

November 2016 subject reports

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	57-68	69-82	83-100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-11	12-27	28-43	44-57	58-68	69-82	83-100

General introduction

The November candidature showed a small increase of 3% at HL, a much larger increase of more than 16% at SL, bringing the total number of candidates to approximately 2,900.

While the overall results at HL are very slightly better this year, as the predicted grades suggested they might be, there is a slight drop in the overall performance at SL. This drop can be observed across all four components as well as in the predicted grades, suggesting it is representative of the cohort.

At both levels, teacher feedback in the G2s on the whole reported that the written papers presented appropriate levels of difficulty and were of a fairly similar standard to those of previous years.

Detailed comments on the way the candidates performed in the four components are to be found in this report. One particular observation that emerges from the reports of the Principal Examiners at both levels is worth highlighting here. It has to do with the increasing number of formulaic responses that examiners of the externally assessed components are reading. While these often show a high level of knowledge and provide excellent references to texts, they tend

to be lacking in a sense of critical engagement with the material studied. Typically, examiners would report: “I read many papers that were almost a stock response with little individuality or personal response.” It is clear to the examining team as a whole that if such candidates were not playing safe, delivering responses that would appear to reflect over-directive teaching rather than their own engagement, they would probably be achieving higher marks. Such caution on their part is understandable in examination circumstances, nevertheless the examiners in this team would welcome signs of greater personal engagement by candidates and of greater signs of confidence in their own judgements. Now that the syllabus is well-established, it might help if teachers would search out fresh examples of texts that will stimulate good writing and independent thought on the part of their students so that they, their teachers and examiners can enjoy the benefits.

Higher level & 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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There was a change to the marking model of the Internal Assessment this session with the introduction of dynamic sampling. The moderators were pleased with the new system, finding the accessibility of the recordings and extracts much better than in the past. Hopefully centres will also find the new approach helpful, as they will now, if necessary, receive feedback from their moderator in terms of how their marking could be a bit better aligned with the marking standard, which should prove most helpful in future marking. However, because now the moderators only see the centre’s sample as a whole at the end of the marking process, it is imperative that centres check and double check their uploads for accuracy. The moderators are not able to spot discrepancies other than poor recordings, or mismatched recordings and extracts.

Although there were many familiar works, including *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Great Gatsby*, and poems by Browning, Frost and Owen, several moderators found that the selection of works was much richer than in the past, with many teachers paying heed to the needs and interests of their own candidature. Writers such as Mistry, Shaffer, Larkin, Atwood, Adichie, Murray, Giovanni and Walcott were discovered in the mix, making for some very interesting marking. Teachers are to be commended for choosing their Part 4 works from the PLA as directed in the Subject Guide. Moderators were also pleased with the extracts chosen from these works, most of which were of suitable length, except for in a few centres where short/thin extracts or overly long/dense extracts are still being set, much to the disadvantage of their candidates. Moderators were also generally pleased that most orals were within the time limit, though several worried that not all teachers are taking full advantage of the

5 minutes allotted to further question the candidates on points not fully explored in the extract so as to improve the candidates' marks in criteria A and B. There is also an on-going concern that some centres are not providing a sufficient variety of extracts for their number of candidates as the same extracts are appearing far too frequently, even taking into account the randomly generated selection of samples.

Centres are to be commended for the timely up-loading of their materials, which enabled the marking process to begin promptly.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the text or extract

Once again the moderators felt that this criterion was reasonably addressed with candidates showing at least an adequate knowledge and understanding of their works. At times, however, teachers seemed inclined to award candidates too highly in this criterion for responses that were primarily paraphrase or for responses that drifted into a discussion of the work as a whole rather than focusing on the extract at hand. Candidates cannot be awarded marks for merely reading out lines. Stronger candidates engaged fully with the extract and did not lose valuable time for analysis by using up minutes discussing biographical and contextual information that was not relevant to the chosen extract. Candidates need to be reminded that their task is to cover the entirety of the extract given and not just to address issues prompted by the guiding questions.

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

As always this criterion proved to be a challenge for candidates who are often too concerned with just showing that they understand what the extract means or who simply identify literary features with no real understanding of how such features enable the writer to shape meaning. This criterion truly gets at the crux of Part 4 as a unit on close study, and, as such, evaluates the candidate's ability to understand how language is used and to what effect. And though it is important for candidates to have a working knowledge of literary terminology, it is far more important that they understand how choices made by writers impact their own thinking and feeling. The better candidates here genuinely see how literary features work together to make the extract meaningful in some way--that a simile may work in tandem with the narrative voice to establish mood, or that lexical fields work to shape character, setting or, perhaps, tone, or that all of these may be establishing a thematic idea. It was encouraging to hear from some moderators that they felt candidates were doing better in this criterion than in the past.

Criterion C: Organization

Some moderators also commented that they saw improvement in this criterion as well, with more candidates than usual offering clear introductions with a statement of intent and a plan of action and then following up those points with analysis and offering a conclusion. At times teachers seemed to award too high a mark for linear approaches that verged too closely to paraphrase and description or for discussions that covered only a portion of the extract. Fewer

candidates than previously started with long forays into background context or biography of the author. Many rightfully and concisely situated the extract within the work as a whole and then moved directly into an analysis of the extract. Some candidates offered an impossible list of topics to cover and others only addressed the guiding questions. Transitions from one point to the next were often vague, and, as always, conclusions for many candidates were hindered by factors of timing.

Criterion D: Language

Though the use of language was generally found to be at least adequate, there was some tendency on the part of teachers to mark too highly in this criterion. Pauses, hesitations, restarts, searching for the right word all take away from the effectiveness of expression. Many lapses in register were noted as well, with the intrusion of slang and colloquialisms. Teachers may have awarded marks on the basis of the candidate's usual control of the language and not to the specific moment of the commentary, which is all the moderator is privy to. Most candidates made an effort to use literary terminology and an academic register; however, extracts from drama and poetry were often discussed as though they were pieces of prose (for example, referring to stanzas as paragraphs).

