

GCSE Examiners' Report

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

November 2024

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Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a 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 then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable 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 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.edugas.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 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC 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 component level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the 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 and PRS (edugas.co.uk)

¹ 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.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
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.edugas.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.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner Eduqas

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Executive Summary

Component 1

- Reading responses need to be focused on the actual question. The questions follow a pattern but are not totally predictable.
- Candidates need to select relevant material from the specified section of text and use it sensibly.
- Quotations work best when they are embedded into comments. A methodical tracking of the text usually works well but too many responses are not organised.
- A successful response to a question asking for 'impressions' of a character get beyond quotation from the text to explore the significance of the evidence and to suggest what it shows.
- In question 05 the successful responses are clear in argument and direction. They are coherent and based on a clear personal response to the text.
- The 'attempt rate' for question 05 is still relatively low and time management is an issue.
- Successful writing can be imaginative but is plausible at least on its own terms.
- Successful writing displays a measure of technical control, particularly with tenses and sentence construction.
- Technical control of spelling, sentences and punctuation is a familiar area of weakness in writing. Basic errors are often numerous, and this often undermines narrative writing.

Component 2

- In the reading section, good responses show care in the reading of the question, a willingness to track the whole text methodically and to select a good range of textual details upon which to comment.
- Some candidates use quotations to good effect and with precision, contextualising and/or giving clear explanation of their effect where appropriate. However, some candidates did not always use quotations effectively. Where this was the case, they were sometimes only 'sentence fragments' that lacked clarity or needed more explanation.
- Very brief responses on 10-mark reading questions are limited in terms of coverage and unlikely to progress beyond Band 2.
- In the writing section, successful responses were well-sustained and were shaped and structured effectively. However, there were lots of brief responses seen which limited overall achievement.
- Basic accuracy and control were features of good responses, with some attempt at using a more extended vocabulary.
- Time management remains a key issue for too many candidates. Missing out a reading question and/or not tackling one of the writing tasks significantly limits the chances of real success in the examination.

Component 3

The majority of centres carried forward their Spoken Language grade from summer 2024. Where new work had been submitted the majority of centres had applied the criteria accurately.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Structuring a written response in Component 1 and Component 2.	Blended Learning Resource	Blended learning resource with strategies to improve the structure of written responses in Section B of Component 1 and 2.
Tracking the text/area of text stipulated, to ensure a range of relevant points are made for 10-mark questions	CPD MATERIALS	Previous CPD materials for examples of good responses and strategies for sensible tracking.
Improving proofreading skills/technical accuracy.	POWERPOINT BLENDED LEARNING RESOURCES	A PPT with strategies to improve technical accuracy. Interactive resource for self-study on improving technical accuracy.

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GCSE

November 2024

Component 1

Overview of the Component

This component tests candidates' skills, knowledge and understanding across 5 assessment objectives (AOs).

- AO1 Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.
- AO2 Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
- AO4 Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.
- AO5 Communicate clearly, effectively, and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences and organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.
- AO6 Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Section A

The passage was a short story called 'The Grasshopper' by W. Somerset Maugham. The main characters were two, very different brothers and the story presented the relationship between them. The text was relatively brief and manageable, and most candidates seemed to cope well enough with the surface of the narrative.

Section B

In this section there was a choice of four titles which offered opportunities to write imaginatively or from personal experience. All four titles attracted significant numbers of candidates. The entry for this examination tends to be re-sit candidates and some struggled to sustain or organise their narrative effectively. There is no merit in writing endlessly and aimlessly, but a successful narrative does need some development and substance. Some thought and planning would help many candidates.

A lack of technical accuracy was a major problem in too many responses and failure to control tenses remains a serious weakness in many narratives.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

- Q0.1** The opening question followed a familiar and predictable pattern, and the focus was on what the reader learned about a person. It tested the ability to identify explicit and implicit information and ideas and the relevant points were all to be found in the short opening paragraph of the passage. Weaker answers were clumsy in approach or phrasing.

Lack of clarity and precision make it very difficult to reward candidates who do not present their answers clearly and coherently. That said, there were plenty of valid points available here. Some reorganisation of the text was possible but most of the relevant material was on the surface.

For example, Tom Ramsay had been a problem to his family for twenty years. He had started life 'decently'. Some candidates showed their understanding by replacing 'decently' with words such as predictably or respectably but that was not essential. Tom followed a predictable path as he went into business and he married and had two children. He seemed to be destined for a 'useful and successful life' but he suddenly decided to give up work and family. He wanted to enjoy himself and he spent two years happily travelling around Europe.

Those candidates who separated the facts about Tom Ramsay into five clear bullet or numbered points scored full marks with minimum fuss. Only a small minority of candidates missed out on five marks here.

