English A: language and literature

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 29	30 - 43	44 - 56	57 - 67	68 - 80	81 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 26	27 - 42	43 - 56	57 - 67	68 - 81	82 - 100

Introduction

A considerable increase in the number of candidates is to be observed this examination session, rising from 1,100 in November 2013 to over 2,000, of which 60% were Higher Level candidates.

At Higher Level, the G2 responses showed that teachers generally found Paper 2 to be a little more accessible than last year, while Paper 1 was perceived to be of a similar standard by most. Overall, performance of this year's candidates does not appear to be quite as strong as it was last year. Comparing the distributions, there were slightly more grade 3s awarded, slightly fewer grade 7s. The results of the Internal Assessment and the Written Assignment were similarly affected, also suggesting that this year's cohort was not quite as strong as in 2013. That the slight drop in the overall predicted grade from teachers matches the overall drop in the mean grade almost exactly tends to confirm this impression.

At Standard Level, the comparative decrease in performance was a little more marked. There was a greater drop in the number of candidates obtaining a grade 7, and this is reflected in all four components. The written papers were not perceived by G2 respondents to be of a significantly different standard to that of last year's papers. As with Higher Level, there was also a slight drop in the overall predicted grade from teachers.

It should also be noted that the Principal Examiners have made positive comparisons with last year in their reports on the session. It is quite clear that teachers on the whole understand the requirements of the curriculum better and are teaching it more effectively. Procedures for the Internal Assessment

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional

oral are being better followed. This is also the case in the Written Tasks, although there is still room for improvement here.

Centres have generally become more proficient at teaching their candidates to have a better understanding of the importance of context and to include discussion of context in their responses. More efforts need to be made, however, to make candidates see better the connections between context and content and to be able to illustrate that interdependence.

Some very good work is being done in the less conventional subject areas, notably on graphic novels, on advertising and on popular media. While analysis of visual and graphic elements in texts is improving, more work still needs to be done on this.

In all four components, candidates have become generally better at organizing appropriate responses but it is also to be noted that many need more preparation for the essay, whether for Paper 2 or for the Written Task 2 at Higher Level.

It is clear from the work submitted this session that much work still remains to be done in helping candidates to develop skills of analyzing and commenting on stylistic features, whether it be for the Individual Oral Commentary, the Textual Analysis on Paper 1, the Essay on Paper 2, or the Higher Level Written Task 2. Teachers should be aware that the definition of stylistic features in this programme is broad. It includes not only language, structure, tone, technique and style, but also what might more commonly be described as literary features such as characterization, setting, theme and narrative point of view.

Finally, all the written examination Principal Examiners drew attention to the worsening problem of the legibility of scripts. In far too many cases, this is making assessment difficult – all the more so now that the answers are scanned. The importance of providing examiners with legible scripts needs to be impressed on future candidates.

This report continues with detailed comments on performance in each of the components by the Principal Examiners responsible for them. Please note that comments on Higher Level and Standard Level internal assessment have been grouped together and that comments on the Standard Level Written Task have been included with those on the Higher Level written task 1.

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional

Higher level and standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 24	25 - 30

Introduction

Guidelines for the proper preparation, conduct, and dispatch of the Individual Oral Commentary and accompanying documentation are to be found in the Language A: Language and Literature *Subject Guide*, the current *Handbook of Procedures*, and the Language A: Language and Literature *Teacher Support Material*. The guidelines in these documents must form the basis for all internal assessment work. Everything else, including this report on the component, is commentary on and elaboration of the contents of these documents.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The moderators this session felt that there was marked improvement in the following of procedures. Almost all centres conducted their Further Oral Activities on parts 1 or 2 of the programme, with only a handful incorrectly doing FOAs on works from parts 3 and 4. There was also improvement on the part of centres in using only writers from the Prescribed List of Authors for their Part 4 works on which the Individual Oral Commentary is based. **Please note that from the May 2015 examination session onwards, any candidate doing an oral on a work whose writer is not indicated in the PLA will not be able to receive a mark higher than a 6 in Criterion A**. Most centres provided full documentation and submitted samples well ahead of deadline, which was greatly appreciated by the moderators. Most centres with more than one teacher demonstrated that appropriate consideration had been given to internally standardizing their marks; the few centres that failed to offer standardized marking place an unnecessary hardship on their candidates. All teachers should be sure to check their feedback information and be sure to correct any issues that might have been noted by the moderator.

For the most part the Part 4 works chosen by centres were appropriate, but teachers should always watch for atypical struggles with a work and consider substituting a different work for study the following year. All genres were in evidence in the orals sampled, with poetry and drama leading the way. Owen remains among the most popular of the poets, with Plath, Duffy, Frost, Heaney and Blake much in evidence as well. *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Othello* were solidly represented, as well as *Glass Menagerie*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Crucible*, and *Streetcar Named Desire*. Short story collections were popular in many schools, with stories by Gordimer, Hemingway, Carter and Poe leading the way. *1984*, *Animal Farm* and *Things Fall Apart* were popular choices in novels. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *Running in the Family* were popular for autobiography, though non-fiction still tends to be overlooked as an option on the whole.

Generally the extracts selected were of appropriate challenge, but at times there needed to be a more careful consideration of the length and density of the extracts. The extracts should be suited to the

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional

nature of the candidature of the school. Very dense passages, though within the forty-line guide, may be too much of a challenge for very good candidates who are trying hard to touch upon every point and having to speak much too quickly to get the information delivered within the ten minute time frame. On the other hand, weaker candidates struggle to find enough to say about particularly short extracts or about prose passages where there is no richness of technique. Teachers should take time to select extracts in a manner that will bring out the best in their candidates while keeping them equal in challenge for each of their candidates. As always, be sure not to include any information on the extracts such as act, line and scene numbers, authors, dates, footnotes, topics, etc. Titles should be included only on poems. Failure to number the lines of extracts for ease of reference was noted by almost every moderator. Please be sure all extracts have their lines numbered by fives, starting at one. Teachers who type out their extracts must take care to avoid error.

