

Advanced Higher English Project–dissertation

Overview of Understanding Standards resources



Band range	Mark	Genre/texts	U/S ref.	Comment
10-6	8	Prose fiction <i>The Cement Garden/ Atonement</i>	2016/ Candidate 8	The topic (theme of growing up) and texts are appropriate for this level yet there is a limited range of knowledge shown and an inconsistent approach to the task; also the analysis has weaknesses in depth and relevance; the evaluation is repetitive and assertive, and the expression has weaknesses throughout. This dissertation does not meet the 10–6 band range descriptors fully so cannot be awarded the top of that range, neither does it just meet the descriptors of this range, so is awarded the middle mark in the range.
14-11	14	Prose fiction <i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles/Far from the Madding Crowd</i>	2021/ Candidate 4	The texts are certainly appropriate in terms of challenge at this level, and the topic of the 'condemnation of the treatment of women in the Victorian era' is appropriate too. There are some examples of insecurity in terms of knowledge and understanding of the texts alongside some weakness in relevance, and the textual evidence is – at times – deployed superficially. Analysis is attempted throughout, but there are some weaknesses in the depth of analysis, evaluation is primarily implicit, and the expression has some weaknesses. This is a dissertation which hits every aspect of the 14–11 band range and is a good example of the dissertation which just fails to move into the 18–15 range.
18-15	15	Prose fiction <i>Trainspotting/ A Clockwork Orange</i>	2016/ Candidate 5	These texts have been popular texts for many years and the focus on 'a comparative study of the characters' is appropriate, albeit straightforward. The approach is relevant, and there is an understanding of both texts although the focus on <i>Trainspotting</i> is narrower than that of <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> . The analysis is primarily character-focussed and based upon long quotations, but it remains a relevant analysis of literary technique. The evaluation is discernible but the comment on <i>Trainspotting</i> is less securely justified by reference to the text. Technical accuracy is fine and there is a comparative approach as defined in the task. This dissertation just meets the descriptors of the 18–15 band range and is a good example of the dissertation which just sits on the better side of this boundary between band ranges.

18-15	15	Poetry Sylvia Plath	2016/ Candidate 6	This poetry dissertation on five poems by Sylvia Plath offers a serial treatment of these five poems as the candidate attempts to link them to 'the varying moods of Sylvia Plath' as defined in a rather vague task. The candidate does go on to show their knowledge and understanding in terms of the moods of Plath with a focus on three poems about motherhood and two which are darker. The analysis is relevant but there is an inconsistent quality to the analysis, and the evaluation is generally discernible although quite simplistic at times and the evaluation of each poem could be better integrated to show an appreciation of the wider aspects of the poetry. This dissertation just manages to do enough in each of the descriptors to be placed at the bottom of the 18–15 band range.
18-15	18	Prose fiction Edgar Allan Poe Short Stories	2021/ Candidate 3	This dissertation looks at three Edgar Allan Poe short stories and focusses on the 'exploration of madness' – these are appropriate texts and an appropriate topic for this level of study. The candidate shows an appropriate knowledge and understanding of all three stories, has a relevant approach, and uses textual references which are relevant to the task, yet there is a limitation in terms of the breadth of selection. The analysis is relevant and covers a range of literary techniques and a strength of this dissertation is its consistent focus on the task and its consistent attempt be comparative as defined in the task itself. The evaluation is discernible in each of the stories and is based on evidence. This dissertation meets the standard for each descriptor in the 18–15 band range and is given the highest mark. This is a good example of a diligent and focussed approach to the task with supporting evidence which is then brought together at the end.
22-19	19	Prose fiction <i>Wuthering Heights/ Jane Eyre</i>	2016/ Candidate 4	This dissertation looks at 'the Gothic convention of the Byronic hero' in two novels by the Brontës and both topic and texts are good choices for this level. This is an interesting dissertation in that the candidate does better in terms of displaying their knowledge and understanding and analytical comment with their work on Rochester which places it in the 22–19 range, whereas the work on Heathcliff is not as strong and that work sits in the 18–15 range. Yet there is enough in the dissertation to state that it just meets the standard of the 22–19 band range and this is based on the stronger work on <i>Jane Eyre</i> which moves it – holistically – into this band range.
	20	Drama <i>Hecuba/Medea/ Electra</i>	2016/ Candidate 1	This dissertation looks at 'the theme of vengeance' in three classical Greek tragedies and the approach and texts are appropriate for this level of study. The candidate shows they have a broad knowledge and understanding of the central concerns of all three texts – although there are small moments of uncertainty as to whether the candidate understands some aspects fully – and they use relevant textual evidence to support the demands of the task. There is a relevant analysis of a range of literary techniques which supports the candidate's line of argument, but a small number of these techniques do not fully engage

