

GCSE Examiners' Report

English Language
GCSE
Summer 2025

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Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.</p> <p>For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.</p>	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)
Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

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Executive Summary

Unit 1: Non-examination assessment

Oracy

The Individual Researched Presentation topics that were selected reflected the interests of young people across Wales, though some titles chosen lent themselves to conveying information only and did not afford candidates the opportunity to access the analysis and evaluation strands of the assessment criteria. Brevity was also an issue that needed to be taken into consideration when awarding marks to Task 1 assessments. Where candidates do not sustain their presentations much beyond the three- or four-minute mark before requiring questions to extend talk, the centre should consider whether ideas have been fully developed and take this into consideration when awarding marks.

For the Responding and Interacting task, all three topics (climate change, PE in schools and video games) were well-represented. In preparation for the November series, centres are reminded that the stimulus materials for the summer series are to be used for the autumn submission.

It was observed that where candidates were well-informed on their topics in the group discussions, they were able to be rewarded for presenting points coherently and interacting successfully with others. The most successful Task 2 assessments featured perceptive interrogation of the topic, exploring ideas with reference to evidence and real-life contexts.

Unit 2: External assessment

Reading and Writing: Description, Narration and Exposition

Overall, candidates appeared enthusiastic about the theme of 'Reading' and attempt rates were high across the paper. Five texts were presented in Section A and a range of text types were included. For Section B2, candidates were able to choose between tasks on exposition or description writing.

For the synthesis task, a significant number of candidates understood the expectations of this question type and were able to complete effective responses. There were many who ranged across both texts and were able to assemble a wide range of points about the benefits of reading. It must be noted though that a bullet point approach to this question is extremely unhelpful and detrimental to a candidate's potential achievement.

For question A16, the ability to use inference skills was crucial in accessing the higher marks available. Most candidates were able to show some understanding with appropriate evidence selection and discussion in relation to this impressions question.

Most candidates were able to make some progress with B1 proofreading. The message that credit can only be given to corrections which do not introduce further errors seems to have been widely received.

Two writing tasks were offered for candidates to choose from in question B2 and both proved accessible with much enthusiastic and detailed writing on offer. Attempt rates were high with many candidates seeming to follow guidance that has been given in relation to the importance of planning their work. As ever with the extended writing response, written accuracy was an area of significant weakness for many candidates and therefore impacted on overall performance.

Unit 3: External assessment

Reading and Writing: Argumentation, Persuasion and Instructional

This exam unit was based on the theme of 'Electric Vehicles' (EVs) and there was a good deal of enthusiasm about the topic and the wider issues, such as the environment. Candidates were committed to demonstrating their reading skills and much effort could be seen via the positive attempt rates. Both extended writing tasks were well received but there were some concerns regarding candidate time management in completing each task with the same level of detail.

For the first higher tariff question A7, candidates were able to engage with the text, and most could recognise the writer's hugely positive opinions. The main stumbling block was a lack of focus on the question. Candidates should continue to track the question throughout their answer in order to remain on task.

With regards to the summary task, question A12, an increasing number of candidates continue to produce succinct and well-focused responses. Many use bullet points to structure their summary and restrict the number of words used (which is excellent practice). Some use a brief phrase per bullet and, in doing so, save themselves a good deal of time which can be used in the final longer tariff questions.

When comparing texts, as was the case with question A13, candidates must look closely at the specific focus of the question. Candidates were asked to compare the thoughts 'about the road trips' and those who embarked on a general comparison of the two texts (looking at features, layout, details etc.) did not perform well. Organisation is also important in a comparison answer. The best approach for those wishing to access the higher Bands, is an integrated comparison. This allows a candidate to find clear details from each text and compare them.

For the argumentation writing task, candidates were able to produce engaging and thoughtful writing which demonstrated their secure understanding of the issues facing our planet. However, brief writing remains a concern. While some candidates run out of time and produce brief writing, there is a real sense that some choose not to finish.

For the persuasion writing task, a vast array of locations was referenced across the cohort. All approaches and locations were valid, as long as the persuasive element was evident.

Technical accuracy remains a concern in both writing tasks. Far too many candidates do not write in paragraphs with many relying on comma splicing throughout their writing or leaving out punctuation altogether.

UNIT 1: NON-EXAMINATION ASSESSMENT

Overview of the Unit

The purpose of the Unit 1 assessment for Summer 2025 was to provide an opportunity for every candidate to express themselves with accuracy and fluency through spoken language whilst demonstrating verbal reasoning skills. In centres where tasks were appropriately set, candidates were appropriately guided and the correct amount of preparation was afforded, individuality and independence were able to flourish.

The expected deadline was met by most centres with 33 requesting extensions. This was the first series that used the IAMIS upload system, and folders were found to be easily accessible. Most submissions included the relevant documentation (signed record sheets and the notes used by candidates for both tasks) alongside clearly labelled recordings. Where there were issues with accessing recordings, this was often due to incompatibility issues. These issues were generally resolved by the centre re-submitting the files in a compatible format. In some cases, moderators had to contact centres to obtain signed declaration sheets. Centres should note that marks cannot be awarded without a declaration sheet that has been signed by the teacher. Where there were administrative issues, these included the omission of the final mark total and the omission of the dates of task-taking. Clerical errors occurred in some cases where the marks submitted did not match the marks on the record keeping sheet. As outlined in the previous report, a number of requests had to be made for the replacement of incomplete folders. Centres are reminded that where incomplete folders are selected for submission centres should replace these with complete folders for candidates on a similar total mark from the same teaching group.

The record keeping sheets that were most productive in terms of moderation were those that contained purposeful commentaries that were closely tied to both elements of the assessment criteria in the appropriate band. The better commentaries featured exemplification of where the candidates met the criteria and clarified the placement of candidates towards the top or bottom of these bands. Less supportive commentaries made general references to the banding criteria and often did not cover a sufficient range of the criteria within the band awarded. In some cases, assessment sheets of the centre's own making featuring highlighted and annotated assessment criteria were included; these are useful, but they are not a replacement for a detailed commentary on the official and authenticated WJEC Record Keeping Sheet. The Record Keeping Sheet is the document that must justify band placement, with description and exemplification detailing where and how the criteria had been met. Where centres chose to use handwritten commentaries, these were less successful in terms of providing sufficient detail to allow the moderator to understand how marks had been awarded than digitally produced commentaries.

