

Circular S/IF/73/22

November 2022

To: The Principals of Post-primary Schools and Directors of Further and Higher Education

For circulation to: All Heads of Department and Examination Officers

The use of Inappropriate or Offensive Language in Assessment Materials

CCEA wishes to ask centres to remind candidates they should not use “inappropriate, offensive, obscene, homophobic, transphobic, racist or sexist material in scripts, controlled assessments, coursework, non-examination assessments or portfolios.” [JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures, 1 September 2022 – 31 August 2023](#) [pg. 39]

Failure to comply with this requirement can lead to a sanction being applied, ranging from a warning or loss of marks to disqualification from all qualifications in that series, or being barred from entering examinations for a set period of time. Further detail on the types of offence and associate sanctions can be found on pg. 46 of [JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures, 1 September 2022 – 31 August 2023](#)

GCSE English Language

Because of the nature of the assessment and opportunities for creative writing, instances of the above offence tend to be higher in GCSE English Language than in other qualifications. CCEA therefore asks that teachers of GCSE English Language share with their students the Competence Level Strand descriptors to show that language used in assessments should be selected to demonstrate a wide and precise vocabulary, and to build rapport with the specified audience.

The writing tasks in Units 1 and 4, both of which are assessed by examination, are underpinned by the requirement for candidates to match form, audience, and purpose. The forms used in previous examination papers have been school-based or forms intended for the public domain. Therefore, students must not use inappropriate language to set context or create a particular atmosphere.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this circular please contact:

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