



# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE (New)  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2009**

## **Introduction**

Summer 2009 is the first award of the new AS. For all specifications there have been changes to the content of the units, and in many new marking criteria have been introduced and unit weightings altered. However, the biggest change in most subjects has been the reduction from a three to a two unit assessment.

In moving to the new specification awarding bodies have sought to maintain the overall United Kingdom standard for AS, as measured by the proportion of candidates achieving grade A and by the proportion achieving a pass grade in each subject. Comparability between 'legacy' and 'new' specifications is measured in terms of the overall subject outcome and not in terms of unit outcomes. Many of the units in the new specifications will bear little relation to those in the legacy specifications. Even where they are very similar, it is quite likely that outcomes will be different. The expectation is that the number of grade As at unit level will decrease in a specification where the number of units is reduced, whilst the number of passes will increase. The overall cash-in outcome, however, will be maintained. These same principles will apply to the new A level where a six unit assessment is reduced to a four unit assessment.

## **Statistical Information**

This booklet contains summary details for each unit: number entered; maximum mark available; mean mark achieved; grade ranges. *N.B. These refer to 'raw marks' used in the initial assessment, rather than to the uniform marks reported when results are issued.*

## ***Annual Statistical Report***

The annual *Statistical Report* (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**  
**General Certificate of Education 2009**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

**LG1: Introduction to the Language of Texts**

*Principal Examiner:* Sally Melhuish

**Unit Statistics**

The following statistics include all candidates entered for the unit, whether or not they 'cashed in' for an award. The attention of centres is drawn to the fact that the statistics listed should be viewed strictly within the context of this unit and that differences will undoubtedly occur between one year and the next and also between subjects in the same year.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>Mean Mark</b>
LG1	3978	60	29.5

**Grade Ranges**

A	44
B	37
C	30
D	23
E	16

*N.B. The marks given above are raw marks and not uniform marks.*

## LG1: Introduction to the Language of Texts

### General Comments

As expected, the candidature for this unit significantly increased on the January session by almost tenfold. As advised in the January report for LG1, the boundaries are liable to change over the next few sessions as the course embeds and standards are maintained.

### Section A: The Language of Texts

The primary focus of this unit is to provide opportunities for candidates to analyse texts closely and thoroughly, to organise their ideas clearly and concisely whilst demonstrating their knowledge of the key constituents using appropriate terminology and to explore the effect of the linguistic choices utilised by the writers. It is important to note that this unit tests candidates' ability to analyse and use correct terminology. To score well, candidates need to make a range of points, showing precise knowledge and understanding.

Many centres had clearly taken on board the advice at INSET and in the web-based Teacher Guides. This was noticeable in the way that candidates approached the paper, particularly with how they were able to gain marks under assessment objective 1, the most weighted assessment objective for this paper.

For Section A, candidates were presented with a set of texts from promotional brochures to explore the linguistic features within them. There was a strong focus on exploring language linked to meaning rather than simply identifying features and giving illustrations without detailed discussion. Successful responses were able to contextualise the text, linking their points to audience and purpose specifically. Good responses were indicated by their clear understanding of the differences in style and focus of each text. The best answers were able to organise their essays clearly and logically, use terminology correctly in identifying features, and then to explain the effects of the language choices linked to audience and purpose where appropriate. They made a lot of points by writing concisely. Nearly all were able to comment upon the use of spoken discourse features within the texts and to explain their effect.

Weaker answers included failure to illustrate points with quotations, incorrect use of terminology, excessive vagueness, broad generalised discussion, formulaic comments about effectiveness that had been learnt by heart in advance, and poor command of English. Approaches which simply gave a personal opinion about the effectiveness of the texts did not score well. One such response failed to use any linguistic terminology at all and commented that "*Text A is a bit of a mess; it really does not step up to the standard set by Text B*". Comparative approaches, which were purely feature spotting exercises, was also a particular weakness in the approach to Section A.