The provision of audio-visual recordings for both tasks by many centres was very much appreciated by moderators. For the Individual Researched Presentation, audio-visual recording allowed the moderator to be assured of the level of reliance on notes as well as be able to appreciate a candidate's engagement with their audience. Where audio-visual recording was used for the Responding and Interacting task, this enabled moderators to identify candidates, observe candidates' engagement with each other and evaluate their use of support materials during the discussion. A move towards using audio-visual recordings for both tasks would be beneficial to both candidates and moderators.

It was pleasing to see most centres following the requirement to submit notes used by candidates when presenting the Individual Researched Presentation; however, as stated in the previous report, some centres still had to be contacted to submit notes. Non-submission of notes creates an extra administrative burden to both centres and moderators, and it can also disadvantage candidates where a moderator feels there is an over-reliance on notes during task-taking. Most notes submitted were appropriate, being in the form of bullet points on cue cards. However, in some cases, candidates were allowed into task-taking situations with an inappropriate amount of notes, often in the form of full sentences or close to being sentences with very few words omitted. In a very few cases, candidates were allowed into a task-taking situation with full scripts. As highlighted in the previous report, some centres submitted candidate notes on electronic Word documents; this is not helpful as it calls the authenticity of the notes used during the task into question. In some cases, it was felt or could be clearly seen that candidates used more notes than were submitted. Every such case was referred to WJEC for further investigation.

Many centres helpfully submitted the notes used during the Responding and Interacting task. Though the specification does not state that notes used need to be maintained and submitted for this task, it is good practice to do so to aid moderation.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

Most centres continued to encourage independent choice of topics for the Individual Researched Presentation. However, in a minority of centres, all candidates presented on the same topic, such as social media or vaping. It is expected that candidates should have some autonomy in choosing a title that fits into one of the five WJEC themes with some task-setting guidance from the teacher. Presentation topics chosen reflected the interests of young people across Wales, though some titles chosen lent themselves to conveying information only and did not afford candidates the opportunity to access the analysis and evaluation strands of the assessment criteria. The most successful tasks had a persuasive focus or were based on the exploration of a question or viewpoint, with presentations that lent themselves to simply conveying information being self-penalising.

For this series, it was pleasing to see that most candidates adhered to the recommended five to seven minutes for the Individual Researched Presentation. However, there was a growing tendency for presentations to be in excess of the recommended duration, especially at the top end. It should be noted by centres that the most able candidates should be able to showcase their skills within the recommended time frame and that being in excess of this risks an adverse impact on audience engagement. Where candidates fell short of the recommended timing, centres wisely posed open questions to allow opportunity for further development of ideas. It is expected that all candidates should have the opportunity to respond to questions; candidates who were not given this opportunity were disadvantaged, especially where they may have failed to engage in analysis and evaluation in the required depth during their talk, or where they had been reliant on notes to present. It should be noted by centres that candidates who do not respond to questions do not present a full display of verbal reasoning skills, therefore impacting marks.

The use of overly detailed notes and prompt cards continues to be of real concern for this task. It is clearly stated in the guidelines for the Individual Researched Presentation that **‘it must be emphasised that this is not a reading task, but rather an oral presentation prepared by the candidate’**. It is further stated that the role of the teacher is **‘to ensure that the candidate does not read his or her presentation’**. Despite this being raised in the previous report, some centres allowed candidates into task-taking situations with inappropriate notes, whilst not considering this in the awarding of the marks. Centres are advised to consider teaching approaches in terms of supporting candidates to compose appropriate notes and to check candidates’ notes before allowing them to be taken into task-taking situations.

For the Responding and Interacting task, all three topics (climate change, PE in schools and video games) were well-represented. In preparation for the November series, centres are reminded that the stimulus materials for the summer series are to be used for the autumn submission.

It was pleasing to see a continued response to previous reports in terms of group numbers, as most groups were comprised of three candidates. However, a number of centres chose to group candidates in fours, meaning that candidates struggled to find space to present their points. It was pleasing to see that most candidates were able to sustain their discussions to the recommended ten-minute duration; however, it was noted that many groups extended their discussions unnecessarily, especially when placed in larger groups.

It was noted in this series that over-preparation of responses and over-reliance on supporting material featured somewhat more heavily than in previous series. In some cases, more able candidates self-penalised by presenting extended points as opposed to discussing spontaneously and responding skilfully to what had been said. In other cases, candidates took a turn-taking approach. Where this was the case, notes included for the group task often cemented this by showing that there was a clear plan in terms of who was going to speak when. As suggested by the task description, **candidates are expected to respond to and interact with each other in a spontaneous manner. It must be emphasised that this is not a reading task, and no scripting of the discussion is allowed**. Even when audio-only recording is used, moderators are clearly able to ascertain where delivery is heavily reliant on notes or scripts.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

For the Individual Researched Presentation, candidates securely achieving marks in Band 5 presented mature, engaging and highly evaluative explorations of complex and demanding subject matter, demonstrating thoughtful analysis of research and viewpoints. In this band, responses to questions served to further demonstrate verbal reasoning skills, thereby securing the mark. Ambitious vocabulary and the extremely confident presentation of information and analysis through highly effective, complex sentence structures were features of secure achievement in this band. Some over-rewarding occurred where candidates were secure, but talk did not feature the wide-ranging and precise vocabulary choices and complexity in sentence structure that we would expect to see in this band. Candidates securely achieving marks in Band 3 effectively delivered well-organised presentations and went beyond conveying information by clearly signposting some analysis and evaluation. Successful candidates in this band began to take the needs of the audience into consideration by using some rhetorical devices when exploring their subject matter. Candidates at the bottom of Band 3 often relied on conveying information before being encouraged to analyse and evaluate through the use of open questions.

Brevity was an issue that needed to be taken into consideration when awarding marks. Where candidates do not sustain their presentations much beyond the three- or four-minute mark before requiring questions to extend talk, the centre should consider whether ideas have been fully developed and take this into consideration when awarding marks.

Any reliance on scripted material or over-extensive notes by a candidate should also be taken into consideration when awarding marks. When applying the assessment criteria for content and organisation, consideration should be given to whether candidates are able to deliver 'effectively' and whether the needs of the audience are taken into consideration. When candidates are tied to extensive cue cards (including those not quite in the form of sentences but with very few words omitted) it is unrealistic to consider a 'confident' delivery. In terms of accuracy, range of sentence structures and register, reading also affects register, especially where there is a stilted delivery.