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The moderators offered several suggestions this session that they feel would enhance the overall performance of the candidates:

- Select texts that are suitable for the candidates in the school—candidates who are still struggling with comprehension of a passage will not be able to produce an effective analysis of it.
- Work on organizational skills—similar skills are needed in an oral commentary as in an essay.
- Practice mock orals so that issues of timing are resolved.
- Practice close reading and analysis of how writers shape meaning throughout the entire course.
- Practice having candidates analyse an extract by referencing line numbers so that a listener can follow their argument quickly and efficiently.
- Practice having candidates situate passages quickly and concisely.
- Practice having candidates speak with an academic register.
- Allow candidates to discover their works for themselves and to develop independent analytical skills.

Further comments

Specific issues for teachers:

- Take time to review the Subject Guide, the Handbook of Procedures, the Teacher Support Material, the previous year's Subject Report and IA Feedback before starting Part 4 of the course.
- Work on writing two effective guiding questions that appropriately prompt candidates

into a full analysis of the extract—one prompting discussion of the content of the passage (criterion A) and one an analysis of its literary features (criterion B). Do not provide any information, such as themes, background information, definitions, dates, authors, etc., in the questions or anywhere on the page.

- Work on being able to frame effective subsequent questions under timed conditions—perhaps working with other teachers in a workshop type setting—not taking the candidate away from the extract but focusing directly on it to uncover any more knowledge and understanding of content and features that might be present. [Teachers who do not offer effective subsequent questions seriously handicap their own candidates.]
- Take suitable time to select extracts, reproducing the passage clearly and correctly (with no modification of the original in the body of the extract) with lines numbered by fives and sorting out extracts that were not effective in previous sessions. Do not provide any information other than the lined extract and the titles of poems.
- Be sure all materials are uploaded carefully and on time: correct marks, clear comments, audible recordings, clean copies of the correct extracts, etc.
- Insist on having an appropriate time and place for doing the orals so that every candidate has the opportunity to give his or her commentary without interruption. Check all equipment in advance and check recordings for quality of sound throughout the process.
- As noted in the Handbook of Procedures (section B1b.10): “Internal standardization of marking must be carried out in any school where more than one teacher has been involved in the marking of the internal assessment components.”

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The great majority of the candidates had clearly engaged with the syllabus through imaginative teaching, perusal of a wide variety of texts, and through many hours of application to different style models. The result is an increase in awareness of the power of the written word, and the written word in relation to aspects of visual texts.

There was evidence of creativity, thoughtfulness and close study of models of writing as well as careful research.

Some work was outstanding, not only in the candidate's understanding of the general aims of the syllabus, but in the finesse, the boldness and the communicative force of the tasks submitted.

Responses to contemporary stimuli often make for the liveliest and most creative tasks.

It was a pleasure to find students engaging in a thoughtful and lively fashion with a range of texts. Some examiners comment how much they enjoyed discovering material and learning about topics they were unfamiliar with.

Here is a summary of the main points raised by examiners about the suitability of the tasks submitted:

- While it is clear from the guidance to teachers on page 27 of the subject guide that they must not be involved in the re-drafting process, their advice to students before and after first-draft stage should aim to help them avoid submitting work that is inappropriate, under-edited, or inaccurate. Examiners are still seeing too many tasks in which the choice of topic and text type makes it difficult for the candidate adequately to meet the requirements in the assessment descriptors.
- There are still candidates not submitting one task based on the literature parts of their programme and one on the language parts. Ignoring this rule is to infringe the regulations – quite apart from being contrary to the balance between the study of language and literature that the programme aims for. Certainly, literary texts may be part of the study of the language parts of the programme but care should be taken not to base both tasks primarily on literary texts.
- Articles continue to be a popular choice for Task 1 but should not serve, as is quite often the case, to pass off an academic essay or a formal analysis of a text, which are not suitable for this task. The former is the province of Paper 2 and Written Task 2, the latter of Paper 1. What is required in Task 1 is a combination of creativity and critical engagement with a topic and/or text that is patently relevant to the student's programme content.
- As regards articles being used as the basis of Task 2 essays, it is too often the case that the focus tends to be the events they describe or what is reported or discussed rather than the article itself. For example, a candidate's essay based on a news article on the Orlando shootings deals with the event itself not with how the paper reported it, or how different readers might interpret what the journalist wrote.
- One of the most common problems reported by examiners is when candidates choose topics that appear to have little to do with the kind of language topics to be found in the syllabus or with the languages and cultures of English. Occasionally the literary works on which tasks are based appear not to be connected to what the candidate has studied.
- The question of Task 1 'topic': this word, as it appears in the descriptors, should be understood to refer to a programme topic not to any topic the student happens to be interested in. Furthermore, a task that merely serves as a vehicle for imitating forms or styles, whether of a literary, non-literary or mass communication type and does not also critically engage with a text or topic studied is very unlikely to score highly in Criterion B.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Rationale/Outline

For obvious reasons, rationales and outlines must precede tasks not follow them.

More candidates than in the past understood that the purpose of a rationale and an outline is to justify the choices made. Many wrote excellent rationales that placed the task in the context of the taught course and well explained the purpose, the audience aimed at and the conventions followed.

On the other hand, some candidates were struggling to identify the aspect of text or topic that they wanted to investigate and were inadequate in their explanation of how it was linked to what they had studied (see point made about 'topic' above).

However, for Task 2, some very long and elaborate outlines are still being presented, often in the form of detailed essay plans. This is unnecessary and does not guarantee that 2 marks will be awarded. What is required are key points that indicate how the key terms of the question are to be addressed and what the main focus of the essay will be.

