



General Certificate of Secondary Education

English

Specification 4700

ENG03

Report on the Examination

2011 Examination – June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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Andrew Hall Director General.

GCSE English 4700

Principal Moderator's Unit 3 (ENG03) Report

This was the first entry for Controlled Assessment in English and moderators reported that they were satisfied that centres had understood the requirements of the specification; indeed there was much evidence that centres had carefully planned a course that could be delivered in one year.

The administrative demands were similar to outgoing specifications and moderators reported that almost all centres met deadlines for the initial submission of marks and subsequent delivery of folders. Candidate Record Forms and authentication were completed accurately and the returned sample was correct. It is helpful to moderators if the content of folders is arranged in the same order as on the Candidate Record Form.

Most centres used the AQA form for notes. Those that chose not to, used a single sheet of either lined or blank A4. In order for the controlled assessment to be the best that the candidate can attempt, it is essential that the notes aid the candidate to achieve this. Moderators commented that this was the case for the majority of centres. It was evident that many centres had 'taught' note taking and there were examples where the notes were useful and valid and informed the candidate when he/she embarked on the actual controlled assessment. There is no one correct method: some candidates preferred short phrases and single words as prompts; some used 'spider' diagrams; some had brief notes in bubbles and some organised their notes according to the intended paragraphs. Centres are reminded that it is not acceptable to have notes which include complete sentences or first drafts which can be then written again as the assessment piece and neither is it in the best interests of candidates to have a page totally covered in tiny writing which covers every centimetre of the page. Moderators also saw notes which resembled a 'tick list' of terms and spellings which was used as a reminder for candidates. Similarly this was not especially helpful to the candidate. There is also a danger that candidates write too much. For centres requiring further help with note taking the e-AQA secure website has some examples of notes used by centres in the preparation of controlled assessment. They can be found within the Secure Key Materials section.

For the greater part, it was possible for moderators to report that the range of texts and tasks provided opportunities for success across the ability range. The Task Bank for Reading allows centres to contextualise the task so that it is appropriate for their candidates. The specification allows flexibility in the choice of text and choice of task. A large number of centres used the task as presented in the actual Task Bank for their assessments and so all candidates in the cohort answered on the presentation of the chosen character or how the narrator's voice was presented in their chosen poems. While this is wholly acceptable centres are reminded that teachers are free to formulate their own assignment titles based on the Task Bank. For example, one title based on presentation read as follows: 'Explore how Shakespeare presents Macbeth in the 'dagger' soliloquy.' This title had the advantage of a clear focus and offered the opportunity of analysing Shakespeare's methods of presentation at a critical time early in the play. Equally successful was the question "Explore Shakespeare's treatment of family relationships in Act 3 Scene 5". Again this allowed candidates to focus by considering Shakespeare's devices and use of language rather than retelling the story. There were also examples where prose titles equally assisted candidates to focus on particular aspects of their chosen text. Considering Steinbeck's presentation of George or Lennie in particular chapters is preferable to using the complete text. Assignments need to reflect a sharp analytical focus so that candidates are able to demonstrate an appreciation of a literary construct. It is important to

remember that the time constraint alone for the Reading part of English Controlled Assessment prevents long and narrative pieces of work based on all embracing assignment titles as was commonly the case with coursework in the outgoing specification. In Controlled Assessment we are looking for concise, focused work where the candidate has engaged with the text and has something to say.

Moderators commented that there were instances where centres had taught a 'frame' for the assessment. This resulted, of course, in all candidates in a particular teaching set and indeed the whole cohort in some cases, having virtually the same organisation, the same points and the same supporting quotations. It became apparent very quickly which candidates did not really understand or could not develop their own ideas but relied on what they had been taught in terms of content and organisation. This has ramifications for internal assessment and subsequent moderation. Moderators would far rather see candidates engaging with their own thoughts and opinion and selecting their own supporting quotation. Where this did happen candidates were more likely to make insightful comments based on their own perceptions and consequently were able to be awarded higher marks.

