ELC
STEP UP TO ENGLISH

5973/1 Gold Step Component 1
5973/2 Gold Step Component 2
5972/1 Silver Step Component 1
5972/3 Silver Step Component 2
Report on the Examination

ELC Step Up to English

Step Up to English continues to be an evolving, dynamic and developing qualification. During this academic year, both in the winter and summer Series, the entries have continued to grow. The Lead Moderator has been delighted to see new centres entering students for the qualification and existing centres entering larger cohorts. Centres entered in almost equal measure at Silver and Gold Step. Many 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. The diagnostic nature of the NEAs and clear routes of progression, were enabling students who had entered at Silver Step in summer 2017 and winter 2018, to progress onto the Gold Step in Summer 2018. It is hoped that Gold Step students will be able to progress to either GCSE English Language or, for others, to Functional Skills Level 1 or 2. 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. The vast majority of students and teachers had embraced the ethos of the specification and had responded enthusiastically to the wide range of topics available. It was widely reported, that students were clearly enjoying the specification, through the responses that had been submitted.

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 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.

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." Generally, centres responded very positively to moderators where errors had occurred and acted quickly to rectify them. However, centres are reminded that the outcome of these misinterpretations can be

damaging to the outcome of the students' submission. Constructive feedback to centres, allocating dedicated, named advisers to each centre, continuing to provide Exams Officers with a welcome email and Submission Checklist at the beginning of each series, alongside the training materials placed on the SKM area of the AQA website, will hopefully support new centres in not making these errors in future.

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, Media Campaigns and The Next Step 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 web page 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 the named advisor who has been allocated to their centre 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. Many centres chose to also include an annotated Spoken Language grid for each student which was very useful in helping to confirm the centre's standards.

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 failed to reference the Assessment Objectives. There were also instances of very brief comments that did not fully support the mark awarded. 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. This lack of annotation could potentially reduce the marks available to the student. There were also a small number of instances where centres had awarded marks for the Spoken Language Task, but failed to provide any comment. In these cases moderators requested comments, as no marks could be confirmed until the centre had provided evidence for the task.

However, these instances were isolated to a small number of centres. Feedback reports and TOLs should ensure that these centres are more fully aware of the expectations regarding annotation in the next series.

Reading

Generally, centres had applied the reading mark schemes very accurately and there were few instances where moderators reported disagreeing centres' standards. 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. At Silver Step, there was some over-rewarding noted for Reading 2, Question 4, where students were rewarded for reasons that were not embedded in the text. There was also a trend of teaching the 'Not Sure' response with two positive reasons and two negative reasons. Equally, there were some teaching issues evident in the Gold Step surrounding questions that involved distinguishing between content and structural or presentational devises.

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. 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. For AO6, there seemed to be some misunderstanding of the definition of CVC, High Frequency, CVCC/CCVC/CVVC and common polysyllabic words that led to some students being under-rewarded.

Component 2

The moderation team reported that they were very impressed by the quality of the responses within Component 2. Centres had again engaged with the whole spectrum of topics, although 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.

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 errors, 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 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. Questions which required responses to AO2 proved most difficult for students. Silver questions 3 and 8 and Gold questions 3, 5 and 8 were clearly questions requiring additional teaching. 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

The marking of the Writing tasks was reported to be much more accurate this academic year. Many centres also chose to include an annotated writing grid from the mark scheme. This was clearly supporting centres in pinpointing marks. There were very few students who only completed a plan and lots of interesting and descriptive narratives were reported. Centres were clearly teaching their students' the skills required for the different genres.

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 frequently an issue with students not being awarded marks which reflected all the requirements of the mark scheme. There was a tendency to under reward for AO6 spelling. Through feedback, Centres are encouraged to rank order their students and internally moderate to help resolve these discrepancies. Although fewer instances of both Writing tasks being attempted were reported, this was still in evidence. Through feedback and experience of teaching the specification, it is anticipated that the expectation to only respond to one question will become embedded.

Conclusion

Step Up to English has enjoyed another very successful series; students have clearly engaged with the contemporary topics, clear structure and differentiated approach that this qualification offers. It has enabled students to understand the expectations of the different AOs, whilst developing basic literacy and literary skills in English. 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 training, exemplar material and TOLs 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 October 2018 from the SKM area of AQA. In addition, centres are reminded that the Celebrity and Exhibitions NEAs for

Component 1 and the Education and Transport NEAs for Component 2 are now expired NEAs and that an additional NEA for each component will be identified for removal by September 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