



GCE AS Examiners' Report

Subject: English Language

Level: AS

Summer 2024

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.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 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 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 (eduqas.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: ANALYSIS OF TEXTS IN CONTEXT

This year's cohort, generally-speaking, prepared well for this assessment. They understood the importance of the comparison in Section A, and connections made were meaningful. Candidates were engaged with spoken language terminology, but the application of core linguistic terminology was, as in the past, less secure. Candidates divided their time well between the two sections and, although Section B responses were a little shorter than Section A, this was less significant than in previous years. Productive engagement was evident in Section B; the candidates seemingly found the genre and content accessible.

The cohort's performance for 2024 shows an increase in the mean mark for the paper from 2023. Almost all candidates attempted both sections of the paper. The mean mark for Section B was, however, lower than that for Section A this year, indicating that candidates would benefit from developing their application of core linguistic terminology when analysing written texts so that their attainment here is in line with that for their spoken language responses.

Once again, the best candidates were those who demonstrated sustained focus on the question and were able to confidently engage with the genre, whilst identifying language features accurately, and consistently supporting points made. It was pleasing to see some of the candidates thoughtfully exploring how language was used to convey meaning in context for both spoken and written texts.

COMPONENT 2 – USING LANGUAGE

Responses to this component were positive and creative, and engagement with the data and the application of clear knowledge of the different language levels was evident. This series there was a higher proportion of candidates above the mean mark compared to 2023.

Candidates responded with some thoughtful discussion of the effects shaped by the features of the texts and responses were at their best when candidates were able to thread together the demands of all three Assessment Objectives, resulting in productive close analysis. Candidates grasped how contexts of reception shaped language choices and supported this with the use of economical quotation and precise linguistic knowledge.

The writing tasks resulted in wide-ranging and interesting responses, but there were varying levels of success here. The most successful responses were accurate and showed sustained control; the less successful response lacked these features. The short story was the most popular option, with fewer opting for the obituary, and only one candidate fully understanding this task. It is important that candidates fully prepare themselves for the different tasks that may come up in the examination.

Time management did affect the outcome of task c, the commentary, leading to candidate responses being underdeveloped, but some did present a pleasing level of detail and knowledge and well thought out evaluation.

Overall, the demand of the paper was equivalent to that of previous series.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Applying core linguistic terminology	Open class words Phrases Spoken language	Knowledge organisers
Practising past questions and time management	Component 1 and 2: a series of resources including teaching activities, general guidance, marked and unmarked responses to SAMs questions and further sample questions and guidelines. These resources have been prepared by Principal Examiners	AS English language: Components 1 and 2 Resources
Creative and critical writing	The structured interactive tasks prepare learners for various forms of writing, exploring key features of the genre, its form, potential audiences, and lexical and grammatical choices that convey attitudes and atmosphere	Travel writing Reviews Opinions Obituaries Explanations
Creative use of language	A range of teaching materials to help prepare learners for their own creative writing and subsequent commentaries	Creative use of language - targeting AO5 and AO3
Commentaries	Practical teaching ideas to stimulate learners' own creative writing and commentaries	Original writing and commentary
Professional Learning / CPD	Past Professional Learning resources are available on demand.	On demand courses Materials from previous events

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COMPONENT 1: ANALYSIS OF TEXTS IN CONTEXT

Overview of the Component

This paper assesses candidates' ability to analyse both spoken and written unseen texts using a range of linguistic terminology with clear and coherent expression (AO1), to critically engage with concepts such as genre and audience and to consistently support responses (AO2). In Section A, candidates are also required to explore connections across two spoken texts (AO4), whereas in Section B (a single unseen text), candidates are instead required to analyse and evaluate how contextual factors shape written language use (AO3).

In Section A, candidates are assessed on their ability to engage with the spoken nature of the two texts and to analyse the transcripts using relevant spoken language and core linguistic terminology and concepts. In this section, they are also required to compare both texts and to make supported connections and comparisons. The comparative element of the response (AO4) is slightly more weighted in terms of marks and is, therefore, significant.

In Section B, candidates are tested on their ability to respond to an unseen written text selected from any genre and to provide detailed analysis and discussion informed by language study. They are also required to explore how contextual factors shape meaning and language choices. As this contextual element (AO3) is weighted slightly more than the other assessment objectives in Section B it is, again, an important consideration for candidates.

