



GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE
A LEVEL**

SUMMER 2022

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2022

Component 1: Language Concepts and issues

General Comments

Reassuringly, candidates responded well to both sections of the paper, showing an ability to craft arguments using appropriate linguistic terminology. The best answers displayed coherent and relevant discussions and an ability to thoughtfully engage with the unseen material. In Section A, the two *Desert Island Discs* transcripts provoked some often insightful and sustained comparisons of the speakers' interactions with some effective consideration of how language reflected the two guests' respective identities. There was a fairly even distribution of responses to the optional questions in Section B.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Analysis of Spoken Language

The choice of two interviews from the same context enabled nearly all candidates to engage with the interactions between interviewer and guests, and in the cases of stronger responses to unpick how language used by both parties reflected the personae of the respective guests. There was some sustained engagement with the transcripts and on the whole generic discussion of the genre of radio interviews was less prevalent. Specifically, many candidates were able to examine the comparison between the two interviewers' openings, which were designed to introduce the guest to the audience. Candidates were not expected to have any prior knowledge of the guests or the programme. However, the more successful responses demonstrated some skilful inference, particularly in Text A, where Young presents Brand as a recently-tamed rebel, and in Text B, where Laverne characterises Carr as a quirky and eccentric British pop culture figure. Candidates were credited for both exploring the interactions between interviewer and guest, and for examining how language conveyed a desired identity. It was less easy to reward responses which imposed certain power dynamics on the two respective conversations which were simply not there. For example, whilst it was legitimate to argue that Young mounts a face-threatening act through the pre- and post- modified noun phrase *reckless acts of self-destruction* in summarising Brand's past, this was certainly not designed to be an attack on his identity but rather a recognition of his recovery; this was aided by Young's use of humour in the clause *he's even begun to look like he regularly washes his hair*, which was designed to good-naturedly rib him while simultaneously signalling his new-found maturity.

It is pleasing to see that the tendency for candidates to write short introductions and therefore engage with the transcripts more quickly appears more embedded. Some weaker responses still featured a page of general comments about purpose and audience, and only included one or two actual points on speaker interactions, making it difficult for them to reach the higher bands.

There is still some work to be done on establishing clear links between the big picture of the text and the linguistic detail. Some candidates continue to focus purely on the overall effects of texts without engaging with the linguistic detail; others focused so closely on the meanings and effects constructed through specific linguistic features that they did not connect these specific details to the overall purpose and context of the transcript. For example, analysing Russell Brand's use of the compound noun *libido lizard* enabled higher-scoring candidates to establish an understanding of this eccentric use of language as a strategy employed by Brand to distance himself from his own past scandalous media representation, whilst weaker candidates simply noted it was an example of high register that contrasts with earlier examples of low register, such as the adjective *pyjama* without connecting these register fluctuations to Brand's identity as a practised user of floridly self-conscious language. Similarly, in discussing Alan Carr's identity the higher-scoring candidates were able to trace a connection between Laverne's framing of Carr as a politics-free entertainer through the clause *you're avowedly disinterested in politics* as a virtue of Carr's stage persona as an eccentric cabaret act in a distinctively English tradition.

While using entirely accurate terminology throughout the essay remains a challenge for many candidates, it was encouraging to see that feature-spotting was not too prevalent. There was still some issue with not layering spoken language terminology with core linguistic terminology. Common mistakes that were frequently made include:

- confusion between syndetic and asyndetic lists
- mislabelling *is that fair* as a tag question
- a confusion between phrases and clauses
- a significant confusion as to the correct use of apostrophes.

Finally, in terms of use of theory, it was pleasing to see that this was done judiciously and sparingly. However, there were still some candidates who forced into their responses their theoretical perspectives, particularly claiming that the two conversations were founded upon face-threatening acts which resulted in a breakdown in communication. It is worth reminding candidates that they can score highly for AO2 without the use of theory, instead focusing on spoken language concepts and issues simply through thoughtful engagement with how language reflects the speakers' personae or identities.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Sustained focus on language and identity.
- Some comparison of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, supported by close reading.
- Sustained and accurate use of wide-ranging linguistic terminology in each paragraph.
- A range of analytical points on both texts in a succinct manner.

Areas for improvement:

- Genuinely engaging with the meaning of the texts, exploring how both interviewees and interviewers use language to establish their identities.
- Using a wide range of accurate terminology.
- Writing concisely to make a series of analytical points about both transcripts and not ending up with very few points on Text B.

Section B: Language Issues

It was encouraging to see that on the whole candidates produced coherent essays on language issues, which is a clear reflection that centres are teaching the full range of topics covered under the specification. The best essays demonstrated an ability to engage closely with the question, whilst referring to a broad but relevant framework of wider context examples suited to the scenario outlined in the question. As in previous years, less successful essays resorted to regurgitating pre-learned material, failing to connect that knowledge to the focus of the question.

Q.2 Language and Power

This proved a popular question with many candidates pursuing a range of valid approaches. Some chose to use the head of department conversation as a springboard for discussing persuasive language, and use of pronouns in particular, by other speakers or writers as an attempt to manipulate or influence the interlocutor or reader; bringing in concepts of status and power enabled candidates in the upper bands to conceptualise the use of language for power. Equally, the language of marketing or advertising, where the notion of synthetic personalisation was sensibly considered, enabled candidates to explore how pronoun use can persuade effectively.

