



WRITTEN EXAMINATION

It is hoped that more/most teachers delivering the course will take up the invitation to mark the written examination and/or folios at the end of 2010. It is a worthwhile informal professional development exercise available to all. One examiner stated: ‘...an enjoyable and at times exhausting process but I wouldn’t have swapped it for all the books in the library.’

Overall the examination paper was viewed by markers as an effective examination tool. This year the Setting Examiner’s wording of the questions in Section A clearly included reference to Criterion 2 and Criterion 9 specifically. The question invited candidates to discuss the ideas and issues through the term ‘representation’ and then further directed discussion of values and attitudes.

The practice of using the same text type for all three questions was deemed fair as it meant all candidates were exposed to a similar style of stimulus and of similar length.

Section A Ideas and Issues offered extracts from novels leading candidates towards a well focused discussion by providing strong ‘hooks’ with which to link discussion of similar or contrasting ideas and issues in their class texts and it was pleasing to note that many candidates were able to structure their responses in essay format more effectively than in previous years. Strong responses introduce texts in introductions which frame the discussion of issues. The body of the analysis provides relevant links to issues similar/or different in set texts and continuously weave in their personal reader response reflections. There was often a very eloquent facility with their use of language. Textual evidence is essential to justify assertions about issues and provide a context for a reader response reflection.

The longer writing time in this year’s exam enabled candidates to explore the stimulus passages and core texts in detail, in both sections of the exam. The incomplete response was rare this year and justifies the extra time provided to examinees.

Unfortunately some candidates were still too reliant on the Information Sheet which lead to reproducing formulaic generic introductions and conclusions, clearly written in advance, rather than integrating their response to the question and in particular analysis of the set stimulus. This will be the last examination in which candidates will be able to use an Information Sheet as it has been phased out for 2010.

Candidates were clearly prepared to refer to ‘at least two texts’ from their class studies and many could find links to issues between their texts, however, there was a tendency for some candidates to include reference to the stimulus, plus three texts and satellite texts - or more, and in doing so produced much weaker responses. Candidates who did this seemed to “retell” rather than analyse. It would seem it is better to do two texts well.

The task for the (b)creative questions was open and fair, enabling candidates to discuss a range of texts in an accessible way but it was also suggested that specifying the context for

the interview in such a specific way (a Triple J interview) was a complicating factor if a candidate chose to compose an interview for *Enough Rope* or *A Current Affair* or did not appear to address any of the requirements of a Triple J interview. Markers are not required to assess Criterion 7 but the wording seemed to require that candidates think about audience, diction and style in addition to the conventions of setting out a transcript. It may be preferable to leave the context very general.

Outstanding responses continue to amaze and delight – and many of the candidates at the upper end of the ratings, have demonstrated an intelligent, informed and insightful understanding of the stimulus and their studied texts.

There were also some very obviously prepared answers that did not address the stimuli and which were strongly penalised and some ‘essays’ that consisted mainly of lengthy quotations at the expense of development of a candidate’s insight and analysis. Weak responses also tend to make poor links between the issues in the 3 texts and/or make links to irrelevant points. Even connections to contrasting points in class texts must be relevant to the stimulus and not take the analysis into an off focus direction. Analytical skill requires candidates to select their best points which are most relevant to the stimulus issues being raised and to discard points on other issues to avoid irrelevancy.

It would also seem that the academic rigour required to be successful in this pre-tertiary subject is lacking for many candidates, as evidenced by the poor responses of a significant cohort of candidates, who lacked interest in or could not understand the concepts of Critical Literacy: what English Communications is about. Teachers of the course need to prepare candidates on how to discuss representations of social and cultural values as this skill underpins the whole course. Because it is difficult for candidates in this age group (indeed anybody who has not been taught how to deconstruct text with a critical literacy focus) to readily identify the values that are being privileged it is essential that teachers teach this explicitly.

Candidates who received ‘D’ ratings were penalized as per the marking standards. There was a clear range of reasons for a ‘D’ rating:

- responses which did not follow examination guidelines e.g. not referring to two texts
- responses which did not answer the set question and read as prepared beforehand
- responses which were very limited or brief despite having an extra half hour in time
- responses which used the terminology of critical literacy but which revealed a lack of understanding of terms and read as incoherent
- responses which did not reveal any understanding of the key critical concepts e.g. ideological positioning as relates to representation of social and cultural values embedded in texts
- responses which were incoherent due to significant literacy problems and were not deemed to be at the pre tertiary level of writing

Candidates need a further reminder that scripts in which handwriting is illegible, put ratings at risk. N.B. Candidates have been instructed not to write in pencil but continue to do so. If

they believe their handwriting may become difficult to read, consider writing in pen on every second line.

Teachers must ensure that candidates receive a copy of the Written Examination Guidelines available at (www.tqa.tas.gov.au) in which penalties are made clear.

It is also strongly advised that candidates experience the complete examination format in their mid-year practice exam in order to gain practice in finding their specific questions to address.

Given the extension of an extra 30 minutes time limit, it was observed that Ideas and Issues responses were longer than in previous years: it was common to find 4-5 pages and that the length of the Text and Context responses remained unchanged: 2 pages on average. Candidates need to learn how to balance the time for both essays, as one great essay does not a great exam result make.

Section A

Question 1 (a)

Criterion 2

The Ideas and Issues module clearly requires 3 elements in response:

1. exposition of a candidate's current understanding of the concept and the personal position that has been developed
2. analysis of key ideas and the issues extrapolated from the stimulus
3. relevant links (comparison/contrasts) made between the representation of the concept in the stimulus and the representations of the concept in two prescribed texts.

Generally this question was well done with candidates examining closely the negative representation of Australia in the stimulus which provided an abundance of issues to analyse and to find links: fascination with triviality, the nature of heroism and celebrity, globalisation, racism, violence, homelessness and marginalisation in society.

In the best responses scripts had strong introductions addressing the stimulus, made sophisticated and engaging connections between the stimulus issues and the core texts (titles acknowledged appropriately) and were capable of citing appropriate quotations, which were embedded well into the body of the sentence and paragraph. Their evaluations of the texts and the way in which they employed critical literacy terminology were impressive.

Effective answers explored the issues of Australians' apathy and intolerance for the second rate, social ostracism and exclusion and found potent links with prescribed texts. They described the tone of disillusion created by this expansive list of those who are marginalised or disenfranchised in Australian society. The best answers also used contrasting ideas to analyse how some texts offer more positive representations than the pessimistic views on

offer in *The Trout Opera* and how they constructed an appreciation for the Australian way of life as shown in such texts as *Down Under*, *Footy Legends* and *The Castle*.

In weaker responses candidates failed to recognise that a character from a novel was expressing his opinions about modern-day Australia in the stimulus extract. Instead, they imputed the attitudes to the composer, Matthew Condon and erroneously criticised Condon as having extreme views.

Despite the penalties clearly outlined in the **Written Examination Guidelines 2009** there continued to be some candidates who used texts from incorrect modules (or even Strands) to answer questions e.g. used Text and Contexts Crime Fiction or Belonging texts to answer Imagining Australia question. The penalties were enforced.

