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Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

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GCSE English Literature (5ET03)
Shakespeare and Contemporary
Drama

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Introduction:

The impression given by the Moderation Team was that centres, on the whole, seem comfortable with standards and administrative expectations this series. One factor may be that centres are becoming more accustomed to the mark scheme, particularly the split with AO2 and AO3 on the Shakespeare task. Centres are reminded that evaluative comments should be addressed to the moderator not towards students. Moderators reported that in general, they were able to agree most centre marks this series; however, it is appreciated that where there has been an adjustment made to marks, this will be upsetting to the centres, especially if their marks had not previously been adjusted. It must be noted that it is necessary to ensure consistency between centres.

Where Moderators had difficulty in agreeing marks there have usually been similar reasons including:

- The task does not conform to those set by Pearson Edexcel and therefore does not allow students to focus on the relevant assessment criteria
- Misunderstanding and mis-application of the mark scheme
- Inconsistencies or lack of internal standardisation within centres

Some centres tended to over-reward narrative responses and/or ideas which had not been developed showing an analytical thought process or development - good ideas, no matter how original, need to have clear evidence of how they have been arrived at.

Simply rewording the mark scheme in comments is not always helpful. For example, putting "sophisticated" when it is not undermines the faith in a centres application of standards. It is better if there are brief indications as to why or how a response has met the standards described. The use of bullet points reminding students about assessment objectives is an approach that is particularly appropriate – having key reminders about assessment objectives in their notes will enable them to address all the

criteria. For the higher tier students providing awareness of what is meant by 'sophisticated' and 'assured' enables them to apply it to their response. Moderators see work placed in band 5 which is fluently written, conscientious and wide-ranging, but which is not necessarily sophisticated. Sophistication suggests complexity of ideas or the ability to handle complex ideas. There is also the skill of selecting textual detail imaginatively rather than selecting the obvious. Encouraging students to work independently to practice and develop these skills can be undertaken outside the classroom environment such as homework.

Overall it was felt that centres seemed well aware of the expectations of candidates' work and the assessment objectives they should be meeting. Perhaps because of this, candidates did sometimes seem to lack originality and often essays were similar and lacking creativity. Generally performance was strong and many candidates showed sophistication in their approach.

There were still a number of difficulties relating to assessment, with most inconsistent or out of tolerance centres having just a number of scripts which were marked inaccurately. Often there was an issue with just certain bands or certain teachers' marking rather than with the whole centre's assessment. On the whole, issues with marking related to marking too highly rather than too low, particularly with the higher band candidates. More than a few times, centres gave full marks to candidates whose work contained numerous SPaG errors.

Most administration was very good. In a few cases EDI print outs were not sent and in a number of places the highest and lowest scripts were not enclosed with the requested sample. In a couple of centres, the requested sample was not sent but the centre substituted scripts without any explanation. Furthermore, lots of centres did not always fill in the cover sheets completely or divide the Shakespeare task into the relevant AOs. There were still a number of scripts which were typed and reasons were not given - it did appear that the spelling and grammar were consistently accurate, suggesting that they may not have disabled the spelling and grammar check.

There was a better standard of Shakespeare responses than was seen over the last two years. Centres seem to understand more of what is required, and what makes a good response, and in many cases the AO2/ AO3 weighting is more accurate. Most responses still use film adaption, although it was lovely to see a ballet used for Romeo and Juliet and one manga version was used, but it was felt by the moderator that it limited the analysis of 'the way language was used'.

Baz Luhrman's Romeo and Juliet was by far the most popular adaptation chosen by centres for the comparison, but there were others on Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet, various Macbeths, Merchant of Venice, Much Ado, a Hamlet, and a few Othellos. The best were on Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet and the various Macbeth adaptations. Many candidates showed some quite sophisticated analysis of Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet, including a great deal of sensitivity to the media techniques used – not just the obvious 'swimming pool' and 'fish tank'. This made Luhrmann feel fresh rather than overdone this year.

