



A-Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

7702/2

Report on the Examination

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General

The work of students in this second series of the new specification saw lots of improvements and it was pleasing to see the effects of the feedback loops that have taken place since the 2017 series. The questions provided students of all levels with stretch and challenge as they explored the issues about language diversity and change that were presented to them. More students were able to show confidently the writing skills required by tasks that tested their ability to write a discursive essay, an analytical and comparative textual deconstruction and an opinion article for a non-specialist audience.

There was evidence of much better time management and greater certainty about exactly how best to tackle questions in the new format. There were fewer partially completed scripts seen.

It was extremely enjoyable and interesting to read about World Englishes in both Section A questions as students showed their knowledge of, and engagement with, this relatively new area of study. The questions answered most successfully in the paper were Questions 1 and 2. Most students seemed well prepared for this section. There was a lot of good knowledge seen and impressive skills of argument and evaluation. In the second year of the examination there was the quite frequent phenomenon of answering last year's questions.

Question 3 produced some perceptive and sharp critiques. It asked students to analyse how two passages used language to present views about political correctness and evaluate their effectiveness. Students were much clearer on the purpose of the task and there were fewer examples of rather general textual analysis. It was rare when students did not apply methods for language analysis but relatively frequent that they did not engage closely with the meanings produced.

Question 4 asked for a response in the form of a feature article about language and political correctness, assessing the ideas and issues raised in the texts in Question 3 and arguing students' own views. There was some impressive writing again: well-informed, skilfully argued and engaging and accessible for a non-specialist. Most students understood the need to write in an article form for a non-specialist and had prepared a number of devices for use.

The new mark schemes have bedded in well and were able to reward students' work effectively. They discriminated well between different levels of achievement and distributed marks effectively to help make judgements about different grades very clear.

Key messages

- Students must read all the words in the Section A ideas for evaluation and consider carefully what they imply.
- Students need to have case studies and examples of their own so that they can evaluate the validity of different views in Section A.
- Students need to avoid repeating rehearsed essays that do not fully address this year's task.
- Students need to use methods for language analysis in Question 3 that enable them to explore how the texts construct and convey their views.
- Students need to engage with meanings in Question 3, focussing on the ways in which the texts are part of a discourse or habitual way of seeing language use.
- Students need to identify specific ideas from the Question 3 texts for their Question 4 response.

- Students need to show knowledge of linguistic ideas and research in Question 4 and critique the ideas in the stimulus texts.

Section A

In Section A students were presented with a choice of two discussion essays. Each question offered students an idea about language diversity and change which they needed to evaluate. Question 2 was chosen more frequently than Question 1 by about 3 to 1. Statistical analysis suggested that the two questions were of equal demand. Students recognised that both questions could draw on aspects of both diversity and change and wrote perceptive arguments.

AO1

In Questions 1 and 2 students were assessed on their ability to use appropriate terminology and coherent written expression. The mark scheme for Questions 1 and 2 asks for ‘appropriate’ methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression. Most students wrote in paragraphs with clear topics, though a minority tried to include a number of unrelated ideas in each paragraph. Most referred to the key terms in the question, ‘superior’ or ‘decay’, in order to structure their answer and create a line of argument. In the most successful essays discussion of the question’s key words was woven throughout as an integral part of the evaluation of case study evidence. Better responses also used skilful discourse markers to knit together their stages of thought.

AO2

Students were also assessed on their knowledge and understanding of concepts and issues in language study. Most students were very well prepared with lots of case studies and theories which they could discuss in their answers. Some students could explain a variety of different views which enabled them to move into Level 4. A major discriminator was the extent to which students could use examples to explore and evaluate these different views. Many students could explain different views (Level 4) but could not assess their validity (Level 5).

Question 01

Question 1 focussed on language diversity, in particular on the nature and status of British Standard English.

Students were asked to evaluate the idea that British Standard English is superior to other varieties of English around the world (AO2). They then had to express their views in a coherent argument using linguistic terminology (AO1).