Some outlines go to the other extreme; are too succinct and fail to include clear identification of the text(s) on which the essay is based or the part, text or topic it is connected to.

Identification of texts on which tasks are based must be clear. This means including the exact title and name of the author or, if referring to a TV programme, movie, or ad, etc. providing an accurate link to the source or, where possible, appending a reproduction of the text (see recommendations). The relevant information should be in the outline; the examiner should not have to scroll down to the essay to find out what text or topic is to be discussed.

Task 1

Criterion B: Task and content

Many examiners made observations particularly about the writing of letters, diaries, blogs and additions to literary works, all of which are very popular choices. Opinion-type articles are also extremely popular, other journalistic text types less so. Some candidates are producing very effective tasks that show a good understanding of genres, styles and contexts. However, there are others who do not show an adequate understanding of the characteristic features or conventions of the text types chosen. Some need to pay more attention to layout and other visual features that would better show familiarity with and understanding of the conventions of the text type. For example, it should be quite clear from presentation, layout etc., what type of publication is being imitated and, often ignored in the rationale, whether in a print or online form.

Generally speaking, opinion articles about advertising are more successful than letters of complaint to advertisers.

It is difficult for diaries with no audience other than the diarist (and the examiner) to score well on the assessment criteria. When writing a diary, an extra chapter/scene, or letters based on a literary work, the candidate should consider who might be interested in reading the text produced and whether the letter or the diary could be an additional part of the work, or if it is to be read in some other context. The way in which diaries, particularly, would be made available to an audience must be clear.

As a rule of thumb, to be successful a task needs an audience and a context as well as a purpose.

Criterion C: Organization

Most candidates submitted assignments that were at least adequately organized and developed. Some text types chosen for Task 1 could have been more appropriately structured. The essay structure invariably serves as a poor model for other text types.

Better understanding of the conventions of the text type chosen would improve scores in this criterion. Candidates who based their work on professional exemplars were more likely to receive good marks here.

Pastiche, of course, is always an option and successfully handled by many. Successful parody, on the other hand, can sometimes depend on how well the candidate has explained the objectives in the rationale.

All but a few candidates appear to have understood now that the penalties for not respecting word limits are applied by examiners. Occasional discrepancies between the number of words stated on the cover sheet and the actual length of the rationale or tasks were observed.

Criterion D: Language and Style

Many candidates showed a strong grasp of particular styles of writing, formal and informal. Some showed outstanding abilities here.

A common problem, though, was inadequate proofreading which, in some cases resulted in losing a mark.

Task 2

Criterion B: Response to the question

The link between achieving 2 marks for the outline and high marks for this criterion is strong, but not absolute. Most essays featured integrated quotations and references, but their significance often went unexplained. Nearly every Task 2 showed an understanding of the requirements of a formal essay, but not nearly enough defined the key terms of the chosen question with adequate clarity.

Several examiners note that a number of candidates produced essays which only loosely addressed the chosen question. It seems that candidates are sometimes attempting to refocus a previous essay written on a text, or respond to several of the prescribed questions at once. Such strategies rarely make for satisfactory essays.

The most popular question was 'How and why is a social group presented in a particular way?', followed by 'Which social groups are marginalized, excluded or silenced within the text?' The quality of the essays depended quite a lot on how carefully the prescribed question had been interpreted. A very few essays bore no discernible link to the question; a greater number addressed the question, but without proper consideration of key terms or ideas; and the best essays showed the benefits of careful reading and the ability to narrow a question to a manageable focus.

In response to the most popular question about how a social group is represented and why, only the better essays took the trouble clearly to define the group selected and its social context. Many essays dealt with more than one social group, sometimes with many different groups. The 'why?' of the question was quite often given superficial treatment, in some cases ignored. 'Society' is often assumed to be 'Western capitalist society' which is somewhat disappointing given the aims of the course and of the IB ethos generally.

Many candidates are analyzing advertisements for this question but often tend to focus more on advertising techniques than on representation and social context.

The way women are portrayed in the media and in literary works is the most popular subject by far, both in Task 1 and Task 2. Many of the essays on the 'power and privilege' questions are about the stereotyping or marginalization of women. While these can be very pertinent, even original, too many rely on sweeping generalizations, especially about the subordinate and subservient role of women in earlier times.

What examiners would like to see more of here are better definition of 'social group' as well as fuller understanding of context. As for the question about groups being marginalized, silenced or excluded, candidates typically approach this in one of two ways: either how the text marginalizes, etc., (without the author being aware of it) or how marginalization, etc., is intentionally represented or discussed. Pragmatically, examiners are open to both approaches.

The next most popular questions are those on 'reader, culture and text'. Responses to the second of these about the text being written in a different time, place, etc., are quite often superficial. Teachers might want to give particular advice to students about approaches that would lend themselves to this particular question.

The least popular of the questions are the two on 'text and genre', however, they often produce excellent essays when the student has more than just a passing familiarity with a 'genre' or with the 'other texts' borrowed from.

Criterion C: Organization and argument

Most candidates submitted tasks that were adequately organized and developed. Essays with adequate or effective content rarely suffered from weaknesses in this criterion. The main weakness was a failure to develop an argument and to support it in sufficient detail.