For the Responding and Interacting tasks, where candidates were well-informed on their topics, they were able to be rewarded for presenting points coherently and interacting successfully with others. In the higher mark ranges, candidates displayed close listening skills and adapted their responses according to what had been heard, challenging points with some skill where appropriate. The most successful discussions featured perceptive interrogation of the topic, exploring ideas with reference to evidence and real-life contexts.

In some cases, over-preparation that hampered spontaneity needed to be considered when awarding marks. A mark in Band 2 requires candidates to 'discuss' and 'respond positively to what they hear', whilst Band 3 requires candidates to 'discuss opinions in some detail' and 'listen attentively' in order to engage with what has been heard and make 'thoughtful responses'. These cannot be achieved when candidates are reciting pre-prepared points or waiting for their planned turn to speak.

Across both tasks, centres are encouraged to consider what constitutes a 'secure' command of grammar, as too many candidates are being placed in Band 4 where there are issues with tense and agreement ('there is' not 'there are', for example) and the repeated use of 'like' or 'y'know' as fillers. Ambitious vocabulary should be rewarded, but this is a balancing act where candidates are inaccurate elsewhere.

Key points to consider ahead of the next Unit 1 submission

Administration:

- Centres should check record sheets for correct detail, marks and teachers' signatures.
- Commentaries on the record keeping sheets should provide adequate detail to justify the marks awarded within the bands through close reference to both elements of the assessment criteria with exemplification provided to justify decisions.
- Incomplete folders should be replaced by a complete folder on the next nearest mark from the same teaching group.
- Centres should respond promptly to contact made by the moderator or the WJEC so as not to delay the moderation process.

Notes:

- All notes used by candidates should be submitted for moderation in their entirety.
- Notes for both tasks should be brief and supportive, as is outlined in the specification.
- Scripts are not allowed to be used by candidates.

Recordings:

- Centres are encouraged to provide audio-visual recordings to aid identification and the ease and accuracy of moderation.

Individual Researched Presentation:

- Having the opportunity to respond to questions is important across all abilities. These questions should be open questions and should not be prepared. Questions can encourage further development and provide opportunity for candidates to engage in further analysis and evaluation and demonstrate verbal reasoning skills.
- Teachers should continue to encourage individuals to choose their own topics for exploration and give guidance in terms of refining titles to enable candidates to access all elements of the assessment criteria.
- It is good practice to link the title of the presentation to one of the five WJEC themes in the 'Description of activity' box on the Record Keeping Sheet.

Responding and Interacting task:

- These tasks should encourage candidates to research further information than that provided in the stimulus material. Candidates perform well when they are confident with the subject matter and only refer to notes as prompts where needed.
- Candidates should be discouraged from prepared turn-taking and should prepare for a natural and spontaneous discussion.
- Centres should aim to place candidates in appropriate groups of three, where possible.
- Audio-visual recordings aid identification. The identification of candidates at the start of the assessment is also necessary.

The most successful centres provided clear evidence of the required internal moderation which resulted in accurate and fair assessment across their sample. It was pleasing to see many centres taking note of moderators' reports and making the required adjustments to their administration and assessment processes. A very few centres were raised as concerns where previous advice had not been heeded. It is hoped that centres will continue to keep these points in mind next year to support the smooth running of the moderation process and ensure that all candidates achieve their full potential.

As always, if centres anticipate any difficulty addressing these points, they should contact the Subject Officer prior to the submission of samples. Moderators also welcome any information that may support the moderation process, and many centres accompanied their sample with a letter to the moderator to outline the assessment and moderation processes and to explain any substitutions.

The moderating team would like to take this opportunity to thank all centres for the hard work that has gone into preparing the candidates for their assessments and compiling the samples for submission. As always, the moderating team has very much enjoyed listening to such an interesting range of materials from a huge range of candidates within a variety of settings.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

Summer 2025

UNIT 2: EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Overview of the Unit

This exam was based on the theme of 'Reading'. Overall, candidates appeared enthusiastic about the theme and attempt rates were high across the paper. Five texts were presented in the Reading section and a range of text types were included. Questions were set to provide varied levels of challenge across the paper whilst allowing for a broad test of skills. In Section B for the extended writing question, candidates were able to choose between tasks on exposition or description writing.

Which AOs were assessed?

AO2 Reading – inference, deduction and retrieval skills were tested throughout the reading section. Candidates were required to use synthesis skills (A10) and evaluate and interpret content (A6, A7, A9 and A16) and edit texts (A17-A19). Careful evidence selection was required across both higher and lower tariff questions as was the ability to interpret meaning.

AO3 Writing – all writing skills relating to the assessment of GCSE English Language were tested. These are listed on p.13 of the Specification document which can be found at:

[GCSE English Language Specification](#)

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A Reading

Text A

Text A was adapted from an infographic which gave information about the reading habits of people in Britain. This was a non-continuous text which provided statistical information about the reading patterns of people who read and their preferences in terms of genre. Details were presented in an accessible way and this provided a straightforward introduction to the examination.

Questions A1 and A2

The opening two questions were designed to offer a straightforward introduction to the examination. Candidates were asked to retrieve statistical information for both questions. This was a straightforward exercise and the majority of candidates were able to access the available marks. In the case of A2, the information was available in two different places within the text which added to the straightforward nature of the question.

Question A3

In this question, candidates were asked to identify the two fictional genres that British people like equally. This involved locating two genres which were preferred by the same number of readers. The only genres that had been selected by the same number of readers were 'Comedy' and 'Contemporary fiction'. Candidates had to write down both of these genres in order to access the mark. Most candidates performed well in this response.

Text B

This text was adapted from the website of the reading charity The Reading Agency. The text gave an overview of what The Reading Agency does as well as providing information on the importance of reading for pleasure.

Question A4

This was the first multiple-choice question on this exam paper. The question required candidates to choose from four options to explain the meaning of the word 'empower' in the context it was used in the text. The question proved straightforward and a significant majority chose the correct answer which was the third choice 'make someone stronger'. Credible distractors were included so candidates needed to read the text carefully and, as ever with this question type, look at the phrase in the context in which it was written. The first answer, to 'force someone to do something' was the next most popular choice. A very small minority of candidates elected to select more than one of the boxes or failed to make their choices clear. These answers were ineligible for credit.

Question A5

This was a low tariff question which required candidates to locate a single piece of information. They were asked to write down one organisation that The Reading Agency works with to encourage reading. There were three possible answers to this question (public libraries, prisons and hospitals) and the vast majority were able to correctly select one of them.

