



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2012**

**English Language B**

**ENGB2**

**(Specification 2705)**

**Unit 2: Creating Texts**

***Report on the Examination***

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## General

In this examination series, the number of submissions remained very much the same as last January – underlining the continuing popularity both of the specification in general and the Creating Texts Unit in particular. It was, however, still only a small proportion of the summer entry. The cohort was made up of a significant number of re-submissions plus cohorts who had been following the specification since the start of the academic year.

Moderators' perceptions were very largely that specification requirements are being effectively met, and that it had been possible to confirm the accuracy of teachers' assessments.

There were still, however, some issues which caused concern, sadly, many of which have been flagged up in previous reports and mentioned at teacher standardising. This report will therefore concentrate on recurring issues that moderators identified, without suggesting that these were increasingly prevalent, in the hope that teacher new to the Language B specification might find the clarification helpful, and that the schools/colleges that do not always fully follow the requirements of the specification nor take on board the recommendations of coursework adviser/moderators will act on the guidance and thus help their students to maximise their achievement.

## Task setting

It was clear that most schools and colleges had encouraged students to select tasks which allowed them to explore their own interests, and to maximise achievement by choosing *specific and ambitious/demanding genres* and aiming them at *challenging audiences and purposes*.

There was however some evidence that a limited number of schools and colleges had adopted a more prescriptive approach to the genre and style where the same style model was common to several students, who all produced the same types of writing. The effect of this was to inhibit students' choice as well as performance, as the students were not afforded the opportunity to explore a range of genres according to preference or strength/aptitude. This clearly goes against the spirit as well as the specification.

In general, writing worked really well when it had explicit context and was original and well-conceived. Where students failed to focus on where their text might appear, who, specifically, constituted the target audience and precisely why the piece was constructed, more often than not the writing was unconvincing and unrealistic. An inevitable corollary of this is that commentaries achieved lower marks for AO3 as contextual features could not be successfully explored and the inability to discuss genre beyond the most basic level seriously affected achievement at AO2.

In addition, some writing was very close in subject to the style model or had unclear context, eg it was described merely as 'a magazine article' or 'an editorial' or 'a web site'.

Another factor which contributed to pieces appearing to be unconvincing was the tendency to replicate style without due process, eg problem pages relating to invented problems, pieces presented as articles featuring imagined interviews with celebrities, or articles proffering travel advice regarding a venue which the students had never visited.

Some autobiographical writing was interesting and engaging but had no context for intended publication. Some extracts from novels had no synopsis attached, so that it was difficult to judge how successful the pieces might be in relation to envisioned whole texts; in addition, commentaries lacked reference to narrative contextualisation.

There appeared to be an increasing perception that there is a formalised genre known as ‘The Rant’ – which some students just see as a way of venting their spleen, often in an entirely uncontrolled way, against a variety of people, institutions and behaviours. These submissions were rarely either successful or unconvincing if they ignored the opportunity to make use of style models which demonstrate the levels of writing expertise shown by the wide variety of newspaper and magazine columnists who regularly tailor their opinions to engage and entertain a variety of audiences in many different publications.

### **Commentaries**

While recommended word counts were respected generally for the texts submitted, this could not be said to the same extent for the commentaries, some of which were seriously in excess of the recommended 500 words. Schools and colleges are reminded that if students are allowed to write unregulated amounts for their commentaries, it is highly likely that they will not be able to fulfil the expectations of the assessment criteria relating to AO1 - *uses linguistic methods in a systematic way*, AO2 - *considering a judicious range of concepts and idea*, and AO3 - *systematic reference to salient features from writing and style models*. In addition, it was disappointing to note that, in many instances, this issue was not addressed by the supervising teacher in the commentary nor in marginal annotation.

### **Style models**

Moderators were pleased to note that many schools and colleges had continued to expand the range and variety of style models used to underpin their students’ writing. There was still some evidence that students were being allowed to choose pieces that lacked either positive features that could be usefully adapted or emulated, or lacked specific attributes related to purpose, genre or audience, and thus provided little valuable guidance to the writer.