				with the idea of vengeance. There is a relevant evaluative stance apparent throughout and the candidate at times makes comparative statements to highlight the effectiveness of the techniques. This dissertation has clear indicators over two band ranges – the 22–19 and 18–15 – but when looked at holistically, the strengths of the dissertation place it in the 22–19 band range, but not just in the band range, so the mark of 20 recognises this.
22-19	21	Prose fiction/prose non-fiction <i>Down and Out in Paris and London/The Road to Wigan Pier/Nineteen Eighty-Four</i>	2016/ Candidate 10	Often, a mixed genre approach can be problematic for many candidates, but this task looking at connecting ‘social injustices’ in the first two texts and how this ‘resonates’ in <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> is a considered approach which works well for this candidate. The candidate shows a broad knowledge and understanding of all three texts, but the textual evidence has limitations in the breadth of selection, especially in <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> , and at times some of the quotation is not used to generate analysis but instead assists the candidate in summarising the narrative. The candidate does analyse a relevant range of literary techniques and the analysis does support the line of argument with an evaluative stance which is relevant and based upon evidence presented in the dissertation. Most of the work done places this dissertation firmly within the 22–19 band range, yet the issues with the limitations in the breadth of selection of quotation means that the dissertation does not fully meet the standard described which would gain 22 marks and is instead awarded 21 marks.
	22	Prose fiction Nineteen Eighty-Four/ <i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i>	2021/ Candidate 2	The selected texts and the candidate’s topic – ‘psychological impacts resulting from life under totalitarian rule’ – are appropriate for this level of study. The candidate’s exploration of the texts shows a broad knowledge and understanding of the texts and a broad consideration of the implications of the task with apposite quotation from across the breadth of the texts. The candidate analyses a range of techniques to support their line of argument and the evaluation is relevant and based upon evidence they have presented. The candidate’s expression is consistently accurate (despite the occasional awkward turn of phrase) and as they define their analysis as being ‘comparative’ in their task, they adhere to this approach throughout the dissertation. This is a good example of a dissertation which fully meets every descriptor in the 22–19 band range and is awarded the top mark in that band range.
22-19	22	Prose fiction <i>The Color Purple</i>	2019/ Candidate 1	This is a single text dissertation which looks at themes of ‘oppression and empowerment’. Both text and topic are suitable for a dissertation at this level and the candidate displays a broad knowledge and understanding of the text and a relevant approach to the task. The candidate’s line of argument is supported throughout by relevant textual evidence from across the breadth of the text. They then go on to analyse a range of literary techniques such as the epistolary form, voice, tone, use of non-Standard English, symbolism,

				characterisation and minor characters, all of which supports the line of argument. The evaluative stance is relevant and supported by the evidence within the dissertation and expression is consistently accurate. As such the dissertation fully meets the standards outlined in the band range and is awarded the top mark in the range. This is a very good example of the use of the single text to gain a good mark – there is no disadvantage in using a single text as long as the candidate can satisfy the standards outlined in the marking instructions as this candidate does.
26-23	26	Prose fiction <i>The Edible Woman</i>	2019/ Candidate 3	This candidate has chosen the ‘exploration of identity’ in this single text dissertation, and the approach and text offer an appropriate level of challenge at this level. The dissertation displays a secure knowledge and understanding of the text and it is obvious the candidate has some insight into the issue of ‘identity’. Their exploration of the novel is relevant and there is a secure consideration of the implications of the task, and the analysis of a range of literary techniques helps to strengthen their line of argument which leads on to their clearly identifiable evaluative stance, which is securely based upon evidence from within the dissertation. The candidate’s expression is skilful and the tone throughout is academic (with the odd lapse), and of note is the rather rigid structure of each analysis paragraph but this assists in the candidate securely addressing the task and providing the level of analysis and evaluation needed for this dissertation to fully meet the standards as outlined in the 26–23 band range, so is awarded the top mark in that range.
	26	Prose fiction <i>Brideshead Revisited</i>	2021/ Candidate 1	This single text dissertation has a focus on Catholicism. This is a challenging topic alongside a challenging novel which allows the candidate to delve into complex issues and relationships throughout the novel. The candidate’s knowledge and understanding of the novel is secure, and they show some insight into the topic being explored. Their exploration of the novel shows a secure consideration of the implications of the task and their line of argument is supported by selections of quotation from across the breadth of the novel. There is a relevant analysis of a range of techniques which strengthens the line of argument, and the evaluative stance is clearly identifiable and securely based on the evidence presented. The candidate’s expression is skilfully employed and assists them in the articulation of a sustained focus on the task. A strength of this dissertation is the articulate expression which integrates knowledge and understanding, analytical comment, and evaluation in a very concise manner, and it possibly reads as a higher mark, but it is the small details concerning the analytical comment and focus which keep this dissertation at the very top of the 26–23 band range, and not in the top range.
26-23	26	Poetry T.S. Eliot	2016/ Candidate 2	This candidate selects a complex range of poems and a complex task – existentialism – as the focus of their dissertation and both texts and topic are appropriate at this level. It is