Q0.2 This question had a clear focus on how the writer showed George Ramsay's unhappiness in a short section of the text. In general, the writer used action, description, dialogue and tone but most answers, quite rightly, concentrated on the details in the text rather than abstract techniques. Some candidates suggested that the fact George was eating alone indicated his unhappiness. This was not an unreasonable suggestion but the writer's description of his 'expression of deep gloom' was totally clear. He was described as 'staring into space' which suggested he was at least preoccupied or distracted by things on his mind. The writer also described George looking as though he had 'the whole world sat on his shoulders'. He told the writer/narrator that he was 'not in great spirits' and he sighed at the suggestion that it was Tom again. The adverb 'miserably' emphasised his unhappiness. The best answers picked out the relevant details and produced an answer which was concise and coherent. Weaker answers relied exclusively on quotation without any supporting comment.

Q0.3 This question was worth ten marks and focused on a slightly longer section of the text. It was a two-part question and, although its main aim was to test analysis of how writers use language to achieve effects, it allowed credit to be given for understanding of the character of Tom Ramsay. The issue of 'how' the writer created impressions of the aunt was often a matter of selecting the relevant evidence but the good answers required some inference and a clear range of impressions. The key was to get the measure of the character.

Tracking the text closely and combining impressions with evidence was the most effective approach and it was clear that Tom's behaviour 'profoundly' shocked his respectable family. He had 'a very good time' and when he ran out of money he simply borrowed. The evidence suggested that he was a playboy, dedicated to his own pleasure and a spendthrift. He was a charmer and it was difficult to refuse him a loan. He was irresponsible and self-indulgent, claiming that spending money on necessities was 'boring' and enjoying spending on luxuries. He found self-indulgent spending 'amusing'. Tom relied on his brother to fund his extravagant lifestyle and lied to him, making false promises to mend his ways but then using the money to buy expensive luxuries such as jewellery and cars. Tom was presented as totally unscrupulous and selfish. He had no conscience about blackmailing George, or exploiting his brother's sensitivity to the family reputation. He was seen, quite rightly, as manipulative and no fool as he did not waste his charm on George but targeted his weak spot.

Some candidates were not attracted by Tom's unconventionality, but others were more seduced by the presentation of him, seeing him as a likeable rogue rather than a scoundrel.

- Q0.4** This question asked the candidates to identify the differences between Tom and George Ramsay and how those differences were shown by the writer. Less successful answers tended to be thin or to produce a jumble of comment and evidence but the better answers had some organisation and clarity of purpose. The writer used a series of general and specific contrasts in lifestyle, behaviour and attitudes to show the differences and the authorial voice was also important in shaping the reader's perception of the two brothers.

The best approach was to link the characters of Tom and George in a series of specific contrasts. For example, Tom was described as having been 'selfish, thoughtless and wild', showing no care for the family's reputation, but George was thoroughly respectable. He was 'terribly upset' at the thought of Tom going to prison and he cared about the family name. Unlike Tom, he perhaps cared about his brother too.

In these lines Tom was also shown to be cunning and unscrupulous. He played an elaborate hoax on his brother, tricking and exploiting George into paying a large amount of money which he then spent in Monte Carlo with his partner in crime. In sharp contrast to his brother, George was described as 'honest'.

Tom was presented as extravagant and self-indulgent in a series of details such as his taste for gambling, expensive restaurants, pretty girls and stylish clothes. Tom looked like a movie star. He looked younger than his age and was presented as handsome and glamorous. George was thrifty and hardworking, and he looked much older than he was.

Tom was described as 'perfectly worthless' but a 'most amusing companion'. Time spent with Tom was enjoyable and he had 'high spirits' and 'charm', which made him irresistible. Tom was popular and well-known. He may have been an incorrigible wastrel but 'you could not help liking him.' Unlike Tom, George was a committed family man. He was a faithful husband and a good father to his daughters. In contrast to the spendthrift Tom, George was careful with his money. He had saved and planned his retirement, unlike Tom who simply squandered his money.

Some argued that Tom was glamorous and exciting whereas George was dull and boring, planning to spend a quiet retirement gardening and playing golf. A few noticed that where Tom was charming and amusing, George was jealous and vindictive, wanting Tom to get his just desserts and taking pleasure in the prospect of his brother 'ending in the gutter'.

Too many responses relied on what were really two completely separate character studies, but this was actually an opportunity to score well.

- Q0.5** As is usually the case, the final question was the most challenging and for one reason or another, the completion rate was lower than for the rest of the paper. It tested the ability of the candidates to focus on a specific section of the text but also show an overview of the whole story and construct a coherent argument. This proved very difficult for most candidates and some of them failed even to mention lines 59-75.

The early part of the passage revealed that George had many virtues and was indeed 'hardworking, decent and respectable.' He was also clearly a victim, exploited and cheated shamelessly by his brother. Some candidates mentioned that George was resentful and expressed his desire for revenge as he imagined the satisfaction of living comfortably while his brother suffered in old age. His desire for revenge was perhaps unattractive and Tom's high spirits made him appealing, but most candidates seemed to feel that George was both a decent man and a victim who had every right to feel aggrieved.

In the final section of the passage the story returned to the narrator/writer meeting George in the restaurant and immediately assuming that Tom was the reason for him being upset and hardly able to speak. The narrator sympathised with George and agreed with everything he said when he contrasted himself with his brother. George was clearly very angry and described his brother as a 'worthless rogue' who would be living on the streets if there were any justice in the world.