The specification for English is demanding in that it requires in Reading a study of Shakespeare, Literature from Other Cultures and the English Literary Tradition. The texts chosen were familiar and probably reflected the book store of English departments across the country namely *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* for Shakespeare and *Of Mice and Men* and *To Kill a Mocking Bird* for Other Cultures. A few centres also used *The Merchant of Venice* for their Shakespeare text. Poems tended to be the Browning monologues or a selection chosen from the past or present AQA anthologies. Centres are reminded that all candidates do not have to study the same text as different teaching groups could take different texts. Moderators were pleased that the requirement for centres to offer prose as Other Cultures and therefore poetry as ELH (or vice versa) was completely understood and did not cause confusion at all.

Moderators commented that the assessment of Reading was generally accurate and that centres were broadly in agreement with the AQA standard as exemplified by material published during the period leading to this first series. By matching the assignment against the descriptors in the assessment criteria, centres will be able to place the assignment within a given Mark Band. Fine tuning is then required to award a precise mark within the Mark Band. In English where three marks are available in each band, the middle mark reflects that the work is secure and the higher mark would indicate that the work is moving towards the next band. It is not helpful for centres to have a notional grade in mind where making assessments in Controlled Assessment as they do not exist. However, centres appeared confident in their use of the assessment criteria to a large extent.

All three of the Writing Tasks were chosen by candidates and there was no particular task that appeared more popular. Moderators commented that candidates writing about a person or significant event in 'Me, Myself, I,' did not always offer reflection but simply wrote an account. The more interesting examples began with a memory being anchored into a thoughtfully described scene and then the relative gradually introduced. Candidates using a scene from a film quite often kept very closely to the film sometimes using actual dialogue when it was intended that the scene should be a 'launch pad'. Of the assignments based on a scene from a film, writing which used '*The Lovely Bones*' and '*The Hobbit*' were particularly impressive. More able candidates created atmosphere and detail, while less able candidates had a structure which they were able to follow. 'The Time Traveller's Wife' was also proved to be highly successful by one centre.

In the Prompts and Re-creations section, centres are reminded that it is helpful for the moderator to know the poem on which the writing is based, as it was apparent that sometimes a centre used a contextualised assignment title which did not appear to be drawn from the Task Bank. Although the Writing Task Bank is more prescriptive than Reading, it is seen as a guide for the candidate. Centres are reminded that a choice exists with the Writing Task Bank and it is not expected that all candidates use the same task, or indeed the same film for their Controlled Assessments.

Moderators found evidence of engaging and controlled writing where candidates had thought carefully about use of language and choice of vocabulary. The element of 'control' had by no means inhibited candidates from constructing coherent and sustained narratives, vivid and exciting accounts or personal and reflective writing.

As with Reading, in most cases moderators agreed with centre assessment. Centres which need further guidance in the assessment of Reading and Writing in Controlled Assessment should consult the e-AQA secure website where examples of tasks and assessments are published. Commentaries also accompany the work so that it is possible to see why the marks were awarded.

Most centres used helpful marginal annotation and summative comments. Centres are reminded that 'AO1' written at the side of writing is not helpful but reference to a band and a comment on the work at that point is more helpful. It is also important that when the terms 'sophisticated' and 'analysis' are used, the work does actually reflect those qualities; in some cases it did not.

There was much evidence of internal standardisation. Centres are reminded that this is essential so that teachers can apply the assessment criteria across the entry cohort and confirm an (AQA) common standard. It would appear that most teachers are able to place work in the correct Band; internal standardisation will 'fine tune' the assessment within the Band.

Centres are to be commended for their commitment to the new specification and their understanding of its demands. There was evidence of careful planning and assessment. Candidates were engaged with texts and writing tasks. Moderators were of the opinion that the first entry of Controlled Assessment in English was successful and that centres would be confident in their future planning.