The most impressive responses teased out the intended shift between the first person singular and the first person plural by the head of department as a strategy to empower John, who would be identified as the solution to the problem. They connected this example of language and power in the springboard to other relevant scenarios, such as classroom exchanges between teachers and students, or even family arguments or discussions between friends and partners. Other candidates focused their discussion on the written example provided of language and power, namely the minister's sign *THOU SHALT NOT PARK*. Many candidates noted how the use of non-standard capitalisation conveyed a sense of authority; however, the more discerning candidates were able to see the sense of humour here in the deliberate invocation of a familiar Biblical reference. The highest-scoring candidates could relate this strategy to other relevant spoken or written scenarios, ranging from public signage, e.g. pandemic related, to conversations in school or college assembly, or written letters on matters such as bullying and even mental health awareness. It is worth noting here that *THOU SHALT NOT PARK* may well deliberately echo one of the Ten Commandments, but it is a declarative not an imperative. As with previous years, weaker responses featured pre-prepared material on language and power and made no attempt to connect or apply the knowledge to the specific power tactics conveyed in the scenarios, e.g. subtle humour, intertextuality or pronoun use. It is clear that centres where candidates are taught to connect the springboard material to a reasonably wide range of extracts, ideally from the candidates' own lives, these produced the most original, focused and well-argued responses.

Q.3 Child Language Acquisition

The focus of the question this year was on evaluating the importance of interaction with adults on a child's acquisition of language. Therefore, a sense of debate and differing perspectives was crucial here. For example, the contrasting theories of Chomsky and Skinner, or a contrast between Piaget's cognitive model and Vygotsky's interactionist model, had to be considered and linked to the evidence in the scenario. Successful candidates linked specific aspects of child-directed speech from the extract to other pertinent scenarios but were able to counter-balance that with specific examples where it does not play a role, e.g. some speakers in Papua New Guinea. Such strong responses carefully considered the significance of case studies such as Genie or Jim (researched by Bard and Sachs) as a way to examine the importance of interaction with adults. They were then able to return to the springboard and note that irrespective of the parental input the child fails to sustain the instruction, as proven by the final utterance *now give me other one spoon*, where the non-standard use of the determiner remains a persistent issue.

Where candidates simply regurgitated theories or case studies they had learnt, without relating them to the scenario, or indeed the focus of the question (the degree of importance of the role of the caregiver), it was more difficult to achieve higher band marks.

In short, centres should remind students that having a good range of knowledge (and there was plenty of evidence of this in the vast majority of candidates' work) is only of benefit to them if they are able to demonstrate how they can select material from a broader body of information and ideas in order to shape an answer to the question set. The strongest responses were insightful, well-informed and well-argued, using a range of material and examples in support, clear proof that this topic engages students. However, more judicious selection of evidence and development of discussion are crucial in accessing the higher bands.

Q.4 Language and Situation

This question proved to be a popular choice, and many candidates demonstrated a firm grasp of the central issue of the reasons why speakers alter their language, either to gain social approval in different contexts, or to maintain a social identity, whether that be region-, class- or gender-based. In many cases, candidates were able to take the concepts of convergence and divergence as a starting point and widen the discussion by bringing in a variety of relevant contexts, ranging from political discourse, job interviews, classroom interactions and family exchanges. The higher-scoring candidates moved beyond regional variation and considered the use of Standard or Non-Standard English as a way of acquiring overt or covert prestige, underpinning this theoretical framework with specific examples from relevant scenarios. Such strong candidates were able to tease out specific links between language use and social identity, considering the importance of regional or national loyalties, as well as looking at code switching, where the same speakers display different identities appropriate to the situation in which they find themselves.

By contrast, weaker responses paraphrased the stimulus material without relating it to conversational contexts, or defined the concepts of divergence and convergence, again without applying that knowledge to any pertinent situation. Centres ought to be aware that in the language and situation question, candidates are rewarded for applying their linguistic knowledge to specific situations. It was encouraging to see that there was a decent corpus of knowledge, covering a range of theories and experiments, including Labov, Trudgill, and Lakov, Leach and Goffman, to name a few. Yet, it is imperative that candidates are able to relate any theoretical framework they make use of to specific situations which exemplify what speakers might say in order to illustrate the use of either Standard or Non-Standard English as a way to maintain either social approval or a social identity.

Finally, it was encouraging to see teachers are keeping up to date with concepts relevant to language and situation, with a number of candidates writing about the growing spread of multicultural English (a relatively recent phenomenon), which is indeed pertinent to the question foci of social approval and social identity.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- A consistent focus on the specific question with relevant examples of language use.
- A sense that material is being chosen from a wider range of knowledge in order to tailor the response to the demands of the question (rather than fitting the question to the material).
- A clear paragraphing structure with relevant topic sentences, allowing for a logically developing argument.

Areas for improvement:

- Having a clear answer to the set question rather than reproducing a generic essay on the topic.
- Selecting appropriate material that is relevant to the question.
- Highlighting the sense of a developing (and relevant) argument through clearly structured paragraphs.

Summary of key points

Section A: key considerations for centres

- Candidates score well when they combine an intelligent overview of the speakers' attitudes with precise linguistic analysis.
- Candidates should be encouraged to use terminology in every paragraph, seeking to use a range of different terms.
- Candidates should start detailed analysis quickly after a brief overview and aim for a concise approach that enables them to make a series of analytical points about both texts.

Section B: key considerations for centres

- Candidates need to be reminded that the stimulus material is a *springboard* to launch their discussion but also to be returned to throughout their essay, where appropriate.
- Candidates need to practise planning different essays on the same topic, developing the ability to shape the material in different ways in response to different questions.