Teachers should also listen back to their recordings from time to time to be sure the audibility is good. It can be devastating to discover at the end of the process that something is wrong with the volume or the recording equipment. And finally, teachers should provide comments on the 1/L&LIA form, and those comments should be relevant to the teacher's choice of mark according to the descriptors. Several moderators commented that the comments often did not match the mark given. For example, the term "adequate" was applied but the actual mark awarded correlated to "good" or "excellent." There also seems to be some tendency of teachers to mark according to their "expectations" of the candidate rather than the actual performance on that given day.

Guiding and Subsequent Questions

Guiding questions continue to be handled unevenly from centre to centre. Many teachers are simply using the sample questions offered in the *Subject Guide* or offering such generic questions as to be useless. All candidates should know to discuss the importance of the extract and to discuss its literary features; guiding questions should not need to restate this information. Teachers should take time to construct questions that prompt the candidate to begin analysis of the particular extract at hand--for example, to prompt the candidate to explore atmosphere, if that is of significance in the passage, or to discuss how the writer shapes character at this point, or what idea the writer conveys through the use of humour, etc. Do, of course, be careful of going to the opposite extreme and offering too much information – for example, "how does the writer create a bitter and malevolent atmosphere?" The candidate should determine the qualities of the atmosphere and not be told what they are.

Some teachers are still a bit hesitant to make full use of the time for subsequent questioning. If at all possible, the full fifteen minutes designated for the IOC should be used. It is imperative that the teacher should listen closely to the candidate's commentary and not ask the candidate to repeat information that has just been offered. Rather, the teacher should consider the extract closely as the candidate is speaking and take the candidate back to the extract to clarify remarks or to ask for further analysis of points and literary features that have been overlooked. In this way the teacher can enable the candidate to receive higher marks in criteria A and B. On the other hand, once the fifteen-minute mark is reached, questioning must stop. A candidate can be allowed to complete an answer to a question asked before the fifteen-minute mark, but no credit can be given for any information offered after that. Subsequent questions should not take candidates into other parts of the work or into contextual concerns that are not relevant to an analysis of the extract.

Candidate performance against each criterion

It might be useful to first discuss the nature of the IOC assessment and, perhaps, even the nature of Part 4 of the Language and Literature programme. This part of the course is to be a focus on close reading: "By looking closely at the detail of literary texts, students develop awareness of their rich complexities and the intricacies of their construction." *Language A: Language and Literature Guide* p. 21. As such, the focus of the IOC is to assess how well a candidate can analyze an extract from a work that has been studied closely. The candidate needs to explore thoroughly *how the writer has constructed meaning* in the given extract. This means that the candidate needs to go much further than an "explication" of the text and that little time should be used discussing extraneous information about the author, the time period, or the larger concerns of the work (or group of poems). Only information directly relevant to the extract that has been given should be offered. In the introduction the candidate should carefully situate the extract, (and in the case of poetry offer one or two specific examples tying the current poem to the study as a whole, e.g., a recurrent image or idea) as that is clearly relevant to how well the candidate understands the overall significance of the extract. The candidate should offer a clear statement of what that significance is. It would be helpful for the candidate to approach the commentary from the point of view of the writer so as to clearly focus on an *analysis* of what the *writer* has done in these particular lines, and not simply explain what the lines mean. Practice with transformations is a useful way to help candidates become confident and familiar with the literary aspects of a text. Literary techniques should not be discussed as a series of disconnected points, but as an integrated whole employed by the writer to shape meaning.

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the text or extract

Almost all candidates were able to show adequate knowledge and understanding of their extracts. The better candidates exhibited a thorough understanding of the majority of the extract, demonstrated a continuous awareness of the significance of the extract and its situation within the whole of the work, and saw the subtleties and nuances implied by the writer. The weaker candidates discussed only certain portions of the extract, offered generalized assertions, tended to talk about topics familiar to their study of the work as a whole, and even misunderstood some of the words and sentences.

Criterion B: Understanding of the use and effects of literary features

As one moderator put it, this criterion was the Achilles Heel of many candidates. There was, as usual, a great deal of feature listing, but much of it for the sake of the "list" that the candidates had evidently been encouraged to cover, rather than truly showing an appreciation for what the writer was doing and meaningfully integrating the discussion of the features into their understanding of the extract and its overall impact on the reader/audience. Even the very best candidates would sometimes slip into explication, especially when encountering allusions, rather than considering why such an element was useful to the writer's purpose. Though some candidates clearly had a sound understanding of the elements of the genre the writer was using, even seeing how such elements had been altered from the "usual" for a particular effect, most candidates floundered when trying to discuss poetic forms and structures, stage directions, or elements such as narrative voice. Stage directions continue to be discussed as though an audience is sitting in a theatre and reading the play. The transformation of the directions into a visual/auditory experience seems unknown to many candidates who could truly benefit from experiencing a theatrical performance as a part of their study of drama.