Key discriminators were whether students could explain and interrogate the idea of superiority and the precision of their understanding of what British Standard English referred to.

The question asked students to evaluate the idea that British Standard English is superior to other varieties of English used around the world. While most students referred to some varieties of World English outside the UK, others focussed entirely on varieties of English within the UK, discussing varieties such as MLE and Estuary English, which was fine. Many, however, did not differentiate between accent and dialect, so spent a lot of time talking about RP, which was acceptable but required acknowledgement that it was a different variety. Others did not attend precisely to the focus on a British standard. Answers were often stronger when it was recognised that there are other Standard Englishes and that there are other supra-national varieties.

Many answers showed knowledge of the historical emergence of BSE and ideas about the process of standardisation. Many students mentioned the effect of colonialism and imperialism and linked it successfully to the primacy of English, the status of English in colonised countries in education and government and the idea of resistance identities. Some students wanted to use the idea of resistance to the standard by discussing Labov's Martha's Vineyard study, without acknowledging that this related to American, rather than English Standard English. Many students explained Kachru's circles; fewer explained or evaluated the model in relation to debates about the 'superiority' of BSE. Schneider's Dynamic Model of Post-colonial Englishes was well used. The most successful students tended to equate views of 'superiority' with economic and political power but also recognised the significance of how many people in the world speak Englishes. The best answers argued for the linguistic equality of varieties and the social nature of the values ascribed to them. They also had a sophisticated sense of the social and historical forces that have shaped Englishes.

More successful answers:

- addressed the key terms 'evaluate' and 'superior' and 'other varieties' throughout their answer
- focussed precisely on what is meant by British Standard English
- clearly identified standard and non-standard varieties of English
- distinguished between accent and dialect issues when discussing different varieties
- had an over-arching argument that superiority was a product of social and historical forces rather than inherent linguistic qualities
- identified and explained in detail how BSE achieved its prestige and status in the UK and elsewhere
- explored how standardisation and the functions of BSE lead to perceptions of its superiority
- cited research on attitudes that evidenced the positive response to standard varieties and the negative responses to non-standard varieties
- explored how research found that non-standard varieties also received positive valuations
- examined how non-standard varieties were associated with identity, community and sometime resistance to dominant cultures and social groups
- explored how attitudes to standard accents were changing, eg in the variety of voices heard on the BBC
- examined pidgins, creoles and different types of Englishes, drawing on a variety of classifications
- explored how ideas about the superiority of BSE and resistance to it were the product of colonial and post-colonial contexts
- described in detail not only the specific lexical and grammatical features of some varieties, but how these were influenced by the native language of the country
- gave relevant examples of the usefulness of BSE in business, law and air traffic control
- explained why some communities reject BSE
- explored how the rise and influence of America/American English and the economic power of China/India/Russia might affect the status of BSE
- offered examples and detailed description of MLE and Estuary English, and accounted for their rise in social status at the expense of BSE
- showed good knowledge of research and debates on World Englishes, Kachru, Nerriere, Crystal, Schneider, Jenkins et al.
- explored post-colonial contexts and the move from looking to external standards to the creation of new standards
- made excellent use of case studies eg Singlish, New Zealand, Canadian, Ghanaian, Indian Englishes

- examined ideas about Globish, English as a Lingua Franca and a possible world standard English
- evaluated ELF as ‘superior’ because it was more practical than BSE in many situations
- criticised deficit models and Anglo-centrism
- could use detailed examples of lexical, semantic and grammatical features to explore the nature of different Englishes and the attitudes to them.

Less successful answers:

- used the terms ‘more superior’ or ‘most superior’, rather than ‘superior’
- conflated BSE and RP
- described Kachru’s circles inaccurately
- gave inaccurate figures about numbers of speakers
- believed that BSE will continue to be superior because Britain is so important
- wrote at length about the history of the English language
- had very sketchy knowledge of the time and sequence of events in the story of English.