Section A - specific points which did not score well:

- Irrelevance: candidates often waste time commenting upon things which are not included in the text. For example, "*However there is no pictures*".
- Adopting a prescriptivist approach: candidates criticising a text for using "*incorrect grammar*" and "*poor spelling*".
- Making inane comparisons: "*Text B flows a lot better than Text A*".
- Few picked up on the pun aMaizin and just thought it was supposed to sound cool!

- Confusing the modes and the key constituents. A significant number of candidates asserted that one of the texts “uses plenty of vocatives” when referring to the second person pronoun.
- Observational skills of merely describing the graphology – 3 paragraphs with two bold lists of 5 and 6 words in between or the fact that there is ‘no punctuation’ when really commenting upon the absence of capital letters at times.
- Preoccupation with graphology – the emphasis should be first and foremost on language choices rather than starting with graphology.
- Points which were just too broad about graphology with comments which could only be seen as key stage 3.
- Showing incorrect knowledge of basic terminology or imprecise quoting. For example, “These nouns tie in with lots of verbs and actions to make adverbial phrases such as “It’s nice to relax”.
- Paraphrasing.
- Narration.
- Making very vague or generalised explanations for a writer’s use of a particular linguistic feature. For example, “Alliteration ‘fast ferries’ and ‘easy escape’ creates imagery in the readers’ heads”.
- North and south, east and west described as oxymoron's.
- Confusing parenthesis for parallelism.
- Confusing constituents – the semantics of the piece is advanced sentences.
- Referring to the minor sentences ‘Convenient. Free’ etc as abstract nouns and tag words.
- Few examples – imprecision.
- Using lexis (or worse, lexeme) as a synonym for word – so often that it becomes just as vacant in linguistic knowledge.
- Over-generalising – text A aimed at males owing to the references to alcohol and use of facts.
- Using the term ‘abbreviations’ when contractions or elision is being commented upon.
- Some pre-occupation with the social class of the audience.
- Confusing personal and possessive pronouns.
- Understanding the intended accessibility and friendliness in the tenor of both texts.
- Strange notions of antithesis. For example, “more seats by the fire and more ales to choose from”.
- Some responses were far too long and unfocussed.
- Imprecise discussion of effects – “this word has many connotations” with no discussion of what these connotations might be.

- Generic comments – “these adjectives describe the noun”, “this adverb tells you more about the verb”.
- Very broad analysis – “this gives the text cohesion”.
- Limited range of analysis – every feature exists ‘to make the reader read on’ or ‘to make it flow’.
- Describing Welsh place names as ‘specialist lexis’.
- Very long accounts of genre, audience and purpose limiting the amount of time available to engage with the text.
- Using ‘lexis’ as plural noun – ‘the lexis are...’
- Describing light heartedness or any non-literal statement as ‘sarcasm’.
- Spelling: sentance, seperate, whales, homophones (esp. Too) visiters, ques, threwout, necessary.

### **Section B: Language Focus**

This section tests a candidate’s ability to select and apply very precisely and to select only illustrations which are clearly linked to the question. Many candidates wasted valuable time by paying lengthy attention to the context and thereby dominating the response. It is worth reiterating here that this addresses assessment objective 3, accounting for just 5 marks in this section (only a quarter of the marks for Section B).

Candidates need to have a clear understanding of the question. Time should be apportioned in the planning stages of this response to ascertain what exactly is being asked. Good responses were immediately focused. For example, one candidate wrote: “*The writer has a very pessimistic view on people’s health, notable from even the first paragraph, ‘complaints accumulate day by day’ (line 3). The repetition of ‘day’ creates a feeling of monotony among readers.*” Only a very brief statement is needed to deal with the overview of the text as an introduction to the response which also has a clear focus on the question. One candidate did this very succinctly: “*The text shows issues with the health of people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The writer seems frustrated by the extent of illness found in the population*”. Responses such as these then went on to make very precise points clearly illustrating how the writer’s attitudes were conveyed to both traditional and herbal remedies and understood the concern of the writer for the health of the nation. Accurate terminology was also used to correctly identify linguistic features used by the writer.

