Review of Standards in GCSE English

2005 and 2009

Contents

Executive summary

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) undertakes a rolling programme of reviews across high profile GCSE and GCE A level subjects to monitor whether standards in assessment and candidate performance have been maintained over time.

This report details the findings for GCSE English in the years 2005 and 2009. The previous review for this subject compared the years 2002 and 2005.

The study compared subject specifications, assessment materials and candidate work from the five awarding organisations awarding this qualification in the years being reviewed (the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance [AQA]; the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment [CCEA]; Edexcel; Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations [OCR] and WJEC[1]) by collecting the views of a number of subject specialists.

The study found the following:

- There were no significant differences between awarding organisations or between 2005 and 2009 in candidate performance at the grade boundaries reviewed.

- There have been no significant changes in demand to specification and question paper content between 2005 and 2009.

- There were differences between awarding organisations, particularly in relation to the assessment of the reading of extended prose texts. Awarding organisations tended to minimise the requirements for reading extended prose and this failed to meet the spirit of the assessment objectives.

- There was no evidence of a consensus on the assessment of non-fiction and media texts, with specifications failing to differentiate clearly between non-fiction and media.

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[1] WJEC were formerly known as the Welsh Joint Education Committee. In Welsh WJEC is CBAC: as the review was conducted in English all references to the awarding organisation are as WJEC.

Section 1: Introduction

Context

In his *Review of Qualifications for 16–19 Year Olds* (1996), Lord Dearing made several recommendations to ensure that 'there is a basis and accepted procedure… for monitoring and safeguarding standards over time'. In the same year, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), one of our predecessors, and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) jointly recommended that there should be:

> a rolling programme of reviews on a five-year cycle to ensure examination demands and grade standards are being maintained in all major subjects. (*Standards in Public Examinations 1975 to 1995*, page 4, 1996)

As a result of these recommendations Ofqual, in collaboration with the regulators for Wales (the Department for Education and Skills [DfES]) and Northern Ireland (CCEA), introduced a programme to investigate standards in A level and GCSE examinations by systematically collecting and retaining assessment materials and candidate work to enable standards reviews to cover two or more years.

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 formalised Ofqual's role in undertaking such reviews by including a statutory objective 'to secure that regulated qualifications indicate a consistent level of attainment (including over time)'.

The aim of this programme is to report on our work in meeting this objective and to inform future developments in qualification and subject criteria to support meeting this objective in the future. This aim is met by:

- analysing the nature of the requirements different assessments make on candidates

- comparing the levels of performance required for a particular grade in different assessments

- considering how these two elements relate to each other.

About the GCSE English qualification

In 2005, the GCSE English specifications included in the previous review attracted approximately 90 per cent of over 710,000 candidates who took GCSE English in that year. In 2009, between the five awarding organisations, 637,163 candidates took GCSE English. A detailed breakdown of candidate entry numbers and cumulative percentage pass rates can be found in Appendix F.

Our immediate predecessor, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), most recently conducted a standards review in GCSE English in 2006; the results were published in a report in February 2007. This is available on our website at www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/QCA-07-3102_standards_GCSE_English_mar07.pdf .

The key findings have been taken into account as part of our work on this review. They were as follows:

- In 2005, the review found that standards of performance over time had been maintained at all grade boundaries. Standards were comparable across all awarding organisations in 2005 at grade A and performance within awarding organisations across tiers at grade C was judged to be comparable. Some variations in standards of performance were identified.

- Reviewers in 2005 commented that several specifications contained repetitive material and explanation that could be reduced.

- Reviewers commented on the introduction of OCR's modular scheme, which they considered made it easier for candidates to achieve particular marks and grades. OCR's question papers were judged to be of a high demand compared with the other awarding organisations.

- The pre-release and anthology materials in assessments were said by reviewers to lead to a more predictable pattern of questioning.

- The assessment of writing questions was also often too predictable and the writing triplet *analyse, review, comment* was given less weighting than the other writing triplets.

All GCSEs and GCE A levels are based on criteria set by the regulators of qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Qualification criteria explain the general aims of studying a qualification and outline the essential skills, knowledge and understanding required. They also stipulate the structure of the qualification and how it should be assessed and graded. Where more than one awarding organisation offers a qualification, the regulators also produce specific subject criteria to ensure consistency between the different specifications.

Assessment objectives are specified within subject-specific criteria documents and outline what candidates must be required to do in the course of the qualification. Specifications must require candidates to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding through the specific assessment objectives in the relevant programme of study. The assessment objectives can often be assessed and weighted differently by awarding organisations, within certain parameters.

The process for producing both qualification and subject-specific criteria is the same. A change in criteria can be prompted by a significant change in government policy (for example, changes to the National Curriculum) or as part of a programme of periodic updates. The regulators develop draft criteria and these are then subject to public consultation so that the views of teachers, awarding organisations, subject associations and other learned bodies; higher education and other interested parties can be taken into account. Once the consultation outcomes have been given due consideration, the criteria are finalised by the regulators and published. Awarding organisations then follow the criteria to develop specifications. These specifications are subject to a review process conducted by the regulators (known as accreditation) to ensure that the specifications meet the relevant criteria prior to learners undertaking the qualification.

The criteria for GCSE English in both 2005 and 2009 remained the same, as published in 2001. Revised subject criteria were published in 2009 and will be first taught in September 2011. Assessment materials and candidate work (that will use these criteria) will be first collected in 2012, for a standards review scheduled in 2013.

