



Pearson  
Edexcel

Moderators' Report  
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE  
In English Literature (9ET0)  
Non-examination assessment

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## **General Comments**

Thank you to all centres for their submissions for the 2022 series of NEA/coursework. After two very difficult years for students and teachers alike, it was both a relief and a worry to return to traditional assessment, but the standard of work was of an excellent standard and demonstrates real passion, commitment and hard work by all parties involved. This report will highlight areas of best practice and suggestions for those centres who perhaps did not quite support their students to fulfil their potential.

This was the first year of electronic submission of NEA via the Learner Work Transfer (LWT) portal and, for the most part, this was a smooth change in how work was submitted.

Overall, moderators commented on the high standard of work seen across the board, with some excellent folders submitted that were undergraduate-worthy in their written style and scope of academic enquiry. Many students had tackled new texts not seen before by moderators or developed new ideas and interpretations of texts that are not regularly seen in coursework study. This component is designed to foster independent study and it is always encouraging to see where students have been challenged with either their choice of text, their focus of enquiry or their wider reading. As ever, it can be a pleasure to read some of the work of students, and many moderators commented on how much they have learned from reading the work of such committed and hard-working individuals.

Most centres continue to use the free resources available from Pearson such as exemplar material when assessing work for this component. Moderators commented that it is helpful to see where centres standardise their assessments with this exemplar material. A few centres would benefit from paying more attention to the moderator reports, the material available online and making use of the Coursework Advisory Service for help with texts and titles. There is coursework marker training available in the Autumn term for those centres who might need a refresher in how to prepare students effectively and assess their work accurately for this component.

### **Text choices and themes**

This year saw a mixture of established coursework texts and titles and some newer choices and ideas. Centres approached this component in a number of ways:

- free choice of texts and titles
- free choice of texts, with suggested titles or areas of study
- one taught text and one other option from a prescribed list with suggested titles
- one taught text and free choice of second texts, with suggested titles or areas of study
- one taught text and free choice of second text and title
- two taught texts, with suggested titles.

Moderators noted how all approaches have different strengths and positive aspects, depending on the cohort, but that, in most instances, what set apart the very best essays was when the student's own personal engagement was stimulated, and they developed their own critical response through their wider reading and approach to the assignment. This component is designed for independence and self-directed study, and centres that embraced this concept and developed approaches that allowed for this enabled their students to thrive. The weakest responses seen were when there was little evidence of wider reading beyond online study guides, or where all students had the same bank of critical material and were not encouraged to develop their independence.

The most common texts seen were the perennial favourites: *The Great Gatsby*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *1984*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *The Bloody Chamber*, *The Color Purple*, *The Bell Jar*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *The Yellow Wallpaper*. However, students still write about these very well and they can elicit very strong personal engagement and original thought and enquiry when students are guided well by their teachers. The most common themes were dystopian societies, the American Dream, the presentation of women, the presentation of mental health and the Gothic.

Some newer texts and combinations seen this year included *The Waste Land* with *Brideshead Revisited*; Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* and *A Raisin in the Sun*; *A Farewell to Arms* and *Catch-22*; *Heart of Darkness* and *The Poisonwood Bible*; *The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale* and *The Road*. As ever, there is no magic bullet as to texts or combinations that will work well, but these all seemed to produce work of high academic endeavour and focused individual responses.

Moderators noted that some centres had encouraged students to focus on more diverse texts and writers for their coursework study which had positive results. One centre had students writing on South African fiction. There were examples of texts such as *Passing*, *Their Eyes were watching God* and *Rockets and Blue Lights*. There is an excellent resource on the qualification website on Contemporary Black British Literature by Dr Deirdre Osborne and a guide by Dr Emma Clark and Dr Andrew Green on pioneering women writers will be available in September as well.

Centres are reminded that young adult titles, and those traditional GCSE texts, are not advised to be used for the coursework component. This is for a number of reasons. Mostly, these texts are difficult to write about well in a way that will address all assessment objectives. Many of the texts studied at GCSE, even if not by the student themselves, have been judged to be suitable for readers in the 14–16 age range. At A Level, students have the opportunity to select texts which require a greater degree of maturity.

