

May 2013 subject reports

## Chinese A Literature

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 20	21 - 39	40 - 50	51 - 62	63 - 74	75 - 85	86 - 100

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 19	20 - 36	37 - 49	50 - 61	62 - 71	72 - 82	83 - 100

### Higher level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25	26 - 30

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

Schools in general followed closely the regulations for this component and carried out this exercise correctly in all aspects. The material received covered classical poetry in candidates' individual oral commentary and several genres of the classical literature in discussion. However, a few schools still failed to observe the rule regarding the provision of passages and the guiding questions, as they either gave more than one extract from the poem for their candidates to discuss or did not give a correct number of guiding questions.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: In general, candidates displayed their familiarity with the work and provided an adequate understanding of the poem. Some even related the chosen extract to the whole work, and this gave their commentary some edge. However, some candidates showed a rather limited capability to interpret the sub-textual elements of the poem and their significance. They relied heavily on a descriptive approach to the piece.

Criterion B: Candidates' appreciation of the literary means and their effect was normally included in their commentary. Yet, overall, consideration of the impact that these means have created on the meaning and the reader was rather vague and brief in some commentaries.

Criterion C: Many candidates were awarded a relatively low mark, as they could not organise their commentary in a logical order and link different sections smoothly. Some commentaries were even composed of loosely connected points. Others were organised in accordance with the sequence of the passage's contents without a clear structure.

Criterion D: Most of the candidates demonstrated familiarity with the work under discussion and answered the questions confidently.

Criterion E: In most cases, the candidates were able to engage in a meaningful discussion with the teacher and responded to the questions well. Some strong candidates demonstrated a critical approach to the work and provided their personal opinion where appropriate.

Criterion F: In general, candidates gave a smooth and well prepared performance which was reflected in the quality of their language. They showed a care with choice of register and terminology and expressed their ideas with clear, precise language. There were only a small number of candidates who seemed to be less confident and who found it difficult to find a suitable register to discuss the passage eloquently.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Make sure to understand correctly and follow closely the regulations for this exercise in terms of providing the passage and the guiding questions, and conducting the subsequent discussion; pay attention to the administrative and clerical issues as well.
- Guide candidates to pay close attention to the literary tools and the shaping of the meaning of the texts.
- Encourage candidates to explore the various aspects of the work in discussion and display their personal response to the issues as portrayed by the writers.
- Help candidates to build a sense of structure for their commentary, and organise their material in a logical and coherent fashion and deliver it with an appropriate register.

## Standard level internal assessment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 30

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The majority of the schools followed the regulations closely and conducted this activity properly. There was a wide range of works selected in part 2 of Chinese A: literature PLA (prescribed list of authors) – mostly classical and two modern pieces. Most schools chose passages/extracts that were appropriate in quality and challenge. The guiding questions were also generally appropriate and clear.

The teachers' marking was as a whole consistent and acceptable. Most schools submitted their sample packs on line by the due date. However, as usual, some schools did not keep the recording of their candidate commentaries within the time limit. Many commentaries were either longer than the required ten minutes (the longest one was more than sixteen minutes) or far too short (five minutes) for the candidate to deliver an adequate presentation.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge/understanding of the context of the passage, providing sufficient awareness of the significance of the passage in relation to the whole work. However, some weak candidates showed vague awareness of the connection between the passage and the whole work when needed.

Criterion B: A large number of candidates gave consideration to the literary features of the passages, and most candidates were able to engage in a through and mature analysis about the effect created. The weaker ones, in contrast, managed to concentrate on narration of the plot or main ideas of the passage. They seemed to find it difficult to give adequate attention to the element of devices and their personal argument was by and large absent from their discussion.

Criterion C: The majority of the candidates were able to introduce the work, engage in some discussion with examples from the passages and conclude the commentary. However, some candidates displayed a rather vague sense of structure for their commentaries, which often lacked a noticeable framework and purpose, as they failed to give their analysis a clear focus and basically relied on paraphrasing of the passage.