Criterion 9

Candidates need to be prepared by teachers to understand the demands of Criterion 9: that a discussion of context, particularly a personal context, means candidates must be able to discuss how the text's representation of the concept has shaped or influenced their thinking. The best responses clearly foreground how their own attitudes had been 'shaped' by their texts' explorations of the issue and emphasise what they now valued regarding the issues raised in the stimulus text.

Overall, Criterion 9 was well handled in this question with most candidates clearly able to identify underpinning values. Strong candidates articulated their personal position in regard to the negative representation of contemporary Australian society. The extract prompted some strong responses as candidates expressed a resistant reading of the stimulus and disagreed robustly with the overall pessimism of the extract.

Proficient answers do provide lively, engaging 'dialogue with the text' as a reader and clearly express opinions and attitudes to issues, from a personal context. Those who did it well were those candidates who embedded their observations as they worked through the representations. Some expressed outrage/ anger about or empathy/ understanding for Australians who did not share middle class affluence, as demonstrated in many of their texts.

In weaker answers candidates barely acknowledged a reader response except in an isolated "I think..." at the end of the paragraphs or in a hurried conclusion. Merely expressing an opinion without exploring its context is not adequate for a pre-tertiary response. Most evident in the weaker candidates is the irrelevant personal anecdotes and autobiographical responses e.g. personal life experiences. e.g. "I have experienced many things in my life..." rather than commenting on how the texts had "shaped" their thinking. Discussion did not focus on the text and how these texts might have "challenged" or "confirmed" their own understandings, attitudes and values.

However, this year there were fewer responses which did not comment on their own understandings, or express their attitudes or clarify what they valued in response to the experience of texts.

Candidates need to be mindful of maintaining the formal register in their writing, despite the personal element required. For example the use of second person narrative voice: ‘you’ is not part of formal writing.

Question 1 (b)

Criterion 2

Some candidates found it was extremely difficult to rate well on this question as it is a considerable challenge to some candidates to analyse the main issues in detail and include reader response whilst maintaining the interview format. The better answers included key questions about the issues from the radio presenter to guide the response. In weaker answers candidates resorted to describing or only mentioning the main ideas of the texts.

Criterion 9

Whilst the opportunity for colloquial language was offered in the (b) option in the questions, it seems that very few took up the opportunity or did not integrate a reader response at all.

Question 2 (a)

General Comments

Most candidates responded to 2 (a). Few selected the creative option but handled it very well.

This was a really good stimulus and question. Candidates who were successful carefully answered the question. There were two components to understanding the question. The first was regarding the “representation of the nature of truth” and the second was “whose version of reality prevails”.

There was equitable treatment across the two criteria. Yet, candidates tended to perform better against criterion 2 : revealing a solid understanding of the issues connected to the idea of telling truth associated with this module and many used appropriate critical language and terminology and were able to select appropriate sections of their texts to support their discussion.

Generally, candidates were able to structure their response in an essay format and were able to address the term ‘representation’ to a more effective degree than in previous years. However, the more formulaic introductions and conclusion which could be written in advance were not well received and did not lead to engaging scripts. Weaker candidates did not integrate discussion of texts in their response to the question, particularly the stimulus. There is still a concern that the reflective component in weaker responses is not as strong and generally these candidates were rated lower on criterion 9.

Candidates also needed to demonstrate a much greater awareness of 'whose reality prevails'. If they did not address this part of the question penalties applied, no matter how sophisticated responses were.

Criterion 2

Strong scripts spent some time on discussing the nature of 'telling' as represented in the stimulus: as a construction that is exploited for certain agendas; and that the public uncritically accept the versions of reality or distortions of truth with which they are presented. Many recognised the character of Henley represented truth telling as relative to a context and that Drake represented objectivity in truth telling.

The nature of truth was not well addressed by discussing the issue of the power relationship between the two characters in the stimulus or the issue of lying or truth within relationships which often lead to an irrelevant discussion and/or tenuous links. Candidates using Carmel Bird's *The Stolen Children* tended to focus on the government lying to the children of the stolen generation and the effects of these lies instead of how Bird's post-colonial discourse affects the truths portrayed in the text and how the responder's position in the history wars affects the way they interpret the text.

Also a significant number of candidates found it difficult to express what values and attitudes were being privileged in *State of Fear*: that as a society, those who hold power over truth telling such as in the world of science and media, and in whom we place trust to tell us truths (science ministers, politicians) exploit their power over truth telling for many reasons. Many candidates accepted this invited reading, with some candidates offering a resistant reading - that this was acceptable in certain contexts.

Candidates who examined the nature of truth through the 'media' were less successful in general because they dealt only with one issue throughout.

The really successful answers integrated their discussion of ideas and issues and their reflective comments. This is really a better way to respond— compared to addressing a discussion of ideas/issues and in an often dislocated way adding in reflective comments.

There is still a tendency for weaker responses to paraphrase sections of a story or cite lengthy quotations at the expense of analytical commentary. There was also an increasing use of more conversational language in option (a) rather than take up the opportunity for colloquial language offered in the (b) option in the questions.

Criterion 9

It is worth noting that the question did not ask for candidates' beliefs and attitudes in regards to Global Warming! Many candidates made the mistake of creating an opinion piece around the notion of whether or not global warming and climate change was indeed a truth in itself!

Better responses regularly addressed how they had come to understand the nature of truth through their essay. Simply writing ‘My understanding of the truth has been confirmed and challenged through the texts studies this year...’ is not adequate for a pre-tertiary response.

Question 2 (a)

The stimulus and the question should have enabled candidates to demonstrate explicit understandings of the representation of ideas and issues in regard to belonging. The passage was well chosen for relevance and accessibility.

Most candidates continue to adopt a traditional literary criticism approach to the question, analysing the ideas and issues in text and identifying the sense of belonging to place, community and family rather than utilising a critical literacy approach that considered the prevailing ideologies, gaps and silences etc. The responses which adopted the latter approach were more highly valued. Both kinds of responses were marked on their merits and rewarded (or otherwise) for their understanding of the stimulus and class texts.

Candidates should strive to compose clear topic sentences in paragraphs which introduce the idea/issue and/or personal position in order to frame discussion. This would provide a stronger structure to avoid irrelevant re-telling of narrative in texts.

It was powerful when candidates explored the complexities of belonging through a critical literacy frame: the factors which can challenge, change, develop or alter that sense of belonging and provided the nuances in quotations which moved beyond the standard quotes prepared for in Information Sheets.

Criteria 2

Candidates seemed to enjoy answering this question and most engaged well with the stimulus which constructed a positive representation of belonging and strong contrasting links were made to the bleakness e.g. racism/ lack of belonging in many prescribed texts. Links were made to *Gattaca*, *Stolen*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night time*, *The Kite Runner*, *Footy Legends* and to ‘Herbie’, the short story from *Making Connections*. Most responses emphasised the powerful interconnection of Lampe to nature and the elements; and to family and regional community. Insightful candidates also commented on the subtlety of an Anglo Australian’s spiritual connection and sense of belonging to place.

Candidates are reminded that the journey of the central protagonist(s) in prescribed texts is integral in the discourse about belonging that is communicated. Therefore, texts like *Marking Time* must include discussion of Hal and it was insufficient to focus only on Sandy’s experience in *Stolen*.

Of concern were clear errors of fact when referring to class texts, given that texts and the Information Sheet were both available.