Question A6

This was a low tariff question which presented a little more challenge as candidates were required to interpret meaning and explain evidence. To achieve a mark, candidates needed to demonstrate that they understood what was meant by the charity thinking it was not doing 'nearly enough' to encourage people to read. The key to a successful answer came from a contextual awareness of where 'nearly enough' featured in the text. Candidates needed to have a clear sense of proportion in that the charity has only 'touched the lives' of 'two million people' which, relative to the population of '67 million', can be considered a small number. Candidates who used the numbers to help them often managed to convey a clear explanation which demonstrated awareness of the scope of the difference. Those who merely copied the relevant evidence from the text without attempting to explain were unsuccessful. Some candidates who answered using different areas of the text or provided very general responses were also unsuccessful. It was possible to convey a sense of the scope of the difference without using the specific numbers in question, but these answers were relatively rare and often stood out due to their perceptive explanation and/or clarity of expression.

Question A7

This question required candidates to engage with word meaning. They were asked what is meant when the text says the charity wants to ‘get more people fired up about reading’. There was an expectation that candidates engage with the sense that ‘fired up’ implies a level of enthusiasm, excitement or passion for the activity of reading. Examiners were instructed that this may be expressed in different ways and to be mindful of synonyms and explanations which demonstrated understanding using different vocabulary to that suggested by the mark scheme. The key was making sure that candidates were able to explore the increased or heightened levels of emotion towards the activity. Many candidates achieved well via the anticipated routes. Those who struggled were vague or insufficiently focused in explanation to achieve the mark. For example, those who said the charity wanted to ‘get more people interested in reading’ did not demonstrate sufficient perception to be awarded the marks.

Text C

This text was adapted from a longer speech given by a well-known author about the importance of reading. This part of the speech discussed the author’s opinions about fiction and the many reasons why it is important.

Question A8

This was a low tariff question which required candidates to retrieve a single piece of information. They were asked how the person giving the speech earns a living. The obvious answer to this question was that the person is an author. He clearly states that he is ‘an author, often an author of fiction’. However, he goes on to state that, ‘I write for children and for adults’ and ‘I have been earning my living through my words’. Those candidates who were able to locate this information and demonstrate understanding by stating that he is a writer, or that he earns his living through writing or through his words were also able to make progress. They had clearly based their answer on what they had read and were able to demonstrate understanding. Those who were unable to demonstrate understanding of this evidence (which was usually evident by wholly copied chunks of text such as ‘through my words’) did not demonstrate sufficient understanding to be credited.

Question A9

This question was worth three marks and asked candidates to explain why the person giving the speech does not agree that some books are ‘bad’ for children. There were four possible areas to consider in response to this question and they were located in the third and fourth paragraphs of the text and are printed in the indicative content in the mark scheme. As ever with this type of question, the temptation is often to copy down relevant sections of evidence or just reiterate the content of the text, but this undoubtedly restricts a candidate’s potential achievement. Those who performed well on this question will have been able to move beyond the text and explain key evidence in relation to the question. For example, the writer states that it has become ‘fashionable’ to declare some books as ‘bad books’ which suggests that he thinks it has happened as part of a trend and not for any valid reason in relation to the books in question. Explanations such as this, which demonstrated clear understanding of the evidence, in relation to the fact that the writer does not agree that some books are ‘bad’ for children were rewarded. This question was intended to offer challenge and test a candidate’s ability to engage with and interpret meaning. As with all reading questions on Unit 2, bullet point answers were ill-advised and tended to lead to very brief answers which demonstrated insufficient understanding.

Question A10

This was the first high tariff reading question on the paper. It tested the ability to synthesise information from Text B and Text C. Candidates were asked to synthesise what was said about the benefits of reading. As ever, a significant number of candidates understood the expectations of this question type and were able to complete effective responses. There were a great many who ranged across both texts and were able to assemble a wide range of points about the benefits of reading (and thereby clearly answered the question). As with last summer's synthesis question those who struggled did so largely because of limitations in their approach or because they attempted to answer a different question to the one they had been set. Previous Principal Examiner reports and numerous Professional Learning exam feedback sessions have made it very clear that a bullet point approach to this question is extremely unhelpful and detrimental to a candidate's potential achievement. It is of significant concern that so many candidates persist in taking this self-limiting approach. An answer structured using bullet points does not allow candidates to demonstrate the necessary collation skills and often encourages unselective copying. Most candidates who take this approach are far too concise in the information they present which reduces their ability to demonstrate understanding and naturally caps the extent of their achievement. This is especially worrying because many of the candidates who take this approach target the correct areas of the text but are perhaps unable to achieve their full potential due to the limitations noted above.

Text D

This non-continuous text was adapted from an infographic that gave information about the use of libraries in Wales in 2018.

Questions A11 and A12

Both of these questions were designed to test the ability to use deduction skills to retrieve information. Candidates were asked to retrieve factual information for both questions. This was a straightforward exercise and the majority of candidates were able to access the available marks. In the case of A12, two items were asked for which could be downloaded for free at a library and, as these were clearly separated in the text, a mark was available for each item correctly recorded.

Question A13

This was the second multiple-choice question on this exam paper. The question required candidates to choose from five options to isolate the statement that was not made by the text about Welsh libraries. All the statements were based on information from the text, although the third statement 'they don't cost much to join' was untrue. The text clearly stated that 'libraries are free to join'. The task proved straightforward and success rates were high with over 90 percent of candidates selecting the right answer. It was essential that candidates read the text and all options in the question carefully to be sure of what they were looking for. A very small number of candidates made more than one choice in relation to this question, ticking one or more of the boxes. These answers were not eligible for credit.

Text E

The final reading text on this paper was adapted from an autobiographical account of childhood reading. It presented the author's feelings on being a self-confessed 'bookworm'.

Question A14

This was the final multiple-choice question on the paper. Candidates were required to choose from four multiple-choice options to explain the correct meaning of the word 'bookworm' in the context provided by the text. This question proved to be very straightforward and the vast majority of candidates answered correctly. This was the multiple-choice question with the highest success rates on this summer's Unit 2 paper.