Criterion D: The majority of candidates demonstrated their preparedness for this oral and therefore their use of language was generally clear and appropriate. However, some candidates seemed to struggle to find right choice of words to deliver their ideas.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- First and foremost, it is crucial teachers have a clear and precise understanding of the nature and requirements of this activity and the regulations for the individual oral commentary, in particular the rules regarding the selection of the passage/extract, the guiding questions and the time allocation.
- Candidates should be given as much practice as possible throughout the course; sufficient time could be spared to allow some in-class individual oral commentary work. That way candidates can, for example, know how to provide a clear focus for the commentary as well as the depth of analysis expected.
- Teachers should instruct the candidates on the importance of addressing all the criteria and to structure their commentary in a clear and convincing way. They should encourage candidates to pay adequate attention to the literary features of the works, to express their appreciation of the authors' feelings as well as the effects created by their techniques.

## Higher level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

This was the first time that schools and candidates used the new Language A: Literature syllabuses and adopted the new requirements for the written assignment. Without the “comparative” requirement, the new approach seems to be a more realistic assessment of the candidates’ abilities, yet continues to maintain its challenging and rigorous edge. Many candidates have a clear understanding of the nature of the assignment and were able to follow instructions correctly and meet expectations satisfactorily. Most of the coursework was delivered on time. The cover pages were correctly filled out and the format of the essays, including the referencing and the bibliography, was mostly satisfactory.

The trend of diversifying the choice of the works in translation amongst schools continues. There are more schools using texts written by Asian, South American and African writers and more candidates and schools chose to do drama and poetry rather than novels and short stories. This greater variety is encouraging.

Some candidates were penalized under criteria A and D as their reflective statements did not meet the requirements (referencing their journals or discussing social and cultural backgrounds) and their work exceeded the word limit (i.e. both in their reflective statements and in their essays).

The new “four-staged” approach encourages candidates to engage in providing a balance between contextual (where relevant) and literary discussion. This continues to be challenging for many candidates. As with the “old” comparative written assignment of the A1 syllabus, picking a suitable discussion topic is important for writing success. Weaker candidates continue to tend to choose topics which lack a clear angle/focus or vague treatment of poorly defined topics, making it difficult for them to provide detailed evidence and convincing analysis.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

In the reflective statement, many candidates failed to mention the interactive oral and the extent to which the activity influenced their developing understanding. In some schools, the candidates wrote about the process of how they prepared and organized the interactive oral in class and what went well and what did not go well and so on. Although this kind of reflection is admirable as a classroom activity, it is not the purpose of the reflective statement. Many placed emphasis on saying only what the historical and cultural elements in the works were instead of also focusing on the historical and cultural contexts in which the work was created and how knowledge of this impacted their understanding.

Despite removal of the comparative element, topic selection and literary treatment still pose a problem for many. This is one of the reasons why few candidates did very well on criteria B and C – a lack of personal, critical responses to the texts is a common weakness. There are too many assignments which look very much alike and they will not do as well on criterion B. While this may demonstrate study of what has been presented/discussed in class, good essays will move beyond what has been learned to provide “insight” (as stated in the higher descriptors of criterion B). In particular, it is unfortunate when the teacher’s ideas or interpretations pervade the class assignments, or when the texts have been “over-taught”, leaving nothing for the individual candidate to discover.

Most candidates demonstrated good to very good understanding of the works studied. Some candidates could list their detailed knowledge about the works they studied (sometimes down to a particular utensil) but did not demonstrate their ability to conduct literary criticism and their insights into the significance of such a detail (whether in the reflective statement or the essay itself). As a result, criterion B often suffers.

In general, candidates did reasonably well in organizing and structuring their essays. Some candidates used subheadings which were not necessary for an essay of this length.

