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January 2014 GCSE English Language unit results fact-finding exercise

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Codi Safonau Ysgolion
Raising School Standards

January 2014 GCSE English Language unit results fact-finding exercise

Audience	Secondary school English departments; parents/carers; governors.
Overview	The Minister for Education and Skills announced an urgent fact-finding exercise to assess the January 2014 GCSE English Language modular results. Its purpose was to look at the causes and influences that have contributed to the awarding of lower than expected grades for both Units 1 and 2 in Foundation and Higher papers, and to make immediate and longer-term recommendations.
Action required	None – for information only.
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Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

Contents

Why we undertook this fact-finding exercise	2
Background	2
How we undertook this exercise	5
Strand 1: Analysis of data and evidence	5
Strand 2: Visits to schools	5
Strand 3: Review of WJEC's processes	7
Initial findings	9
Analysis of data and evidence	9
Teaching of the revised specification for English language and the performance and preparedness of pupils	12
Support and guidance provided to practitioners in relation to the changes incorporated into revised specification	14
WJEC's role in standardisation and moderation of the units	15
Previous Welsh Government monitoring exercises	18
Conclusions	21
Recommendations	25
Immediate actions	25
Longer-term actions	27
Annex A: Interview framework	30
Annex B: List of schools	39
Annex C: Scrutineers' report 21 March 2014	41
Issues/concerns raised by Centres	41
Overall summary of findings	42
Observations on individual questions	42

Why we undertook this fact-finding exercise

The Minister for Education and Skills announced an urgent fact finding exercise to assess the January 2014 unit outcomes for GCSE English Language.

Data in this report has been provided by WJEC and regional consortia and has not been corroborated by the Knowledge and Analytical Services within the Welsh Government due to the time constraints imposed although the robustness of the data is considered sufficient for this exercise.

Background

In October 2012 the specification for GCSE English Language was changed in response to concerns raised in a report commissioned by the then Minister for Education and Skills Leighton Andrews AM, following a review of the results achieved in summer 2012. That review also led to the re-grading of summer 2012 outcomes for WJEC's GCSE English Language candidates. The specification was revised so as to require greater emphasis on sentence structure, punctuation and spelling – features which employers and other stakeholders value. Other elements which were revised include:

- the weighting of controlled assessment element of the assessment was reduced from 60% to 40%;
- the weightings for writing and reading were each increased from 35% to 40%;
- the 10% content on 'study of the use of spoken language' which had been difficult to teach and assess was removed.

Welsh Government officials wrote to all centres on 4 October 2012 advising them of the reasons, nature and timescale for the changes. The revised subject criteria were subsequently published by the Welsh Government on 9 October and the revised specification was published by WJEC in draft and then final form on 24 October and 6 November respectively.

January 2014 provided the first opportunity for pupils to sit the new revised specification. Two units were offered in the January series – Unit 1 and Unit 2, each was offered at Foundation and Higher Tier, therefore 4 exams were available in total.

Table 1 below provides a summary of the unit results in 2014 compared to January 2013 (2012 unit results are also included to provide context). This data indicates a decrease in the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades along with a decrease in those achieving A*-A grades in 2014. The decrease in results appears to be particularly pronounced for the Foundation Tier, especially Unit 1. The decrease in A*-C at the Higher tier is less pronounced, however the decrease in the proportion of A*-A grades achieved is particularly striking.

Table 1 – Comparison of January 2014 unit outcomes with preceding years

	January 2012			January 2013			January 2014		
	Number of candidates	% A*-C	% A*-A	Number of candidates	% A*-C	% A*-A	Number of candidates	% A*-C	% A*-A
Foundation Unit 1	4,374	29.1	-	7,413	23.6	-	8,681	4.6	-
Foundation Unit 2	3,435	13.8	-	6,525	11.1	-	8,853	8.1	-
All foundation units	7,809	22.4	-	13,938	17.8	-	17,534	6.4	-
Higher Unit 1	5,190	76.4	19.8	8,712	62.9	22.7	9,744	52.2	7.9
Higher Unit 2	4,496	80.1	15.3	7,060	49.4	14.7	10,067	42.8	4.7
All Higher units	9,686	78.1	17.7	15,772	56.8	19.1	19,811	47.4	6.3

Caution is needed in interpreting the data above as results at unit level are often subject to some volatility when new specifications are sat for the first time. One of the first and noteworthy findings of the exercise was the substantial increase in entries to all units in 2014 compared to 2013 – a 26% increase in entry rates. It is also evident that this continues the trend seen between January 2012 and January 2013. In all but one case (A*-A in unit 1, Higher Tier between January 2012 and January 2013) an increase in candidate entries is matched by a decrease in unit outcomes. Changes in entry patterns may cause volatility in results, particularly if the students entered in one year reflect a very different pattern of ability when compared to the previous year. It is not possible to tell for certain how the cohorts entered in 2013 and 2014 might have differed. If relatively less able pupils are disproportionately represented in the increased number of pupils entered this would

have the effect of depressing results. In January 2013 entries for Year 10 or younger candidates stood at 1.8% of the cohort for unit 1 and 3.2% for unit 2. In January 2014, entries for Year 10 or younger candidates stood at 3.3% of the cohort for unit 1 and 5.9% for unit 2.

The Review of Qualifications recommended that early entry (before Year 11) should generally be discouraged.

The relationship between increasing early entry and results achieved is not a uniform one across all subjects – much depends on the nature of the subject. Certain subjects lend themselves more readily to modular exams. Modular exams are less appropriate where the majority of the skills and knowledge relevant to the subject develop and are built upon over time. English (and Welsh) Language fall into this category and as a consequence it has already been decided that the revised English (and Welsh) Language GCSEs that will be introduced in September 2015 will be based on a linear model of assessment.

In the context of lower than expected results this fact finding exercise has then focussed on:

- teaching of the revised specification for English language and the performance and preparedness of pupils;
- support and guidance provided to practitioners in relation to the changes incorporated into the revised specification; and
- the WJEC's role in standardisation and moderation of the units.

