ELC
STEP UP TO ENGLISH

5973/1 Gold Step Component 1
5973/2 Gold Step Component 2
5972/1 Silver Step Component 1
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Report on the Examination

ELC Step Up to English

During this academic year, the uptake, particularly in the summer series, grew exponentially for Step up to English. Centres entered in almost equal measure at Silver and Gold Step. At least a third of centres entered at both Silver and Gold, suggesting that they were using the differentiated, stepped approach to full effect to co-teach across a full spectrum of abilities. Equally, the wide ranging student and centre demographic indicated that the specification was being used to full effect in the flexible way in which it had been intended. The specification was written to be innovative, motivational and enabling. It was, therefore, very pleasing to note that the vast majority of students and teachers had embraced the ethos of the specification and responded so enthusiastically to the range of topics available. It was clear that many centres had utilised the diagnostic element of the papers, alongside the formulaic questions and answer formats, to help support the progression of their students, through Entry Level and in many cases beyond. Step Up to English was written to appeal to a wide audience. As a result, this series saw centres using the specification for Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, EAL, as well as some post-16 students.

Component 1
The moderation team identified Component 1 as an area of strength for most students. They reported that the transactional nature of the tasks had engaged students and clearly encouraged them to interact enthusiastically with the range of tasks presented to them. This series saw the whole range of NEAs submitted. However, Detectives, Travel and Media Campaigns were identified as the most popular choices across Silver and Gold steps. It was clear that, in the vast majority of cases, teachers had carefully and diligently trained students in how to interpret the demands of the different Assessment Objectives and how to respond successfully to the range of question formats.

However, a small minority of centres had misread the requirements of the specification and only submitted one, instead of the compulsory two NEAs. Wherever possible, this was rectified by the moderation team who contacted centres and, where possible, arranged for the missing NEA to be submitted. Where centres were not able to provide the additional NEA, this obviously had a very significant impact on the marks available to the students in this compensatory mark scheme. Centres are advised that training materials are available on both the SKM area and the open website to help support teachers in understanding the requirements of the specification. Where centres are still unsure, they are urged to read the specification and contact their designated NEA adviser for support.

Spoken Language Task
It was very clear from centres' annotation that both teachers and students had valued this task. The scenarios had undoubtedly led in the vast majority of cases to interesting, meaningful and relevant discussions and presentations. Where centres had used the tasks as the building blocks for the NEA, their students had often demonstrated clear engagement and interest with the subsequent tasks. There were some excellent examples of assessment recording, where teachers had meticulously recorded how the students had responded to the tasks, with cross referencing to the assessment criteria.

However, there were a number of centres who misinterpreted the annotation required in this section. In those cases centres had either omitted any reference to the context of the students' performance or had not made reference to the Assessment Objectives. This made it difficult for the moderator to confirm the centre's standards. In this instance centres were advised, through feedback, that it is a requirement of the specification that annotation should be contextualised and embedded in the assessment criteria. There were also a small number of instances where centres had awarded marks for the Spoken Language task, but hadn't justified the marking with any

comment. In these cases moderators requested comments, as no marks could be confirmed until the centre had provided evidence for the task. However, it is important to note, that these issues were isolated to a small number of centres.

Reading
Generally, centres had applied the reading mark schemes very accurately and the majority of centres' marking was confirmed. Where questions required interpretations, centres had usually annotated the response with reference to the assessment criteria, which was very helpful to the moderation process in confirming the centre's judgements.

However, the moderation team did report some issues surrounding the over-rewarding of AO2 questions. Centres are advised that if the word or phrase is repeated, or the explanation is not embedded in the context of the text, or does not explain the key word(s) then that does not meet the AO2 criteria. Equally, there were some teaching issues evident in the Gold Step surrounding questions that involved distinguishing between content and structural or presentational devices.

Writing
Centres who matched their annotation to the writing key accurately, and who acknowledged and awarded marks where there was evidence that a skill was being incrementally developed, were the most accurate in the marking of this task. These centres often include the Writing Assessment grid alongside the task. Moderators found the addition of this grid, where it had been supplied, very useful in helping to confirm the centre's standards.

However, there were some issues, where centres had not yet adjusted to using the new assessment grids. Where centres were less successful, moderators reported either a lack of annotation linked to the specific criteria in the grid, or a lack of consistency between evidence and marks awarded. Subsequently, this made it more difficult for teachers to pinpoint the band and subsequently the mark that should be awarded. There were also some instances where students were heavily penalised for minor errors which is not in line with the best fit nature of the mark scheme. In addition, the moderation team also reported a few instances where centres had not identified the AO5 and AO6 marks separately. This made it difficult for the moderator to advise the centre on where they may have misinterpreted the mark scheme.

Component 2
The moderation team reported that in general Component 2 had been successfully completed by students. Across the entry students had engaged with all the topics available although Sport, Adventure, Transport and Family were the most popular choices across Silver and Gold entries. Students had clearly been taught the requirements of the questions and how to respond to them successfully. There were areas where students' experienced difficulty and these are addressed in more detail below.