Many candidates’ writing skills are weak so they did not do well in criterion D. They struggled to make themselves clear as a result of making grammatical and linguistic errors.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- As the new literature syllabus is in place, teachers need to provide more guidance for the candidates in terms of topic selection and arriving at personal interpretations. Developing a sense of social, cultural and historical understanding is essential for candidates’ future study of works in translation, and indeed, in ultimately cultivating “international mindedness”. They need to learn how to view the characters within historical and cultural contexts in order to demonstrate their own, more convincing critical thought.
- Candidates need to be encouraged to analyze, not paraphrase.
- Teachers should not over-teach the works to the extent that they leave no room for the candidate to develop his/her own individual response. Candidates should be encouraged to move beyond what has already been discussed in class, either building on it or taking a new angle on the works.
- As a corollary to this, teachers need to cover enough content and the correct number of Part 1 works to help the candidates to prepare for their assignments, including ensuring the required number of short stories and poems. It becomes evident to examiners when this has not been done, and it makes it more difficult for candidates to find topics that appear to be independent.
- Schools/teachers need to help all candidates to understand the requirements of writing the reflective statement.
- Many candidates’ writing skills are weak. Prior to asking candidates to embark upon this assignment, teachers need to include instruction which helps candidates to improve the accuracy and fluency of their written use of language. Teachers are reminded that they may not write upon (proofread and/or edit) the candidates’ draft assignments, however. (Please see the guide for further detail.)
- Schools need to make it clear to the candidates that they should write within the word limit. Teachers must warn them there is no “grace”. Anything over the word count is penalized.
- Schools need to submit the form of Advance Notice of Works studied. Only a few schools followed this procedure. Working with a school’s DP coordinator will be helpful.

## Standard level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

This was the first time that schools and candidates used the new Language A: Literature syllabuses and adopted the new requirements for the written assignment. Without the “comparative” requirement, the new approach seems to be a more realistic assessment of the candidates’ abilities, yet continues to maintain its challenging and rigorous edge. Many candidates have a clear understanding of the nature of the assignment and were able to follow instructions correctly and meet expectations satisfactorily. No major irregularities have been reported from the Assistant Examiners. Most of the coursework was delivered on time. The cover pages were correctly filled out and the format of the essays, including the referencing and the bibliography, was mostly satisfactory.

The trend of diversifying the choice of the works in translation amongst schools continues. There are more schools using texts written by Asian, South American and African writers and more candidates and schools chose to do drama and poetry rather than novels and short stories. This greater variety is encouraging.

Quite a few candidates, mainly self-taught candidates, were penalized under criteria A and D as their reflective statements did not meet the requirements (referencing their journals or discussing social and cultural backgrounds) and their work exceeded the word limit (i.e. both in their reflective statements and in their essays). Schools are required to give self-taught candidates support, thus the name ‘School Supported Self-Taught’. Clear instructions from advising teachers in this area are needed.

The new “four-staged” approach encourages candidates to engage in providing a balance between contextual (where relevant) and literary discussion. This continues to be challenging for many candidates. As with the “old” comparative written assignment of the A1 syllabus, picking a suitable discussion topic is important for writing success. Weaker candidates continue to tend to choose topics which lack a clear angle/focus or vague treatment of poorly defined topics, making it difficult for them to provide detailed evidence and convincing analysis.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

In the reflective statement, many candidates failed to mention the interactive oral and the extent to which the activity influenced his or her developing understanding. In some schools, the candidates wrote about the process of how they prepared and organized the interactive oral in class and what went well and what did not go well etc. Although this kind of reflection is admirable as a classroom activity, it is not the purpose of the reflective statement. Many placed emphasis on saying only what the historical and cultural elements in the works were instead of also focusing on the historical and cultural contexts in which the work was created and how knowledge of this impacted their understanding.

Despite removal of the comparative element, topic selection and literary treatment still pose a problem for many. This is one of the reasons why few candidates did very well on criteria B and C – a lack of personal, critical responses to the texts is a common weakness. There are too many assignments which look very much alike and they will not do as well on criterion B. While this may demonstrate study of what has been presented/discussed in class, good essays will move beyond what has been learned to provide “insight” (as stated in the higher descriptors of criterion B). In particular, it is unfortunate when the teacher’s ideas or interpretations pervade the class assignments, or when the texts have been ‘over-taught’, leaving nothing for the individual candidate to discover.