How we undertook this exercise

The approach and methodology adopted in this fact finding exercise has comprised of:

1. analysis of evidence and data;
2. visits to schools to discuss:
 - a. how they prepared pupils and developed teaching and learning strategies in line with new specification and to ascertain what those schools perceive as the underlying reasons for the unexpected profiles within their schools;
 - b. schools' views of the support provided by the WJEC for the preparation of the introduction of the new qualification specification including preparing of pupils; and
3. a review of WJEC's processes in setting in place the new GCSE English Language and awarding of the January 2014 units to determine that they were suitably robust and rigorous in line with the GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice:May 2011
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/qualificationsinwales/qualificationregulation/regpublication/codesofpractice/?skip=1&lang=en>)

Strand 1: Analysis of data and evidence

The review team undertook an analysis of data provided by the four regional consortia, the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and written evidence from individual schools.

Strand 2: Visits to schools

Thirty two schools were visited over a four day period (17-20 March). The schools were selected from a complete list of grade data for units 1 and 2. All schools selected had entered more than 20 candidates for the units to ensure that the

numbers entered were large enough to secure statistical validity of the data. They were selected for one or more of the following reasons:

- January 2014 results were on average at least a grade lower in one or more units than the results in January 2013;
- they experienced a mixture of results for the two units and for the two tiers within each unit: i.e. one or more unit went down by an average of one grade or more while one or more of the other units went up by an average of one grade or more in comparison with January 2013;
- they had previously entered candidates for GCSE English Language via AQA, the only other awarding organisation that had candidates in Wales for this subject in 2012;
- two schools were selected in discussion with the regional groups of secondary headteachers in order to gain a valid sample size/balance views.

Visits to each school lasted around 90 minutes. The Head of English at each school was interviewed along with a member of the school's senior management team. The process applied was based on a semi-structured interview. This allowed the school to expand on the reasons it considered contributed to the results. Schools were asked to prepare for the interview by identifying how they had set targets for pupils' grades, to be ready to discuss their data for January, to talk about how they had adjusted their teaching to meet the needs of the new specification and to gain their views about the examination papers and the marking scheme. Two members of the Department for Education and Skills attended each interview; one led the discussion, while the other recorded the conversation.

Information on the support provided for the introduction of the new specification was also gathered during the visits; in particular the discussion covered schools' views on the quality and scope of the WJEC's initial training, the usefulness and availability of exemplar materials for teacher preparation and use in the classroom and the clarity of the marking scheme.

The views expressed in these interviews were subsequently cross referenced with those expressed by a further 20 English subject practitioners, selected by the four regional consortia school improvement teams, on 21 March 2014. A list of questions for the semi-structured interview is at Annex A. A list of schools interviewed is at Annex B

Strand 3: Review of WJEC's processes

All awarding organisations offering GCSEs have to follow the code of practice (referenced above). The code is designed to ensure that the standard of qualifications is maintained across time, and across awarding organisations. This code sets out:

- the agreed principles and practices for the assessment and quality assurance of qualifications;
- the roles and responsibilities of awarding organisations and centres; and
- the requirements for a high-quality examinations process.

As the regulator of qualifications in Wales, the Welsh Government has responsibility for ensuring that awarding organisations comply with this code.

To establish compliance with the Code the Welsh Government required WJEC to provide a range of information and materials, along with examples of candidates' work at the grade boundaries set by awarders.

Independent external subject experts were appointed and asked to review the scripts and form judgements regarding the extent to which they:

- matched the requirements of the grade descriptions for A and C in the specification; and
- reflected or deviated from the sample assessment materials available on the WJEC website in advance of the first live paper.

The subject experts were also invited to make comments on the question papers, marking schemes and candidates' performance as appropriate.

Initial findings

Analysis of data and evidence

WJEC has provided an analysis of the results achieved by pupils in those centres that entered more than 20 candidates for comparable units and tiers in both January 2013 and January 2014

In January 2013 178 centres entered candidates compared to 191 centres that entered candidates in 2014. 143 centres entered candidates in both January 2013 and January 2014. WJEC were able to compare results in 2013 with those in 2014 for 102 centres, where at least 20 candidates had been entered for equivalent units. Table 2 below and data quoted on page 9 relate to entries for units from those 102 centres.

Table 2 – Mean Changes in outcomes in 2014 compared to 2013 for those centres where a comparison is possible

<i>Mean change in outcomes</i>	Unit 1 FT	Unit 1 HT	Unit 2 FT	Unit 2 HT	All
Decrease of more than one grade	13.9%	26.8%	5.4%	20.6%	16.4%
Decrease of 0.5-0.99 grade	32.9%	25.4%	13.5%	22.1%	23.6%
Change of less than 0.5 grade either way	49.4%	31.0%	75.7%	33.8%	48.0%
Increase of 0.5-0.99 grade	2.5%	9.9%	4.1%	10.3%	6.5%
Increase of more than one grade	1.3%	7.0%	1.4%	13.2%	5.5%
<i>Number of situations</i>	79	71	74	68	292

The table shows that in the 102 centres:

- 16.4% of unit entries saw an average drop in outcomes of at least one grade;
- Almost half (48%) of the unit entries were within what would be regarded as the normal variation – on average up or down half a grade; and
- 12% of the unit entries were at least half a grade higher compared to January 2013.

WJEC also provided data on how pupils performed on each of the questions in the papers. Table 3 below shows the mean score achieved on each question on each of the papers sat. It is not unusual to see variation in the mean score where questions are deliberately set to discriminate between the ranges of abilities of candidates. The low marks achieved, on average, on question 3 of the Higher Tier Unit 2 paper is apparent.

Table 3 – Candidate Performance across questions on each unit by tier

Unit 1: Foundation Tier

All candidates' performance across questions					
Question number	Number of candidates attempting the question	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Maximum Mark for question	% of candidates attempting the question
1	8631	5.3	2.1	10	99.4
2	8561	4.9	2.1	10	98.6
3	8296	3.4	1.8	10	95.6
4	8421	14.2	4.5	30	97.0

Unit 1: Higher Tier

All candidates' performance across questions					
Question title	Number attempting the question	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Maximum Mark	% Attempting the question
1	9646	5.1	1.7	10	100.0
2	9642	5.5	1.6	10	99.9
3	9566	5.3	2.0	10	99.2
4	9629	15.1	5.1	30	99.8

Unit 2: Foundation Tier

All candidates' performance across questions					
Question title	Number attempting the question	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Maximum Mark	% Attempting the question
1	8826	7.6	2.2	10	99.7
2	8707	4.7	1.9	10	98.4
3	8422	4.4	2.3	10	95.1
4	8191	13.0	4.8	30	92.5

Unit 2: Higher Tier

All candidates' performance across questions					
Question title	Number attempting the question	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Maximum Mark	% Attempting the question
1	10067	5.3	1.9	10	100.0
2	10046	5.0	1.8	10	99.8
3	9965	2.8	2.1	10	99.0
4	9943	15.0	5.0	30	98.8

Data provided by regional consortia, ASCL and individual schools indicate that the majority of pupils predicted to achieve A*-C received lower outcomes than expected. They also reported that pupils sitting the Higher Tier papers performed significantly under target. However it should be noted that predictions are, generally, for whole qualifications, whereas the January outcomes are for units, rather than whole qualifications. In addition, nationally, centre predictions supplied to awarding organisations tend to be significantly higher than actual qualification outcomes. Table 4 below illustrates the discrepancy between predictions and outcomes in English Language in January 2013 and January 2014, and all other subjects (excluding English Language) in January 2014.