This year, candidates were mostly well-prepared for this paper. The genres of both spoken and written texts are unseen, so candidates must apply their skills and knowledge accordingly. It was pleasing to note that candidates were clear about the significance of comparison (AO4) in Section A and were often able to make meaningful connections and comparisons across both texts. There was evident engagement with spoken language terminology (AO1) in Section A. As in previous years, however, the application of core linguistic terminology – beyond basic word classes – was less secure in Section A. In Section B, candidates were able to engage productively with the genre of the text and appeared to find its content accessible. Although responses were, overall, a little shorter for Section B than Section A, there was not a significant difference this year, so candidates have been clearly well-advised to divide their time equally between sections.

Candidate performance this year shows an increase in the mean mark for the paper from 2023. This suggests that candidates had a clear grasp of the assessment objectives in each section. The attempt rate also demonstrates that virtually all candidates responded to *both* sections of the paper. This year, as in 2023, there was a difference in the mean mark for Section A compared to Section B, with Section B slightly lower. This suggests that candidates should build more confidence and accuracy in their use of core linguistic terminology when analysing written texts so that performance matches their spoken responses. The most successful candidates, as in previous years, were able to demonstrate sustained question focus, confident engagement with genre plus accurate identification of a range of language features with consistent support. In particular, the strongest candidates were able to explore thoughtfully how language was used to convey meaning in context for both spoken and written texts.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: Spoken Language of the Media

The transcripts selected for Section A were from televised food programmes. They were accessible and provided candidates with lots of potential opportunities to explore connections across the texts. Text A was an extract from an opening segment from *Saturday Kitchen Live* where the host Matt Tebutt welcomed his guests, BBC Morning News presenters, Charlie Stayt and Naga Munchetty, and introduced the topic of 'food heaven or food hell' to them. Text B was an extract from *Rick Stein's Cornwall* where the chef demonstrated his recipe for butterflied lamb.

Most candidates were able to engage well with the food programme genre and to identify the difference in tone and purpose between the texts (Text A as a light-hearted, jovial, and entertaining extract, versus B which was informative and instructive). A focus on the question bullet points allowed candidates to draw comparisons between the less serious attitude to food and cooking in Text A compared to the expert approach in Text B. Audience engagement in Text A was driven by the mocking interactions between participants with an almost game-show approach to the food task compared to the serious, informative and precise discussion of ingredients and processes delivered by a single expert speaker in Text B.

Responses were structured in a number of ways: some chose to select specific points for connection and create an integrated comparative response, others chose to explore Text A in detail and then Text B, while still maintaining a comparative focus. Either approach is valid, and the issue of comparison (AO4) has clearly been reinforced very effectively by centres.

Characteristics of a successful response

The strongest responses were able to explore the topic of food in both the texts and how it was introduced and developed by the participants' use of language. They noted the relatively late appearance of the topic in Text A and the ironically mocking introductory section of the transcript where the hosts and guests engaged in some (non-food related) banter ('you've got a weird way of clapping'). They then noted how the host asserted his role as topic manager with the discourse marker and imperative ('now listen') to introduce the 'food heaven food hell' task. They were able, for example, to note the listing of food related concrete nouns by the guests ('greens' 'spice' 'curries') and to note the elliptical utterances which included the stative verbs 'love' and 'hate.' Stronger candidates were able to explore the spontaneity and relaxed informality of Text A and how it was marked by spoken language features such as latch-ons, overlaps, filled pauses and prosodic features such as raised intonation and emphatic stress. Successful responses also noted that the transcript ended with a more direct engagement with the viewers and their 'vote,' setting up interest for later in the programme.

Successful responses then explored the contrast with the expertise demonstrated in Text B through subject specific lexis ('butterflied' 'marinade' 'pimentón' 'umami') and made well-supported references to language choices which indicated the text's instructive and demonstrative purpose: for example, the use of precise measurements, time and manner adverbials and imperatives ('add a teaspoon of dried chilli flakes' 'let it rest for another fifteen minutes'). They were also able to explore the way the personal enthusiasm and expertise of Stein in Text B was demonstrated by his use of intensifiers and adjectives ('so tender' 'so juicy') and how it was a driver for audience engagement compared to the light-hearted interactional nature of Text A. Overall, the most successful candidates were able to explore distinctive language features in both texts, consistently support their points and accurately use both spoken and core linguistic terminology in their analysis.