Criterion 9

Reader response reflections are about articulating your current understandings. The personal reflection resonated well when readers showed clearly how the text had extended upon, challenged or affirmed their thinking, with credible mention of personal beliefs about belonging- reading as genuinely felt responses which did not sound pre-learned. However, candidates need to be reminded that reader response statements are not emotive personal comments e.g. ‘I don’t agree with Hal having sex with Randa’ and explaining that ‘...the character feels at home in the bush just as I do when surfing...’ but intelligent reflections on the ways in which the texts had represented the key ideas and a deliberated personal response to the socio-cultural values that underpinned the composer’s representation of belonging: a response that refers to specific aspects of the texts rather than a generalised response to the text as a whole.

There also needs to be balance between C2 and C9 where weight should not just be towards analysis but also reflection.

Section B

The *Texts and Contexts Module* requires critical analysis of how genre is exploited to perpetuate representations which naturalise/convey dominant cultural values and social attitudes – or indeed challenge them by constructing more inclusive representations. Teachers need to focus on both the process of positioning (the text features that position the audience) as well as the cultural values, attitudes and beliefs the author is privileging and thereby positioning their audience to adopt and what the effects of this might be on how audience perceives shared cultural thinking on race/ethnicity, class, gender etc.

Examination Critics need to ensure that all questions give direction on the context of the stimulus piece: the text type and date of composition (or publication) so they can think about any possible changes in attitudes since the text was published.

Examination Critics need also ensure there is the continuity in wording across each question and that a glossary is included where necessary e.g. Question 7- The Generic question: for words such as “evangelical”, “subliminal”, “pontificate”.

Communications is a critical literacy course, which focuses on social and cultural values. Teachers and candidates must read the syllabus to ensure they understand that in the *Texts and Contexts* strand the underpinning concepts are the ways in which texts shape cultural and social values in relation to race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion. Whilst all texts generate representations that reinforce particular power balances in society there were many texts chosen for Texts and Contexts that did not provide the candidates with adequate opportunities for the critical engagement and understanding which is the expectation of the course.

Question 4

This section was reasonably well-handled by most candidates. Strong responses showed a sound understanding of intended audience of predominantly male sports readers; could define the ‘invited reading’ as undervaluing women and that they are not deemed to be equally professional to males in sport / and that Welch was positioning readers, ironically writing as a female journalist, by reinforcing reactionary, even patriarchal, ‘sexist’ gender attitudes through the objectification of sportswomen.

Strong responses closely supported their assertions by analysing a variety of the language features including: connotation, puns, humour, imagery and some fiction writing techniques.

Few scripts linked to contrasting sports reporting texts that challenged the stimulus’ invited reading and positioned audiences differently on gender or ethnicity in sport.

Popular texts referred to in this section *included* *Why Roger Federer has become a preening poser in the emperor’s new clothes* (a newspaper article on Roger Federer’s Wimbledon jacket), *Threesome* (Alpha magazine article on Australian women triathletes), *One Perfect Day* (ABC Australian Story Walkley Award Winner), *Code of Silence* (ABC Four Corners 2009 Walkley Award Winner), and a Nicholson cartoon of Nicky Winmar.

Candidates are reminded that Texts and Contexts is examined against Criterion 3 and that responses should not address C9 personal reflection in this section of the paper.

Question 5

It appears that the addition of the extra thirty minutes has remedied the problem in past examinations of incomplete essays. There seemed to be a more thorough evaluation of stimulus possible and continued references to stimulus throughout the responses. The cohesiveness of strong essays stood out. The key to success was using the stimulus as their starting point and to organise their responses around it.

Candidates who were able to elaborate on the way documentary ‘language’ conventions were used to position viewers developed some excellent responses. These responses were doing what we would expect: answering the question; engaging with the stimulus in a rigorous and integrated manner; comparing the positioning achieved; clearly demonstrating an understanding of the cultural and social values being privileged. Failure to engage in a discussion of those values automatically put candidates (despite how erudite) into the B and below range.

However, in some cases, the overall quality of the essays does not seem to have improved as a result of the extra time. In some cases candidates seem to have gone from one extreme to the other. Previously there was, wrongfully, an overemphasis on a style analysis of film devices such as close up and long shots, etc. instead of an analysis and evaluation of how documentary codes and conventions were used to create a dominant reading which supported a particular cultural/social value. This year there were a number of scripts that made

incoherent mention of terminology such as ‘foregrounding’, ‘construction’ and ‘responders’ and descriptions of ‘values’ such as ‘drugs’, ‘sex’, ‘survival’ (N.B. “drugs” are not a value. A better expression of a social value could perhaps be “social acceptance, rejection or understanding of drug abuse by aboriginal teens due to the embedded inequality in Australian society based on race and class”) Use of critical terms without really knowing what they mean or using them out of context results in convoluted incoherent sentences. Some scripts presented no discussion of genre linguistic features and their purpose/impact on audience!

As it is not possible to present candidates with a primary source of stimulus for documentary film candidates should be prepared to apply their understandings to a range of secondary stimuli, for example- interviews, reviews, critical commentary, DVD covers etc.

Criterion 3

This stimulus for Documentary Film revealed Courtin-Wilson’s views but also Bond’s commentary that positions the reader to respond in particular ways to the film.

Although most candidates were not expecting a written stimulus for this question, the interview provided did have several clear statements which most candidates could and did discuss. Many candidates could broadly identify the ‘happy ending’; the director’s friendship with Charles, Charles’ ‘eloquence and charm’, ‘the camera loves him’ and the return of the ring episode – most were able to connect these aspects to the affect on the audience emotively and attempted to discuss the composer’s personal values privileged by such details.

Fewer responses clearly indicated understanding of Criterion 3 critical literacy ‘positioning: Wilson inviting the readers to challenge prevailing ideologies/ dominant cultural values associated with race, sexuality, class and the resulting exclusion/ marginalisation of such individuals/ groups in society as unworthy of being valued.

To get an ‘A’, candidates had to look closely at the interview/review which pointed out how Wilson used the conventions/’language’ of *Bastardy* as a documentary reaching a wide audience to position the audience towards what Charles represents: to see how this portrayal of Jack Charles challenges some traditional/stereotypical cultural representations of indigenous/homosexual people and thus bringing this back to an appreciation of the underpinning social/cultural values privileged by both Bond/Courtin-Wilson i.e. acceptance; racial tolerance; sexual diversity; equality etc.

Those who best understood the key concepts discussed the ‘happy ending’ as an unusual element in the genre of documentary which was broadening the boundaries of the genre; the crossing of the genre into fiction film by being more subjective; the positive representation of Charles in order to present him as unduly marginalised due to his race and sexuality. Very few candidates were able to discuss Wilson’s representation of Charles in order to challenge social marginalisation of such individuals due to the class and racial prejudice that prevails in society.

Most candidates had enough time this year to discuss two other documentaries in some detail. The best answers could make links comparing Wilson’s alternative reading to similar

positioning of other viewers through other documentary films focussed on those who did not 'fit' easily into society through *Forbidden Lies*, *Murder Ball*, *Bra Boys*, *Oasis*, *Code of Silence*, *Landmines A Love Story*, *I Know I'm Not Alone* and *Bush Mechanics* etc. The best responses came from candidates who had a sound general knowledge of current social and cultural issues.