Conclusion

The component continues to allow candidates to showcase highly impressive analytical skill, and an ability to respond flexibly to unseen materials or situations. As in previous years, Section A provided for a more sustained opportunity for candidates to apply knowledge to the analysis and evaluation of how meaning is constructed, whilst Section B remains more challenging due to the reliance of some candidates on pre-learned material not connected to the question, which often hinders the method of analysis.

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Component 2: Language Change Over Time

General Comments

Candidates responded well to this year's genres (speeches and Tweets) and there was clear demonstration of sufficient and apt subject knowledge in the vast majority of responses. There was clear evidence of good time management, too, with almost all candidates attempting all questions on the paper.

As in 2019, there was some good close engagement with the meaning of the texts and the contexts in which they were produced and received, and it was clear that the Advanced Information was of significant help in preparing candidates for this paper. Perhaps due to the Advanced Information, it did appear to be the case, however, that some candidates went into the exam with a pre-prepared 'shopping list' of features that they were looking for in the texts and, while this resulted in some reasonable responses, the strongest were those which approached the texts with an open mind and a readiness to explore them for meaning. There were fewer, but still some, candidates including material related to specific language change features in response to Question 2, instead of engaging closely with the construction of meaning, as prompted in the question. Perhaps because of the genre of speeches, there was a significant increase of the use of spoken language theory, too; while some of this was productive – considering Face theory in terms of relationships between speechmakers and audience was certainly a valid approach – others were perhaps less so; Grice's Maxims have much more to do with dialogue, rather than monologue, for example.

In Question 3, also, some conceptual approaches were more successful than others: while issues of attitudes to the acceleration of informalisation were pertinent to this question – and some fascinating arguments about Standard English becoming the 'new Non-Standard English' in Present Day English were a pleasure to read – the name-checking of a number of descriptivists and prescriptivists and their various theories is probably better used in response to C1 Section B. It was pleasing to see the focus much more tightly on Twitter, however, rather than veering off into other social media, as noted in my 2019 report.

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 explicit conceptual knowledge of the genre of speeches (persuasive language and rhetorical devices, language written to be spoken out loud, audience engagement, formality) and the important subject matter (almost all candidates picked up on the unifying strand of how women were represented over time). Other key issues of status, and the importance (or otherwise) of religion were relevant, as was consideration of the level of planning/spontaneity of the respective speeches. General comments about language change concepts were not relevant here as they are covered by Questions 1(a-d), unless specifically related to meaning, for example, thematic capitalisation in Text A. It was good to see some candidates equipped with some specialist knowledge about rhetoric – such as Aristotle’s logos, pathos, and ethos – when this was applied to specific examples from the texts. Indeed, appropriate, embedded and concise supporting quotation was required in support of all points. Line references without quotation are not acceptable.

AO3 (20 marks)

Candidates needed to engage closely with the speeches, exploring detail and interpreting meaning. Addressing context was central to the question and, as in 2019, focused use of the rubric as an interpretive tool was key to the structuring of a good response. Many candidates were successful in shaping an argument which saw the three speeches as key moments in the development of female empowerment: from the Early Modern English male voice of Donne somewhat patronisingly presenting the deceased woman in designated traditional female roles as ‘wife’, then ‘mother’, then ‘neighbour’ and finally ‘friend’; to Anthony’s deliberately provocative Late Modern English speech that argued fiercely for female equality (and offered us an early preview of the importance of the pronoun in the politics of self-definition); and onto the PDE potty-mouthed confidence of Theron that not only celebrated how far gender equality has developed but also turned its attention to other groups experiencing discrimination or a lack of empathy in contemporary society.

As mentioned in 2019, that word ‘relatable’ once again reared its rather-too-unhelpful head, both here and in Section B in a significant number of responses this year. It should be discouraged as it simply does not make for good analysis of meaning in context: we should be asking candidates what they mean when they use the word and encouraging them to elaborate in order to shape stronger, more precise discussion. If they are interested in the way that the producer of the text has made a specific language choice or included a certain cultural reference in order to build rapport with a certain demographic in their audience, for instance, then this is what they should be writing in their essays. Just because this word has found its way into mainstream language usage does not mean it is some kind of short-cut to the truth in AO3: quite the opposite, in fact.

AO4 (20 marks)

While there are a number of valid ways to address the requirement to explore connections between the texts, the most productive approach is through comparison by meaning. Simply starting a separate section of the essay by drawing a broad link to the text just analysed is not sufficient to score well under this AO: the strongest ranged across the texts frequently and productively. The use of linguistic terminology is also assessed under this AO. Candidates needed to analyse the texts using a wide range of terms in support of all points and from across the language levels.

Q. 1 Short questions

These questions are marked under AO1. The approach to the short questions continues to develop, as mentioned in the 2019 report. It was particularly pleasing to see far fewer long responses to these questions, as succinctness is key. What does need addressing, however, is responses to 1(b-d) in note form, rather than full sentences as, on occasion, this can result in insufficient detail to achieve the second mark for each point made. On the whole, though, there was significant evidence of assured knowledge of language change, with ever-developing identification of word form.

- (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. While 'til' was technically a conjunction, this proved very challenging to the majority of candidates, so it was decided that 'preposition' would be also accepted.

Most candidates did well in this first question, identifying all three word classes correctly and describing the i/y and u/v interchanges, and the singling out of consonant of clipping of 'until'.

- (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 (e.g. a lack of standardisation) for each example.

Most candidates identified the word classes correctly and could be rewarded for the pattern of variation for *be/bee* through reference to inconsistency, appended -e, for naming a key linguistic work (e.g. Samuel Johnson's 1755 dictionary) or the lack of standardisation. For *betwixt*, candidates were rewarded through reference to archaic/obsolete word form or reference to PDE 'between'. As this was NOT an orthographical point, references here to Johnson or lack of standardisation were not acceptable.