The data show that only in a minority of cases do teacher estimates match actual outcomes. Also that teacher estimates in GCSE English Language (in January 2013

and January 2014) are less accurate than teacher estimates across all other subjects (as a group) in January 2014.

Table 4 – Comparison of Teacher Estimate and Actual Grades in English Language

	English Language January 2013		English Language January 2014		All Other Exams January 2014
	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 1	Unit 2	
Teacher estimate at least 2 grades lower than actual	3.5%	1.6%	0.3%	0.3%	2.1%
Teacher estimate 1 grade lower than actual	12.4%	6.7%	2.8%	2.4%	13.1%
Teacher estimate same as actual	26.5%	20.3%	16.0%	15.0%	37.2%
Teacher estimate 1 grade higher than actual	25.8%	30.6%	35.7%	32.8%	28.7%
Teacher estimate at least 2 grades higher than actual	31.9%	40.9%	45.1%	49.5%	19%
<i>Number of candidates</i>	<i>12,999</i>	<i>11,185</i>	<i>13,783</i>	<i>14,189</i>	<i>35,768</i>

Teaching of the revised specification for English language and the performance and preparedness of pupils

From the visits undertaken the following themes emerged in relation to the preparedness of pupils:

- Within our sample, the majority of schools stated that they submitted the same number of pupils in January 2014 as they did in January 2013. Four schools reported entering more pupils, across the entire ability range, as a means of improving their understanding of the new specification and its requirements and two schools entered pupils for the first time following a move to the WJEC from another awarding body.
- Whilst it must be noted that officials had no means of corroboration, schools felt that pupils were well prepared for the January units. Schools advised that they were well aware of the increased emphasis being placed on sentence structure, punctuation and

spelling (SSPS) and had adapted their preparation accordingly. Some teachers commented that developing SSPS needed to begin in KS3 and some pupils were potentially trying to play catch up. Two schools confirmed that no additional work was undertaken on SSPS and explained that this was already targeted from year 7 onwards. Likewise they had intensified their work on preparing pupils to compare and contrast two texts in line with the requirements of the new specification. All confirmed that schemes of work had been amended to reflect the new specification.

- All schools said that they had prepared pupils for the new specification and in addition had provided the usual catch-up sessions and out of hours learning opportunities. A number of schools targeted C/D pupils by utilising the Welsh Government support programme run by Education London. All schools reported that they set pupils targets using the new specification.
- Just over two thirds of the schools felt that the unit papers in January were a fair reflection of the new specification; however, 9 schools raised concerns that the double question in the Unit 1 foundation paper was very difficult for C candidates and below. In the higher tier for unit 2 the comparison question did not provide as much guidance for pupils as the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs).
- All schools expressed concern that in their view the marking of the papers had been unduly harsh and the majority of schools believed that a deficit model had been used for marking – i.e. marks were deducted for inaccuracies or mistakes rather than striking a balance between rewarding pupils for good features and deducting marks for common mistakes. They considered that comprehension questions were open ended but the published marking scheme for the January 2014 units was very specific about what the answers should look like. The only other published marking scheme is for the

one set of SAMs. Schools also reported that the questions seemed to encourage repetition on behalf of the candidates which contradicts previous advice that pupils should avoid repetition.

Support and guidance provided to practitioners in relation to the changes incorporated into revised specification

A number of themes emerged from the visits in relation to schools' views of the support and guidance that had been provided:

- Whilst there was consensus that the new specification was introduced too rapidly, no school offered this as a contributory factor to the results.

12 CPD events were offered by WJEC (5 in January 2013, 7 in November 2013). In total WJEC records show that at least 215 centres attended the January events and 214 attended in the autumn. Welsh Government has seen analysis of feedback from the events which show that, at the time, schools were very positive about the events, with no 'poor' ratings. Nevertheless, during our interviews, all schools, apart from one, reported that, in their view the training provided by the WJEC was poor and unhelpful. They felt that initial training tended to underplay the extent of the differences. This included references to unit 1 being a return to the papers as they were in 2011. They also felt that help and support for the new examination was poor with no allowance for discussion or responses offered to questions in relation to the examination and grade boundaries. However it should be noted that these CPD events followed the widely publicised furore about exam seminars held in autumn 2011, following which, awarding organisations were more cautious about the content of CPD events and regulators imposed conditions about the conduct of such events. In Wales, new Conditions of Recognition for awarding organisations came into force on 1 November 2013.

- All schools interviewed reported that communication with WJEC has proved difficult with one school claiming that they had not been invited to the training – although WJEC’s attendance records indicate that this school did attend an event in Autumn 2013. Schools were unclear how the marking scheme worked and felt that there were insufficient annotated answers provided representing the full range of abilities. A number of schools reported attending a WJEC training session where they had been shown an example of a marked piece of work. Every single spelling mistake or grammatical error had been circled. It was felt that the emphasis was very much on seeing what was wrong with the answer and looking to penalise rather than looking positively at what the pupil had understood and evidenced.
- The January 2014 Examiner’s Report was not considered useful. Schools interviewed felt it was too verbose and did not clearly identify major issues to be addressed. School and department leaders were surprised that the anomalies and scope of underperformance observed by then was not identified in the report.

WJEC’s role in standardisation and moderation of the units

Preparation of the examination papers for January 2014

Following the change in specification Welsh Government monitored the Question Paper Evaluation Committee (QPEC) meetings in 2013 where the January 2014 question papers and mark-schemes were finalised. The meetings were run in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Practice and the independent subject expert observing the meetings reported no concerns that required the attention of Welsh Government as the qualifications regulator.