It was then revealed that there was indeed no justice in the world as Tom had inherited a fortune from a wife 'old enough to be his mother'. George's rage was evident as he slammed his fist on the table and denounced the unfairness of life. The narrator reacted with a 'shout of laughter' which was almost uncontrollable. He found the situation 'hysterical' and the narrator's response was important in shaping the reader's response. George never forgave the narrator and seemed mean-spirited and churlish, but Tom continued to dine with the narrator.

The blanket assertion that 'I agree' or 'I disagree' did not work very well here. There were three elements in the quotation in the question and they needed to be addressed individually. For example, most responses agreed that George was a decent man and a victim, but opinion was divided on whether to sympathise with him.

Section B

Q1.1 The choice of four titles offered an opportunity to write imaginatively or from personal experience.

(a) Write a story that begins: It was going to be a special day out with the family.

It was possible to take this title at face value and describe a special day out with the family. However, it was also possible to use the hint in the wording and describe a day where things did not go to plan. Some answers went off in a completely unexpected direction, but most were relevant and had some coherence.

(b) Write about an occasion when you went to a live performance such as a concert, theatre visit or sporting event.

This option encouraged the candidates to draw on their own experience of going to a live performance. The less successful responses had limited reader-awareness and tended to concentrate just on a simple string of events but the better answers captured the atmosphere and texture of the event. It was clear in most responses that the anticipation of the event was often the most memorable aspect.

(c) The Rescue.

This title was very open and gave the candidates a lot of scope to write from personal experience or from the imagination. Some 'rescues' were rather tenuous but most were coherent.

(d) Write a story that ends: Mum just looked at me, and I knew that if I did it again I was in big trouble.

Endings are not always easy to structure, and the conclusion can seem rushed or rather forced, an uncomfortable fit with the rest of the story. This option was relatively straightforward, but there were some awkwardly structured responses.

Characteristics of Successful Responses

In the reading section:

- In 05 the successful responses are clear in argument and direction. They are coherent and based on a clear personal response to the text
- A successful response to a question asking for 'impressions' of a character get beyond quotation from the text to explore the significance of the evidence and to suggest what it shows.

In the writing section:

- Successful writing can be imaginative but is plausible at least on its own terms.
- Successful writing displays a measure of technical control, particularly with tenses and sentence construction.

Areas for Improvement

- The 'attempt rate' for question 05 is still relatively low and time management is an issue.
- Reading responses need to be focused on the actual question. The questions follow a pattern but are not totally predictable.
- Candidates need to select relevant material from the specified section of text and use it sensibly.
- Quotations work best when they embedded into comments. A methodical tracking of the text usually works well but too many responses are not organised effectively.
- Technical control of spelling, sentences and punctuation is a familiar area of weakness in writing. Basic errors are often numerous, and this often undermines narrative writing.

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Component 2

Overview of the Component

This component tests candidates' skills, knowledge and understanding across 6 assessment objectives (AOs).

- AO1 Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. Select and synthesise evidence from different texts.
- AO2 Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
- AO3 Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts.
- AO4 Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.
- AO5 Communicate clearly, effectively, and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences and organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.
- AO6 Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Section A

The two reading texts for this examination were about women's football, one text being a newspaper report of the Women's Euro final in 2022, capturing the scenes in and beyond Wembley Stadium, when England played Germany, and the other text being an account of the first official women's football match played in England, in March 1895.

The six reading questions followed a familiar pattern, and most candidates were able to show at the very least, a basic understanding of the two texts. Candidates who had prepared themselves well for the exam were able to make good progress, using the texts well to support their responses, but there were still too many candidates who failed to read the questions with sufficient care and gave incorrect details in straightforward 'search and find' questions and then struggled to develop responses to those questions offering greater reward. In some cases, less successful candidates seemed to find it difficult to manage their time effectively, often omitting one or more of the reading questions.

Section B

As usual, candidates were invited to tackle two writing tasks. The first of these was to respond to part of a letter that had appeared in a newspaper. The view that had been expressed was that schools focused too much time on examinations, and too little time and involvement in voluntary work, learning more practical skills or increasing their knowledge of real-life skills such as managing money.

The second task invited candidates to put themselves in the position of a candidate in an election for their school/college student president, giving a speech to persuade students to vote for them and giving details of key issues they would want to work on with the headteacher.

Each of these tasks had an expected length of 300-400 words and allowed candidates to reflect on their own experiences and views, offer their own thoughts and suggestions where appropriate and to shape their responses in a way that showed an awareness of their intended audiences.