### **Some common faults in approaching Section B**

- Writing too much and lacking a clear selection of appropriate material to comment upon.
- Making points in a very laboured way – i.e. taking a whole page to make a single point.
- Lacking focus.

- In a large number of cases there was little to distinguish responses from GCSE comprehension. Where this was the case, responses tended to be lacking in any linguistic knowledge at all.
- Irrelevance about audience and purpose.
- Irrelevance in general was a big problem for several students. For example, one candidate had an elaborate discussion of the roots of the noun 'Plague', discussing the Biblical references and even the references to the term in Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*.
- Some candidates opted to respond with little more than their own personal response to the text and failed to explore and analyse. For example, a number of candidates thought it was "*a ridiculous suggestion*" to treat the 'hidden plague' with herbal remedies. Another commented: "*What is shockingly worrying about this text is how instead of going to hospital to get a check up from a qualified doctor, the writer suggests to use nature*" and then went on to discuss the availability of the NHS in 1929.
- Describing personification as a very archaic technique.
- Some confusion in the classification of word types, for example using the term 'abstract adjectives'.
- Some candidates felt that the purpose of this text was to entertain.
- There were some cynical viewpoints of the writer's intentions – i.e. that he was writing to boost his sales of herbal remedies.
- Describing herbal remedies as '*supernatural treatments*'.
- Making vague comments which had limited linguistic focus on the directed aspect of the question, e.g. '*The tone is formal and sounds like a book should do, in third person, telling information*'.
- Describing '*Consumption*', '*noxious drugs*' and '*patent medicines*' as esoteric language.
- Errors in basic word classes.
- Taking examples out of context and then applying incorrect terms. The most common being the noun '*ravages*' being described as both a verb and an adjective.
- Discussion of aspects of language change without relating it to the focus of the question.
- Describing all forms of comparison as metaphor.
- Assuming there was no valid medical knowledge available in 1929.
- Mislabelling pronouns and using the phrase 'written in first person pronoun'

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**  
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**LG2: Original Writing and Exploring Spoken Language**

*Principal Moderator:* David Lewis

**Unit Statistics**

The following statistics include all candidates entered for the unit, whether or not they 'cashed in' for an award. The attention of centres is drawn to the fact that the statistics listed should be viewed strictly within the context of this unit and that differences will undoubtedly occur between one year and the next and also between subjects in the same year.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>Mean Mark</b>
LG2	4109	80	51.0

**Grade Ranges**

A	63
B	53
C	43
D	33
E	23

*N.B. The marks given above are raw marks and not uniform marks.*

## **LG2: Original Writing and Exploring Spoken Language**

On the whole this initial submission of coursework for the new specification proved a great success. Most candidates seemed to approach the tasks with a real sense of engagement and enjoyment, and almost all appeared to relish the degree of personal choice encouraged in the unit. The best writing was impressive and was a pleasure to read. There were a few teething problems, particularly in using the new marking scale, out of 40, for the first time. Quite a few centres had to be scaled, but this was to be expected with any new coursework unit. What was really encouraging was that the majority of centres did not need scaling, which showed that the new assessment standard was already well understood.

I would like to correct an error that somehow crept into the original version of the Teachers' Guide to LG2, where it said that 'the raw marks and the UMS marks will be the same'. This should have read: 'the raw marks and the UMS marks will be out of the same total' (i.e. 40 for each section and 80 for the unit). The whole point of UMS marks is that they are not identical with raw marks. We must ask all teachers to ignore UMS marks in their assessments, as any attempt to take them into account could lead to serious distortions, and the possibility of major scaling of marks as a result.

### **Section A: Original Writing**

As expected, the short story genre was the most popular, followed closely by opening chapters of novels or novel extracts. A smaller, but still substantial, number of candidates produced dramatic monologues, and very small numbers offered play scripts or screenplays for TV.