Marking of the examinations

Examiners' training conferences were held on the following dates and examiners had around three weeks to complete the work.

- Unit 1 Higher Tier & Foundation Tier: Saturday 18th January 2014.
Marking deadline: Monday 10th February.
- Unit 2 Higher Tier & Foundation Tier: Saturday 25th January 2014.
Marking deadline: Monday 17th February.

WJEC appointed a team of 107 examiners to mark the four examination papers available in January 2014. The number of examiners, by unit and tier, were as follows:

Unit 1 Foundation = 24 examiners
Unit 1 Higher Tier = 28 examiners
Unit 2 Foundation = 25 examiners
Unit 2 Higher Tier = 30 examiners

The average number of scripts allocated to each examiner was:

Unit 1 and 2 Higher Tier: 330
Unit 1 and 2 Foundation Tier: 360

Three team leaders were appointed in each of the four units.

The Welsh Government is satisfied that the above arrangements were consistent with previous examinations series. One difference was that without a January series in England in 2014, WJEC had fewer entries overall than it otherwise would have had to deal with during this period consequently the English Language team were not as stretched as they might have been in previous examination series.

The team of examiners for the January 2014 GCSE English Language units was experienced. There were no 'new' examiners i.e. examiners who had not marked papers for the previous GCSE English Language specification. Whilst this was the

first live assessment for the revised specification, the team was entirely drawn from examiners who had previously marked GCSE English Language for WJEC.

Examiners attended a marking conference where the question papers and marking schemes were discussed. Following this conference, examiners were required to send a sample of 10 scripts to their team leaders for checking. Only if the team leader was content with the examiners' application of the mark scheme on those 10 were examiners authorised to continue marking.

A further 25 'specimen' scripts were checked from each examiner. If there were any doubts about an individual examiner's performance, additional scripts were checked.

We have analysed records of the examiner standardising process. For each of the specimen scripts considered, the record sheet shows the centre number, candidate number, mark given by examiner, mark given by team leader / principal examiner, difference (plus or minus) and space for relevant comments. We are content that the WJEC have adhered to the requirements of the Code of Practice.

In the majority of cases, the team leaders found evidence of consistent application of the marking scheme. In ten cases, team leaders found examiners had been slightly harsh; in five cases examiners were found to be slightly lenient. These variations were dealt with by the established process of scaling the examiners' original marks (adding or subtracting from them). In two cases, both for Paper 1, Higher Tier, the nature and extent of the variation between the examiner and team leader led WJEC to re-mark the scripts allocated to those examiners. This happened before publication of outcomes, which would have been based on the revised marks, not the original examiners' marks. This would have involved about 650 scripts out of a total of more than 37,000. Subsequently, following publication of the results WJEC undertook their own internal review of marking, WJEC announced on 19 March that a further one examiner's work was being re-marked. This involved 318 scripts from 6 schools.

Awarders recommended grade boundaries which were within a range established by considering scripts judged to be worthy of the grade in question (i.e. grades A and C

on the higher tier papers and grades C and F on the foundation tier papers) and scripts judged not to be worthy of the grade. It is worth noting that the other grades are determined arithmetically. Also, that the highest grade available on the foundation tier is a grade C; the lowest grade available on the higher tier is a grade E.

Awarders are required to use their professional judgement, informed by a range of statistical evidence, to identify a single mark which becomes the boundary for that grade. It is clear from the Chair of Examiners Report that awarders considered statistical evidence when establishing the grade boundaries.

WJEC is clear that the recommended boundaries represent the lowest marks at which awarders were content the work is worthy of the grade. This fact is recorded in the Chair of Examiners Report to the Chief Executive.

On the basis of the evidence seen by the Welsh Government, the procedures adopted by the awarding committee when setting grade boundaries adhered to the requirements of the Code of Practice.

Previous Welsh Government monitoring exercises

Welsh Government appoints teams of subject-experts to conduct a scrutiny programme of designated qualifications. The subject specifications chosen for scrutiny are selected on the basis of factors such as risk, size of entry, previous monitoring etc. A small number of qualifications are scrutinised each year. In 2013, WJEC GCSE English Language was one of two qualifications scrutinised by Welsh Government.

The purpose of a scrutiny programme is to:

- check that the qualification and subject criteria have been met;
- check whether the assessments were fair and effective;
- check whether the appropriate procedures, to ensure fairness and comparability, have been followed at all stages;

- identify whether there are any issues with the qualification specification;
- identify good practice worthy of encouragement and dissemination.

GCSE English Language was selected for scrutiny in 2013 because of the problems in summer 2012. Although measures had been put in place to mitigate against the issues in 2012, for example the provision of separate assessments for learners in Wales in comparison with learners outside of Wales, other risks remained in this final year of the legacy specification that warranted close monitoring.

The scrutiny found no significant issues of concern. Indeed, scrutineers found evidence of much good practice throughout the assessment setting, marking and awarding stages. WJEC processes and procedures demonstrated full compliance with the Code of Practice.

Review of January 2014 assessments by Scrutiny Team March 2014

To inform this fact finding exercise the team of three external subject experts, appointed by Welsh Government, who scrutinised WJEC GCSE English Language in 2013 was reconvened to inspect a sample of 10 candidates' scripts on each of the following grade boundaries. These represented the minimum mark, set by awarders, for the achievement of those grades.

- Paper 1 foundation tier 41/60 C
- Paper 1 higher tier 30/60 C
- Paper 1 higher tier 43/60 A
- Paper 2 foundation tier 41/60 C
- Paper 2 higher tier 29/60 C
- Paper 2 higher tier 42/60 A

WJEC supplied 10 scripts on each mark. While all 10 scripts achieved the same mark, the distribution of marks across questions varied. The team of subject experts was asked to review the scripts and form judgements about the extent to which they:

- matched the requirements of the grade descriptions for A and C in the specification; and
- reflected or deviated from the sample assessment materials available on the WJEC website in advance of the first live paper.

The subject experts were also invited to make comments on the question papers, marking schemes and candidates' performance as appropriate.

The Scrutiny team considered that the overall performance of candidates on the A/B boundary matched the Grade Description for A quite securely. This could suggest that candidates just below the grade boundary might have demonstrated some of the characteristics of an A grade. The overall performance of candidates on the C/D boundary for both tiers was at times a secure match for the Grade Description for C, but was more often inconsistent, and therefore was best seen as genuinely 'borderline'. This is more in line with what we would expect to find.