The best responses were those which stuck clearly to one character. One centre's Mercutio and Tybalt responses were almost all good, and interesting to read. Other text/film comparisons were less successful and focused too much on the effect and less on how the effect was achieved (e.g. stating that a character appeared distressed but not explaining how he was portrayed that way).

In the lower bands, there was still a lack of close textual analysis on both tasks. If done, it was often overworked and became labored or unconvincing. There was also still too much context that was unrelated to the task requirements. For example the treatment of women in Shakespeare's time is important to understand in order to help with analysis to a degree, but at times it was more of the focus than the play.

In the Contemporary Drama task, An Inspector Calls was still the most popular text, but this was a shame as it was often formulaic in its

construction. Marks were seen to be slightly lower for this drama text in comparison to the lesser chosen texts. It was also problematic as the theme of responsibility led to some rather context led (rather than text led) responses. The 'Use of Dramatic Devices' question was used too much by lower ability candidates, who really struggled with the concept and may have done better with a question on character or theme.

The best responses were on The Crucible, but unfortunately these were few. Other texts were A View from the Bridge, which was generally approached well, Shirley Valentine, Educating Rita, Journey's End (quite well done) and Potter's Blue Remembered Hills. Unfortunately, one centre chose to analyse Of Mice and Men, which is a recommended text for Unit 1, and although is available in a play text form, is not one of the recommended texts for the contemporary drama.

Problems were again incurred by the moderators with centres running very close to the deadline when posting the sample to the moderator, resulting in the majority of scripts arriving 2 or 3 days late or even in some cases not even arriving by the mark submission date. There was still a need for the moderators to spend rather a lot of their time chasing centres for missing work, incomplete folders or incorrect marks submitted on Gateway, which did not correspond with the marks on the front sheet. It is essential that centres adhere to the deadline, as the Moderation Team is under immense pressure to complete the moderation process by the final mark submission deadline.

Distinctions between bands:

A key feature of a Band 1 is the narrative style of the response, with very little if no reference to the text. Alternatively the student will just paraphrase the lines:

 '*Macbeth is a violent soldier and a lord and in the film is shown covered in blood from the war*.'

Very little attempt is made to the evaluation of meaning (AO3) or language, structure and form used by the writer to present ideas, themes or settings (AO2).

Band 2 students will begin to select more relevant textual detail which may mirror the point they have just made; however, the response will generally lack evaluation or explanation. A response may look like:

'Shakespeare makes Macbeth repeat the words tomorrow, 'tomorrow and tomorrow.'

However the student will still state what is obvious within the text. Weak interpretation may be speculation which would be difficult to support or exemplify.

Moving into a band 3 a student will begin to show a sound understanding of the text and will be able to provide some further explanation of the terminology used by the writer and be able to expand on their understanding – creating a straightforward PEE paragraph:

'Macbeth is changing his mind, 'We will proceed no further in this business.' This shows he no longer wants to kill Duncan.'

There is clarity within the response but it is still a simple explanation, not far removed from some understanding (band 2). The student is however starting to analyse/evaluate and the response suggests an approach that is methodical with an attempt to find a pattern between the three parts.

To develop this further and fully evaluate the language/structure and form, a band 4 response would look more like this:

'Following the soliloquy, Shakespeare brings Lady Macbeth onto the stage and Macbeth voices his determination to bring the murder plan to an end, 'We will proceed no further in this business.' It is significant that the first word is 'We,' it confirms the characters' joint responsibility and the

importance of their relationship. The selected modal verb 'will' suggests this is an order, that Macbeth is assuming control.'