Question A15

Candidates were asked to write down one reason why a 'bookworm' may not mind missing out on promotion at work. There were two possible answers to this question. Both were located in the middle paragraph of the text and the first proved to be less complicated than the second. Those who answered that bookworms 'only need money for books' were able to access the mark. The second reason was that promotion would give them 'longer working hours' and 'would mean less time to read'. For those candidates who focused on the 'less time to read' part of the text, they needed to be absolutely clear that it was the longer working hours created by promotion that gave them 'less time to read'. Those who abbreviated this answer and merely wrote 'less time to read' were ineligible for credit – that did not work as an answer to this question. For some candidates, ambiguity was caused by using the pronoun 'it' – often they used 'it' to refer to promotion but that did not necessarily answer the question because the focus of the question was why 'bookworms' may 'not mind' missing out on promotion. If insufficient words were used to contextualise their answer a candidate was likely to fall short of an adequate answer to the question. Conversely, those who were able to see that a bookworm may not mind missing out on promotion because it would give them more time to read were able to access the mark with relative ease.

Question A16

This was the second higher tariff reading question on the examination paper. Attempt rates were high, although perhaps a little lower than those of earlier questions. It was clear that most candidates had timed the exam successfully to this point. Eight marks were available for this question. The question was designed to encourage candidates to engage with the language of the text to explore the impressions created by the writer. The ability to use inference skills was crucial in accessing the higher marks. Most candidates were able to show some understanding with appropriate evidence selection and discussion in relation to the question. The highest achievers were able to carefully examine the text and demonstrate a wide range of well-evidenced and specific impressions which demonstrated perceptive awareness of implicit detail.

The earlier points in the text, particularly in relation to the advantages a 'bookworm' has at school, proved the easiest to access and most candidates made some headway with these ideas. Some struggled to move beyond this which was self-limiting. For a number of candidates, the writer's humorous tone and exaggeration of ideas for effect were missed. Those candidates who read very literally struggled to make progress. There were a number who took issue with the writer's lifestyle and were keen to label her as 'deluded' or an 'addict' but these were often points based on the candidate's own opinions and rarely made any meaningful connection with the text.

Editing Section - Questions A17-A19

This section did not present anything unexpected. All of the question types had been seen across past examination series and there was nothing out of the ordinary to report.

In questions A19(a) and A19(b) an increasing number of candidates wrote out the whole sentence rather than putting the sentence number. If the correct sentence was written down these answers were credited. As mentioned in previous Principal Examiner reports, limitations with handwriting and, in particular number formation, may have been a barrier to success. An increasing number of answers were escalated for further consideration because an examiner could not decipher the number written down. A few candidates were saved by further investigation revealing they had shown their workings on the actual text. Where it was not clear which sentence number had been selected, a mark could not be given.

Proofreading section - Question B1

The majority of candidates were able to make some progress with this proofreading question. The text was presented as a paragraph welcoming users to the library. There was little to separate which errors were identified and corrected most frequently, although 'calandar' was almost certainly the error most often identified but inaccurately 'corrected'. There were many different alternatives given for the spelling of this word. There were also a few different alternatives to 'acess' and this also seemed to be the error which was most often overlooked by candidates. The message that credit can only be given to corrections which do not make further errors seems to have been widely received. As a reminder though, please be mindful that all corrections must appear exactly as they would appear in the text. The introduction of additional errors – for example, inappropriate capital letters or accompanying the answer with another word which has been spelled incorrectly, would render the answer ineligible for credit.

Question B2

Two writing tasks were offered for candidates to choose from and both proved accessible with much enthusiastic and detailed writing on offer. Unfortunately, we are unable to measure which of the question types was most often chosen by students, but anecdotally examiners felt that both tasks enjoyed similar levels of popularity. Attempt rates seemed high with a great many candidates seeming to follow guidance that has been given in relation to the importance of planning their work.

Task A was an exposition task which asked candidates to write an essay explaining their views on reading. They were provided with the additional stimulus of a quote taken from Text C of the reading section which stated that 'reading for pleasure, is one of the most important things a person can do.' There were some interesting and detailed responses to this question. It was delightful to read of so many passionate advocates of reading as a hobby. Many candidates wrote at length about the importance of reading and were able to provide lovely specific detail in relation to their own experiences of reading as well as discuss its wider importance in society. A number of candidates also wrote about why they did not agree with the statement in the question. A few were disgruntled rants which had little substance, but many handled a dissenting view with care and thoughtfulness. There were some nicely balanced responses which suggested that 'reading for pleasure', although important, is not 'one of the most important things a person can do'. These tended to focus on the need for balance and proportion in life. Some used the example of the 'bookwork' in Text E to suggest this was not a healthy lifestyle. There were several responses from candidates with learning difficulties such as dyslexia who wrote in detail about their own personal reasons for disagreeing with the task statement. Many of these were articulate, thoughtful and informative and certainly provided much 'food for thought' to the examiners reading them.

As expected, the reading resources from Section A were often used to inform the writing produced in these responses. Indeed, there were facts provided in Text D which were not required to answer reading questions but were ably adopted by candidates in their writing to make clear and effective points. Text C was used quite extensively in these responses to further engage with and develop the ideas of this writer. A few candidates took this approach too far and wrote an answer which would have been more at home in the reading section – this task was an opportunity to explain the candidate's own views on reading not to focus on attacking or defending a list of points they had found in Text C. As with previous years, a small number of candidates copied from the texts. This was usually Text C but sometimes they copied a small chunk from each of the reading texts. These were easy to spot (examiners are very familiar with these reading resources) and were ineligible for credit.

A few candidates seem to have tried to adapt a technique which we believe to have been popularised on social media platforms. This will undoubtedly have harmed their chances of achieving highly on this section of the examination. It seems to have been advised that candidates copy the key aspects of what they have read (for example, the structure, punctuation and key vocabulary) and change the topic or words slightly. Although this may result in a slightly different piece of writing than the one which they have read (and modelled their work upon), it does not provide them with a piece of their own original writing nor showcase what they can achieve. Little credit would be available for those taking this self-limiting and somewhat pointless approach.

Task B was a description writing task which asked candidates to describe an occasion when they did something they enjoyed. These were varied in content and approach and there was much entertaining and detailed personal writing for examiners to enjoy. Unsurprisingly, relatively few candidates described the experience of taking an exam as something 'enjoyable' but a few still elected to take this route and were keen to impress with their elation at a job well done. More common themes included experiences with friends and family, holidays, musical concerts and festivals and sporting or creative arts experiences. As ever, when candidates root the source of their description writing in experiences which are familiar to them they are generally able to write in convincing detail.

