

# Principal Examiner Feedback

## Summer 2009

GCE

### GCE English Literature (6ET02) Paper 01



## GCE08 English Literature: 6ET02

### General Comments

There is clear evidence from moderation that centres have engaged fully with the demands of the new specification. Given the demands of this unit - where candidates have to cover all four assessment objectives - and the fact that this was the first series for the majority of centres, the quality and variety of work from candidates, and the commitment to high standards from teachers, was very impressive.

There were some very interesting combinations of texts for the Explorative Study, ranging fully across the 1300 to 1800 period, linking texts such as *Everyman*, *The Rover*, *Volpone*, *The Changeling*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Way of the World* with many different Shakespearian plays. We had felt that there may have been some initial caution with regard to choices of texts and that centres might have 'played safe' with Shakespeare texts, but this was not the case.

Candidates had also taken full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Creative Critical Response for them to be experimental in style and write in different formats. There were lots of lively and entertaining pieces, often demonstrating very skilful manipulation of form. Topics ranged from an extract from a 'Culture Show' script of a discussion about a modern adaptation of *Measure for Measure* set in Afghanistan to a transcript of a Book Club discussion about women in *Titus Andronicus*.

There were a few cases where candidates had chosen tasks which did not allow them fully to access all the relevant assessment objectives. With the Explorative Study, this tended to be because they had not taken full account of the demands of Assessment Objective 3. The least successful responses to the Creative Critical task were those that did not establish a context for their writing and simply reviewed a film, for example. This meant that Assessment Objective 4 on this piece was weak. These issues will be explored further in the comments below.

### Administration

Most centres were extremely prompt and efficient with the administration of the coursework samples. However, there were some delays to the moderation process because of administrative errors and centres are urged to read carefully the specification requirements for folder submission, paying particular attention to the following points:

- It is important that the sample arrives with the moderator by the date specified. The dates for submission each year are published on the Edexcel website.
- The top copy of the OPTEMS form should not be sent to the moderator, but to the Edexcel Processing Centre at Hellaby (address on the form). Only the yellow copy of the OPTEMS should be sent to the moderator with the coursework sample.
- Centres must include the top and bottom candidates if these are not already included in the sample. They must also substitute another

candidate's folder if one of the folders selected is from an absent candidate.

- Candidate's work should, ideally, be fastened by treasury tags or, alternatively, by staples. Paper clips should not be used, nor should plastic or cardboard folders.
- Centres must check to ensure that candidate numbers and marks in the AO boxes are correct and complete. There were quite a few candidates whose marks had been added up wrongly by centres.
- In order that the moderator can understand how the centre's marks have been allocated, it is important to record the separate marks for each AO on **both** the candidate's Explorative Study and Creative Critical Response.
- Grades should not be written on the front sheet nor on the OPTEMS form. Equally, percentages should not appear.
- It is important that the coursework record cards are attached to the candidates' work and are signed (and dated) by both the teacher and the student. Some centres failed to do this and samples had to be returned, causing the moderation process to be delayed. Centres should download the coursework record cards from the Edexcel website: [http://www.edexcel.com/migrationdocuments/GCE%20New%20GCE/English Lit-GCE-cwrcV2.doc](http://www.edexcel.com/migrationdocuments/GCE%20New%20GCE/English%20Lit-GCE-cwrcV2.doc)

## Bibliographies

Most candidates included full, detailed information regarding their sources, but some simply failed to acknowledge their reading - even in the body of their essay - and this often resulted in low marks for Assessment Objective 3 where candidates have to take account of critical views by other readers. It is a requirement of the specification that references to texts, sources and quotations must be provided and all candidates should therefore attach a bibliography to their work.

## Word Counts

Gratifyingly few candidates exceeded the word limit for the coursework folder and the result was that much of the writing was tightly controlled and pertinent. It soon became clear that breaching the word limit on with either piece invariably was self-penalising because the argument tended to drift on the Explorative Study and the lively tone was lost on the Creative Critical piece if it went on too long.

Centres are reminded that the maximum number of words allowed for the folder as a whole is 2500 (including quotation). There is no set word limit for each individual coursework task: what is important is that the candidate meets all the relevant assessment criteria for each piece.

Candidates should be reminded that it is a requirement of the specification that they include a **cumulative word count** at the bottom of each page. Quite a number of candidates failed to include this on their work and as a result the moderation process was delayed. Centre assessors should comment on any candidate whom they feel has exceeded the word limit.

