

# English Literature

Advanced GCE A2 7828

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3828

## Report on the Units

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**January 2007**

**3828/7828/MS/R/07J**

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications  
PO Box 5050  
Annesley  
NOTTINGHAM  
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622  
Facsimile: 0870 870 6621  
E-mail: [publications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:publications@ocr.org.uk)

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## **Chief Examiner's Report**

A review of the reports from papers in the specification indicates that Examiners saw a wide range of achievement among candidates in the January session. In the reports that follow a number of features emerge, in terms of both strengths and areas of possible improvement, that are applicable across all Units and should provide food for thought, for both teachers and candidates.

There was a wide range of attainment in the responses: impressively fluent scripts at the upper end, showing a detailed knowledge of the relevant play, interesting argument and perceptive critical insight.

- A pleasing proportion of answers focused well on language, form and structure, supported by relevant contextualisation and lucid expression. Ability to select specific textual references, wider contextual detail and recurrent issues/concerns showed improvement.
- A significant number of answers showed evidence of good teaching of Assessment Objective 5, and most candidates related their knowledge of historical/literary context effectively to the question they were answering.
- Increasingly, as was observed in the June 2006 report, candidates were able to support their views with very close reference to the text, and with detailed evidence of the effects of language (AO3). Generalisation without evidence was a characteristic of weaker answers, and is to be avoided.
- There was also a greater evidence of awareness of literary critics and their views. In the great majority of answers critical opinions were introduced relevantly with a slightly greater degree of confidence than seen in earlier sessions.
- There were some very well prepared candidates, who produced confident and articulate answers. There were also some whose work contained many lapses in effective written English, who may not have been ready for the demands of the examination.
- A majority of scripts showed good awareness of literary terminology, with some quite technical on form and metre. As ever, however, a number of candidates identified technical devices without commenting fully on their effects.
- Less secure candidates, who often tend to be somewhat dogmatic in their interpretation of critical views, would do well to see critical comments as suggesting possibilities and as a sort of exploration: the modal form – ‘could’ ‘might’ and ‘perhaps’ - can be very useful here.
- In the lower bands there was again a tendency to narrate without specific question focus, and candidates would do well to bear in mind the adage, ‘Don’t tell, show’.
- Assertion rather than analysis was apparent in lower band responses.
- Some candidates appeared to lack detailed knowledge of the texts and could not cite detailed evidence (which need not equate with quotation) to justify their arguments ... many did not answer in response to the question's precise wording. There was a tendency for some candidates to write generalised AO5 exposition – whether historical, sociological, psychological – at the expense of literary analysis.

Nonetheless, examiners were encouraged by evident enthusiasm, for the subject and the texts studied, in most of the scripts submitted.

## 2707/01 DRAMA: SHAKESPEARE (CLOSED TEXT)

### General Comments

There was a wide range of attainment in the responses to this question paper, with a minority of impressively fluent scripts at the upper end, showing a detailed knowledge of the relevant play, interesting argument and perceptive critical insight.

There was evidence that some candidates were insufficiently prepared for the examination. Examiners encountered examples of basic and obvious thought, limited textual and historical knowledge, clumsy or immature style, and assertion rather than analysis. In some cases there was little evidence of progression beyond GCSE. This was shown particularly in two respects: failure to focus effectively in Section A on Shakespeare's use of language, and the tendency to make vague and general statements about the social and political contexts of the plays, including distorted ideas of Elizabethan sexual morals and conventions, and simplistic statements about perceived comment on colonialism in *The Tempest*.

On the positive side, the general quality of written communication showed improvement. It was rare to encounter answers with unclear expression and the standard of spelling and handwriting seemed rather better than in previous sessions. Rubric errors, perhaps because the pattern of the paper is now so well established, were very rare, as were examples of candidates failing to complete the question paper. Less successful students had a set of ideas and approaches with which to frame answers and more successful candidates were able to develop this and work in a less stereotyped, more polished and lively way.

In this session most answers were on *The Tempest* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, with very few on *Henry IV (Part 2)* or *As You Like It*.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### *Henry IV (Part 2)*

Question 1 presented an encounter in Act 1 Scene 2 between Falstaff and the Lord Chief Justice and asked for discussion of their relationship. Generally the contrast between the two characters was well appreciated but with rather little response to their language. There was some misunderstanding: for example several candidates thought that the Lord Chief Justice was attacking Falstaff for having done nothing at Shrewsbury. A general strength was the ability to relate the passage to the play (or the tetralogy) as a whole including a wider view of the dealings between the two characters and the role of the law.

Question 5(a) was about fathers and sons, and the answers were creditably wide ranging. The main areas discussed were the King's relationship with Hal and the role of Falstaff. "In the same way that the King usurped power from Richard, Falstaff tries to usurp the King's position as a father." Several writers saw fathers as destroyers: Henry IV as usurper for instance, or Northumberland unworthily surviving the Hotspur whose death he partly caused.

Question 5(b) was concerned with disease as a central theme in the play and answers were generally relevant and competently organised. The discussion of disease, physical, mental or moral, mainly concerned the King. Cures were seen to be extreme but necessary: Henry V casting off Falstaff; John of Lancaster tricking the rebels at Galtree. Many other examples of disease were used however, including the moral sickness of England or even Bardolph's nose, "a constant reminder of the state of the country".

On the whole candidates responded well to this play and its themes. It seemed to have been enjoyed and appreciated by candidates.

### ***As You Like It***

Question 2, the passage from Act 1, Scene 1 in which Oliver and Charles discuss the wrestling match with Orlando, required a consideration of the relationship between the brothers. Many candidates did this well. Most commented on Oliver's description of Orlando to Charles, linked the relationship of the two brothers to that between the dukes, and contrasted it with that between Rosalind and Celia. A few found signs of Oliver's future conversion in his truthful estimate of Orlando once Charles has gone.

Setting the passage in context, one answer perceptively noted how the opening scenes of the play "mix comedy with calamity". The tone of the passage, including Charles's respectfulness towards Oliver, was well understood but it was not very common to find examples of detailed analysis of language and imagery.

In Question 6(a) answers needed to debate whether *As You Like It* was a cold and harsh play. Most candidates responded positively. At a simple level, "even though they have rough weather and starvation to deal with in the forest, people are still falling in love and singing and dancing." Put a little more subtly, "it may be debatable whether Duke Senior really 'fleets the time carelessly' but there is still much joy and joviality at his court." Plenty of answers suggested that, while life in the rural setting was less harsh than at court, problems remained in the country. For numerous candidates the remaining problems were mainly concerned with the course of true love. Others focused on the economic plight of Corin or on Jaques as an exponent of the "harsh and cold" view in the Seven Ages speech and elsewhere.

Some answers missed the humour of the play: Touchstone, for example, featured almost entirely as a villainous exploiter of the ill-educated Audrey (though clearly this is one way of looking at their relationship).

Some attempted to analyse the play in potentially interesting theoretical ways, with the exploited countryfolk or finally married-off women as victims of a harsh world. Unfortunately they provided little textual evidence to support such ideas. General comments like "feminists would be very angry about this" commonly occurred.

In Question 6(b) about courtship there were some effective answers although the structure of the essays rarely transcended a competent list of couples with predictable comments on each. Some of the weaker answers resorted to summary and storytelling, a limitation evident in all sections of the paper. Unfortunately a few answers mistook 'courtship' for 'courtiership' and wrote about the court, although the reference to 'love' in the second bullet point should have removed any ambiguity.

### ***Antony and Cleopatra***

The passage for Question 3 showed the confrontation between Antony and Caesar in Act 2, Scene 2 and asked for a view of the relationship between them. Successful responses usually did justice to the shifting political and psychological balance in their dealings with each other. Antony was found variously curt, jocular, evasive and, most often, defensive: "he is forced backwards, parrying Caesar's accusations with less success each time." Caesar was perceived as cold and calculating or, more rarely, petrified of appearing foolish: "I must be laughed at..." Some noted that Cleopatra, though not explicitly mentioned, was the main bone of contention between them.

Many candidates, including some who wrote well about the psychology or tactics of the encounter, seemed to understand only in a general sense what the characters were saying. Phrases were taken out of context and misinterpreted, especially "I must be laughed at", often read as a statement that Caesar is laughed at. Less surprisingly, numerous answers showed ignorance of the meaning of "state" and "practice" in the passage.

## *Report on the Units taken in January 2007*

Another problem was that candidates wrote long accounts of the context of the scene (or even the play) before discussing the passage itself. The instruction "comment on what the passage suggests about Caesar's effect on Antony in the play as a whole" was frequently interpreted as "write an account of Caesar's effect on Antony elsewhere in the play, ignoring the passage." Long introductions and long accounts of Actium sometimes left little space for detailed analysis of the text.

The more popular of the two essay questions on this play was 7(a) on Cleopatra. There were many pre-packaged and generalised character portrayals some of which misjudged the appropriate critical tone entirely. The Egyptian Queen was described as 'well sexy' in one essay and 'always horny' in another. The specific terms of the question were addressed in better answers and the best responses offered subtle distinctions between "self indulgent" and "flawed". Clearly this is one character who continues to fascinate and inspire some candidates. The much quoted barge speech and the death sequence in the monument provided material for numerous essays. The overwhelming conclusion was that Cleopatra is indeed self indulgent and flawed but that these failings are more than made up for by her more positive qualities. The comparison with Octavia often allowed this idea to be advanced convincingly.