Question 2

Question 2 focussed on language change, in particular whether it is a process of decay.

Students were asked to evaluate the idea that the English language has been decaying over time and continues to do so (AO2). They then had to express their views in a coherent argument using linguistic terminology (AO1).

AO2

Students seemed very well prepared for this question. There was lots of good focus on what 'decay' might mean and how it might be countered by views of change as progress or evolution. While many essays followed similar structures, there was interesting variation in the examples, case studies and sources cited among many of them.

A major discriminator was whether students could use examples to evaluate the validity of the range of explanations or views of language change that they could detail.

All students understood that they were expected to weigh up the evidence as to whether the English language has been decaying over time and will continue to do so. A considerable number decided that it was decaying, citing the growth of slang, the influence of MLE and the effects of social media in support. Most students explained Jean Aitchison's metaphors characterising prescriptivist views. As usual, a minority ascribed these views to Aitchison herself. Some subsequently spent a long time describing the metaphorical 'crumbling castle' in detail, complete with its 'pinnacles, moat, turrets and gargoyles'.

A majority saw language change as an inevitable process of evolution rather than decay, quoting Crystal in support. Most discussed, or at least described historical forces for change, including invasions, the invention of the printing press, Johnson's Dictionary and Lowth's grammar rules. These events were sometimes located in wildly inaccurate centuries. On the other hand, many students had clearly been taught very thoroughly in this area and were able to describe a range of interesting and relevant examples of historical change.

Some students looked in detail at the changes to language brought about recently by technology. It was sometimes merely mentioned in passing without any specific examples being given at all. Answers which addressed the language changes brought about by Political Correctness were even rarer. The role of education in attempting to prevent 'decay', when it was addressed, was often well understood and its success carefully assessed.

Students who wrote about the processes of language change usually concentrated on word formation, though often without any specific examples. Many cited wave and s-curve theories, sometimes inaccurately and with limited understanding of how to apply them to the question. A few answers explained processes such as potential, implementation, diffusion and codification accurately.

Some students, having been undecided which question to answer, moved between addressing Question 1 and Question 2, and, having considered the question on World Englishes, wrote entirely on this topic, sometimes making it completely relevant, sometimes less so.

More successful students:

- agreed that language change *could* be seen as a process of decay, but that this would be a reductive view
- saw the nature of change as inevitable, unstoppable and uncontrollable (following on from last year's question)
- supported their arguments with detailed examples throughout the answer
- made references to different commentators and linguists: Oliver Kamm, Simon Heffer, John Humphrys, Lynne Truss, Lane Greene, the grammarians & Johnson et al.
- explained and evaluated Prescriptivist views, explaining clearly Aitchison's decay metaphors and challenging their validity
- offered a range of other ways of describing change
- explained Functional Theory and offered a range of modern examples
- explained Substratum Theory clearly and gave a range of examples of 'borrowed' words
- explained causes of Random Fluctuation
- gave examples of changes and explored how they could be seen as decay
- took the same examples and offered other interpretations of their nature
- discussed the importation of Australian English and American English to the UK owing to media influences, usually interpreted as evidence of 'decay'
- evaluated PC as benign prescriptivism and evaluated whether it should be seen as progress or decay
- accurately explained historical attempts to standardise English
- explained the need for standardisation for the sake of clarity and intelligibility
- saw the idea of progress/decay as binary opposites as unhelpful
- challenged neutral descriptivism to argue that some language change can actually be judged positively (political correctness and language reform, for example)
- challenged neutral descriptivism to argue that some language change can actually be judged negatively (political euphemism and doublespeak, for example).