Effective responses showed good understanding of the purpose of each task. In the first task, candidates offered their own experiences of the pressures that examinations brought, some comfortable that success in final exams made all the work and pressure worthwhile, whilst others lamented missed opportunities for a wider curriculum offer. In the second task, most candidates tried to persuade their audience that they were the 'right person' for the role and then went on to explain the changes they would work to bring about for the benefit of the students and the school/college. As in previous examinations, whilst many candidates showed good understanding of the demands of the tasks, some wrote very brief responses or struggled to complete both tasks.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q1.1 The first question focused on the newspaper article, 'England beat Germany 2-1 in Women's Euro 2022 final.' As usual, there were three one-mark questions requiring candidates to select details from across the text. Although these were straightforward 'search and find' questions it was important that candidates read these carefully, as well as the text. The first part of the question simply asked for the name of the player who scored England's winning goal; this information - Chloe Kelly - came in the second paragraph of the report and almost all candidates were able to find this correctly. The second part of the question should have been equally straightforward, as it asked for the name of the German player who scored the equalising goal. The answer was contained in the fifth paragraph, Lina Magull, but there were too many responses that only gave the name of the team Magull played for, Bayern Munich, rather than her name. The dangers of inefficient copying from the text were obvious. The final part of the question, which asked candidates to explain the reaction of England's head coach at the end of the game, required the whole of the text to be read, as the information that Sarina Weigman 'began to dance with happiness', was in the penultimate paragraph. Most located the detail without difficulty but some focused instead on the reaction of the England captain and quoted what she had said. For some, the loss of a mark or even two marks, because of a failure to read carefully would have proved costly.

Q1.2 With an initial reading of the text completed, candidates should have felt prepared to tackle the next question on this text. This required them to consider how the writer, Alan Garry, had tried to capture the drama and excitement of the Euro final. This will have been a familiar type of question to many candidates and, as in previous examination series, the most effective way for candidates to tackle this type of 'craft of the writer' question was to work methodically through the article, selecting appropriate details from the text, commenting on how or why these illustrated the drama or the excitement of the situation. There was plenty of material to explore and comment on.

In the opening paragraph, readers were told about the `extraordinary scenes of celebration` and how the game was won in `heart-pounding style`, and many candidates used one or both of these details to comment upon as they began their response. Others noted the details Garry gave about the size of the crowd and the way he described it as `record-breaking`, the `capacity crowd` or the `sea of England shirts`. As good candidates worked their way through the text, they often initially focused attention on the descriptions of the crowd's behaviour to show the excitement of the supporters. Many selected and commented on details from the third paragraph, where supporters were `blowing horns and waving flags` or `roared on every England attack` or `loudly booed every refereeing decision they didn't like.` Details about the way the crowd reacted to the game were threaded through the text and this proved a rich seam for good candidates to explore.

The game itself provided much of the drama for Garry to report on, and again, good candidates who worked methodically, captured the details of the `desperate goalmouth scramble`, how each of the goals were scored during the 90 minutes and then the drama that took the `nerve-wrenching contest` into extra time, and a `nail-biting` affair for spectators. Garry then described the goal that secured the victory for England, `the scrappiest of winning goals` but one that sent the England supporters `into a frenzy`.

The article included descriptions and details as the game finished and these offered more opportunities for exploration, particularly the scenes in the stadium, the reactions of players and the head coach, and also the `raucous celebrations` reported on around the country; these included quotations from fans, illustrating the excitement of those not at the match but watching on big screens around the country.

The most effective responses were from candidates who separated `drama` and `excitement`, as this helped them to focus clearly on specific details, which were then clearly explained or contextualised. Weaker candidates were often able to select relevant details but sometimes struggled to comment effectively about how or why they showed the drama of the game or the excitement of the spectators. Good responses also had coverage of the whole text, whilst weaker responses sometimes confined their focus to just two or three of the ten paragraphs, inevitably limiting the impact of the response. The message, often repeated in examiner reports, that merely `feature spotting` on this type of question is unlikely to be rewarded highly, appears to have been largely heeded and there was a greater focus from all candidates on trying to comment on the text itself. In some cases, weaker candidates used incomplete `sentence fragments` from the text, where a more complete quotation would have served them better; these `fragments` were often presented without a clear context and made it more difficult to comment on or explain with any precision. Occasionally too, weaker candidates tried to use ellipsis, but this often led to a quotation being reduced to a word from the beginning and a word from the end of a sentence, that then meant little and often led to a loss of focus in the comment. As in previous examinations, a clear focus on the question, working methodically through the text and linking text and comment to the question rewarded good candidates, whilst weaker candidates' responses were often brief, had limited coverage and/or struggled to comment effectively on selected textual details.

Q1.3 This third question asked candidates to look at the second text, an account of the first official women's football match in March 1895.

Like question 1.1, these three one-mark questions asked for specific details from the text and provided careful readers with an opportunity to accumulate marks as they gained familiarity with the text, and in readiness for the more demanding question that followed. The first part of the question simply asked how many spectators were reported to be at this match. The information was contained in the first paragraph, where readers were told 'ten thousand had gathered to see the opening match of the British Ladies Football Club'. Most candidates had no difficulty with this, although some lost the specific requirement for a number and instead told examiners about a 'huge throng' or that there were 'train-loads' of people going to the match. The importance of reading the question carefully can never be over-emphasised. The second part of the question asked for the final score in the game, and again most could select the correct detail, 7 goals to 1, although examiners saw '7 goals' or 'North won' on some responses. The final part of the question asked what was different about the ball used for the game, a detail contained in the penultimate paragraph. Most correctly noted that it was a 'smaller ball than usual', but some lost focus on the question and selected incorrect details. Whilst most candidates gained reward for all three correct answers, unfortunately these 'search and find' questions again showed too many candidates not taking enough care over the reading of the question.