Most candidates demonstrated good to very good understanding of the works studied. Some candidates could list their detailed knowledge about the works they studied (sometimes down to a particular utensil) but did not demonstrate their ability to conduct literary criticism and their insights into the significance of such a detail (whether in the reflective statement or the essay itself). As a result, criterion B often suffers.

In general, candidates did reasonably well in organizing and structuring their essays. Some candidates used subheadings which were not necessary for an essay of this length.

Many candidates’ writing skills are weak so they did not do well in criterion D. They struggled to make themselves clear as a result of making grammatical and linguistic errors.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- As the new literature syllabus is in place, teachers need to provide more guidance for the candidates in terms of topic selection and arriving at personal interpretations. Developing a sense of social, cultural and historical understanding is essential for candidates’ future study of works in translation, and indeed, in ultimately cultivating ‘international mindedness’. They need to learn how to view the characters within historical and cultural contexts in order to demonstrate their own, more convincing critical thought.
- Candidates need to be encouraged to analyze, not paraphrase.
- Teachers should not over-teach the works to the extent that they leave no room for the candidate to develop his/her own individual response. Candidates should be encouraged to move beyond what has already been discussed in class, either building on it or taking a new angle on the works.
- As a corollary to this, teachers need to cover enough content and the correct number of Part 1 works to help the candidates to prepare for their assignments, including ensuring the required number of short stories and poems. It becomes evident to examiners when this has not been done, and it makes it more difficult for candidates to find topics that appear to be independent.
- Schools/teachers need to help all candidates to understand the requirements of writing the reflective statement.
- Many candidates’ writing skills are weak. Prior to asking candidates to embark upon this assignment, teachers need to include instruction which helps candidates to improve the accuracy and fluency of their written use of language. Teachers are reminded that they may not write upon (proofread and/or edit) the candidates’ draft assignments, however. (Please see the guide for further detail.)
- Schools need to make it clear to the candidates that they should write within the word limit. Teachers must warn them there is no “grace”. Anything over the word count is penalized.
- Schools need to submit the form of Advance Notice of Works studied. Only a few schools followed this procedure. Working with a school’s DP coordinator will be helpful.

## Higher level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 18	19 - 20

### General comments

Candidates' performance was in general solid and convincing. Most of their commentaries were considered as very good and even excellent.

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

Overall, candidates demonstrated confidence in tackling the tasks of this component and took an effective approach towards exploring the main message of the prose passage or the poem. However, many of them still failed to engage in an in-depth and convincing analysis of the subtext of the passage chosen. Some also tended to replace the critical interpretation with a descriptive account of the contents of the piece. While a great number of candidates demonstrated their awareness of the chosen passage's literary features, some of them only managed to provide a brief and superficial discussion. In addition, how to construct their ideas in a logical and progressive way was still a big challenge to most of the candidates, as they tended to adopt the method of linear explanation of the story under discussion.

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

As indicated above, most of the candidates showed no problem in discovering and exploring the feelings and thoughts that the writer or the poet intends to convey and their significance. They also correctly investigated the importance of the ending of the story and the poem. While analyzing the text under discussion, they made a close and detailed reference to it and supported their arguments with relevant examples. In terms of their examination of the selected text's literary features, many candidates demonstrated their familiarity with the concepts which are required to carry out a sufficient discussion of the technical devices of the genre concerned. In expressing their thoughts, candidates, as a whole, displayed effective writing skills.

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

Text 1: This was again the popular choice for a majority of the candidates. In their commentary, they all gave detailed interpretation of the relationship between the main characters as well as the heroine's personality and its symbolic beauty. The technical devices which are employed by the author, such as characterisation, plot construction and the setting, were all selected by them to



discuss. Yet, some candidates failed to explore in detail the social meaning of the heroine and the ending.