In some instances, there is evidence, in the scrutineers' view, of severe application of the marking scheme. This is particularly evident in relation to question 3 on the Unit 2 Higher Tier paper.

The Scrutiny team considered that the reading material in the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) was at least as challenging as that in the live papers. Overall, the SAMs and January 2014 assessments were broadly comparable in terms of demands.

A copy of the Scrutiny team's report is at annex 3.

Conclusions

The overarching conclusion of the review team is that there is no one single aspect that has contributed to the lower than expected outcomes. It appears that our sample schools were generally prepared for the new specification and the revised weighting for SSPS. Indications are that schemes of work were amended and predicted grades were modelled on the new specification. Generally the examination papers matched teachers' expectations of the new specification and there were few surprises for teachers or pupils. There is no evidence to suggest that WJEC did not follow the correct procedures at all times.

However, there are a number of themes which have emerged:

- **Changes in entry patterns.** There was a substantial increase of 26% in entries to all units in January 2014 by comparison with January 2013. In January 2013 entries for Year 10 or younger candidates stood at 1.8% of the cohort for unit 1 and 3.2% for unit 2. In January 2014, 3.3% of the cohort for unit 1 was in Year 10 or younger and 5.9% for unit 2. Changes in entry patterns may cause volatility in results particularly if the students entered in one year reflect a very different pattern of ability when compared to the previous year. It is not possible to tell for certain how the cohorts entered in 2013 and 2014 may have differed, but we conclude that such a large change in entry patterns makes year on year comparisons of results difficult and potentially open to misinterpretation.
- **Late change to the specification.** The new specification was introduced in October 2012 when the 2014 cohort had already started their course of study; however, schools in the sample felt that this was not a contributory factor.
- **The A/B boundary was secure.** The Scrutiny team considered that the overall performance of candidates on the A/B boundary

matched the Grade Description for A quite securely, while the process for setting the grade boundary was correct this would tend to suggest that candidates just below the grade boundary might well have demonstrated some of the characteristics of an A grade. This might suggest that the grade boundary was set at a more challenging level.

- **Requirement for accuracy.** The new specification with its increased emphasis on SSPS demanded greater accuracy from candidates. The Scrutiny team report supports the view that the bar has been raised and there are indications of a severe interpretation of the marking scheme. In the small sample viewed by the Scrutiny team there is evidence of severe but consistent application of the marking scheme, this is particularly evident in relation to question 3 on the Unit 2 Higher Tier paper. Greater clarity and consistency on how the marking scheme relates to Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) and specimen answers at each grade could immediately help teachers to meet their pupils' learning needs and improve pupils' performance by the summer. In particular, there needs to be greater clarity about what constitutes a valid alternative answer within the marking scheme.
- **Demands of Sentence Structure, Punctuation and Spelling.** Schools have had to prepare candidates for the increased weighting on SSPS throughout years 10 and 11. Regardless of how hard teachers and candidates work there is an element of catch up in this approach which clearly affected grades. It is important that schools continue to teach this aspect with increased rigour from Year 7 upwards and indeed within Key Stage 2. The Literacy and Numeracy Framework is being extended into key stage 4 to help set in place a seamless progression from primary school, through key stage 3 into key stage 4.

- **Support materials were of insufficient quantity and quality.**
 Support materials were available but could have been improved. There is currently only one exemplar set of SAMs available on the WJEC website. Had more materials been available and linked to marking schemes teachers would have found the link between the materials, the specimen answers and the mark scheme more transparent. This would make it easier for them to use the marking schemes more accurately in assessing pupils' work. It would also help them to support pupils in making a more accurate self-evaluation of the quality of their own work. We know from the Sutton Trust that effective teacher feedback together with high quality pupils' self-evaluation of their own work leads to significant improvement, especially for those young people subject to socio-economic deprivation. The provision of additional materials would be a hugely cost effective way for teachers and their pupils to do this.
- **The WJEC's online offer does not meet the needs of teachers.**
 The WJEC website was considered by the schools interviewed to be difficult to navigate. The site would benefit from the inclusion of more training materials for teachers, especially in the form of video clips which can be used to carry out internal training in schools. Where schools missed WJEC training sessions the schools felt that the shortcomings of the web-site limited their opportunities to catch up. More materials would provide this opportunity and allow for widespread dissemination. They would also help to combat the inconsistencies in messaging and advice reported by teachers in our sample schools.
- **Accessibility of WJEC subject specialists.** Direct communication with the WJEC and subject specialists was described as difficult, especially following the January unit results. Clearer pathways of communication would assist considerably in

making messaging accessible, clear and consistent.

- **Greater vigilance by WJEC.** We are concerned that the lower outcomes were not picked up by the WJEC and reported to the Welsh Government earlier. The drop from 23.6% C grades for Unit 1 Foundation Tier in January 2013 to 4.6% in January 2014 should certainly have focused attention. The fact that lower outcomes were communicated to Welsh Government on the date of publication is a concern and the WJEC and Welsh Government should review data exchange processes.

It is important to remember that the results issued to pupils in January were for units – that is certain specific components of the GCSE English Language qualification, not for the whole qualification. The re-grading of GCSE English Language in summer 2012 was an exceptional measure, but Welsh Government had compelling evidence to support this action based on the qualification outcomes for the whole cohort of learners in Wales. The situation regarding January 2014 unit outcomes is different. On the basis of the broad range of evidence considered by the review team there would be no justification for re-grading the January 2014 GCSE English Language units – these should stand.

Whilst the Welsh Government cannot guarantee that GCSE English Language A* to C outcomes in summer 2014 will exactly match those achieved in summer 2013, we will continue to apply the ‘comparable outcomes’ approach to this qualification in Wales. Our approach to comparable outcomes has not changed. Unless WJEC is able to provide a compelling reason for a different outcome, we expect the cohort of learners who sit the GCSE in summer 2014 to achieve, outcomes that are broadly comparable in GCSE English Language as that age group of learners did in summer 2013.

Recommendations

The Welsh Government expects to see increased rigour leading to higher standards of attainment for our young people in the Welsh education system. This is essential if Wales is to compete and face the demands of an increasingly global market. Given the conclusions reached in this review there are a number of recommendations that must be acted upon to address the concerns of learners, parents and practitioners, in particular to support learners preparing for the summer exams – they must be the priority. These recommendations will also help to build confidence across the system.

