

GCSE

English Language

8700/C

Report on the exam

Autumn 2020

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Summary

Although most students carried forward, not all did, plus there were several new entries from overseas students and from adults. This November 2020 cohort often produced some very lively and well-constructed responses to a wide range of topics, and in most cases it was possible to support the level they had been awarded by their centre.

Recording the sample

The vast majority of centres did this without any real problems. The following points are a reminder for those whose submission this time was not as clear as it should be:

- Unless special circumstances are reported to AQA before the examination, then student performances must be visible and audible.
- When checking sound quality, you should play the performances on a computer which was not the one involved in the recording. This will allow you to check whether others will be able to hear it.
- Please label files in a way which includes candidate names and the level awarded. These two pieces of information, placed together, are vital for the verifier.

A number of centres used zoom-style recordings to overcome difficulties around access to their students. In nearly every case these worked well technically.

Sending the sample to AQA November Series

If a student is not carrying forward their level but submitting a new performance then this must be sent to AQA for verification.

Tasks

As with all work that is teacher assessed, suitable tasks/topics lead to best practice and performance. At all levels of ability these topics, supported by helpful questioning (including the teacher), lead to engaging work.

It is a feature of the November entry that we hear from many young people who have come to study in Britain from other parts of the world and it is usually interesting to hear of their background and varied experiences. The best work in this category reflected on specific social and cultural differences between countries and attempted to give possible reasons for such differences. When probing teacher questions were added at the end of these presentations, then Distinctions and Merits could be justified. However, some candidates presented an account of their journey to Britain, their life story, a tourist type guide to their home country or their observations on how life in Britain is different. Such topics did not readily permit them to engage with challenging or sophisticated ideas, and so could only be verified at Pass level.

Surprisingly perhaps, Covid-19 was not as popular a topic as might have been expected. Perhaps teachers rightly wondered whether their students could find an interesting enough angle on this all-encompassing topic of the moment. Some students at Pass level, though, were able to give lively presentations on how the virus was affecting their lives as young people.

Centres should always consider how they can best support such students through task choice and questions asked. As has always been true, a specific rather than general focus in an issue based presentation, is more successful in encouraging candidates to shape their talk to a purpose.

Centres are reminded that questions are a required part of the overall presentation. They should arise out of what has been said in the first part of the presentation, rather than being pre-scripted.

Assessment

Most centres were accurate enough in their assessment for their levels to be verified. It was pleasing to see that most centres had used the criteria in the right way, ensuring that all elements of a level had been fulfilled before awarding that level.

Spoken language endorsement

Centres are reminded that the standardising examples are an inter-board resource and should be referenced before assessing their students. There are no plans at this stage to issue any more examples.

Centres are reminded that they can access all necessary information about this endorsement from [our website](#).

Further support

Mark ranges and award of grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)

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Tel: 0161 953 7504

Email: english-gcse@aca.org.uk

Twitter: [@AQA](https://twitter.com/AQA)

aca.org.uk