Characteristics of a less successful response

Candidates who were less successful relied on spotting spoken language features which were of limited significance in these contexts (for example, micropauses). This feature-spotting in the less successful responses often included normal non-fluency features such as repetition or use of filled pauses without any meaningful reference to context. Less successful candidates often relied upon formulaic topics to comment upon, such as formality or the speaker's status. Often, these general, unsupported observations could form the bulk of a candidate's response. When less successful candidates did explore language use and apply terminology, this was often imprecise (misidentifying 'love' and 'hate' as nouns, for example, when in the context of Text A they are clearly used as verbs). In addition, there is a tendency to use linguistic theory in the weaker responses as a replacement for close language analysis. General references to Grice and genderlect were often not fruitful (particularly in relation to Text B with a single speaker, thereby making *conversational* maxims irrelevant). Finally, in the less successful responses the analysis of each text was not evenly balanced or there was very partial coverage of each transcript (missing, for example, the engagement with viewers in Text A or the recipe demonstration in Text B).

Areas for improvement Section A: key points for centres

- Use the question bullet points to aid structure and to focus responses.
- Avoid using formulaic topics (such as formality or speaker status) which may not be relevant to the question focus.
- Encourage selection of noteworthy features for discussion as the basis for comparison.
- Ensure that all points are supported with evidence from the text.
- Ensure all evidence from the text is analysed using relevant spoken language and/or core linguistic terminology.
- Encourage detailed language analysis, rather than over-use of (often irrelevant, generalised) language theory and theorists.
- Support the accurate use of a range of terms to assist detailed analysis at word, phrase and sentence level.

Section B: Written Language

The written text for Section B was an extract from a mission statement, taken from the website of Virgin Galactic, an American spaceflight company. In the contextual information candidates were also provided with a concise definition of a mission statement. The question bullet points asked candidates to explore how the text expressed the company's aims and values and promoted the company. Most candidates were able to connect very effectively with the topic of the mission statement and to engage meaningfully with its genre and overall purpose. Most were also able to identify features such as subject specific lexis (with examples) plus the use of features such as listing and emotive language (for example, powerful verbs such as 'grow' and 'evolve') to create a sense of a common human endeavour: to explore space. The accessible sub-headings combined with the professional formality and relative sophistication of the language of the text also allowed candidates to explore a wide range of linguistic features, providing plenty of scope for candidates of all abilities.

Characteristics of a successful response

The strongest responses were able to clearly identify and analyse the varied linguistic features of the text and connect them with the company's aims and values. They were able to comment accurately, for example, on the use of minor sentences and noun phrases which formed the sub-headings and discuss the key words such as 'good' (used here as a noun) along with other abstract nouns such as 'unity,' 'exploration' and 'inspiration' along with the present participle 'democratizing.' They were then able to comment in a supported way on the company's mission to widen access to space travel and to motivate a new generation of scientists.

The most successful responses were able to score highly on context and AO3 (which is more heavily weighted than AO1 and AO2) by noting that the primary driver for Virgin Galactic was financial (as evidenced by the noun phrases 'private company' and 'commercial service'). Again, the more successful responses were able to identify the underlying promotional quality of the mission statement with the use of subject-specific lexis and repetition of the adjective 'new' and/or determiner 'first' to build an image of the company as a technological market-leader and trailblazer. Some, more subtle and sophisticated readings, also noted the different uses of the first-person plural pronoun 'we': firstly, to refer the company in a corporate, collective sense and secondly, to build a sense of a shared human mission to wonder and explore ('as we raise our eyes to the night sky'). The most successful responses were therefore able to select meaningful points from across the text and deploy a range of linguistic terms accurately and purposefully. They were able to move confidently beyond basic word class identification and feature spotting to analyse language use at word, phrase and sentence level.

Characteristics of a less successful response

Candidates who were less successful produced responses which comprised mainly of paraphrasing and/or feature-spotting, often with inaccurate identification of basic word classes and little development of links to context, meaning or effects (AO3). There was, as in Section A, a tendency with some of the weaker responses to lose sight of the question focus and contextual information provided and to structure responses instead around formulaic topics (such as formality, status of the writer and/or broad discussion of audience). This then resulted in a largely generic response with little meaningful close analysis or precise language focus (limiting marks on AO1).

As in Section A, for some lower scoring responses, close analysis was replaced by generic application of theory and theorists (for example, overt/covert prestige, Fairclough and Grice). These sociolinguistic theories were referenced very generically and were not relevant or helpful when analysing this written text. Weaker responses that did feature some linguistic terminology, however, rarely moved beyond basic word classes and seldom included any sentence-level analysis. Less successful responses for Section B were often shorter than those for Section A. This did not allow for a full exploration of the text and was clearly another limiting factor.