## Assessment Objectives

### Explorative Study

#### A03

Assessment Objective 3 tends to be the discriminator between candidates on the Explorative Study. Although most candidates made links between drama texts, there were a number who dealt with texts separately, with a section on one play followed by a section on another, using only a few connecting comments made. It is clear that some candidates need to be supported in strategies for linking texts and task- setting is crucial here. For example, "Discuss the presentation of outsiders in *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Jew of Malta*" suggests an interesting topic, but the task does not clearly direct the candidate towards AO3. A better 'steer' might be "Do you agree that Shakespeare is more sympathetic to his outsiders than is Marlowe?"

Perhaps more seriously, a number of candidates failed to take account of the second part of Assessment Objective 3 which requires their work to be 'informed by interpretations by other readers'. Other candidates interpreted this as meaning that critical quotations must be included and simply did this without any engagement with the arguments or ideas. High band answers need to use the views of other readers to develop their own arguments further, thus: "Many critics argue that Behn's choice of setting allows her characters a 'holiday' from the patriarchal system but it is clear from the play that..." or "Muir believes Antony to be more self-critical than even his harshest critics and this is probably true - indeed it is surely true of most tragic heroes, for instance..."

#### A01

The quality of written expression was very high for the most part. Candidates were generally comfortable and confident when writing about drama texts and there were lots of examples of tightly controlled structure and argument. Pleasingly, very few candidates offered narrative recount or subjective assertion. Furthermore, the vast majority of candidates had proof-read their work and produced accurate copy. Those who had not done this drew attention to their errors.

The weakest responses still tend to be a little formulaic - and this is often obvious when every candidate in a centre has written on the same title with a similar structure - and their essays follow a script rather than an engaging argument ("Macbeth's fatal flaw was... Othello's fatal flaw was..."). Alternatively, lists of features are produced (... another religious image in *The Duchess of Malfi* is...").

#### A02

Although candidates are confident about using appropriate critical terms when analysing drama texts, this AO is sometimes overlooked - perhaps because the relative number of marks available for it. It is important that candidates do not forget to look at how language and structure shape meaning in their chosen texts. They should also be aware that this objective will be assessed on equal terms with the others in Unit 4 and this it is a skill area that they need to develop.

The best responses explored in some detail the writer's use of structure, form and language to shape meaning - e.g. "Both characters are marked by their artificiality and frequent use of hyperbole which make their romantic liaisons ambiguous..." or "Shakespeare uses food-related symbolism ('Egyptian dish') to suggest that Cleopatra is hard for Antony to resist..." or "Don John...a two-dimensional character is used as a plot catalyst..."

#### A04

Candidates continue on the whole to incorporate contextual material into their work in a much more sophisticated manner. There are very few examples of essays that focus on historical and cultural information at the expense of the texts. This may be because of having to work within the discipline of a word limit. Whatever the reason, centres are clearly preparing candidates very well for this assessment objective and there were some genuinely inspiring contextual approaches to the plays.

The best responses made reference to contextual material as a means of progressing their argument - almost in passing - rather than 'bolting on' lots of, often irrelevant, material. For example - "...it may appear odd to a contemporary audience that Caesar criticises Antony so ruthlessly for pursuing Cleopatra and an easy lifestyle in Alexandria, but in Act 3 Scene i...". Similarly, high band answers used contextual material to link and compare their texts: "Even a modern audience will find this element of dark humour disturbing in both *Twelfth Night* and *The Way of the World*..."

#### Creative Critical Response

This new element of the coursework folder was very well received by centres and candidates and a wide variety of tasks was in evidence. Many candidates clearly enjoyed using less formal tones and registers to discuss literary texts. A number of centres used tasks from the early samples published in the specification, while others had clearly allowed candidates to experiment creatively and there were some excellent submissions ranging from director's notes for performance to blogs for online DVD buyers.

There were, however, a number of candidates who did not take account of the assessment objectives for the Creative Critical Response: some gave no indication of the context in which they were writing and it was very hard therefore to award marks for appropriate tone and form - thus, 'A review of Trevor Nunn's production of the *Merchant of Venice*' gave moderators no indication as to the intended audience of the piece nor did the task invite the candidate to engage contextually with the play's production or reception.

Centres are urged to consider carefully the assessment objectives for this coursework piece when setting tasks.