Text 2: It was encouraging to see that most of the candidates in this group showed their capability to interpret the meaning of the piece in a profound and correct manner. The technical elements of the piece, such as imagery, tone and structure, were all analysed by them. The importance of the ending in the poet's effort to deliver the message was also given adequate attention. As usual, the common weakness of these commentaries was their structure as they were constructed by sequential analysis of the piece, for instance, sentence by sentence and stanza by stanza.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- To provide candidates with some basic knowledge of the literary terms and concepts that are needed for this exercise, including their definition and role.
- To remind candidates to engage themselves in careful reading and re-reading of the texts in order to gain a solid understanding and interpretation especially of the underlying meaning.
- To teach candidates to pay attention to the effects of the techniques and styles employed by the authors and provide such an analysis in relation to the question in their answers.
- To train candidates on how to communicate and construct their arguments in a coherent manner and to encourage them to address the issue as raised in the given passage. They should not write a purely narrative account of what is described in the given passage.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 15	16 - 17	18 - 20

### General comments

In general, all candidates adequately demonstrated their literary knowledge and their writing skills when doing standard level paper one guided literary analyses, some did better. The examination extract (prose/poem), especially the prose, seemed easy to access for most of the candidates. The poem seemed a bit challenging compared to the prose piece so as a result few candidates chose to do it. The examination served to differentiate ability as there was a wide range of performance.

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

While most candidates demonstrated adequate understanding of the text chosen, interpretation continued to be a difficult area for many. Many misinterpreted a text either partially or did not engage in interpretation at all. Too much paraphrasing and too little analytical criticism was frequently observed. Writing a guided textual analysis on poetry was a difficult task for many as evidenced by how few chose to explore the poem. This may be the sign of largely inadequate emphasis on studying poetry in schools worldwide.

The guiding questions are supposed to help the candidates to access the text, and indeed, now it is a requirement that they are answered. Many candidates responded to the guiding questions well. However, the guiding questions should not be regarded as the limit of candidates' responses and cannot be seen as a rigid structure for organizing responses. Many candidates turned to following the guiding questions too closely, resulting in papers that appeared to be comprehensions; the writing thus became restricted.

Many candidates' writing skills are weak. They struggled to make themselves clear as a result of grammatical and linguistic errors. It was observed that even among the best written scripts the written mistakes were many. There seemed a huge difference between now and even five or six years ago in terms of handwriting quality. It certainly has much to do with internet technology. Schools should have policies to deal with this as an urgent matter.

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

Candidates did relatively well in understanding of the chosen text. Many used relevant and sufficient details to support their understanding and interpretation. Many were skilful in conducting criticism on the literary techniques. Many scripts were well organized and sharply focused.

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

The prose extract: many candidates did well in understanding the basic message of the text. Many demonstrated their skills in identifying literary features and providing comments accordingly. However, many failed to treat the text holistically and perceptively. The ending of the story (the doors shut again when power restored) was significant to the whole text and deserved more interpretation. Many candidates, unfortunately, did not pay much attention to it. Also, many tended to use certain formulaic approaches and set structures to express their interpretations. This worked to some extent but hardly produced cogent, coherent argument.

The poem: many paid attention to the literary (poetic) devices while writing the textual analyses. Many offered their creative interpretations and did well in treating the poem as a poem. However, some were merely "translating" the poem as if their job of writing the commentary was revealing the "hidden" meaning between the lines. Candidates often did poorly once they tried to approach the poem in the same manner as prose or prose fiction or tried to repetitively pin down a "meaning" without regard to the whole content of the poem.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers need to provide more guidance for the candidates in terms of holistic evaluation towards a text to avoid commenting only on part of it.
- Candidates' personal interpretations of a literary text should be encouraged. Teachers should not create standard formats or formulate "template" approaches for the candidates to deal with writing responses to paper one.
- Help candidates to learn to plan their writing prior to drafting, including how to incorporate, but not be limited to, discussion of guiding questions.
- Paraphrasing is something candidates should avoid at all times.
- Encourage candidates to engage in more poetry study.

- Help candidates to practise their Chinese handwriting. Examiners were frequently “horrified” by illegible or barely legible writing!

## Higher level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 19	20 - 22	23 - 25

### General comments

It was evident that most of the schools provided their candidates with useful and relevant training prior to the examination. As a result, there were hardly any cases of irregularity due to the basic errors committed by the candidates.