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional

Criterion C: Organization

Moderators indicated that organization seemed better this session, with many candidates offering a clear introduction to their orals, indicating the points they would make and why such points were relevant to an analysis of the particular extract. Most candidates followed their indicated plans and offered transitions to show movement from one point to the next. More practice is needed on conclusions as many candidates simply stopped talking, and other candidates had to be interrupted by teachers as the time limit was reached. It would be helpful to candidates to have some way of seeing how much time has elapsed so that they can draw their thoughts together in a meaningful fashion. While the better candidates will probably press past the ten-minute mark in order to finish their analyses, they must understand that by 12 minutes at the latest they will be interrupted for subsequent questioning which is a mandatory part of the oral exam. The loss of conclusion can impact their mark for organization. (This is another reason for carefully designing extracts so that they are suitable to the task.) Often, even the better candidates are beginning to become repetitive after the ten-minute mark. On the other hand, candidates who do not offer a plan of discussion that carries them a significant way into a ten-minute discussion, cannot be said to have an adequate plan of organization. Further work can always be done on how to organize a commentary so that it is not just a structure to hang points on, but also a logical approach to a meaningful analysis.

Criterion D: Language

Moderators were very encouraging about this descriptor as well, commenting that it was rare for candidates not to be at least adequate in their language skills. There was some impressive work here from candidates for whom English was clearly not their first language. The better responses were characterized with ample vocabularies that enabled a precise discussion of the extract in terms of both meaning and technical features. Both teachers and candidates need to be aware that a formal register is expected in this assessment and that a maturity of style is encouraged.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Please take time to read your IA feedback and make any necessary changes.
- Please check the current information in the *Handbook of Procedures* for Group 1 IA.
- Consider the works you are using in Part 4 and make sure they are appropriate for conducting the IOC.
- Continue to work with candidates in terms of the timing and organization of their orals.
- Try including more close reading in other parts of your programme so that your candidates are familiar with the process and the terms of analysis.
- When doing practice orals with your candidates, remember to work on subsequent questioning as well.
- Choose your extracts wisely and make sure your guiding questions are helpful in prompting the candidates to generate an analysis rather than an explication of the given extract.
- If typing extracts, be sure they are identical to the original, and if you make photocopies, be sure they are easily readable.
- Proofread all materials to be dispatched on IBIS; make sure they are complete, accurate, and audible.

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional

Further comments

Teachers are to be commended for their hard work in helping their candidates to perform well in this assessment and in striving to fulfil all the necessary tasks required by this internally assessed segment of the course. Several moderators commented on how much they enjoyed listening to the orals and that they were very encouraged to see such fine teaching taking place.

Higher level written tasks

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 18	19 - 23	24 - 28	29 - 33	34 - 40

Standard level written task

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 20

Written Task 1

The comments below are also valid for the Standard Level Written Tasks.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Overall, most of the work submitted was suitable, showing understanding by candidates and teachers alike of the basic aims of the written task 1. Nevertheless, there is much room for improvement to ensure that more candidates in future take pleasure in and derive benefit from carrying out the task that is required of them.

That task must demonstrate that it is an appropriate exploration of a topic studied for one of the four parts of the programme. Generally speaking, it was observed that tasks relating to parts 3 and 4 were more consistently suitable than those relating to parts 1 and 2, though not necessarily more original, creative or varied. Some of the very best, most creative tasks were based on the language and media parts of the programme but there is still too much work submitted for those parts that is not suitable in terms of content or, at worst, not seemingly related to the aims of the programme at all. A typical example of this is a speech on women's rights that, though it shows excellent use of the conventions of persuasive language, if it does not address how language is used, or how media portrays women,

content has to be regarded as inappropriate and understanding of a programme topic or text as superficial.

A very wide range of text types has been observed this session, with candidates often showing very good awareness of their conventions. However, there were also many text types that were ill-chosen or inappropriate to the stated aims and often the conventions were not well understood, or at worst ignored.

As in last year's report, the vital thing to draw attention to is that the task must be clearly linked, by means of the rationale, to the literary texts or topics and aspects that are listed in the programme summary. If this is not the case, the examiner will have difficulty in understanding and assessing the candidate's work.

Furthermore, the following unsuitable practices, drawn attention to in last year's report, persist:

- Candidates at some centres are submitting very similar tasks or tasks based on the same or similar material. For example, in some cases, the same advertisement or set of advertisements was being used by all the candidates from a centre. Centres are reminded that it is not appropriate to assign tasks to a class (see *Subject Guide* 27-28). The choice of task must be left to the individual candidate in consultation with the teacher who will then guide the student during the planning and working phases. Students should not be left to pursue working on stimuli that give little scope for the sort of analysis required in the assessment.
- HL tasks are continuing to be submitted where both task 1 and 2 are based on the works in literature parts 3 and 4, sometimes even on the same work. The rule is that one task must be based on parts 1 or 2, the other on parts 3 or 4.

Clarification: Short literary texts may be used to complement the study of a topic in parts 1 and 2. Thus a written task exploring an aspect studied in those parts may also include some reference to these short literary texts, but they should not form the basis of the candidate's investigation.

- If a task is not likely to reach the required 800 words (for example, an advertisement) it is not usually appropriate to supplement it with another text type (for example, a letter or an article about the advert, or a song lyric and review of same). It was never intended that a task should deal with more than one text type. However, multiple texts of the same type, the most common examples observed being diary entries and exchanges of letters, can be appropriate. In any event, whatever the deviation from what might be regarded as the norm, the task should stand alone and its rationale clearly explain the choices made and what the objectives are. Ultimately, if a task is relevant to what the student has been studying and a good case is made for it, then there is unlikely to be a problem with the assessment of it.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Rationale

It is worth again drawing attention to what is required of a rationale (*Subject Guide*, p.41). Many candidates failed to explain how their piece met the demands of the course. It should explain:

- which part of the course (text or topic) the task is linked to.
- how the task intends to explore particular aspects of what has been studied.

These are the candidate's objectives. The examiner will always refer back to these on reading the task itself.