- (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 *sayeth* in order to achieve the mark for form, while the second mark could be achieved via a variety of different explanations, such as obsolete/archaic verb inflection or correct translation into PDE 'says'. For *thou*, any reference to pronoun was acceptable for form, and while acknowledging it as archaic was acceptable this year, for future reference, we will be looking for discussion of relationship/tenor in its intimate use, in comparison to the more formal 'thee' or, from the contextual perspective of EME, the plural 'you'.

- (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 be reminded that references to EME spelling are not relevant in part (d). Some candidates lost a significant proportion of the 6 marks because their points were based on orthography.

Many candidates cited random capitalisation identifying the capitalisation of common nouns (e.g. *Congregation*) and adverbs (e.g. *Downe*). It is important that a word class term is used to explain the variation from PDE. Some candidates recognised the omission of the possessive apostrophe (*Sundaies*). Reference to possession was necessary to receive reward. Another popular selection was the not yet compounded reflexive pronouns (e.g. *my selfe*).

References to the high levels of subordination, or to long, complex sentences were valid as features typical of EME. The example cited, however, had to do more than mark the beginning and end of a particular section of the text, but in order to access the second mark, to make specific reference to clauses introduced by subordinators. Claims that a comma before a coordinating conjunction was specifically EME practice were not rewarded as this is not entirely the case, while broad points about the "excessive" use or "misuse" of semi-colons or commas are not credit worthy.

Some candidates did, however, successfully identify the capitalisation of the relative pronoun 'That' following a semi-colon separating the verb and noun clause '*propose...; That*'.

While there was significantly less of it this year, candidates should be reminded that they cannot repeat examples from part (c) in part (d) and that examples must be taken from the extract provided for part (d), rather than elsewhere in the text.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Concise, but sufficiently focused, responses.
- Precise and accurate linguistic labelling of examples.
- Clearly expressed descriptions of distinctive EME features.
- An analytical (rather than observational) response.

Areas for improvement:

- Focus of part (d) responses: there are still references to spelling being made here.
- Accurate identification of form: tense for verbs on (c), for example.
- More specific identification of clauses when discussing sentence types on part (d).

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 speeches written at different times.

As mentioned above, the majority of candidates identified the position of women in society as the unifying thread that ran through the three texts, but there was also much interesting discussion of the place of religion in society and ideas of self-representation and status. It was pleasing that many candidates engaged with meaning, often responding with independence and enthusiasm to the texts. Strongest responses linked the three texts together through these issues and how the contexts of the speeches' delivery had an impact on their effectiveness. The presence of religious language in Text A, for example, was much less due to the EME setting than to the sermon's delivery by a reverend in a church, while the single interjectional 'Amen' in Text B was already starting to take on a secular resonance, and Text B's mildly blasphemous use of 'hell' hardly registers alongside the stronger expletives of Text C. Considering the three texts in terms of the attitudes and identities of the speechmakers themselves was another productive response, from the complacent patriarchy of the 'celebrity' preacher in Donne's sermonising, through the powerful and subversive rhetoric of Anthony's tour of America, to the self-deprecating empowering and perhaps semi-spontaneity of Theron's acceptance speech.

Less successful, but still valid, approaches tended to look for connections via linguistic feature – as per the 'shopping list' referenced above and, for example, while pronouns are undoubtedly highly important in speechmaking, there were occasions where candidates focused on little else. Likewise, while it was pleasing to see candidates well-versed in the various different articles of rhetoric, it was the discussion of meaning shaped by these, and their effectiveness in context, which was of most importance.

It is always worth reminding candidates that their achievement will be improved by using all the language levels through the application of a wide range of terminology – linguistic knowledge should always be at the heart of unseen analysis. There were still some instances of exclamatory sentences being inaccurately labelled as exclamatives, though a number of candidates impressed through the correct identification of Theron's 'What a night' as a minor exclamation.

Again this year, it was a pleasure to see much lively engagement alongside sound understanding of the texts. As with similar features in Section B, most candidates were drawn to Theron's use of expletives, and there was some interesting evaluation of how this was very much a phenomenon of PDE, while many candidates positioned themselves firmly alongside Anthony in her fight for equality. There were lots of focused topic sentences and at the highest levels of achievement, some compellingly structured arguments developed over the course of highly analytical and very engaging essays.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Well-shaped essay responses that clearly address the question.
- A clear, purposeful overview that sets the essay up.
- Engagement with details of the texts, rather than broad discussion of genre conventions, supported by well-chosen, concise textual references.
- Discussion of contextual features linked specifically to meaning.
- The use of issues as a means to explore connections between texts.
- The use of wide-ranging and relevant terminology to underpin points made.

Areas for improvement:

- The context rubric should not be copied out verbatim as an overview.
- Develop analysis of meaning in context.
- Precise and economical quoting of evidence.
- Wider use of accurate terms from across the language levels.
- 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 appropriate linguistic terminology to underpin analysis of Tweets. This enabled candidates to develop a critical approach. The fluency and technical accuracy of the writing was also assessed here.

AO2 (10 marks)

Candidates needed to demonstrate their knowledge of the genre and medium explicitly. Discussion of relevant issues (e.g. attitudes, self-presentation, status) and concepts (e.g. medium, informalisation, sociolect, face, anonymity, interaction) was valid when linked directly to the genre and content of the data. The marshalling of apt and concise textual support was also of great importance.

