General Certificate of Education

English Language 1706
Specification B

ENGB2   Creating Texts

Report on the Examination
2009 examination - June series

General

It is very heartening to report that the vast majority of centres submitted work that was very much in the spirit of the new specification. There are some areas of concern which are highlighted below and centres are advised to act on the guidance given where appropriate.

Task selection/setting

Best practice was displayed where centres had clearly decided to make a wide variety of text types and genres available to their candidates, who studied them in detail and were encouraged to develop their own ideas drawing upon the linguistic methods identified in the style models and adapting them for their own use in the construction of new texts.

There were some cases where candidates' submissions gave cause for concern and they were often found to adopt some or all of the following traits.

- Some candidates did not to establish a realistic or viable context for one, or both, of the submitted pieces. Perhaps the publicity given to the rhetorical flourishes of Barack Obama in his speeches inspired many candidates but to reproduce them in speeches to be given in school councils in an attempt to alter dress code regulations is surely to misjudge what is meant by *adapting language for purpose and audience*. Clearly it is important to consider *how*, *when* or *where* texts might have realistically been delivered.

- Some groups of candidates were given the same task for both pieces, using the same style model, and producing very similar outcomes. Not only does this go against the principle that candidates should be encouraged to create their own texts, but it could also reduce the levels at which candidates achieve, as they are not being allowed to pursue their own areas of interest and expertise.

- Submissions which failed, fully or partially, to meet the Specification requirement that pieces should be *differentiated by primary audience, purpose and genre.*[1] Folders which contained two pieces which were basically the same or which were aimed at audiences which were largely the peer group of the writer are not *ambitious genres,* or *challenging audiences and purposes.*[2]

- 'Unbalanced' folders – some submissions contained one fully realised piece plus a flimsy second piece (eg a full-scale magazine article combined with an advertisement containing an image and a few words.) To gain a mark at the top of the second band candidates must display *sustained deployment of appropriate structures and conventions*[3] and it is difficult to envisage how a mere handful of words could possibly fulfil that requirement.

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[1] Specification, Section 3.2 Unit Content
[2] Coursework Assessment Criteria ENGB2, marks 46-50
[3] Coursework Assessment Criteria ENGB2, marks 36-40

The general characteristics of folders within each mark band are described in the grid that follows. It must be remembered that this does not replace the Assessment Criteria published in the specification.

Marks	AO4 Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English in a range of different contexts informed by linguistic study.
46–50	• Both pieces in the folder consistently displayed sophisticated and controlled uses of language features, suited to purpose, audience and the chosen genre. There was sufficient contrast in the selected purposes, genres and target audiences to convince that the writer can operate successfully and convincingly across a range of styles. In the vast majority of cases the audiences chosen by the writers were outside their most familiar groupings and required the writers to operate 'outside their comfort zone'.
41–45	• Both pieces in the folder were suited to clearly identified audiences and considerable expertise was shown in adapting language and structures to cater for their needs. Good contrast between pieces demonstrated an ability to write convincingly in a range of styles. The most significant difference between this and the top sector band tended to be that in one piece the choice of either genre, task, purpose or audience tended to be less ambitious or less fully realised.
36–40	• Typically, pieces in this band were well realised, showing knowledge and understanding of the discourse features and conventions associated with the tasks selected. They were accurately written, coherent and cohesive, but with an increasing preference for at least one piece to tend towards 'comfortable' and more easily emulated genres. Overall, there was less evidence of ambition in the writing. This band was also awarded for folders where one piece was clearly of top band quality, while the other was significantly less ambitious and/or less successfully developed.
31–35	• At this level, both pieces, while accurate and largely secure in style, register and written accuracy, tended to be quite straightforward in terms of genre, audience and purpose. Again, ambition in any of these areas was not obvious. The 'unbalanced folder' was also apparent here with one piece reflecting attainment in the band above and the other the band below.
26–30	• At this level, flaws in technique, accuracy and 'language awareness' begin to become more apparent, though the positive features still outweigh them. Sound grasp of the 'surface features' of genres, audiences and purposes ensure a reasonable level of success. There was also a widespread tendency for the folder to be unbalanced with writers often achieving very limited success in identifying a suitable purpose, audience or genre for one of the pieces. There were also examples of folders with two viable but underdeveloped pieces being accurately placed in this band.
21–25	• At this level the shortcomings in the folders submitted tended outweigh the positive attributes. If achievement was balanced across both pieces, then they tended to be made up of pieces from very straightforward and easily emulated genres, demonstrating a very broad sense of audience with limited crafting in terms of language choices made. Once again the 'unbalanced folder' was widely found, with one piece from the band above, while the other met the criteria for the band below.
16–20	• Awareness and control of genre were inconsistent in one or both pieces. At this level, one piece was noticeably stronger than the other, with the second sometimes very noticeably underdeveloped. Language choices, in general, whilst almost inevitably unambitious and limited, were not strikingly inappropriate. Issues with written accuracy and word count were increasingly apparent.
11–15	• Almost always, very straightforward tasks, with little or no distinction between audiences apparent. Texts produced lacked clearly identifiable genre features and in general few signs of language being crafted for purpose or audience. Unbalanced folders with one piece very short, underdeveloped or just inappropriate in terms of genre, purpose or audience, also often fitted this band. The effectiveness of one or both texts was very limited; even within the rather unambitious parameters set.
6–10	• Very few of the moderated folders fulfilled the characteristics of this band. Those that did consisted of two very short pieces (seriously under the minimum recommended word count). Any sense of audience, genre, or purpose seemed a result of general knowledge rather than any study of the language. No signs of crafting or any other positive decision making were apparent.
1–5	• No folders seen were at this level.
0	• No folders seen were at this level.