- the nature of the task chosen

Here it is a question of showing the suitability of the choice of text type as a means of meeting the candidate's objectives. The formal conventions of the text type should be referred to and how they relate to the aims of the task. This should mean more than merely giving a few quotations from the task.

- information about audience, purpose and context

Particularly important for media tasks, some or all of these aspects are often not provided by candidates.

Short rationales (say less than 150 words), unless very effective and concise, are likely to lack the necessary detail for 'a clear explanation'.

Criterion B: Task and content

While many candidates performed well on this criterion, both in terms of understanding of the topic or text, and the conventions of the text type, in some cases there was a disparity between the two; conventions of the text type were very good, but the topic/content did not relate to any of the parts of the programme. This was often the case in relation to part 2, where the text type may have been related to the media, but the content failed to explore an aspect of language and mass communication. Very many diary entries are written but all too many are merely character/plot summary masquerading as exploration of character and often with superficial understanding of the form and its conventions.

Criterion C: Organization

The candidates' work very often showed evidence of considered planning and careful preparation. It would, however, be helpful for teachers to encourage candidates to submit the tasks, rationales and outlines in the correct order in order to allow examiners to read the material submitted in the right sequence.

Criterion D: Language and style

On the whole, it was not language accuracy that proved a problem so much as capturing a style and register that would lend authenticity to the task. Some candidates are very successful indeed at doing this but others, clearly not familiar enough with examples of the types of texts they have chosen to write struggle to engage the reader.

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional

Written Task 2 (HIGHER LEVEL only)

The range and suitability of the work submitted.

Detailed remarks about the prescribed questions were made in the report on the first session that need not be repeated here.

While a great variety of both media and literary texts are being discussed by the candidate population as a whole, it is apparent that in some centres candidates were producing essays on the same text that would follow the same pattern and discuss the same issues, illustrated with very similar examples. There did not seem to be much sense of enjoyment, just of 'getting the essay done'. While it may be problematic in centres with large numbers of submissions to find a range of topics wide enough, every effort should be made to encourage candidates to find independent responses to the questions.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Outline

Outlines varied from a few succinct lines to overly lengthy essay plans over several pages. The most effective tended to identify the focus in three or four relevant bullet points. Many candidates lost a mark for outlines that were too general or where the terms of the question were either not addressed or had been incompletely or erroneously understood.

Criterion B: Response to the question

The formal essay requirement in response to a prescribed question proved demanding for some candidates. Effective use of detail from the chosen text varied considerably. While most had at least some awareness of the demands of the questions, some candidates appeared to be over-reliant on secondary sources for ideas, often citing them without further independent discussion or support from the original text. The identification of 'social groups' and contexts in the two 'power and privilege' questions that are among the most popular, was often rather vague.

Criterion C: Organization and argument

Overall most candidates were able to produce structures appropriate for analytical writing, however, ideas often lacked development.

Criterion D: Language and style

Language was on the whole clear and appropriate for formal essay writing. Accuracy could often easily be improved by better proofreading.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Many of the recommendations made after assessment of the first session's submissions need repeating here:

- Teachers should refer their candidates to the Written Task pages of the *Subject Guide* (pp.30-32 for SL, pp.40-46 for HL). Great attention should be paid to what the point of a rationale or an outline (HL) is.
- Students working on tasks should be strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with authentic examples of the text type that they are planning to submit for Task 1.
- Teachers are reminded that it is not acceptable for candidates to submit two tasks on the literature parts or two tasks on the language parts of the programme.
- Word counts must be stated for each task and must be accurately recorded on the cover sheet. Candidates should be made aware of the penalties for exceeding the prescribed word limits.

Please note that quotations are included in the word count but cover pages, footnotes (used for referencing only), acknowledgements and other references, annotated illustrations and tables, etc. are not. Hyphenated compound nouns or adjectives count for one word.

- Candidates should be strongly encouraged to proofread to correct typos, spelling and grammatical errors.
- Stimulus material must be sourced in such a way as to allow the examiner rapid access to it.

While candidates should refer to secondary sources for analysis of both literary and non-literary texts, they should synthesize the ideas gleaned from these sources to inform their own close reading and interpretation of their Task 2 text. Secondary sources should not replace their own independent analysis.

- Candidates should be encouraged to find their own independent task 2 topics in order to avoid formulaic responses.
- Teachers should remind their candidates order their pages in the logical order, rationales preceding Tasks 1, outlines preceding Tasks 2 and Task 1 placed before Task 2.

In addition to consulting the relevant sections of the *Subject Guide* (pp.30-32 for SL, pp.40-46 for HL) as well as the assessment criteria for this component, teachers are invited to refer to the *Teacher Support Material* for the Written Task as well as the *Handbook of Procedures*.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

General comments

This session, there was a fairly equal distribution in responses with the candidates choosing both questions. There were perhaps more responses to the second pair overall; however, not a significant number. It is a good sign that an older text was not perceived as necessarily more difficult. There

were more excellent responses to the first pair than to the second; however, responses to both covered the full spectrum of marks.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

The most frequent problem under Criterion A (Understanding and comparison of the texts) was a failure to support points with references to the text. Discussion of audience also remained difficult for some candidates, who did not understand that while some texts may have a very specific audience, others do not. Defining an audience as, for example, teenagers and adults or people between the ages of 15 and 59, is not very helpful.

Marks were often lowest on Criterion B (Understanding of the use and effects of stylistic features). Some candidates did not mention stylistic features at all; others claimed to be addressing them but did not. Generally, candidates who discussed style supported their points with references to the text; some, however, did not illustrate their points adequately. As was the case last year, there was some tendency to a mechanical approach: listing stylistic devices such as personification or metaphor without explaining them. Candidates in general had trouble clarifying the effect of stylistic features on the reader. Too frequently they did not attempt this or limited their discussion of effects to very general notions such as "to keep the reader interested." Quite a number of candidates referred to the terms "logos", "pathos" and "ethos" with little or no explanation, as if the relationship of these concepts to the texts were self-evident.