Areas for improvement Section B: key points for centres

- Encourage careful attention to the specific question and bullet points to aid structuring of responses.
- Avoid paraphrasing without support.
- Ensure all supported points include relevant language analysis with accurate linguistic terminology.
- Encourage the selection of significant points in a text to avoid basic feature-spotting that has little reference to meaning or context.
- Advise careful evaluation of language devices and their effects to improve performance in AO3.
- Avoid over-use of irrelevant language theories and theorists as a substitute for close and detailed language analysis.
- Encourage the use of a range of terms to support precise analysis at word, phrase and sentence level.

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COMPONENT 2 – USING LANGUAGE

Overview of the Component

This component assesses all five Assessment Objectives:

- AO1: *Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression* (Section A Questions 1(a)-(c), 20 marks)
- AO2: *Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use* (Section A Question 1(d), 10 marks)
- AO3: *Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning* (Section A Question 1(d), 10 marks; Section B Question 2(c), 20 marks)
- AO4: *Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods* (Section A Question 1(d), 10 marks)
- AO5: *Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English in different ways* (Section B Question 2(a) or 2(b), 30 marks).

This year, the genre of greetings card messages was chosen for the Section A 'Investigating Data' corpus, which also provided the potential stimulus material for Section B 'Creative Writing', for which candidates were asked to choose between a short story extract or obituary writing. The overarching English Language skills of writing with precision (both analytically and creatively), applying linguistic knowledge and exploring meaning in context from a conceptual and issues-led perspective were tested.

In terms of general performance this year, candidates responded positively and creatively to the various demands of the component. There was pleasing engagement with the data, with many candidates applying clear knowledge of the different language levels for Questions 1(a)-(c), with some thoughtful discussion of the effects shaped by the techniques of the texts. Question 1(d) likewise produced some engaging and impressive responses, which were at their best when candidates were able to thread together the demands of all three AOs in order to shape productive close analysis with a clear conceptual awareness of how contexts of reception shaped language choices which was supported by economical quotation and precise linguistic knowledge. The writing tasks provided a wide range of interesting responses with varying levels of success; the strongest had accuracy and sustained control in common, which was what was noticeably lacking at the other end of the scale. The short story extract was by far the more popular option, while the obituary task had few takers, and only one that really showed a firm understanding of the genre. The compulsory commentary task (c) was the least successful element of the component in terms of achievement, with time management clearly being an issue for many candidates whose responses were undeveloped. Nevertheless, there were some that presented a pleasing level of detail and knowledge with some thoughtful evaluation of their own writing choices.

The demand of the paper was equivalent to that of previous series.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Investigating Data

- Q.1 (a)** Candidates were required to identify two different phonological techniques from the corpus of data, describing each one using accurate terminology and briefly explaining the effects created. There were a range of acceptable answers available, such as: patterns of alliteration, rhyme, onomatopoeia all shaping tone. Some candidates successfully identified puns through homophonic repetition, although without reference to this specific phonological feature, the feature of punning was deemed invalid for this question as it would be seen as a lexical/semantic point. Some candidates incorrectly identified non-standard capitalisation as a phonological, rather than a lexical/semantic, point, while some candidates provided points referring to two alliterative patterns (for example, sibilance/plosive); both these issues were referenced in last year's report.
- (b)** Candidates were required to identify four different lexical/semantic effects from the corpus, describing each using accurate terminology and briefly explaining the effects created. There was a wide variety of acceptable answers available, such as: word play, semantic fields and lexical sets, word classes shaping different meanings, figurative language, audience engagement, and various different types of typography. Occasionally, candidates did not receive marks for all points made as they were phonological (e.g. onomatopoeia) or grammatical (e.g. sentence mood) points. As was referenced in last year's report, candidates making a point about semantic fields could not be rewarded for also making a point about lexical sets as these features are too similar.
- (c)** Candidates were required to identify four different grammatical points from the corpus, describing each using accurate terminology and briefly explaining the effects created. There was plenty here for candidates to choose from, including grammatical patterning (including listing), different grammatical moods and sentence types, and the use of non-standard grammar through, for example, elliptical structures. There was more clarity here in comparison to 1(a) and 1(b) in terms of credit-worthy material for this question.

For all three of these short questions (which are awarded under AO1), the strongest responses used the 'point – evidence – explain' structure, where the 'point' contained the relevant term, the 'evidence' quoted only what was relevant to the 'point' and the 'explain' briefly explored the effect of the feature, often making reference to the impact of the language on the greeting card's intended recipient.

