

# **Regulations for the Assessment of the Quality of Written Communication**



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# The Criteria

## Introduction

1. The purpose of this communication is to provide guidance on quality of written communication for awarding organisations. The principles set out in this document have been agreed by the three regulators: Ofqual, CCEA and DfES (Wales). This document should be shared with all chairs of examiners, chief examiners and principal examiners.

## Background

2. The requirements for the assessment of quality of written communication (QWC) previously appeared in *The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications (2004)* under the criteria for the accreditation of GCSEs and GCEs.

GCE assessment arrangements require that:

- 2.1 Where learners are required to produce written material in English, Welsh and Irish (Gaeilge), learners should:
  - 2.1.1 ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear;
  - 2.1.2 select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to the purpose and the complexity of the subject matter;
  - 2.1.3 organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.
- 2.2 Procedures associated with the assessment of QWC require that the awarding organisation ensures that mark schemes include marking instructions for those questions where extended written answers are expected and the QWC used by learners will be assessed.
- 2.3 The process of helping to secure the consistent application of the mark scheme must include the marking of a number of common, clean responses sufficient to help consolidate a common understanding of the mark scheme, including any criteria for the assessment of written communication.
- 2.4 Where the scheme of assessment requires learners to produce extended written material in English, Irish or Welsh, the marks awarded will take into account the QWC as defined by the appropriate qualification type criteria.

3. Previously, there were discrepancies across both subjects and awarding organisations with regard to the assessment of QWC in terms of its contribution to overall marking, its method of assessment, and guidance to both examiners and learners in assessment materials.
4. The regulators seek to establish a coherent approach to QWC to ensure that the method used is:
  - appropriate to each subject;
  - consistent across awarding organisations for a particular subject;
  - communicated clearly to learners.

### **Identified differences between subjects**

5. It is accepted that there is not one approach to QWC that could be applied to all subjects. Differentiation can be made on the basis of the subject's inherent requirements and basic applications. There is no requirement for QWC in mathematics subjects.

#### **Strand (i)**

6. All subjects will make similar requirements for appropriate *grammar, spelling, punctuation* and *legibility*. All subjects will have some requirement for extended writing to allow this aspect of QWC to be assessed.
7. Modern foreign languages require little response in English, Irish or Welsh. The tasks that do involve response in English, Irish or Welsh relate to transfer of meaning or comprehension and address this strand only.

#### **Strand (ii)**

8. The appropriateness of form and style of writing may be different for different subject types.
9. Where the requirement is to give an explanation or to present an argument, the most appropriate form is likely to be extended writing produced in a correctly structured manner.
10. In descriptive work, the use of bullet points may aid clarity. The use of a formula may be the most appropriate way of defining a scientific or mathematical term. The frequency of a particular style of a response as the most appropriate form of communication will depend on the nature of the subject.
11. This strand does not apply to modern foreign languages.

### **Strand (iii)**

12. Organising information clearly and coherently will need to be assessed through an extended piece of work, but the use of specialist vocabulary may be assessed through any style of assessment.
13. This strand does not apply to modern foreign languages.

### **Required approaches to assessment**

14. Where there is a requirement, all three strands of QWC, (i), (ii) and (iii), should be integrated into mark schemes. There should be statements referring explicitly to QWC within the marking criteria, not a general statement in addition to the marking criteria.
15. QWC should be assessed qualitatively, as an integral part of the judgement on a question, when the assessment item is substantive enough to provide the necessary evidence. For certain strands this will necessitate paragraphs or essays, not short-answer responses.
16. It is expected that all A level subjects, except for mathematics subjects, will have some assessments requiring some responses of this nature.
17. Requirements for English literature, English language, English language and literature, Welsh first language and Welsh second language are met through one of the assessment objectives.

### **Transparency in the assessment of QWC**

18. Previously, there has been a lack of clarity to learners and examiners over the assessment of QWC. Some assessments indicated to learners that they would be assessed on QWC, but mark schemes gave no instruction to examiners to do so. In other instances, assessment of QWC did take place but with no indication to learners that it was happening. In the interest of transparency:
  - There should be a clear communication to learners as to which assessments will involve the assessment of QWC.
  - Examiners should be made aware of when they are to assess QWC through the incorporation of the assessment criteria into mark schemes.

## **Annex A:**

### **Assessment of spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar**

Where the subject criteria require marks to be allocated for accuracy in spelling, punctuation and the use of grammar the following rules apply.

i. Performance descriptions

*Threshold performance*

Candidates spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar with reasonable accuracy in the context of the demands of the question. Any errors do not hinder meaning in the response. Where required, they use a limited range of specialist terms appropriately.

*Intermediate performance*

Candidates spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar with considerable accuracy and general control of meaning in the context of the demands of the question. Where required, they use a good range of specialist terms with facility.

*High performance*

Candidates spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar with consistent accuracy and effective control of meaning in the context of the demands of the question. Where required, they use a wide range of specialist terms adeptly and with precision.

- ii Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar must be allocated to written and externally assessed units where there is a requirement for sufficient extended writing to enable the accurate application of the Performance descriptions. The marks allocated must achieve a total weighting of 5% of the total marks for the qualification.
- iii Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar will be allocated to individual questions. These marks must be identified to candidates on the question papers.
- iv. No fewer than three marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar should be allocated to any single question.

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