In reference to Criterion D (Language), there is considerable room for improvement: spelling was often poor and inconsistent; there were also errors in punctuation, sentence construction and subject-verb agreement. Although in most cases such errors were the exception, there were cases where candidates received lower marks on D due to apparent carelessness. Some of these errors may be due to an over-reliance on automatic spelling and grammar checks. Legibility of handwriting was also a problem for some candidates.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Most candidates received a mark of at least "adequate" on Criterion A. They usually made appropriate comments about context, genre and purpose. They seem well-prepared to grapple with the meaning of the texts, to compare them and to comment on their contexts. In general they could write convincingly about differences in genre and the relationship between genre, audience, purpose and content.

Candidates were particularly strong on Criterion C (Organization and development): even those who were weak on A, B or D had some sense of how to organize their response. Relatively few candidates discussed each text in sequence with little or no comparison. A few who used this structure did so fairly successfully, framing their discussion of each by a good comparative beginning and ending.

Overall, there were few serious language problems. Candidates who really had a problem in their control of English were relatively few.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1: As indicated above, most candidates had little trouble with the 17th century text, although some made errors and invalid assumptions in referring to conventions of English at that time. They were familiar with both genres in the pair and made some convincing comments about the two. Not all candidates commented adequately on the non-textual elements in Text B such as the links and photos. Many, however, commented appropriately on the layout and format of the text. In some cases, more could have been done with the variety of speakers quoted in the report.

Question 2: One marked improvement this year was that, overall, candidates seemed more comfortable dealing with graphics and there were some excellent analyses of the visual aspect of Text C and of the relationship between the written and graphic text. Rather frequently, however, candidates assumed that Text C must be for children. There would still seem to be a lack of familiarity with the potential adult audience of graphic texts. Candidates also had some difficulty grasping the point made by Text C. Text D caused a problem for a number of candidates because of the multiplicity of authors. Some candidates were only able to point out that both texts were about climate change, but without insight into exactly what was going on in the texts which would have been needed for them to achieve higher marks.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Most candidates are well-prepared to write Paper 1, a clear result of successful teaching. The following areas could be emphasized in the teaching of future candidates:

- It would be useful for candidates to practice producing legible handwritten exams.
- Many candidates need more practice in discussing the effects of stylistic features.
- Candidates this year showed a good understanding of context and genre. These areas of the course should continue to be emphasized and reinforced. Some centres may need to further integrate the study of visual texts and graphic components of written texts into their curriculum.
- It would be helpful for more time to be spent showing candidates how to back up their comments with references to the text.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20

General comments

Candidates responded well to this paper. Both texts seemed to be interesting and accessible to them, providing a wealth of features and detail for commentary although Text 1 was the most popular choice.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Criterion A: Understanding of the text

Candidates struggled to provide a detailed analysis of context; sometimes even the target audience was vague. Some candidates did struggle with Nehru's "purposes other than commemoration" in response to text 2, with many omitting any discussion or inference on this aspect of the text.

A significant minority of candidates attempting text 1 struggled to pick up the irony and humour of the piece, resulting in several responding to the text as a serious promotion for genetically engineering children. Some of these were clearly second language issues, where candidates lacked the sophisticated language skills in English to pick up on the cues, but others simply seemed to miss it.

Some candidates continue to have a problem with discussing cultural context with some losing marks because they did not connect their analysis to time, place or audience. Candidates must identify specific audiences for the texts they are analyzing.

Criterion B: Understanding of the use and effects of stylistic features

Identification of stylistic features was weak from some candidates; often numerous important stylistic features were neglected, or candidates only mentioned a limited number of features when there were so many more. Sometimes candidates listed stylistic features, quotes, or observations, but did not develop their ideas adequately.

Criterion C: Organization and development

Performance against this criterion was generally sound although, in order to achieve higher scores, candidates should attempt to have a thread throughout their commentary in order to integrate their points and provide a developed argument. Supporting evidence was generally used but quotations were not always well integrated, or explained, and therefore failed to support a point.

Many candidates did take a linear approach to commentary but included an overview and made links so that the response was coherent and the argument was well developed. There were a couple of unfinished submissions which limited the overall coherence of the answer. A few candidates described and restated content, lapsing into simple explanation and consequently did not achieve high marks against this criterion.

Criterion D: Language

Sentence structure was the weakest point in this area as well as the incorrect use/lack of apostrophe that is still evident. Candidates need to proofread their work before submission for spelling errors and omissions of words in sentences. There was occasional informality and some language errors.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Criterion A: Understanding of the text

More candidates seemed generally confident in approaching Paper 1 this session and often used a framework for approach which covered the significance of context, audience, purpose and formal and stylistic features as in rubric requirements; the best responses addressed the guiding questions whilst also covering these rubric prompts in detail.

Candidates engaged well with text 1 and its many features, layers and purpose. Many candidates were able to recognize and comment on mode and text type for both texts.

Some candidates were, perhaps, over-prepared to the point where they were going to make the text fit the techniques they had been prepped for. This was especially apparent in text 2.

Criterion B: Understanding of the use and effects of stylistic features

There were some candidates who did a commendable job identifying and analyzing a variety of stylistic features. Many candidates were able to analyze the conventions, format and stylistic features of the interview in text 1 and Nehru's speech in text 2. A strength here was the good attention paid to the effects of punctuation, rhetoric and structure of a scripted "spoken" speech as actually delivered, for example, the dash as a pause in the first line and the use of the rhetorical question; more able candidates considered the effects of these devices on the audience.