				<p>obvious that the candidate has a secure knowledge and understanding of all four poems and they show a relevant exploration of the topic alongside some insight into many of the ideas explored. In support of their line of argument they also use extensive textual evidence throughout the dissertation to support the demands of the task and they employ evidence from across the breadth of all four poems. Likewise, the relevant analysis of task-appropriate techniques strengthens the line of argument, the evaluation is clearly identifiable and securely based on the evidence given within the dissertation. Finally, the expression is skilful, and the structure is very effective as the initial serial treatment of the poems becomes more complex as the dissertation progresses and the comparative comments are integrated to bring a cohesive line of argument together. So much of this dissertation points towards being located in the top band range yet it is the – at times – slightly inconsistent nature of the analytical comment which is not always consistently well-developed which keeps this dissertation solidly at the top of the 26–23 range.</p>
30-27	27	<p>Prose fiction <i>Small Gods/American Gods</i></p>	2016/ Candidate 9	<p>The selection of texts here is relatively unusual in that they are taken from the fantasy genre, yet the nature of the task in looking at the 'process and development of religion, belief and worship' points towards a topic which is appropriate for this level of study. The texts too are appropriate at this level as they have the potential for the development of a complex and sophisticated literary discourse on the given topic. The candidate displays, on the whole, a comprehensive knowledge of both texts and they have a sustained insight into the implications of the task which is supported by their judicious selection of evidence which is clearly focussed on the demands of the task. They also present a relevant analysis of a task-appropriate range of literary techniques which strengthens the line of argument. The candidate's genuine connection to the topic and texts is obvious throughout and supports their committed and clear stance. There is some evidence of skilful and considered use of structure, style and language and the comparative aspect as defined in the task is always to the fore and is at times precise. There is just enough of the dissertation which can be placed in the standards outlined in the 30–27 band range so it is awarded the lowest mark in this band range. The choice of texts may not be what is normally dealt with at this level, yet the candidate works very hard at focussing on the literary features of the text and it is this focus and endeavour which places the dissertation in the top band range.</p>

30-27	28	Prose fiction <i>Beloved/The Color Purple</i>	2016/ Candidate 7	<p>The twin foci of the task – the ‘importance of community and language in female emancipation from social oppression’ – is a clear and precise task which allows the candidate to interrogate these two popular and appropriate texts at this level. Their knowledge and understanding of both texts is comprehensive and it is skilfully supported by relevant textual reference (both direct quotation and indirect reference). The analytical comment is relevant and skilfully strengthens the line of argument, with a particular focus upon the character relationships at the heart of the texts, but also makes reference to authorial comment, metaphor, language, and structure. Yet the treatment of the texts here has an imbalance in that <i>Beloved</i> is dealt with with a touch more quality, depth and insight than <i>The Color Purple</i>. The evaluation is clear and committed and supported by the candidate’s own evidence but also with the judicious selections from secondary reading, but with – once again – <i>Beloved</i> being the stronger text in terms of evaluation. The expression is skilful and considered for <i>Beloved</i>, and skilful for <i>The Color Purple</i>. The section headings are not always helpful as at times the promise of the section heading is not fulfilled as with the ‘Power of language/communication’ section. Although there is a great deal of excellent work here – which is rewarded throughout – the fine judgements made about the balance of treatment prevents this dissertation from being awarded the very top mark as it does not fully meet the standard, yet neither does it just meet the standard, so the mark of 28 is awarded.</p>
	29	Prose fiction <i>Half a Yellow Sun</i>	2019/ Candidate 2	<p>This is a single text dissertation which primarily focuses on character development through a single text. The topic and text offer an appropriate level of challenge at this level. The knowledge and understanding is comprehensive, and the exploration of the topic is full and relevant and demonstrates a sustained consideration of the implications of the task. Throughout the dissertation, the selection of evidence and references is broad and judicious and employed in a clear and focussed way to support the line of argument in a sustained manner. The analytical comment of a range of task-appropriate techniques such as narrative, characterisation, setting, contrast, foreshadowing, crucial moments, and symbolism is all relevant to the task and is done to skilfully strengthen the line of argument. The committed and clear evaluative comments throughout are also skilfully based upon the candidate’s own evidence and analytical comment. The expression is skilful too, and considered, but at this level it is the fine judgement being made which bring us to the mark awarded. The penultimate paragraph on Olanna and gender identity is not as cleanly integrated into the overall argument and it is this which places the dissertation at 29 rather than 30.</p>

	30	Prose fiction <i>Emma/Pride & Prejudice</i>	2016/ Candidate 3	<p>The two Austen texts selected for this dissertation are challenging choices, and in concert with a task which deals with the 'theme of seeing clearly' the dissertation is established at this early point as having the requisite challenge at this level. The candidate has a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of both texts and it is clear that their insights are sustained into the theme of 'seeing clearly' and their observation that the reader discovers different layers of seeing evidences the sort of insight this candidate illustrates throughout their dissertation. The quotations/references employed throughout are judiciously selected, and the analysis of the task-appropriate range of literary techniques skilfully strengthens the line of argument. The evaluative comment is discernible, clear, and skilfully based on evidence throughout. In terms of expression, it is clear that the candidate is articulate in the language used but also in their considered structuring of the line of argument, which is sustained, precise and cohesive. This dissertation meets all the standards outlined in the 30–27 band range and is awarded full marks accordingly.</p>
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