It was clear that the teaching of Criterion 3 in 2009 had resulted in:

- more appropriate selection of documentary texts for candidates to employ this year
- fewer candidates were simply listing isolated filmic features and instead could pertinently analyse how specific, relevant genre 'language' affected audiences and could also include relevant discussion of omissions: commonly referred to as 'gaps' and 'silences' which are based on prevailing cultural assumptions
- strong structure to each paragraph i.e. stimulus as starting point; link to genre features; examples from texts studied; positioning effect.
- effective links and connections of their documentary texts to the stimulus text, commenting on the cultural and social values present in each.

In general, candidates demonstrated a marked improvement in their ability to address the composers' personal social and cultural values privileged in the stimulus and core texts.

Overall, this concept still challenges many candidates! It also was clear that common weaknesses remain in the critical understanding of 'positioning', resulting in:

- a lack of understanding of the stimulus extract which lead to the retelling of the narrative of documentaries which clearly revealed the candidate did not have an understanding of ideological positioning
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- introductions and conclusions which were too general and did not draw on the question components as an organiser e.g. defining the 'invited reading' and mentioning "social and cultural values and in doing this, maintaining focus on the key elements of the question they need to be answering.
- inappropriate choice of documentary films with little connection to the stimulus
- making empty statements such as the following, without further clarification:
'to make us believe everything the documentary shows'
'to privilege certain values'
'to get us to see issues like the director does'
'to play with the emotions of the audience'
'to interest and create sympathy'
- formulaic responses which read as prepared
- essays which lacked appropriate use of critical literacy language.

Weak responses tended to use a great deal of critical literacy language indiscriminately, so that they clearly demonstrated a lack of understanding of key terms, or they merely repeated clauses such as: ‘the interview had social and cultural values’. Some candidates simply listed 3 or 4 values that were privileged, all in one sentence: ‘This documentary privileges Courtin’s personal values such as ‘mateship ... and ...’. If they had discussed values individually and in more detail, they would have demonstrated greater understanding of the question.

Others claimed, for example, that the film about Jack Charles gave the filmmaker the opportunity to express his anti-homosexual discourse, when according to the stimulus text nothing could be further from the truth.

Again, it would be a good idea for candidates to learn to spell common terms correctly: privilege, positioning, comparison, documentary/documentaries, referring, similar, techniques, scene, discourse, dialogue, dominant (often spelt as dominate), biased, definitely (not defiantly).

There also needs to be a reminder that Informal register is not appropriate at pre tertiary standard e.g. “does a good job”, “has pulled it off”

Question 6

The unexpected stimulus as a visual text seemed to be a good discriminating tool clearly sorting out who understood ‘cultural positioning’ – and who did not. Few candidates made direct reference to the elements of the stimulus which actually broke the boundaries of the genre. Having a fixed date for when the T.V. show was produced may have helped candidates see that the show could be transforming norms of the genre.

Some candidates struggled greatly to address social and cultural values within the text. Ratings were awarded for relevant links between the stimulus and studied class texts and the recognition of how these texts positioned viewers/readers on shared cultural thinking about gender and racial ideologies.

However, it is worth noting that the question did not ask for a personal opinion on racism, feminism or even ineffectual policing in Australia! Criterion 9 is not addressed in this section.

Strong responses were able to write about the ‘cosy school’ contemporary prime time television crime fiction series and its challenge to other crime fiction representations of gender and in so doing, comparing the ways women have been presented in the genre across time and other socio-cultural implications. Good connections were made with texts – especially the Miss Marple crime series featuring a female protagonist. Other responses were able to provide contrasts with their texts that contained the more typical physical male sleuth hero e.g. Sherlock Holmes texts. It is also worth noting that the stimulus text worked very well for some texts, namely LA Confidential and Prime Suspect. All appreciated how this

crime fiction text empowered women as detective sleuths and challenged the stereotypical representation of gender power in many other crime fiction texts. The representation of race and class were other key elements but were not strongly addressed.

Candidates do not seem to have understood the concepts to unpack the stimulus in terms of post colonial or, resistant feminist readings. There is a lot of background cultural theory and critical literary theory that needs to be taught to candidates to give them the chance for elite marks in Criterion 3 in the examination situation.

Unfortunately there were too many unsuccessful responses which were purely observational: describing the poster - and were not analytical at all. Many candidates were lacking the cultural and common knowledge needed to interpret the stimulus, as many candidates could not recognise that the main character was in an African – not a western cultural context! A few responses compared the African, probably rural setting with the grime, violence and corruption of the western urban environment as it is portrayed in crime fiction.

Candidates even failed to recognise historical context in their own texts and felt that crime fiction writers from the golden era just ‘got it wrong’ as they failed to recognise the importance of women!

Other candidates did not appear to understand the requirements of the word “compare” in relation to the stimulus and their studied texts. It was noted that a lot of candidates tried to make far fetched similarities between texts e.g. Getting’ Square and Appeal Denied rather than looking for differences in representations between texts.

Other responses failed to answer the question, instead discussing all they knew about the generic conventions with no correlation to the stimulus text and struggled to interpret any implied positioning on cultural or social values.

All these types of responses reveal that many candidates still do not clearly understand the concept of positioning on cultural values.

The best answers showed strong essay structure:

- an ability to link the stimulus text to appropriate texts studied (rather than feeling they had to write about the texts they were most familiar with)
- addressed both visual and written ‘language’
- utilised quotes well to support analysis in terms of representation
- displayed excellent paragraphing, grammar, sophisticated expression and effective use of critical literacy terms
- drew conclusions about positioning on social/cultural values based on evidence provided

Aspects to avoid:

- long quotes that do not relate or add to argument

- a prepared essay with the odd sentence every now and then to link what was prepared to the stimulus
- mention of generic conventions only in introductions and then repeated in conclusions
- repeating the same point for several pages
- contradictory points of argument
- using very little of the terminology associated with analysing: ‘genre’, ‘representation’ ‘positioning’, ‘dominant/invited’ or ‘alternate reading’, ‘inclusion/exclusion’.

Question 7

The Generic Question in Section B provides parity with Section A. As outlined in the Written Examination Guidelines, the Generic Question validates the Communications Project and Applications studies and increases their significance in the class since they offer additional texts to explore in the written examination.

The responses that addressed this question were exceedingly weak, indicating that few candidates understood the stimulus material and the satiric style. Ben Elton’s satirical novel, *This Other Eden* is a platform he uses to question social values: through exaggerating the way contemporary mass media, particularly film, is increasingly driven by commercial and economic incentives, which insidiously exploit consumers in western culture.

Most importantly, the chosen texts that these candidates attempted to make links to in terms of values positioning were woefully inappropriate e.g. an Application on National Anthems and how they positioned responders on nationality was destined to be tenuous. Many candidates referred to only documentaries and would have been better off responding to the specific stimulus for documentary- they failed to link to the challenges in criticising the underpinnings of capitalism.

It needs to be emphasised that teachers need to create appropriate studies for Applications and vet the suitability of Communications Project studies if candidates are to use them in the examination situation. It also underscores that C1: Representation, C2 Ideas and Issues and C3 social and cultural positioning need to be purposefully addressed in the extension areas of the course.