- Q1.4** This next question asked candidates to respond to the statement: 'The writer gives an entirely negative view of the first women's official football match and women playing football', explaining to what extent they agreed. It was very clear to the majority of candidates that the reporter was indeed critical of the skills of the women involved in the game, suggested that people would only watch women's matches 'out of curiosity' and was of the opinion that 'ladies' football matches will not attract crowds'. However, good candidates were able to recognise that the 'huge throng' of spectators had been initially interested enough to see women playing football and that it had attracted 10,000 people to watch. Some commented on these details, suggesting the writer may have been open-minded at this point, although most candidates focused on the game, then described as 'a huge disappointment'. In the second paragraph, the writer had focused on the costumes of the women, telling readers 'they certainly made a pretty picture' and how the players were 'greeted with cheers and good-humoured laughter'. Responses to these details were open to interpretation, some expressing the view that the details showed clearly the writer was sexist, mocking and patronising, others taking a more positive view, and here examiners rewarded responses that showed thoughtful consideration of the details. There was, however, little doubt that what followed in the final three paragraphs was an almost entirely critical view of women's football. The players were described as 'not having the slightest qualification to take the field' and their play 'dreadful'. Readers were told that spectators felt they had 'wasted their time and money' and that they left the ground early.

The penultimate paragraph gave candidates lots of material that would support the statement, some commenting on the writer's view that describing the match was simply not worth the effort, and calling football by women to be 'totally out of the question'. Many candidates homed in on the four qualities said to be required of footballers and on the writer's comment that 'not one of these qualities was apparent' in the match. Candidates who had tracked the text carefully also commented on the writer's description of the women who 'wandered aimlessly' around the field and then 'danced around the ball' when it came to them. When this happened, it seemed they could kick it no further than a few yards. Some candidates used this paragraph well to support their view of the statement, but some only picked out one detail, rather than building a strong case with a range of details about the contest.

In the final paragraph, the writer offered some view that suggested there might be some positive outcome for women playing football: it could be seen as a 'new and healthful form of recreation' for them but concluded the report by suggesting that 'as a public entertainment it is to be deplored.'

This was a question that offered opportunities to candidates to accumulate a range of relevant details to support the statement, and it was possible to gain very good marks with a selection of detail taken from each of the five paragraphs. Some candidates tried to take a more balanced view, but the weight of evidence in the text made this difficult, and some less successful responses simply offered two or three quotations from the text with simple and/or limited comments. Very brief responses struggled to move into Band 3, mainly because of the limitations of range. That said, examiners saw some good and often insightful responses that gained very creditable marks.

Q1.5 This question, asking for the ability to select and synthesise materials from the two texts, asked candidates to give the details of the football kits worn by the two teams in the two football games. As always with this type of question, selecting specific details with precision and clarity meant good candidates could gain good marks without writing at great length. In the Euro 2022 game, readers were told that England played in white shirts and white shorts, while Germany played in dark green shirts and shorts. In the 1895 game, the North team played in red blouses, black knickerbockers, red caps and brown leather boots, while the South team played in similar kit but with blouses of light and dark blue squares and blue caps. Where candidates adopted the decision to be clear and precise, they inevitably gained full marks, but too many failed to gain the four marks available, in some cases by only giving the kit of one of the teams in the match, giving only general, often vague details ('they played in shirts and shorts') or not identifying specific teams – or in some cases, which game.

Q1.6 Although this final reading question focused on a comparison of the two texts, as in previous examinations, candidates were asked to do this by specifically focusing on the two bullet points as the basis for the comparison. Candidates who chose to ignore the bullet points rarely gained good marks.

In the first bullet point, candidates were asked to compare the impressions the writers created of the spectators who watched the games at Wembley and the Crouch End ground, and the second bullet point asked how the writers had created those impressions. It was the type of question candidates will have seen in previous examinations (summer 2023 for example), and where candidates kept their focus on 'impressions', it was possible to make good progress quickly. In the Euro 2022 article, for example, it was clear that one impression of the spectators in the stadium was that they were noisy, loudly giving their 'raucous' support to the team. These spectators were also hugely supportive, passionate and excited for their team, Garry describing the way they showed their support for the team, whether by 'blowing horns and waving flags', booing the referee when they disagreed with decisions or roaring on every England attack. There were also points in the game where the supporters appeared nervous about the outcome, whether as a result of the 'dramatic equaliser' by Germany or the game going into extra time, when 'nail-biting intensified' for these spectators. Finally, the impression of these spectators at the end of the game was one of celebrating joyously at the result, as readers were told of the 'extraordinary scenes of celebration' and of 'jubilation in the stands.' These impressions served as a real contrast to the impressions of those attending the 1895 game, where at the outset, the most that could be said was that spectators were 'curious' to see what the game would bring.

Perhaps it could be argued that another impression of the spectators was that their 'good-humoured laughter' as the players took the field suggested they may have been initially supportive. However, it became quickly obvious that many spectators were disappointed by what they witnessed on the field and 'felt they had wasted their time and money', the writer telling readers that 'people began leaving before the game was half-way through'.