Criterion D: Language and style

Most candidates wrote clearly and in an appropriately academic register, though many essays would benefit from careful proofreading.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Impress upon candidates that the examiner will not have inside information about what they have been taught and how. Therefore advise them to provide in the rationale or the outline the essential information that the examiner will need in order to understand what it is they plan to do. They should start by showing how the task is linked to a particular text or programme topic – and only subsequently and if appropriate, to a learning outcome.
- The coversheet is the only way examiners can familiarize themselves with what was taught. They expect to see there a list of all the topics studied for Parts 1 and 2 and all the literary works studied, not just those on which the tasks have been based.
- It should also be pointed out to students that in order to ensure equity of treatment, the centre's name and location is not known to the examiner; therefore a certain amount of contextualisation may be necessary when a task deals with local language, cultural or other issues.
- As far as possible the candidate's submission should not be identified by name or number.
- Depending on the copyright and scanning situation, it would be helpful for examiners if the texts on which some tasks are based were included with their tasks. This would not apply to novels or short stories, obviously, but to newspaper or magazines articles, advertisements, speeches or poems of, say, three pages or less.
- Examiners sometimes find that the stimulus texts the candidates used are untraceable. Beware of memes. Some candidates are using memes as stimulus material instead of genuine documents in their original contexts.
- Students should be encouraged to think carefully about the choice of format for Task 1, and ensure that they are familiar with the conventions of the genre. For example, presenting a blog which follows the formatting conventions of a particular online forum will work to their advantage. As one examiner put it, "From an examiner's point of view, if it doesn't look like what it's claiming to be, that immediately detracts from the overall impression and it would be hard to imagine awarding a high mark."
- Impress upon students that Task 1, particularly, is both about being creative and inquiring. The more a student critically engages with an appropriate text or topic, the higher the mark is likely to be.
- Emphasize to students that the more realistic the context, audience and purpose of a Task 1 is, the more successful it is likely to be. For example, journalistic pieces in

imaginary publications are usually not as successful as those written for publications or websites that exist. 'Realistic' context here can include that of a literary work studied, for example, a propaganda broadcast written as an extra scene for readers of Orwell's *1984*, or a letter from Stella to Blanche for readers of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

- Many examiners comment that students would benefit from more analysis of text types before making their own choices for Task 1. Analysis of examples of well-written tasks as well as weaker ones would help students develop the skill of critiquing their own written tasks, or those of their peers.
- Teachers might usefully spend time discussing with students the implications of each of the prescribed questions for Task 2 and provide examples of appropriate approaches, pointing out also the potential pitfalls of each prompt.
- Show students how definitions of key terms can provide a structure for an essay and work on the idea of developing an argument rather than just a series of examples.
- The Task 2 prescribed questions must not be re-written by candidates to suit their purposes.
- Now that the syllabus is well-established, teachers will want to search out fresh examples of texts that will stimulate good writing, and not repeat some of the well-worn examples used to demonstrate, for example, female stereotypes in advertising, which is probably the most common topic chosen by students.
- In some cases candidates would have benefitted from more teacher guidance in terms of the topic and text types selected. Remember that the tasks should be produced while the course is proceeding and selected by the candidate for submission later. An emergency rush before the submission deadline should be, as far as possible, avoided.

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The majority of work submitted was suitable to the task chosen. Most candidates wrote reasonably fluently and the style was suited to the intended text type, audience and purpose. There did, however, seem, in a few cases, to be too much central direction in some centres producing sometimes formulaic responses. It was sometimes difficult for examiners to assess work (such as 'blogs') that veered off towards conventional academic essays. The range and suitability of the tasks chosen in most centres was appropriate and gave the candidates ample opportunity to show their linguistic skills and adapt their style to the particular text type.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Rationale

Generally rationales were appropriate, however a few were presented as a list of bullet points vaguely connected to the task.

Criterion B: Task and content

Overall the content was interesting and pertinent to the task chosen. A few became too much like conventional academic essays. It is important that candidates are strongly advised not to produce essay-style work.

Criterion C: Organization

Organisation was almost universally good; paragraphing was appropriate.

Criterion D: Language and style

Language varied from the fluent to the fractured. Most candidates showed evidence of some level of close linguistic control.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Stress the need for students to 'own' their topic and to work on it independently.

Avoid the use of imitation academic essays (like blogs for example).

Allow students a wide choice of subject matter and do not over direct student engagement.

Further comments

Overall the standard of writing from this November entry was suitable to the task chosen and produced, on occasion, incisive pieces of writing. Examiners remarked upon how students need to be more familiar with text type conventions. More than one examiner commented upon the plethora of relatively loosely organised blogs and online tourist guides.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

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

General comments

In general, candidates responded well to the paper. The texts seemed to engage their interest and most found ample material for analysis. The first pair consisted of an informal essay posted on a blog and an online encyclopaedia entry; the second of two automobile advertisements. More candidates – at least two-thirds, based on examiners’ estimation – chose the second pair. Responses to both questions ran the gamut of the mark range, with excellent responses to both.

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

While most candidates were comfortable with the text types, this was not always the case. Details of the problem are explained below in terms of each of the questions.

Some candidates focused more on an analysis – often excellent – of each individual text but not enough on drawing meaningful comparisons.

The discussion of audience was sometimes a problem. Designations such as “adults and teens” or “people with internet access” contribute little to a discussion of the importance of audience in a text.

Nearly all candidates mentioned stylistic features; however, some merely produced a list with no discussion of effects. General comments such as “to make the reader more interested” are not helpful. Specific references to the text were sometimes missing; impressive-sounding terms were not backed up with actual examples. Another difficulty was an approach to discussing structure that became merely a summary of the texts.

Responses to both questions were usually organized at least adequately; however, it is still difficult for some candidates to develop their analysis in response to the particular texts presented rather than to a formula. Unfortunately there were a number of “pre-organized” scripts, usually allocating one paragraph each to context, theme, audience, purpose, structure, stylistic features and sometimes tone, without reference to the demands of the particular texts. This too-formulaic approach led to repetition, poorly-developed paragraphs and sometimes irrelevance, as well as a failure to see how the various aspects of the texts are related and create meaning in the text as a whole. As well, a number of candidates got into trouble with a paragraph analysing the “mood” of the reader: a difficult discussion to tackle and one that was usually not very enlightening.