Methodology of the review

Standards reviews examine different specifications within a qualification, their associated assessment instruments and candidate work by collating and analysing the views of a number of subject specialists. The following sections of this report detail the process of collecting and processing this information. In these studies, demand is measured against that of the other specifications under review and includes consideration of:

■ specification-level factors such as assessment objectives, content and structure

■ assessment-level factors such as what content is assessed and how, the weighting of each component and how the assessments are marked

■ candidate performance-level factors, including how the candidates responded to the assessments and the grades they received as a result.

The demand of an assessment or qualification can be defined in a wide variety of ways and is linked to the purpose of the qualification. The demand of an assessment or qualification is related to:

■ the amount and type of subject knowledge required to be assimilated

■ the complexity or number of processes required of the candidates, the extent to which the candidates have to generate responses to questions from their own knowledge, or the extent to which resources are provided

- the level of abstract thinking involved

- the extent to which the candidates must devise a strategy for responding to the questions.

Provision of assessment materials and candidate work

Each of the five awarding organisations offering the qualifications being reviewed (AQA; CCEA; Edexcel; OCR and WJEC) was asked to provide specification materials for GCE English Literature (from the specification with its largest entry in summer 2009).

Details of the requirements for assessment materials and candidate work are given in Appendix A, and in summary include:

- the current specification

- all associated question papers

- final mark schemes

- the 2009 Chief Examiner's Report and grade boundaries, overall and by unit (both raw and scaled)

- mark distributions, grade descriptions and assessment grids

- any other information that was routinely supplied to centres

- all the assessment work carried out by a sample of candidates whose final grade lay at or near the judgemental grade boundaries for the qualification being analysed.

The equivalent materials that had been collected and retained for the previous review were retrieved from our archive of assessment materials and candidate work.

Full details of the materials supplied by awarding organisations can be found in Appendices D and E.

The review team

Seventeen reviewers, experts in GCSE English, were contracted by us to undertake the review. These reviewers were sourced through three main channels:

- a subject expert recruitment exercise carried out by us in November 2009, advertised via *The Times Educational Supplement* and our website and newsletter

- nominations made by awarding organisations involved in the review

- nominations made by subject associations and other learned bodies invited to participate in the review.

A full list of reviewers can be found in <u>Appendix H.</u>

Reviewers were contracted as a *lead reviewer*, a *specification reviewer* or a *script reviewer* (all awarding organisation nominees and subject association nominees were *script reviewers*).

Analysis of the specifications and assessment materials

The lead reviewer and specification reviewers (specification review team) conducted detailed home-based (individual) analyses of the awarding organisations' materials, using a series of forms that can be found via the comparability page on our website at www.ofqual.gov.uk/research-and-statistics/research-reports/92-articles/23-comparability

These analyses are designed to describe the demand of the specification. Each reviewer completed analyses for a subset of the specifications available, in order for there to be at least three different views on each specification. The lead reviewer then produced a report that brought together the views of the reviewers on each of the awarding organisations. The specification review team was given the opportunity to discuss the conclusions made by the lead reviewer at a follow-up meeting. These findings are presented in Section 2 of this report.

Analysis of candidate performance

In order to assess candidate performance, all reviewers were brought together for a two-day meeting to analyse candidates' scripts (pieces of candidate work as supplied by the awarding organisations). This process is referred to as a script review. This started with a briefing session to ensure that all the reviewers had a common understanding of the methodology and the judgement criteria.

The scripts were organised into packs for consideration during the review. Packs were organised by grade (only grade boundaries A/B, C/D and F/G at GCSE level were analysed, as the other grades are calculated arithmetically after the former grade boundary marks have been set during the awarding process carried out by awarding organisations).

As far as was possible, given the collection of scripts available, packs contained 12 scripts at the same grade, with at least one script from each awarding organisation from 2005 and 2009 (the remaining two scripts were selected at random).

Reviewers were then asked to rank the 12 scripts in each pack from best to worst, on a data entry sheet, and to make comments on the scripts as necessary. Each reviewer completed a maximum of 14 sessions over the two-day residential script review.

Over the duration of the script review a plenary session was held for reviewers to discuss the script review process and the quality of the scripts that were being analysed.

Data analysis

We use a software package called FACETS to analyse the results from the datasheets produced during the script review. FACETS uses a Rasch model (often classified under item response theory) to convert the qualitative ranking decisions made by reviewers into a single list that reflects the probable overall order of the sets of candidate work, from best to worst.

We use this list, alongside the qualitative comments made during the candidate work review process and findings from the specification review, to inform Section 3 of this report.

Section 2: Subject demand in GCSE English

Overview

Specification reviewers considered the specification documents, Chief Examiners' Reports and question papers with associated mark schemes from each of the awarding organisations from 2005 and 2009. Details of the specifications included in the review are given in [Appendix C.](#)

In summary, the following findings emerged:

- There have been no significant changes in demand to specifications and question papers between 2005 and 2009, so any change in standards would be reflected clearly in the work of candidates. However, the review has found no such change and standards over time have been maintained.

- While awarding organisations approach the assessment objectives in different ways, they maintain a common standard. WJEC continues to place an emphasis on creative writing and narrative and for this reason its question papers are less demanding, although the overall standard is maintained. The modular option proposed by OCR does not appear, from the point of view of this review, to benefit candidates or to impact on standards.