Where candidates could link textual details with a specific impression of the spectators in each text, and then move on to explore a second or a third impression, they quickly gained reward, the best responses moving confidently between the two texts and using appropriate detail to illustrate and support these impressions. Weaker responses were often brief and limited and sometimes drifted from the focus of the bullet points into more general comparisons, such as the difference in the size of the crowds or the final scores in the two games, but gaining little reward. It also became clear that a significant minority of candidates struggled to manage their time and as a result, failed to tackle this final reading question altogether.

Section B

Q2.1 In the first of the two writing tasks candidates were asked to respond to an extract from a letter to a national newspaper in which a view had been expressed suggesting schools gave too much emphasis to exams, to the detriment of 'other important things' pupils should be learning about. Voluntary work, learning to manage money and learning more practical skills were given as examples of what schools should be offering. All candidates had some views to offer on this topic, some explaining that exams were vital for good work or further education opportunities, whilst others took the view that life-skills, such as learning to manage money, were so important they merited a key place in the curriculum. Others felt examinations disadvantaged some students who had skills and knowledge not tested in an examination room. Many drew on their own personal experiences and it was clear that there was a genuine engagement with the topic.

Good responses managed to adopt a suitably formal tone and showed an awareness of the intended readership; these letters often showed some understanding of how to set out the addresses correctly and had a clear idea about how to structure their work. A clear explanation about why the letter had been written, the reaction to the original letter and something of the writer's views on the topic was all that was needed for an effective opening paragraph. This was then followed by two to four paragraphs, dealing in more detail about a specific point the writer wanted to raise, but developed with examples, personal anecdotes, more information about the point raised and so on. The best responses showed the ability to introduce, develop and then sustain an argument convincingly; these responses were then often able to make a neat link between one paragraph to what then followed in the subsequent paragraph. A final paragraph, often no more than two or three sentences, that brought the letter to a neat, often convincing conclusion again marked out strong, assured responses. Less successful responses were often brief, some significantly shorter than the 300-400 words indicated in the exam paper, and as a result, these struggled to develop the points raised in any detail; often, brief and weaker responses offered only general concerns about a limited curriculum, sometimes only repeating what had been said in the original letter, but with little development.

Q2.2 This second task asked candidates to write a speech to try to persuade their fellow students to vote for them in the school/college elections for student president, saying why they would be a good choice and giving details of the issues they would seek to pursue with the headteacher, for the benefit of students and the school.

As with the first task, many candidates had plenty to say and the best responses balanced the need to persuade their peers why they were the ideal choice, with some clear suggestions for improvements that needed to be made. While some candidates had borrowed slogans from recent political rallies ('Make XX School Great Again') and went to some length to extol the qualities only they possessed, others made it clear that previous student presidents had failed to bring about changes and that the other candidates in the forthcoming election were unconvincing. The 'improvements' that needed a strong student president to bring about often seemed to involve toilets or the school dining room, with lots of details about what was wrong and how things could be improved. Other responses advocated even more radical changes: no school on Fridays, extended lunch breaks, free or greatly reduced lunch prices, reductions to homework, and reviews of detention policies were all among the subjects that the prospective school presidents warmed to and promised that they would bring about change. It would have been interesting to know how their headteachers would have responded to such changes.

Good responses captured a sense of the speaker's passion and persuasiveness when they described their 'fitness for office'. There were many claims that as the new student president they would ensure other students' voices would be listened to and when they moved on to the improvements they wanted to make, they described the current concern and tried to explain how they would approach the issue with the headteacher and governors, giving details and in some cases facts and figures to support their case. These good responses were sustained, engaging and persuasive. Weaker responses were often too brief or lacked specific detail, and in some cases became little more than a list of complaints about the school, with few clear or developed suggestions for improvement. As this was the final task in the exam, unfortunately there were also too many candidates who failed to tackle the task at all. Across both of the writing tasks, basic accuracy remained an issue, with too many candidates being given marks in a lower band for VSSPS than for communication and organisation.

Characteristics of successful responses

- In the reading section, good responses showed care in the reading of the question, a willingness to track the whole text methodically and to select a good range of textual details upon which to comment.
- In successful responses, comments were always linked to the key words in the question. For example, in question 1.2 good answers kept a clear focus on the 'drama' and the 'excitement' of the Euro final – and these key words were to be found in many of the sentences in the response.
- Reading questions worth 10 marks had sustained responses that covered a number of points or details, and these were commented upon with some perception and in some cases, with insight.
- Candidates used quotations to good effect and with precision, contextualising and/or giving clear explanation of their effect where appropriate.
- In the writing section, responses were well-sustained, and were shaped and structured effectively (some examination scripts contained an outline content plan, showing thought and planning before the writing had been tackled).
- Basic accuracy and control were features of good responses, with some attempt at using a more extended vocabulary.