Commentaries

The recommended word count is now 500 words per commentary and assessment is Assessment Objective specific, rather than a holistic mark. In general, centres appeared to have embraced these changes, and the comments made in relation to the January entry still apply, *those centres that had clearly used the mark scheme as an overt framework for the teaching of the skills of commentary writing, invariably produced high scoring and well-rewarded commentaries.*[4]

There were, however, some areas of concern.

- Overlong commentaries inappropriately rewarded. Commentaries of 750 words often contained anecdotal material which was not (i) related to the candidate's understanding of the linguistic methods or utilisation of technical terminology (AO1), (ii) directly relevant to the application of the candidate's linguistic knowledge to his/her writing (genre awareness) (AO2), or (iii) demonstrating contextual knowledge and/or understanding of purpose and audience (AO3).

- The use of relevant and appropriate style models is fundamental to successful teaching in this unit and this is acknowledged throughout the assessment criteria for commentary writing. Centres should be aware that *reference to … features from ….style models*[5] is an integral part of the mark descriptors of AO3 in the top three bands.

- Commentaries written to rigid templates. Moderators reported evidence of centre-wide templates being used, based either on Linguistic Methods or on the three assessment objectives. While each of these can ensure that all relevant issues are identified and perhaps acknowledged, it is rarely the most effective method of commentary production, as it leads to a listing or descriptive approach and a lack of prioritisation of the most significant features. The best examples started with the identification of the most important features of the text and the analysis of how these features had been incorporated into the candidate's writing, with reference to how the use of style model(s) had informed decision making. Above all, it is the awareness of what constitutes the most important features of the discourse constructed between writer and reader that marked out the most successful commentaries.

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[4] Principal Moderator's Report ENGB2 January 2009
[5] Coursework Assessment Criteria ENGB2 – Commentaries AO3

The general characteristics of folders within each mark band are described in the grid that follows. Again it must be remembered that this does not replace the Assessment Criteria published in the specification, but it can be used to assist the assessment processes.

Marks	AO1 Select and apply a range of linguistic methods, to communicate relevant knowledge using appropriate terminology and coherent, accurate written expression.	AO2 Demonstrate critical understanding of a range of concepts and issues related to the construction and analysis of meanings in spoken and written language, using knowledge of linguistic approaches.	AO3 Analyse and evaluate the influence of contextual factors on the production and reception of spoken and written language, showing knowledge of the key constituents of language.
9–10	Commentaries at this level demonstrated the ability to select and to prioritise the most relevant linguistic methods that informed the writing processes across two contrasting pieces. This selection process demonstrated an overall understanding of the writing process. Expression was confident, cogent and technical terminology was used accurately and was invariably well-directed.	What clearly distinguished top band submissions in this area was the ability to establish an overview of the text and *how* and to *what extent* the various linguistic choices made by the writer in the construction of the piece helped to construct the desired meaning. An understanding of the more complex aspects of the chosen genre and how these were exploited in the production of the texts was another widespread feature. Examples from the texts were expertly embedded into the evaluative comments.	Clear and consistent understanding of how the writers' language choices could ensure effective fulfilment of purpose and engagement of the perceived target audience characterised these commentaries. A sophisticated grasp of the specific genre requirements needed to ensure engagement by the perceived audience was also present. Audiences were also defined in precise terms rather than generalisations. All of these factors were linked by explanations of how the selected style models had influenced the writer's various language choices.
7–8	Commentaries at this level consistently demonstrated the ability to define aspects of their own writing in terms of most, if not all, of the linguistic methods. What distinguished them from the top band was a less well developed sense of which methods were more important, leading to a less reliable or less consistent evaluation.	A clear understanding of the more obvious aspects of the genres selected. The commentaries at this level lacked a consistent appreciation of how specific language choices could affect the construction of meaning in their texts. Some relevant examples were quoted from the texts but not always fully integrated.	A sound appreciation of how the purpose of each piece was to be achieved and how the audience could be best addressed was demonstrated, supported by some reference to the style models studied. Some examples from the writer's own pieces were also included – the number and relative importance of those quoted often determining the mark within the band.
5–6	At this level the defining characteristic was incomplete coverage: the linguistic methods chosen either tended to be (i) all of them without any attempt to prioritise; or (ii) some selected, but not necessarily related to their relative importance. Coherence, and accuracy of written expression was noticeably less secure than in the top two bands.	A more generalised view of particular genres and the links between them and how meaning is expressed was a significant feature of many commentaries at this level. Exemplification becoming less widespread, and rarely integrated fully into analytical comments. Still a range of features were recognised, but the tendency was to describe rather than to analyse.	Purpose and audience are defined and described in generalised terms both in relation to style models and to the writers' own texts. Judgements tended to be 'black or white', overlooking more subtle or tentative interpretations. Style models ignored or only vaguely referred to. Links between language features and the context of reception of the texts was likely to be generalised and rarely supported by any consistent exemplification.

3–4	Incomplete coverage of linguistic methods. Sometimes inaccurate or irrelevant selections made. Understanding and meaning sometimes or often obscured by weak or imprecise expression.	Very simple view of the characteristics of chosen genres and how they help communicate meaning. Minimal understanding of links between the writer's language choices and their chosen genres.	Very obvious, sometimes erroneous, grasp of purpose and audience. Comments likely to describe content. Any features relating to style models likely to be just described rather than related to texts.
1–2	Very little written and linguistic methods either overlooked or used inaccurately. Written expression weak. No evidence of linguistic knowledge acquired as part of an English Language course.	Very basic knowledge of genre features shown. Little, or no, reference to how the genres contributed to the communication of meaning in the writers' texts.	The connection between context and the writer's text were either not acknowledged or misrepresented. Purpose and audience were described in general terms. No useful references to style models.
0	No commentaries were seen in this band.		

Selection of and Annotation of Style Models

As suggested in the previous section, this is an area that is crucial to the successful teaching and assessment of the entire unit. The comments made in the January Report relating to this aspect are repeated below, as they are still relevant, '…*this was another clear success of the new requirements. As mentioned above, the judicious selection of style models by teachers to act as insights into a whole variety of language skills involved in effective writing, seems to be bringing a real sharp sense of focus into the production of texts.'* Style models *'can be used to illuminate so many different aspects of writing, eg layout, discourse features, persuasive techniques, ways of appealing to specific audiences, suitable lexical and/or grammatical issues.'*

Areas of concern include:

- multiple texts submitted relating to one of the pieces in the folder, where it was not clear to the moderator which one (or ones) constituted the style model as there was no reference to it (or them) in the commentary

- style models that were not annotated at all, or had a separate sheet containing non-specific headings appended to them: once again, these cannot fulfil the intended purpose(s) of a style model

- style models which were not used for anything except providing source material or information. These are clearly not what is expected under the heading of 'annotated style models', and should be regarded as part of the bibliography or list of sources used

- over-reliance on a single style model for a group or even a whole entry. If centres regard the deconstruction of a particular text as a 'springboard' for candidates to consider how they might adapt features or investigate further into alternatives texts in order to support the process of creating their own texts, then the style model approach will have served its purpose.

Evidence of early planning (EEP)

EEP is *not* the same as 'submitting a draft'. Since the almost universal adoption of word-processed texts for submission, the 'draft version' has been largely an irrelevance as an insight into the process of writing. The intention behind EEP is to show the basis upon which the candidate constructs a text. It may include, for example, aspects of layout, discourse features, persuasive techniques, ways of appealing to specific audiences, suitable lexical and/or grammatical choices. Taken in conjunction with annotated style models and observations within the commentary, the moderator should be able to gain an insight into the construction of the text.

Acknowledgement of sources and bibliographies

The bibliography serves two important purposes: to instil in candidates good habits for the future and to act as a defence against plagiarism or the over-dependence on the writing of others. In general this requirement was adhered to by centres.

Annotation of work

The specification demands that both the texts and the commentaries submitted for moderation *must* be annotated to demonstrate how the marks awarded have been arrived at. The specification states, *'Work could be annotated by… key pieces of evidence flagged throughout the work by annotation either in the margin or in the text* or *summative comments on the work, referencing precise sections in the work'.* For the vast majority of centres this may even have contributed to the sharpening of the accuracy of assessments. Both annotation methods worked successfully, especially with a separate cover sheet, and where annotations related to each Assessment Objective for the Commentary. In all cases, comments relating to the Assessment Objectives, rather than merely quoting them verbatim, was the most effective.

Administrative Matters

Although most centres managed the submission of folders very efficiently, there were some concerns as follows.

- Centres with entries of 20 or fewer should still send the work of the whole entry to their appointed moderator by the due date.

- Centre Declaration Forms which confirm that internal standardisation has taken place, if necessary, and which identify all teachers who have taught and been involved with the assessment of the Unit must be signed by the person responsible for the oversight of standardising and sent to the moderator.

- Unsigned Candidate Record Forms (cover sheets).

- The Specification contains a list of the required contents of the ENGB2 folder and both standardisation meetings and teacher support meetings have provided a 'checklist' of contents of the folders in a recommended order. It makes a moderator's task much more straightforward if these suggestions are heeded.

Many centres have also devised their own cover sheet, often doubling as an assessment proforma, which identifies the title, genre, audience and purpose of each piece, and this has proved helpful to moderators. Centres are also requested not to put whole folders or even individual texts into a single plastic transparent cover as this is cumbersome and time consuming for moderators. Treasury tags are the preferred method of holding the constituent parts of a folder together.

Conclusion

Despite some shortcomings, the overall response to this new coursework unit is extremely positive. The majority of issues alluded to in the report can be put down to 'teething problems', which might be expected at this stage of a new specification. As stated at the end of the report of the January series, '…*thanks to the commitment and professionalism of the centres submitting work, it is quite clear that the modified assessment system and submission requirements both can and do work well*.'

Once again widespread good practice was apparent in terms of both process and product and many candidates were able to produce effective and at times highly expert writing.

The marking criteria provided clear guidance for the majority of supervising teachers to produce fair and accurate assessments and for the most part administrative procedures have been very largely complied with.

Thanks are due to all those centres who worked so hard to produce these gratifying outcomes and it is hoped that the minor glitches will be ironed out as a successful Unit goes from strength to strength.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results Statistics** page of the AQA Website.