Introductions and conclusions were sometimes either minimal or extremely long.

There was a good deal of carelessness about language. In some cases, time allotted for a reread of the candidate's work would have raised the mark on criterion D.

Many candidates have very poor handwriting indeed. If examiners cannot read a script, they cannot award marks.

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

Many candidates' work included insightful analysis. They knew the areas that they should cover and most scripts included at least some reference to genre, audience, purpose, context and stylistic features. Those commenting on visual elements often did so very well. Generally, the scripts were at least adequately organized and showed evidence of planning.

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

Question 1: There were some excellent responses to this pair. Generally candidates understood the two texts and could identify some points of comparison. They engaged well with the subject matter. Most handled Text A at least adequately, although weaker candidates did not fully grapple with the issues of identity raised in the text. Although most mentioned the writer's proposal about formulating questions, they did not always address the reasons behind it. Most seemed to be aware that a blog may include various genres, although the difference between a formal and, as in this case, an informal essay was difficult for some. The text type was more of a problem in Text B. Some candidates were clearly uncomfortable writing about an informative text; they saw few or no stylistic features and analysis tended to be superficial. As well, the visual aspects of both texts were too often ignored or barely mentioned. Many candidates discussed the two texts more or less independently, making the link that they were both about the Hausa, but missing a number of interesting points of comparison: for example, the differing presentations of the Hausa people and definitions of identity, the women in a traditional role in the photograph in contrast to the author of Text A, the influences of other cultures mentioned in Text B. Surprisingly, not all candidates were familiar with conventions of the internet: some did not recognize hyperlinks as such or thought that the Britannica article was written in 2015.

Question 2: Again, there were some excellent responses. Candidates seemed to find this pair quite accessible and appeared to be comfortable writing about the two advertisements. They were apparently well-versed in the techniques and conventions of this text type. They were engaged and often quite insightful in their analysis. Generally, they had no problem identifying key features and comparing their use in the two texts. However, some merely adequate responses stayed with summary and/or geared their discussions to identifying the tricks of the advertising trade more than to the analysis required. Weaker candidates presented a list of features but without a clear focus or structure. Discussion of colour was sometimes quite successful, although with the occasional questionable interpretation. Some did not deal adequately with Text C's many visual features. Most dealt with context, often quite well, even if

discussions of the historical context of Text C were sometimes speculative or erroneous. A handful missed Text B's ecological pitch. Finally, despite a general familiarity with advertising, a few were perhaps unprepared for comparing two texts of the same genre.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should remind candidates that there can be different kinds of relationships between the texts in Paper 1 and different grounds for comparison. As the Language and Literature Subject Guide states, "The links between texts will be varied" (p.39). There is only one of several possible connections.

Continued practice on development of a comparative analysis is needed and analysis of visual features should continue to be emphasized.

Candidates should be reminded that the mere listing of stylistic features is not adequate. To quote the Guide again, "Rather than simply listing formal aspects, students should focus on how such aspects are used to create particular effects" (p.40). Also, some need clarification that a summary of the contents of each part of a text does not constitute an analysis of its structure.

More work could be done on writing introductions and conclusions.

Finally, practice in writing by hand under examination conditions is needed urgently and candidates must be reminded most emphatically to leave time for proofreading.

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

Standard level paper 1 was interesting and topical, proving accessible at all levels of candidature while achieving the required differentiation. Both texts were connected to literature, so there was a common theme, and content-wise, the texts were comparable. Candidates had been generally well prepared to write an analysis of one of the given texts.

Text 2, an iTunes preview, was the most popular choice, immediately appealing to candidates presumably because its subject matter and text type were intrinsically within experience. In some cases, however, this proved a disadvantage as some candidates focused only on text type and form and did not fully deal with the content material.

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

Many examiners made points about the difficulties candidates appeared to have this session with fulfilling the requirements of Criterion A: some responses were only “sometimes supported” often with context or audience being omitted and there was evidence of misreading. This may have been due to the text types with many candidates focusing on the format of the text type and not fully understanding the content of the text. Candidates did not always comprehensively read the texts with some tending to spot-check aspects of the text instead of thoroughly reading in order to engage critically with it.

Candidates should be aware that the rubric and the assessment criteria demand analysis of both formal and stylistic features in the commentary. This is a Language and Literature course, but some candidates appear to be trained to approach the task almost exclusively concentrating on the physical layout of the text. It is a safe approach, especially for candidates whose English language skills are limited, but some understanding of the effects of language features, rather than structural features is also important.

Candidates did not seem to be fully aware of the importance of the guiding questions. Although addressing them is not compulsory, they do provide a good focus to begin the analysis.

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

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

Candidates consciously addressed Criteria A and B with varying degrees of success indicating that they understood the material and had been taught to consider stylistic devices. Knowledge and understanding of how tone is created and conveyed in both texts and analysis of the effects of authorial word choice (Criterion B) were strengths this session.

Candidates seemed aware of contextual elements, stylistic and formal features of texts and often were able to provide effects of stylistic features. Candidates generally understood the text types well and the formal features that accompanied the text types.

The best responses to both texts covered the entire text. In Text 1, candidates were able to note the changing viewpoint – interviewer/interviewee or customer reviews – and creation of tone. Some responses still described the text content with no further development. The best responses ranged across the text, making links.

Criterion C: Organization and development

Many candidates built responses upon the effective guiding questions, which structured responses successfully and pointed candidates towards all assessment criteria efficiently, however many candidates did not use the guiding questions. The best responses to both texts

affirmed using the guiding questions with consideration of detail (Criteria A and B) and viewpoint/tone (Criterion B).