Barriers to success were perhaps most evident for those candidates who neglected to consider the direction provided by the task. This led to a suspicion of pre-prepared content rather than a genuine attempt to answer the examination question. For example, examiners reported third person narratives about time travel and horror-style stories which developed in a gruesome/macabre way, and these types of response could in no way be connected to an 'enjoyable' experience. Whilst it is possible to assess these candidates for Writing Accurately it is inevitable that their Communicating and Organising marks will be detrimentally affected as a result of limited or negligible task awareness. Another concern echoes my remarks in relation to Task A. A few candidates took the 'bookworm' story from Text E and adapted this text (using similar structures, sentences and key vocabulary) to describe a hobby of their own choosing. This is not a piece of original writing, it is plagiarism of the reading materials and shows little task awareness. Answers such as these will have struggled to make progress.

As with previous summers, timing did not appear problematic for most candidates with many writing extensively in Section B. Indeed, and as reported previously, some candidates seem to write beyond what is necessary in order to fill the time. In many of these cases, their time may have been better employed in the preparation stages with careful planning of their writing. Many would also benefit from reserving a few minutes at the end to proofread what has been written.

Finally, written accuracy was an area of significant weakness for many candidates and is likely to be the single biggest factor in candidates not achieving the outcome they desired in this summer's GCSE English Language examinations. The following are all areas which detrimentally affect the quality and coherence of writing and will restrict a candidate's progress:

- limited control of tense and agreement
- verbless sentences
- the omission of basic punctuation like full stops and capital letters
- the prevalence of comma splicing
- basic spelling mistakes – particularly regular homophone errors and errors with key words that can be found in the texts and questions
- inaccessible handwriting – if writing is illegible, it cannot be marked as accurate.

These are areas of weakness that have always proved problematic and there is no easy or obvious solution. It is clear though that this is the area which could most improve a candidate's performance so teaching strategies that address some or all of these areas would be highly desirable.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GCSE

Summer 2025

UNIT 3: EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Overview of the Unit

This exam was based on the theme of 'Electric Vehicles' (EVs) and there was a good deal of enthusiasm about the topic and the side related issues, such, as the environment. Candidates across the cohort were committed to demonstrating their skills and much effort could be seen via the positive attempt rates. A combination of continuous and non-continuous texts and the range of question types ensured varied levels of challenge were posed. Writing tasks saw candidates complete a talk and an article to comply with the requirement to produce argumentation and persuasion writing. Both tasks were well received but there were some concerns regarding candidate stamina and the ability to sustain concentration/complete all tasks.

Which AOs were assessed?

AO2 Reading – inference, deduction and retrieval skills were tested mostly across a range of lower tariff questions (A1, A2, A3, A5, A6, A9, A10). Candidates were required to use summary (A12) and comparison (A13) skills during the examination alongside analysis (A7). Careful selection of and reference to evidence was required across a range of higher tariff questions (A7, A10 and A13) alongside the ability to interpret texts and use verbal reasoning skills (A7, A8, A10, A13). Sequencing skills were also tested (A5).

AO3 Writing – all writing skills appertaining to the assessment of GCSE English Language were tested. These are listed on p.13 of the Specification document which can be found at: [GCSE English Language Specification](#)

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A

Text A

Text A was a non-continuous text which presented the results of an electric vehicle survey. The text featured a series of callout boxes identifying information regarding cost, government grants, environmental benefits and charging points. The information was clearly presented, and a series of statistics were presented to indicate the overall findings of the survey.

Question A1

With a high success rate, A1 proved to be a clear and straightforward introductory question to the topic. The question asked candidates to locate information to enable them to focus on ‘...what percentage of people would consider buying an electric vehicle?’ The correct answer could be found in the first box on the page and was 79%. As always, the number could be presented numerically or in writing. The % was not necessarily required as this was implied in the question. Success rates were high for this question and completion rates were extremely positive.

Question A2

This was the first multiple-choice question on the paper. The question asked candidates to find the most suitable definition of a ‘government grant.’ Four options were presented and the top option ‘an amount of money or funding given by the Government’ was the correct and most credible response. More than 80% of candidates chose the correct option, which was pleasing. The next most popular answer was option two ‘a loan given by the Government’ although this suggested a misunderstanding of the term ‘loan’. The other two options were much less commonly selected with very few selecting the third option ‘an electric car that is donated by the Government’. As always with a multiple-choice question, some candidates ticked all boxes or multiple boxes and were ineligible for credit.

Question A3

Candidates were asked ‘...how many electric vehicle charging points are there in the UK?’ and this question offered few barriers to success. The correct answer could be located in the final box on the page and candidates were required to write, ‘50,000 – 70,000’. It is worth reminding candidates that a location question simply requires them to copy down the correct answer. A small number of candidates chose to present the information in an alternative way and by doing so did not gain credit. An incorrect number of ‘0s’ meant that an answer could not be credited as did answers that included other irrelevant statistics.

Text B

Text B was a factsheet aiming to help people, when choosing an electric car. Four sections of information were located around an image of an electric vehicle. The text was randomly presented to allow candidates to sequence the information in response to question 5.

Question A4

This was the second multiple-choice paper on the question and with a success rate of 90%, candidates performed well. The question asked them to find the most appropriate definition of 'battery range' and the third option was the correct answer (the word 'distance' undoubtedly guided them to the idea of 'range'). Options 2 and 4 were the next most popular options and very few candidates chose option 5. A small but not insignificant number of candidates ticked multiple boxes and could not be credited.

Question A5

This question required candidates to sequentially order the information given in Text B. Success rates were pleasing but some lost marks due to not following the instructions. It is essential that candidates pay attention to the number that is given to them (in this paper it was 1) and then allocate the remaining numbers. Some candidates tried to tick boxes rather than writing in a number, and this approach was unhelpful. Those completing the paper using a word processor often saved themselves time by writing down their answer for this question in the answer booklet (rather than word processing the information). Those who read the information in the paragraph below the bold heading would have discovered that additional words such as 'finally' could be found to further enable success.

Text C

Text C was a non-continuous advert that explored some of the advantages of electric vehicles. The advert was helpfully separated into smaller sections and the aesthetically pleasing presentation of the information made it particularly accessible and appealing. Candidates appeared to enjoy working through the text and some of the detailed responses to A7 demonstrated their understanding of the text, its appeal and structure.