Examples of texts which students struggled to write about well include *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Animal Farm*, *The Lord of the Flies*, *The Woman in Black*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and *Jekyll and Hyde*. Whilst *Jekyll and Hyde* is a relative newcomer to the GCSE canon, the range of wider reading available for it is pitched to KS4 students, and this is not always acknowledged by the student who may find it hard to judge which level it is pitched at.

Some more popular fiction was seen this year - as well as a number of memoirs - such as *Twelve Years A Slave* and *Girl, Interrupted*. These can all suffer from the same issue of the student engaging with them as literary constructs and the availability of wider critical reading. Moderators noted how students would engage well with the ideas and storylines, but not focus on the writer's craft or the construction of the narrative.

Literary non-fiction is a permissible choice for a coursework text, but centres are reminded that the focus must be on the literary aspect. Examples that have worked well include *In Cold Blood*, *Into the Wild*, *A Room of One's Own* and *London: The Biography*. Some moderators found examples of students using texts more suitable for the study of sociology or history. Whilst these might be very useful for wider reading, they may not have the range of literary features needed to address AO2.

There were a few rubric infringements seen this year. Centres are reminded that texts in translation are not permissible in this component. This is also a comparison of two texts, and students should not be attempting to compare more than this in their assessments.

The majority of texts seen were novels or novellas. Some centres use combinations from Component 2 not studied by the centre such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* or *Wuthering Heights* which can be effective as there is a wealth of critical material available. Likewise, some students

chose plays from Component 1, including *Doctor Faustus* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. There were good examples of poetry used this year. Alongside the Chaucer and Eliot noted above, there was *The World's Wife* collection by Duffy, and the collected poems of Sujata Bhatt. Students were most successful when they were able to address the dramatic methods used by the playwrights or develop a critical and evaluative overview of the poetry collections.

### **Assignment Setting**

Moderators noted that the quality of the task setting is vital to the success of the student and the assignment. Whilst it is not necessary to flag up all assessment objectives in the title, moderators felt that, where this did happen, students were more likely to address them well in the assessment.

Choice of theme and the focus of enquiry had the most impact on the success for the student. In most cases these were entirely appropriate and developed well throughout the assignment. Sometimes they were too broad and resulted in a superficial approach, such as the 'presentation of relationships' or 'war, love and death'. Occasionally, moderators felt that tasks were too specific and did not allow for the student to present their own argument or ideas.

Some moderators noted a tendency for tasks which encouraged students to explore their texts as if the characters were real, rather than constructs. Titles with contemporary concerns such as 'toxic masculinity' or which looked at the mental health of characters ran the risk of students treating the situations and characters as if they were real.

The best titles allowed for meaningful comparisons to be made throughout that shed light on both texts. AO5, whilst supported by wider critical reading, is the assessment of alternative readings and interpretations. The best assignments and tasks allowed for students to develop and challenge their own critical position.

Some centres use critical comments and ask students to examine their texts 'in light of this statement'. This can be a helpful way to ensure students develop their own argument, but moderators did find this depended on the quality of the statement. Sometimes, the statements could be skewed towards one text, or have too much of a focus on context or wider critical reading, rather than the texts themselves.

Some assignments ask students to develop a value judgement on which writer is more successful in presenting a theme. Moderators noted that, on occasion, this left students developing quite specious arguments, rather than focusing on the text, or writing quite a personal opinion piece, which did not have the sophisticated academic prose style seen in the best responses.

### **Assignment marking and standardisation**

For the first series in three years, moderators were keen to point out that in most cases assignments were marked well and in line with the national standard across both assessment grids. In many instances, the use of annotation (either by hand or digitally) showed a clear understanding of the mark grids and of the demands of the component through the use of level descriptors and annotation throughout where students had addressed various Assessment Objectives.

Centres where marks were most likely to be agreed were able to demonstrate this understanding through extensive annotation, detailed summative comment and clear evidence of internal moderation and discussion. One moderator noted that a centre had written that a

mark may be changed if they received a 'tough moderator'. However, in this instance, it allowed the moderator to see the thoughtful and rigorous internal moderation process the centre had gone through, and the marks were agreed with.