- There are differences between awarding organisations, particularly in relation to the assessment of the reading of (extended) prose texts and a tendency to minimise requirements that consequently fail to meet the spirit of the assessment objectives. The range and extent of reading is particularly undervalued in the CCEA and WJEC specifications and question papers.

- There is no evidence of a consensus on the assessment of non-fiction and media texts. There are different approaches, so that different awarding organisations assess non-fiction and media in either coursework or examination and do not differentiate clearly between non-fiction and media texts (or assess their study as writing). There is no evidence of emerging best practice in the assessment of responses to media texts or in discriminating between non-fiction and media in the specifications reviewed.

- There is no common agreement on the use of supporting scaffolding and bullet points in task setting. It is not always clear what the status of advice and support is in terms of the candidate requirement to follow it. Sometimes instruction, advice and requirements are confused or overlap.

Findings

Specifications and schemes of assessment

There were no changes to the assessment objectives or subject criteria in the specifications for GCSE English between 2005 and 2009. There were some differences between the awarding organisations in the weighting given to particular aspects of assessment objectives, but these were not sufficient to impact on standards.

There were no changes to specification content in English or to the schemes of assessment between 2005 and 2009. Details of the schemes of assessment included in the review, as well as other specifications available, are given in Appendix B.

There were no changes to the arrangements for coursework between 2005 and 2009; however, the quality of coursework in 2009 demonstrated that teachers were clearly more aware of the requirements. The coursework requirements for each specification are detailed as part of the overall scheme of assessment in Appendix B.

No changes to the arrangements for tiering or to the acceptable areas of overlap across tiers between 2005 and 2009 were made. A significant amount of textual material and content in question papers was common to both tiers, questions were often similar (with the only difference sometimes being additional prompts at the Foundation tier).

There were few options in GCSE English and the provision of choice was unchanged between 2005 and 2009. Coursework texts could be chosen and there was a choice of written tasks on some written question papers. AQA offered the most choice to candidates within its question papers and CCEA and WJEC offered the least. OCR was the only awarding organisation to offer a modular scheme. This provides alternative routes and, for example, allows candidates to take both coursework and examination options, carrying forward the better mark for certification.

Assessment objectives

Speaking and Listening (AO1)

It is not possible to comment on the maintenance of standards over time for speaking and listening. There is no retrievable evidence to support a review of this assessment objective over time.

Reading (AO2)

There is no change in standards over time for reading. However, the way in which an awarding organisation addresses this assessment objective may impact on breadth and the candidate's experience of reading. There are differences in interpretation, requirements, volume and demand in the study and assessment of reading. Some

specifications minimise the volume, range and demand of the reading requirements in the subject criteria. For example, because of the flexibility in the AQA scheme of assessment, it is possible to study only eight poems, one or two chapters of the longer novel (with brief references to the whole) and, similarly, one or two scenes from the selected Shakespeare play. In its Chief Examiner's Reports in 2005 and 2009, AQA emphasised the need to cover the full range of poems, suggesting that this is not universal practice.

CCEA and WJEC test prose reading in one section of the question paper with a single short extract. Candidates are encouraged to read more widely, but the range of wider reading texts studied is not assessed explicitly. For CCEA, Shakespeare and poetry are assessed in coursework, with candidates being expected to have engaged with around 15 poems and about 1,000 lines of poetry.

The coverage of poetry is well supported within the Edexcel specification. WJEC and CCEA offer most guidance and prescription to candidates and offer less clarity in the assessment of whole text reading. However, WJEC does still require unprepared practical criticism.

Another significant difference in assessing reading is whether question papers address the whole text. In the OCR question paper, a specific question is posed that requires candidates to show understanding of the whole text. However, in other question papers candidates are simply faced with multi-part questions on a section of a whole text, or answers are excessively guided by scaffolding. The subject criteria suggest that an appropriate response to reading requires a personal response to the whole text (even when that is an extract).

The assessment of the reading of non-fiction and media texts is an area where there is variety in the approach, not only in the choice of coursework or written examination, but also in the emphasis placed on different aspects of the assessment objective. The types of text and the degree of challenge that they present to candidates vary between specifications and how they are addressed in question papers can influence the demand of this aspect of a specification. Specifically, there is an issue as to the consistency and effectiveness with which the need to consider 'structural and presentational' devices in AO2(v) is approached. So OCR sets demanding texts and questions, but while the level of demand is considerable, the coverage of the targeted AO2(v) is partial and reduces the clarity of some of the key distinctions between non-fiction and media texts. WJEC sets accessible texts but also views media largely as non-fiction. Edexcel has the most comprehensive scheme of assessment but employs a generic mark scheme for the assessment of AO2. However, non-fiction is assessed separately from media and the latter is assessed as a media product.

Writing (AO3)

There is no change in standards over time for writing. The writing triplets[2] are approached in different ways, but in terms of individual specifications there have been no significant changes between 2005 and 2009.

The writing triplets are given different weightings, according to where they are assessed. CCEA weights *analyse, review, comment* at 15 per cent in the written examination, but a triplet assessed through coursework is likely to be given a weighting of only 5 per cent. Where one of the writing triplets is separated out in a written examination (for example, *argue, persuade, advise*) the writing can be distorted and the task unnecessarily constrained.