On Question 7(b) a relatively small number of candidates wrote about dishonour although some of the essays appeared to be reproducing prepared material on honour rather than its opposite. More straightforward answers offered appropriate lists of characters and events related to the theme but did not synthesise these into a sophisticated argument. Better answers were able to weave in consideration of more complex matters such as the respective world views of Egyptians and Romans. Related ideas about selfishness, patriotism, loyalty and responsibility were handled with care by a number of highly proficient candidates. Enobarbus's changing conception of honour and dishonour was interestingly explored. The conclusion of the majority was that any dishonour exhibited by the lovers throughout the play was made up for by the noble actions surrounding the circumstances of their deaths.

### ***The Tempest***

In Question 4 the passage was from Act 2, Scene 1, in which the nobles speak to Alonso about the shipwreck and the loss of his children. The task was to give a view of Alonso and his followers. Examiners saw good, balanced answers here. Many respondents wrote well on Gonzalo's well meaning attempts to distract Alonso. Some were convincing about his comments on the freshness of their garments, suggesting that he is so much less blind than the other courtiers, although a surprising number of answers did not link this phenomenon to the actions of Prospero. Francisco's vigorous account of Ferdinand, full of verbs of motion, was generally appreciated. Other areas considered included the flippancy of Sebastian and Antonio and Antonio's dangerous quietness. The arguable breakdown of social order in the extract was seen as an effect of Prospero's power.

Question 8(a) asked how far candidates saw freedom as a central concern of *The Tempest*. Although this seemed likely to produce narrative (such as the stories of Caliban and Ariel), even weaker responses saw that the theme emerges in a large number of contexts in the play. The topic evoked a particularly wide range of ideas and comments including reference to Montaigne, Rousseau and others. The "off stage Lord Chief Justice" events (involving Sycorax for example) were also cited to good effect in argument at times, as were Prospero's victims on the island. The very best answers pointed with a final flourish to Prospero's own release at the end of the play. One candidate argued that the audience too were imprisoned in the theatre.

In Question 8(b) the task concerned the role and significance of Miranda. Most answers were relatively straightforward. Her relationships with Prospero and Ferdinand were compared and contrasted; her defiance of her father's instructions when meeting the Prince was seen as a new independence and a new stage of her life. Her understandably hostile attitude towards Caliban was seized upon as a welcome relief from her usual innocence and compassion. There was



*Report on the Units taken in January 2007*

some tendency just to list such qualities rather than developing a discussion. Feminist responses to her position as the sole female on the island were often well articulated and supported.

## 2708 Poetry and Prose

### General Comments

There were many very well prepared candidates, who produced confident and articulate answers. There were also some whose work contained many lapses in effective written English, who may not have been fully prepared for the demands of the examination.

Major discriminating factors, as usual, were (a) focus on the opportunities of the question and (b) addressing the bullet points, and therefore the Assessment Objectives. Most candidates identified extracts clearly, but there was again a number of candidates who did not refer to the second bullet point in their responses to (a)-type questions, and some who responded to the (b)-type question with a discursive response to the whole text; responses to both types of question must be grounded in detailed discussion of the passage(s) set or selected by the candidate.

There seemed to be more focused discussion of the effects of verse form in this session. Some candidates spent too much time discussing other works by the same author: this came up in the Austen answers in particular. A pleasing proportion of answers focused well on language, form and structure, supported by relevant contextualisation and lucid expression. Ability to select specific textual references, wider contextual detail and recurrent issues/concerns certainly showed improvement. A significant number of answers showed evidence of good teaching of AO5, and most candidates related their knowledge of historical/literary context effectively to the question they were answering.

There was also a greater awareness of literary critics and their views. In the great majority of answers critical opinions were introduced relevantly with a slightly greater degree of confidence than seen in earlier sessions. A majority of scripts showed good awareness of literary terminology, with some becoming quite technical on form and metre. As ever, however, a number of candidates identified technical devices without commenting fully on their *effects*.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### SECTION A

##### 1 Chaucer

There was no evidence that the error in Question 1(b), attributing to Aurelius Arveragus's declaration of the significance of "trouthe" had disadvantaged candidates. All scripts with answers on Chaucer were checked by a senior examiner.

In the event, both options were about equally selected. Question 1(a) was well tackled by many candidates, who explored various kinds of significance and effects in reading the set passage. Almost all noted the narrative import of this description, preparing for Dorigen's encounter with Aurelius, and found a plenty of effects of the writing to comment on: contrast with the despondency of the previous episode, Dorigen's complaint about the "rokkes blake", God's "unreasonable" handiwork, though most answers noted the irony that the actual threat to her security comes in the location crafted by "mannes hand", the springtime playing place, the ostensible "verray paradis"; the imagery attached to the garden was enthusiastically explored, with thoughtful comment on rhyming patterns (eg shoures/floures, prys/paradis, siknesse/distresse, pleasaunce/daunce), and some well directed investigation of the analogy with the garden of Eden, the conventional use of the garden as location, and the connotations of May in courtly love romance, and in the context of the Tale (Aurelius was perceived as "fressher and jollier ... than is the month of May").

On Question 1(b), similarly, there were a number of impressive answers, showing awareness of the meaning and significance of the concept of "trouthe" in the Tale, and its place in the system of values designated by the term "gentillesse"; many of these answers were fully grounded in discussion of effects of the writing of appropriately selected passages. A few answers noted the suggestion in Arveragus's diction that "trouthe" is the "hyeste thing" for man to keep, perhaps not for *woman* ... Some responses to both questions usefully managed to explore the Franklin's status amongst the Tale-tellers as an important aspect of context that led to discerning independent judgements.

## 2 Shakespeare

Question 2(a) was the more popular option, though in some centres all answers were on question 2(b). Candidates noted the emphasis in Sonnet CXVI on "marriage of true minds" (identified in different ways as Platonic in some answers), opening up comparison with other sonnets exploring physical or discordant aspects of the experience of love. Here the various dimensions of reference (first quatrain, personal; second, cosmic; third, temporal) were noted in answers directly considering Shakespeare's imagery and "handling of the sonnet form", and the element of doubt in the final couplet again offers comparison with other sonnets where the couplet confirms, rather than questions, earlier argument.

On question 2(b) many answers stayed with Sonnet CXXVII, offering thoughtful discussion unravelling the often complex expression, and exploring the poem's twin concerns with changing concepts of what constitutes beauty's successive ("... now is black beauty's successive heir"), and the physical and moral distinction between actual and artificial beauty (the line "Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd face" provided material for a good deal of thematic and technical discussion). Answers which responded seriously to bullet point 2 cited a range of sonnets offering grounds for comparison and/or contrast.

## 3 Byron

Relatively few answers were submitted on Byron, few of them on the part (b) option. There were several pleasing analyses of 'Fare Thee Well' and the effects of its melodramatic language, with a minority going further and, drawing on biographical knowledge, suggesting that Byron doesn't mean a word of it and is furious with his wife, using his poem to punish her by making her feel guilty. Effective comparisons were made with *Don Juan* and 'Sonnet on Chillon' and with Greek independence (a cause *really* worth fighting for). There was some interesting discussion of rhythmic and rhyming patterns (eg ironic dissonance of double rhymes such as "defaced me/embraced me"), and the dislocating effects of the frequent dashes ("eg "All my hopes – where're thou guest -/ Wither – yet with thee they go").

Among the few answers on Question 3(b) there was some impressive discussion of Byron's satirical targets, methods and effects, sensitive to the tonal variations suggested by the lead quotation in the question, citing mainly the extracts from *Don Juan* and 'Beppo ...'; some of these noted that, as well as *malice* and *humour*, *melancholy* is another aspect much in evidence in this selection of Byron's work, particularly in the *Childe Harold* extracts.

## 4 Browning

Question 4(b) was the more popular option. On 'Love Among the Ruins' (Question 4(a)), some answers saw the final line, "Love is best", as unequivocally affirming the value of (here, explicitly physical) love as compensation for/ refuge from the erosions of time, history and the natural world. Others, noting the preponderant emphasis on change and decay in the poem ("only nine lines on love!"), read it as an ironic warning that all things fade and decay: some lively answers

wondered if the "anticipated meeting" would turn out quite as the speaker hopes. Answers were generally alert to the poem's portentous rhetoric, though only a few explored the effects of the verse form, lines alternately expansive/ constricted putting particular emphasis on the rhyme. Bullet point 2 was often neglected, even in otherwise impressive answers.

On Question 4(b), in answers exploring varieties of "frustration" and "fulfilment", most commonly cited poems were 'Andrea del Sarto' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi', where "fulfilment" was seen in terms of artistic achievement (Lippi described as "a painter prevented from painting in a manner that fully expresses his potential"); in the second rank were 'My Last Duchess' (the Duke "frustrated" by his Duchess's lack of gratitude and indecorous behaviour) and 'Porphyria's Lover'; 'The Bishop Orders His Tomb ...' and 'Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister' were also explored. Almost no answers dealt with poems like 'Any Wife to Any Husband', 'Two in the Campagna', or 'Love Among the Ruins' – poems whose speakers are just as much "characters" as those presented in historically distant settings.

