previous years, there was a great deal to admire in the work submitted and seen by moderators this series. On the whole, candidates had been well prepared and supported by centres in producing their NEA folders. The hard work of both students and their teachers was evident across the work submitted and centres are thanked for their work in preparing and submitting the work.

It is strongly recommended that centres pay careful attention to the advice given through the individual moderator reports as they provide valuable guidance on the work submitted by individual centres. The purpose of these reports is to offer guidance on the best ways to support candidates, to give advice based on good practice seen and read during the moderation process and to provide recommendations for future submissions.

In addition, this report and previous Principal Moderator Reports also provide helpful advice and guidance to centres. These reports, alongside individual moderator reports, should be used as a tool to support candidates as they approach their investigations and to guide them throughout the NEA process. It is also good practice to consult the WJEC standardising material for Component 4 (available on the website) to draw information that can further support candidates. Centres are encouraged to make full use of all these documents before approaching the non-examination assessment component.

Candidates were generally very well prepared for this component. As a result, they demonstrated a good understanding of the assessment objectives and a significant number of folders across the top bands were seen. The bands are distinguished through careful evaluation of the application of the assessment objectives outlined above but distinctions between the bands can be made through the indicators below:

Band 5 - sophisticated, perceptive, detailed, confident
Band 4 – effective, secure, focused, consistent
Band 3 – competent, sensible, clear, relevant
Band 2 – straightforward, valid, uneven, inconsistent
Band 1 – limited, basic, inaccuracies

This component tests candidates' skills, knowledge and understanding across three Assessment Objectives (AOs)

AO1: Apply appropriate methods at language analysis using associated terminology and coherent written expression (30 marks)

AO2: Demonstrate critical understanding of language concepts and issues relevant to language use (20 marks)

AO3: Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning (20 marks)

Centres showed a clear understand of the requirements across the three different strands of AO1 with AO1a focussing on appropriate methods of language analysis, AO1b focussing on associated terminology and apt selection and AO1c focussing on coherent written expression and structure.

Candidates being awarded in the higher bands for AO1 demonstrated the ability to effectively discuss the rationale for the collection of their data (AO1a). Higher achieving folders demonstrated a wide range of carefully selected examples from their data, analysing across language levels and including analysis at word, phrase, clause and sentence level (AO1b). The majority of folders in this series displayed coherent written expression which was academic and engaging (AO1c).

AO2 requires candidates to demonstrate critical understanding of language concepts and issues relevant to language use. Higher achieving folders clearly demonstrated critical and perceptive exploration of their chosen identity topic. They were able to apply and discuss a range of theories and concepts in an intelligent manner. As with previous years, some investigations relied heavily on dated theory, this was again most evident in investigations exploring Gender and Identity.

AO3 focuses on the analysis and evaluation of how contextual factors such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity, situation, etc, affect the production and reception of meaning. The highest achieving folders displayed a confident understanding of a range of contextual factors which were closely linked to their data and to their area of study. They avoided general contextual description often demonstrated in lower achieving folders.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

The titles were generally well thought out. However, as identified in the previous Principal Moderator's report, there were still some investigations where the word 'identity' did not feature in the investigation title and some with very implicit reference to this focus. At times, candidates used terms such as stereotyping, ideology and representation instead of identity both in the titles and in the main body of their work. As a result of this lack of focus in the titles, the quality of analysis and evaluation of the data was hindered. This prevented some students from being able to access the higher Bands 4 and 5 where secure and perceptive interpretations of the topic and concepts/issues are required. Centres are strongly encouraged to revisit the WJEC Eduqas guidance in respect of task setting located on the WJEC Eduqas website.

The best titles posed a question which supported candidates to focus their study. The best folders then questioned and/or tested their own hypothesis in relation to identity. The higher band folders focused their hypotheses on identity and not on the area of study, for example gender. Again, this ensured that tight focus and helped candidates to remain on track. Centres should encourage this approach as this helped the candidates focus and supported the structure of the investigations.