Less successful students:

- misrepresented Aitchison's views and models
- claimed that Jean Aitchison is a prescriptivist
- could not explain her metaphors clearly
- lacked examples to evaluate the views
- defined descriptivism as seeing language change as 'positive', rather than as observing/describing it
- wrote about topics and issues suited to Question 1 rather than Question 2 without making them relevant to the latter
- began their answer with language change in the first century AD, then Viking invasions and the Norman conquest and ended it with Johnson's Dictionary, all seen as evidence of decay
- mentioned the influence of technology on change, but gave no specific examples
- identified MLE as evidence of change, but described it inaccurately
- did not mention attitudes to language change at all
- listed word formation processes but gave no specific examples
- attempted to discuss PC but gave confused or unsuitable examples
- gave confused/inaccurate accounts of Wave and S-curve theory
- almost always claimed that the English language is decaying and will continue to do so.

Section B

There was often a marked difference in the levels of achievement between Section A and Section B in the work of the same students. Students were often well versed in the arguments they wanted to present in Section A. It was interesting that many students revealed in their Section A answers that they had appropriate knowledge to use in their Section B answers but did not make the transfer. It was also the case that there were many schools where some students revealed extensive appropriate material had been taught for section B but many students from the school did not deploy it.

Question 3

Question 3 focussed on discourses about language diversity and change with a specific focus on language and representation and language reform.

Students were expected to explore the two texts systematically by describing linguistic features (AO1) and analysing how they created meanings (AO3) in order to evaluate the ways the texts represented ideas about Political Correctness, showing connections between the texts as parts of a wider discourse about Political Correctness (AO4).

Both Text A and B offered students a rich resource for analysis and the great majority demonstrated clear analytical abilities and genuine engagement with the texts. The strongest students integrated accurate linguistic description with close analysis of meaning.

AO1

This year most students understood that they were expected to describe the linguistic features in the texts which they were analysing. It was also pleasing to see that this labelling was much more focussed on enabling successful analysis of the texts. There was less evidence of students using arcane and over-detailed descriptions in the hope of getting high AO1 marks and ignoring the need for the features to help them deconstruct the texts' representations. The indicative content of the mark schemes reveals what can be used to enable high scoring responses.

Students described salient features with varying degrees of success. Many were able to identify accurately a range of sentence types, particularly the 'gift' simple and minor sentences at the start of Text A. Fewer students could identify clauses and quote them accurately. Many used word classes with some detail to help them focus on how PC and its adherents were represented. Semantic fields were very well used to identify patterns of thought and the discourses present.

There was some good understanding of modality and this was often used to evaluate how the texts presented their ideas. It was encouraging to see students commenting on the modality created by the copular verb 'is' in Text A. Many students could identify present participles and discussed how these represented a current and ongoing threat.

Some things students could profitably attend to are:

- accurate labelling of word classes
- identifying and showing the exact extent of clauses
- which pronouns are 1st, 2nd and 3rd person
- identifying precise semantic fields and convincing examples

AO3

Although the two texts were shorter than last year, and the language and ideas relatively straightforward and accessible, many students clearly found this question challenging. Almost all

managed some level of analysis, but often by looking only at very superficial features of address or speculating on the identities of the writers, rather than engaging with the views and arguments presented. Ironically, when it came to Question 4, many students demonstrated clear understanding of these views by restricting their answers solely to offering reactions to the ideas in Texts A and B.

Many students did not engage at all with the meaning of the texts. It was possible to read some answers and be left with no idea what the texts were saying. It was often difficult to find much to reward above the bottom of Level 3, where students had interpreted the use of address to the audience or the use of rhetorical questions.

Better answers were able to see how the phenomenon of Political Correctness and the people who espoused it were represented. The best answers looked at the ways the texts sought to make their views persuasive and incontrovertible. To do this they considered the positioning of the audience, the self-representation of the writers, modality and the effect of the crafting of sentences and syntax.