Appendix

This year some exemplars were written responding to Criterion 3 stimuli and are included here. Extrapolation can be made from the other exemplars for Sports Reporting.

This summary is extracted from **Written Examination Guidelines 2009 – Criterion 3:**

- explain the intended audience for whom the texts have been created
- explain the ‘invited reading’: the reading that is encouraged and which endorses the dominant values, attitudes and beliefs of the composer at the time of the texts’ production
- analyse the features of the genre recognised in the texts
- analyse the representations in the texts which have become ‘naturalised’ (or are being challenged) through the genre language/conventions
- analyse the ways genre language affects the way in which the texts may be interpreted
- consider the possibility of resistant readings
- explain how the experience of the text/s positions its audience to endorse or challenge the texts’ ‘social meanings’: the dominant socio-cultural values privileged in the text at the time of construction and or reception.

DOCUMENTARY EXEMPLAR

EXPLAIN THE INTENDED AUDIENCE/S AND PURPOSE/S AND THE CONTEXT OF ITS CREATION

Contemporary documentaries are no longer genres associated with high brow cultural snobbery of the elite in society and having narrow educational intentions. Traditional documentary has been a genre that adults have found more compelling than young people.

This documentary is likely capitalising on the critical and commercial success with mass audiences of other (TV) documentaries like *Choir of Hard Knocks*. Documentary genres like this are currently popular and this film is utilising similar plot formula and location in order to establishing pathos for a social class: enduring the gritty realism of life amongst the urban under classes of ‘the criminal fraternity and ...drug associates’. Wilson uses his documentary as a platform to compete with the dominant discourse on sexuality, ethnicity and class and to challenge the status quo in western culture.

Does any element of the film strike you as breaking the boundaries of the genre?

This documentary maker probably utilises the modes of observational style and a blend of reflective (more experimental style) and maybe docu drama: reality constructed through a character-centric approach: Jack Charles.

Wilson also seems interested in assimilating some of the processes of making a fictional film such as ‘a happy ending’ and strikes you as breaking some of the traditional boundaries of documentary film as the filmmaker admits to ‘...cross[ing] the lines of documentarian objectivity and his revelation that as a director he had: ‘lost all objectivity...you’re getting close to being an accomplice...’ in the construction of the documentary.

Analyse the features of the genre recognised in the texts

Another element which shows Wilson’s interest, as a documentary maker, in how reality can be constructed, is in the obtrusive construction and editing ‘in one particularly surreal scene...’; and at the simplest level, making no attempt to hide its biographical construction: in not ‘putting the camera down until Charles got a happy ending’ ...and ‘filming him until he died’.

Analyse the ways genre language affects the way in which the texts may be interpreted/ how the director uses cinematic techniques to position the audience to accept a certain perspective on an issue.

Wilson builds a position of authority on Jack through the exploitation of some genre conventions in representing Jack positively: through allowing him as an individual to make his own case and interpret events through his personal recounts: ‘frank from the outset...’. His moments of direct address- speaking to camera is ‘very frank from the outset, in the context of his urban surrounding by using actuality shots of Jack’s life on the streets...’(video footage) Another filmic convention, strongly shaping how the audience view Jack favourably, is through the way Wilson exploits cinematography: ‘the camera loves him and he builds ‘an affecting portrait of Jack Charles...’

Explain the ‘invited reading’ and key values running through the texts

The director’s perspective is being privileged through *Bastardy*: inviting the audience to accept that Jack Charles has fought hard and is to be admired, despite his representation as a heroin addict involved with criminal activity and homelessness.

Wilson uses his documentary as a platform to compete with dominant discourses about the marginalised. Wilson selects a character to ‘...explore[s] the many and varied facets of Jack Charles’ life: as a gay aboriginal elder ...hobbled by an addiction to heroin, and as a homeless cat burglar whose life is punctuated by stints in jail.’

His ‘remarkable’ documentary challenges key cultural values: the ideologies of the most powerful (traditionally Anglo Australian, the middle class, and heterosexual males) in society relating to ethnicity/race, social status, gender and even age. This documentary was constructed to challenge the social marginalisation and exclusion of the voiceless in mainstream media, in the past, which represented such people narrowly as valueless or even worse- threatening the status quo: of heterosexuality and gender as a homosexual male; of law as a lawless criminal addict ; of social order as a homeless vagrant and of ethnicity as ‘a gay Aboriginal elder’.

Who loses from this text? Who might resist the invited reading on offer?

Wilson clearly adopted a Marxist reading perspective and values a more humanitarian inclusiveness in society and this resistant text provides a challenge to the social snobbery of the conservative establishment: in particular visual media and the elitist assumptions and ideologies of the middle class which work to perpetuate stereotypical representations of the marginalised underclass in our society.

CRIME FICTION EXEMPLAR**EXPLAIN THE INTENDED AUDIENCE/S AND PURPOSE/S AND THE CONTEXT OF ITS CREATION**

The Crime Fiction text, *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, is intended for a wide mainstream audience (Sunday night 8:00 - prime viewing time) and targets consumers of the genre of Cosy Crime Fiction. In its context of broadcasting, it is a text created in an African context but also intended to reach a western audience.

An analysis of the promotional poster suggests that this series is offering a contrast to the commercially successful police procedurals that attract mass audiences, such as *CSI*, *Law and Order* etc. This series seems to be following the generic conventions of Cosy Crime Fiction, as in *Miss Marple*, *Midsomer Murders*, but there are some obvious divergences from these conventions, such as location, in order to encourage understandings of different social and cultural contexts, attitudes and values. This series is a platform for the broadcasting of a discourse on social and cultural attitudes that competes with the dominant discourse on gender, ethnicity/race and class to challenge the status quo in western culture.

Does any element of the poster suggest that the series will break the boundaries of the genre?

This series constructs a social reality in which the value of women and the skills they possess are privileged; a reality constructed through a character-centric approach in the formidable figure of Madame Ramotswe. The casting of a large black woman in the role of the sleuth-hero is a significant subversion of the conventions for mainstream crime fiction, (which overwhelmingly reinforce the divisions of power in western society by naturalising the dominance of Caucasian males).

Analyse the features of the genre recognised in the texts

Cosy Crime Fiction, sleuth-hero, weapons, powers and means of deduction, setting.

Analyse the ways genre language affects the way in which the texts may be interpreted/ how the poster suggests the series will position the audience to accept a certain perspective on an issue.

The inserted text implies that Madame Ramotswe will solve the crimes in which she is involved through the use of ‘women’s intuition’, not through the more ‘naturalised’ methods of logical or scientific deduction. Also, the informal language of the name of the detective agency implies that it is not a corporate style or upper class establishment. It is ‘*The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency*’; a title that has working class connotations. The challenge to the dominant ideologies of Anglo-Saxon, white, male dominance in western society is reinforced by the colours, symbolism and written text of the promotional poster. The pink and blue colours that dominate in the representation of the sleuth hero are a direct contrast to the dark and sinister tones that are most familiar to crime fiction consumers. Madame Ramotswe wields an umbrella rather than a gun. She is an extremely large woman challenging the conventions of the ‘celebrity female image’. The inserted photograph of the iconic African landscape informs the viewer that the setting of the series will definitely be important in providing a context for cultural and social issues in Africa, which may differ from the issues raised in western social and cultural contexts but may revolve around some of the same constructs e.g. gender, race, class, age. It is a setting that will contrast markedly with many texts studied by candidates.