## **5 Eliot**

Question 5(b) was the more popular option. 'The Hollow Men' (Question 5(a)) generated some lively responses, exploring the nihilistic tone and viewpoint (often related to postwar psychological and cultural conditions) and discussing effects of language/imagery (eg aridity, cactus, scarecrow, "not with a bang but a whimper"), with some interesting comment on the mockery of prayer and the paradoxes of eg "shape without form/ shade without colour". Bullet point 2 was often well served in the fullest answers, particularly with references to appropriate passages of *The Waste Land*.

On Question 5(b), candidates noted the dual applications of the question's lead quotation: Eliot invoking a disjointed world inhabited by dislocated characters, in poetry which is itself fragmented; most answers exploring these issues were well-stocked, many were substantial, and some were very impressive. While some answers turned into lists, others selected and explored relevant passages critically and sensitively, with range of reference from eg 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' to parts of *The Waste Land*, some alert to continuities as well as fragmentation in the writing.

## **6 Thomas**

The options were about equally popular. 'The Other' (Question 6(a)) was often presented as a quintessential Thomas poem in tone and concerns (instability of identity, melancholy, inconclusive searching of memory/ experience - "unseen moving goal") and poetic style (intimate first person narrative, conversational diction and rhythm, prevalence of enjambement, evasiveness of definition – "I quite forgot what I could forget ..."). Linear answers on this poem tended to become paraphrase; answers that explored language and imagery more systematically found plenty to discuss, with fruitful references to a range of other poems (eg 'Words', 'Melancholy', 'Lights Out').

On Question 6(b) answers that stayed with 'Health' found abundant causes for regret – characteristically regretting what he could not do even if he were restored to the health he regrets losing. Other poems, expressing regret in various ways, often cited were 'Old Man' (very popular and very fruitful), 'Rain', 'And You Helen', 'The Glory' ("I cannot bite the day to the core"), and – on a larger arena of regret – 'As the Team's Head Brass'. On both options, sensitive development of opinions and use of details from Thomas' life helped to build informed responses.

## **7 Harrison**

The options were about equally popular. Most candidates had something substantial to say about the relationship between Harrison's poems and biographical/cultural contexts, and on Question 7(a) the MacNeice epigraph offered a helpful way into the poem 'North', pointing towards nostalgia for domestic and cultural, as well as geographical, experience. Some recognised that the room was a self-imposed prison and explored his tensions in leaving his background. There was some thoughtful discussion of implications of the wind symbolism in this poem, the dangerous suggestiveness of the ship imagery and persistently violent language. The most interesting answers presented the poem as about the "years of struggle ... elbow grease, / deep thought, long practice and much sweat" involved in writing poetry, yielding "some inkling of an inner peace" from inner and outward turbulence ("a state/ where there's no gravity to hold the world"); this approach drew in a range of other poems (eg 'Durham', 'Book Ends', 'Allotments', v.) to explore Harrison's views on the functions and status of poetry.

Similar issues were raised in answers to Question 7(b), considering Harrison's overtly political writing (eg 'National Trust', 'Working', 'Durham' and v.) and the prejudices latent in his upbringing (eg his father's philistine attitudes to education and books) and the cultural community he feels glad to have escaped but for which he feels regret at having lost.

## **8 Stevenson**

The options were about equally popular. Good answers to Question 8(a) discussed the layers of meaning in 'False Flower', and the shifts in perspective from the personal love gift, the difficulties of communication and intricacies of the relationship between lovers, to the persona's moral concerns about working conditions in the third world. The analysis of the effects of similes was really enjoyable to read and many chose to follow up stylistic features such as patterns of imagery in other Stevenson poems, in response to bullet point 2 (eg the motif of the moon which appears throughout her poetry).

Answers on Question 8(b) found memory a rich topic: various kinds of memory and ways of remembering were explored in a wide range of poems: 'Innocence and Experience', 'The White Room' and 'The Miracle of CAMPO 60', linked by memories of war from contrasting perspectives; 'Going Back' and 'Arioso Dolente' were explored on the level of personal memory (informed by biographical knowledge); the light humorous tone, vivid language and imagery of 'Freeing Lizzie' provoked a good deal of engaged and enthusiastic writing.

## **SECTION B**

### **9 Austen**

On Question 9(a), the more popular option, candidates found plenty to say about the set passage, rich in narrative significance (inaugurating the novel's final phase), in Austenian indirect irony (eg " ... such as becomes a man of consequence ... Here were funds of enjoyment! ... The worst of Bath was the number of plain women ... the effect which a man of decent appearance provoked") and in character revelation: Sir Walter's narrow-mindedness and vanity, his obsession with looks, the snobbery he shares with Elizabeth, their common disregard for Anne ("no inclination to listen to her"), and their newly aroused interest in Mr Elliot, of whom Anne is proleptically deeply suspicious. Answers attending to the detail of the writing were alert to the implication of "a very good house in Camden Place" (undermined by his omission to admit that the location was not the best in Bath), the ironic repetition of the word "sensible", the warning latent in Mrs Clay's interest in Mr Elliot, the change of tone when Anne's point of view is adopted (eg "... she must sigh that her father should feel no degradation in his change ...").

Question 9(a) was, often, similarly well addressed. Answers explored different ways of defining a good marriage: on the one hand marriage seen in terms of social/financial status (eg Lady Russell's reasons for dissuading Anne from marrying Wentworth, and Mary's assessment of their actual marriage in the final chapter); on the other, marriage as emotional bonding (eg in different ways the Crofts, the Harvilles). There was some interesting discussion of the symbolic value of Anne's and Wentworth's marriage: as well as emotionally and narratively appropriate, it brings together representatives of classes changing both in their own terms and in their relations with each other. As ever in this section of the paper, the most satisfactory answers were fully grounded in critical discussion of appropriately selected passages.

## 10 Bronte

The options were about equally popular. The narrative significance of the passage, presenting Jane with choice that concentrates all the novel's, and her own, major concerns, was well noted. Bullet point 2 was neatly addressed in many answers that were constructed around contrasts between Rivers and Rochester, each flawed and demanding in different ways, and their differing relationships with Jane ("she loved Rochester but couldn't live with him. Rivers says it's her duty to go with him but she can't because it would kill her ..."); the fullest answers developed close analysis of St John's characterisation and the pattern of imagery associated with him (ice/ cold/ marble), contrasting with the passionate character of Rochester and the pattern of fire imagery associated with both him and Jane (even here she feels "a slow fire of indignation"). A few answers explored Bronte's narrative methods: eg the sense of direct engagement with her consciousness suggested by the passionate, melodramatic rhetoric (eg "if I were his wife, this good man, pure as the deep sunless source, could soon kill me, without drawing from my veins a single drop of blood, or receiving on his own crystal conscience the faintest stain of crime"); also worthy of note, as frequently elsewhere Jane as narrator appeals (extra-diegetically) to the reader's experience ("Reader, do you know as I do ... ") and even asks the reader to validate her moral position ("Now I never had, as the reader knows, either given any formal promises ...").

Question 10(b) was well tackled by many candidates. Bertha's role in the narrative was invariably noted ("She's the reason that keeps them apart but she's also responsible for bringing them together... "), as were various other kinds of significance. Her embodiment of Gothic elements attracted some interesting comment. Her symbolic relation to Jane, as a kind of *alter ego*, was really fruitfully explored, often invoking the red room episode as a symmetrical structural feature: she was often presented as representing the passionate qualities of Jane's nature, which some candidates thought needed to be controlled, while others argued they should be more fully expressed; colonial issues were sometimes raised by candidates many of whom were helpfully familiar with *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The episodes of her burning the veil and attacking her brother were the most frequently cited, often explored with critical relish and strong response to bullet point 2.

## 11 Gaskell

Again there were few answers on this text; Question 11(b) was the more popular. In answers on 11(a) there was some acknowledgement of the novel's dual generic nature – the concerns of the social novel giving way to the suspense mode of romantic fiction. Apart from the chapter's contribution to this narrative structure, among the elements noted in the passage were: Mary's unease at being away from her home *milieu* for the first time; the novelty of rail transport; the characteristic representation of language variation between members of different classes; the suggestion that Liverpool folk are less spontaneously generous than Mancunians.

On Question 11(b), episodes most frequently cited were the descriptions of the living conditions of the lower classes (eg Chapter 6), contrasting with the lives of the masters and their families,

underlining "the seeming injustice of the inequalities of fortune": here the vividness of Gaskell's writing was generally acknowledged, together with the narratorial interventions to explain working class conditions and consciousness to the bourgeois reader of her novel (eg "... the poor are fatalists with regard to infection, and well for them it is so, for in their crowded dwellings no invalid can be isolated").