This analysis could be taken even further for the band 5. Moderators comment on rarely finding examples of students engaging and discussing 'structure' other than by simply identifying features of form such as rhyme patterns and metre. A 'perceptive' response to Macbeth's lines might explore alternative approaches to delivering the words. There could be consideration of how the actor places particular intonation on the words, and why it might be emphasized. Candidates targeting bands 4 and 5 need to have the skills associated with analysis and interpretation and this can be supported by the kinds of sentence openings which lead them to comment on effects:

- Shakespeare conveys (instant focus on the writer)
- But it also (shows development of an idea and a possible alternate interpretation)
- The writer wants us to see Lady Macbeth as (focus on the writer and the relationship with the reader/audience).

It is imperative that students and staff understand the key terms in the bands. When devising tasks in preparation for the unit, schools should have the assessment objectives and the mark scheme as the primary foci of their lesson planning.

It was felt by the majority of moderators that the candidates generally performed well in Unit 3, with a few centres having candidates achieving full marks as their highest folder, although it was felt that some teachers are still loath to award 50/50. Conversely, teachers rarely use Band 1, tending to aim towards the top of band 2 as the lowest mark. The higher achievers were those who could analyse "how the writer uses language" without just retelling the story or regurgitating the teacher's notes. Many answers were formulaic with the quotations being "pre-chosen" by teachers and the candidates being drilled in when to use them and what to say about them.

Centres are reminded that the length of some of the scripts, often the higher marked pieces, would suggest that the two hour time limit was *extremely flexible*.

Annotations on some centres' scripts were often intended for the candidate rather than the moderator, despite regular notification in previous Moderator's Reports. The summative comments often were nothing more than an odd word or phrase lifted from the criteria e.g. *"this is perceptive"* or *"well sustained piece."*

Suggestions for centre annotations:

- Department meeting focusing on key terms in bands and on the importance of annotation – especially for new or trainee staff – it is important that every member of the team has a shared understanding of key terms
- Use of standardisation material provided by Pearson Edexcel to aid in training and consistency
- Annotate scripts to draw attention to features of the response which support the final mark awarded, rather than highlight negatives or errors
- Annotations to be directed to the moderator and not the student
- Poor or no annotation is historically an indicator of over-rewarding.

Internal standardisation:

As mentioned earlier, a clear understanding of key terms in the mark scheme is essential for marking controlled assessments accurately, but it is also essential for efficient internal standardisation. Moderators commented on the many centres who clearly employed exemplary methods when it came to standardisation and this is reflected in the accuracy and consistency of their students' controlled assessments. However, a number of centres still require a more stringent approach to standardising, to ensure their candidates are accurately marked. Although it is not my place to dictate how centres complete their standardisation, I would like to remind

centres that internal standardisation is a requirement rather than desirable. To enable centres to consider various approaches, below are some ideas employed by a number of centres across the country:

- Teacher pairing – especially beneficial for newly qualified and trainee teachers; part time teachers who may not be able to attend regular department meetings and teachers who have taught other boards. Teachers can meet when the time suits them to moderate a top/middle/bottom script or they can share the marking of complete class sets of controlled assessments.
- Interim standardisation – at two points in the year the department can meet and discuss the marking of controlled assessments.
- Focus on a single controlled assessment task – when all classes have completed a piece copy a sample of scripts from a range of abilities and ask staff to mark and annotate before a department meeting.
- End of course standardising – samples of various tasks are taken from all staff teaching the course and either a nominated member of staff standardises the complete set or the whole department checks the consistency.

Summary of key points:

Many centres are still failing to:

- Meet deadlines for submission
- Include the highest and lowest marked scripts
- Include required paperwork
- Enter marks correctly – ensure that the mark on the front sheet tallies with the one submitted on Gateway
- Substitute script with one of a similar mark when scripts are lost or unavailable
- Correctly complete front sheets – missing names, numbers, marks etc
- Split the Shakespeare AOs
- Add any annotations
- Write annotations which reflect the AOs
- Write a summative comment which says something about the AOs without just repeating them.
- Moderate internally in an effective manner.
- Enter marks onto Gateway in good time