It also appeared that, increasingly, students were adopting a systematic approach to annotation, so that it was clear to writer, supervising teacher and moderator, precisely what the style model could provide in the creation of the new text. In some cases, however, style models were superficially annotated so that mere feature-spotting took place - a process which neither supports effective commentaries nor successful production of texts.

Some moderators also noted that some schools/colleges/students demonstrated only a limited understanding of the style model’s function, ie it is not the same as source material, and thus tended to use unsuitable style models which were often without recognisable genre features or were unattributed and lacking in language features worthy of emulation in the students’ pieces.

### **Evidence of Early Planning**

The majority of schools and colleges now seem to have taken on board the specification’s requirement that evidence of early planning (EEP), rather than draft versions should form part of each submission, and also the rationale behind this requirement. There was, however, a small but not insignificant number of schools/colleges who still chose to include first and sometimes even second drafts. This lack of evidence of early planning suggests not only a disregard of specification requirements and previous reports, but also perhaps a disturbing lack of consultation between supervisor and students in relation to process and intentions.

### **Annotation of pieces and commentaries**

It is perhaps appropriate to remind schools and colleges of the requirement and the purpose of the annotation of folder components texts and commentaries. The following extracts from the specification apply:

- *The Code of Practice for GCE states that the awarding body must require internal assessors to show clearly how the marks have been awarded in relation to the marking criteria defined in the specification.*
- *The annotation will help the moderator to see as precisely as possible where the teacher considers that the students have met the criteria in the specification.*

Often schools/colleges created their own pro-formas which contained the necessary information and these were both efficient and helpful for both the school/college and the moderator.

It is also worth reiterating the fact that annotations on the work should relate to both the criteria and how the work evidences the fact that a certain standard has been achieved, and comments should be addressed to the moderator and not the students.

### **Assessment**

Moderators found that assessment of both texts and commentaries was very largely accurate and reflected the majority of the schools' familiarity with both with the specification's content and appropriate approaches to the production of folders.

Where the school's/college's marking was found not to be in line with the AQA standard, it was generally found to be in relation to generosity in assessors' interpretation of the marking criteria. A summary of the main issues relating to this follows:

#### **AO4**

Schools and colleges are reminded that for a high level response, the folder needs to contain 2 pieces which are challenging/demanding/ambitious in terms of genre/purpose/audience *and* convincing in terms of realisation.

Commentaries:

#### **AO1**

Students must select *salient* linguistic methods/apply them systematically, display appropriate linguistic knowledge. deploying appropriate technical vocabulary and use clear and accurate expression.

#### **AO2**

Students need to display a perceptive overview of how their knowledge of concepts and ideas from Language study has allowed them to analyse success of their linguistic choices in terms of genre awareness, and the language features associated with that genre.

#### **AO3**

A precise and insightful grasp of how writers' language choices have been tailored to meet the needs of purpose and audience. Students should also provide systematic reference to features emulated/adapted from style model(s).

### **Administration Issues**

In a small number of schools and colleges, moderators noticed some administration issues which were very frustrating and often delayed the moderation process.

Schools and colleges are reminded that:

- all folders requested in the sample should arrive promptly and should match the request from the moderator
- students' marks need to be carefully checked as they are transferred from centre comment sheets to the Candidate Record Form
- students' details should be complete on the Candidate Record Form
- data for the language investigation should be in paper format and securely attached
- all folders should contain teacher comments which indicate how the marks were awarded to that folder – comments simply transferred from the assessment criteria or highlighted in a photocopy of the assessment criteria are not as helpful as individual comments.

The majority of folders were secured with green tags, orderly, logically and appropriately sequenced, even labelled in some cases, affording easy access to facilitate the moderation process. However, others were randomly sequenced and lacking essential elements such as early planning evidence, (annotated) style models or bibliographies.

The latter was a serious matter particularly where students had submitted travel writing without having visited the location, or written 'interview' articles on celebrities without having interviewed the subject, or written about health matters requiring detailed scientific/medical knowledge, as the writing was not fully or convincingly authenticated.

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

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.