Areas for Improvement

- Careful reading of the questions is vital, and errors in the 1.1 and 1.3 'search and find' questions show that this is still an area where candidates can make improvements.
- Candidates do not always use quotations effectively. Where this is the case, they are sometimes only 'sentence fragments' that lack clarity or need more explanation. It is better for candidates to make use of a longer quotation, even a full sentence, rather than a fragment that makes limited sense on its own.
- Very brief responses on 10-mark reading questions are almost inevitably limited in terms of coverage and unlikely to progress beyond Band 2.
- Writing tasks are expected to be 300-400 words; where responses are much shorter, both the range and the development of the content are limited as a result.
- Time management remains a key issue for too many candidates. Missing out a reading question and/or not tackling one of the writing tasks significantly limits the chances of real success in the examination.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

November 2024

Component 3

Overview of the Component

As is normally the case in the November series, the vast majority of candidates entered were resitting to improve their overall grades in GCSE English and opted to carry forward their Spoken Language grades from Summer 2024. In a small number of centres, however, there were candidates entering new work whose presentations were assessed by their teachers and checked by at least one senior monitor.

Centres were required to upload recorded evidence of each candidate's presentation by November 5th and there was no longer the option to submit work by posting USB devices. Most centres complied very efficiently and made sure the uploaded presentations were available for external monitoring by the deadline. However, Eduqas Subject Support Officers had to contact a small number of centres, some repeatedly, when the necessary evidence to support the assessment had not been uploaded.

In most centres the sample was very small, often a single candidate, and the assessment tended to be accurate and fair on the whole. In some cases, however, the candidates' work had been generously marked and there appeared to be some uncertainty at the centre about how to apply the Competency Assessment Model. **This requires that all the criteria for any grade must be met before the grade can be awarded.** As a result, a very small number of centres were contacted directly by letter to give specific guidance on how to make their Spoken Language assessment more secure in future submissions.

Comments on individual questions/sections

While the assessment overall was generally accurate and in line with agreed standards, there were three main issues which monitors felt resulted in generous assessment. These factors tended to restrict opportunities for candidates to satisfy the criteria for the higher grades:

- Lack of sufficient challenge in topics chosen
- Limited evidence of basic presentation skills
- Brief or perfunctory response to feedback or questions.

Choice of topic

Some candidates had clearly been advised by their teachers to tackle suitably challenging topics such as an issue they felt strongly about. The dangers of social media and its effects on mental health was a particularly popular subject in this series, suggesting how serious a concern it is for young people at this time.

This approach was most successful when candidates had organised their material into a clear line of argument which met the audience needs and achieved a clear purpose. In some cases, however, the candidates had relied too heavily on material from the internet which had not been shaped effectively.

Some presentations were simply too brief at under three minutes in total which compromised any attempt to show command of challenging or sophisticated content. In other cases, however, the candidates had not edited their material carefully or judiciously enough and overly long and factual talks also failed to meet audience needs or sustain the listeners' interest.

Most importantly, however, monitors felt in many cases candidates were disadvantaged by topics which encouraged a straightforward and descriptive approach limiting them to a Pass grade. Without sufficiently challenging material which could stimulate the use of an appropriate range of vocabulary, it often proved very difficult for candidates to meet the criteria for Merit, still less Distinction. This was especially disappointing when the speaker showed evidence of the maturity and more fluent expression often seen in post-16 candidates. It was a shame to see some speakers hampered by their subject matter and confined to a Pass when there were signs of the potential to achieve a higher grade.

All too often the subject chosen elicited a chronological or autobiographical account which did not give the candidate a chance to demonstrate command of more complex ideas and/or vocabulary. For instance, many candidates had open-ended topics which lacked a clearly defined purpose and met only Pass criteria as a result, such as: 'What happened when I came to this country'; 'My hobby'; 'Football' or 'When I changed schools'

As previous advice to centres has recommended, adapting such topics to give them more universal relevance and make them less anecdotal and straightforward can help candidates meet higher grade criteria. As one criterion relates to 'achieving the purpose' of the talk, it can also be beneficial if candidates identify a clear focus, such as persuading their audience, rather than simply describing a topic in a straightforward way which often limits them to a Pass grade. As feedback to centres has recommended, it can be beneficial to candidates to keep their audience and purpose firmly in mind when selecting and organising their material as in Component 2 writing tasks.

For example, the topics listed above could have been tweaked or amended in line with Eduqas guidance to inject greater challenge:

- Delivering a survival guide for newcomers to the UK/this college or giving targeted advice to local councillors/Senior Leadership Team on how best to ease the transition to a new country/institution.
- Promoting the benefits of a particular hobby or interest and/or making a pitch for increased funds from the local council/government/school leadership to support its development.
- Persuading the audience that Premier League footballers *are* deserving of their high salaries or that a statue of Harry Kane should grace the plinth in Trafalgar Square.

It is worthwhile recalling the specification states that teachers should discuss the chosen topic with each candidate to make sure it is appropriate and can satisfy the assessment criteria. All candidates would benefit from their teachers' advice on the content of their presentations and some brief guidance on how best to organise their material.