Most candidates took care to structure responses coherently (Criterion C) with the use of cohesive argument improving this session. Some candidates set out their arguments in the initial paragraph while others developed an argument as the analysis progressed. Some candidates based their analyses structurally, driving the response and argument through Criterion B, discussing how authorial purpose is achieved through features and devices. Both approaches to structure were successful. There were very few candidates who had run out of time and most candidates completed an adequate analysis indicating that they had been given plenty of practice in writing a language analysis under pressure.

Criterion D: Language

Most candidates wrote clearly and achieved reasonable scores for this section. There appeared to be fewer scores in the lower ranges with most candidates scoring a 3 or above.

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

Text 1

This was an effective examination text because there was a lot to comment on, and the range of what candidates wrote about clearly displayed various levels of the mark range with the responses being naturally differentiated.

Candidates were able to identify the text as an interview with many commenting on the online aspect of it, as well as the formal features of the text type. The more astute candidates discussed the specific context and target audience indicated by the titles, identified the stylistic features employed by the author and the leading questions employed by the interviewer as well as understanding the cultural context and the purpose of the text.

Weaker candidates were too general in their analysis and did not focus on key content or linguistic/stylistic features. Many failed to comment on the interviewer at all, ignoring one of the guiding questions and there was often a tendency to summarize. Some Text 1 responses did largely contain summary where candidates also ignored the linguistics, and sometimes even ignored the contextual elements. In Text 1 there was some misunderstanding of “wrested” (read as “wrestling”, line 31) and “Sumana” (line 21) as being one of Salgado’s own names. Few candidates interpreted “Missing Slate” and “Discerning Metropolitan”. Weaker candidates missed details such as the photograph in Text 1 or the description of the application in Text 2.

Text 2

There were some insightful responses that showed clear critical engagement with the text and, like Text 1, this was an effective examination text because there was a lot to comment on, and the range of what candidates wrote about clearly displayed various levels of the mark range. Overall, there was more misunderstanding on Text 2 than Text 1.

Stronger candidates gave a broad context background to the text and broke down the text into chunks of key aspects addressing both linguistic and stylistic features.

More candidates chose to write on Text 2 than Text 1. Perhaps they thought it was more accessible – which may have led them to skim read it rather than read carefully and critically analyse. Candidates often misunderstood the content of the application; some thought it was a game, and others thought it was non-fiction. There was often a lack of clear, comprehensive reading.

This text type resulted in many candidates discussing it in a generic manner and focusing solely on the concept of an iTunes page advertising an application and did not focus on the content of the text. This meant that candidates tended to focus largely on structural issues: layout, for size, images, etc., which was often to the detriment of their treatment of the language of the text. Some candidates did not address the language element in any significant way at all. Weaker responses to Text 2 omitted lines 11-32, the actual content of the narrative. Some candidates were not aware that Text 2 was “digital fiction” and wrote about the condition of “silent children” as real life. Many Text 2 responses failed to analyse literary/stylistic features drawing wholly on describing presentational devices/webpage format.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Ensuring candidates:

- Refrain from restating the text content and therefore not analyzing content;
- Consistently support comments on text and context and not digress into personal anecdote or rely heavily on providing generic features of the text type at the expense of showing how the specific text for analysis makes use of them.

Providing candidates with the skills to:

- Manage time wisely as there were several instances of unfinished or very rushed commentaries with unresolved arguments – thus sacrificing criterion C marks;
- Prepare a structure based on the rubric demands: context, audience, purpose, formal and stylistic techniques;
- Structure writing using discourse markers for progression and overall cohesion;
- Structure responses using the guiding questions to ensure a cohesive analysis which addresses the assessment criteria;
- Make links within and across the text and interpret features in a sustained manner;
- Use appropriate vocabulary range and sustained formal register.

Identify key teaching strategies:

- Candidates should have a portfolio of different text types, which they regularly analyze and discuss.
- Candidates need exposure to a wide range of text types so that they can analyze more confidently. Teachers need to help candidates prioritize which linguistic and stylistic features are key in the analysis.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

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

General comments

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

In general, the examiners found the November 2016 exam comparable to previous years' exams. While the quality of the responses was similar, examiners mentioned that they did not see as wide a range of questions being addressed (most candidates chose questions one and three). Question 1 easily connected to context which candidates were prepared to deal with and Question 3 offered an obvious connection to the plots/stories of the texts. In both cases this led at times to generalizations on the context (The treatment of Women in Victorian Society from *A Doll's House*; or the failure of the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*; or the dangers of totalitarianism in *1984* or *Persepolis*) or story summaries (to illustrate the endings).

While candidates all seemed prepared to deal with historical or biographical context this for some led to assertions and assumptions not always connected to the details of their chosen texts or the specifics of the questions.

Not answering the specifics of the question was a problem for some candidates. For example, some candidates were able to identify examples of "foreshadowing" without really discussing the effect of such "foreshadowing". As well some candidates appeared to have a "set/prepared" question in mind and attempted to force the question to fit that prepared response with limited success leading to vague generalizations without evidence. The wide variation in the interpretation of questions and the approach taken needs to be more clearly defined at the outset.

The language ability of the candidates was at times hindered by their lack of comfort 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 the arguments difficult to follow. Poor penmanship at times appeared to be a mask for the candidates' language issues.

Some candidates are still struggling to use the appropriate diction for the discussion of Poetry, Prose and Drama. Many do not see a difference created by these genre choices and plays are at times called novels and acts are called chapters etc.

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

Contextual knowledge in relation to their chosen works was often discussed in insightful ways, and many students were able to link this knowledge to the question, such as the deceptive appearance of money during the roaring 20s in *The Great Gatsby* (question 4), or Okonkwo's pride in the context of his culture in *Things Fall Apart* (question 5).

Texts in translation were also sensitively handled and many centres are using an interesting array of works in translation (*The Reader*, *The Stranger*, *No Exit*, *The Visit*, *Persepolis*, *Antigone* and *Medea*). Attitudes and values developed involved in interpreting the text for a modern-day reader/ audience was also communicated effectively.