Explain the ‘invited reading’ and key values running through the texts.

The writer’s perspective seems to be being privileged through *The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency*: inviting the audience to accept that a female detective is just as capable and effective as a male one, so a key value is gender equality. The text invites the viewer to accept that different cultures have a right to be represented in television broadcasting, it is therefore valuing cultural diversity. Women with body images that do not fit the dominant stereotypes of celebrities are being valued. The text also invites viewers to consider means other than violence for the resolving of crime. There is also the implied valuing of working class people. The discourse of this series will compete with the dominant discourse regarding the less powerful groups in society- people from the developing world, women, working class groups and black people.

The poster suggests the series challenges key cultural values: the ideologies that support and are perpetuated by the most powerful (traditionally Caucasians, the middle class/elite, and males) in society, relating to ethnicity/race, social status, gender and even age. The series seems to challenge the social marginalisation and exclusion of the voiceless in mainstream media, which generally represents such people narrowly - as valueless or even worse-threatening the status quo.

Who loses from this text? Who might resist the invited reading on offer?

A resistant reading would perhaps be generated from a feminist perspective. The lead female character is valued for her clearly feminine qualities...the umbrella, the colours, the inserted text ‘Never underestimate a woman’s intuition’ etc. A resistant reading could also argue that

the text is exploiting a cultural group, with its diverse social attitudes (for example towards body image) for humour.

GENERAL EXEMPLAR

EXPLAIN THE INTENDED AUDIENCE/S AND PURPOSE/S AND THE CONTEXT OF ITS CREATION

Ben Elton's satirical novel, *This Other Eden* is a platform he uses to question the overvaluing of materialism as a social value: through exaggerating the way contemporary mass media, particularly film, is increasingly driven by commercial and economic incentives, which insidiously exploit consumers in western culture. On his privately owned corporate network, Plastic, a media mogul, breaks the boundaries of the traditional genre of advertisement: where the line between what can be considered strictly entertainment and information as opposed to what can be seen as commercial persuasion has deliberately been blurred: '...The shows, the ads, even the news would be mutually complementary' and this satirical extract is positioning readers to see this as underhanded :by targeting unwary audiences with unsolicited commercial messages! Elton is satirising/criticising the abuse of the power of language to foster or perpetuate the ideology and practice of capitalism.

This article would target a wide range of contemporary readers, in particular youth who are the targeted but unwary audience and consumers of entertainment and who might have enjoyed Elton's satirical humour in other visual media. Ben Elton, interestingly, utilises the genre of the satiric novel to challenge social values, a form that you would imagine might be less effective in targeting his contemporary audience in an increasingly computerised world.

Analyse the features of the genre recognised in the texts

The features of the satirical novel are cleverly exploited: features of fiction and in particular exaggeration, irony and overstatement. He constructs a fictional character, along the lines of Dickensian characters, with the humorous and personified name of 'Plastic' who is zealously giving a speech to a group of future media candidates. Plastic's monologue is written as overstatement: traditional commercial breaks are described metaphorically as 'insulting little ghettos where the marketing got crammed in...' He is negatively represented as a crusading zealot of the economic enterprise of 'advertainment' (a pun on the genre of 'infotainment') through Elton's third person narration: 'Plastic would pontificate with evangelical zeal...'

Readers are being positioned, through humour, to be critical of the subversion of the 'means of communication' by media corporations who have extended the purpose of advertisements far beyond mere background placements, to instead become fully immersed in a film's narrative : '...A story nothing else! No subliminals, no product identification, nothing!...' .

Explain the ‘invited reading’ and key values running through the texts

Elton is positioning readers to accept the invited reading that the genre of advertisement and film has played an integral part in the cultivation of the contemporary consumer culture and raises serious concerns about the subversive control and interference commercial investors can exert over entertainment, shifting the balance of control from filmmakers to advertising CEOs: ‘[Plastic] noting ...the extent to which the film was in fact a colossal advert for the spin off paraphernalia which accompanied it.’

Readers are being positioned , through irony and other satirical techniques, to question such developments as being a reprehensible exploitation of the relationship of one group who have social power: control of mass media , over others, the consumers of entertainment, in society and that the practice of blurring the genre of film with the genre of advertisement to create ‘advertainment’ should be questioned. He is criticising the underpinnings of capitalism.

Who loses from this text? Who might resist the invited reading on offer?

Elton clearly values a more equitable relationship between business and consumers in contemporary society and this text provides a challenge to the advertising industry’s value: he is scathing of the huge economic benefit capitalists continue to gain from our consumer culture by blurring the line where art meets commerce. A resistant reader would believe that economic growth and aesthetics can coexist.

FOLIO**Selection of Folio Pieces**

Successful students were those who made the most of the 2009 Folio Guidelines. Students and teachers are reminded to refer closely to the 2009 Folio Guidelines as a number of markers commented that non-compliance had resulted in lowered awards.

The strongest folios demonstrated the exciting elements of this course. They revealed the students’ engagement with the wide range of texts studied; their enjoyment of the diversity of reading and viewing; their discovery of aspects that obviously inspired quality outcomes from students.

An encouraging proportion of ‘A’ folios indicates that many teachers and students are preparing well and are following the Guidelines and advice on the selection of effective pieces across the modules more than in previous years.

There was a distinct difference between folios containing texts that showed their teacher had taught from a critical literacy standpoint and those who had not.

Another strong concern that was expressed is that the Applications that are being permitted inclusion in Folios often had very tenuous links or connections to the English Communications Course.

Many examiners objected to a trend in the Applications and Communications Projects in which English Studies texts were being used in a way that more closely addressed English Studies requirements than evidencing an extension on the understanding of critical literacy or addressing the power of language in contemporary Australian society. There was also objection to the use of prescribed Ideas and Issues texts for Applications. To ensure students are not disadvantaged by the risk of their work being deemed to be developed outside of the Communications Course it was strongly suggested texts for English Studies and English Communications do not cross-over.

Folio Content

A Creative Piece

The creative response provides scope for students to show their grasp of purpose and audience and perhaps teachers need to be more aware of the potential here. There is an expectation that creative pieces are imaginative or inventive and have some evidence of crafting or ‘playing with’ language.

Creative pieces were more successful compared to previous years. The development of a strong and varied voice and real ‘crafting’ of language was evident in the best creative pieces.

This year’s Folios showed the Short Story is one effective choice for displaying imagination and imitation of the original writer's style. They included original material that showed extra dimensions to a student’s understanding of the text through an extension to the story, theme or giving further insight into character.

Students need to be mindful that simply retelling the same story from the point of view of an alternative character, giving trite and expected commentary on, or retelling of the action does not constitute new insight or originality. Most of the better short stories also included a title which hinted at a theme in the story and so demonstrated a greater understanding of the way stories ‘work’.

There were also some other clever forms including excellent crime fiction pieces, stories which used dialogue and/or vivid description and creative plotting and innovative drama scripts, picture books, power points and posters. Very few students attempted poetry. Some of the “tried and true” approaches to creative writing can be profitably reused: writing from an alternative perspective; writing from the perspective of a bystander; exploring the gaps and silences in texts; or writing as a character in an alternative form.