As in the 2022 series, the majority of candidates chose the Culture and Gender aspects of study as the specific focus for their language investigation. A few students chose Self-representation and Diversity as their area of study, but these were few and far between. Centres had encouraged candidates to explore different aspects of study and most centres had effectively encouraged candidates to produce investigations that represented their areas of interest and therefore candidates' engagement with the task was evident in the vast majority of folders seen. It was great to see that, in almost all centres, candidates had clearly made their own informed, independent decisions about what to investigate.

Language and Gender

This was the most popular aspect of study again this series. A range of very interesting primary data was collected covering media representation in advertising, female journalists and sports. The higher achieving folders demonstrated a sophisticated range of language features from across language levels. Lower achieving folders were often characterised by sweeping generalisations with loose reference to more limited data sets. There was a tendency for candidates to focus on more outdated gender theorists such as Lakoff. Higher achieving candidates engaged effectively with other theories such as Butler's performativity models and Eckert and McConnell's communities of practice.

Examples of focused titles:

- Analyse and investigate how the language in toy adverts reflects attitudes to gender identity.
- Using relevant data analyse and evaluate the ways in which the language is used by male and female characters in animated cartoons to construct gender identities.

Examples of less focused titles:

- An investigation into how language is used to target specific genders in advertising skin care products.
- Using relevant data investigate and analyse gender stereotypes portrayed through music.

Language and Culture

This was again a popular aspect of language study chosen by candidates. A range of very interesting data ranging across written and spoken modes was collected covering politics, sporting communities and criminal identities. These included Investigations into how Benjamin Zephaniah uses language to explore his cultural identity and how language and identities are conveyed by the royal family.

High achieving folders demonstrated analysis of a range of sophisticated language features covering grammar, morphology and semantics. Lower achieving folders were limited to word level analysis with some references to sentence functions. Higher achieving folders engaged with speaker behaviour and identity issues and concepts and made good use of theory. There was strong, confident contextual awareness in the higher achieving folders. In the lower achieving folders, contextual awareness was more generalised and lacked precise linking to language features and the chosen data.

Examples of closely focused titles:

- Investigate the professional identities created by boxers through their language use in pre-match press conferences.
- An investigation into how identity is created by teachers through their language use when speaking to pre-school children and teenagers.

Examples of less focused titles:

- Investigate and analyse the ways in which the issue of mental health is conveyed in song lyrics.
- Analyse the language used by the cast of Love Island.

Language and Self-Representation

There were few investigations focusing on this topic. This is a shame because this is an interesting area of study and, when done well, candidates produce intelligent and thoughtful investigations on this topic. Interestingly, data included multimodal forms as well as spoken transcripts. However, centres are encouraged to be mindful that, while data such as WhatsApp messages can be interesting and can be analysed effectively, they do not always yield the richest data. Centres should ensure that, where these multimodal forms are used, the data provides the richness to allow candidates the opportunity to effectively apply the assessment objectives thoroughly across the higher bands.

This series again provided examples of theories such as Goffman's/Brown and Levinson's face theory, Leech's 'Banter Principle' and Lakoff's politeness principles and these were explored well (AO2). Less successful explorations were evident with concepts, issues and theories at a more general level or where the concepts and issues led the investigations rather than a clear focus on identity.

Examples of closely focused titles:

- In what ways do I alter my identity through use of language when in conversation with a family member in comparison with to a friend?
- An investigation into how my language use with family and friends in spoken discourse creates my identity.

Examples of less focused titles:

- Investigate my language use in verbal communication and written social media communication with friends and family.

Language and Diversity

Again, there were few candidates selecting this area of study. Higher achieving folders discussed a range of sophisticated language features from across language levels. Theories were used to discuss language issues, for example, Giles' accommodation theory. Lower achieving folders use of linguistic terminology was very limited, often at word class level. There was a straightforward discussion of language concepts and issues with little or no reference to theory. There was some sensible discussion in these folders of how context shaped meaning.