- (d) This question requires an extended response and tests the candidate's ability to analyse and evaluate the corpus of data for meaning in context, making links between them and developing analysis through the consideration of relevant concepts and issues. A range of terminology should be applied, and well-chosen and specific examples quoted from the corpus. Many candidates responded to this question effectively, considering concepts of genre, purpose, and audience to underpin analysis, while the contextual issue of the occasion for which the card was chosen was often explored with nuanced understanding in terms of how it affected the register of the message. The strongest responses ranged across selections from most of the corpus, quoting concisely, applying a wide range of terms from across the language levels, and finding subtle and frequent connections through differentiation between generic features of the genre and those that changed according to event and/or audience. Some candidates identified the audience not just in terms of the recipient of the card, but also the sender as a marketable audience for the greeting cards manufacturer. It is perfectly acceptable for candidates to recycle material from 1(a), 1(b), and 1(c) here, and indeed many did so effectively, but the strongest responses always went beyond this. This question was marked under AOs 1, 2, and 3, with 10 marks available for each. Specific linguistic terminology was awarded under AO3. Despite being mentioned in consecutive previous years' reports, the unhelpful word 'relatable' was again seen frequently: candidates are reminded that its use limits the scope of discussion of contextual resonance in analysis.

Section B: Creative and Critical Writing

For this section, candidates are required to respond to either 2(a) or 2(b), with (c) being compulsory.

Questions 2(a) and 2(b)

- Q.2 (a) & (b)** Both these questions required candidates to create a piece of original writing, of around 350 words, assessed under AO5. The word count is provided as a guide to ensure that sufficient detail is included, and time is managed effectively in order to allow sufficient time to complete the whole paper. As has always been the case for this optional route question, candidates are given the option of a fictional piece or a non-fiction genre-based piece of writing. They can use the Section A corpus as stimulus for their writing but must use ideas of their own. Engagement of the audience, control and accuracy, creativity and genre-awareness are all considered here, under AO3. This year, (a) was 'an extract from a short story set at a family celebration', which proved to be significantly more popular with candidates than (b) 'an obituary that summarises and celebrates the life of an imaginary or real person'.

The best responses to (a) immediately engaged the reader through some form of narrative hook, and they looked to characterise and set the scene vividly and economically, and sustained tense and narrative perspective throughout. They were accurate and precise and implicitly acknowledged the detail of the task that asked the candidate to 'write an *extract* from a short story' (my italics); attempts to write a complete short story were self-penalising as the level of detail required for a high band response was inevitably lacking. Other features of less successful responses were general inaccuracy (candidates should always proofread thoroughly), insecure narrative perspective and tense control, and over-complicated plotting (often driven by inauthentic dialogue) at the expense of detail. While the majority of candidates chose to write in the first person, centres might consider the benefits of exploring writing in the third person, given the possibilities this provides with regards to providing powerful detail.

Comparatively few candidates opted for (b) and only one genuinely fulfilled the criteria of its genre conventions, although this was done very effectively. The remainder of responses tended towards eulogy, rather than genuine obituary writing. Centres should be aware of digital resources related to this genre (among others) on the Eduqas subject website. The lack of genre awareness of most responses inevitably impacted negatively on marks awarded, particularly on the fourth bullet point on the assessment grid, which references 'form and structure linked...to content'. It is particularly the case that, for the non-fiction option, candidates must demonstrate a secure grasp of genre in order to achieve the highest marks, along with the more general requirements of sustained accuracy and fluency.

- Q.2 (c)** This question required candidates to analyse and evaluate their own writing choices in 2(a) or 2(b), applying terminology and quoting from their own work. This is assessed under AO3. The most successful candidates managed their time effectively in order to leave themselves enough time to address this question fully: it was disappointing to start marking what looked to be shaping up as insightful discussions that fizzled out to a stop after just a couple of paragraphs. The strongest commentaries quoted frequently and economically, applied a range of terms from across the language levels, and thoughtfully engaged with meaning within the context of its reception.

Less successful were responses that were too general, without evidence or the application of linguistic knowledge, or that pondered at length on intended audience and purpose without getting stuck into the exploration of meaning. It is pleasing that the interpretation of 'evaluation' as 'what I would have written if I had the chance to do it again' style responses are diminishing every year, however, although there were still a few. For this question, the concept of evaluation should be viewed through the lens of the selection of the most important features from the candidate's writing being presented for insightful analysis with confidence and clarity.

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 4292

Email: gceenglish@edugas.co.uk

Qualification webpage: https://www.edugas.co.uk/qualifications/english-language-as-a-level/#tab_keydocuments

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