## 12 Stoker

Question 12(a) was the more popular option. The narrative significance of this passage was generally clearly recognised, as Dracula the erstwhile hunter becomes the hunted, pursued by the group of men now held together by courageous resolve, understanding of the issues, and "the sense of companionship". Many answers noted that Dracula is always a figure in someone else's narrative, though here his address is particularly powerful and significant, announcing his plan to invade the western world at its weakest point: "Your girls that you love are mine already". There was some vigorous discussion of the effects of the writing: the animal imagery, expressing Dracula's special ferocity and aristocratic, "lion-like disdain"; Quincey's positioning as the leader of the hunting party, its members now differentiated by language, disposition and behaviour; Van Helsing's emphasis on the value of knowledge ("We have learnt something"); the "mighty power" of the crucifix at the moment when the forces of good and evil confront each other; the presentation of "poor, poor, dear Madam Mina" as the terrain of the struggle, "sweet, sweet, good, good woman" who "with all her goodness and purity and faith was outcast from God". Answers that considered the conclusion of the passage noted Mina's Christian emphasis on pity and redemption. A number of answers noted the effect of first person narrative, pointing out that Dr Seward the scientist is now made aware of the power of the crucifix and the value of Van Helsing's arcane knowledge.

Answers on Question 12(b), almost entirely choosing passages from Harker's account of his eastern experience, also noted the value of representing the alien world ("the centre of some imaginative whirlpool") from his detached, inquisitive, naïve, patronising ("The women looked pretty, except when you got near them ..."), ostensibly organised ("*Mem.*, get recipe for this also ..."), essentially *Victorian* perspective, semi-informed by books and maps. His increasingly ominous journey and his talks with the Count were interestingly explored; the most popular episode, however, was his exposure to the three vampire women, which generated some sharp critical writing. Some discerning answers explored ways in which the text inflects features of the gothic genre.

## 13 Conrad

Options about equally popular, with some enthusiastic responses on each (An examiner writes, "This text is a favourite with real enthusiasts.") On Question 13(a) answers explored the presentation of the harlequin figure (sometimes compared with the accountant, to suggest that the reminders of the civilised world are progressively diminishing) – "an insoluble problem" in his own right, but also in his contribution to the increasingly violent and contradictory views of Kurtz's nature ("You can't judge Mr Kurtz as you would an ordinary man..") and activities that Marlow collects as he proceeds up the river. Marlow describes the heads on stakes as "symbolic", and candidates were interested to explore what they might be taken to symbolise: some thought the devastating effect of European power in Africa, some thought the demoralising effect of Africa on Europeans, some argued for both readings. The presentation of the setting also attracted thoughtful discussion, "with their air of hidden knowledge, of patient expectation, of unapproachable silence".

On 13(b) various kinds of "discovery" were identified, sometimes several in the single answer: geographical; biographical (piecing together what Kurtz was like and what he was doing); psychological (as the doctor says in Brussels, "the changes are inside", and some candidates wondered if Marlow came home sane, or at least radically disturbed). Some answers emphasised Marlow's "discovery" of the reality of European activities – the rapacious,

destructive hunt for ivory, the violent exploitation and de-humanisation of Africans – veiled by the ideology of imperialism, the "great and saving illusion" that he allows the Intended to retain at the end.

#### 14 Forster

The passage set in Question 14(a) the more popular option, was seen as crucial: for the novel's narrative (Mrs Moore's casual suggestion to Aziz not to "let so many people come with you this time" sets the scene for whatever happens to Adela in the cave); and for Mrs Moore herself with her realisation that "Everything exists, nothing has value". Some answers pointed out the contrast with Godbole's position that everything has value – including the wasp. There was some fascinating discussion of the meaning of the reductive, nihilistic echo that Mrs Moore can't forget and its effect - her loss of faith in life as well as "poor little talkative Christianity". Her frightening epiphany was seen in some answers as a symbolic realisation for the reader that the British can never understand the real India.

On Question 14(b), the episode most frequently selected was the bridge party, usually to illustrate straightforwardly the attitudes and behaviour of the women that Adela rejects as models for her own future development. Some useful comment on Adela's role in the novel as enquiring observer ("the reader would like to see 'the real India', too") and on the way she actually changes; her and Mrs Moore's relationships with Aziz sometimes cited as potentially fruitful, in the event disastrous. Some answers distinguished between Adela/Mrs Moore and Mrs Turton/Mrs Callendar using Forster's own categories of "round" and "flat" characters (in *Aspects of the Novel* he argues that a successful novel can include both types): in some of these answers this approach led to some discussion.

#### 15 Barnes

This was very much a minority choice text. Question 15(a) was the more popular option among very few responses, some answers identified recurrent textual concerns: the irresistible implication of individual experience into historical forces (Franklin has to explain to the passengers "How they are mixed up in history"); ways in which personal survival may be negotiated, and at what cost "survival of the fittest" may be secured; the arbitrariness of "catastrophe"; the philosophical concern to distinguish between self-interest and altruism, when in actual circumstances one may just as easily be taken for the other; the relation/difference/continuity between animals and human beings ("... he was not a monkey").

Answers on Question 15(b) invariably considered the wreck of the *Medusa* as a case study in different media, with some promising discussion of relations between actual experience and aesthetic representation.

#### 16 Carver

On Question 16(a), the more popular option, there was some finely detailed analysis of the writing of the passage, alert to implication (Bill "trying on someone else's lives as well as their clothes") and to detail: eg the lint on Arlene's back presumably from "the fluffy white bedspread"; Bill saying "I wish it was us" as they see the Stones off on their holiday. Most answers explored the suggestions of the Millers' sexual renewal as an outcome of their own "holiday" in the Stones' apartment, and the particular effect of Carver's telling only half the story ("What does Arlene get up to over there? How does she find the pictures? What are they? We never know ..."). This selective narrative was presented as characteristic of Carver's other stories, as was the strategy of "telling what people do but not why they do what they do", and the inconclusive ending. 'Neighbours' offered fruitful material for discussion of what "home" means, since the



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Millers make their "home" in the refuge of the Stones' apartment and bring something of it back to their own. "Home" as prison formed the basis of discussion of 'Vitamins' ("Things kept falling"), 'So Much Water So Close to Home' and in 'Will You Please Be Quiet, Please' home as space to escape from becomes refuge finally. A number of answers fruitfully explored the enigmatic 'Collectors' as the account of a kind of invasion of whoever's home it is.

## 2710 Poetry and Drama Pre-1900

### General Comments

A wide range of levels of performance was seen this January: a mixture of highly capable work and some rather uncertain scripts. Perhaps because many candidates are only part way through their final year of Advanced study, there was a tendency for less individuality to be apparent, even in very good scripts: more following a 'party line', evident when reading answers across a Centre. Nevertheless, there were fine individual scripts, and individuals felt freer than in previous sessions to challenge the assumptions of prompts in questions. Less secure candidates, who often tended to be somewhat dogmatic in their interpretation of critical views, would do well to see critical comments as suggesting possibilities and as a sort of exploration: the modal form – 'could' 'might' and 'perhaps' - can be very useful here.

Increasingly, as was observed in the report on the June 2006 session, candidates were able to support their views with very close reference to the text, and with detailed evidence of the effects of language (Assessment Objective 3). Generalisation without evidence was a characteristic of weaker answers, and is to be avoided.

### Responses to Individual Questions

#### Geoffrey Chaucer : *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale*

**1(a)** There was a good range of approaches to the question. Most of the more successful answers took the Merchant's viewpoint into account: the presentation of Januarie, for instance, 'inevitably as a false dreamer since the tale is shaped by a man who is cynical about marriage.' Many people wrote well on the link between Januarie's physical and metaphorical blindness. AO2 was handled better than in previous sessions: answers looked profitably at genre. Fabliau rather than just character psychology dictates that May will be unfaithful to her husband. He is a fool not to know that May 'isn't "gentil", she is a typical fabliau girl.'

Not everyone tackled the 'dream' part of the question. Some who did pointed out that from Januarie's own point of view his dream is not entirely false since, apart from his brief temporary enlightenment at the tree, he goes on thinking the dream has been fulfilled. This text again engaged and appeared to amuse many candidates. The morally censorious tone of many answers again surprised examiners.

**1(b)** This question often elicited thoughtful responses to narrative, looking at the different levels of the text – the Merchant, Chaucer the pilgrim, and Chaucer the writer. Feminist approaches to the text were often developed: many felt that May's (or the woman's) point of view was too important to be ignored. Other candidates saw May and Januarie as in control at different moments, sharing dominance, just as Proserpina and Pluto are associated respectively with spring and winter. 'May's treachery as a wife is matched by January's general depravity'. Genre convention - the sexually stereotyped expectations of fabliau and courtly romance - was often well discussed.

### George Herbert: *Selected Poems*

Very few answers were seen in this session. Almost all were to 2(a), where answers often challenged the proposition. Herbert's modesty and faith was sometimes appreciated in comparison with Donne's showmanship. The arguments were fluent and well-supported.

### Milton: *Paradise Lost Books 9 and 10*

This text was often discussed very well. Better candidates explored with real flair the subtleties of language and imagery. Good use was made of other books in *Paradise Lost* – Books One and Two, mainly – but what successful candidates tended to do was to reveal the ambiguity or suggestiveness within Milton's phrasing.