AO3 (20 marks)

Candidates needed to engage with the data, exploring details and interpreting meaning. It was important that the data was analysed, but other examples of Tweets could be discussed. Because of the mark weighting, addressing contextual factors (producer, purpose, relationships with other users) needed to form the basis of discussion. As stated above, the word 'relatable' does not help candidates to construct meaningful contextual analysis.

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 enthusiastically to the data, demonstrating a good understanding of Tweets and the various issues created by this medium.

As mentioned above, excessive focus on representatives from descriptivism and prescriptivism and the naming of their various theories (Jean Aitchison received a particularly good airing this year) was the cause of some loss of focus but candidates largely focused on the material in front of them and used the contextual material provided (both usernames and handles) to good effect in the development of their analysis. Many candidates also identified the contextual possibilities of discussion of both literacy issues and the debates around Brexit as helpful material.

As was expected, given the nature of this year's exams within the broader context of the Advanced Information, many candidates began with an overview of the history and evolution of Twitter, all of which was entirely valid from a conceptual perspective. There was clear evidence that candidates were well-prepared for the identification of potential groupings as a means to effectively structure their responses.

There was secure understanding of the manner in which Pullman's celebrity allowed his Tweet to gain such traction and provoke such varied responses. Many candidates proved how ambiguous the medium is due to its requirement for brevity through much lively discussion of whether Text 2 was produced as a particularly arch piece of satire on the stereotyped idea of a Brexiteer or was a genuine example of a Tweet from one. As such, there was plenty of good analysis on the identities forged by each Tweeter through their language choices, which demonstrated effective knowledge of typical 21st century language features. This was at its strongest when linked to meaning, although many candidates took the equally valid route of rounding up all the EML features before setting about the business of analysis in context.

One minor issue: a handful of candidates misread the context of Pullman as 'A WELL-KNOWN ENGLISH NOVELIST' as a self-aggrandising act of self-identification and/or his reply to Text 7 as by 'THINKER ON THE SOFA'. It is hoped that further experience of this question should alleviate obstacles to achievement like this in future series.

As in 2019, it was a great pleasure to see the knowledge and enthusiasm of candidates in dealing with this material: their own real-life experience of 21st century language clearly informs their nuanced understanding of how we communicate in CML.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Clear organisation and fluent, accurate expression.
- An explicit focus on context and genre.
- Analysis of data using appropriate linguistic and conceptual terminology.
- Clear knowledge of medium and associated concepts as a means to analyse data.

Areas for improvement:

- Maintaining a focus on the data, rather than discussing broader issues of attitudes to language change in isolation.
- When introducing other material, ensuring this has something to add to discussion.
- Using a wider range of terminology, particularly grammatical, to underpin analysis.

Summary of key points

Section A: key considerations for centres

- Responses should address a range of points.
- Pre-prepared responses often fail to engage meaningfully with texts.
- Links between texts should throw light on meanings of all texts, rather than being used to move from one text to another across the response.

Section B: key considerations for centres

- Remember that Standard/Non-Standard English is covered in Component 1 Section B: while this will always have some relevance to this question, it should not be the main focus.
- A well-structured response that engages with the data holistically, rather than looking at each text separately, will produce the strongest responses.

Conclusion:

Once again, it was evident that candidates from across the bands had followed a language course. It was clear that they had been well-prepared for the paper and that the Advanced Information had been used productively in this preparation. It was a pleasure to read responses that shaped a compelling argument and handled the textual material well, engaged with meanings, and used a variety of terminology from across the language levels to demonstrate understanding.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Component 3: Creative and Creative Use of Language

General Comments

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 2 seeming to be the slightly more popular option. There was evidence that candidates had considered carefully the specifics of the tasks, with fewer having approached the exam with pre-prepared ideas. The stimulus material was clearly understood. 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.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** The stimulus material was an extract from a Guardian piece in which Richard Orange discusses the move away from using cash in Sweden, where he has lived for eight years. The piece touched upon the cash-free ways of doing business in cafes, restaurants and shops, whilst warning that some pensioners' groups had expressed concerns about their members' ability to adjust to a world of digital financial transactions. There was an overwhelming sense that the future may be not merely noteless, but coinless too.

Task (a)

Candidates were asked to write an article for an online magazine, discussing where any aspect of digital interactions are becoming more common, while considering some of the social consequences to such a change. The focus here was not necessarily on digital finances, and candidates were free to go in any direction about the growing digitalisation of modern life. The majority of candidates who chose this question had a clear sense of the genre. They considered a wide range of aspects of modern life, such as: digitalised education; the all-encompassing and addictive use of mobile phones; online dating; the impact of social media; and even the digital means of publishing and disseminating music in the 21st century. Most were able to consider the social consequences of their chosen aspect of modern life and were able to construct an appropriately lively and informative voice for their online article.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- The construction of a lively, engaging and informative journalistic voice e.g. cultural references, puns, ironic tone and a sense of authority.
- An awareness of audience e.g. clear articulation of the aspect of digitalised interactions they had chosen, and its social consequences.
- Effective stylistic choices e.g. rhetorical devices to engage the reader, such as rhetorical questions and hypophora, as well as a sense of humour.

Areas for improvement:

- Some wrote about the issue, but ignored the social consequences, suggesting they had not fully engaged with all aspects of the task.
- Inconsistency or incoherence in expression.