Candidates should try to include the whole piece, not excerpts. An excerpt of a short crime fiction is a ‘pale shadow’ of the full story. Some candidates also confused first person

narrative with monologue. Monologue seemed a misunderstood form by those that chose to describe their pieces as such. A hand drawn DVD cover does not meet the standards required of a pre-tertiary course.

This part of the folio continues to cause concern for other candidates, possibly because of misunderstanding about what a “creative” response entails: it must be more than a “created” product.

Candidates need to heed advice about which journalistic forms work best for certain tasks: an opinion column may lend itself well to reflection; a review can tread a line between analysis and reflection; a feature article, on the other hand, can work well as a creative piece because there is often scope for some imaginative input on the part of the candidate. Power points that were analytical but ‘dressed up’ as creative with fancy layout/presentation or panel discussion/interviews with director are not creative.

‘Reflective’ type creative responses often were very similar to the personal response – so 3 distinctively different ‘voices’ were not as clear.

An Analytical, Investigative or Interpretative Piece

Analytical Responses

The essay form was by far the preferred text type for the analytical option. It is clear that the essay still provides the best avenue for many candidates to showcase understanding of the critical literacy elements of the course and draw on knowledge and examples of language from the set texts to support analysis. Stylistic variations were very evident yet most candidates were comfortable with this form. Those that included a precise focus question wrote more precisely and relevantly. This was better than a general summary in the Context Statement about the vague intentions of the piece. Where possible, candidates should include the stimulus text when they have selected a mid-year exam essay.

If a mid-year exam essay from section A is to be used it should be reworked to be clearly reflective OR analytical. It was disappointing to find that many folios included analytical pieces which still had reflective components within them. This may have stemmed from submitting midyear exam pieces. Candidates should be mindful that they must edit and remove reflective comments from their analytical pieces.

We would recommend the inclusion of the exact question being addressed either in the Context Statement or at the top of the actual essay.

It is also clear that some teachers are allowing the use of the explicit “In this essay I will...” approach. Whilst markers did not penalise for this, we would strongly recommend that, given the plentiful opportunities for the use of an explicit personal voice in this course, teachers conform to the expectation of stylistic objectivity in essays. This gives candidates a foundation for the approach still required in other disciplines.

Investigative/Interpretive Responses

Candidates need to think carefully about their choice of topic – a very broad inquiry question, such as ‘Advertising and how women are represented’ seemed to pose problems for weaker candidates. More precise questions or studies, such as analysing the power of language in a short extract or article, were managed much more successfully by candidates.

The critical part of the Communications Project brief should involve analysis /discussion or exploration to reveal how the 'language' as used in a text/s (visual/ written) has had an impact/influence/effect on contemporary Australian society. Projects should at least make a clear textual link or engagement with the demands of criterion 1: Cultural Representation. Many did reveal original and engaging work.

Some Communications Projects that were included did not address the power of language in an Australian context at all. They were a collection of facts and observations – not an analysis of language. Some Communications Projects still look alarmingly like a Tourism Studies Assignment.

Some were not referenced (no in-text referencing or bibliography.) This is alarming as the Communication Project is an investigation and would need evidence of the research the candidate had undertaken. Weaker projects remain very general, although in some cases the list of references implied that candidates had researched widely. On the other hand, the danger is always the over emphasis on research to the detriment of the candidate personally engaging with language and independently synthesising and evaluating the power of language in contemporary society.

A worrying number of Communications Projects continue to be reflective in nature, perhaps as a result of the Section A Written Exam requirement.

Applications have been developed in the course as a short group activity. Many Applications selected seem inappropriate to include in folios and the topics are concerning.

A Personal Reflective Response Piece

Meeting the specific demands of Criterion 9 still appears to be a major challenge for the candidates of this course. There continues to be some confusion as to what makes a good reflective task. Personal Reflective pieces tended to rate poorly compared to the others.

There seemed to be a number of candidates who submitted analytical pieces with a token effort to included criterion 9 elements. Reflective pieces for the folio need to focus far more on criterion 9 than is expected in Section A of the exam. If utilising in-class examination pieces for Section A then it is strongly advised that extracts be chosen and that these be edited and extended.

Many candidates failed to follow the guidelines for what should be included in the Folio. The most common difficulty was including a piece that was identified as being reflective but which was not reflective at all. The phrase ‘I believe’ or ‘I think’ does not necessarily make a piece reflective – candidates need to chart the effect of texts studied on their personal attitudes and values. An alarming number of reflective pieces were not tied to any specific

text/s and were a vehicle for the candidate to tell us their values or response to an issue unrelated to a text.

Compared to other years a greater number of candidates are attempting to express how the texts they have studied have challenged or confirmed their understanding or beliefs, which is pleasing to note. Many of these candidates are very good at stating their personal positions clearly. Giving reasons is the next step and not all did this well. The better pieces considered the candidate's own social and cultural contextual factors as well as the personal factors that have shaped their views, as well as quantified the impact of the text on their own views.

Alarmingly there were still reflective responses that were autobiographical or re-told a story or – in some cases – were actually analytical.

Inappropriate Selections (Criterion 7)

Penalties were applied to folios which included one or more inappropriate selections according to the stated 2009 Folio Guidelines.

Candidates were penalised for including two pieces on the same text or two pieces from Applications, or three pieces from a single strand, which impacted significantly on the range and originality of responses, particularly the creative pieces.

Personal histories/autobiographies- in lieu of personal reflection are still appearing despite warnings about inappropriateness in 2009 Folio Guidelines and in previous exam reports.

Non-prescribed texts were often referred to in Modules – e.g. newspaper articles for Imagining Australia module.

Markers expressed concern that Applications show an increasing trend to not be short group studies and products. Other inappropriate Applications included the study of texts that are part of the English Studies syllabus. The Communications Syllabus is quite explicit about what types of study focus fit the Applications purposes and these do not.

Context Statements

The Context Statements were much improved overall: generally more concise and useful. Most Context Statements clearly indicated the strand and text connections and other relevant information.

Context Statements need to make clear the text connection - what part of the course candidates were working from and how each piece tied into the 'underpinning concepts' of that unit e.g. Communications Projects should have made a direct link to the "power of language in contemporary Australian society."

Precise Context Statements direct the reader to the intentions of the piece.

Examples – 'The intention is to show 'that representation and positioning' are prevalent in non-fiction, historical texts...', or 'The intention is to explore 'two senses of belonging in

conflict...’ or it identifies the main ideas to be explored. Nearly every folio had Word Counts clearly visible – a great help for the marker.

Unfortunately some Context Statements were mislabelled, which became problematic when it was not clear which strands were represented. There was some confusion about strands/text connections; and intentions/forms selected were in many cases misleading. Some were very poorly constructed and did not match the response – for instance, one folio contained the same Context Statement for two pieces of work! In many cases the Context Statements had not been checked and gave the impression of having been written at the last minute. Such candidates are still omitting essential information that would actually advantage them in terms of how the marker approaches a piece.

Folio Length and Word Count

Generally the required word count was easily met. Candidates must not take advantage of the 10% excess for words. Instead they should demonstrate their ability to write and edit by meeting the set word limit – that is what they will be required to do post Year 12.

