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# AS LEVEL

*Examiners' report*

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

**H070**
For first teaching in 2015

# H070/01 Summer 2018 series

Version 1

# Contents

# Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

# Paper 1 series overview

As with last year, the overall performance across Q1 and Q2 was fairly equal in terms of quality. The texts for both questions appeared to be accessible to a wide range of candidates. Candidates covered an impressive amount of ground across all language levels. It was noted that, unlike last year, candidates tended to avoid over-commentary on graphology. That said, some candidates are continuing to produce answers which 'go through' the language levels for each question. This led to some lengthy and uneconomical responses, with candidates repeating the same contextual point multiple times for each language level. This also, on occasions, led to timing issues which then impacted on the candidate's overall mark. Particularly for Q2, the best-performing answers were able to link multiple features across different language levels together and base connections between texts on context. A pleasing development from last year was that fewer candidates over-used the word 'pattern' when not really identifying any patterns at all. It appears that candidates are being encouraged to identify them, rather than to simply say they have found them. That said, it was noted that there was a lack of high Band 5 and Band 6 answers. Many responses were not rich in terminology, with some candidates appearing to struggle to use terminology accurately, or to choose evidence which correctly matched the term used. As noted last year, there are still a significant number of candidates dedicating almost a page to an introduction (which could be nothing more than a re-write of the contents page of the Resource Booklet with a description of each of the texts included) before beginning their own analysis. To that end, some fairly short answers were amongst the best in some cases, avoiding introductions and conclusions, which were usually a summary of what had already been written in the answer. High ability candidates accessing the higher bands used a highly systemised approach to exploring linguistic features, including frequent comparison in Q2, and densely packed terminology. It was noted that some candidates had a tendency to become 'mired' in theory which is not assessed in this paper. While occasionally some responses incorporated theory well, particularly in Q2, these points were successful because they were closely linked to contextual factors, thus addressing AO3. Extended general commentary on the maxims, Giles' accommodation theory, face need and such like are rarely helpful and were not credited unless linked to the address of AO1, AO3 or AO4.

## Question 1

You are advised to spend no more than 35 minutes on this section. Of that time you are advised to spend 10 minutes reading and about 25 minutes writing your response.

Read **Text A** in your **Resource Booklet** and answer the following question.

1    Giving careful consideration to the context of the text, identify and analyse features taken from different language levels.                                                                          **[24]**

It was pleasing to note that overall performance on this question was significantly better this year in comparison to last year. Candidates appeared to find the text, a piece of campaign literature from a charity, accessible and most found valid and relevant comments to make in addressing AO3. In terms of AO1, most candidates seemed able to identify examples from the various language levels with relative ease, including rhetorical questions, use of direct address and relevant lexical and semantic fields. Some candidates, however, still appear to be confusing the terms lexical and semantic field which was particularly noticeable in this question. Other areas of confusion were noted in differentiating between low and high frequency lexis, compound and complex sentences, minor and simple sentences and phonology versus prosodics. It was noted that many candidates did not adopt or maintain a formal register in their answers. This was exemplified by the term 'guilt trip' which appeared often in the analysis. Some candidates misidentified the genre of the text as an article, rather than a piece of campaign literature in the form of a letter. The multimodality and mixed register of the text was acknowledged by most candidates and it was pleasing to note that fewer responses than last year laboured the use of graphology at the expense of analysis of language. Some candidates, as noted earlier, attempted to apply theory which was not relevant to the task at the expense of analysing how language was used in the text. Such responses achieved in the bottom bands. As with last year, the best answers were able to synthesise AO1 and AO3 throughout their answer. It was noted that some clearly perceptive candidates did not access a higher band as they did not incorporate well-chosen evidence into their answer. This was particularly noticeable in the identification of patterns (which is required to achieve higher than a Band 4). Candidates who simply asserted the use of a pattern (eg concrete nouns or emotive abstract nouns) but did not exemplify these accurately – or  at all – with evidence from the text were unable to access a top band, even if they had displayed good knowledge and understanding.

## Question 2

You are advised to spend about 55 minutes on this section. Of that time you are advised to spend at least 10 minutes reading and preparing your answer and about 45 minutes writing your response.

Read **Texts B** and **C** in your **Resource Booklet** and answer the following question.

2    Using appropriate linguistic concepts and methods, analyse the ways in which language is used in these two texts. In your answer you should:

- explore connections and variations between the texts
- consider how contextual factors contribute to the construction of meaning.    **[36]**

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As noted earlier, the best answers for this question were able to link multiple features across different language levels with valid contextual factors across the texts. For example, how Winterson mirrors spontaneous speech through her writing or how Duffy attempts to gain overt prestige while also presenting herself as a somewhat rebellious voice in very different ways in the two texts. Some responses incorporated theory in a valid way, such as Duffy deliberately subverting gender norms in different ways in the texts, or Winterson implying that Duffy flouts Grice's maxims in order to present her as more 'real'. Most candidates were able to correctly identify genres and make useful comparisons. Some were able to identify the mixed mode elements. For Text B, a significant amount of commentary was focussed around the more obvious features of the text (such as its non-fluency features) and often at the expense of other features (such as discourse structure and the use of imagery). Such responses rarely accessed the higher bands. Stronger candidates were able to comment on Duffy's syntax throughout as being untypical of spoken discourse in Text B and the rich pre-modification of noun phrases in Text C. Again, the plentiful use of metaphor and idiom in Text C was not addressed by many candidates. In terms of AO3, some candidates appeared confused about audience, with the Times v Guardian issue at times incorrectly portrayed as a class war. Some candidates were of the view that the Times was a tabloid newspaper and that its readers were uneducated. The pragmatics of both texts were pleasingly widely addressed, with most candidates commenting on the directness of Duffy's language in Text C ('*I've got bird shit on my jumper*') and correctly relating this to her 'un-snobbishness'. Stronger candidates were able to comment on the indirectness of some of Higgins' questions in Text B which were framed as statements (eg '*so poetry can and should be part of the everyday*'). Most candidates were able to comment on the schematic discourse of Text B and stronger candidates could hypothesise that although the agenda was set by the interviewer, it is likely that the Duffy's answers were not entirely spontaneous. Weaker candidates were unable to get beyond the 'Text B is spoken while Text C is written' position. It was noted that there was a lack of top band answers for this question, although the reasons for this seemed to not be related to the texts themselves, which appeared to be accessible to most candidates.

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