Examples of closely focused titles:

- How is identity reflected in the way in which Nigerians use English?
- Investigate how speakers from southwest London show their identity through language and adapt their language in different situations.

examples of less focused titles:

- An investigation into how slang in Zimbabwe developed and its similarities and differences to the standard conventions of slang in the UK.
- Analyse and evaluate how native and non-native speakers differ from one another.

Characteristics of successful pieces of work

- Well focused titles referring specifically to both language and to the theme of identity.
- Well selected, high quality, rich data collected and analysed.
- A sophisticated range of accurate language terminology covering word, phrase, clause and sentence level analysis.
- Sophisticated engagement with concepts and issues and exploration of contemporary research

- Intelligent and coherent lines of argument in relation to the title/question.
- Proof-read, edited and accurate written expression.
- A well organised, academic style of writing adapted.
- Language concepts, issues and theories carefully selected and discussed.
- Confident, subtle interpretations of how identity is constructed.
- Perceptive understanding of how data can be affected by different contextual factors.

Common misconceptions and recommendations

- Some titles did not have 'language' and/or 'identity' in their titles. Both should be explicitly referenced in the title and analysed/evaluated throughout the investigation.
- At times, the primary data did not have the breadth, depth and richness required, Centres should avoid relying on one or two sources. However, a few centres had data sets that were too broad and this is also to be discouraged.
- Candidates should be encouraged to explore language across all levels.
- Too often, gender investigations relied too heavily on Lakoff's deficit approach and/or other outdated theorists.
- At times, there was a greater focus on the topic area (gender, culture etc) and not on identity. Clearly focused titles can help to avoid this.
- A range of language concepts and issues with underpinning theories should be analysed and discussed in direct relation to the data set.
- Candidates should aim for analysis and evaluation of data rather than description.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Administration and presentation of samples was very good. There were very few errors with submissions, There were however a few NEA cover sheets missing information, for example, centre names, candidate numbers, dates, aspect of study and descriptions of the data. Also, in a small number of cases, there were some clerical errors in respect of the addition of the different assessment objectives for the total folder mark and discrepancies with what was entered on WJEC's secure website. It must be acknowledged that these errors were very rare.

Centres are reminded to make use of the NEA checklist as these ensure that no elements are missed in preparing the sample for the moderator. Where these were used, samples were well presented.

Centres are reminded not to use plastic wallets or folders in submitting their candidates work for moderation as this can be a hinderance to the process. Folders were presented to moderators in a variety of ways and centres are reminded that guidance on submitting folders can be found in the specification including the fact that the sample should be sent to the moderator in rank order.

Some centres used assessment criteria grids by both the main assessor and as part of the internal standardising/moderating process. This demonstrated good, rigorous practice and was helpful for external moderators to establish how centres had made decisions with regard to the application of the marking criteria and assessment objectives. Many folders displayed evidence of robust and effective internal moderation which was again helpful to ascertain how marks had been awarded.

The team of moderators and I would like to thank all the students and staff for their time and hard work in producing an A level English Language NEA submission which was a pleasure to moderate. We look forward to next year's submission.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team are on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4292

Email: gceenglish@eduqas.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [Eduqas AS/A level English](#)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | Eduqas](#)

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

Regional Rep Team

Our regional team covers all areas of England and can provide face-to-face and online advice at a time which is convenient to you.

Get in contact today and discover how our team can support you and your students.

[Regional Support Team | Eduqas](#)

Eduqas Qualifications

We are one of the largest providers of qualifications for schools, academies, sixth form and further education colleges across England, offering valued qualifications to suit a range of abilities. Each and every one of our qualifications is carefully designed to engage students and to equip them for the next stage of their lives.

We support our education communities by providing trusted qualifications and specialist support, to allow our students the opportunity to reach their full potential.



WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk

ⁱ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.