Task (b)

Candidates were asked to write an extract from a short story about a pound coin. They were free to decide on the genre here. While many wrote plausible and engaging pieces, some constructed less credible narratives, venturing into magical realism, fantasy and even fairy tales. These indeed were not invalid approaches, and often yielded fruitful results, but sometimes tended to lack coherence and credibility. Many chose to construct first person narratives from the point of view of the personified coin, which did work when done well. The most successful pieces adopted a symbolic tone, where the pound coin was presented as emblematic of a refusal to conform to social expectations for uniformity. There were even some dystopian pieces, where coins symbolised nostalgia for earlier, simpler times.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Features of fiction writing e.g. characterisation, perspective, narrative voice.
- Description of settings or characters e.g. modified noun phrases, fronted adverbials and figurative language.
- Effective stylistic choices e.g. dialogue, symbolism and extended metaphor.

Areas for improvement:

- Misunderstanding of the genre e.g. unstructured narrative, implausible content or heavy reliance on plot.
- Limited awareness of how narrative elements are incorporated to engage readers.
- Inconsistent or incoherent expression.

Q.2 For this question, the stimulus material was an extract from Phillip Pullman's novel *La Belle Sauvage: The Book of Dust Volume 1*. It covered a canoe rescue which occurred after a river had burst its banks, following days of torrential rain.

Task (a)

The task was to write a blog by a survivor of an extreme weather event. The aim was to convey a sense of updating an already existing base of followers on the extreme weather event and the dramatic circumstances surrounding the blogger's survival. Most candidates produced lively and engaging pieces. Many created a credible voice and a real sense of engagement with a regular group of followers. The use of suspense and drama was often engaging and well-controlled. Some were able to craft images of exotic travel and summer weather, whilst others focused their writing on mountainous weather disasters.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- An appropriate form for a blog e.g. directly addressing the reader to construct a sense of familiarity with audience and ongoing engagement via the blog's regular updates.
- A balance of information and drama.
- Creative and sensory description to engage the audience.
- A personal voice to inform and entertain, and sometimes advise.

Areas for improvement:

- Misunderstanding of the task e.g. writing a first person narrative or diary rather than a blog.
- Over-reliance on the stimulus materials e.g. extended quotation.
- A lack of engaging voice.

Task (b)

Candidates were asked to write a local news report which describes a dramatic rescue. Many candidates responded appropriately and considered the local element of the task by producing pieces for newspapers where readers would be familiar with specifics of the area. The more successful pieces included clear signature stylistics of newspaper reporting, such as fact and apposition at the start, as well as direct and reported speech. The most successful pieces managed to convey a sense of drama, whilst keeping control of the piece and producing credible journalistic writing. A few were extreme and unconvincing, with complex and drawn-out police rescues or, at the opposite end of the scale, animals (such as a tortoise or a cat) which had been lost in the local area, but turned up by themselves, without having been rescued.

Characteristics of successful responses:

- Tailoring stylistic choices to genre e.g. facts, apposition, direct speech and reported speech.
- Descriptive language e.g. dramatic lexis connected to disappearances and rescues, imagery.
- A sense of reporting for a local audience.
- Appropriate, accurate and coherent written expression.

Areas for improvement:

- Misunderstanding of the genre e.g. undeveloped or too ambitious rescue ideas.
- Limited awareness of the audience's needs e.g. a confusion about what happened.
- Direct speech becoming so lengthy it turned into a testimony.
- Inconsistent viewpoint and weak tense control.

Q1&Q2 (c) – Commentary

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 characterisation in 1b, or register fluctuation and idiomatic usage to create a credible spoken voice in 2a. Writers of the best commentaries were able to range through the levels of language, for example by detailing unusual syntactical features, pragmatic cultural references and implied meaning, 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 in previous years, 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, as well as a general misconception that every question is rhetorical. 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 effects e.g. to persuade, 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 e.g. '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**Creative Writing Q1: key considerations for centres**

- Candidates appeared equally familiar with narrative writing and journalistic writing, yet there was a preference to produce the commentary on the narrative piece, despite the journalistic piece often being the more successful of the two.
- A successful piece 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.

Creative Writing Q2: key considerations for centres

- The stimulus text was used effectively as material for both tasks by the majority of candidates. A few, however, inappropriately produced narratives or diaries for 2a, rather than blogs.
- Many candidates showed skill in the use of an engaging voice in 2a, clearly establishing an ongoing connection with a follower base, which was essential for this task.
- For 2b, most candidates chose to write about situations that were appropriate material for local reporting; some, however, lost control of the situation by developing scenarios which were too complicated and sometimes turned into narratives.
- Reported speech was used effectively to create a sense of journalistic fact-gathering but was sometimes too lengthy and not appropriately paragraphed.

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 e.g. 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 2022

Component 4: Language and Identity

General Comments

It was good to see that the majority of centres submitted their Component 4 Language and Identity samples in accordance with the specification's requirements and by the required date. Samples arrived with moderators in good time and good order. Centres should be commended for their resilience, hard work and efforts in supporting students with these investigations and preparing quality work for assessment, particularly given the challenges faced over the last two years.

The majority of candidates had been encouraged by centres to pursue their own language interests and they had undertaken the language investigation independently as required by the specification, which states that 'this component gives opportunities for language research which has personal relevance'. By encouraging candidates to explore areas of personal relevance, candidates engaged effectively with the process and produced investigations that were interesting and relevant.

As indicated in the Examiner's Report from 2019, the NEA is designed to engage students with the theme of language and identity. However, 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. As a result of this lack of focus in the titles, the quality of analysis and evaluation of the data as well as the line of argument was hindered, preventing 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 guidance in respect of task setting located on the WJEC Eduqas website.

The titles were generally well thought out. The best titles posed a question which then supported in leading the study. Though examples were rare, some less successful titles appeared more forced to fit the study or area of investigation. The best folders questioned their own hypothesis. Centres should encourage this approach as this helped the candidates focus and supported the structure of the investigations.