**3(a)** This was much the more popular question. The 'seducer' element was most substantially addressed, with many subtle and detailed accounts of Satan's seduction of Eve (achieved 'through a combination of flattery, rhetoric and (false) reason'). One candidate wrote that 'Satan uses all the exaggerated hyperbole of a 17<sup>th</sup> century love poet to seduce Eve, so that Eve's fall becomes a kind of rape.' 'Adventurer' was often treated on the level of 'an awfully big adventure', ignoring the additional meaning of a speculator, or a risk taker for personal advantage. Most discussion, however, was of the 'hero' element, often overlapping with the earth-circling 'adventurer'. Comparisons with classical adventurous heroes were made, and the Romantics' heroic view of Satan noted, but the burden of many answers was that Satan is a hero mainly in his own eyes (and not always even there). One candidate argued interestingly that Satan fails as a classical hero but succeeds as a tragic hero. The idea of the Fallen Reader was put to good effect: 'the reader is seduced like Eve, finding Satan heroic and adventurous, until reminded by God's appearance in Book Ten that his/her past sympathies were simply a demonstration and re-enactment of the temptation and fall.' Some candidates wrote too exclusively on heroism, at times answering 'Is Satan the hero' rather than the question asked and therefore losing focus on the question. Very few dwelt much on the idea that the roles are 'contrasting'. The Romantic view concerning Milton's sympathy with the devil weakens the cogency of some candidates' arguments. Milton was radically orthodox and this needs to be reflected in a balanced argument. Weaker candidates tended to side with Satan rather than God. But on the positive side there was some impressive and often well used knowledge of the religious, political and literary (mainly epic) context of the poem.

Better candidates were able to include with relevance their knowledge of the Civil War, Milton's biography and the Restoration. Others wisely remembered Milton's original intention.

**3(b)** Fewer answers were seen but many were of a very high quality. The question produced some very varied responses, one or two including Satan's joy at his clever idea of vengeance – and his loss of that joy. 'Milton's Eden needs gardening tools, albeit rude implements but nevertheless it necessitates some help. This could be an indication of a slight atmosphere of disharmony even before the fall.' 'Eden is the "Paradise" that is "lost"... and it is this that in turn causes the loss of joy.' 'The reader's loss of joy is because of our recognition of the Fall and the presentation of a wondrous Paradise we can no longer have.' 'Satan, deprived of joy by the creation of man, can endeavour to recover it only by destroying man's joy.'

### **Dryden: Selected Poems**

Relatively few candidates answered on Dryden. The range of poems discussed was limited, with a focus on ideas and content, and little comment on form – for example, the use of the couplet. A formulaic tendency was sometimes evident – the same quotations being adduced, the same points made by many candidates.

### **Blake: Selected Poems**

Blake provoked the least satisfactory responses in this examination session. Part of the problem is the narrow range of texts cited, with many candidates prepared to answer on only a few poems: generally 'The Lamb', 'The Chimney Sweep' and 'London.' Centres are reminded that the specified text for this paper is not only the 'Songs of Innocence and Experience'. Candidates should be made aware of 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' and parts of the more accessible prophetic books.

Many responses to the set questions were only tangentially or implicitly relevant – for example, beginning in a pre-rehearsed way with a broad AO5 overview of biography, social conditions, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and Swedenborg. AO5ii issues were thus explored but often not sufficiently embedded into arguments supported by text or engaging with the question itself. Too many candidates took for granted the meaning of these extraordinary poems, seeking easy generalisations divorced from the words themselves, and not uncommonly turning them upside down – looking for the sinister in 'Songs of Innocence' for example. Frequently when candidates wrote about Blake, the normal logic was inverted and poems were seen as evidence for some pre-prepared idea of Blakean thought - deductive rather than inductive. It would be more successful to attend to the indeterminacy of these poems and to explore their ambiguities fully. Secure answers showed a more cogent grasp of the breadth and ambiguity of Blake's thought; it is simply not enough to limit answers to the 'Songs'. References to 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' were appreciated, even if comments on the 'Proverbs of Hell' were sometimes limited.

**5(a)** This was the more popular choice. Contrasts between 'The Tyger' and 'The Lamb', and detailed analyses of 'London', were frequent. 'Fear' and 'horror' were often well illustrated, although some were not sure what 'revulsion' meant. Certainly the verb 'revult' appeared more than once. *London* and the two *Chimney Sweeper* poems were frequently cited. Quite a few ended by denying, sometimes quite cogently, that 'dominate' was justified. Many answers saw 'images of fear, horror and revulsion' as the province of "Songs of Experience" only, and found appropriately contrasting images in "Songs of Innocence".

**5(b)** Most answers here were rather more sophisticated. A few looked at Blake's distinctive freshness of language and style. Most interpreted seeing 'the world afresh' as what one writer described as 'helping the reader view things from a different perspective and exposing the harsh realities of the world around them.' The reader would see, for example, what was wrong with conventional religion or the state of London. 'London', 'The Tyger', 'The Lamb', and the 'Holy Thursday' poems were often discussed. One answer considered 'The Little Vagabond' in terms of the need for the church 'to be conceived afresh.' Some others took 'afresh' to mean 'in a good light'. They therefore disagreed vehemently, pointing out that Blake generally tried to make us see what was wrong in society. There were several who pointed out that the last thing Blake would have wanted is for the candidates to be sitting indoors like the Schoolboy answering questions on his work!

### Hopkins: *Selected Poems*

Though Hopkins was selected by relatively few candidates, some excellent answers were seen. Both questions were equally well-answered. Candidates took advantage of the richness offered. There was admirable close study of a good range of poems reflecting Hopkins' differing stages of thought and experience. Close textual reference justified sophisticated ideas and the rich text offered inscape, sonnet format, metaphor, simile alliteration for elegant (AO3) analysis, which subsequently drove the argument forward.. Biographical detail was incorporated into both questions to justify opinions and judgements

### Shakespeare: *Hamlet*

7(a) Most answers addressed the question confidently. On the whole there was strong agreement that children are destroyed by their parents: 'the children are swept into the vortex of the court.' Good answers looked at the four 'children' in some detail, aware that there were different reasons for 'destruction', and that Fortinbras was far from being destroyed. Some concentrated only on Hamlet and Ophelia, some making careful reference to the contemporary view of young daughters and how differently a young prince would expect to be treated. Some saw 'destruction' as purely physical – after all, there are a lot of deaths – but others studied the preceding psychological destruction quite subtly. Opinions differed as to whether to include the stepfather among the 'parents', but this question offered so much material that it could be answered satisfactorily with or without Claudius. One ignored the Ghost, but included Claudius. Some picked up on the matter of going to battle 'for an eggshell' – a sign of our times that they condemned warmongering parents so forcibly. One wrote 'Shakespeare is too complex to simply spoon-feed causation to his audience in this way'.

Other answers argued that Hamlet is destroyed less by his father's expectations than by his uncertainty about the ghost's identity. Freudian psychology was often found useful in discussions of Hamlet's relationship with his mother and Ophelia's with her father. One candidate wrote, incorporating subtle AO3 'Polonius's rather moving speech to Laertes before he leaves for Paris gives the audience some hope of a salvageable father-son relationship. The words 'Give every man your ear but few your tongue' seem heartfelt and the regular iambic rhythm adds to the sense of order and control.' A few weaker responses strayed far into the realms of speculation: 'Gertrude grew up around money and perhaps this is why she is so corrupt.' ('Corrupt', here as on most other texts, was used as a hold-all word for any negative quality.)

7(b) This was chosen less frequently. At least one discussed Shakespeare's application of the idea of *humanitas* to Claudius 'catching many critics off-guard'. Some candidates took the view that Claudius deserves no pity and found much convincing evidence to support them. (Some appeared slightly desperate in their search for reasons to pity him: 'we pity him because he lacks Hamlet's intelligence'.) While usually he was seen as a Machiavellian schemer, one essay saw him rather as weak and cowardly, as illustrated especially by his 'pitiable' method of trying to have Hamlet killed by letter. Our pity, said another, 'is tempered by the fact that his expressions of guilt function also as confessions of murder.' On the other hand, one of the rare voices on the other side observed, 'we believe Claudius to be a villain because he is portrayed so often through the eyes and mind of Hamlet.'

**Shakespeare: *Measure for Measure***

**8(a)** A surprising number seemed to find this question fairly straightforward. One candidate stated that 'it seems that the source of disorder in *Measure for Measure* is not Isabella's honesty and innocence, but rather the other characters' inability to cope with her powerful voice and character.' A frequent topic of debate was how far Isabella's apparently erotic language can be blamed for encouraging Angelo's lust. Perhaps predictably, the quotation that featured most frequently was Isabella's reference to rubies, whips, stripping and bed. More cogent candidates explored the odd logic of what she is saying more fully than those who simply cited it as a reference to her half-suppressed sexuality.

Candidates who disagreed with the proposition felt that Angelo was a greater source of disorder, and very many that the 'manipulative', 'secretive', 'blundering' or 'hypocritical' Duke was. Others argued that disorder was abundant in Vienna before Isabella met Angelo and remains so at the end of the play; thus there was general agreement that she was a source of disorder rather than *the* source. Isabella was, however, much condemned for her role in the 'bed trick', except those who blamed the Duke entirely.

Most candidates tended to focus on characters rather than the idea that in the play the law itself produces disorder. Likewise, the Duke tended by many candidates to be seen as purely negative – the way he tries to inculcate the ethic of Christian forgiveness in Act 5 – however problematically – is usually ignored

**8(b)** There was a wide range of answers here. The general consensus was that the underworld characters' humanity contrasts with their superiors' cruelty, narrow-mindedness and hypocrisy and that they provide comic contrast or relief to the more serious scenes. Many other points of contact were found. For instance 'Elbow is a substitute for Angelo; like him he is caused trouble by sexual deeds and also cannot completely comprehend them.' Barnardine's refusal to die 'shows the limits of the Duke's authority and control.' Lucio was studied interestingly as a character who moves between the underworld and main-plot characters. (Some candidates found the play darker than necessary because they believed that Lucio is actually executed.) 'Dramatic effects' was often ignored or treated vaguely.