Our recommendations have been split into immediate and longer-term actions. The main group or body to lead on the implementation of the action has been identified together with a timescale.

Immediate actions

<u>Actions</u>	<u>By whom</u>	<u>By when</u>
1. To help schools understand the performance of their pupils and to assist schools and pupils in deciding on the appropriateness of re-sitting, copies of papers or samples of papers need to be returned to schools as soon as possible so teachers can start to look at how they have been marked in relation to the marking scheme. Centres have been asked to identify samples by 28 March.	<u>WJEC</u>	<u>Immediately</u>
2. The deadline for registering students for the June units is 31 st March. WJEC should extend that deadline to 30th April to allow schools the opportunity to consider in more detail which pupils should be entered for re-sit in June.	<u>WJEC</u>	<u>Immediately</u>

<p>3. Further materials should be produced before the Easter break to explain how the mark schemes will be applied to students work in order to increase transparency. This guidance should also provide greater clarity on what constitutes a valid alternative answer within the marking scheme.</p>	<p><u>WJEC,</u></p>	<p><u>Before Easter to inform preparation for the Summer 2014 exam series</u></p>
<p>4. Training and new exemplar materials should be made available on line before the Easter break, including sample papers with examples of scripts across a range of achievements (for example spanning A*, A, B and C performance) annotated against the marking scheme. Schools should explain to teachers how marks are given and what they therefore need to do to gain these marks.</p>	<p><u>WJEC, Consortia, Welsh Government</u></p>	<p><u>Before Easter to inform preparation for the Summer 2014 exam series</u></p>
<p>5. WJEC are now running free additional sessions for schools in advance of the summer examinations. These must ensure that advice given to schools is consistent with that provided in the examiner's report, e.g. the issue of when and when not to use bullet points in examination paper scripts. There must be consistency across the board.</p>	<p><u>WJEC, Welsh Government</u></p>	<p><u>Immediately</u></p>
<p>6. January units need to be on the online review section of the website immediately.</p>	<p><u>WJEC</u></p>	<p><u>Immediately</u></p>

Longer-term actions

<u>Actions</u>	<u>By whom</u>	<u>By when</u>
<p>7. The feedback from schools is that the WJEC online offer is weak. WJEC need to carry out the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a review of their online communications and their website to ensure it is clear and easy to navigate and provides improved communication regarding future specifications. Communication needs to be accurate, timely and joined up with consortia. • On-going support to be available online when the specifications are being taught. • Use of technology to ensure training is captured electronically to facilitate greater dissemination 	<p><u>WJEC</u></p>	<p><u>WJEC should develop a new communications strategy in consultation with practitioner by May 2014 with all actions in the strategy set in place by January, 2015.</u></p>
<p>8. In preparation for the 2015 specifications in English/Welsh language, literature, mathematics and Welsh Baccalaureate, Welsh Government, WJEC and consortia should co-ordinate a range of training events and materials which have continuity from the previous key stages, linking to those provided by the NSP to support the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. The new specifications will reflect the skills needs in the PISA assessments.</p>	<p><u>Welsh Government, WJEC, Consortia</u></p>	<p><u>From autumn 2014</u></p>

<p>9. Every school should have a named lead member of staff for English, Welsh first language and mathematics through whom the WJEC can pass on information to be disseminated across the whole school.</p>	<p><u>Schools,</u> <u>consortia, WJEC</u></p>	<p><u>July 2014</u></p>
<p>10. As secondary schools prepare for the changes to GCSEs, A levels and National Curriculum requirements that will take effect from September 2015 it is essential that they consider how best to use the 5 INSET days allocated to them, in order to provide effective professional development for their staff. The Welsh Government will provide advice for schools on how they might best utilise these days to plan and prepare for the changes ahead and will provide materials for schools which can be used as part of INSET.</p>	<p><u>Welsh</u> <u>Government</u></p>	<p><u>From September</u> <u>2014</u></p>
<p>11. It is our expectation that all schools should release members of staff, so that as part of their CPD, they can apply to become examiners.</p>	<p><u>Schools, consortia</u></p>	<p><u>September 2014</u></p>
<p>12. In 2015 Qualification Wales will be established as an independent regulator of qualifications in Wales, it will be responsible for the design, development and awarding of General Qualifications, their quality assurance and promoting public confidence in the exam system. The Qualifications Wales Advisory Board should undertake a</p>	<p><u>Welsh</u> <u>Government,</u> <u>Qualifications</u> <u>Wales</u></p>	<p><u>July 2014</u></p>

<p>review of lessons to be learned from recent events to inform the way in which Qualification Wales should carry out its regulatory and quality assurance roles. They should also consider how these findings might inform the transition of functions from Welsh Government to Qualifications Wales.</p> <p>13. Specific regulatory actions for the summer 2014 and January 2015 examinations series include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Retaining a focus on qualifications outcomes, but extending the formal data exchange procedures between WG and awarding organisations to include emerging outcomes at unit level, where there are 5,000 or more candidates, and no opportunity to cash-in a qualification result. ● Considering the benefits and drawbacks of reporting raw marks only (not grades) in January 2015 and January 2016 GCSE English Language units, and awarding those units in the summer of each year. ● Exploring the practicalities of monitoring awarding organisation CPD events, including feedback from delegates. 		
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Annex A: Interview framework

School Name:

Interviewee (HT/Deputy HT/HoD):

WG interviewer and scribe:

Question	Comments
<p>1. Did you enter a greater number of pupils in January 2014 than you did in January 2013? If so, why did you do this?</p> <p>2. Which specification did you use to set pupil target grades?</p> <p>3. Did you take account of the shift in weighting for sentence structure, spelling, punctuation and grammar?</p>	

<p>Teaching of the revised specification and the preparedness of pupils:</p> <p>4. What do you believe has led to January entrants in 2014 scoring better/less well than your January entrants in 2013?</p>	
<p>5. Did you feel that the unit papers were fair and a reflection of the new specification?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they seem particularly difficult/easy? • Were there questions for which you feel you had been unable to prepare your students? • Were the tiers appropriately differentiated? 	

<p>6. How had you prepared students for the shift from 30% weighting to 50% for sentence structure, spelling, punctuation and grammar?</p>	
<p>7. How did you change your schemes of work to reflect this change in weighting?</p> <p>8. What lessons have you learnt from undertaking the first two sets of units?</p> <p>9. How will you change your teaching following the January units?</p>	
<p>10. Had you carried out work on comparing and contrasting two documents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the challenges in undertaking this?	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will the outcomes of January's unit change your practice? If so, how?	
11. What is your opinion of the writing exercises in units 1 and 2?	
12. Looking at the information you have received from the WJEC and your own analysis are there anomalies in the way each unit has been marked? If so can you describe them?	
13. Was the marking scheme clear to you?	