Administration and presentation of samples were very good. There were very few errors with submissions, however there were a few NEA cover sheets with missing information, for example, centre names, candidate numbers, dates, aspect of study and descriptions of the data. These were rare, as were occasions where candidates had not signed the declaration. It is imperative, however, that all candidates sign the declaration and careful attention should be paid to this aspect. In addition, 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 IAMIS.

The majority of candidates chose the Culture or Gender aspects of study for specific focus of their language investigation. A few students chose Self-representation and fewer still chose Diversity. Although many centres had encouraged candidates to explore different aspects of study, some centres had encouraged a variety of different investigations under one specific aspect (Culture or Self-Representation). Whilst this approach is acceptable, centres may want to ensure that there are overviews and introductions to the four different aspects of identity study, so that the breadth of the specification has been covered. Students can then make their own informed, independent decisions about which aspect to investigate.

Careful selection of an appropriate breadth of data with carefully controlled extra-linguistic variables often resulted in a more sophisticated analysis and perceptive interpretation of the identity topic. There were a number of candidates where only two small items of data had been analysed in direct comparison and a smaller number of candidates where too much data had been collected. In both cases, the amount of data can be limiting to candidates to provide effective and appropriate discussion within the word count ranges stated in the specification. On a few occasions, data was selected that was not easy to compare which hindered students' investigations.

Some investigations attempted to incorporate historical change into the study. This was rarely done successfully and resulted in, at times, broad and over-ambitious investigations given the limitations and scope of the work.

All centres' submissions were a pleasure to read and it was clear that centres and students had worked hard on this NEA component.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The Assessment Objectives

Centres demonstrated very good understanding and application of all assessment objectives as evidenced by detailed marginal and summative comments. Some centres used assessment criteria grids by the main assessor and as part of the internal standardising process, which were models of good, rigorous practice. Many folders displayed evidence of robust and effective internal moderation.

Centres clearly understand the three different strands to **AO1** with **AO1a** focusing on appropriate methods of language analysis, **AO1b** focussing on associated terminology and apt selection, and **AO1c** focusing on coherent written expression and structuring. As part of **AO1a**, it is important that candidates discuss the provenance and rationale for the collection of their corpus of data, whilst avoiding lengthy descriptive accounts of the data, particularly in awarding Bands 3, 4 and 5. Candidates achieving high bands for **AO1b** demonstrated a wide range of carefully selected examples from the data set, showing sophisticated and secure knowledge of a wide range of language levels. Word, phrase, clause and sentence level analysis was often seen in the higher-achieving investigations. In contrast, lower band achievement evidenced work which focused primarily on word level (lexis, semantics and word classes) analysis. In addition, terminology was often used but without appropriate exemplification. For **AO1c**, many folders displayed coherent written expression which was academic, engaging and tightly focused on both the data and the topic of identity with a strong, cohesive line of argument. Lower-achieving investigations often demonstrated work which had not been proof-read with frequent lapses in expression, were lacking in coherent organisation, and often did not have a conclusion.

AO2 requires candidates to demonstrate critical understanding of language concepts and issues relevant to language use. Whilst theories are not explicitly referenced within this AO, there has been previous training and resources are available on the WJEC Eduqas site demonstrating how concepts and issues, along with theory, can illuminate and enlighten data analysis in respect of the identity focus. Higher-achieving investigations clearly demonstrated critical and perceptive exploration of the relevant identity topic, applying and debating a range of theories in an intelligent manner. Investigations at the lower end of the spectrum did not make any reference to theories or if they did, they were “shoe-horned” in and quite general in application. Some investigations relied heavily on dated theory and applied this slavishly. This was particularly evident in investigations exploring Gender and Identity.

AO3 focuses on the analysis and evaluation of contextual factors such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity, situation, etc, and how these factors affect the production and reception of meaning. The highest-achieving investigations had strong, confident understanding of a range of contextual factors, whereas the lower-achieving studies relied too much on general contextual description without close linking to language analysis (AO1) and the data.

It is recommended to consult the WJEC standardising material for Component 4 (available on the secure website), which exemplifies marking standards, particularly before embarking upon centre assessment and should be included as part of the internal standardising process.

The Four Aspects of Study

1. Language and Self-Representation

While more students chose this aspect of study in comparison to previous years, there were still very few investigations focusing on this topic. This is a shame as this topic resulted in some very strong investigations, often with a real sense of research. One successful study looked at code switching in a household where English was not the parents’ first language. Higher achieving folders demonstrated the collection of high-quality data which led to sophisticated and perceptive analysis and evaluation of the identity topic. Data included multimodal forms such as Instagram and WhatsApp as well as spoken transcripts in respect of a voice note conversation. Theories such as Goffman’s/Brown and Levinson’s face theory, Leech’s ‘Banter Principle’ and Lakoff’s politeness principles were explored at an intelligent level (AO2). Lower-achieving folders engaged with concepts, issues and theories at a more general level and, at best, sensible discussion with references to politeness and power relationships. Analysis was often limited to word and phrase level analysis. These investigations would have benefited from a sharper title focus on identity to help guide the analysis.

On rare occasions, there was misunderstanding of the self-representation aspect by collecting data of politicians and celebrities with a focus on their self-representation as opposed to the candidate’s own use of language.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- Using relevant data, investigate and analyse how my idiolect changes in instant messaging to create my identity as an employee, student and daughter.
- Using two short transcripts of my own speaking, I will explore if and to what extent I change my own identity and accommodate to other people’s idiolect and if accommodation theory is the reason for this.