While many novel extracts, including some of the best, could not be classified into fictional genres, the majority could. Of those seen by the Principal Moderator, the most popular genres were romantic fiction, horror (including gothic horror), thrillers and crime fiction. Slightly less common, but still attracting significant numbers were: fantasy, historical fiction, science fiction, detective fiction, war fiction, murder mysteries, teen fiction, and re-tellings of fairy stories. Among other genres that were offered by small numbers of candidates were: action, ghost stories, adventure, hospital drama, noir style, children's literature, military, and dystopian fiction.

Most candidates made good links with texts studied from the relevant genre, and there was a strong sense that a real study had been undertaken of literary style and generic features.

One of the major reasons for disagreements with centre marks was that in some cases not enough account had been taken of technical errors in the writing, especially of poor punctuation, including comma splicing and ignorance of how to punctuate dialogue, poor or confused expression, and the misuse of words. Spelling errors must not be overlooked as 'typos': there should be plenty of time for candidates to proof-read and correct their work. A surprisingly common fault was the changing of tenses for no discernible purpose or effect. AO4 requires candidates to demonstrate 'expertise' in the use of English, and an important part of this is the ability to write accurately.

There was a problem with some monologues, and to a lesser extent with some first person short story or novel narratives, where the speaker is meant to be poorly educated or illiterate or inarticulate, and where this is shown by non-standard uses of language, and non-standard spelling. A similar problem was encountered by some candidates who tried to represent thick regional accents and dialects. We are aware that writing of this kind has been known to win the Booker Prize, but in an exam situation, where moderators are looking for demonstration of 'expertise', it is unwise to pursue to extremes the search for authenticity in depicting the language of linguistically deprived individuals, or those who use entirely non-standard speech. Candidates are best advised to show how well they can write in this unit, rather than how accurately they can reproduce linguistic errors and inaccuracies.

The dramatic monologue, if presented as such, should be essentially a piece of drama, not just a first person narrative. There should be stage directions of some kind, and there should ideally be a sense of development and gradual revelation. A few 'monologues' would have been better described as stories.

Some candidates chose to use a first person narrative written in 'teen-speak' – with the use of very colloquial language that was very often restricted in range. It was difficult for most of these to move out of Band 2, or very low Band 3 at best. If candidates are aiming for a high mark, they would be well advised to avoid this kind of 'teen-speak' altogether.

In general, the length of pieces conformed well to our recommended limit of about 1000 words, – indeed, a problem with some was that they were below 700 words, and could have done with more extension and development. The original writing should always be longer than the commentary, and this was not always the case. Some of the under-length pieces were dramatic monologues, and some of these had immensely long commentaries.

In a few instances, candidates claimed that their stories had been inspired by films or TV. We were uncomfortable about this: the important thing is that there has been reading and study of appropriate texts and extracts. It would be advisable to refer to these in the commentary, rather than to films or TV dramas.

Centres might like to focus with their students on the importance of the sentence in original writing – its crafting, phrasing and punctuation.

May we emphasise that informative articles are not acceptable for this unit, and in future any that are submitted should be awarded zero marks.

### **The Commentary**

We wanted the writing to count for more than the commentary, but the commentary remains an important part of the section. May we remind (or in some cases, inform) everyone that we have extended the recommended word limit for the commentary to 750 words. We realised that 500 was not long enough to do justice to the analysis. We hasten to reassure centres that kept rigidly, as some did, to the 500 word limit, that this year their candidates were not disadvantaged in any way. In future, however, we will expect commentaries to be closer to the 750 word limit. This year some commentaries were much too long, but many were much too short – nowhere near even the 500 word limit.

When there is a complete mismatch, as there often is, between the original writing and the commentary, we would advise that the commentary should count for just over a third of the total mark.

Errors in the use of terminology should not be overlooked, but should be crossed as incorrect and taken into account in the marking. One or two minor errors can possibly be forgiven, but several errors, especially if some are basic, must result in a reduction of the mark.