Centres which were more likely to be out of line with the national standard were lacking in detailed annotation and a comment at the end, and instead only offered a shaded-in mark grid and a moderated tick and date, rather than any evidence of moderation. Likewise, centres that annotated AOs, but did not provide commentary on why marks and levels were awarded, beyond repeating descriptors of 'clear', 'critical' and 'sophisticated', were unlikely to be in line with the national standard.<sup>1</sup>

### **Assessment objectives**

The most accurate marking seen was where centres used the three divisions within the levels-based mark scheme and provided commentary on how they arrived at the 'best-fit' in terms of overall marks for the two mark-grids.

### **AO1-AO3**

In most instances, the AOs were appropriately rewarded for AOs 1–3. In the best responses, centres had rightfully rewarded sophisticated academic expression and the controlled crafting and development of a critical and evaluative argument (AO1). These responses were often very interesting to read, with critical understanding and independent reading alongside strong personal engagement and an illuminating argument. Where AO1 was over-rewarded, this generally was due to a lack of proof-reading. For example, titles not referenced correctly (*The Color Purple* proving tricky for many students), lack of apostrophes, lack of capital letters for characters' names and lengthy and unwieldy paragraphs. There were also instances of incorrect terminology (adverbs identified as nouns, for example) which were not picked up on by the centre. Some students could also lapse into colloquial, informal expression, which makes a mark in Level 4 or 5 very hard to justify.

Where students had identified good examples of the writer's craft such as the narrative frame, the characterisation, the tone of the writing and writers' lexical and syntactical choices, AO2 was usually rewarded accurately by centres. Where there was inaccurate marking evident, it was likely to be where students had focused on word-level analysis and a preponderance of linguistic terms, rather than literary concepts. The use of evaluative adverbs did not always signify a critical or evaluative understanding of the writer's craft. Higher level responses should take account of the form of the text. Moderators noted how some analysis of plays did not focus on dramatic methods, or of novels where the narrative and stylistic choices were not mentioned (such as writing on *A Clockwork Orange* without mentioning Nadsat).

Moderators noted that contextual factors were generally dealt with well this year, with most students able to integrate relevant historical, literary and political-social factors into the body of their argument. Some excellent responses were seen where this was used to develop interesting points of comparison and contrast between texts, with students able to look at the context of production and reception. Interesting points of contemporary context were seen in discussion of dystopian novels, such as gender inequality and the MeToo movement. Weaker responses were still likely to have bolt-on contextual paragraphs, often drawing on very generic sources (such as

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<sup>1</sup> JCQ has a detailed guide on the non-examination assessment - <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/> - including how to mark and moderate the work before submission.

Wikipedia). Centres are reminded that the AO3 mark should be based on the link between texts and contexts, with specific textual examples used to show how the writer has been influenced. Texts which are more biographical in nature (e.g. Tennessee Williams, Sylvia Plath) need to make sure that any points of biographical context are firmly rooted in the text. Students should also be mindful of when a text's setting differs from when it was written, e.g. *The Age of Innocence*, and be specific with their use of dating (rather than 'those times' etc.).

#### **AO4-AO5**

Moderators reported that connections were a strength of many responses, particularly those rewarded at the higher levels. These developed an integrated approach that provided genuine insight and illumination into the argument. There was a tendency for some students to write about texts singularly in alternate paragraphs, with a conclusion that drew points together. Whilst this is a valid approach, it is unlikely to be rewarded higher than Level 3 as points will not be integrated. Likewise, on occasion, topic sentences suggested points of comparison that did not follow in the paragraph, and there was an unbalanced approach to the two texts in the essay.

As noted above, AO5 is analysis and evaluation of alternative readings and interpretations. Wider critical reading helps to develop this analysis and evaluation, but it should feature as part of a wider critical argument. Some centres developed this very well with their students, with students producing arguments that are of undergraduate standard, with their understanding of the critical discourse around texts and where their own reading, understanding and interpretation fit into this dialogue. Comments that simply explain what critics have said about texts, sometimes with an opinion of agreement or disagreement, are not fulfilling the higher levels of this assessment objective. There was a tendency for some students to use generic critical readings, such as Marxist, post-colonial or sexual identity, which discussed aspects of the topic without being specific to the texts themselves. The weakest responses seen were when students provided very little evidence of any critical reading or understanding of alternative interpretations, beyond basic online study guides.