Candidates were generally able to construct an essay with an intro, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Many candidates showed an insightful appreciation/awareness of academic register.

Many candidates also wrote very good responses that highlighted literary features and more importantly their effects on the reader. Specifically, these discussions led to a perceptive analysis of stylistic features and narrative structures, including poetic forms, points of view, symbolism, metaphor etc. The better essays were also able to discuss stylistic features that were specific to the genre of the work (visual imagery in *Persepolis*, or the use of stage directions in *A Doll's House*).

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

Q1. By far the most popular question—this offered an obvious connection to the works' context. Successful candidates used this as a springboard to show how authors were able to specifically set their texts in "a real world". In the *Kite Runner*, the introduction of the Taliban was shown to be an opportunity for Amir to redeem himself and how Winston in *1984* became an opportunity to see the effect of "a Big Brother" government on individuals or how Nora's deception in *A Doll's House* had to be resolved with her walking out (they often commented here on the differences between a Victorian and a 21st Century response). Many also discussed the concept of allusion through this question, such as Stalin in *1984*, or McCarthy in *The Crucible* or colonialism (*Things Fall Apart*), the Iranian Revolution (*Persepolis*), and the crowning of James I (*Macbeth*). In general, candidates referred to real-life events associated with the author's lives.

Q2. This question proved to be very difficult for some candidates who clearly did not understand what foreshadowing meant (it was not always clear why this question was chosen). An example of this is writing about the paperweight in *1984*, and how it foreshadowed Winston and Julia getting caught without showing more than the symbolic value of the object.

Q3. This question was also fairly popular. Not clearly defining "satisfactory" led to some vague, general, and narrative responses. Some candidates fell into the trap of equating a 'happy' ending with a 'satisfactory' one. The best answers managed to discuss the appropriateness of

the ending in terms of how the work had been constructed – plot, characterization etc. – in order to illustrate the necessity of the ending. Tragic endings then became morally and aesthetically satisfactory even though the candidate might have preferred a reversal of fortune. Some candidates simply just summarized the works and then briefly offered their opinion on whether or not they thought that the ending was satisfactory.

Q4. This question was handled quite well with some thoughtful and analytical responses produced. Candidates sometimes focused on deception without examining the reason behind authors creating characters or situations in which appearances might purposefully be deceptive and why (Hamlet was an interesting choice). The weaker responses discussed characters lying to other characters, but not commenting about the issue of “appearances” (George to Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*; Hanna to Michael in *The Reader*). But there were some very insightful responses as well, such as showing how Offred has to ‘appear’ to be happy to everyone around her in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, or in *A Doll’s House*, the comparison of the deceptive appearances of both Nora and Torvald. (While Nora pretends she is happy and lies to Torvald in order to save his life, Torvald’s deception is much more sinister because he is lying to Nora about the fact that his love is sincere.)

Q5. This question required a solid definition or led to assumptions showing a misunderstanding of pride. A wide array of ‘definitions’ of pride was produced often identifying examples of boasting of one’s accomplishments (Okonkwo and Willie were two such examples). Candidates who focused on hubris fared better. Failure to give sufficient attention (or any at all) to the second part of the question about success or failure as a result of pride was the biggest stumbling block to success on this question.

Q6. In this question the best answers leaned heavily on stylistic devices - again some misunderstanding was present regarding the terms “contrast and juxtaposition”. Appropriate definitions were needed to clarify the differences between the two terms. Some candidates used the two terms interchangeably while others showed a nuanced appreciation for the differences. Character foils were often the focus of the essay but settings – Iran vs Austria, East vs West Egg, etc. – and shifting sub-plots were popular and relevant topics.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

As was implied above, the excellent attention that has clearly been applied to the teaching of the specific stylistic aspects of graphic novels should also be applied to drama and the prose works. Candidates need to be more comfortable with the lexicon for discussing the different genres. While it is important to have the appropriate vocabulary, candidates also need to be aware of the effect of authorial choices on the reader/audience.

Candidates should be encouraged constantly to provide evidence for their ideas. There is still a tendency to generalize and assume. In some cases, candidates made stereotypical statements about “a woman’s place” in *A Doll’s House* or “racial stereotypes” in *Things Fall Apart* or “cultural assumptions” in *A Chronicle of a Death Foretold* which bordered on being inappropriate.

Candidates need to define (explain) the terms/topic/approach used in their question (preferably in the introduction or at least early on in the paper). Too many candidates lost focus because there was no clear direction established in the introduction and the conclusions were often only tacked on. A good introduction and conclusion can give structure to an essay which otherwise may “drift”. 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) especially if the question does not specifically ask for it (Questions 1, 2, 4 and 5 come to mind).

It is important to keep working on improving grammar and expression. Teachers should also select works which are accessible to the level of the candidates. It appears that some candidates have not or could not read the works.

Teachers need to spend time deconstructing/unpacking previous paper 2 essay questions, focusing on what aspects/features of the literary works are relevant to the chosen question. Often candidates begin the essay well enough but end up resorting to plot summary and whatever they can remember about the works they have allegedly studied. This can lead to a problem in developing the argument. Having candidates practice using cohesive phrases such as ‘in addition’, ‘however’, ‘consequently’ and ‘in conclusion’ would indicate to the examiner that the essay has a structure and a direction.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-3	4-7	8-11	12-14	15-18	19-21	22-25

General comments

This was felt to be a very accessible paper and generally candidates were able to utilize their knowledge of the texts they had studied to good effect using the clarity and directness of the questions to facilitate their engagement with the texts. Many candidates show impressive knowledge and understanding of the texts and even the weaker essays showed evidence that the candidates had thought of the texts as literature and were aware of the importance of discussing the various aspects of this, such as character, theme and plot. This made all the more concerning the very high prevalence of answers that appeared to have been prepared in outline prior to the exam where candidates were almost waiting for a question to “lock” onto that would allow them to use this material. As one examiner put it: “[I received] many responses that were almost a stock response with little individuality or personal response to either book - a sense that notes and essay plans were learned rather than reading and discussing books.” There is no question here of any kind of malpractice and the pressure teachers are under to achieve results is recognised. The need that is clearly felt to prepare candidates for the examination rather than to engage with the texts in an imaginative and thoughtful way is in

many ways, however, counterproductive leading to formulaic responses that while they often show a very high level of knowledge, with excellent reference to the texts lack the sense of real engagement and in particular the presentation of a reading of the text based on evidence selected by the candidates.