Some candidates spent far too long analysing the language of a style model rather than their own use of language. The main focus should be on the candidate's choices of language, and not on process or improvements on original drafts or evaluations of success that involve seeking the opinions of friends and relations.

## **Section B: Exploring Spoken Language of the Media**

A rich variety of texts was offered for analysis. In no particular order these included: chat shows, soaps, sit-coms, stand-up comics, TV drama, films, interviews, quiz shows, sports commentaries, news reports, speeches, TV or radio advertisements, reality shows, panel games, cookery programmes, and many others.

The quality of transcriptions was inconsistent. The best followed all the usual conventions and marked all the pauses. The weakest used none of the normal conventions and looked more like drama scripts than transcripts. It is important that the material is listened to, and not simply downloaded ready-made from the internet. We would recommend that centres follow the conventions outlined in the WJEC Teachers' Guide to the new English Language specification. There should be a key, and lines, not turns, should be numbered (every fifth line is perfectly adequate). The point of numbering the lines, of course, is that line references can then be used in the study. Please encourage students to use these (they should not be included in the word count), as they enable readers to check a reference quickly. Transcripts should be presented in portrait format, not in landscape, as some candidates did, and should not be over long. It is not necessary to mark prosodic features unless these are explored and discussed in the analysis.

A minority of analyses were of radio, and we would recommend more consideration of the possibilities of radio, as it does provide a very rich source of material.

If two texts are used, they should be matched in some meaningful way. A few pairings were bizarre: for example, the films 'Gladiator' and 'Notting Hill' were too disparate for useful comparison.

A few candidates attempted some comparisons with a literary text – in one case with Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' – but this is unacceptable, as both texts, if there are two, must be spoken language of the media.

### **Annotation (both sections)**

We do expect to see some annotation in the body of the work. There does not have to be a huge amount, but errors in the writing should be indicated, and teachers should feel free to make any comments they wish in the margin. Good points can be ticked, and correct use of terminology can be ticked in the body of the script, but we would advise against the over-enthusiastic use of ticks. In some extreme cases, each page had about 30 or more ticks, none of them in the margin, and at this level, the ticks not only cease to have any meaning, but become a distraction to subsequent readers.

We would be grateful if teachers would write some comments for each section on the cover sheet. For Section A there is only one Assessment Objective, but for Section B there are three, and there is some overlap. What we would like to see are comments appropriate to each individual study that make some specific reference to some of the key aspects of the objectives, such as concepts related to the construction and analysis of meaning in spoken language, linguistic knowledge (including use of terminology and knowledge of key constituents), and analysis of the influence of contextual factors on the language that was spoken. Coherent and accurate written expression should also be taken into account. Words and short phrases from the assessment grid can be incorporated, but we would like teachers to use their own words as far as possible to sum up the strengths and weaknesses of the individual analysis.

## Some Administrative Points

- Please use the correct cover sheets, which feature a candidate side and a teacher side. The sheets can be downloaded from the WJEC website. Next year's may not be identical to this year's, so please download a fresh master sheet each year. It is helpful if the Centre name and Centre number are printed on the master copy before it is copied for candidates to use.
- Candidates should complete the Assignment Details as precisely but briefly as possible: moderators need to know what has been intended before they start reading.
- Please complete the Word Count spaces on the cover sheet – say, to the nearest 50 words.
- Please ensure that the folders reach the moderator by the official deadline.
- Please do not send drafts: it is only the final versions that we need to see.
- Please ensure that folders are assembled correctly, with sections in the right order. For Section A the original writing should precede the commentary, and for Section B the transcript should precede the analysis.
- The cover sheets must be signed by the teacher and the candidate, to authenticate that the work produced is solely that of the candidate. The importance of this was almost universally understood this year, and it was extremely rare to find any missing signatures. Cover sheets have to be sent back to centres if unsigned, and no marks can be awarded until they are returned to WJEC.



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