Question A6

The first question on this text was a location task. Candidates were asked to consider how much 'CO² one electric car can save in a year' and the correct answer was found in the 'Fun Fact' section. The answer was (an average of) 1.5 million grams. To successfully gain credit, all highlighted components were required – the correct number and the grams. As with question 3, candidates who simply copied down the correct information made this a straightforward task. Those who tried to change the way that the number was presented (e.g. 1500000) often made the task far more difficult than it was intended. Some did not include the correct number of 0s or placed decimal points within the number that rendered it incorrect. Others omitted the 'millions' and were ineligible for credit. A number forgot to include the 'grams' and could not be credited. It is worth reminding learners that precise copying of information for this type of response is valid and often the most useful (and straightforward) way to respond.

Question A7

The first extended reading question of the paper was A7. The question asked candidates to consider, 'How does the advert persuade the reader of the benefits of electric cars.' The text was overwhelmingly in favour of electric cars and gave a wealth of positive and persuasive examples of language, specific details, factual information and persuasive techniques. At all levels, candidates were able to engage with the text, and most could recognise the writer's hugely positive opinions. The main stumbling block was a lack of focus on the question. A good number of candidates wrote well about the text and clearly understood how it was trying to persuade but there was little sense of the actual benefits within their answers. For some, focus was instead given to 'why should I read on' or 'why am I persuaded to buy one'. Any class-based work that can be done on question focus will be beneficial to all candidates.

When teaching candidates to complete a 'how does' question, it is good practice to encourage them to step back from the resource and simply ask themselves, what am I being asked to do. In this question, they were being asked to consider how the advert persuades the reader that an electric car is *beneficial*. Constantly referring to 'benefits' throughout their answer helped many candidates operating in the middle Band areas.

The next step to success is simply picking out the areas of the text that suggest a benefit. Even the picture – which suggested the process looks easy – could be credited if linked to a valid point. In this text, the hugely positive language, wide range of benefits, appealing language, rhetorical devices, financial benefits were amongst the details that painted a broad sense that this type of vehicle is beneficial to both the environment, the pocket and even the neighbours (reduced noise). There were many benefits throughout the text which was especially rich in persuasion.

Candidates should continue to track the question throughout their answer, so they remain on task. Some of the common barriers to success include:

- a relentless hunt for techniques - usually causes a candidate to become off task quite quickly.
- an answer without evidence - this usually means that a candidate will struggle to write anything specific.
- evidence with little reference to the question - this will usually cause a candidate to produce a vague response.
- a listed information – causes a candidate to produce an answer that includes insufficient detail or focus.
- unselective copying – this is ineligible for credit.

Text D

Text D was adapted from an article about a woman who embarked on a road trip with her son using an electric vehicle. The text began by outlining all her apprehensions about the trip but concluded by giving an optimistic overview of how the trip was far better than expected.

Question A8

This question was designed to offer a more challenging lower tariff question and was successful in its aim. Candidates were asked to ‘explain what the writer means when they use the word ‘alarmism’’. It was clear that some of the more literal readers were struggling with the task as they referred to the actual alarms found within cars. Others tackled the question by copying down some of the information following the word ‘alarmism’ in the text and this approach did not give a clear explanation of meaning. A number of those who did not score on this question produced answers that got to the idea of something being negative but then did not have the sense of scale or perhaps deliberate behaviour. There was, however, a significant number of candidates who were able to successfully provide a clear definition and we could not have anticipated the range of ways or the expert selection of language that was used to achieve success. Those who were successful approached the task by referencing the ‘spreading’ of ‘damaging ...worrying’ information in quite a deliberate or negative way. Words and phrases such as, ‘hysteria...scaremongering... propaganda... misinformation...fear culture’ were used to good effect. Examiners reported that those who often failed to achieve success were those who simply did not clearly express the sheer power behind the word.

Question A9

The final multiple-choice question on the paper asked candidates to consider the term ‘boringly well’ which could be found in the third paragraph of the article. With a success rate of just below 90% this was a clearly accessible question. The correct answer ‘straightforward and without incident’ was the final option and the words ‘straightforward’ and ‘without incident’ almost mirrored the ‘boringly well’. Those who read the passage and considered the phrase in context would have been guided to the final option.

Question A10

This question asked candidates to consider the ‘impressions’ they have ‘of the road trip that the writer took with her son’. Candidates were directed to look only at the final three paragraphs (the ones where she was actually on the road trip) and most heeded this advice. Those who did not read this instruction carefully will have wasted time focusing on areas that were not directly related to the actual road trip. Thankfully, such responses were rare.

The best responses tracked the text chronologically and began by exploring the idea of ‘the trip going ‘boringly well’ giving the impression that the trip was ‘not difficult’ or that it ‘went to plan’. Some candidates misunderstood this section of the text and gave the impression that the trip was dull and that she did not enjoy it. The point was more to do with the fact that there were none of the ‘dramas’ and issues she had anticipated. Many picked up on the impression of ‘fun’ and ‘bonding’ due to the ‘games’ the writer played with her son on the journey. Most of the indicative content on the mark scheme was explored by candidates but the two aforementioned points and the impression of it being ‘relaxing’ via ‘feeling rested’ were by far the most popular.

On the whole, those who focused on the task and gave a range of impressions from across the three paragraphs scored well. Where candidates were less successful was where they lost focus on the task, repeated the same impression or misread the information.

Text E

This text was about one man's journey to Portugal in an electric car. The journey was not without problems although the driver was retired and had time to extend his journey. The point was that using an electric vehicle for the journey was tolerable but that would not have been the case had he been driving for business purposes.

Question A11

This was one of the more straightforward questions on the paper and asked candidates to consider 'how much charge was left in Andy's car' when he arrived in France. The answer could be found in the second paragraph '90%' and most candidates did not appear to struggle when locating the correct answer. Examiners reported some concerns with letter formation. Some candidates did not clearly form the number '9' and could not be credited. Examiners endeavour to always try to decipher handwriting but when something is ambiguous, it is ineligible for credit.

Question A12

This question asked candidates to summarise the 'reasons why Andy and his wife ended up being delayed in France.' Careful reading was required at the start of the passage as the trip actually began in Kent and candidates were only required to summarise why he was delayed during the French part of the journey.

Great progress has been made in relation to the summary question over the past few years. An increasing number of candidates continue to produce succinct and well-focused responses. Many use bullet points to structure their summary and restrict the number of words used (which is excellent practice). Some use a brief phrase per bullet and, in doing so, save themselves a good deal of time which can be used in the final longer tariff questions.