There is a danger that this approach puts a ceiling on the level of performance that candidates can achieve; knowledge, where interpretation is absent, to a significant degree rarely achieves the highest marks. Furthermore this approach can also inhibit strong candidates from constructing their own reading of the texts in relation to the question selected. Teachers are clearly doing a very good job of supporting candidates in gaining detailed knowledge of the texts and showing a better understanding of context and how it contributes to the construction of meaning. The challenge is to use this as the means to responses to texts that show the candidates' own engagement with them, expressed as their own awareness of its ambiguities nuance and paradox rather than as an end in itself.

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

Examiners found that while knowledge of context was often good, candidates continue to find it difficult to integrate it into their analysis of a text and show its significance in their understanding of the text's meaning. One examiner for example highlighted this in Question 1, where they found that many candidates faltered with specific detail about context after giving the first few introductory comments about areas such as social relationships in 19th century Norway, the Roaring Twenties or the American Dream.

Structuring essays also continues to be an issue for many candidates and, while some of this is no doubt due to time pressure in an examination, terms are often lacking clear definition and a thesis statement is absent or submerged in a rambling introduction. This is linked to the way candidates frequently do not answer the questions as asked, often falling back on learned discussion of themes that clouds the task at hand.

Responses were often very long and seemed to privilege the presentation of everything the candidate knew at the expense of focus on the question and a clear structure and conclusion.

A small number of candidates showed language skills that were very weak and whose placement in this course needed perhaps to be questioned.

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

While Subject Reports by their nature focus largely on areas where improvements can be made, it was generally felt by examiners that candidates had done a good job here especially in the way they deployed textual detail to support their ideas. Knowledge of context was also good though integrating this into the answer less assured. Most candidates were able to structure their essays though at times conclusions were often absent or very thin. A large number of responses showed that candidates had been admirably well prepared using excellent language

skills, giving detailed accounts of the texts and integrating the analysis of literary style so that it was relevant to their argument.

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

Q1. This was a popular question, though not always well done largely because many candidates found it difficult to distinguish between context and content, especially in memoirs like *Persepolis*, where many candidates were unable to show how real-life events were dramatized and developed into a fictional text. A further concern here was that candidates tended to forget to integrate meaningful analysis of literary features. The best responses tended to come from students writing about purely fictional texts such as *The Outsider* and *The Great Gatsby* where they were able to use their knowledge of the detail of the text to show how context was related to narrative and style.

Q2. Successful responses to this question were rare largely because candidates had difficulty in defining foreshadowing using it to cover any event that could be interpreted as predictive of others in the texts, almost rendering the concept meaningless. Better candidates were able to show the connection in terms of literary style, for instance symbolism, or relate this to structure.

Q3. This was frequently selected by weaker candidates and while these responses were often adequate especially in discussing how the ending was satisfactory, few discussed how endings might be unsatisfactory and many either saw this as referring to the characters' feelings or saw the ending as unsatisfactory if it was not happy or did not get across what they saw as the author's message. Better candidates were able to zero in on the last page or two and analyse how those pages resonated with the rest of the work, addressing, for example, the final sections of *Wide Sargasso Sea/Kitchen* and relating this to character resolution, thematic resolution, and authorial accomplishment.

Q4. This was not a popular question and in many ways the most problematic with candidates often unable to go beyond listing incidences of appearances being deceptive but less able to make any relevance of the fact. Generally only the more ambitious candidates who attempted it succeeded and then only if they were clear in their definition of these categories and their relationship at the beginning of the essay.

Q5. This was the least popular question and candidates often chose texts where pride was not a major concern or not relevant to the characters. Furthermore it was rarely defined clearly. A few candidates were able to argue the dual nature of pride and how it reflected strengths and downfalls of characters and so give successful responses.

Q6. This was a very popular question and accessible to a wide range of candidates. Some candidates seemed to have trouble with the understanding of juxtaposition at times but the best could explore both contrast and juxtaposition and show how they might generate irony and drama. Weaker candidates focused on the contrast between characters but generally candidates made reasonable arguments that they could support with details from the texts. A successful and popular question.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

As noted in the general comments above it would be good to see greater confidence shown in candidates' ability to trust their own judgements and work more open-endedly. Getting candidates to devise their own questions and work collaboratively and use peer review to develop ideas and feel comfortable in producing their own reading of a text are ways this can be promoted. There is full appreciation of the need to support candidates in getting the best grade they are able to achieve, but it is clear that candidates who play safe and deliver responses that reflect over directive teaching rather than their own engagement are not achieving the highest marks they could.

More general areas where focus could be given are in the use of quotations, making sure candidates are able to set them in context and ensure they support the argument given rather than simply show the candidate's knowledge of the text. Structuring responses could also be looked at with candidates, encouraging close focus on the nuances of the question, defining terminology clearly and structuring the flow of the essay so that the knowledge of the texts can serve the development of the argument, not vice versa.

Examiners commented a number of times on the fact that some combinations of texts were very difficult to bring together in an essay and attention should be paid to how compatible the texts might be in this context rather than looking solely at their individual qualities.