Criterion C: Organization and development

Most candidates had at least a basic sense of organization with some development of ideas. Generally, organization was adequate or better than adequate, with essays logically structured. Candidates in this session did well at organization and development of their arguments, often scoring higher points in this area than others. It was pleasing to see candidates move away from merely addressing the guiding questions or using a template to organize their commentary. Candidates took care to structure arguments this session and there were many high marks awarded.

Criterion D: Language

Language use was strong with candidates' accuracy, register and style being generally good, reaching a higher standard this session than previous sessions. There were many top marks achieved against criterion D this session, where candidates provided effective and precise register and writing. There was much very confident and accurate writing, scoring high marks.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

In both texts, candidates were able to discuss many of the linguistic stylistic features and were able to comment on them in an analytical way. There was sufficient material that was accessible to all candidates, although candidates generally had a preference for text 1.

Candidates did seem less prepared to comment on features of a conversation as a text type (text 1) and for the speech some candidates tended to try and make everything they knew about speeches fit the extract. This distracted from the commentaries and had the tendency to make them list-like and contrived. Candidates generally understood the texts well but did not always demonstrate a strong understanding of the contexts. Some candidates missed the purpose of the texts, taking text 1 as a serious piece on genetically engineered children and text 2 on a superficial level. Some reacted very personally and wrote generally about the topic rather than analyzing the text itself.

There were many subtle stylistic features that capable candidates noticed. The examination allowed candidates of a variety of abilities to understand and analyze the texts on different levels.

Those candidates who chose text 2 seemed to do better, in general, than those attempting text 1. Candidates attempting text 1 tended to deal with the structural elements of banner, font, images, etc. as discrete entities rather than as contributing to the development of a cohesive argument.

Text 1

The most difficult part about this text was identifying an audience and recognizing and analyzing humour. Most candidates were far too narrow in their identification of the target audience merely stating that it was for parents who wanted to have children or for people interested in genetic engineering. A more in-depth analysis of text features etc. would have helped candidates with understanding the context. Candidates who were not able to see the humour and how it was used, instead looking at it as an informative text, missed the purpose and performed less well.

For the lower range responses there was much restating of given contextual detail without much exemplification, further comment or development but at the higher range there was well-supported inference of audience and good points made about genre and tone.

Candidates were all able to identify features/devices/techniques and at higher levels were able to infer effects and purpose. Some of the candidates who achieved the highest marks for text 1 provided an excellent range of detail and good understanding of effects of techniques.

Text 2

Candidates generally understood the context, and many understood at least two of the purposes and audiences although some candidates only understood the purpose at a superficial level. Many identified and analyzed quite a few stylistic features and developed their ideas quite well; some disappointingly missed many of the stylistic features. Overall there was a lot of rich material for candidates to discuss in this text.

Unfortunately, many candidates missed the text features of speech and did not consider that the eulogy was spoken. The complexity of context for the eulogy was often overlooked for example; the person giving the speech, when and where and to whom. The fact that Gandhi was a worldwide figure was often overlooked as was the notion that the world was watching. Only a few candidates looked at the fact that it was published on a website as testament to its historical and worldwide significance. Some candidates clearly were passionate about Gandhi himself, and this passion sometimes got in the way of them being able to analyze the text. These candidates often slipped into opinion with much restating of context supplied in footnotes.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates should be taught to avoid giving generic answers – textual supporting detail and analysis are needed consistently. Candidates are advised to be detailed and specific in their commentaries.
- Candidates are encouraged to prepare a strategy and framework for approach to analysis covering the rubric requirements: context, audience, purpose and stylistic features.
- Candidates should not generalize, describe or feature-spot.
- Attention needs to be given to technical accuracy – especially sentence structure. Teach proofreading of work for errors before submission.
- It is helpful for candidates to keep close focus on the passage throughout – to be specific and detailed – not to provide a general introduction or personal response, and to establish focus immediately.
- Teachers should ensure that candidates have lots of practice in analyzing and understanding the purpose of a variety of different texts and text types.
- Expose candidates to a wide variety of stylistic features, even pairing some features with text types that typically use them.
- Give candidates the vocabulary and practice in identifying and analyzing stylistic features.
- Work on developing ideas and writing a cohesive commentary in a formal register.
- Candidates need to be constantly reminded that the text exists as a whole, where parts are interlinked and work together. They should also be encouraged to identify those features which are relevant to the text, or parts of it, rather than making the text fit the argument.
- Satire/humour is extremely difficult, and it would be wise for teachers to make sure to focus on the use of satire and/or humour in a wide variety of texts.

Further comments

- Focus on teaching candidates the connection between context, content and literary techniques in order to understand how the text has been constructed in order to achieve its purpose.
- Legibility continues to be an issue for several candidates, producing essays with handwriting that is extremely difficult to read. This is especially true now that exams are scanned in. Candidates should be mindful of the fact that they are handwriting an exam for an examiner who has no experience with his/her handwriting.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 25

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some candidates appeared to struggle with the task, as they had difficulty with demonstrating understanding of their chosen texts compounded with a limited appreciation for what the specific question was asking. While some had knowledge of the texts, it was at times superficial and lacked any sense of the details that would illustrate understanding. These responses were often short and vague, with generalizations often replacing analysis. In the attempt to show context, stereotypical assertions dominated some papers ("Victorian Men discriminated against women and disadvantaged them terribly"). These kinds of statements for some replaced a discussion of what was specifically happening in the text (between for example Nora and Torvald in *A Doll's House*) and did not allow the candidates to connect the historical, cultural and social context with the content.