<p>14. Had you a clear idea of how marks would be allocated prior to the first units being sat?</p>	
<p>15. Have you requested the return of papers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What were the main issues/ lessons from these? • Were there surprises?	

<p>Questions for those schools who have changed exam boards:</p> <p>16. How has the change of examination board impacted on your preparation for the WJEC specification?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What practical measures did you need to set in place?• How has this impacted student outcomes for the units?	
<p>17. What do you see as the major differences between your previous exam board and the requirements of WJEC?</p>	

<p>Support and guidance to practitioners for the new specifications:</p> <p>18. Did you attend the courses run by the WJEC?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you feel about the quality of these courses? • In the light of your subsequent experience did the courses alert you enough to changes within the specification and help you prepare to meet these changes? 	
<p>19. Did you undertake any other preparation/training in readiness for the introduction of the new specification?</p>	
<p>20. How did you prepare your department for the new specification?</p>	

<p>21. What is the implication for the changed weighting of sentence structure, spelling, punctuation and grammar for key stage 4 and for preparation in key stage 3.</p>	
<p>22. How can the preparation training offered be improved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can it be improved in the light of the greater movement in GCSEs towards PISA type questions?• What are your views on the quality of exemplar materials provided?• How could the materials be improved?	

<p>To the schools that changed exam boards:</p> <p>23. If you were changing exam boards did the WJEC training support you adequately?</p>	
<p>24. What additional training would you want to see in the future?</p>	
<p>25. Any other comments</p>	

Annex B: List of schools

Argoed School, Flintshire

Bishopston Comprehensive School, Swansea

Brecon High School, Powys

Brynteg School, Bridgend

Caldicot School, Monmouthshire

Cardiff High School, Cardiff

Connah's Quay High School, Flintshire

Corpus Christi High School, Cardiff

Crickhowell High School, Powys

Cynffig Comprehensive School, Bridgend

Denbigh High School, Denbighshire

Elfed High School, Flintshire

Fitzalan High School, Cardiff

Llanwern High School, Newport

Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Porth County Community School, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Queen Elizabeth High School, Carmarthenshire

Rhymney High School, Caerphilly

St Cyres School, Vale of Glamorgan

St David's High School, Flintshire

St Joseph's RC School, Neath Port Talbot

St Julian's High School, Newport

The Maelor School, Wrexham

Ysgol Bryn Elian, Conwy

Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle, Gwynedd

Ysgol Eirias, Conwy

Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan, Conwy

Ysgol Glan y Môr, Gwynedd

Ysgol Gyfun Cymer Rhondda, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Ysgol Gyfun Dyffryn Teifi, Ceredigion

Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr, Swansea

Ysgol John Bright, Conwy

Annex C: Scrutineers' report 21 March 2014

Issues/concerns raised by Centres

1. View that the actual reading material in the question papers in the January session was harder than that in the Specimen Assessment Materials (SAMs).
2. Difficulty in understanding how the mark-scheme for reading questions (as evidenced in the Specimen Assessment Materials) had been applied to the candidates' answers in the January session.
3. Concern about questions which candidates seem to have found most challenging – i.e. Question 3 in Unit 1, Foundation Tier and Question 3 in Unit 2, Higher Tier.

The Scrutineers considered a range of material:

- the SAMs question papers and the associated mark-schemes
- the January 2014 question papers and mark-schemes
- a selection of marked scripts from each unit, comprising ten scripts at each of the key boundaries: A/B at Higher Tier, and C/D at Higher and Foundation Tier
- the Examiners' Reports for January 2014
- the Awarding Report of the Chair of Examiners for January 2014

One member of the Scrutiny team had been present as a Welsh Government observer at the Question Paper Evaluation Committee (QPEC) meetings in 2013 where the January 2014 question papers and mark-schemes had been finalised.

No member of the Scrutiny team had been present at the Standardisation or Awarding meetings for the January 2014 session. Comments below represent the considered view of English subject experts based on accumulated knowledge of standards at GCSE English Language over a number of years, with WJEC and the other GCSE awarding bodies. No member of the Scrutiny team had been 'standardised' by WJEC senior examiners on the 2014 units.

Overall summary of findings

The Scrutiny team considered that the overall performance of candidates on the A/B boundary matched the Grade Description for A quite securely. The overall performance of candidates on the C/D boundary for both Tiers was at times a secure match for the Grade Description for C, but more often was inconsistent, and therefore was best seen as genuinely 'borderline'.

The Scrutiny team considered that the reading material in the SAMs was at least as challenging as that in the live papers. In the case of Unit 1 at Higher Tier, for example, the SAM extract (from "Catch-22") was more difficult than that in the January 2014 paper. Passages for Foundation Tier were no longer than those in the SAMs.

Observations on individual questions

Unit 1 Reading Questions

Unit 1 Foundation: extract of 86 lines from "From the top deck" (Jan Mark)

- It was not wholly clear from the question-wordings how individual questions might be asking for different skills / inviting different levels of response from candidates.
- Script evidence suggested that candidates adopted a very similar method for all three questions, although Q2 asks for some focus on the writer's methods ("How?") and the mark-scheme suggests that this question "*tests understanding of structural devices*".
- The mark-scheme included, beneath each question, an italicised summary of which 'strands' in the Assessment Objectives for reading were being targeted.
- Mark-scheme, page 4: question A3 band-descriptors do not explicitly reference "*personal response*", though the question asks "*How do you react to this as an ending to the story?*" (Higher Tier comparable question 3 mark-scheme has references to "*personal response*".)
- The mean marks suggest a steady progression of difficulty in the questions, which was borne out in looking at scripts on the C/D boundary.
- Centres had been concerned about under-performance on Q3. Script evidence suggested that candidates wrote at some length in questions 1 and 2 and sometimes more briefly for question 3. It may

be that they were looking to move on to the Section B Writing tasks at this stage.