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

Two areas continued to present a big challenge to most of the candidates. One was how to interpret the key demand of the question concerned correctly and another, how to make a proper and efficient use of the prepared material. Due to their failure to grasp fully the main issue as indicated in the question chosen, a large number of candidates were able to make a meaningful link between the prepared material about the texts studied and the question that they chose to answer. In some cases, the candidates almost completely missed the point during their attempt to tackle the question. In other cases, many could merely come up with a rather simplified even superficial investigation, failing to consider other related aspects, even though the questions were phrased in a rather simple and clear fashion.

In addition, construction of the essay and appreciation of the literary features of the works in relation to the question continued to be the relatively weak areas in many scripts.

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

As usual, most of the candidates demonstrated a sufficient knowledge of the works studied and many of them were able to make detailed reference to the texts to support their argument. Yet, some of them failed to make effective use of the material due to the reason mentioned above. In general, candidates also seemed to lack training on organizing their thoughts in a progressive and coherent manner, as they only presented the examples from the two or three works one after another as their response to the question. In terms of their communication skills, they used language in an adequate fashion and their choice of register and phrases were in general appropriate and smooth.

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

Questions on novels and short stories were the most popular ones. In dealing with these questions, candidates normally demonstrated their ability to grasp the meaning of the questions and tackled them in an adequate fashion. They were also confident enough to find relevant examples from the works studied to support their argument. The common weakness that was revealed in many scripts, however, was the candidates' understanding about the thrust of the question. As mentioned above, in some cases, the candidates failed to understand the key concepts and phrases in the question and therefore were unable to respond adequately. Questions 12 and 13 were the example, as quite a number of candidates could not disclose the implication of the main issue and give their response accordingly. Questions 11 and 15 were a relatively easy choice and the candidates normally showed no problem in understanding the request of the question. However, as said before, their response lacked sophistication and depth. Another weakness which was common to most of the scripts was the candidates' appreciation of the literary devices that are related to the question and employed by the authors in their works and the effects created. They either totally ignored this aspect or just gave very brief or superficial analysis. The comparison of the different works was in general missing in the scripts.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- To teach candidates the genre related literary terms and expressions and encourage them to use them correctly in answering the relevant question.
- To urge candidates to build up a strong sense of planning for their writing, by unwrapping carefully the demand of the selected question before they formulate their answer. By so doing, they are able to construct their papers with a focus and put forward their argument in a coherent and logical manner; and to encourage them to challenge the validity of the statement given when needed.
- To teach candidates how to appreciate the effects of the technical devices and styles employed by the authors and provide such an analysis in relation to the question in their answers.
- To guide candidates on how to make a real link between the different works against the question.

## Standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 19	20 - 22	23 - 25

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

This examination session's paper two questions seemed clear and easy to understand, accessible to most of the candidates. It seemed most candidates did well in handling the new demands of paper two questions. Their responses showed their familiarity with the new examination focus and the works they studied. Many paid good attention to the literary conventions and were able to use details of the works to support their arguments. There were a large number of candidates who responded to the short story

and novel questions, but it seemed other genres are also now receiving attention. Many candidates did well in producing their responses, with satisfactory structure and development, showing some good examination time management and writing practice. Many scripts were awarded high marks, for various reasons. Very few candidates received less than 10 marks.

While many demonstrated their good understanding and detailed memory of the chosen texts, many candidates still failed to pay adequate attention to the genre literary conventions in their response (as required by criterion C). More often they engaged themselves in the discussion of the content of the works rather than the literary conventions used by the authors to deliver the content and the effects of these. This type of less satisfactory response was perhaps the result of not being able to fully understand the demands of the questions as well as the new focus that is spelled out in the Language A: Literature guide.

Many paper two questions were broad, with multiple parts. Many candidates failed to view the questions holistically and overly stressed one part of the question to the exclusion or relatively inadequate treatment of others.