#### **Word counts and bibliography**

Centres are reminded that students should be including word counts at the end of their essays, which include quotations (but not titles or footnotes). The advisory word count of 2500-3000 words was generally adhered to by most centres, although moderators did comment that they had read some very long responses. Whilst this word count is 'advisory' and there is no penalty for exceeding (or not reaching) the limit, it is worth reiterating that this component is an excellent opportunity to prepare students for university assignments where word counts are often more strictly enforced.

Where students were significantly below the word count, it was unlikely that their argument was fully developed or in depth enough to achieve a level 3 or above. Likewise, where the essay was significantly over the upper limit, it is unlikely that the argument had the cogency or cohesion expected of higher-level responses. Moderators did comment that this was not always reflected in the summative comment or in the mark given by the centre.

It should also be noted that bibliographies and references are a requirement of the specification. Whilst there is no specified referencing system, centres are required to ensure students apply a recognised referencing system in their submission, such as Harvard etc.

## Malpractice and plagiarism

Moderators did comment on the number of malpractice cases seen this year which seem to have increased since the last submission. This generally took two forms: evidence of too much teacher intervention and support, and plagiarism from online sources.

For the former, centres are reminded to look at the JCQ guidance document on conducting non-examination assessment, and particular the stipulation that *Teachers must not provisionally assess work and then allow the candidate to revise it*. In a small number of cases, the annotations or the inclusion of drafts suggested that this had not been adhered to by centres.

Plagiarism is defined by the JCQ as the *'unacknowledged copying from or reproduction of published sources or incomplete referencing'*. Where moderators identified examples of plagiarism, it was mostly a wholesale copying of paragraphs from online sources without reference. In most instances, this was relatively easy to spot as there was inconsistent tone and quality within the body of the response. Centres are expected to pick up on this and should be aware of the quality and ability of their students when assessing the final piece.

## Administration

As this was the first year of the new online LWT portal, there were a number of issues with the administration of submissions, mostly minor and easily rectified.

Moderators did note that there were issues with how folders were scanned in and labelled. Centres are reminded to follow the Pearson guidance on file names. Moderators commented that the best centres had included everything together into one file, i.e. completed NEA authentication sheet (NAS) (including Texts Coverage Check), completed non-examination assessment piece, with marking and moderation evidenced on the piece in different colour pens.

Some centres had not scanned in work in the correct order, or had pages missing or upside down, all of which caused some considerable delay and difficulty for the moderator. Likewise, if work had not been scanned in colour, or if the assessor and internal moderator had used the same colour pen, it was difficult to identify where moderation was taking place.

Other issues that were identified were centres not including enough students in the sample, or not including the work of the highest- and lowest-scoring students (unless either were already in the sample).

While errors of addition, missing signatures or other administrative inaccuracies were by no means widespread this series, where they did occur, they were likely to cause delays to the moderation process.

Some useful advice to centres is:

- request students use at least font 12 and double-space their work
- Use the latest NAS and ensure that all student numbers and teacher/student signatures are appropriately completed before being uploaded to the portal
- ensure folders have the correct file name, are assembled and complete; students should number their pages to ensure essays are correctly collated
- text coverage checks need to be completed by all students, so the moderator can ensure the correct number and combination of texts have been covered for the qualification



- centre-assessors should ensure that marks for each set of AOs as well as the overall total out of 60 (ensuring correct adding-up of the two sets of AOs) are entered on the front cover, and that this tallies with the mark entered onto the system
- check the essay title and texts on the NEA authentication sheet matches the task actually undertaken by the student.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the majority of centres, teachers and students provided moderators with evidence of a wide variety of interesting work, produced to a very high standard after what has been a very difficult few years. As one moderator put it, they now have their summer reading list compiled. Thank you to everyone involved in making this moderation series both successful and enjoyable. The team look forward to reading coursework submissions in 2023.