Unit 1 Higher: extract of 81 lines from “44 Scotland Street” (McCall-Smith)

- The extract was adapted/abridged from more than one chapter in the original text. Whilst it lacked coherence – specifically, there is a “gap” between the end of the first page and the start of the second – this is mitigated to some extent by having each of the three questions target a limited section of text. Q3 requires attention just to the second page of the extract.
- Q2 is expressed as two questions: “What impressions do you get of Anna in these lines? How does the writer show you what she is like?” Having this division takes attention away from the writer’s method.
- It is presumed that Q2 is intended to target the ‘strand’ of Assessment Objective 2 (AO2) which involves “*how writers use linguistic, grammatical, structural and presentational features to achieve effects and engage and influence the reader*” but the Scrutiny team cannot be sure about this because the mark-scheme does not include AO targets beneath questions.
- Q3 is expressed as two questions: “*What do you learn about Bruce in this part of the story? How do you react to what you learn about him?*” It was not clear that candidates understood how to move from the factual details which might be a response to the first part of that question to the “personal response” invited by the second part. It was also not clear that examiners were able to apply the mark-band descriptors in such a way as to discriminate between answers which “*make simple comments*” (2-4 marks), those which “*select appropriate detail from the text to show understanding of the character*” (5-7 marks) and those which “*explore appropriate detail from the text with depth and insight ... covering a range of points accurately and with an assured grasp of character*” (8-10 marks).
- The mean marks suggest an absence of progression of difficulty in these questions. Rather ‘flat’ performance, where candidates tended to adopt a very similar approach to all questions, was characteristic of the scripts on both the C/D and A/B boundaries.
- The typical “Point-Example-Explanation” formula was often followed regardless of what the question seemed to be asking. As has been pointed out, it is difficult to be entirely sure of what was expected since the AO “targeting” was not made explicit in the mark-scheme.

Unit 1 Writing Questions

Unit 1 Foundation: C/D boundary

- These were the same tasks as for Higher, but with planning space on the question paper, and some 'scaffolding' prompts for candidates.
- 'Content and Organisation' mark was generally 2/3 higher than 'Sentence Structure, Punctuation and Spelling' (SSPS) mark – and this was generally a valid differential. The Examiners' Report suggested that as many candidates had benefited from the increased SSPS weighting as had suffered, and this seemed borne out by the script evidence.
- This was generally borderline C/D performance, with occasional signs of "prepared" material intruding into candidates' responses.

Unit 1 Higher: C/D boundary

- As with the Foundation Tier, this was generally borderline C/D performance. Some candidates were over-ambitious in setting themselves an agenda which could not be managed within (notionally) 10 minutes of planning and 35 minutes of writing. Even so, these responses were sympathetically marked by the examiners.

Unit 1 Higher: A/B boundary

- Script evidence suggests that these "boundary" scripts are actually secure at Grade A.
- 'Content and Organisation' marks were generally 11 or 12, but, in the collective view of the scrutineers, scripts showed enough conscious crafting in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure to be secure in Band 4 (12 to 15 marks)
- SSPS marks were similarly borderline Band 3 / Band 4 (11 or 12) but the accuracy on balance was secure at Grade A.

Unit 2 Foundation: ‘Helping Hands: Four in five teens positive on housework’; ‘Mother goes on strike to teach messy children a tough lesson’

- The item-level data indicated that only 92.5% of candidates did the Writing task, suggesting candidates were short of time. The C/D boundary scripts, however, seemed not to have been rushed.
- Both questions 1 and 3 were essentially information-retrieval. This means 20 out of 30 marks for lower-order reading skills. Item-level data suggested significantly better performance on question 1 than question 3.
- Script evidence suggested candidates struggled to find useful material on the *authorial method* question: “How does the writer try to make the story of Jessica Stilwell’s strike interesting?”
- Bullet-prompts were provided for this question, but these may have been too similar to be helpful. The first two were:
details that make this story interesting;
what we learn about Jessica Stilwell and her family that is interesting
- Script evidence for the Writing section supported the expectation – one held by many teachers and articulated in the Principal Examiner’s report – that the SSPS performance would be less good than the *content* performance.

Unit 2 Higher: ‘Thorpe Park: how to scare your teenagers’; ‘Great Days Out: Alton Towers’

- As with Unit 1 Higher, the mark-scheme did not include a summary of which ‘strands’ in the Assessment Objectives for reading were being targeted.
- However, questions 1 and 2 seemed clear in their requirements: respectively, an account of the first writer’s opinion as to reasons for Thorpe Park’s appeal to teenagers, and an account of authorial method/language/structure in the second text – “*How does James Kenny try to show that Alton Towers is a great day out?*”
- Some evidence in these two questions, in the collective view of the scrutineers, of under-reward at the A/B boundary and a tendency of markers to comment on what the candidate has not noticed rather than what she/he has understood. This was also evident to some extent at the C/D boundary.
- Q3 was as follows: “*Queuing is a major issue at theme parks. Compare and contrast what these two writers say about queuing at*

theme parks.” This wording suggests a response in which candidates might extrapolate from the two texts some general points about *queuing*. The mark-scheme listed a substantial number of specific points from each text with just two points in common.

- In the scripts seen by the scrutineers, candidates had adopted a wide variety of strategies to *compare and contrast*. Some began with what both authors said, then moved on to the differences; others did the opposite. Some candidates took a thoroughly comparative approach and moved from one text to the other and back again with some assurance and subtlety.
- In the view of the scrutineers, Q3 seemed under-rewarded at both A/B and C/D boundaries, in some cases significantly so. Markers often seemed to be indicating some omission by using the caret symbol, and marginal annotations of *How? Why? Where?* were evident.
- The mark-scheme band descriptors require “*a range of valid points*” for 5 to 7 marks, but there were several quite developed answers receiving 2 to 4 marks (“*simple comments based on surface features of the text ... limited development ... thin or tending to be unselective in their choice of textual material*”).
- This question had been described in the following terms in the Examiners’ Reports:

*The test of the ability to compare and contrast is always challenging and this was no exception, although the question did ask the candidates to focus on a single aspect of the texts. The candidates were also left to make their own decisions about how to approach the question and present their answers. The question was intended to be rigorous and it proved to be exactly that as the **candidates had to be accurate and precise** in their comments.*

- A number of examiner comments referred to a lack of precision, but the scrutineers did not feel that this accurately characterised the candidate’s performance.
- The comparable task in the SAMs provided candidates with some organisation / structure for their answers in the form of two bullet-prompt headings.
- At both A/B and C/D on this Unit, the marks for Reading were in general; significantly lower than the marks for the Writing task.