AO4

It was often easier to give students credit for AO4 compared to last year, because virtually all of them had recognised the need to compare the texts. It was pleasing to see the way most answers were addressing all the AOs in an integrated way. Most did this throughout their answer, though less successful students confined their comparison to a paragraph at the end. Almost all compared the shared focus on PC and most the shared hostility to it. Many reached Level 3 because they compared the use of sentence functions, pronouns and other features of language. Some compared and contrasted the sources used and referred to. The answers placed in Level 4 could link language use with the contexts of politically correct language, looking at ideas that it was ridiculous, had gone too far, was restrictive and controlled thought. The best answers in Level 5 evaluated how these representations were constructed to be convincing and persuasive and recognised that they were just that: constructed representations.

More successful students:

- understood what discourses are and used the word ‘discourses’ in answers
- connected the texts all the way through, showing how they drew on and contributed to anti-PC discourses
- placed both texts within a discourse about PC as being ridiculous/having gone too far
- identified a discourse of PC as totalitarian thought control
- applied a range of linguistic frameworks accurately to describe language
- analysed the language used to represent and judge political correctness as ‘controlling’ in A and ‘excessive/ridiculous’ in B
- discussed effects of punctuation in creating sarcasm and mockery
- examined the significance of the repeated forms *newspeak*, *new behaviour* and *Newact*
- looked at the adjectives and abstract nouns used to characterise PC: *censorship*, *intolerance*, *fascism*, *strange behaviour*
- analysed the metaphor of *fascism* and its implications
- analysed the language used to characterise the *PC crowd* with its *commissars*, *social engineers* and *manipulators*
- evaluated the effects of the references to organisations in the texts, particularly the ‘faceless’ authorities in A, as opposed to the named authorities in B
- analysed the language used to represent the sources quoted and referenced in the texts
- challenged A’s imprecise implication that Orwell wrote about PC
- examined the audience positioning by the way Orwell is referred to in each text and the presuppositions made

- identified and analysed the representation of PC supporters as ‘crybabies’, immature and irresponsible
- explored language representing PC snowflakes and millennials as too sensitive
- explored how the first two simple sentences and the subsequent minor sentence at the start of Text A shaped the reader’s response
- noted the effect of the parallel structures with the copular verb *is* in paragraph one of text A and the power of definition exerted
- recognised the satirical tone and approach of Text B, and the deliberate choice of listed examples likely to provoke laughter or outrage
- analysed positioning using pronouns, rhetorical structures (questions and hypophora), lexical choices (eg idiom suggesting a man-of-the-people [sic] approach)
- compared the modality in the texts: certain and definitive *waste*, the copular verb *is*, *becomes*, predictive and threatening *seems doomed*, *will have to*
- considered the verbs used to characterise PC: *running amok*, *restricting*, *dictates*, *insisting*, *limit*, *reducing*, *to be banned*, *will have to*
- explored how the threat of PC was made to seem current and ubiquitous by adverbs of time and place
- examined how the reader is positioned as a tax-payer in Text B and the reader of A is challenged to avoid the position of the easily offended crybabies
- analysed the construction of us vs them positions, seeing the emphasis on individuals vs organisations
- looked at how the writer in A used discourse markers to sound rational and authoritative and the writer in B used references to lend a factual basis to their claims
- made very astute discussion of the wider contexts of these debates and the political positions being adopted.

Less successful students:

- were able to identify the shared focus on, and shared ‘negative’ view of, PC
- could compare the use of rhetorical questions, exclamatory sentences and declaratives
- tried to use the labels descriptivist and prescriptivist for the views in the texts
- struggled to explain what PC was or what was being said about it
- wrote generally about address and general style without specific engagement with the texts’ actual ideas and arguments
- identified all the views in the passage in very broad terms such as ‘negative’
- sought to look at audience positioning and the self-representation of the writer but made very general or banal points (the writer is knowledgeable) which ignored the specifics of the texts given
- focused much attention on their mistaken perception that one text was from an online source, Text B, and the other was not
- identified audiences by age rather than by interests or viewpoint
- paraphrased the content of the texts
- did not engage with what the texts were actually saying
- did not understand that the footnotes were not part of the original texts
- accepted every claim about PC as true
- spent much time giving their own often unfavourable, views of PC
- missed the context, ‘in the workplace’ of the situation in which terms of endearment were to be ‘banned’
- misread the objection to ‘Asian’ as it being a ‘term of *inconvenience*’
- thought *control* was a verb at the start of Text A
- did not spell correctly words in the question, the titles of the texts or from the texts’ content