Two examples of less focused titles:

- Research into my self-identity and how it is expressed.
- Using relevant data, analyse how my language alters according to context.

2. Language and Gender

This was the most popular aspect of study this series. A range of very interesting primary data was collected covering media representation and political interviews. The higher-achieving folders demonstrated a sophisticated range of language features covering discourse, semantics, phonology/prosody and grammar. Lower-achieving folders often made sweeping generalisations with loose reference to more limited data sets. There was a tendency for students across the spectrum to focus on more outdated gender theorists such as Lakoff. Centres are advised to encourage students to cover a range of gender theoretical approaches covering deficit (Lakoff), dominance (Zimmerman and West, Fishman), difference (Tannen, Coates), communities of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet) and performativity models (Butler).

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- Using relevant data, investigate how female guests use language to create gender identities in broadcast interviews with male hosts.
- Using relevant data, analyse how female contestants from 'The Apprentice' use language to create their identity as professionals.

Two examples of less focused titles:

- How are women presented in the media?
- Explore how gender is expressed through song lyrics.

3. Language and Culture

This was the second most popular aspect of language study chosen by candidates for independent research. A range of very interesting data ranging across written and spoken modes was collected covering domains such as politics, journalism and celebrities. These included investigations into how cultural identities of Megan Markle and Kate Middleton are created in the media, and how the media utilises language to create identities for traveller communities. Also noteworthy was an investigation that explored the extent to which Polari and its decline affects the way in which language is used to reflect the identity of British LGBTQ+ subcultures.

High-achieving folders demonstrated analysis of a range of sophisticated language features covering grammar, morphology, semantics and linking prosodic features to word classes. 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. Some good use of theory was seen in referring to Brown and Levinson's Face Threatening Acts and Thorne's study of the language of stand-up comedians. However, it was noticeable that in many investigations, there was a lack of theory to underpin identity issues and concepts in relation to culture. There was stronger, confident contextual awareness in the higher-achieving folders linked to precise linguistic features. Contextual awareness was more generalised and lacked precise linking to language features and the data in the lower-achieving folders.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- How does the media utilise language to create an identity for traveller communities?
- Using relevant data, investigate and analyse how language is used in the drag community to define their identity.

Two examples of less focused titles

- Explore how language is used by celebrities across a variety of sources.
- Using relevant data, explore how language is used in political interviews.

4. Language and Diversity

For this series, this was the least popular aspect of investigation study. However, the students who chose this topic collected a variety of interesting primary data, including transcripts of patient and GP consultations. Candidates also made use of political speeches with varying degrees of success.

In the higher-achieving investigations, a range of sophisticated language features were discussed perceptively covering word, phrase and sentence level analysis. Theories were used in an illuminating way to discuss language issues, for example, Giles' accommodation theory in both investigations focusing on individuals with specific educational needs and lawyers. Lower-achieving investigations were too diverse in tackling a range of extra-linguistic variables such as race, gender and sexuality, whereas a focus on one of them would have been more fruitful. Linguistic terminology was very limited in these investigations, not moving much beyond word class analysis and some spoken forms. There was a straightforward discussion of language concepts and issues with no reference to theory. There was some sensible discussion of how context shaped meaning.

Two examples of closely focused titles:

- Using relevant data, investigate and analyse the ways in which speakers for the prosecution and defence use language to present the identity of Donald Trump during his second impeachment trial.
- Using relevant data, investigate and analyse how online articles use language to create parental identities within the context of the Covid pandemic.

Two examples of less focused titles:

- Analyse and evaluate how accent and dialect is used to project Shrek and Donkey.
- The representation of race, gender inequality and sexuality in Grey's Anatomy. Is it done well?

Summary of key points

Characteristics of successful NEA responses

- Well-focused titles referring specifically to the NEA theme of identity.
- Well-selected, high-quality corpus of data with identity and the aspect of study being central in the decision-making process.
- A sophisticated range of accurate language terminology covering word, phrase, clause and sentence level analysis and a range of language levels. Carefully selected examples from the data.
- Intelligent and coherent lines of argument in relation to the title/question.
- Proof-read, edited and accurate written expression.

- Language concepts, issues and theories are carefully selected and discussed, supported, refuted, argued in direct relation to the data set and the identity focus.
- Confident, subtle interpretations of how identity is constructed and affected by different contextual factors.

Areas for improvement

- Identity should be explicitly referenced in the title and analysed/evaluated throughout the investigation.
- More breadth and depth of primary data.
- More range of language levels with well-selected examples needed.
- Gender theories should move beyond Lakoff's deficit approach.
- A range of language concepts and issues with underpinning theories should be analysed and discussed in direct relation to the data set.
- Analysis and evaluation of data rather than description.

Summary of key points: advice to centres

- Titles should be reviewed to ensure that they have an explicit focus on identity.
- Primary data should be collected with the identity and the particular aspect of study in mind.
- Students should research a range of appropriate and relevant theories, concepts and issues to illuminate their particular area of study. In particular, the broad range of older and more contemporary gender theories should be researched.
- Child Language Acquisition and language change are very challenging topics for the analysis of identity.
- Language and Self-representation should focus on the student's own use of language.
- Please follow specific advice and any recommendations made in your centre's moderation report.

Conclusion

My 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 that was a pleasure to moderate. The sheer variety of quality data and specific areas of language and identity study together with illuminating analysis and evaluation was not dissimilar to previous NEA submissions. Students and staff are commended for their valiant efforts in what has been a difficult period. We look forward to next year's submission.



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