Reading
The reading section of the NEA was marked very accurately by centres. Where errors occurred this was often owing to a rigid adherence to the mark scheme and not allowing 'other valid responses' as indicated in the mark schemes for some questions or from simple error on the part of the centre assessor in carefully applying the mark scheme. Care needs to be taken as such errors can quickly add up to move a student out of tolerance.

Some students do find the literary texts found in Component 2 more difficult to access than the non-literary transactional texts of Component 1. This is clearly an area for further development in centres and is related to the fact that, as expected, students found some questions more difficult than others thus reflecting their current ability and pinpointing where further development was required. As with GCSE, questions which required response to AO2 proved most difficult for

students so in Silver questions 3 and 8 and in Gold questions 3, 5 and 8 are clearly questions requiring additional teaching. In Gold Question 7 with its requirement for ability in AO3 was also less well addressed, however centres should note that marks for this question are not allocated per point made but in reflection of the quality of the response thus the words 'limited', 'attempts', 'simple' and 'some' in the mark scheme are very important.

Writing
There were many examples of accurate and perceptive marking in the writing section of the NEA in Silver and Gold and where this was the case there was clear evidence of accurate annotation linked to the mark scheme and use of the mark grid.

Where assessment was less successful this was often linked to unannotated work or work where the annotation simply did not match the evidence pinpointed. Severity and leniency were equally often displayed with students not being awarded marks which reflected all the requirements of the mark scheme. The mark scheme for writing is common across Component 1 and 2 and it is to be hoped that as some centres become more familiar with the requirements of the bands, and the strands within them, they will find it easier to accurately place students within and between bands.

A number of students did not complete all, or in some cases any, of the writing section. This affected the overall mark of these students for Component 2 and Centres are reminded that students who may struggle to complete the whole paper in the allotted time can be assisted by 'chunking' the NEA. Thus, so long as the overall time allocation is adhered to, the reading and writing elements could be addressed during different lessons and indeed the reading section could be further chunked, for example working on individual texts and their questions at different times, which may further enable student achievement.

Administration
There were many examples of exemplary administration for the specification. It was noted, that generally, where centres had entered the specification previously those centres had responded positively to advice offered in the moderation feedback. However, as anticipated with the large number of new centres, there were areas that could be improved and there were some errors. Centres are reminded to:

- Ensure marks are added correctly and entered onto E-Subs with care.
- Enclose the Centre Declaration Form with the sample.
- Provide the full sample requested on E-Subs.
- Correctly complete and securely attach the relevant JCQ Access Arrangement forms as follows:

    Form 13 for students who had used readers for the writing task.
    Form 13 for students who had used a scribe for the reading tasks.
    Form 4 for students who had word processed tasks.

- Ensure access arrangements are appropriately applied for students in exceptional circumstances, who require a reader for the Reading tasks or a scribe for the Writing tasks.
- Ensure scripts are annotated and make detailed reference to the Assessment Objectives.
- Ensure marks awarded per question in Reading, and separate marks for AO5 and AO6 in Writing are clearly indicated.

More serious errors, although confined to a small number of centres, included:

- Use of a Reader for the reading section.
- Use of a Scribe for the writing section.
- Centres devising their own (or using) specimen papers that had not been approved for use in live NEAs.

Centres should be reminded that the specimen assessment materials should not be submitted as live assessments. Assessments available for submission are stored securely in e-AQA.

Centres should be reminded that Step Up to English strictly adheres to JCQ Access Arrangements that state: "In Entry Level English a reader is not permitted in the Reading component." And "In Entry Level English a scribe or speech recognition technology is not permitted in the Writing component." Where centres did not adhere to this guidance, their NEA submissions were referred to the Irregularities and Malpractice team for consideration.

We hope centres feel supported by the individual moderation feedback provided and access to training materials available on e-AQA. Additionally, each centre is allocated a name NEA Adviser. If you do not have your Adviser's contact details please contact our Teacher Services team on 0161 953 7504.

Conclusion
This has been another very successful series; students have clearly responded well to the contemporary topics, predictable structure and differentiated approach that this qualification offers. It has enabled students to develop basic literacy and literary skills in English, whilst also providing clear progression pathways. It is very pleasing to be able to recognise and acknowledge the level at which students are working and accredit that achievement accordingly.

It is anticipated that the supportive feedback provided, combined with exemplar material, TOLs and access to training materials, will enable centres to rectify issues where these have occurred and lead to even greater success for future cohorts.

Centres are reminded that the new NEAs will be available to download from September 2017 from the SKM area of e-AQA. In addition, centres are reminded that the Celebrity NEA for Component 1 and the Education NEA for Component 2 will no longer be live NEAs and that an additional NEA for each component will be identified for removal by June 2018.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.
UMS conversion calculator