**Middleton: *The Changeling***

Though studied by relatively few, candidates knew the text well, using incident and textual reference. Candidates were more successful considering the main plot's tragedy than the subplot's comedy and its role in the play. All could compare and contrast between the two plots. In answering (b), Candidates generally dismissed Alsemero as plot catalyst, two dimensional rather than a fully rounded figure.

**Behn: *The Rover***

- 10(a)** Where this question was answered, it provoked some lively discussion. Many accepted the challenge, discussed and illustrated her skill in the marriage game, and then went on to write of her other traits, especially her empathy with her sister, her defiance of her brother and her wit. As in 10b, they were disappointed that the last act suggested that she had 'given in'.
- 10(b)** This was the more popular option. 'Disguise' was easily defined and discussed. 'Sexual temptation' seemed more difficult to argue for or against with any cogency. Some of the problem perhaps lies in the lack of productions to bring the page to life, especially for less secure candidates. A few took a very puritanical view, which made it hard for them to empathise with any of the characters, but many had great sympathy with the plight of women of the time. Some appeared quite aggrieved that in the end Hellena gives in to conformity.

**Gay: *The Beggar's Opera***

This play continues to grow in popularity and produce some very good responses. The weaker answers allowed AO5 to dominate. Better answers showed detailed knowledge of the intricacies of the action and characters – another example of the way that, although AO4 is prioritised, in fact AO3 is extremely important in this examination. Candidates need to realise the importance of memorising telling quotations or at least of exemplifying points through detailed references to the text. Better answers engaged well with the question. Such answers avoided tediously invoking Walpole and instead worked outwards from the text to explore the parodic relationship between thieves and the respectable classes. (There was frequent confusion about the subtleties of the English class system – candidates tend to label anyone respectable as 'aristocrats'.)

In some centres, candidates tended to begin with an overview of the play's successful reception and make AO2 points about Italian opera. In an examination which focuses on AO4 it is much more successful to engage actively with the question.

**Shaw: *Mrs Warren's Profession***

Both questions were chosen equally by a relatively small number of candidates with considerable success. Candidates either produced straightforward well-justified agreement, or shades of agreement and challenge were presented and usually proved. AO5ii was well explored and incorporated into arguments. AO5 detail included Victorian dramatic custom, inequality of society (wealth and gender), Shaw's socialist beliefs and intentions in writing the play. In some answers, candidates became impassioned about Victorian sexual barriers and the condition of women. Such answers were often, however, relevant as well as refreshing. The Preface and stage instructions were well-used by many candidates, and literary critical opinion either accepted or challenged.

### **2709/2711 Principal Moderator's Report**

Once again the great majority of candidates submitted thoughtfully prepared and presented work for both Units (2709 and 2711), and most Centres assessed and marked this work with care and conscientiousness. As always, there were exceptions, as will be noted below, but Moderators were reassured by the quality of work submitted and the engagement and enjoyment that was evident.

Late submission by some Centres was again a concern, and almost all Moderators reported some difficulties in this respect. Most work did comply properly and fully with other Specification requirements, but there was again a number of folders that did not do so in a number of respects:

- a few exceeded the maximum length of 3000 words, occasionally by a very considerable amount, and had therefore to be returned for re-marking in accordance with the instructions printed on the OCR cover-sheet;
- most Centres annotated fully and helpfully, and made useful summative comments, but still a number of essays showed no annotation at all;
- not all 2709 work had copies of the passage selected for the second piece, meaning that Moderators had difficulty in finding, or even, identifying the appropriate extract – again a point printed on the cover-sheet;
- several Centres failed to send the CC160 authentication form, or even the MS1 mark-sheet (or e-equivalent), which led to time-consuming chasing by the Moderators concerned;
- cover-sheets were sometimes partly or even totally incomplete;
- some work was submitted in loose-leaf fashion – not merely each candidate's work, but the complete set of essays from more than one Centre arrived without any sheets being attached to any others, with the serious risk of significant confusion.

Annotation: many Centres indicated in the margins of an essay where an Assessment Objective had been addressed, often with a single or double tick to indicate a particular level of success, an approach that was very helpful in showing Moderators how and why credit had been awarded. Some Centres preferred to write more fully, and this was equally valuable, provided that the comments made very clear which AO was being noted and rewarded at each point. It is essential for moderation that the level of success is noted in some way, however briefly; for example, annotation that merely puts "AO3" alongside a quotation, unless the candidate has done something positive and constructive with it, is not sufficient to demonstrate that this particular Objective has been addressed; similarly, putting "AO4" alongside a simple reference to a secondary critical source, even a quotation from it, does not indicate if or how far the candidate has properly engaged with this critical view. Annotation, therefore, is helpfully kept succinct, but focused upon what the AOs and their associated Band Descriptions require.

Annotation should include the identification of errors in candidates' work; as is the case every session Moderators commented on how many essays this January were spoilt by an apparent lack of proof-reading. Quality of Written Communication must be taken into account when work is assessed.. Some Centres did not correct or comment upon significant inaccuracies of punctuation, or infelicities and errors in vocabulary; most Centres did assess Quality of Written Communication, but some carelessly written work was awarded unjustifiably high marks.

Some Centres continued to offer double annotation, perhaps as evidence of internal standardisation, and this was very useful.

Summative comments were similarly valuable. It is particularly helpful if they are linked to the demands of the AOs and the Band Descriptions, though simply repeating the words and phrases from these is not necessarily useful, and a slightly more targeted approach is helpful.



## Report on the Units taken in January 2007

Past Reports have considered the demands of the five Assessment Objectives, so only a few points need to be repeated here. AO4 remained a concern for both Units 2709 and 2711, with relatively few candidates doing what the Band Descriptions require, even where they were in other respects correctly placed in Band Four or even Band Five. Most candidates at all levels of ability and success this session demonstrated an ability to express their own opinions and to make confident judgements, and the ablest were well prepared to challenge orthodox viewpoints and/or to defend their own. However, many again did not cite any other readings or alternative interpretations, and where they did so failed to engage thoughtfully with these views as a means of shaping their own ideas and argument. There were some occasions when candidates appeared to regard a reference to another text or to a contextual matter (AO2 or AO5 concerns) as sufficiently addressing what AO4 requires, even when they had made no attempt to engage with how these references influenced or affected their own opinions.

AO4 requires much more than candidates simply having and expressing their own opinions, however well and fluently these may have been presented. Candidates, who had been encouraged to think independently, and to challenge some orthodox perspectives; could not have done this without properly tackling exactly what AO4 expects.

Although AO2 is dominant in Unit 2709, many candidates still did little, or occasionally literally nothing, to link their selected passage with the text as a whole. No matter how good and detailed the close critical reading may have been – and AO3 was well managed by almost all candidates in both Units – if there was insufficient discussion of the relation of the selected passage to the whole text, then AO2 could not be richly rewarded. A relatively simple way into this is to frame a task something along the lines of this (genuine) one: “Discuss the opening three pages of *Death of a Salesman* in order to suggest the ways in which Miller prepares the audience for the play as a whole.” In the case of a poem being used as the selected passage, the “whole text” must be the body of poetry studied for the whole Unit: it is not enough for a candidate to write a critical appreciation of, for example, “Mr Bleaney” or “Tulips”. The genre and period aspects of AO2 were better managed by most, especially those who used drama or poetry (in Unit 2709), though usually relatively little was said about the type of prose that was being discussed (unless it was Gothic, in which case there was sometimes rather too much emphasis on the particular characteristics of this genre). There is no requirement in either 2709 or 2711 for the core text to be compared with any other.

Most candidates this January who used secondary material used it sensibly and often very competently, using quotation marks and footnotes, sometimes combined with a formally presented bibliography as well, and this is actively encouraged – it is, after all, going part of the way towards addressing AO4. It is acceptable for candidates to draw quotations, etc, from class handouts, but the source of the references/quotations should be acknowledged; failure to do so may weaken the strength of their argument. Published critical ideas are important to teachers, and other, in forming judgements, but in AS and A2 coursework it is especially important for candidates to acknowledge openly all their sources, and to use these sources in framing and justifying their individual responses.

The title of an essay is only a gateway to the work itself, and that it is the work that is marked and assessed, but there is considerable benefit to all candidates if the task(s) are appropriate to candidates’ interests and abilities, and worded in such a way that enables them to do their best work. Centres can contact OCR direct for details of the coursework consultancy service. In Unit 2709 Centres may require all candidates to do the same task, or to select from a small selection, but for Unit 2711 it is recommended that each candidate tackles his or her own task with suitable guidance. Individuality of response is encouraged. In general it is more successful if candidates tackle a clear but quite restricted task rather than just a broad topic for discussion; eg “Discuss how far it is possible to read *Rebecca* as a 20<sup>th</sup> Century version of the Gothic” rather than “Write about the Gothic elements in *Rebecca*.”

*Report on the Units taken in January 2007*

It was disappointing that there was much that could have been better focused and more certain in its addressing of the AOs. However, at its best, coursework this session was hugely impressive in every way.