Unfortunately, a small number of candidates produced responses which were overly long and struggled to make a summative point. Candidates should consider the amount of space allowed for the completion of this question and respond accordingly. Candidates should not write on extra paper or below the allocated lines as this would suggest a lack of understanding of the expectations of a summary.

To reiterate previous advice. A good summary:

- is brief and succinct
- is confined to the lines given in the booklet
- separates points clearly
- is written in bullet points or concise sentences
- is not copied from the text.

Question A13

The final reading task on the paper was an extended comparison response (worth 10 marks). Candidates were asked to compare 'what the writers of Text D and Text E think about their road trips using electric cars.' Across both texts, a wide range of thoughts could be seen and these varied depending on the stage of the road trip. Candidates who tracked both texts and carefully considered a range of the different thoughts presented usually fared well.

When comparing texts, candidates, must look closely at the specific focus of the question. In this instance, candidates were asked to compare the thoughts 'about the road trips' and those who embarked on a general comparison of the two texts (looking at features, layout, details etc.) did not perform well. Organisation is also important in a comparison answer. The best approach for those wishing to access the higher Bands, is an integrated comparison. This allows a candidate to find clear details from each text and compare them. Far too many candidates simply write about one text followed by the next and make little, or no attempt to make links and comparisons. Comparative language is undoubtedly helpful and those who are armed with appropriate vocabulary (unlike, in comparison, however, although, but etc.) often make good progress.

Some candidates adopt an unhelpful bullet point or approach to comparison questions in which they present a series of unrelated details about the two texts. This is unhelpful and those with no sense of comparison do not make progress beyond Band 1. Some candidates choose to separate their answer into two sections with headings (again, not an ideal approach). Rather worryingly, a small minority of candidates selected a range of quotations from each text and simply added a comparative connective before them with no sense of comparing the information. While candidates do not need to add lengthy comparative paragraphs, superficial details with limited comments do not gain credit beyond Band 1.

SECTION B

Question B1

This argumentation writing task required candidates to produce a talk in which they were asked to give their views on what can be done to save the planet. The task was of a format and topic that candidates are familiar with. There were frequent references to the environment throughout the materials presented in Section A and this ought to have been helpful to candidates who required some additional information to inspire/prompt their ideas.

On the whole, candidates produced engaging and thoughtful writing which demonstrated their secure understanding of the issues facing our planet. Many took the time to talk about issues such as melting ice caps, excessive use of plastic, poor recycling, littering and a general apathy from some governments. A good number of candidates used the reading materials from section A and wrote about electric cars and the positive impact they can have on the planet. Careful use of a selection of evidence from the source materials enhanced some of the writing. It was pleasing to know that a good proportion of candidates consciously chose to include a wide range of techniques and sentencing or structural techniques to further enhance their writing.

While some candidates used the statistics and information from the reading resources to good effect, there were many who were less effective in this area. A minority simply chose to copy the materials while others chose to significantly copy chunks interspersed with one or two of their own words. This approach is unacceptable and unlikely to achieve credit beyond Band one. There have been many reports about unhelpful advice being given on social media sites regarding copying materials and changing words. This is something we really need to advise against for our candidates. Sadly, we cannot ignore the power of social media when it comes to candidates revising in their own time, but we must educate them on the fact that not all advice will be helpful or relevant. Selective use of the materials can enhance a piece of writing. Unselective copying does not.

Brief writing remains a concern. While some candidates run out of time and produce brief writing, there is a real sense that some choose not to finish. An increasing number of drawings, letters to examiners, poems, off task writing, insulting messages, are evident in place of sustained writing. This must be avoided as it will not bring credit. Handwriting remains a concern. It is impossible to credit illegible handwriting. If a word or phrase cannot be read, then unfortunately it will be underlined as an error. Please ensure that any candidates whose work cannot be read are considered for access arrangements.

Question B2

The second task was an article that aimed to persuade the reader to take a road trip around the UK. The persuasive angle of this task should have directed candidates to produce interesting writing that would encourage a reader to visit a place or series of locations as suggested by the candidate. The format of an article is a familiar one. A range of approaches can be adopted when completing articles but the most popular by far is simply writing a title and then including a series of paragraphs in the style of article writing.

Examiners were trained not to be punitive about geographical locations as some candidates were not particularly aware of what constituted a country or area in the UK. Several responses were written about trips to Europe and other non-UK destinations. A road trip could be taken in any vehicle (we saw a number of bikes, scooters, trucks and buses) but most chose to take their road trip in a car.

In terms of content, a vast array of locations was referenced across the cohort. From a short road trip to a local beach or town, to an entire trip across the UK, the range was pleasing. It was extremely satisfying to note that many candidates chose specific places to describe. Although Cardiff, Tenby and Big Ben were by far the most popular, those who performed best usually gave some details appertaining to a specific location rather than simply listing a series of places to visit. Some candidates were especially creative with the locations and quite a number wrote about a themed road trip. For example, some candidates wrote about Harry Potter inspired road trips travelling from Edinburgh to Northumberland and London. Other candidates wrote about food-inspired road trips with stop-offs at various restaurants or cafes. Others focused on several beaches, especially across Wales, and commented on where to go for the best ice cream, swimming, paddleboarding and dog walking. Quite a number also chose to write about shopping trips across the UK to various different shopping centres like the Trafford Centre and Cheshire Oaks. Some went on road trips of a much smaller scale and simply wrote about a school trip to a local farm (again, perfectly acceptable). All approaches and locations were valid, as long as the persuasive element was evident.

It is important that candidates are encouraged not to copy materials. Some candidates copied details about Andy's road trip with the focus being on Andy and not the task in hand. Some also used the text to write about negative road trips which completely ignored the instruction to persuade.

Technical accuracy remains a concern in both writing tasks. Far too many candidates do not write in paragraphs, which is unhelpful. Basic punctuation remains a concern with many relying on comma splicing throughout an entire paragraph or a demonstrate a complete lack of any punctuation. Quite often, the most common spelling errors were the ones that were available to them in the reading materials and many errors could have been avoided. Vocabulary was, on the whole, pertinent to the task and used for effect. However, there is still a tendency by some to force extended vocabulary into a piece of writing at the cost of cohesion and meaning.

Overall, there was a good deal to celebrate although a number of candidates need to develop their timing skills, so they have sufficient time to dedicate to both writing tasks equally.

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