OCR placed a greater emphasis on AO3ii and AO3iii in 2009, with additional notes in the mark scheme. Comparing the two speech writing tasks, one set in 2005 and the other in 2009, the mark scheme in 2005 noted how 'the tone should be appropriate', while in 2009 it stated how the writing 'should reflect a sense of purpose in organising, systematising, clarifying'.

There is also evidence that AQA has adopted a sharper and more focused approach to the assessment and marking of written tasks. The writing tasks were more manageable and straightforward in 2009.

With WJEC, the *inform, explain, describe* triplet in Paper 1 Section B appears to offer an opportunity to describe each year and there is no penalty for narration as opposed to description. The same triplet is addressed in coursework. Elsewhere, the AQA Chief Examiner's Report for 2009 noted how candidates were frequently 'restricted' by centres to follow the option to describe.

Question papers

The pattern of question papers remained unchanged in 2005 and 2009. There were minor differences in question style and presentation, but they were not sufficient to impact on standards.

It was noted in 2005 how aspects of reading or writing carry greater weighting when assessed in the written examination as opposed to coursework. In all schemes of assessment, the response to Shakespeare (or a writer of classic status in Northern Ireland or Wales) is weighted at 5 per cent in coursework compared with 7.5 per cent or 10 per cent for aspects of reading assessed in the written examination.

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[2] These are specified in the subject criteria. The writing triplets are: inform, explain, describe; analyse, review, comment; and argue, persuade, advise.

It was also suggested in 2005 that the pre-release of reading material might have upset the balance between foreseeable and unforeseeable demand. It was noted that in some cases there were insufficient unforeseen challenges and that some questions were formulaic and possibly predictable by teachers or candidates, lowering demand.

The question papers produced by WJEC supported candidates at the lower end of the Higher tier. The structured and prompted tasks offered by CCEA might also have benefited lower attaining candidates.

In the assessment of reading, CCEA and WJEC are the least demanding; the duration of the reading paper is not commensurate with demand as the reading is relatively straightforward and bullet points provide scaffolding at both tiers. In contrast, Edexcel combines relative complexity in tasks and a considerable volume of reading and re-reading, together with a full novel for study in coursework and challenging tasks on poetry.

Edexcel candidates complete three extended writing tasks in two hours. In contrast, CCEA allows an hour for a single transactional writing task. OCR Unit 1 presents three extended writing tasks, including the reading of two unseen texts. These constraints may be challenging for Foundation tier candidates.

The design of question papers has improved between 2005 and 2009, with the introduction of new fonts, colour and more white space. The representation of authentic media materials has improved. WJEC papers are particularly well presented. The question papers produced for CCEA and OCR are the most cluttered and there is still confusion between instruction, rubric and advice across all awarding organisations.

Higher tier candidates with WJEC benefit unduly from scaffolding and bullet point support prompts for writing in the tasks that are common to both tiers. It was noted in the CCEA Chief Examiner's Report in 2009 that too many candidates simply copied the prompts and commented briefly on them. However, CCEA set a letter with extensive scaffolding, two bullet points outlining indicative content and an opening sentence for candidates to use. CCEA also uses the triplet type within the scaffolding so that candidates are not asked to make a choice of writing type.

The use of this kind of scaffolding is particularly problematic when the mark scheme responds positively to what is, in practice, just the exposition of the bullet points in the order in which they are listed. Candidates should not be given credit for their ability to sequence, for example, when the sequencing of the answer has been provided by the scaffolding. Arguably, in writing, part of the challenge for candidates is to select an appropriate writing type. Finally, in responses to reading, the

scaffolding could shape responses unhelpfully, perhaps by encouraging separate responses from candidates who are capable of linking insight and evidence.

As previously noted, the AQA papers in 2009 were sharper and more focused than in 2005 in their approach. Tasks were typically more manageable and straightforward and the bullet point scaffolding for Paper 2 Section A was more helpful. In the questions that expected candidates to compare, the bullet points triggered a discussion of similarities and differences rather than, as in 2005, merely repeating a requirement to make a comparison.

There was also some evidence of a positive shift in OCR Unit 2, Section A, where the style of the questions on the Higher tier has moved away from the pattern of asking 'How does the writer…?' into more helpful questioning. The mark scheme has also been changed to include more indicative content. Also, with the OCR mark scheme there appears to be greater rigour and more clarity in the assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar, with more emphasis on structure, organisation and expression in writing tasks.

Section 3: Standards of performance

Findings

Reviewers considered candidate work from all the awarding organisations in 2005 and 2009. Details of the scripts used are provided in Appendix D. Both Higher and Foundation tier candidate work was reviewed when reviewing candidate performance at the C/D grade boundary. Tables and graphs of candidate performance can be found in Appendix F.

The FACETS software will produce a rank order, even when there is little difference between the quality of the candidate work considered in the review. This is due to the natural slight variability between candidates who get the same mark. In these cases the rank order would show a relatively even spread of candidate work from different awarding organisations throughout the rank order.

However, in this case, as there was so little difference between the quality of candidate work FACETS could not determine a probable rank order at all. The lack of a rank-ordered output indicates that there were no statistically significant differences observed in the quality of candidate work reviewed within the study.

It was found that there were no significant differences between awarding organisations and between 2005 and 2009 in performance at the grade boundaries reviewed. Therefore, we cannot provide further detailed commentary relating to script ranking positions. This was the case for grade A (Higher tier), grade C (Higher and Foundation tiers) and grade F (Foundation tier).

This means that the grades awarded across the awarding organisations (AQA, CCEA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC) for the candidate work that was reviewed in the script review, at the grade boundaries specified above, were of comparable standards to one another, similarly, they were also comparable over time.

While we cannot provide information relating to the script ranking results, information regarding the percentages of candidates achieving certain grades can be found in Appendix F.

Recommendations

This report has detailed our work in analysing the demand of qualifications across different years within GCSE English.

The next review of GCSE English is currently scheduled to take place in 2013, based on 2009 and 2012 materials. GCSE English Literature is also scheduled to be reviewed in 2013, based on 2007 and 2012 materials.

From the analysis, reviewers noted a number of elements that could usefully be considered when reviewing subject criteria, and also in the upcoming scrutiny of GCSE English in 2012 that will examine the lifecycle of the qualification in detail, from question development and examiner training to the awarding process.

This report recommends that stakeholders should be consulted specifically on the following points as part of any future changes in requirements for GCSE English:

- how to tighten up assessment objectives with regard to the assessment of the reading of extended prose texts

- how to tighten definitions of non-fiction and media texts to enable effective assessment of both.

Appendices

Appendix A: Provision of assessment materials and candidate work at GCSE and GCE levels for the National Archive (annual inclusion and standards reviews)

Section 1: Specification of requirements

1.1 Each awarding organisation should draw the materials for each subject from the specification with their largest entry in summer 2009, unless that selection severely limits the range of examination components available. Where there are several entry options, materials should be drawn from the largest option only, unless Ofqual were exceptionally to agree other arrangements.

1.2 (With regards to GCSE)- where there are both modular and linear (non-modular) examinations in a subject, the awarding organisation operating the modular scheme with the greatest number of candidates (amongst all awarding organisations) should include that modular scheme, even if it is not a specification within the awarding organisation's largest entry. Similarly, the awarding organisation operating the linear scheme with the greatest number of candidates should include that linear scheme. If an awarding organisation runs both the largest entry linear examination and the largest entry modular examination in a subject, it will therefore provide two sets of materials, including candidate work, where required.

1.3 The following materials should be supplied:

a) Current specification: all associated question papers and final mark schemes.

b) The 2009 chief examiners' report (CER) and details of awarding procedures particular to the specification supplied.

c) An indication of how the specification's content and assessment criteria and objectives have been met in each question paper supplied. This may take the form of a grid. For objective tests this should include faculty values, discrimination indices and a specification grid detailing what grade each question was targeted at, as well as an indication of what percentage of candidates got a particular question correct when it was targeted at the grade they got overall.

d) Unit or component mark distributions (with grade boundary marks shown). It should be clear whether the marks are on the raw or uniform mark scale.

e) Grade boundaries, overall and by unit (both raw and scaled).

f) Candidate work as specified in Section 2.

g) Complete data record showing for each candidate selected the raw mark; final mark; weighted or uniform mark; grade for each component/unit (including any non-archived component/unit) and overall grade; and, where relevant, tier of entry.

Where appropriate, materials a)–e) may be supplied in electronic form.

Section 2: Candidate work

2.1   The work submitted should include the examination scripts, the internal assessment, and any oral/ aural examinations (with examiner mark sheet) where these are routinely recorded. In addition, for modular specifications, the examination papers of module tests should be supplied.

2.2   The sample should be of the original work of the candidates. Photocopies of work should only be used where it is impossible to send the originals and with agreement in advance by Ofqual. Candidate and centre names and numbers should be removed wherever they appear in a candidate's work, unless they form an integral part of the work, for example, within a letter.

2.3   Where an awarding organisation's specification has a relatively small entry or where, for some other reason, it is proving difficult to find sufficient candidates who fulfil the criteria, the awarding organisation should contact the Ofqual officer responsible to agree how best to finalise the sample.

2.4   All internal assessment submitted should be that of the particular candidates selected for the sample. If, for any reason, this proves to be impossible, the awarding organisation should contact the Ofqual officer responsible to agree appropriate alternative measures.

2.5   The sample of scripts retained for each specification (option) should be taken from candidates whose final mark lay at or near the subject grade boundaries for A/B, C/D and F/G for GCSE and A/B and E/U for GCE A-level qualifications. At each boundary, each awarding organisation will supply the externally and internally set and marked assessments of fifteen candidates. Candidates selected should be those whose performance across units is not obviously and significantly unbalanced.

2.6   In tiered subjects, where the same grade boundary may feature in two tiers, separate sets of candidate work for the boundary should be provided from each tier.

In addition for AS/A level specifications:

2.7   Where awarding organisations have to supply candidate work for an A level specification,   two samples are required: one for the AS and one for the A2 units.

2.8   For AS level, the work of 15 candidates whose mark for the AS is at or close to the UMS boundary for an AS grade A (240) or grade E (120) should be supplied.

Candidates selected should be those whose performance across the three AS units is not obviously or significantly unbalanced. Candidates should have taken at least two of the three AS units in the June examination series.

2.9   For A level, the sample comprises the A2 work of 15 candidates who have gained c240 UMS marks at A or c120 UMS marks at E on their A2 units. Candidates selected should be those whose performance across the three A2 units is not obviously or significantly unbalanced. Candidates selected will ideally have also gained an overall A level mark which is at or close to the UMS boundary for an overall A level grade A (480) or grade E (240). Candidates should have taken at least two of the three A2 units in the June examination series.

2.10   The set of AS and A2 units provided should also be a valid combination for

A level.

2.11   Where coursework forms a compulsory sub-component within a unit, that coursework should also be collected. Where a unit has optional sub-components, the highest entry option should be supplied. The candidates chosen for the sample should, as far as possible, have a performance across the components of the unit which is not obviously unbalanced.

Appendix B: Schemes of assessment

NB: as no changes were made between 2005 and 2009 to the schemes of assessment, the tables are representative of both years for the respective awarding organisation.

AQA

Component title	Weight (%)	Time allowance	Type of assessment
Paper 1 Section A Reading in response to non-fiction/media texts	15	1¾ hours	Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Paper 1 Section B Writing to argue, persuade or advise	15		
Paper 2 Section A Reading response to poetry from different cultures and traditions in the AQA Anthology	15	1½ hours	Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Paper 2 Section B Writing to inform, explain or describe	15		
Coursework			
Speaking and Listening (En1) Three assessed activities	20		Internally set and marked coursework
Reading (En2) Shakespeare	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Reading (En2) Prose Study	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Writing (En3) Media (analyse, review, comment)	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Writing (En3) (imagine, explore, entertain)	5		Internally set and marked coursework

CCEA

Component title	Weight (%)	Time allowance	Type of assessment
Paper 1 Section A Reading literary prose text written by an Anglo-Irish author	15	2 hours	Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Paper 1 Section B Writing: Review, Analyse and Comment	15		
Paper 2 Section A Writing: Inform, Explain and Describe	15	2 hours	Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Paper 2 Section B Reading: Response to Non-fiction and Media	15		
Coursework			
Talking and Listening (En1) Three assessed activities	20		Internally set and marked coursework
Reading (En2) Shakespeare	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Reading (En2) Poetry Study	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Writing (En3) (analyse, review, comment)	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Writing (En3) (explore ,imagine,, entertain)	5		Internally set and marked coursework

Edexcel

Component title	Weight (%)	Time allowance	Type of assessment
Paper 2F/4H Section A Reading modern poetry from Anthology of pre-released material	30	2 hours	The Craft of the Writer: Poetry and Non-Fiction Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Paper 2F/4H Section B Reading non-fiction section of Anthology of pre-released material			
Paper 2F/4H Section C Writing to inform, explain, describe			
Paper 3F/5H Section A Reading unprepared media text(s)	30	2 hours	Media (unprepared) and writing Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Paper 3F/5H Section B Writing to argue, persuade, advise			
Paper 3F/5H Section C Writing to analyse, review, comment			
Coursework			
Task 1A Speaking and Listening (En1) Three assessed activities	20		Internally set and marked coursework
Task 1B Personal and imaginative writing	10		Internally set and marked coursework
Task 1B Work reflecting different cultures and traditions	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Task 1B Work based on a play by Shakespeare	5		Internally set and marked coursework

OCR

Component title	Weight (%)	Time allowance	Type of assessment
Unit 1 Section A Reading response to unseen reading: ▪ non-fiction ▪ media texts	 10 10	1hour 45 minutes	Non-Fiction, Media and Information Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Unit 1 Section B Writing to inform, explain, describe (Continuous writing, linked to but not based on reading)	10		
Unit 2 Section A Task based on reading of a prescribed text	10	1hour 45 minutes	Different Cultures, Analysis and Argument Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Unit 2 Section B Writing to analyse, review, comment AND Writing to argue, persuade, advise	 10 10		
Unit 3 Section A Writing to explore, imagine, entertain	10	1hour 45 minutes	Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Unit 3 Section B Reading Shakespeare AND Poetry	5 5		
Coursework			
Unit 4A Item 1: Writing to explore, imagine, entertain	10		Literary Heritage and Imaginative Writing Internally set and marked coursework
Unit 4B Item 2: Reading Shakespeare	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Unit 4C Item 3: Reading poetry	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Unit 5 Speaking and Listening	20		Internally set and marked coursework

NB: Candidates may enter **either** Unit 3 (examination) **or** Unit 4 (coursework), **or both**. For certification, however, **only one** of these units will be counted.

WJEC

Component title	Weight (%)	Time allowance	Type of assessment
Paper 1 Section A Reading of a prose passage from the English literary heritage	15	2 hours	Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Paper 1 Section B Writing to inform, explain, describe AND Writing to explore, imagine, entertain	7.5 7.5		
Paper 2 Section A Reading non-fiction and media texts	15	2 hours	Externally set and marked written examination Foundation and Higher tiers
Paper 2 Section B Writing to argue, persuade, advise AND Writing to analyse, review, comment	7.5 7.5		
Coursework			
Speaking and Listening (En1)	20		Internally set and marked coursework
Reading of Shakespeare play or Welsh author	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Reading Poetry from Different Cultures	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Writing EITHER to: explore, imagine, entertain OR inform, explain, describe	5		Internally set and marked coursework
Writing EITHER to: argue, persuade, advise OR analyse, review, comment	5		Internally set and marked coursework

Appendix C: Details of GCSE specifications reviewed

		Awarding organisation and specification codes				
		AQA	CCEA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC
Year	2005	English 3702 Specification A	English 5030	English 1203 Specification A	English 1900	English 150(01/02)
	2009	English 3702 Specification A	English 5030	English 1203 Specification A	English 1900	English 150(01/02)

Both AQA and Edexcel offered an alternative GCSE English specification (Specification B) in 2005 and 2009. For the purposes of this review, the specification with the largest total entry from each awarding organisation was selected.

Appendix D: Details of GCSE scripts reviewed

		Awarding organisation									
		AQA		CCEA		Edexcel		OCR		WJEC	
	Year / Grade	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009
GCSE	A	6*	6*	6*	6*	5*	6*	6*	6*	6*	6*
		15**	15**	15**	15**	10**	15**	9**	15**	15**	15**
	C	12*	12*	12*	12*	12*	12*	12*	12*	12*	12*
		30**	30**	30**	21**	20**	30**	16**	15**	30**	30**
	F	6*	6*	6*	6*	4*	3*	6*	6*	6*	6*
		15**	15**	15**	8**	10**	15**	10**	30**	15**	15**

* Number of scripts used within packs for script review weekend

** Number of scripts provided by awarding organisation/available in the national archive

Appendix E: Availability of specification materials for the purposes of this review

Materials	2009					2005 (over time)				
	AQA	CCEA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	AQA	CCEA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC
Specification	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Question paper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mark scheme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chief Examiner's Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mark distribution	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Grade boundaries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grade descriptions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assessment grids	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓   Material was available and was used in the review

✗   Material was not available and was not used in the review

Appendix F: Candidate achievement by grade

Percentage of grades awarded by awarding organisation for GCSE English, 2005 and 2009

Awarding organisation and year	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	Total candidate entries
AQA 2005	3.8	11.0	19.2	26.5	20.0	10.7	5.1	2.1	1.4	424,241
AQA 2009	4.2	10.8	18.9	26.9	21.5	10.3	4.3	1.7	1.3	417,989
CCEA 2005	4.2	15.6	22.3	26.7	16.5	8.4	3.6	1.4	1.3	21,622
CCEA 2009	5.0	16.0	24.2	26.5	16.1	7.3	2.6	1.3	1.0	19,932
Edexcel 2005	3.6	12.7	22.3	21.9	18.8	12.0	5.5	2.2	1.0	21,290
Edexcel 2009	4.0	15.8	28.0	23.2	14.6	8.3	3.6	1.5	1.0	16,279
OCR 2005	5.4	15.3	22.3	22.6	16.4	9.5	4.9	2.4	1.2	73,794
OCR 2009	6.8	16.3	22.7	25.6	15.4	6.7	3.6	2.0	0.9	46,727
WJEC 2005	1.9	7.5	16.3	29.1	22.2	12.1	6.0	2.7	2.2	87,365
WJEC 2009	3.1	9.3	18.2	30.4	20.5	10.1	4.6	2.1	1.6	136,236

Cumulative percentage of GCSE English grades achieved, 2005 and 2009

Awarding organisation and year	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	Total candidate entries
AQA 2005	3.8	14.8	34.0	60.5	80.6	91.3	96.4	98.6	100.0	424,241
AQA 2009	4.2	15.1	34.0	60.9	82.4	92.7	97.0	98.7	100.0	417,989
CCEA 2005	4.2	19.8	42.1	68.8	85.3	93.7	97.3	98.7	100.0	21,622
CCEA 2009	5.0	21.0	45.2	71.7	87.8	95.1	97.7	99.0	100.0	19,932
Edexcel 2005	3.6	16.3	38.6	60.5	79.3	91.3	96.8	99.0	100.0	21,290
Edexcel 2009	4.0	19.8	47.8	71.0	85.6	93.9	97.5	99.0	100.0	16,279
OCR 2005	5.4	20.7	43.0	65.6	82.0	91.5	96.4	98.8	100.0	73,794
OCR 2009	6.8	23.1	45.8	71.4	86.8	93.5	97.1	99.1	100.0	46,727
WJEC 2005	1.9	9.4	25.7	54.9	77.0	89.1	95.2	97.8	100.0	87,365
WJEC 2009	3.1	12.4	30.7	61.1	81.6	91.7	96.3	98.4	100.0	136,236

A graph to show cumulative percentage of GCSE English grades achieved
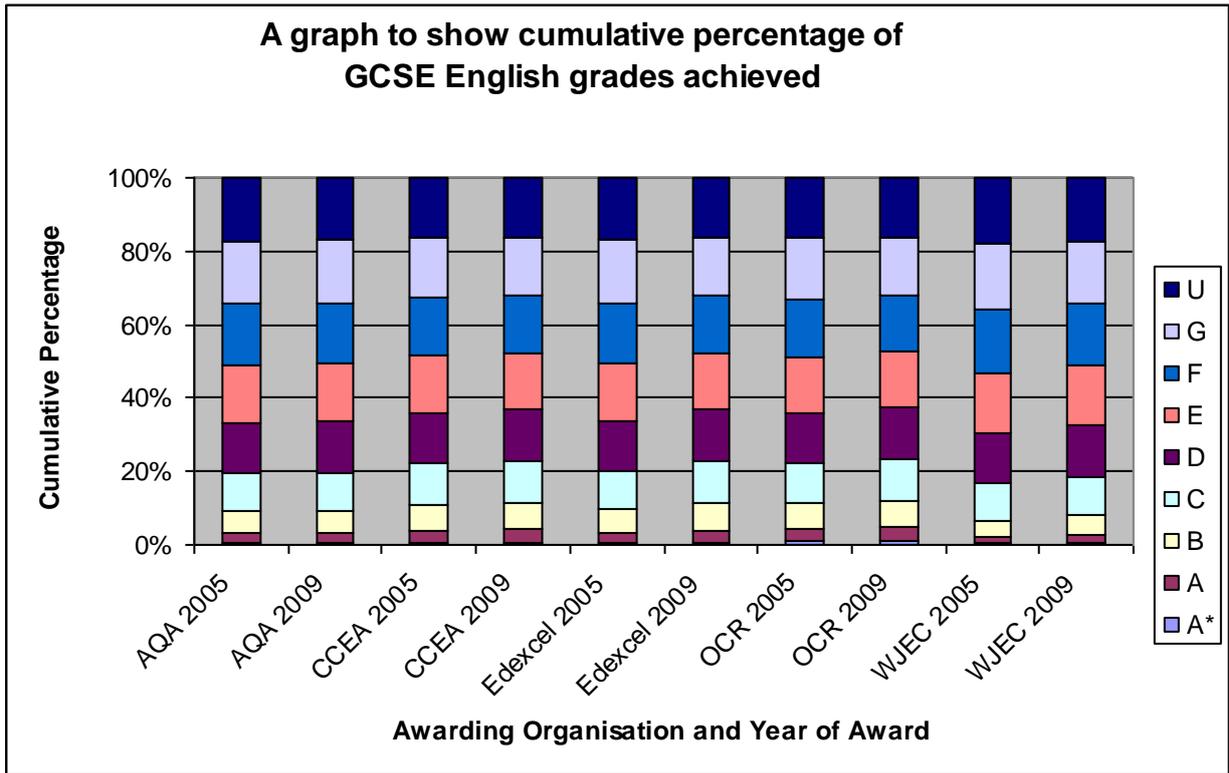
Appendix G: Number of data pairs analysed in the script review

Number of data pairs analysed			Number of blank lines	Number of missing/null observations
Grade	A	6,518	146	0
	C	17,844	0	0
	F	6,851	97	0

Appendix H: Review team

Review team		Organisation
Lead reviewer	Jim Sweetman	Ofqual reviewer
Syllabus reviewers	Mick Connell	Ofqual reviewer
	Gillian Clarke	Ofqual reviewer
	Rosemary Wisker	Ofqual reviewer
Script reviewers	Lois Nicholls	Ofqual reviewer
	Katherine Vincent	Ofqual reviewer
	Margaret Gardiner	Ofqual reviewer
	Louise Claire Vink	Ofqual reviewer
	David Percival	Ofqual reviewer
	Duncan Williams	Ofqual reviewer
	John Nield	AQA
	Pauline Wylie	CCEA
	Roger Addison	Edexcel
	Bridget Hutchings	OCR
	Roger Lane	WJEC
	Ian McNeilly	National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE)
	Rob Penman	English Association

Appendix I: Grade descriptors

GCSE grade A grade descriptor

In a range of contexts, candidates select and use appropriate styles and registers. They vary their sentence structure, vocabulary and expression confidently for a range of purposes. They sustain discussion through the use of a variety of contributions, listening with sensitivity. They show assured use of Standard English in a range of situations and for a variety of purposes.

Candidates articulate and sustain their responses to texts, developing their ideas and referring in detail to aspects of language, structure and presentation. They identify and analyse argument, opinion and alternative interpretations, making cross references where appropriate. They make apt and careful comparison within and between texts.

Candidates' writing has shape and assured control of a range of styles. Narratives use structure as well as vocabulary for a range of effects and non-fiction is coherent, logical and persuasive. A wide range of grammatical constructions is used accurately. Punctuation and spelling are correct; paragraphs are well constructed and linked to clarify the organisation of the writing as a whole.

GCSE grade C grade descriptor

Candidates match their talk to the demands of different contexts. They use varied vocabulary and organise their talk to communicate clearly, engaging the interest of the listener. In discussion, candidates make significant contributions, varying how and when they participate. They show confident use of Standard English in situations require it.

Candidates show understanding of the ways in which meaning and information are conveyed in a range of literary and non-literary texts. They give personal and critical responses to literary texts, referring to aspects of language, structure and themes in justifying their views. They select and summarise a range of information from different sources.

Candidates' writing engages and sustains the reader's interest. It shows adaptation of style and register to different forms, including using an impersonal style where appropriate. Candidates use a range of sentence structures and varied vocabulary to create effects. Paragraphing and correct punctuation are used to make the sequence of events or ideas coherent and clear to the reader. Spelling is accurate and handwriting is neat and legible.

GCSE grade F grade descriptor

Candidates talk and listen in a range of contexts. Their talk is adapted to the purpose developing ideas, describing events and conveying their opinions clearly. In discussion, they listen with concentration and make contributions are responsive to others' ideas and views. They use some of the core features of Standard English vocabulary and grammar appropriately.

In responding to a range of texts, candidates show understanding of key ideas, themes, events and characters, using inference and deduction. They refer to aspects of texts when explaining their views. They locate and retrieve ideas and information from different sources.

Candidates' writing communicates clearly, shows liveliness and is organised. The main features of difficult forms are used appropriately, beginning to be adapted to different readers. Sequences of sentences extend logically and words are chosen for variety and interest. The grammatical structure of simple and some complex sentences is usually correct. Spelling is usually accurate. Full stops, capital letters and question marks are used correctly and other punctuation is also used, mostly accurately. Handwriting is legible.

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First published by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in 2011.