Some candidates seemed to have problems understanding the questions in full. In order to solve the problem, they tended to pick a few familiar words and phrases from the original question and to create their own “title” and to subsequently build their argument around it. Candidates need to know they must respect the original question and should try to answer all of its parts.

There are works which require some social and historical knowledge to prevent untenable readings. A lack of this knowledge, and indeed, seeming confusion about events and their impacts, prevented many candidates from producing quality literary criticism.

It seemed evident that some schools did not teach candidates enough texts to complete syllabus requirements. This backfired.

Some candidates did not provide enough textual evidence to support their arguments nor meet the demands of most of the paper 2 questions. Using a few lines from one or two poems or using very limited quotation or exemplification from one or two short stories is not enough to support arguments required by most of the paper two questions. Where shorter texts are used, demonstration of depth of understanding includes that of both of the poems/short stories used and of their significance to/within the collection (i.e. “the work”).

Constructing well organized responses under timed conditions continues to be challenging for many candidates. Too often we saw poorly structured responses without coherent structure and clear critical focus (relying too much on paraphrasing). Sometimes we saw candidates who were rushed to “off-load” their pre-prepared materials about the given texts even though what they wrote was not adequately (or at all) connected to the question.

Candidates’ handwriting is a major concern. Some scripts were barely legible.

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

Almost all candidates could provide some comment on the main messages of the texts and on the main literary techniques deployed. Some can provide details and examples to support their arguments when

addressing questions. This was due to candidates' close reading as well as good examination preparation.

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

As usual, more schools were doing short stories and novels so that questions 10, 11, 12 and 15 were the most popular ones among candidates. Questions 1 and 2, question 6, and question 9 were the favourites among candidates who studied prose, poetry and drama genres respectively. These were straightforward questions and had no surprising elements.

It was evident that the majority of the candidates studied the texts well and had done some level of examination preparation. As a result, many were able to identify the key demands of the questions and to produce arguments efficiently with support of textual evidence. However, such thorough examination preparation was often double-edged. The "formulated approaches" may have provided the candidates with some safe and standardized answers, but it inevitably reduces relevance, and rarely addresses the subtleties of the question, ultimately becoming a limitation of the candidates' interpretive abilities.

Candidates may use a minimum of one text by each author to respond to the questions. However, there were candidates who used only two very short poems or two very short stories as the basis of their discussion. This thin, narrow textual coverage could not support the arguments which most of the paper 2 questions demand. Teachers should ensure that poems and short stories chosen contain enough depth and sophistication for the demands of the assessment component. Short cuts in syllabus coverage are unlikely to lead to success.

Question 13 was an interesting and challenging question. The question did not specify what "fragment" means in short story writing. It was up to the candidates to define this and to use textual evidence to support an argument. As a result, it confused some candidates but at the same time created some analytical space for some abler ones.

Questions 4 and 5 were two interesting questions about poetry. Unfortunately nearly no candidates used them. It was evident that poetry study was not a popular option amongst schools. Given that poetic conventions are relatively easy to identify relative to other genres, this is something schools may wish to consider.

Question 3 was an interesting question about prose writing. Unfortunately nearly no candidates used it. It was evident that some candidates were not used to dealing with questions that seemingly veered away from the content discussions with which they were familiar. Paper 2 asks candidates to take their knowledge and "rethink" it "on the spot" in relation to an unknown question. They need practice with this.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Make sure candidates fully understand the demands of the paper two questions, and adjust their learning focus accordingly.
- Make sure candidates have practice in answering all parts of the paper two questions they choose, to avoid making incomplete responses.
- Help candidates to learn how to better plan their writing before starting to write.
- Teachers should help candidates to engage in more studies on genre, having the candidates not only know what the author said but how the author said it through the particular genre thus the special effects created.

- Teachers should encourage candidates to think critically so that they are capable of formulating individual responses, rather than just repeating what has been studied. As always, irrelevant paraphrasing cannot be rewarded.
- Teachers should help candidates to engage in comparison/contrast when writing paper two response. This is an important explicit demand of the new criteria and many candidates were quite weak in this area.