Presentation skills

Unfortunately, some candidates did not meet all the criteria for a grade even when their topics were stimulating with the appropriate level of demand. This was often because the way they delivered their material meant they did not meet audience needs or engage their listeners' interest. Despite tackling challenging material and using an impressive range of sophisticated vocabulary, some candidates did not 'present' their ideas and feelings clearly or effectively enough to earn a higher grade.

Candidates **are** permitted to write scripts for their presentations and even to read from these as there are no restrictions on the use of notes. However, if they read with heads lowered in a monotone and their delivery was halting or unsure, they were less likely to meet the criterion for Distinction which relates to audience engagement. Of course, candidates are not expected to give flawless performances characteristic of experienced and polished orators. Monitors are all experienced teachers who realise speakers can lack confidence in public speaking and they make reasonable allowances for nerves. However, the criteria for all three grades specify some awareness of their audience's needs. Candidates must acknowledge the distinction between writing a speech and delivering an effective Spoken Language presentation. Evidence that the candidates have prepared in advance and made use of some basic presentation skills is needed for the higher grades.

In order to acknowledge and meet the audience needs, **candidates would be advised to avoid:**

- reading every word from a script or phone screen
- faltering over unfamiliar material in their scripts which suggests lack of preparation
- relying too heavily on PowerPoint slides, especially turning to read the text of their presentations word for word from the screen
- including lengthy audio or video clips from other sources which do not demonstrate their spoken language skills.

In the most **successful presentations**, candidates showed evidence of engaging their audience by:

- practising their presentations in advance to avoid hesitation or halting delivery
- using their notes as an aide memoire but making sure to establish frequent eye contact with the audience
- varying their inflexion as appropriate and using some simple rhetorical devices such as questions, repetition, emphatic intonation, etc
- ensuring PowerPoint slides are used sparingly and do not distract from the spoken delivery
- standing up to indicate awareness of the appropriate level of formality
- showing some enthusiasm for their chosen topics, perhaps even smiling if appropriate.

Showing candidates some examples from the standardising presentations can be a useful way to demonstrate some basic presentation skills, such as considering how Laura makes use of her notes and visual images on PowerPoint slides to enhance her performance, for example.

Response to feedback

This is a mandatory requirement for any grade and candidates must be encouraged to recognise its importance as an integral part of the whole presentation. It was sadly the case that a significant number of candidates met the criteria for a grade in their initial talk but failed to satisfy the separate criterion for the Question and Answer section.

As the competency assessment model means candidates have to meet all the criteria for a grade, a significant number were restricted to a lower grade because their response to feedback on their talks was disappointing.

It was still more concerning to note that in quite a few centres candidates were awarded a grade even though they had not responded to any questions or feedback. This suggests that the teachers assessing the work were not sufficiently familiar with how to apply the competency model and/or the assessment criteria.

Centres should ensure candidates are made aware of the following issues relating to this **vital part of their presentation:**

- All candidates must respond to some feedback or questions on their talk if they are to be awarded even a Pass grade and avoid being entered as Not Classified.
- The quality of the questions is more important than the quantity. Candidates aiming at the higher grades will need suitably challenging questions which can elicit detailed and perceptive responses. It might have to be the teacher who provides the appropriate stimulus by asking a probing question.
- If the time allowed for the feedback section is very brief, often less than thirty seconds, it is unlikely to afford candidates the opportunity to demonstrate detailed, formal responses or perceptive elaboration on their ideas.
- There is nothing in the specification to preclude candidates' relying on prepared questions but reading scripted responses should be avoided. Candidates often read these written answers in a perfunctory manner which does not make it easy to justify them as 'perceptive elaboration'.

Once again, it can be helpful to show candidates a few of the Inter-board standardising presentations focusing on how successfully the speakers respond to questions. For instance, Jibreel's sensitive explanation of a complex issue relating to pre-destination is a good example of perceptive elaboration for a Distinction grade, while Holly's brief and inconclusive answers to encouraging prompts just about meet the Pass requirement for straightforward, appropriate responses.

Centres can find help on effective task setting, basic presentation skills and preparing for the feedback section on the Eduqas website under Component 3 Spoken Language on the GCSE English webpage.

Finally, it is important to congratulate those candidates who had worked hard to conquer their nerves and present their ideas effectively. In the November series monitors are often impressed by engaging talks from candidates, many having learnt English as an additional language. It can be uplifting to see how the speakers' confidence and self-esteem have been boosted by meeting the challenge. As one candidate put it, 'Believe it or not, I really enjoyed that!'

Key Points

- Candidates must meet **all** the criteria for a grade before they can be awarded that grade. If they do not meet them all, they must be awarded the grade below.
- If candidates do not respond to any questions they should be entered as Not Classified.
- Candidates must demonstrate command of suitably challenging or sophisticated ideas and vocabulary to meet Merit and Distinction criteria. They should be given the opportunity to discuss their chosen topic with a teacher.
- To earn a higher grade, candidates must prepare in advance and practise the delivery of their ideas.
- All teachers involved in the assessment of candidates must be fully familiar with the competency model and the standardising exemplar material available on the Portal.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4288

Email: gcseenglish@eduqas.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [GCSE English Language | Eduqas](#)

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

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