- thought George Orwell or George Carlin wrote Text A
- thought that Orwell had written about PC
- made very few comparisons between the texts
- struggled to achieve an appropriate register for analysis (“sarcastic vibes”).

Question 4

Students were asked to write an opinion article in which they assessed the ideas presented in the texts they had analysed in question 3. These texts raised issues about language and representation and processes of language change. Students were expected to show knowledge and understanding of linguistic concepts and issues (AO2) when writing in a journalistic style for a non-specialist audience (AO5). It is the culmination of the students’ A-level study as they use their knowledge to engage in language debates in wider society, taking their learning beyond the classroom.

This task produced a very wide range of outcomes. It was rarely left unattempted. It was also sometimes a witty and thought-provoking way to finish marking a paper. Performance was better than last year in terms of students going beyond the texts and writing for a non-specialist audience.

Most students understood that they need to show off their linguistic knowledge. Most were able to discuss issues about language reform and more broadly the nature of language change. Some did not feel they had the necessary references and worked hard to do things with face and accommodation while others tried to talk about gender and interaction and/or occupation.

AO2

A significant number of students clearly had not expected a question on the topic of language and representation and were not well prepared for it.

Some students were able to discuss representations in PC and non-PC language, and label relevant features such as metaphors, suffixes and pronouns and use concepts like semantic derogation and lexical over-representation. They commonly considered the use of PC language and representation in areas such as gender, race, ability and sexual orientation. Students were able to discuss the issues of representation in the examples from Text B and many brought in their own examples as well.

At a higher level, they could explain the ways in which language might influence thoughts or reflect social values. Often they referred to the theory of linguistic relativity and ideas of linguistic reflectionism and determinism.

At the highest levels students explored concepts such as reclamation, the euphemism treadmill, gate-keeping, dominant and muted groups, change from above or below, issues of intentionality, Cameron’s critique of verbal hygiene and ironic uses of non-PC language. Students also explored language change issues with this example of benign prescriptivism and attempts to control and determine language change.

Less successful students sometimes did little more than paraphrase the source texts. Many students were unwilling to challenge the anti-PC views in the texts, writing off PC as an infringement of their human rights, often using intemperate and inappropriate language. Many responses seemed to be triggered by the term Political Correctness to repeat the very discourses

they were being asked to consider analytically. After two years of studying English Language many concluded that words were just words and did not really matter.

A05

Almost all students this year were prepared to write an article and provided a functional headline. Many also provided engaging sub-editorial features, though there were fewer really telling conclusions. Many had clearly studied comment and opinion features in newspapers, especially language features like ‘Mind your language’ and identified these. Some chose to write a blog and took this as a licence to rant rather than explore and argue.

There were a few essay-like and over-academic answers, but far more very informal responses, often very badly expressed, punctuated and spelt, and sometimes containing immoderate invective which eschewed rational and well supported analysis and argument.

This question showed up clearly the weaknesses of students whose control of expression, punctuation and spelling was flawed.