## 2712 Prose Post 1914

### General Comments

As ever, this report should be read in conjunction with previous 2712 reports.

Most answers in this session demonstrated a clear idea of what was expected in this paper. However, a proportion of candidates did not grasp what was required in Section A, a significant number producing Section B type answers or focusing upon AOs that this section did not target. Close textual analysis is relevant to all tasks set. In the lower bands there was again a tendency to narrate without specific question focus, and candidates would do well to bear in mind the adage 'Don't tell, show'. Sometimes candidates did not follow the exact wording of a question, thus failing to respond to all aspects of that question (see below under *One Thousand Acres* with respect to the question on the Ginny/Rose relationship, and the *To the Lighthouse* question on Mrs Ramsey as possibly more important after her death).

It was clear that candidates who had been carefully briefed about the examination tended to perform best. Candidates should avoid the naming of literary techniques without considering their effects in the writing.

Finally, candidates should write the number and option of the questions tackled in the boxes provided on the front cover of the answer book (and at the commencement of the answer itself).

### Section A

Some candidates failed to follow the instructions in rubric box at the head of Section A which specifies: that 'each chosen passage should be no longer than two sides of text and must be clearly identified'. Failure to comply with this not only means that AO1 suffers, but also that candidates often fail to focus in effective AO2 and AO3 detail. Section A answers should commence something like this:

My chosen passages from 'Cold Comfort Farm' are from Chapter 3, pages 37-39 (Penguin edition), beginning "A strange film passed over Adam's eyes..." and ending "The porridge boiled over."; and Chapter 7, pages 77-78, beginning "...The man's big body" to "...in a bright, interested voice."

A crisp start, clearly defining the passages, often led on to a crisp, relevant response.

### Section B

Some candidates did not address AO5ii contextual requirements, even implicitly. Reference to other texts can be illuminating (for instance with *Atonement* and *A Thousand Acres*), but in some answers such references added little to the discussion.

### Cold Comfort Farm

The Section A question on the ways in which Gibbons uses language to create comic effects was generally well answered. Weaker candidates focused simply upon instances of comedy or humour. Sometimes Gibbons' language in general was addressed but not keyed to the creation of comic effects.

The Section B question on common sense versus passion was generally well answered, but sometimes responses exactly equated common sense with town, and passion with country - true only up to a point. The alternative on the challenge of Aunt Ada too often consisted of a mixture of character sketch, narrative and/or] uncritical assertion.

## **Atonement**

This text is proving to be very popular. The Section A question on the presentation of Robbie Turner was generally well answered. Some answers veered towards character sketch, but the better ones identified and evaluated consistent features between the presentations of Robbie in the two passages, and also discuss how his experiences had changed him (AO2ii). There was some excellent close analysis of McEwan's techniques, but also a tendency to fall back upon inconsequential observations about such matters as sentence length and punctuation (granted, this is a kind of AO3, but it was usually mentioned devoid of analysis of effect).

There were some splendidly thoughtful, informed and wide-ranging answers on the Section B question on Briony and atonement. Less good responses fell back on the remembered and formulaic rather than forging coherent lines of argument and/or did not manage effectively to integrate AO5. The alternative question on attempts to create order leading to chaos was less well handled, with much stretching of terms (such as 'order' being equated with 'social order', leading to essays on class). Critical authorities were often drawn upon, but a cautionary note must be sounded: learned quotations from critical sources are a strength only when integrated into the candidate's own thoughts and argument.

## **Rites of Passage**

There were some very effective answers on the Section A question on the presentation of two officers: AO2 was often very strong, often forming the spine of a successful response.

Both the Section B questions on power and dark comedy were generally well answered, the latter drawing responses from different angles with AO5ii well-integrated by those who wished to discuss the novel's social and cultural 'power struggles'.

## **Open Secrets**

A variety of endings were chosen as focus for the Section A question; some candidates, slightly to their cost, discussed three or four endings. There was often a fruitful coincidence of AOs 2 and 3 as candidates considered the conclusions of their chosen stories in relation to the preceding narratives, Munro's narrative/structural techniques providing good material to demonstrate literary appreciation of the text as a whole.

The Section B question on the solitary nature of Munro's central characters drew some strong answers from those who managed to move on from making a list of solitary characters to considering how solitariness may be seen as important in the collection as a whole. For example, in a number of answers the solitariness of key figures was regarded as their strength, allowing choices to be made about such issues as marital destiny and self-concealment.

## **To the Lighthouse**

The Section A question on relationships between generations of the Ramsey family was generally successfully answered, but there was some misinterpretation of the question with emphasis either simply on 'generations' or on the Ramseys.

The Section B essay on the novel as concerning different kinds of loss produced some very good, thoughtful responses, and the alternative on Mrs Ramsey, which proved to equally popular, produced some highly effective answers, although only a few grappled with 'more important' rather than simply discussing how/why Mrs Ramsey may be seen as important after her death.

### **A Thousand Acres**

The Section A question on the presentation of confrontation was generally well answered. Answers to the Section B question on the Ginny/Rose relationship were, on the whole, fairly poorly handled with 'relationship' often being left out of the equation in favour of character sketches of the two women. The alternative on characters struggling to break free from the past was generally well answered.

### **Letter to Daniel**

Unlike the previous session, there were too few responses to this text for valid comment here.

### **An Evil Cradling**

The Section A question on the presentation of resistance prompted some fully engaged answers. There was some (perhaps understandable) straying into AO5, but also often a deep appreciation of how Keenan in particular presents himself as maintaining his pride and identity through his pride / perversity. The best responses sometimes focused upon Keenan's tendencies to use dramatic, defiant language and to repeat key ideas.

The Section B question on something wonderful coming out of horror was generally well answered, with much focus upon Keenan's relationship with McCarthy, and on the shared ingenuity and humour of their bond. In the alternative question on sharing in the humanity of others, Keenan's relationship with McCarthy again often took centre stage, sometimes being contrasted with others who feature in the text.

## 2713 – Comparative and Contextual Study

### General Comments

The entry for January, as has become customary, was very small. Only a few centres entered candidates in any numbers; many Centres entered one or two candidates only and, overall, the range of questions tackled was relatively narrow. Satire, Post-Colonial Literature and Writing of the Romantic Era were little represented statistically. Rubric errors were exceptionally rare, and there was little evidence or problems with time management. Equally, there was little or no evidence of candidates who failed to compare at least two texts in Section B responses, although a number did have disproportionate weightings. Structurally such an essay may be flawed as not much comparison can be made.

Despite the smallness of the entry there was an abundance of excellent work from the best candidates, and some responses were breathtaking in their quality. What was most impressive in the very best work was the sheer depth and breadth of knowledge of textual detail that was brought to bear in support of arguments being made. By contrast, weaker candidates performed less well for three principal reasons. Firstly, some candidates could not cite detailed evidence (which need not equate with quotation) to justify their arguments. Secondly, many did not answer questions in line with the precise wording asked. Thirdly, perhaps related to the above point, there was a perceptible tendency for some less strong candidates to write generalised AO5 exposition – whether it be historical, sociological, psychological – at the expense of literary analysis. This was particularly noticeable in Section A responses to the unseen passage. It remains that AO3 is dominant in Section A, and candidates who do not address literary techniques as appropriate cannot expect to score well in that section. Section B responses were, broadly, handled more confidently. Strong candidates were frequently lucid and astute in their articulation of thoughtful and original answers, and many managed to be successful whilst only writing about two key texts.

As observed above, Writing of the Romantic Era was attempted relatively little, but candidates for this, and for The Gothic Tradition, noticeably blended AO2 and AO5 successfully in the main, observing how texts work as part of a wider movement or period. There is one caveat to this – and it seems to extend across all British texts written prior to 1900 (and in other topics too). It is a commonplace for examiners to read (in scripts across the full ability range) that a given text was/is “Victorian”, whether it dates from 1860 or 1786 – as in the *Vathek* extract – or even earlier. ‘Victorian’ would seem to be used to mean ‘from a long time in the past’. Historical imprecision like this tarnishes the overall argument being offered.

### Comments on Individual Topic Areas

#### Satire

Examiners saw very little writing on Satire. The passage from *A Modest Proposal* was tackled thoughtfully and astutely by the handful who attempted it, and only one instance can be recalled of a candidate who confused the persona of the Proposer with that of Swift. There was judicious discussion of its tone – whether Swift was being Horatian or Juvenalian – and discussion confidently tackled Swift’s literary techniques, including the arch, mock formality of the Proposer, the use of bathos, the dehumanising use of statistics and so on.

No answers were seen on *England, England*. Essays focusing on Pope were, as in previous sessions, confident and assured, with the (c) option being the preferred. Vanity and pride were recognised as central satirical targets and, unsurprisingly, *The Rape of the Lock* was much in evidence as a core text, but there was much else from Pope, as well as comparison with Swift (*Gulliver’s Travels*, notably) and Dryden. Though small in number, this was one topic where candidates did have unbalanced answers at times, owing to their disproportionate comparison of one Pope text with others of his, rather than with satire by writers other than Pope.