#### A04

A number of candidates failed to access this assessment objective. There is a requirement for evidence of understanding of the contexts in which texts are written and received. Again task setting was the issue. Straight reviews of videos gave candidates no opportunity to demonstrate contextual understanding. Rather than, for instance, having candidates write a review of a video production of a

play, it would be better, for example, to have them write a letter in response to a particular newspaper's review, thereby creating a critical context for the candidate to explore and a clear indication of the tone and register to be attempted.

Many candidates, however, responded thoughtfully and creatively to this task, writing for example a transcript of a podcast of a Radio 4 debate about the appropriateness of *The Duchess of Malfi* as an A Level text or a National Theatre programme note on design for a modern production of *The White Devil*. More examples of tasks that allowed candidates fully to access the assessment objectives were:

- Produce an extract from a script for 'The Saturday Review' programme where guests discuss the 2007 Lucky Strike adaptation of *Measure for Measure*
- Write the director's programme note for a production of Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, explaining why a twenty-first century audience should find this 300 year-old play relevant.
- Write a letter in response to Roger Ebert's review of the 2004 film version of *The Merchant of Venice*, using textual references to support or contest Ebert's interpretation of Shakespeare's original script.
- Pitch, in outline, your adaptation of *Volpone* to a BBC executive for inclusion in the 'Jacobean Tales Re-told' series.
- Write a fictionalised account of an interview with Oliver Parker at the Berlin Film festival where his adaptation of *Othello* has been critically acclaimed and where you adopt a very traditionalist stance regarding Shakespearean texts.

Centres are once again reminded that the criteria for AO4 on this piece are different from those that apply to the Explorative Study. The notion of 'context' that applies to the Creative Critical Response is one of the 'critical context' that looks at reception by different audiences; it does not refer to historical / social context which is addressed in the longer study.

In some cases candidates submitted work for this piece which read simply like another literary essay - a shorter version of the Explorative Study, in effect. This approach does not allow candidates fully to access either AO4 or AO1 on this task.

Finally, although it is intended that this task is approached creatively, some candidates were required to imagine situations that did not allow them to respond to characters or situations as literary constructs. Examples would be tasks which asked for diary entries to be written from the point of view of a character in a play or which asked characters to write 'in-role' pieces, such as a letter from Desdemona to her mother. Such tasks do not allow candidates to assume the critical distance required for this piece of coursework.

## AO1

This assessment objective looks at a candidate's ability to write persuasively in a critical style. The key here is to foster the candidate's sense of appropriateness of register and audience. Some candidates had established 'creative' situations - e.g. writing as a drama critic for The Times - but failed to establish a register and style that were appropriate for this situation.

Candidates should be reminded that despite the less formal tones and registers used in this coursework piece, they need still to pay heed to the clarity and accuracy of their written expression.

As with AO4, it is important that the candidate's work on this piece is accompanied by a clear indication of the task that has been set - including details of the intended readership - so that marks can be awarded for appropriateness of tone, form and register.

### **Assessment and annotation**

Although the majority of centres had put enormous effort into annotating their candidates' work, there were some who had clearly not recognised the importance of annotation in the moderating process. Some work was so well-annotated that the reasons for awarding the marks were crystal clear; other scripts showed little evidence - in some cases none- of having been marked by the centre, making it difficult to work out why a particular mark had been given.

There were scripts where annotations simply read "AO1" or "AO2" without there being any indication of the level being achieved.

However, many centres annotated their candidates' work in detail and had helpful summative comments linked closely to the assessment objectives and not to candidates' failures or personal qualities.

Centres are reminded that they should base all their marks on bands and not grades. It is not helpful to put grades on candidates' work. In order to fulfil the specification requirements for internal moderation, there must be separate totals for each coursework piece so that the moderator can see clearly how the overall mark was awarded.

The majority of centres had engaged fully with the process of internal moderation and it was again good to see evidence of an ongoing dialogue between teachers and the centre-assessor. Centre moderation comments are really helpful - e.g. 'I think you're being too cautious on AO2' etc. demonstrates clearly to the moderator what processes of internal moderation have taken place. Simply crossing out and changing marks is not helpful.

Although this was the first series of a new specification for most centres, the assessment of candidates' work was usually impressively accurate. Most centres seemed confident about interpreting the assessment objectives and bands in relation to their own candidates and substantial changes at moderation were rare.



## 6ET02 Grade Boundaries

Paper No	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E
01	80 Moderated mark	70	61	52	44	36
01	80 UMS mark	64	56	48	40	32