More successful students:

- wrote substantial answers in which they reviewed and evaluated the purpose and value of PC and language reform, using a range of theories and examples to support their views
- looked at what PC language might have been designed to do and explored its intentions – argued the significance of language in affecting social values and attitudes
- characterised the anti-PC discourses in the two stimulus texts
- evaluated the views expressed in A and B
- saw the contradictions in A where words were both just words and thought control
- examined how PC as a term has pejorated through attempts to belittle its egalitarian intentions
- challenged the sources and evaluated the examples being used in Text B as PC myths
- gave the example of Birmingham City Council supposedly banning ‘Christmas’ to use ‘Winterval’ instead before forensically destroying the claim
- analysed strategies used to represent and undermine language reform such as the use of reduction ad absurdum and the invention of fake PC terminology
- explored the representations in words concerning gender, ethnicity, ability and sexual orientation
- showed knowledge of concepts like trivialising suffixes, lexical gaps and over-representation, semantic derogation, false generics, medical and social models of disability
- explored the theory of linguistic relativity and considered whether language was a reflection of social values or helped determine thoughts, perceptions and behaviours
- examined Pinker’s idea of a euphemism treadmill and understood his view that refreshing the terms did not refresh the concept or attitude
- evaluated PC as a band-aid that had little effect on underlying attitudes and discussed Cameron’s critique of ‘verbal hygiene’ practices
- explored the significance of intention and interpretation and where meanings actually reside
- understood the effect of contexts on the use of the endearments discussed in Text B
- made references to recent news stories
- made reference to recent ‘freedom of speech’ campaigns and the characterising of snowflakes and Social Justice Warriors, making it clear that PC language is being fought over now as never before, even if it’s not always called PC any more
- explored the plethora of identity and sexuality labels and the challenges people have negotiating them in the modern world

- realised that age and the language you were brought up with can be a major factor in how you view PC
- used theories and views of language change to discuss language reform: gate-keeping, decay, evolution, functional theory
- chose a wise and helpful place of publication
- made realistic references to Texts A and B; ‘I recently read an article ...’
- wrote answers which often incorporated well-judged humour
- used sentences which were varied and crafted for effect
- used anecdotes skilfully to engage the reader
- addressed the reader in an appropriate way
- used sometimes witty and always relevant headlines
- guided the reader by means of sub-editorial features
- provided a thoughtful, memorable or witty conclusion.

Less successful students:

- did not seem prepared for the task
- wrote only a general response to the texts, often expressing horror at what the government was doing
- recycled the language and ideas of both texts
- simply agreed with the texts, arguing that racism and sexism were already beaten or were just opinions and should be uncontested as such
- made a free speech argument without acknowledging the power of language to provoke, incite and stereotype
- made little or no reference to any concepts relevant to PC or language change
- wrote at length their own views of the unimportance of language/the ridiculous nature of PC
- misunderstood the context of the banning of affectionate terms in B
- misunderstood the tone and purpose of Text B and some of the examples of PC chosen by the writer
- misread elements of Text A, claiming that the writer was sympathetic to the ‘crybabies’
- were confused about the use of gender-neutral pronouns
- thought the Euphemism Treadmill meant people kept changing their mind about what terms should be used and therefore no-one knew what to say anymore
- stated “They’re only words” or asked “Why should we have to think before we speak?”
- wrote as if their audience had read Text A and Text B
- referred to the sources as Text A and Text B
- used an inappropriately informal style of expression
- included expletives and taboo language in their answer which became immoderate, abusive invective
- showed little control of spelling and punctuation
- showed little control of the ability to analyse and argue a case.

Advice to students

To improve performance on this paper, students need to:

- read the tasks very carefully, identifying key words and the exact focus of the task
- understand what key question verbs like ‘evaluate’ and ‘assess’ require them to do
- avoid using pre-prepared essays that do not quite match the task set
- answer the question on the paper and not the previous year’s question!
- treat AO1 as a toolkit to enable AO3 and not as an end in itself
- pay attention to what the texts in Question 3 are saying as well as identifying language features
- spend time clarifying the meanings, attitudes and arguments in Section B texts
- focus on evaluating the ways Section B texts use language to represent language and persuade the reader of their views
- use their knowledge of language to evaluate the specific arguments raised in Section B texts when answering question 4
- use argument and evidence rather than assertion when producing their piece
- challenge the ideas offered in the texts in Section B.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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