The language ability shown on some of the responses indicate candidates who are not yet comfortable with English as a written language – the errors in spelling, syntax, grammar, diction and register made some of the papers very difficult to read and follow the argument.

Finally, some candidates still seem to struggle with the chosen genres, being unsure of the difference between a play and a novel. (Many candidates choose to write about plays, but treated them as if they were novels.)

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Having said the above it must also be said that many candidates had no problems at all with HL Paper 2. Their responses were detailed, well-illustrated and showed a very strong understanding of the works and an appreciation for the ideas being developed in the question. It seems that the papers were divided between two groups – those candidates who were well prepared, knew their texts and appreciated the demands of the question (in fact their ability to use snippets from the texts was really quite amazing), and those candidates who were not prepared for this task. The more successful candidates were very capable of discussing stylistic features and presenting their ideas on the narrative structure, poetic form, point of view, symbolism, metaphor etc.

Candidates studying graphic novels were knowledgeable and comfortable discussing the specifics of this genre, taking into account the visual nature of the work, and the effects of elements specific to an illustrated work (more specific illustration of these conventions would have helped some students).

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1

This was a fairly popular question – for some this question led to stereotypical responses on a women's place in society and for others there was a more nuanced development of "the way women are represented" in the specific works. Context for this discussion was at times only a repetition of class notes without evidence from the candidate's chosen text (often Ibsen, Miller or Williams). There were also some strange choices regarding "societies or cultures" (*A Doll's House* or *Blood Wedding*

being looked at as 21st C., modern texts or *Heart of Darkness* and *Of Mice and Men* being discussed in relation to their lack of female protagonists (some successful and others not)).

Question 2

This was also one of the popular choices for candidates – violence as a concept for some became too broad (anything and everything was seen as an example of violence including the character interactions in *The Importance of Being Earnest*) and for others the paper became a list of examples of violent moments. Some choices by candidates seemed to naturally lead to a clearer argument (e.g. *Maus, The Reader* or *A Streetcar Named Desire*). At times candidates had difficulty identifying cultural specifics that might have influenced the "why or how" of the violence portrayed. One text that worked well was *Death and the Maiden* with its background of self-perpetuating violence.

Question 3

Not that many candidates looked at this question and those that did tended to focus on the elements of "change", while the sense of "brevity" or "state of flux" was seldom addressed.

Question 4

Many candidates chose to discuss setting in a broad sweeping manner, without looking at "How" the setting was used to create order and influence meaning. This often led to a general discussion of the setting of the works with the premise that they could not exist anywhere else. For example, *The Great Gatsby* had to be set in the Roaring 20s, *Of Mice and Men* in the Depression. In both cases the universal qualities of the texts were not always perceived or developed.

Some of the more interesting and insightful discussions came around works such as *Maus* or *Slaughterhouse 5*, with candidates looking at the shifting time frames that influence the way we perceive these works.

Question 5

Only a few candidates seemed to choose this question and most of them referred to dystopian texts to show negative aspects of the world and then reflected on how this would lead the reader to goodness and virtue. These papers were often well written and well-illustrated with specific and detailed references to the texts (*The Handmaid's Tale*, *1984* and *We* were often used in responding to this question).

Question 6

This was a very popular question and when candidates avoiding merely listing a collection of symbols but rather focused on how symbols are used by writers, they were generally quite successful. On the other hand some candidates did not appear to know what a symbol was and listed thematic topics such as "love" or "war" and discussed these broad topics instead of symbols.

The best answers explored the nature of representative literature or the relationship between concrete and abstract with insightful understanding (*The Great Gatsby*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *All My Sons* etc.)

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It seems many candidates have been taught to include context in their responses. They need to know that context and content go together and that the evidence they need to use must come from the texts they are reflecting. Discussing the life of the writer, or the "ism" they are reflecting without connecting these ideas on context with the content of their works will not lead to a successful paper.

The excellent attention that has clearly been applied to the teaching of the specific technical aspects of graphic novels should be applied equally to drama and prose works.

Candidates should be encouraged to define the question, approach or thesis clearly in the first paragraph. Too many candidates lost focus because there was no clear direction in their paper. They should practice using the wording of the actual question in their response since the question often becomes their thesis. A good introduction and conclusion can give structure to an essay which otherwise may drift.

Care must be taken in using film versions of texts so that candidates recognize which version of a text they are referring to and write about the specific text accurately.

A greater emphasis must be made to have candidates address literary conventions/stylistic features in their responses (with specific focus on the effects these features have on the audience/reader).

Further comments

Handwriting was often quite problematic – combined with incorrect grammar and spelling it was at times very difficult for examiners to decipher the candidates' ideas.

In a small number of cases, student placement appeared to be an issue as it seemed that candidates were not appropriately placed in the English A course. They were out of their depth in both the chosen texts and their ability to express themselves in English. In these cases, the candidates might be better suited to English B.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 25

General comments

In general examiners were pleased to report that candidates sitting the examination this session showed an enthusiasm for and engagement with the texts they were studying in Part 3 of the

