



**General Certificate of Education**

**English Language 1706**  
*Specification B*

**ENGB2     Creating Texts**

**Report on the Examination**  
*2010 examination – January series*

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## General

As was the case in the summer, it is pleasing to report that the majority of centres have made themselves increasingly familiar with the spirit and requirements of the new specification, and are using this familiarity to ensure that their candidates produce work which can demonstrate their maximum potential.

## Task selection/setting

The Principal Moderator's report from the summer 2009 series emphasised the need to establish a realistic or viable context for the texts submitted by students, citing rhetorical speeches based on those of Barack Obama's which did not realistically meet the needs of a new and less elevated context.

It is important that texts are produced with a realistic context in mind on the grounds that the success of a piece of writing can only be fairly assessed by the extent to which it realistically meets the requirements of purpose, genre, and audience. Moreover, if assessment across the entire entry is to be fair, it is important that candidates work within commonly held rules as they create a text; it is, for example, easier to write a report on a fictitious sporting event than to research and gather real facts and organise them to meet the needs of audience and genre; it is easier to create a fictitious biography than it is to find and make engaging actual facts and events. A useful question to ask is whether a piece is publishable. If this question had been asked, some centres would have avoided tasks which fell outside the spirit of the specification. Some examples of such texts reported by moderators during this round include:

- texts which rewrote a chapter of a novel from the viewpoint of a subsidiary character; this is arguably useful as an exercise for students of literature but where would it be published? Who would read it?
- speeches in poetic form based on a protest poem meant to be delivered to a politician; again an interesting exercise, but not a real and practical task
- a transcript of an imagined television discussion programme
- an interview with a celebrity in a question/answer format. Would the celebrity not sue the magazine which published their alleged responses?

Obviously some of these tasks seem more acceptable than others, but a line needs to be drawn between **exercises**, no matter how interesting, and **real tasks**.

## Commentaries

One of the areas where a task which is not closely defined by a viable context, runs into significant problems is, of course, in the commentary where candidates found it difficult to meet the demand of AO3 which requires *awareness of purpose and audience*; it is, at best, difficult to show how the needs of an audience are met when that audience cannot or does not exist.

Most centres, however, are meeting the new demands of the commentary with success. To reiterate the guidance given in last summer's report - the best commentaries *started with the identification of the most important features of the text and the analysis of how these features had been incorporated into the candidates' writing*; they dealt convincingly with complex issues such as tone, reader/writer relationship, avoided the anecdotal, remained within the word count, and were *tentative* in their comments, showing awareness that language is a complex area which cannot always be confined within a set of rules, or explained fully in an analysis no matter how good.

As is required by AO3, successful commentaries referred to both the candidate's own writing and style models.

Centres are reminded, however, that commentaries should not be based too rigidly on their style model(s). The summer report warned against *rigid templates*, and using the model(s) can become another over rigid template leading to a focus on less significant features to the exclusion of the more significant areas of the newly created text.

### **Selection of and Annotation of Style Models**

A lot of centres offered students (or encouraged them to discover for themselves) a variety of style models which lead to a freedom of choice which enabled the writers to select topics and approaches in which they were interested and which suited their differing abilities. Thus, style models were made part of the creative process as a base or springboard guiding the writer towards the production of texts which were fully defined by and met the requirements of a realistic context. Successful centres, too, encouraged detailed planning, and meaningful annotation of models which gave definition to the texts, and provided a solid base for commentaries.

Less successful was the practice of confining the style models to one or two to cater for all students regardless of ability or the approach to the selected task. This tended to restrict rather than enable creativity, and often led to a mismatch between writing ability and the demands of a particular genre. For instance, writers of modest ability trying to create the level of language expected from a broadsheet article or handle the subtleties of satire, or conversely a more able writer trying to breathe new life into a basic information leaflet. More restricting even than the use of such common models was the tendency to use common topics (especially for information texts) based around issues such as the dangers of smoking, drugs, climate change, eating disorders, etc. Moderators reported that when this approach was followed, levels of achievement were noticeably capped.

Less successful centres also tended to allow students to regard early planning and the annotation of style models as a cosmetic exercise, rather than an integral part of the process with a resultant loss of definition to the final texts, and a loss of focus in the commentaries.

Moderators reported an unexpected but growing tendency to use texts from agreement trial booklets as style models. While not wishing to detract from the competence of the monologue from the 2009 booklet or the dual arguments of 2009 and 2010, it is questionable whether these provide the best possible models for students – especially if they are the only models chosen.

### **Evidence of Early Planning**

Another issue widely flagged up by Moderators, was a significant tendency for centres to continue to present earlier drafts of texts as part of a candidate's folder. The Specification makes it clear, and this point has been re-iterated in all the Teacher Standardisation meetings, that what is required is Evidence of Early Planning. This can take a variety of forms, from a simple spider diagram to a more formalised sheet which considers a number of issues relating to purpose, genre and audience, and the ways in which language can be shaped to meet the demands of each of these; if centres keep in mind the purposes of such planning sheets – namely to establish the provenance of the text and to illuminate the processes involved in its production – then it should be quite straightforward to include a document which fulfils these requirements.

### **Acknowledgement of sources and bibliographies**

Centres are reminded that the inclusion of a bibliography which identifies all sources used in texts is also a requirement. The recommended way of organising a folder can be summarised thus; text 1, commentary, explicitly referenced sources, annotated style models and evidence of early planning, followed by the same components in the same order for text 2.

### **Conclusion**

Moderators were in agreement that the whole process was overwhelmingly successful, helped by the vast majority of centres who combined thoughtful and sensitive support of their students in the selection and presentation of an astonishingly wide variety of different text types with accurate assessment supported by insightful summative comments.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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