Folios should be balanced in terms of the length of each piece and candidates should be discouraged from using a very short piece (often the analytical) so that they can include a longer reflective or creative piece.

Candidates MAY submit extracts from a longer piece – extracts from an essay and if chosen carefully, can still demonstrate the writer’s ability to ‘explore and develop complex ideas’ which is an important descriptor for criterion 7.

Extracts from a longer personal response could also focus on the articulation and exploration aspects of the response – with less retelling of all the details of a text. Ironically, many of the overlong folios would have been improved by some ‘culling’ – repetition of ideas was frequent in personal responses and some of the short stories in the creative responses lost impact due to excessive retelling.

This year there appeared some questionable practices and these should be actively discouraged:

- Submitting over length pieces and leaving notes for the marker about choosing when to stop e.g. one folio was 4,623 words - with an invitation to the marker to select a part of each piece to mark!
- attaching the complete longer piece to the smaller extract that was the actual folio piece
- using appendices to add information beyond the word limit
- seemingly ‘fudging’ the Strand Connection to include material outside the Guidelines e.g. calling it an Application when it appeared not to be from a short group task.

Presentation

Whilst the Folio Guidelines provided presentation requirements this year, these were NOT observed in many instances.

Many candidates did not present work with length/word counts or use the suggested line spacing, or include a Contents Page and so on.

Criteria Assessment

Criterion 7

The problems with Criterion 7 (range of texts) have improved significantly this year.

There were many excellent folios where candidates had obviously worked hard at developing an effective range of texts for different purposes/audiences. This year there was a clearer differentiation between the analytical and reflective, which was pleasing.

However, there were many where candidates continue to submit pieces that are contraindications: for example, trying to submit reflective pieces that are actually creative and/or vice versa.

The weakest pieces seem to be either creative or personal reflective.

An analytical essay should not be rebadged as a reflective piece. The personal reflective pieces that did not work were most of the time exam essay type analysis that had little reflective depth to them, with only a cursory reflective comment occasionally or at the end of the piece. The best ones really explored how the texts, the ideas/ issues etc really had an impact on their beliefs, ideas, attitudes, values

Criterion 10

- the accurate use of: language conventions including appropriate structure and register, grammar,
- critical literacy terminology, a sophisticated vocabulary,
- punctuation and spelling
- referencing etc.

There is the expectation that candidates are the ones responsible for editing and proofreading class drafts and preparing publication pieces for their Folios. Generally there were fewer grammatical mistakes and the folios were usually well proofread. So the task of marking the folios was a pleasant one. It is pleasing to see that so many candidates can write good prose and edit their work for effective communication.

The assessments on Criterion 10 therefore reflected the candidates' expertise. Strong folios contained no typographical or grammatical errors. Sophisticated vocabulary and a capacity to accurately punctuate coherent, complex sentences, distinguished the strongest pieces. As

markers we rewarded the candidates who varied sentence structures and sentence openings as this gave the writing more fluency and flair.

However, for a pre tertiary level subject, proof reading in weak Folios was, in short, poor! Simple things like knowing when to use ‘a’ as opposed to ‘an’, general sloppiness with paragraphing, structure and overall expression, failure to place titles of texts in italics, and correctly use the possessive apostrophe and homophonic ‘their/there’ are hard things to accept in an external folio of work.

Weak responses also did not demonstrate an understanding of the differences in register required e.g. use of register inappropriately, in many instances formal, analytical essays were written in first person.

Weaker folios were riddled with typographical or grammatical errors. In many cases, sentence structure was extremely poor – words were missing, tenses were incorrect, tense and subject – verb agreement was incorrect and closing or introductory phrases were omitted. The failure to run spell check and correctly edit work by candidates is always disappointing.

Most essays had introductions; a worrying number of essays did not have conclusions which really summed up the content of their argument. Similarly, paragraphing was given scant regard with candidates not employing paragraphs effectively.

Generally candidate vocabulary was successful where they were able to use critical literacy terminology effectively and appropriately. Still too many candidates did not effectively use key critical literacy terms appropriate to the area of study e.g. a documentary piece that did not use or understand positioning, dominant reading etc.

Candidates should avoid using critical literacy terminology when out of context.

This course is very full, but it seems essential that time is made for the more explicit teaching of punctuation and grammar.

The following elements were identified as concerns:

- Overuse of informal language in essays. e. g. the writer ‘talks about’ rather than discusses, contends etc.
- A conversational tone, where a more formal register is needed.
- Use of slang language.
- Run on sentences showing poor awareness of appropriate punctuation.
- The precise use of pronouns is also lacking in many candidates’ work. This is not an issue of grammar pedantry; rather it is essential for clear communication. So many candidates use “they” repeatedly when there is no clear antecedent noun.
- The use of correct prepositions is also a problem and their misuse leads to awkward expression: different than; ignorant to; comment of; agree to/with etc.
- Misuse of or ignorance of the apostrophe and hyphens.
- Misuse of semi-colon – often used where colon or commas should be used.
- Poor punctuation of dialogue evident in creative pieces.

- Title conventions are still poor.
- Capital letters not being used for names and titles.
- Indiscriminate use of capitals seems to be a new feature!
- Paragraphing confusion – starting a new line for every sentence or writing paragraphs which are too dense or convoluted.
- Confused use of terminology e.g. purpose, point of view and positioning.
- Even though candidates endeavoured to use sophisticated language, they often showed limited awareness of ‘word families’ e.g. evilness (for evil), corruptness (for corruption), demolition (for demolition).
- Awkward transitions to quotations and citations.
- Redundancies – e.g. in the text ‘*Beneath the Veil*’.
- Use of numerals for low numbers
- Of concern was the fact that even obvious A level candidates persisted with use of contractions in formal essays. In similar casual vein, candidates often referred to authors by their first name.

The poor syntax in many Folios often suggested candidates were second language users which prompts a reminder that they should be counselled to do ESL, not English Communications.

Referencing

Research skills usually signal an informed candidate. Overall the use of referencing was inconsistent but greatly improved on other years. There was a direct link between candidates who took the time to reference accurately and appropriately and the overall standard of the work.

Candidates who presented the strongest folios referenced accurately and appropriately, even taking care to reference images. In solid Folios there was competent and effective use of in text referencing, footnoting and bibliographies. . Candidates who were consistent in their referencing style across the three pieces were most successful.

Disastrously, many ‘good’ folios struggled with the formatting of citation, did not incorporate quotations smoothly and citations were awkward. Candidates also needed to check the accuracy of their quotations and citations. Analytical response needs it.

There is confusion about what constitutes a bibliography and what constitutes a reference list: a bibliography is a list of texts that have been consulted but not specifically referred to in the body of the work; a reference list is one that cites those works specifically referred to in the body. Candidates are presenting bibliographies but failing to use in text referencing and following up with a reference list.

Weaker folios contained no referencing at all. There were several instances where candidates referred to media articles but did not include copies for reference by markers.

Clearly, referencing is problematic for many of our candidates. There seems to be much inconsistency in the importance placed on referencing by teachers and, whilst we do not wish this to become a major issue, there is probably a place for greater clarification of expectations. The APA referencing system is an easy to use feature of Office 2007 and is suggested as the standard for English Communications.

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