## The Gothic Tradition

Responses to the passage were generally confidently written, and most candidates had prepared material about early Gothic which was used here. Usually, answers offered a reasonable balance between critical commentary and context; in some cases, however, candidates were side-tracked into writing a general essay with limited response to AO3. Candidates noted the exotic setting, the use of darkness, the suggestions of the supernatural and the vulnerability of the heroine. Some weaker candidates tried to assert readings that, ultimately, remained tenuous because the line of thought that would justify the assertion was not made. A common instance of this was the claim that Nouronihar 'was in Hell' (asserted as fact) for the simple reason that there was some fire in the passage. Had candidates nuanced this in any way, to try and explore levels of connotation which could make the link from 'fire' to 'hell', such a view could have gained more reward. Regrettably, many candidates wrote their answers in this overly blunt and simplistic fashion.

No responses were submitted on *The Dead School*.

A substantial number answered on 'ways in which the natural order is challenged', and most wrote with confidence on *Frankenstein*, dealing with issues like incest and creation. Pleasingly, too, a range of AO4 critiques was adopted by candidates, and it was common to read about issues of patriarchal power in Victorian (sic) England from a feminist perspective, or to read discussions of texts in the light of Freudian psychoanalytics – and often at an advanced level. The most popular accompanying text by far was *Dracula* but a wide array of others was seen too, including *The Woman in Black*, *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Monk*, *The Turn of the Screw* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* amongst them.

Answers to question (c) were usually well focused and offered some kind of working definition of 'innocence'. This topic area always attracts some answers written partly or mainly from a feminist perspective, and many candidates gave significant space to the innocence of young female characters in their chosen texts. The relative innocence and guilt of Frankenstein and his Monster also formed a substantial part of most essays. If there was a relative weakness, it was that the aspect of corruption was addressed too little. Many candidates used the term as if it was a simple synonym for 'things going wrong' and failed to define it in terms of a process of physical and or moral decline or decay. Again, the ability to look beyond the surface of the question to see potential alternatives to approaching it proved a significant discriminator.

## Writing of the Romantic Era

Responses to 'Helvellyn' were often of a very high order, offering sophisticated insights in relating the poem to their knowledge of Romanticism. Comments on verse form and metre were usually accurate and appropriately related to the poem's content. Many candidates picked up the gothic overtones of the fourth stanza, but a number misread this part of the poem, understanding it to be a description of the 'young gentleman's' actual funeral, rather than a contrast to his death 'In the arms of Helvellyn and Catchedicam'.

Section B answers were often accomplished, but perhaps not as wide-ranging as those submitted in June sessions. The most popular choice of material was Wordsworth and Keats; once again, Keats's letters were the only significant prose presence. There was some reference to Blake and Shelley in a few essays, but the stipulated authors of the set texts were the most discussed.

There was a significant number of answers on 'mortality and immortality'; candidates found most of their valuable material in Keats, especially *Ode to a Nightingale*. Some essays relied rather too heavily on biographical material about Keats and his family. In some cases, essays were too heavily biased towards Keats to be able to offer a sustained comparison.

## Report on the Units taken in January 2007

The most popular question was the (c) option about 'addressing the senses more than the mind'. This was tackled with confidence and substance; there was often more here in the way of comparison than in the other options for this topic, and AO5 discussion of romanticism as a critique of Enlightenment rationalism was very well understood. Some candidates had difficulty defining their terms, and were not sure how to deal with imagination in the context of the senses and the mind, although *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* were much to the fore.

Wordsworth tended to be written about mainly as a comparison to Keats in (a) and (c) questions (examiners saw very few (b) essays on memory; 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' was the mainstay of those) and, further, it was pleasing that many candidates went beyond *Lyrical Ballads* in their discussion of Wordsworth.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Prose

Candidates responded well to the passage from *Post Office*, and most found material worthy of comment both thematically and stylistically. Many dealt with the first person narrative, the colloquial style and tone, the short paragraphs and sentences and the simple vocabulary. The images of the 'faithful horse' and the 'old car' were often treated in relation to the context, offering the sense that G.G. himself had become obsolete in an advancing consumerist society, and the judgement that Bukowski was criticising, if not satirising, heartless capitalism was commonly held. The apt nickname of 'The Stone' was often mentioned. Some candidates made rather empty comments about punctuation in an attempt to satisfy the demand for AO3: it was surprising how often heavy punctuation was said to 'speed up' the reading of a passage. Candidates also failed to access marks by stopping their commentary before they got to the end of the passage.

The question on 'moral confusion' was usually answered by comparing *Tender is the Night* to *The Great Gatsby*, and generally centred on Dick's marriage and his relationship with Rosemary. A second line of discussion, often fruitful, pursued Dick's moral and professional conflict of duty as doctor and husband, whilst several candidates also discussed the effect on Nicole of the immoral incest to which she was subjected as a child. The argument of some essays was weak at times simply because discussion of morality was poorly focused and ill-defined.

Writing on *Postcards* was, in the main straightforward and competent. Answers tended to focus on the safe, yet valid, line that Loyal Blood was physically 'free', in the sense of being a wanderer, in much of the novel, but was never emotionally or morally free from the murder he committed at the outset of the book. It was pleasing that many others of the Blood family were discussed too. Comparison was largely confined to the two principal Fitzgerald novels, although a few candidates cross-referenced effectively with Steinbeck.

The (c) question about 'disappointment and disaster' was competently handled on the whole, and a number of candidates challenged the statement in the question by drawing on literary works with what they felt had a more positive message.

### Drama Post-1945

This topic area suffered more than others from simplistic contextual statements. For example, some candidates suggested that, before 1945, drama focused on royalty or nobility, giving Shakespeare as the major example of a pre-1945 dramatist. The period after 1945 was often seen as an amorphous historical entity, and many candidates gave the impression that Thatcherism followed immediately after WWII, and was a cause of women's liberation. June entries for this topic are often characterised by a very wide range of reference; January candidates seemed to be relying on a smaller repertoire.



## Report on the Units taken in January 2007

The passage from *Edmond* was reasonably well-handled, especially where candidates avoided very broad contextual material. Many noticed the struggle for communication between Edmond and Glenna, and Edmond's dissatisfaction with the world was often placed in the context of the failure of the American Dream. Candidates were divided over their views of Glenna: some suggested that she is a stronger, more successful character than Edmond, others that she is deluded and weak and felt threatened by his presence. Some weaker answers struggled to go beyond simplistic claims that this was an Absurdist piece of drama because it was ambiguous, hard to understand and had pauses in it, thus making it Pinteresque and 'like' *Waiting for Godot*. Such sweeping generality was not productive.

Section B answers were generally competent; some candidates again limited their marks, however, by dealing with texts separately rather than offering sustained comparison. The (a) question was a popular option, and some answers were clearly and effectively argued, often suggesting that modern drama could be at its most disturbing when serious rather than humorous. Weaker answers tended to lose focus on one or more of the question's elements, however, and were sometimes reduced to a list of examples of humour in their chosen plays.

The (b) option, on an 'uncertain and threatening' world, was handled with confidence, although contextual material was often applied with a broad brush. Candidates found plenty of material in *The Homecoming*, and often compared it with *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, whilst *Waiting for Godot* was another popular comparator. Answers often included sections on uncertainty about gender roles, and focused on the importance of Jessie and Ruth in *The Homecoming*.

There were fewer answers on 'predators and victims', and some candidates found these terms a little difficult to focus, offering a generalised response about power relationships. However the predatory nature of Martha in Albee's play was commonly cited, whilst many characters were deemed 'victims', the term seemingly synonymous with bad things happening to people. However, issues of fate, or people bringing misadventure on themselves were rarely considered.

### Post-Colonial Literature

There were relatively few responses in this topic area, but those which appeared were often of very high quality. Candidates tackled the passage from Salman Rushdie's *Shame* with impressive confidence, often demonstrating a knowledge of Rushdie outside of the set passage, and using this knowledge effectively to enlighten their reading. The strongest answers offered a markedly literary approach to the passage, commenting on the humorous tone and the flavour of magic realism; other answers, whilst effective, tended to engage in a debate with the views presented in the passage, offering less in the way of critical analysis.

In Section B, there were no answers on Derek Walcott. Candidates were divided between the (b) and (c) options, often choosing to compare *White Teeth* with Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. There were some relatively weak, rather shapeless essays consisting of loosely connected examples, but many answers were tightly argued and characterised by sustained, sophisticated comparison. In both essays, candidates often compared characters within as well as between texts.

**Advanced GCE English Literature (7828/3828)  
January 2007 Assessment Series**

**Unit Threshold Marks**

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2707	Raw	60	45	40	35	30	25	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2708	Raw	60	48	42	37	32	27	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2709	Raw	60	51	45	39	33	28	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2710	Raw	60	48	42	37	32	27	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2711	Raw	60	52	46	41	36	31	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2712	Raw	60	49	44	39	34	30	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2713	Raw	60	48	42	37	32	27	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

**Specification Aggregation Results**

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
<b>3828</b>	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
<b>7828</b>	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
<b>3828</b>	20.6	46.0	75.0	89.5	98.4	100.0	252
<b>7828</b>	24.7	53.9	93.3	100.0	100.0	100.0	94

**94 candidates aggregated this session.**

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

[http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam\\_system/understand\\_ums.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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**1 Hills Road**  
**Cambridge**  
**CB1 2EU**

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**(General Qualifications)**

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