Language and literature syllabus and that this was revealed in the way they tackled the questions. In addition all examiners reported an improvement in the understanding and discussion of the context of the texts they were studying. There are, however, still significant areas where improvements could be made and these lie particularly in the ways candidates might integrate the different elements of their response, balancing the thematic and literary aspects of the texts they are writing about more effectively, for example. Indeed the importance for candidates of being able to do this in order to produce a coherent response could be seen as the main theme that emerged from the reports made by examiners in this component this session.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Many candidates found it difficult to produce a sustained and coherent response, even where sufficient knowledge of the texts was shown. This took a number of forms, from the failure to offer sufficient supportive detail from the texts to giving an interpretation of the question that did not show an awareness of its implications for the texts. At a more fundamental level weaker candidates often showed insufficient language skills to structure and clarify their expression effectively and so present their argument effectively. Examiners also highlighted weaknesses in the ways candidates dealt with stylistic features (criterion C). This sometimes appeared to be connected to the fact that at times candidates privileged contextual information too much, not allowing themselves the time or space to explore the way stylistic features also contribute to the construction of meaning in the text. In other cases candidates saw stylistic features as separate elements to be "ticked off" and analyses of them as discrete areas of the texts were not integrated into an argument. Related to this is the fact that there was too little evidence that candidates understood the dramatic or graphic aspects of drama and graphic texts. In many cases texts from these genres were discussed in terms of their plot, character and themes as if they were prose novels. It is very important that students are taught to understand these texts not simply as purveyors of content but unique modes of expression with their own features and characteristics that require investigation and analysis.

Questions were often answered unevenly in that candidates either did not demonstrate equal knowledge of both texts or selected a question that only really applied to one of the texts discussed in their response. On the matter of texts and questions generally candidates often seemed to find it difficult to select a question they could apply to the texts they had studied. This was the case where the texts studied were difficult to write about together, poetry by Baudelaire and *Frankenstein*, for example, or where the candidate's selection *Hamlet* and *Death of a Salesman*, for question 1, for instance led to a limited exploration of the texts. Finally while candidates showed an impressive knowledge of the context to the texts not all of them owned this knowledge and at times it appeared to take over their response crowding out analysis and the development of a reading of the texts in the light of the question. This was particularly shown where ideas either about the texts or literary approaches in general that had been taught were not always fully digested. An example of this was the discussion of "The American Dream" common in many responses considering *The Great Gatsby* or *Death of a Salesman*, where candidates too often failed to understand that what was at stake here was not the idea of the dream itself but the "understandings" of how to succeed and definitions of what success is. A final point here is that candidates often failed to give a local contextualization of the point they were making and this essential courtesy needs to be given to the reader whose awareness of the candidate's knowledge should not be assumed.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Many candidates were very well prepared and showed a solid understanding of the works studied. They combined strong language skills and were able to shape and sustain an argument effectively that integrated an understanding of the texts in relation to the question. Examiners were unanimous in their recognition of the improvements made in the way candidates deploy knowledge and understanding of the works, in particular of their context and the relevance this has to the understanding of the content of the texts. The caveat noted above of not allowing this to dominate the response but to serve its argument needs to be noted, however. Some examiners noted that there was an improvement in the number of candidates who showed themselves better able to structure and develop their responses to a reasonable length.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1

This was a popular question that was generally well handled by candidates. This was a common question, however where candidates used texts such as *Hamlet*, or *Of Mice and Men* and struggled to fit the texts to the question. Pairings such as *A Doll's House, Persepolis, Handmaid's Tale* and *Purple Hibiscus* in any combination worked well, however. It was noted that candidates often assumed a female character was representative of all women and made unsubstantiated claims to this effect. It is important for candidates to define who is being discussed and exactly what their status is in the text and to their argument.

Question 2

This was again a popular question and it generated a number of good responses, the best seeing violence as complex and even formative in its impact on a character such as Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus*. The main weakness shown was an inability to consider and discuss the "significance" of violence in the texts.

Question 3

Relatively few candidates selected this question, most examiners only seeing two or three examples in their target. Successful responses were infrequent with candidates often unable to shape a response where they could argue the significance of change, usually failing to define it clearly in relation to the texts being studied.

Question 4

There were many good responses to this question. Frequently, however, it led to candidates seeing setting as an opportunity to focus on context as a discrete element unconnected to its role as a vehicle for the shaping ideas in the texts being discussed. At times some confusion was shown about whether 'time and place' referred to the text or the context of its production, as with lengthy discussions of the "roaring twenties" in *The Great Gatsby.* Furthermore few candidates seemed able to address how setting 'created order'.

Question 5

This was a fairly popular choice and generated some of the best responses with candidates able to challenge the premise of the question in relation to the texts being discussed in an interesting and well expressed way, showing how the depiction of vice for instance might influence the reader to consider the importance of its opposite. Conversely, however, goodness and virtue were not always clearly differentiated and a number of candidates wrote rather lengthy responses, especially on texts like *The Outsider* that tended to deal in unsubstantiated generalisations and superficial readings of these texts.

Question 6

The best responses to this question involved clear analysis of the symbols that was integrated into an overarching reading of the main concerns of the texts. Weaker responses confused the symbolic with the literal or saw almost everything they wanted to write about in the texts, including character and setting as symbolic, leading to responses that could be confused or lack a clear argument.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It is clear that teachers understand the requirements of the curriculum and teaching more effectively. However there are still areas for improvement.

Candidates need to be given confidence in developing a reading of the texts that integrates areas such as context, setting, character, theme and stylistic features into a whole that relates to the question. Candidates understandably brought with them the products of thoughtful and dedicated teaching but at times seemed to depend on this rather than own it. The importance of balancing and integrating the different elements of texts cannot be overstressed.

Context needs to serve the analysis and the reading it supports rather than being an opportunity to write at length about the background to a text. The understanding and use of context is much improved but this is a challenging aspect of the syllabus and needs to both be taught as an aspect of the texts and their production and reception and also as a means to greater understanding of them.

Candidates often failed to support their points with evidence or did not integrate their analysis of stylistic features or knowledge and understanding into substantiation of the argument they were presenting. Teaching candidates that a point needs to be both substantiated by evidence and shown to be pertinent to an argument is a challenge in a syllabus where a number of texts need to be studied, but is vitally important.

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional