

English & Literature Extension subject report

2025 cohort

January 2026





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Introduction



The annual subject reports seek to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement of internal and external assessment processes for all Queensland schools. The 2025 subject report is the culmination of the partnership between schools and the QCAA. It addresses school-based assessment design and judgments, and student responses to external assessment for General and General (Extension) subjects. In acknowledging effective practices and areas for refinement, it offers schools timely and evidence-based guidance to further develop student learning and assessment experiences for 2026.

The report also includes information about:

- how schools have applied syllabus objectives in the design and marking of internal assessments
- how syllabus objectives have been applied in the marking of external assessments
- patterns of student achievement
- important considerations to note related to the revised 2026 syllabus (where relevant).

The report promotes continuous improvement by:

- identifying effective practices in the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessments
- recommending where and how to enhance the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessment instruments
- providing examples that demonstrate best practice.

Schools are encouraged to reflect on the effective practices identified for each assessment, consider the recommendations to strengthen assessment design and explore the authentic student work samples provided.

Audience and use

This report should be read by school leaders, subject leaders, and teachers to:

- inform teaching and learning and assessment preparation
- assist in assessment design practice
- assist in making assessment decisions
- help prepare students for internal and external assessment.

The report is publicly available to promote transparency and accountability. Students, parents, community members and other education stakeholders can use it to learn about the assessment practices and outcomes for senior subjects.

Subject highlights

79

schools offered
English &
Literature
Extension



9.07%

increase in enrolment
since 2024

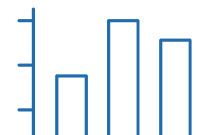


98.73%

agreement with
provisional marks
for IA3



Subject data summary



Unit completion

The following data shows students who completed the General subject.

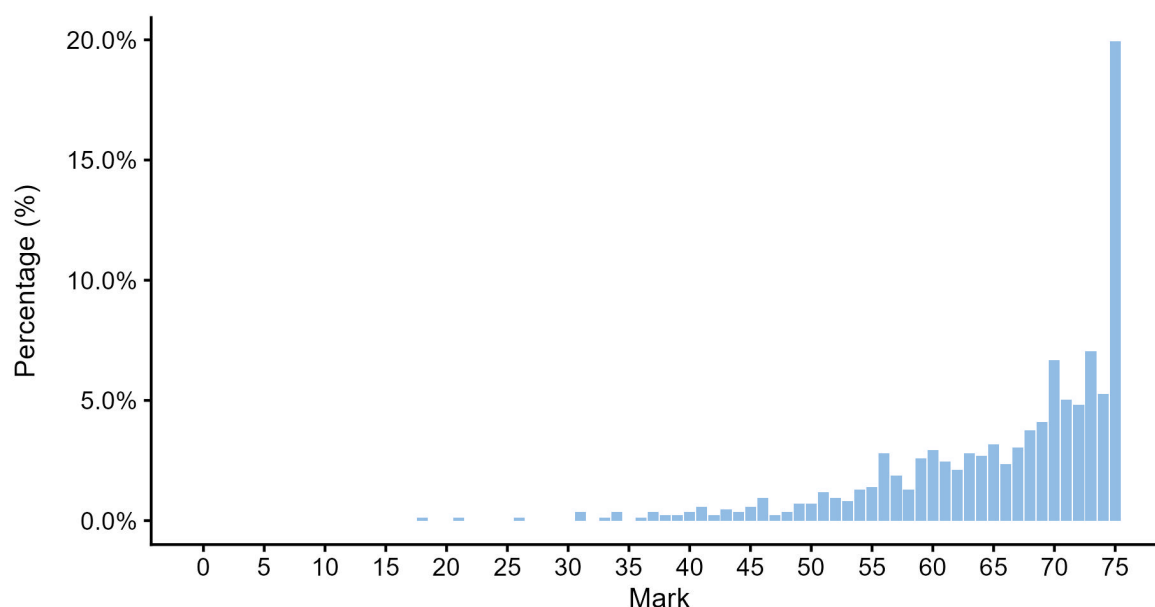
Note: All data is correct as at January 2026. Where percentages are provided, these are rounded to two decimal places and, therefore, may not add up to 100%.

Number of schools that offered English & Literature Extension: 79.

Completion of units	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	852

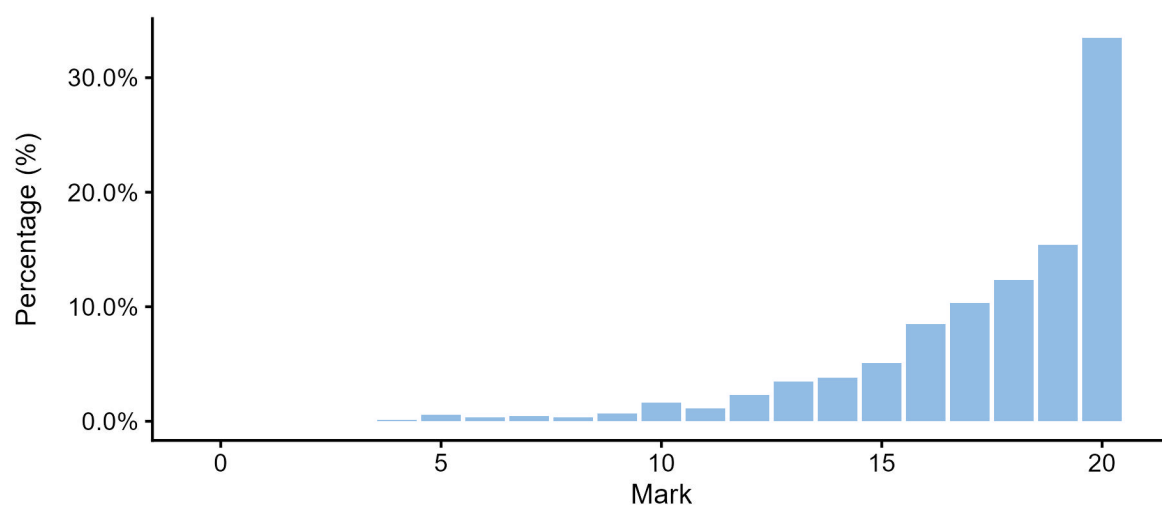
Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results

Total marks for IA

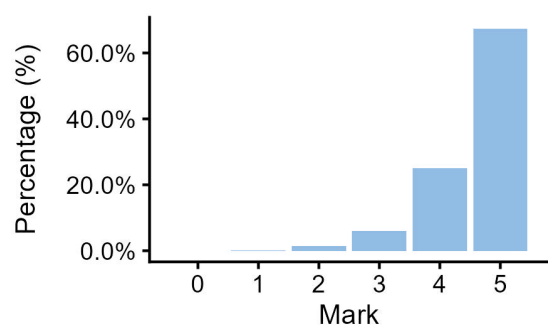


IA1 marks

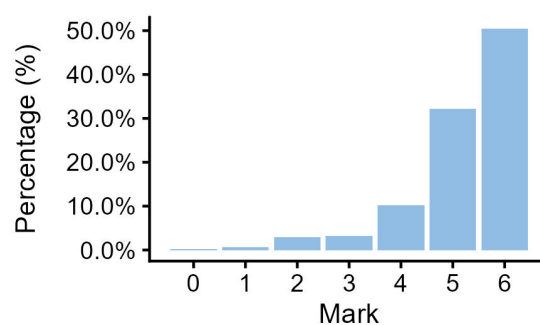
IA1 total



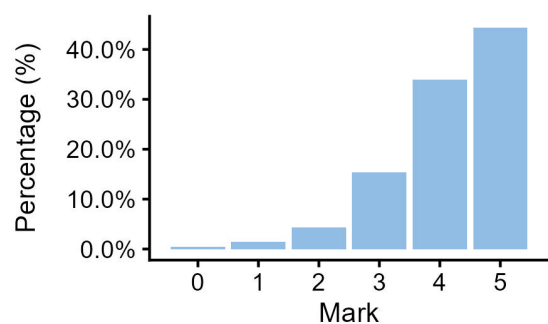
IA1 Criterion: Understanding and analysis of literary texts



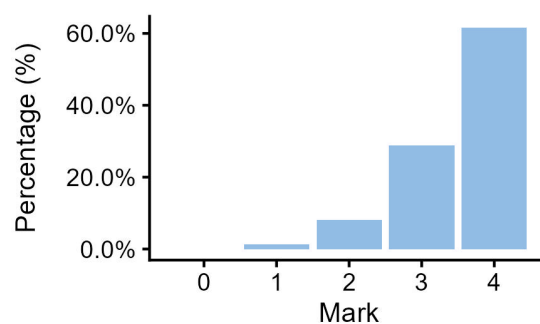
IA1 Criterion: Understanding and application of theories



IA1 Criterion: Evaluation and synthesis

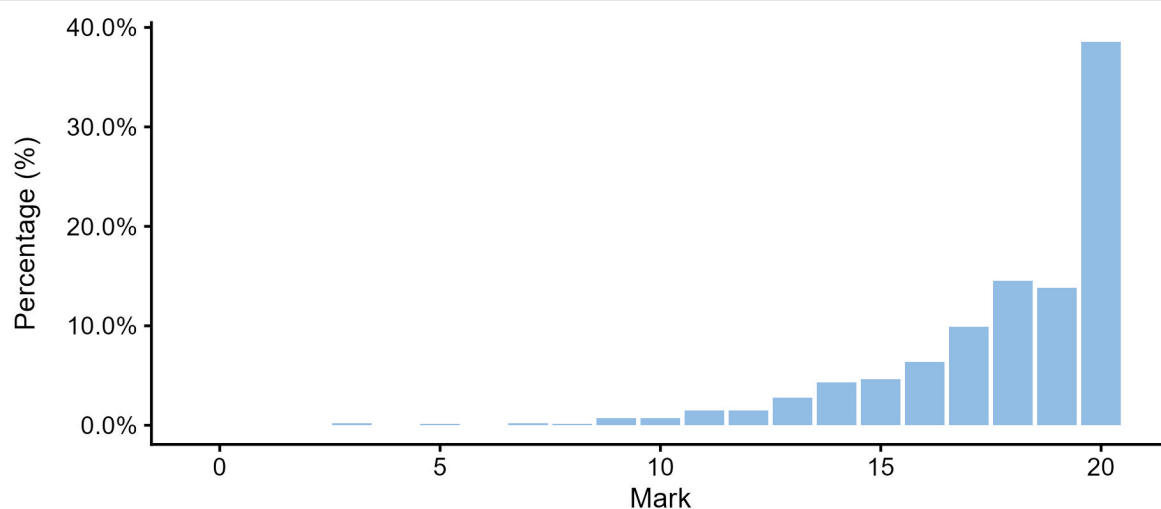


IA1 Criterion: Controlling textual features and conventions

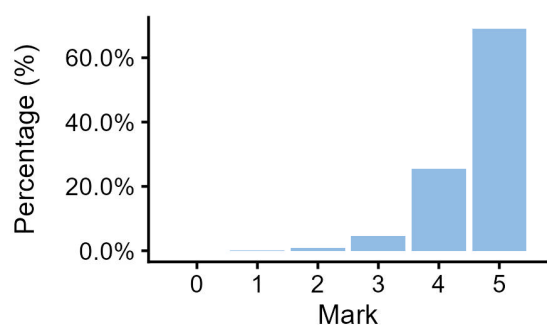


IA2 marks

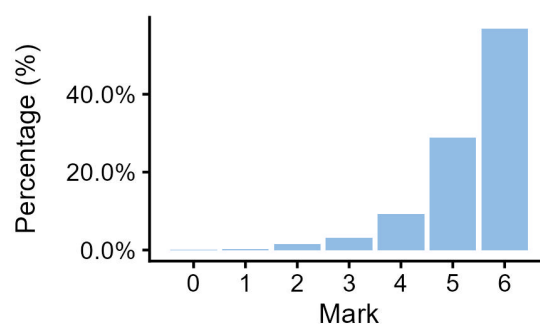
IA2 total



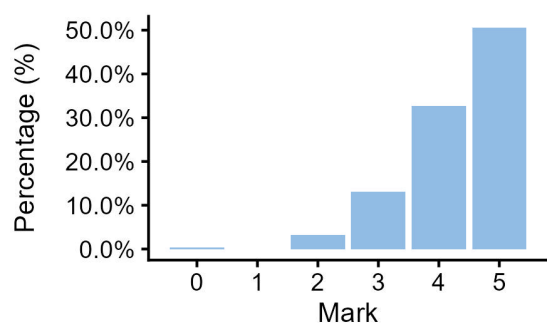
IA2 Criterion: Understanding and analysis of literary texts



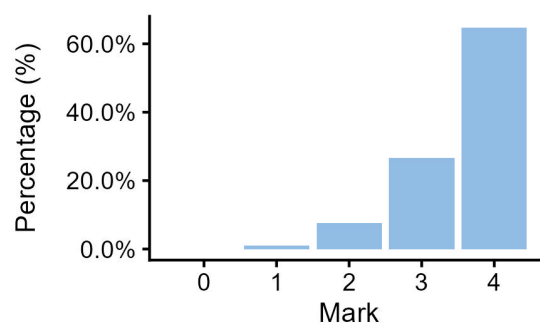
IA2 Criterion: Understanding and application of theories



IA2 Criterion: Evaluation and synthesis

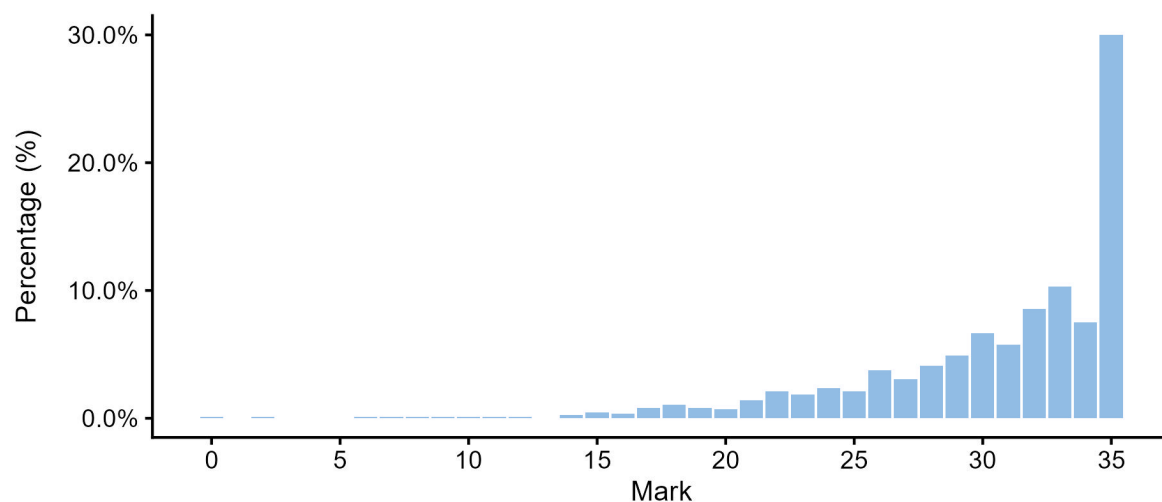


IA2 Criterion: Controlling textual features and conventions

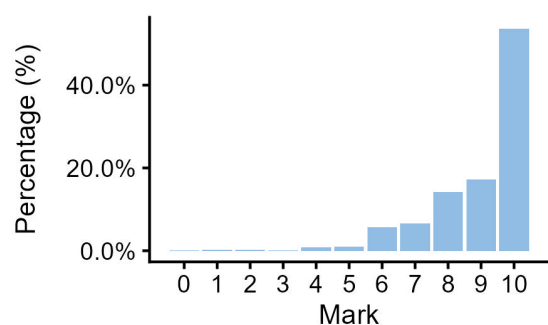


IA3 marks

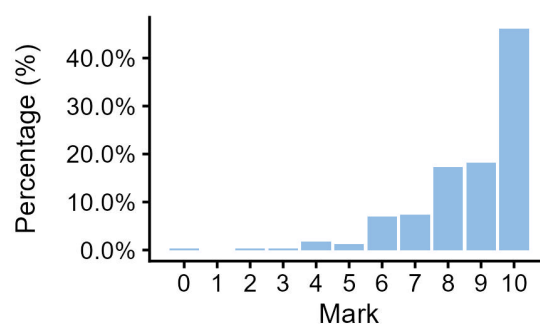
IA3 total



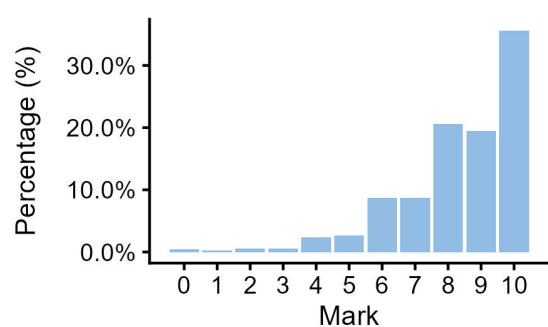
IA3 Criterion: Understanding and analysis of literary texts



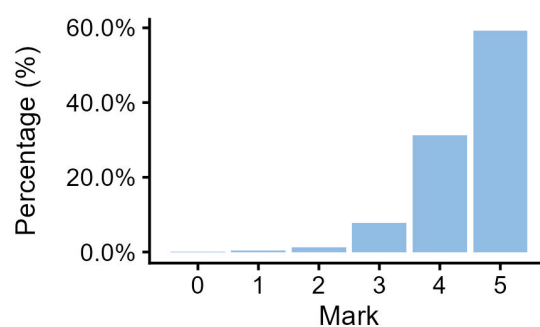
IA3 Criterion: Understanding and application of theories



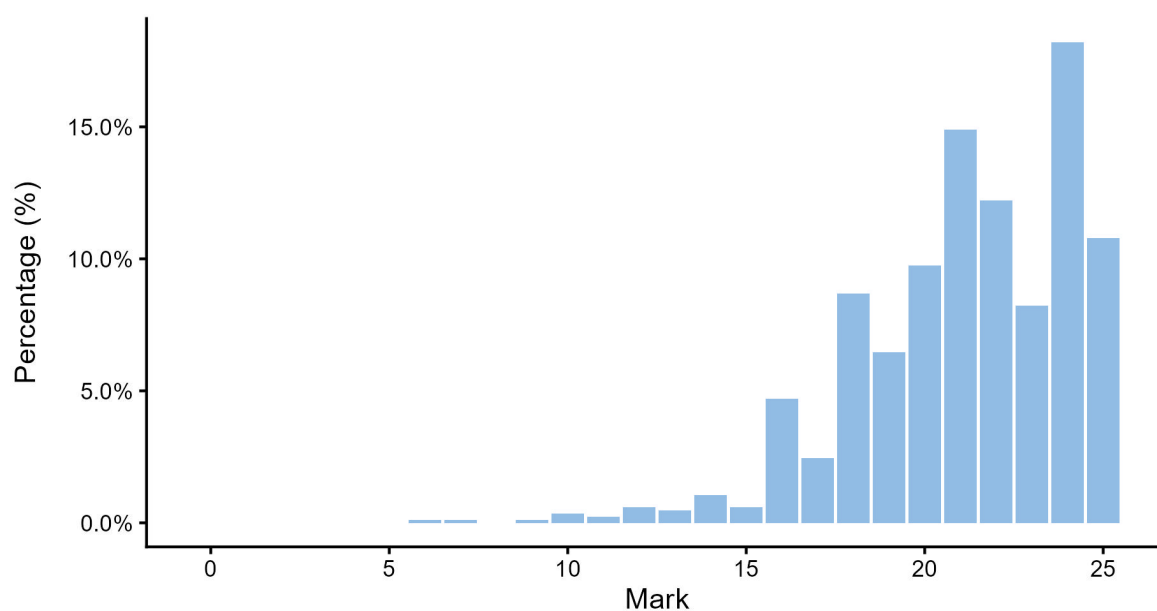
IA3 Criterion: Evaluation and synthesis



IA3 Criterion: Controlling textual features and conventions

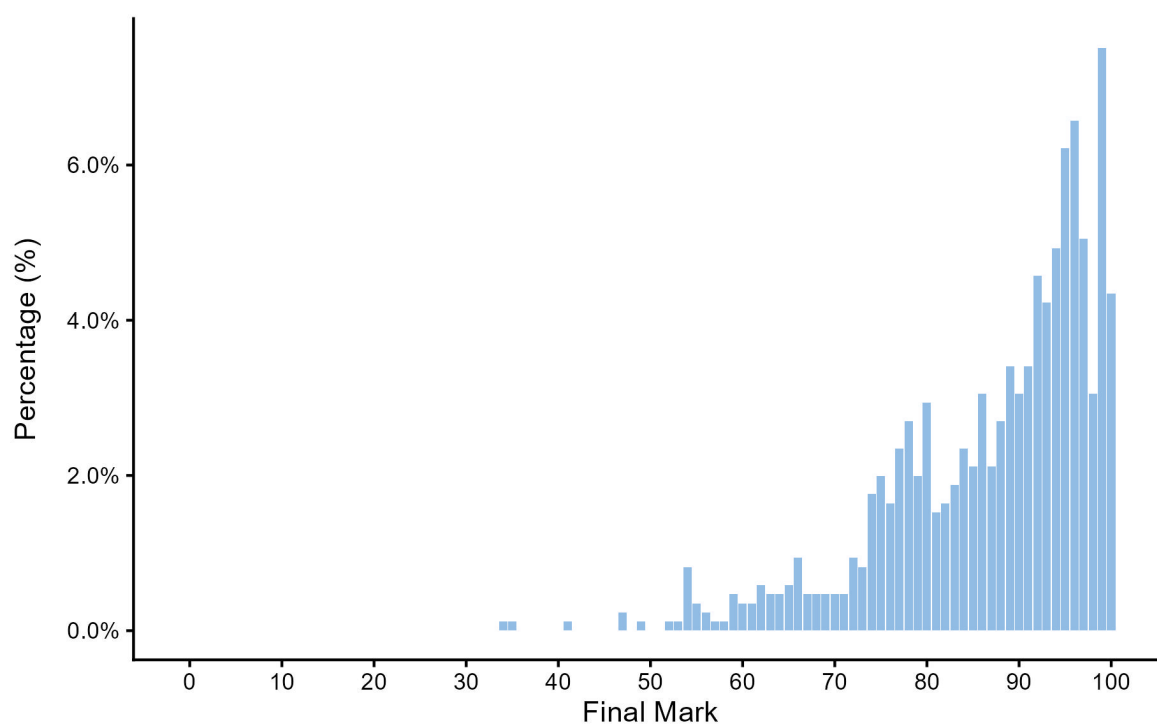


External assessment (EA) marks



Final subject results

Final marks for IA and EA



Grade boundaries

The grade boundaries are determined using a process to compare results on a numeric scale to the reporting standards.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Marks achieved	100–85	84–65	64–43	42–17	16–0

Distribution of standards

Number of students who achieved each standard across the state.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Number of students	565	242	42	3	0
Percentage of students	66.31	28.40	4.93	0.35	0.00

Internal assessment



This information and advice relate to the assessment design and assessment decisions for each IA in Units 3 and 4. These instruments have undergone quality assurance processes informed by the attributes of quality assessment (validity, accessibility and reliability).

Endorsement

Endorsement is the quality assurance process based on the attributes of validity and accessibility. These attributes are categorised further as priorities for assessment, and each priority can be further broken down into assessment practices.

Data presented in the Assessment design section identifies the reasons why IA instruments were not endorsed at Application 1, by the priority for assessment. An IA may have been identified more than once for a priority for assessment, e.g. it may have demonstrated a misalignment to both the subject matter and the assessment objective/s.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0*, Section 9.5.

Percentage of instruments endorsed in Application 1

Internal assessment	IA1	IA2	IA3
Number of instruments	79	79	81
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	89	90	85

Confirmation

Confirmation is the quality assurance process based on the attribute of reliability. The QCAA uses provisional criterion marks determined by teachers to identify the samples of student responses that schools are required to submit for confirmation.

Confirmation samples are representative of the school's decisions about the quality of student work in relation to the instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG) and are used to make decisions about the cohort's results.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0*, Section 9.6.

The following table includes the percentage agreement between the provisional marks and confirmed marks by assessment instrument. The Assessment decisions section for each assessment instrument identifies the agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks by criterion.

Number of samples reviewed and percentage agreement

IA	Number of schools	Number of samples requested	Number of additional samples requested	Percentage agreement with provisional marks
1	79	501	3	96.20
2	79	498	0	93.67
3	79	490	0	98.73

Internal assessment 1 (IA1)



Extended response — reading and defence (20%)

The extended response focuses on applying particular aspects of either the reader-centred or author-centred theoretical approach to a text to produce a reading and an accompanying defence. In a reading, students make meaning of a literary text by applying interpretive strategies associated with a particular theoretical approach. In a defence, students analyse the reading they have produced, applying and evaluating aspects and strategies of the theoretical approach and explaining how the theoretical approach used has allowed them to make meaning of the text in particular ways.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Alignment	6
Authentication	0
Authenticity	1
Item construction	2
Scope and scale	0

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- specified a clear audience and provided a description of the publication to give a context for students to achieve Assessment objectives 6 and 7. For instance, 'the reading and defence you produce in response to this task will be published in the literary magazine *Reading Theory*, which has an audience of adult readers who are conversant with and interested in contemporary theory about literature'
- used syllabus specifications to direct students to complete all aspects of the task in the expected response genre, e.g. 'analyse, in the reading, how the genre, structure and textual features of your selected text support your interpretation'
- provided scaffolding that explained in accessible language how to achieve the assessment objectives. For instance, 'construct your defence by making direct and indirect reference to your reading, and deliberately explain these references through the reading practices and aspects of the theoretical approach that underpin them'
- provided chronological steps for completing the task that offered more than a verbatim list of the assessment objectives. Scaffolding or 'to complete this task' sections should specify steps for completing both a reading and a defence that make clear how to address the assessment objectives.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- avoid scaffolding that is not a repeat or rewording of the task instructions
- provide opportunities for students to engage authentically with the task by allowing them to choose the text or choose from a range of texts
- specify the purpose of a reading and use the cognitions to make clear the connection between the genre of the task and the assessment objectives, e.g. a reading is an interpretation that is reached through the analysis of the genre, structure and textual features and the application of aspects of theory
- align with the language of the syllabus and not mislead students when providing a context statement for the writing, e.g. do not redefine the genre of a reading as a 'critically reflective review' or 'film critique or review'.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Bias avoidance	0
Language	1
Layout	0
Transparency	1

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- used subject-specific vocabulary to reflect syllabus specifications to help students achieve Assessment objective 6, e.g. auteur, aspects of theory, close reading, author-centred, reader-centred
- specified the use of first-person as a convention specific to the academic genres of readings and defences
- provided scaffolding to familiarise students with the unfamiliar genres of readings and defences, including instructions to provide direct and indirect quotes from the complex literary text in the reading, and direct and indirect quotes from the reading and the applied theories in the defence using in-text citations as necessary.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- use unambiguous language, e.g. do not use interpretation and thesis interchangeably
- use error-free language and accurate grammar to provide clear instructions
- manipulate layout so that clear instructions are provided with the relevant cognitions for both the reading and defence in each section
- avoid template scaffolding that specifies the content and order of paragraphs in the reading and/or defence.

Additional advice

When developing an assessment instrument for this IA, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- The ISMG for Assessment objective 5 has been revised to ‘analyse, in the reading, how the genre, structure and/or textual features of the selected complex literary text support a valid interpretation’. This may change the way scaffolding is worded to provide students with clear steps to achieve task specifications.
- The revised conditions now require word length of ‘up to 2,000 words’.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Understanding and analysis of literary texts	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	Understanding and application of theories	97.47	0.00	1.27	1.27
3	Evaluation and synthesis	97.47	0.00	1.27	1.27
4	Controlling textual features and conventions	97.47	0.00	2.53	0.00

Effective practices

Reliable judgments were made using the ISMG for this IA when:

- for the Understanding and analysis of literary texts criterion, judgments for the 5-mark performance level were matched to readings with a synthesised overall interpretation about the text’s meaning. This conclusion, usually a thesis statement, was then developed through analysis of specific genre, structure and textual features, and connected to aspects of the author or reader. Discerning responses used connections to the author or reader to support the primary purpose of analysing the literary text. They included varied and specific direct evidence from the text to support interpretations
- for the Understanding and application of theory criterion, judgments for the 6-mark performance level were matched to
 - readings with interpretive strategies common to the reader-centred or author-centred approaches, providing opportunities to quote parts of the reading and examine the theoretical underpinnings. For instance

- for the author-centred approach, readings considered how the text's meaning is deepened through awareness of the author's biography, body of work, sociohistorical context, or statements they have made about their own work, suggesting their intentions
- for the reader-centred approach, readings considered how the text's meaning is deepened through the student's own life experiences, sociocultural context, intertextual understanding or political beliefs. Effective reader-centred readings were written in first-person
- defences that used specific theoretical concepts to identify the theory underpinning the reading's interpretive strategies. Discerning responses selected relevant theoretical concepts to develop a theorised examination of the reading. Common theoretical concepts that were effectively applied included
 - for the author-centred approach: intentionality and intentional fallacy, idioculture, authoredness, author functions, implied author, auteur theory, and collaboration/multiple authorship
 - for the reader-centred approach: transactional theory, identity and subjective criticism, gaps, horizon of expectations, interpretive communities, intertextuality, and implied reader
- for the Evaluation and synthesis criterion, judgments for the 5-mark performance level were matched to defences that analysed and critiqued the author-centred or reader-centred approach to interpretation. Strong defences synthesised their evaluation of the approach into a thesis statement that drew a conclusion about its strengths and/or limitations. This thesis was then developed through further evaluation of the theory and reading practices that underpinned the reading. For instance
 - in the author-centred approach, a defence may conclude that the approach's reliance on evidence external to the text provided the reader with a sense of interpretive closure but also narrowed the text's possible meanings. This could then be further explored through application of relevant theoretical concepts such as the 'Author God' and biography, by aligning quotes from the reading to theoretical citations and evaluating the impact of these interpretive strategies on the construction of meaning
 - in the reader-centred approach, a defence may conclude that the interpretive freedom afforded by the approach allowed for highly personalised and emotional responses, but these drifted from the text towards an overemphasis on self-analysis. This could then be developed through application of related theoretical concepts such as re-symbolisation and psychological perspectives, aligning reading quotes to theory and critiquing the strengths and limitations of these practices.

Practices to strengthen

To further ensure reliable judgments are made using the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- for the Understanding and application of theory criterion at performance levels 5 and 6
 - readings should demonstrate interpretive strategies associated with author-centred or reader-centred theoretical approaches. It is important that connections to the reader or author are made within the reading rather than the defence. Theoretical terminology should not be used in the reading. For instance
 - an author-centred reading may analyse how particular genre features are inspired by other texts but reconfigured by this author to create meaning. Textual evidence and analysis can be aligned with statements from the author about their inspirations. An example of this might be a reading of Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, analysing how genre

features such as character narration emphasise a nostalgia for the rich lives of ordinary people that have been hidden by time and war. This analysis could then be tied to statements Anderson made about Stefan Zweig's writings and how they inspired these aspects of the text

- a reader-centred reading may analyse how specific genre features connect personally with the reader to create meaning. Textual evidence and analysis can be aligned to moments in the reader's life. It is important that students use their own first-person perspective and background when making these links, rather than referring to a hypothetical 'reader'. An example of this might be a reading of *The Grand Budapest Hotel* that connects with the coming-of-age aspects of Zero's character. Analysis of these aspects could be tied to the reader's experience with first jobs or mentors
- readings and defences that are unambiguously written within an author-centred or reader-centred approach. Some responses featured readings that analysed the literary text by applying text-centred or world-context-centred theoretical approaches, such as Postmodernism or Feminism, and then examined these theories in the defence. This limited their ability to demonstrate an understanding and application of approaches specified for this assessment instrument. While an author or reader may adopt a stylistic or ideological stance, these should be explored in author-centred or reader-centred approaches, e.g. Greta Gerwig's feminist ideologies could be discussed when analysing the film, *Barbie*. This could later be examined in the defence through the application and evaluation of Attridge's idioculture, an author-centred theoretical concept that explains how authors are influenced by sociopolitical contexts. Directly applying feminist theory in the reading or defence should be avoided as it does not align to the author-centred approach
- for the Evaluation and synthesis criterion at performance levels 4 and 5, there should be evidence of defences that analyse and evaluate the reading, rather than the literary text. Defences should focus on metacognitive analysis of how the connections between the author or reader with the literary text are underpinned by theoretical concepts. As the defence is a 'theorised examination' of the reading, it should not attempt to make new connections to the author or reader. Instead, it should explore how these author-centred or reader-centred interpretive strategies strengthen, limit or impact meaning. In constructing this application and evaluation, a defence would use quotations from the reading, aligning them to cited theory. For instance
 - an author-centred defence might analyse how a reading's discussion of Stefan Zweig's influence on Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* reflected Bennett's theory that collaboration or 'multiple authorship' should be considered as more central to literary criticism. This can then be evaluated by discussing how not limiting the reading to one solitary author enabled the reading to consider historical context, deepening conclusions drawn about the power of nostalgia
 - a reader-centred defence might analyse how a reading's discussion of personal growth and milestones that align with Zero's character reflect Rosenblatt's theory of transactional reading, where the experiences of the reader influence what is selected from the text as meaningful. This can then be evaluated by discussing how an emphasis on one character narrowed interpretations of the text towards the importance of milestones when growing up, rather than other possible alternatives
- for the Controlling textual features and conventions criterion at the performance level of 4, there should be evidence of two distinct, separate responses (reading and defence) that use cohesive devices (e.g. thesis statements) and patterns (e.g. arguments) to emphasise and connect ideas. In the defence, theoretical terminology should be selected for relevance, with correct citation and referencing conventions. Responses with the presence of some errors or lapses in expression may still demonstrate discerning and effective performance levels.

Additional advice

It is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- Assessment objective 5 has been revised: Analyse, in the reading, how the genre, structure and/or language features of the selected complex literary text support a valid interpretation. The addition of 'and/or' to this objective allows flexibility for the type of evidence a student might use in their reading. Where relevant, students should use direct evidence to support more precise analysis of the literary text.

Samples

The following excerpts demonstrate precise analysis of the literary text. All analysis is generated through the author-centred approach, as conclusions drawn about the meaning of the text are informed by author-text connections, e.g. the need for control is analysed in the character of Brandon, and connected with specific Hitchcock biographical details. This analysis is synthesised through an overall interpretation, outlined in the conclusion.

The defence paragraphs demonstrate a precise application of a range of theoretical concepts, producing a theorised examination of the reading. The defence references precise moments in the reading that demonstrate the reading practices underpinned by the theory discussed. The implications of these practices are evaluated specifically, e.g. the extent to which the author's name influences the interpretation is precisely discussed. The conclusion synthesises this evaluation into an overall appraisal of the theoretical approach.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Identically, the murderer's and Hitchcock express their desire of supreme charge by stating that in some way, working in their craft is 'divine-like.' Although there are no sources to the claim, Hitchcock is widely accredited to the quote that "in feature films, the director is God." This public notion has clearly evolved from his other various statements and philosophy and use of 'pure cinema,' in which emphasized the power of visual storytelling over dialogue, affirming director's ability to craft meaning through images alone (Film Theory Organisation, 2014). Hitchcock's belief in the director's role as a God is reinforced by his authoritative attitude concerning his craft through the thorough detail, much like a god-figure illustrating a narrative. Brandon shares a similar sentiment, expressed when Rupert during his confrontation asks, "Did you think you were God, Brandon?" (*Rope*, 1948). The similarity of Brandon's symbolic gestures and Hitchcock's repeated presence signalled, and how both recognise themselves and their work to be of God, show a parallel between the director and his characters assertion in their intellectual and artistic superiority and dominance.

Hitchcock's tyrannical rein extends additionally to the treatment of his actors, labelling actors as cattle and "should be treated like such" (Holliday, 1941, p.19-20). This distorted ethics translates into his behaviour during the production of *39 Steps* (1935), where actors Madeleine Carroll and Robert Donat were physically restrained into handcuffs for the entire day of shooting to ensure a genuine hatred was elicited from their performance (Holliday, 1941, p.19-20). His approach effectively stripped actors of their own interpretative agency, making them instruments in his definitive design. Through this manipulation by using unprincipled means, Hitchcock forcibly removes the capacity of invention and creation from the actors that play in his work because of his austere and fascistic hands-on control. This attitude is seen in how Brandon assumes the directorial role in the relationship with him and Philip. Brandon's theatrical preciseness contrasts with Philip's compelled complicity to the situation, duplicating the environment Hitchcock creates, as Philip's loss of agency is enacted in the same way Hitchcock coerces his actors.

Excerpt 2

Barthes' theory is additionally limited in my reading, as its author-centred approach does not account the intertextual context and history of *Rope*'s narrative. Barthes argues "the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings (...)" (Barthes, 1969, p.146), entailing that intertextuality allows an extension of meaning that can be made, as it comes not from the singular voice of the author, but the ongoing dialogue that each text engages in, indicating that writing is not a product of the author, but an assemblage of texts. The ideas in *Rope* are not from one text, but from its original play of *Rope's End* (Hamilton, 1929), and the real murders inspired by it done by Leopold and Loeb. Moreover, the text, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 1892), which originally introduces the theory of the Übermensch, of which one is an ideal superior being that rises above to create their own values. All these texts contribute to the current discussion regarding authority, and therefore the approach I chose of Hitchcock as the centre focus on how *Rope* is a parallel to him is limited due to the numerous works and other authors that contribute to the overall meaning-making done by the reader.

Foucault's conception of the 'author function' further illustrates Hitchcock's role in shaping *Rope*'s reception. The terms of the author function are that it is "the manner in which a text apparently points to [the author] who is outside and precedes it" (Foucault, 1977 p.125). This theoretical framework suggests that an author's name influences how a text is ultimately received, through its characteristics, quality, and features of its text, thus referred to as classification, valuation, and attribution.

The author function of classification is of most use in my reading, referring to how "a single name implies the relationship of homogeneity, filiation, reciprocal explanation, authentication, or of common utilization were established among them" (Foucault, 1977, p.123). A Hitchcockian film has developed into a recognisable genre, with the use of suspense, themes of murder and guilt, and camera work to create a voyeur-like watching experience, and similarly many of Hitchcock's films are given the title of 'pure cinema' due to his specific film techniques (Wilshire, 2009). In reference to the casting of James Stewart as Rupert additionally fulfills Foucault's author function, as his 'classification' of an author is his brand of an archetype that epitomizes the ideal principled civilian (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025).

The system of valuation and attribution are utilised the least in my reading, however the reference to the appraisal of Hitchcock's highly valued work and how his reputation shapes perspectives of the audiences are clearly referenced when talking about his procedure in ensuring audience's watch the entirety of *Psycho* (1960). Moreover, the field of discourse created through the contradiction of *Rope*'s message and Hitchcock's tyrannical behaviour builds on the Foucauldian definition of the author's role, where ideas surrounding authorship come into question. With the intertextuality stated previously, it allows for a varied impression and view that any Nietzsche-inspired work may create for the readers/audience.

Excerpt 2 cont.

My reading thus follows Michel Foucault's Author Function more than Roland Barthes' *Death of the Author*, due to the previously mentioned way of the flaws of an author-centred approach. *Rope* displays the tension between authorial intention and audience reception. Through the theory framework, we can understand Hitchcock's influence does not singularly define the texts meaning, but rather the dynamic interplay between the filmmaker, text, and its audience.

References

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Internal assessment 2 (IA2)



Extended response — complex transformation and defence (20%)

Students select a literary text suited to the demands of the assessment instrument (and different from the text selected for internal assessment 1). They select and apply aspects and strategies from text-centred and world-context-centred theoretical approaches to intervene in this selected base text, or part of the text, to create a complex transformation. In a complex transformation, the rewritten text invites alternative and/or resistant readings other than those the base text seems to invite. Alternative and resistant readings require students to move beyond merely inverting the base text's ideologies. Transformations must relate to repositioning the reader in a purposeful way and must be theoretically defensible.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Alignment	7
Authentication	0
Authenticity	1
Item construction	0
Scope and scale	2

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- prompted students to address the subversive requirements of the task by specifying that a complex transformation 'move[s] beyond merely inverting the base text's ideologies'
- used scaffolding to provide instructions that clarify the way cognitions are achieved. For instance, directing students to address Assessment objective 8 by 'explaining how you applied text-centred and world-context-centred theoretical approaches to re-write your selected base text and re-position your audience — being specific about how the theory both shaped and supported the "ideological shift" in your transformation'
- specified the need for a balance between an exploration of the base text and explanation of the complex transformation, which guides the students to address the specificities of the assessment objectives, e.g. the defence should deliver a balanced analysis of the genre, structural and textual features, with supporting evidence, from both the base text and the complex transformation

- provided instructions to explain how synthesis is achieved in consideration of the multiple parts of the task, e.g. support your evaluation by synthesising the analysed evidence from the base text and complex transformation, and aligning this analysis to aspects of theory.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- provide a clear audience for the defence to allow students to address Assessment objectives 6 and 7, e.g. you have been invited to present a theoretical defence of your complex transformation of a literary text at the English Teacher's Association of Queensland's senior student *Reimagining Readings* symposium
- cue students to evaluate the alternative reading position the complex transformation offers when exploring the ways the theories have been used to draw out the resistant reading of the base text, e.g. detail the choices you made and why, making explicit your theoretical underpinnings, and explaining how the transformation ideologically repositions the reader
- avoid instructions that direct students beyond the scope and scale of the task. For instance, an instruction to 'evaluate the multiple theorists that discuss text-centred and world-context-centred theoretical approaches, considering which of these would best allow you to defend the textual choices in your text' is beyond the scope of syllabus specifications, as students are only required to evaluate the theory used to determine invited and alternate readings, and used to reposition audiences
- provide varied options for the base text to allow for unique student responses and 'provide opportunities for students to work independently on intellectually challenging tasks' (Syllabus section 1.1.1), e.g. self-selected song, poem, short fiction text, myth, legend, folk or fairy-tale.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Bias avoidance	0
Language	0
Layout	0
Transparency	0

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- used the stimulus or resources to define 'complex transformation' using Pope or Johnson's work as a reference, e.g. a complex transformation 'requires writers to rewrite texts that reposition readers from the invited reading of the base text to an oppositional or resistant reading in the transformation' (Johnson G. 1999. Multiple readings of a picture book. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 22(3), 176–191)
- specified that the complex transformation is not the focus of the task. It is simply the catalyst for the theorised defence.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- highlight that in a spoken response, pace, pronunciation and modulation contribute to the mode-appropriate textual features of Assessment objective 7.
- provide clear and separate instructions for each aspect of the task, breaking down the steps required before the defence can be written, such as
 - identify the gaps and silences in the base text and how these contribute to the dominant reading of the base text
 - identify the generic, structural, and language features in the base text that are used to position the reader to take up the invited reading
 - identify the slippages and contradictions in the base text that make space for your resistant reading
 - determine the world-context-centred theory most relevant to your resistant reading.

Additional advice

When developing an assessment instrument for this IA, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- The ISMG for Assessment objective 5 has been revised to ‘analyse how the genre, structure and/or textual features of the base text and complex transformation support valid interpretations’. This may change the way scaffolding is worded to provide students with clear steps to perform an invited reading and resistant reading and achieve task specifications.
- The syllabus now requires that the response for the defence should be
 - spoken (live or recorded) — up to 10 minutes, or signed equivalent, or
 - multimodal (at least two modes delivered at the same time) — up to 10 minutes.
- The ISMG for assessment objective 7 has been revised to ‘use mode-appropriate textual features to create an extended theorised, spoken analytical response for an academic audience’. Students are not required to be visible in a multimodal response and the task design can allow for a variety of presentation options including podcasts or vodcasts.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Understanding and analysis of literary texts	96.20	3.80	0.00	0.00

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
2	Understanding and application of theories	94.94	5.06	0.00	0.00
3	Evaluation and synthesis	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4	Controlling textual features and conventions	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Effective practices

Reliable judgments were made using the ISMG for this IA when:

- for the Understanding and analysis of literary texts criterion, judgments for the 5-mark performance level were matched to defences that
 - synthesised an overall interpretation about the base text's meaning through the lens of a world-context-centred theoretical approach. This interpretation — usually communicated in the introduction — summarised the base text's underlying ideology and provided a resistant perspective informed by the world-context-centred approach. For instance, an interpretation of the song *Hard Hearted Hannah* (Yellen et al., 1924) through the lens of feminist criticism is that the lyrics vilify female agency by representing the rejection of male attention as 'cold' and 'mean'
 - used specific evidence from the base text to analyse its ideologies, making discerning comparisons to the complex transformation. This allowed defences to clearly analyse how different interpretations had been prompted by each text, with equal analysis. For instance in the lyrics to *Hard Hearted Hannah*, the lines 'But here's what I don't understand/They got a gal there, a pretty gal there/Who's colder than an Arctic storm' implies that women who are deemed attractive but don't appease the male gaze are incomprehensible and potentially dangerous. This could be compared with how the transformation reworks lines through Hannah's perspective to read, 'Their eyes turned colder than an Arctic storm when I simply said I'd prefer not to dance. I understood why.' Analysing how the connotative changes to words reposition readers provides evidence for this criterion and Assessment objectives 9 and 10 in Evaluation and synthesis
- for the Understanding and application of theory criterion, judgments for the 6-mark performance level were matched to defences that applied specific theoretical concepts, including
 - text-centred concepts from structuralism, semiotics, linguistics, narratology or post-structuralism that allowed for precise application to direct evidence from the base text and transformation. These responses considered semiotic denotations and connotations, or pinpointed moments of aporia in the base text that could be exploited to reposition readers. If binary oppositions were used, they were specifically applied. For instance, the patriarchal hierarchy within *Hard Hearted Hannah*'s gender binary could be tied to specific evidence such as the term 'brother' implying a patriarchal camaraderie from the writer that collectively ostracises women who don't conform, in comparison to winter imagery that isolates Hannah as an outlier ('Can you imagine a woman as cold as Hannah?'). This could then be compared to the transformation, where the hierarchy is not naturalised but instead directly questioned by Hannah

- within the selected world-context-centred approach (e.g. feminism, Marxism, postcolonial criticism, ecocriticism or queer theory), relevant concepts that demonstrated more precise understanding of theory. Examples of specific feminist concepts that could be applied to *Hard Hearted Hannah* include gender performativity, male gaze, and Gilbert and Gubar's 'the mirror and the vamp'. These extend further than the broad aims of feminist criticism (e.g. combating misogyny), showing discerning understanding of theory
- for the Evaluation and synthesis criterion, judgments for the 5-mark performance level were matched to defences that purposefully compared the base text and the transformation. They stated how applied theory revealed issues in the base text and repositioned readers in the transformation. This evaluation and synthesis were more precise when comparing the base text and transformation with each theoretical concept, rather than larger sections that discussed each in isolation and then compared at the end of the defence. For instance, for *Hard Hearted Hannah*, a tightly synthesised cycle related to text-centred linguistic transitivity could apply the concept to agentive language in the base text such as 'She's a gal who loves to see men suffer' followed by the non-agentive 'they say'. This could explain how the base text influences readers to adopt the patriarchal bias against one woman. In the transformation, the transitive constructions could be manipulated to state 'They loved to see me suffer, calling me the Vamp of Savannah, because I didn't play by their rules. But they have names I won't forget'. By explaining how the concept of transitivity informed this analysis and change, the theory and the transformation can be precisely evaluated.

Practices to strengthen

To further ensure reliable judgments are made using the ISMG for this IA it is recommended that:

- for the Understanding and analysis of literary texts criterion at performance levels 4 and 5, there should be specific analysis of direct evidence from both the base text and complex transformation. Some responses using fairy tales and fables as base texts referred only to indirect evidence such as plot and character archetypes. This limited the ability for detailed analysis. In some cases, this was exacerbated when the response did not use a specific publication as their base text, referring instead to the generic storyline. Selecting shorter base texts (e.g. poems, song lyrics, picture books) can allow for targeted scope and scale
- for the Understanding and application of theory criterion at performance levels 5 and 6, there should be evidence of
 - transformations that reposition readers through detailed textual features. Some transformations consisted of a poster or slide with some pictures and brief slogans. In the 2026 syllabus, the length of the written or multimodal complex transformation is up to 800 words or 5 minutes, with no minimum. A very brief transformation, however, can limit opportunities for a defence to apply theory and evaluate reader repositioning. Interacting with different aspects of the base text (words, phrases, genre patterns, characterisation) allows for more varied evidence to be used when analysing the transformation. For instance, transformations might
 - change the denotations or connotations of specific signifiers in the base text to reposition readers
 - foreground a contradiction, double-standard or implicit issue the base text glossed over
 - allocate blame more specifically revealing the systemic reasons for the issue, compared to its normalisation in the base text
 - juxtapose privileged and marginalised voices within the base text through changes to narrators and/or perspectives

- defences that use world-context-centred and text-centred theoretical approaches equally. The world-context-centred approach provides the motivation for rewriting the base text, using theoretical concepts to analyse and challenge its key assumptions and values. Text-centred theoretical concepts provide further analytical methods to examine how the base text constructs particular representations of reality, positioning readers. Changes in the transformation informed by text-centred theory help to further demonstrate how language is crucial to reposition readers

For instance, after examining how feminist gender performativity and the male gaze operate within *Hard Hearted Hannah*, a response might further analyse the application of text-centred psychoanalytic theories such as ‘the Other’ and ‘lack’, examining how patriarchal ideologies are internalised within the psyche. These issues, latent within the base text but foregrounded in the transformation, can assist in repositioning readers by making them aware of the psychoanalytic toll caused by gendered hierarchies. This provides evidence of understanding of relationships among and within text-centred and world-context-centred theory (Assessment objective 3)

- for the Evaluation and synthesis criterion at performance level 5, there should be evidence of evaluation of the effectiveness of both the transformation in its ability to reposition readers to reject or challenge the base text and the theory in its ability to examine the base text and underpin interventions within the transformation. To further assist synthesis, theory should be relevant to the ideological motivation for resisting the base text and transforming it. Some responses applied multiple world-context-centred approaches without synthesising these into an overall interpretation of the base text and subsequent reason for intervening, instead forming isolated interpretations in different sections, e.g. Marxism, followed by Feminism. It is recommended to either use one world-context-centred approach or ensure that they are interrelated, benefiting synthesis and Assessment objective 3
- for the Textual features criterion at performance levels 3 and 4, there should be evidence of spoken genre conventions and mode-appropriate textual features that are suited to a formal academic audience. Recordings where a student reads the defence script aloud — without using other appropriate complementary features catering to an academic audience — may limit the ability to demonstrate ‘effective’ or ‘discerning’ descriptors. Suggested features of academic communication include using
 - a slideshow that complements the spoken defence by emphasising key points and using referencing conventions — similar to academic lectures and seminars
 - spoken/signed features such as intonation and emphasis, phrasing and pausing, audibility and clarity, volume and pace
 - non-verbal features such as facial expression, gesture, stance and movement.

Additional advice

It is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- Assessment Objective 7 has been revised: Use of mode-appropriate textual features to create desired effects for an academic audience. The addition of ‘mode-appropriate’ to this objective allows for flexibility in the ways to present the defence. While the defence may be spoken or multimodal, consideration should be given to how textual features communicate ideas appropriately to an academic audience. For instance, if the defence was delivered as a podcast (audio recording), the absence of visuals places greater emphasis on the need for tightly controlled vocal pacing, pitch, intonation and emphasis.

Samples

The following excerpts demonstrate a spoken defence that uses presentation skills and complementary features that aid academic communication and are well-chosen for the academic audience.

The accompanying defence script, alongside this video excerpt, further demonstrates precise and discerning analysis of the base text with purposeful comparisons made to the complex transformation. In this section, the response explains how text-centred theory has been applied to further challenge the base text's ideologies. The relationship between binaries and the overall Marxist criticism motivation is established, and used purposefully to challenge the base text and evaluate how the transformation has repositioned readers.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Defence

Written in 1887, Anton Chekov's *The Beggar* explores how labour changes one's circumstance. with the text following Skvortsov, the lawyer, as he teaches Lushkov, the beggar, how to work hard and get a better life.

In an invited reading, *The Beggar* promotes the following ideologies: 1. The Proletariats are miserable and inferior to the Bourgeoisie; and 2. hard work is always rewarded. This is because the text portrays the upper-class as being content, the lower-class as miserable, and laziness as causing misery, thus reinforcing a loaded binary where one's quality of life depends on class, and the ideological view that rewards, such as prosperity, depend on how hard you work.

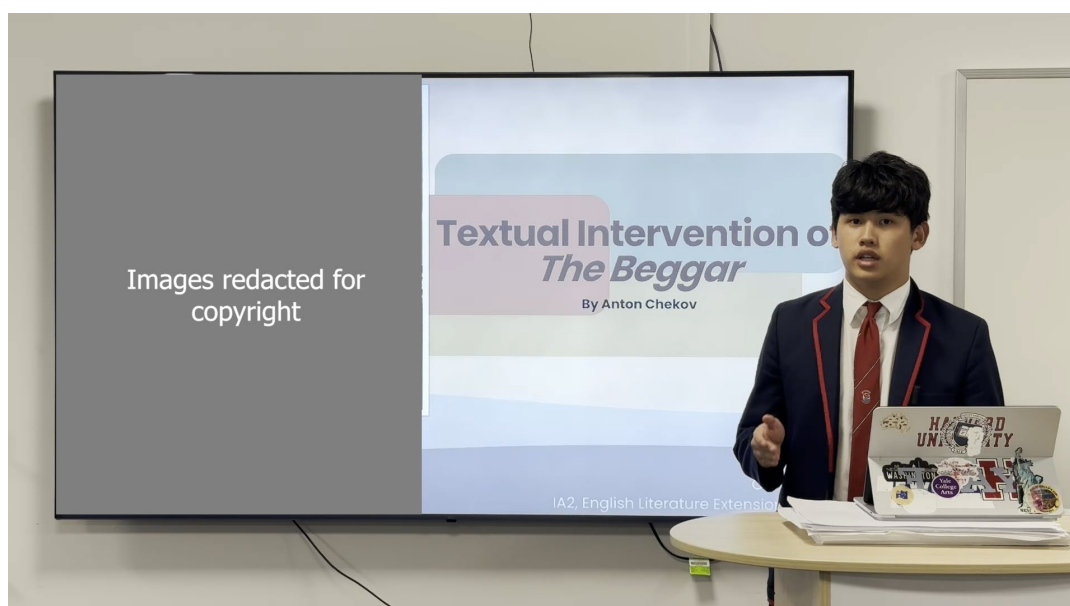
To understand how *The Beggar*'s textual features perpetuate this, I analysed the text under Deconstructionism, examining how 'all... units within the text operate to promote [this] invited reading' (Klages, 2006). For example, the language used to characterise Lushkov as a 'lazy, pampered, drunk', and Skvortsov as 'a Petersburg lawyer', operates on the pair's differences since 'language[solely consists of] ... differences without positive terms' (Derrida, 1982). Thus, it emphasises their 'disunity rather than [their] unity' (Barry, 2017) and the loaded binary is reinforced. Furthermore, Lushkov's character arc from 'ragged fellow' to having 'a lambskin collar' is driven by him working for Skvortsov, thereby advocating the view that labour always generates rewards.

However, upon the text's conclusion, it is revealed that Lushkov was changed through Olga's kindness, not his own hard work, and became content prior to becoming a Bourgeoisie. He says, "I never chopped a single log for you—she did it all!... [She] brought about a change in my soul". According to Deconstructionism, this is the moment of aporia where the text 'offer[ed] to contradict itself' (Derrida, 1993).

Excerpt 1 cont.

In response to this, I created a complex transformation that goes '*across the grain of the text*' (Pope, 1995), providing an alternative reading on the Proletariat's quality of life and whether labour generates rewards. This is based on the Deconstructionist notion that '*a text can be read as saying something... contradictory to [its supposed]... meaning*' (Cuddon, 2014). By developing a blog about fulfillment from Lushkov's perspective, my transformation analyses how all classes can be happy. Moreover, by recharacterising Lushkov as a content non-working man, my transformation challenges the ideology that hard work is rewarded. Therefore, my reading explores the moment of aporia's implications and its '*impasses of meaning where [the text]... contradict[ed] itself*' (Eagleton, 1996).

According to Jacques Derrida, binaries '*are... little hierarchies... [where] one term in the pair is [considered]... privileged [and]... superior*' (Derrida in Tyson, 2006). In *The Beggar*, a binary exists between the superior Bourgeoisie and inferior Proletariat, with Skvortsov being content whereas Lushkov is miserable. According to Lois Tyson, this binary '*equates one's value [and joy]...with the social class [they]... belong[to]*' (Tyson, 2006). To challenge this, I placed the '*binary 'under erasure'[.] allowing the privileged term to remain in place but partially undermining it to... shift... the reader[s] positioning*' (Derrida in Pope, 1995). This was achieved by making both classes equally content, as shown through Lushkov blogging, '*I have found something that fulfills me*', thereby challenging the idea that only the Bourgeoisie can be happy. By doing so, my transformation does '*not simply... invert [the] hierarch[y]... but [instead] reopen[s] the play of differences around these terms*'. (Pope, 1995).

Excerpt 2

Video content: (2 min, 2 secs)

<https://youtu.be/p8vXrssRYQE>

Internal assessment 3 (IA3)



Extended response — academic research paper (35%)

Students explore different way/s of reading their selected complex literary text/s through the application of at least two theories or aspects of theories to produce an academic research paper. These theories may be drawn from different theoretical approaches, or from the same theoretical approach. The selected complex literary text/s must be different from those selected for internal assessment instruments 1 and 2. Students use these theoretical approaches to produce a close reading of at least one selected complex literary text and to explore a focus question. The focus question should allow them to evaluate how effective these theoretical approaches have been in exploring and producing the close reading. Students may use class time and their own time to develop a response.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Alignment	10
Authentication	0
Authenticity	1
Item construction	1
Scope and scale	4

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- described how to develop a focus question that will meet the demands of the task, e.g. if your focus question can be answered without theorised analysis (i.e. the answer is self-evident in the text), it is not complex enough
- suggested students use theorised terminology that relates to the theoretical approaches in the focus question, e.g. to what extent can an eco-critical reading of *The God of Small Things* demonstrate the relationship between post-colonial hybridity and the exploitation of environment?
- specified a syllabus explanation of a close reading to provide parameters for the task, e.g. 'one of the goals of this intense scrutiny of a text's characteristics is to understand how the stylistic and formal aspects of a work of literature contribute to meaning'

- provided scaffolding that made the evaluation process clear, e.g. explained how specific differences, similarities, or connections between the chosen theoretical approaches underpin specific interpretations of the text.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- use the syllabus language and specify the complex text/s selected without further qualifiers such as 'a well-regarded and suitable novel' or a 'novel from the canon of contemporary world literature'
- use precise language to ensure alignment with the syllabus specifications, e.g. the syllabus description of IA3 specifies that students apply at least two theories or aspects of theories. It is not a requirement that students apply two different theories to explore close readings of a complex literary text
- draw on the syllabus specifications when providing instruction to ensure the scope and scale of the task is maintained, e.g. asking students to consider the social, historical and cultural significance of the chosen text and its representations is beyond the specifications of the task and is only relevant with the application of certain theoretical approaches such as new historicism and cultural materialism
- allow students to independently select text/s, rather than provide a text selection list, to ensure unique responses and promote student agency.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions
Bias avoidance	0
Language	1
Layout	0
Transparency	1

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- used scaffolding to explain the steps required to complete the task, e.g. provided advice regarding how to select a complex literary text suitable for a theorised close reading
- provided scaffolding that specified sequential steps for task completion that explained processes required to achieve the cognition that moved beyond the verbatim replication of the assessment objectives
- prompted students to design a focus question that allowed them to evaluate their chosen theoretical approaches or aspects of theories.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- maintain key vocabulary across the task to ensure clarity, e.g. do not rename the genre of an 'academic research paper' as an 'academic article' as these are two different text types and require different generic conventions
- are grammatically error free to ensure instructions are clear
- use scaffolding that is sequential and provides chronological steps to achieve the tasks, e.g. avoid directing students to write the focus question before the consideration of theories. The theories need to inform the crafting and reworking of the focus questions.

Additional advice

When developing an assessment instrument for this IA, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- The ISMG for Assessment objective 5 has been revised to 'analyse the genre, structure and textual features of the selected complex literary text/s to support valid interpretations'. This may change the way scaffolding is worded to provide students with clear steps to perform a close theorised reading of the selected complex literary text/s.
- The revised conditions now allow 'up to 3,000 words'.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Understanding and analysis of literary texts	98.73	1.27	0.00	0.00
2	Understanding and application of theories	98.73	1.27	0.00	0.00
3	Evaluation and synthesis	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4	Controlling textual features and conventions	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Effective practices

Reliable judgments were made using the ISMG for this IA when:

- for the Understanding and analysis of literary texts criterion, judgments for the 9–10 performance level were matched to responses that analysed genre, structure or textual

features with frequent and varied direct evidence. This analysis was used to generate a close reading with interpretations that explored the focus question. Many effective responses used a perspective, concept or character to narrow the scope and scale of their focus question, which also allowed for in-depth textual analysis. For instance, a response analysing Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* with Ecocriticism and Psychoanalysis could develop a focus question that examines the symbolism of Alaska. By exploring this aspect of the text, the response can apply a range of theories in detail, making interpretations more discerning

- for the Understanding and application of theory criterion, judgments for the 9–10 performance level were matched to responses that
 - featured clear focus questions in their introductions. Effective focus questions
 - made the two theoretical approaches explicit
 - identified a focus area within the literary text to analyse, e.g. a theme, concept or character
 - were phrased as questions instead of statements
 - prompted opportunities for the response to evaluate the strengths, limitations or impact of the applied theory on generating interpretations
 - used either an open question format, e.g. 'Through the application of Ecocriticism and Psychoanalysis to *Into the Wild*, what can be revealed about the deeper meaning within the central symbol of Alaska?', or used a closed question format, e.g. 'Will the application of Ecocriticism and Psychoanalysis to *Into the Wild* reveal that the symbolism of Alaskan wilderness cannot be divorced from a human desire?' Closed focus questions with contentions like this can be strengthened with a follow-up question that considers consequences, effects, or how the selected theoretical approaches either complement or clash. For instance, 'If so, what is the impact of an anthropocentric view of nature that is tied to psychoanalytic fulfilment?'
 - explored the chosen theoretical approaches with detail and precision, applying a range of relevant theory quotations to direct evidence from the text. Many discerning responses explained the relationships between the theoretical approaches through sequencing analysis with cause-effect patterns. For instance, applying Laurence Coupe's ecocritical concept of the semiotic fallacy and its tension with the referential fallacy to how the Alaska Range is perceived in *Into the Wild* can then be linked to the psychoanalytic concepts of the symbolic order and desire. By explaining how the drive for the non-textual reference of pure wilderness ironically generates a stronger language-based symbolic order and objects of desire, this cause-effect sequencing can also assist with synthesis and evaluation, providing opportunities for cohesive links that evaluate how the theories work together or in tension to help answer the focus question
- For the Evaluation and synthesis criterion, judgments for the 9–10 performance level were matched to responses that referred to their focus questions in clear, systematic ways. These responses used the focus question as a cohesive thread to link arguments and ideas together, and evaluate theory across arguments, rather than in one concluding section. For instance, an evaluative conclusion to an argument exploring the above ecocritical-psychoanalytic example could be that the blend of theories reveals that a non-textual pure wilderness becomes a sublime object of desire ironically pushing subjects further away from experiencing nature as a referent. This helps to answer the focus question by explaining how anthropocentrism is pervasive and attempts to challenge it are impossible through a language system, but the struggle to do so reinforces psychoanalytic lack.

Practices to strengthen

To further ensure reliable judgments are made using the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- for the Understanding and application of theory criterion at performance levels 9–10, there should be evidence of two theory approaches (or aspects of these approaches) that have the depth and complexity necessary to produce a close theorised reading of the literary text. Some responses used author-centred or reader-centred approaches in broader ways, linking the text to author influence or reader context. Because these ideas were not specifically theorised, application of theory and the development of a close reading of the text were affected. Typically, world-context-centred and/or text-centred theoretical approaches are used more frequently in IA3 responses. If using author-centred or reader-centred approaches, however, it is important to consider that
 - some theories appropriate for IA1 might not be suited to producing a close theorised reading, as they focus more on the ways author or reader context drifts away from the ‘intense scrutiny of a text’s characteristics’ necessary for a close reading
 - adopting an author-centred or reader-centred lens to interpret a text is not the same as applying theory to produce a close reading. For instance, discussing links between the text and the author’s sociocultural context is not theorised unless it is specifically linked to relevant theory such as idioculture or New Historicism, and subsequently evaluated in relation to the focus question
- for the Evaluation and synthesis criterion at performance levels 9–10, there should be evidence of
 - a focus question that is used as a cohesive device across the research paper to synthesise arguments and ideas. Some responses only referred to the focus question once, used a predetermined thesis statement that did not require theory to be explored or answered, or used a question that did not prompt evaluation of how the two theories produce a close reading. As the focus question is part of Assessment objectives 2, 3, 4 and 8, it should be signposted clearly and referred to frequently

For instance, a thesis statement that poses that ‘an Eco-Marxist interpretation of *Into the Wild* reveals how materialism must be rejected to appreciate nature’ does not prompt evaluation. This could be reworked into a more specific question such as ‘To what extent do Ecocriticism and Marxism work together to reveal that appreciation of nature in *Into the Wild* is contingent on dissatisfaction with capitalism?’

- a focus question that asks if ‘a text can reflect the author’s experiences, through analysis of *Into the Wild* with author-centred and psychoanalytic theory’ does not necessitate theory to be explored or answered. This could be revised to ask ‘How will author-centred theory and psychoanalysis reveal that Jon Krakauer’s ego-ideal has shaped the representation of McCandless’ identity? What is the impact of the author’s textual presence on our understanding of McCandless’ psyche?’

When making judgments for this IA for the 2026 syllabus, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the ISMGs in the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- There are no significant changes between the 2020 and 2026 syllabus.

Samples

The following excerpts demonstrate an introduction that features a clear focus question that necessitates theory to be explored, and prompts specific evaluation. It signposts the two theoretical approaches used, and uses the concept of ‘truth’ to focus analysis of the literary text. This argument demonstrates synthesised analysis of *Shutter Island* through the application of the

postmodern concept of hyperreality with the psychoanalytic concept of The Real. There is analysis of specific textual features in the text, which are linked to relevant theory quotations. The relationship between the two theoretical concepts is made clear, as the hyperreality is disrupted by The Real. In the conclusion of this argument, the response refers to the focus question and evaluates how the theories work together to partially answer the focus question. Academic register and control of the patterns and conventions of a research paper are demonstrated in this excerpt.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Introduction

Martin Scorsese's 2010 film *Shutter Island* examines the elusive pursuit of truth in a reality forged by trauma, repression and deception. This pursuit, however, becomes unattainable in a reality perpetually manipulated by language, the institution, and the unconscious mind. In Jean Baudrillard's view "we live in a world where there is more and more information, and less meaning" (Heyd, 2000); a world in which truth is indistinguishable from illusion. Postmodernist criticism, which "questions the existence of universal truths and fixed meanings" (Lyotard, 1979), will be employed to analyse how truth in *Shutter Island* is established through Symbolic Order, the Real, and Superego. However, external distortions of truth cannot be disentangled from the workings of the psyche's defensive mechanisms.

This aligns with psychoanalytic criticism, which identifies that "the unconscious is structured like a language" (Lacan, cited in Barry, 2002) such that subjects suppress distressing realities to preserve psychological equilibrium. The characters use illusion to escape trauma, yet what resurfaces is not truth itself but a distorted echo of it. Simulated realities offer momentary refuge from trauma, however illusion collapses under what the psyche refuses to forget.

These two theories may thus be applied in tandem to interrogate the focus question:

Will postmodern and psychoanalytic criticism expose how truth simultaneously drives human desires while also repelling us away into abstract illusions? How does trauma create a warped perception of truth that is both an obsession and a burden?

Excerpt 2

Argument 2 — Illusion (Hyperreality and the Real)

As Teddy's investigation continues, *Shutter Island* constructs narrative excess and a network of signs that overwhelm logic. This reflects Baudrillard's concept of Hyperreality, an artificial reality that "does not aim to resemble reality but to improve upon it" (Calvete, 2019). This is evident when the nurse recounts Rachel Solando's disappearance with implausible clarity, "she made breakfast... she set the table for four... then walked out the door." The camera fixates on a meticulously ordered kitchen: a stable set with geometric symmetry, clean mugs, and no signs of struggle. This mirrors what Eco calls "the obsessive determination not to leave a single space that doesn't suggest something" (Calvete, 2019), as each visual in the space insists on meaning without clarity. The illusion deepens when Teddy discovers a picture of Rachel's supposedly drowned son, placed prominently on the mantle. It is frozen in time, untouched, as if curated for him. When he inquires, "Andrew Laeddis. Is he still here?" to which Chuck deflects "just a name he found in the intake logs", the narrative fragments. Baudrillard argues these signs "no longer succeed in referring properly to their original context" (Calvete, 2019), and here, the signifier "Laeddis" goes unresolved. During Teddy's interview with the patient Gloria, the performance persists. She delivers obscure, evasive replies, maintains eye contact and furtively writes 'RUN' in Teddy's notebook⁴. The word flashes in a close-up, underlined and bold, before the scene transitions without explanation. Baudrillard asserts that hyperreality emerges when one "relinquishes critical thinking" (Calvete, 2019), and at this point, Teddy follows symbols as if they hold intrinsic truth, ceasing to question inconsistencies. Rather than seeking reality, he immerses himself in an illusion more intense than the Real. This marks the emergence of Lacan's psychoanalytic concept of the Real. The Real is "what can neither be expressed by the Symbolic nor captured by the imaginary" (Gasparoni, 1996) and is what ruptures the surface of the Hyperreal. This rupture manifests in Teddy's dream of Dolores, who appears in their burned apartment, water streaming from her hair as she declares "you should've saved them, Teddy"⁵. This moment defies interpretation as it an emotional rupture rather than a clue. Lacan notes that "the symbolic fails in the effort to contain the Real" (Gasparoni, 1996) and here, Teddy's verbal defences falter as he cannot respond. The dreams visual grammar: reversed fire, dampened skin, burning rooms, convey what cannot be reiterated. When he wakes, gasping and clutching his temples, it is not rational fear, but the return of what Lacan identifies as "the truth that insists even in denial" (Gasparoni, 1996). This resurgence escalates when Dr. Cawley invokes Dolores's words: "Why are you all wet, baby?"; a phrase resurfacing in public speech. It's repetition by another signals not logic, but a psychic rupture that pieces the illusion. This moment affirms Lacan's claim that there are "no signifiers with which to speak or convey the Real" (Gasparoni, 1996). Teddy's body reacts viscerally because language fails. He is suspended between endless signs and what they cannot obtain. This argument helps to show how illusion replaces truth's symbolic excess, disclosing how Hyperreality absorbs the subject's desire for resolution. In doing so, it reveals that trauma resurfaces in moments language cannot obtain—exposing how the Real ruptures even the most crafted simulations of truth.

Excerpt 2 cont.

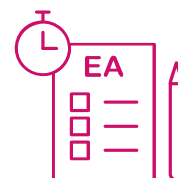
Argument 3 — Denial (Perfect Crime and Superego)

As Teddy descends further into Ashecliffe and uncovers more about the island's secrets, the narrative begins to erase reality itself. Baudrillard characterises the Perfect Crime as a simulated world "without criminal [and] without victim... where the secret is never exposed, for want of traces [of the Real]" (Rosa, 2008). The point is not the concealment of truth, but its total substitution. This is depicted when Teddy interrogates Dr. Cawley about Laeddis, "if he doesn't exist, why does he have a file?" Cawley's cold reply, "we have no patient by that name," is a systemic erasure and denial of the Real. Baudrillard argues, "each image must take from the reality of the world...behind each image...something that has disappeared" (Rosa, 2008), and this is reflected when Chuck casually recounts Rachel's disappearance: "It was raining. Maybe she slipped out." This is not an answer but rather an artificial placeholder mimicking resolution. The further Teddy probes, the more truth unravels. In Ward C, when he asks, "where is Laeddis?" he's answered only with "you're not allowed in here." With each moment, another trace vanishes, and another layer of reality is overwritten. Baudrillard cautions, "to rediscover the configuration of the secret is necessary to take away the accumulation of reality" (Rosa, 2008), and when faced with the Real, Teddy replaces its traces with Hyperreality, intensifying his persona and pursuing the hunt even more determinedly. Due to the vanishing traces caused by the perfect crime, it leads to an obsession with the Superego. Psychoanalytic theorist Freud describes the Superego as the moral force that "threatens the ego with internal punishment" (Longuenesse, 2012), a psychic structure that endures despite a fragmented reality. As Teddy fractures, his hallucinations erupt as Dolores whispers in the cave "you should have saved me." This isn't recall, but a return of judgment unfiltered by logic. In Freud's view "the Superego does not observe reality, it observes the ego" (Longuenesse, 2012), and Dolores' voice serves not as a ghost, but a moral echo. This is supported in Ward C, where George Noyce spits, "you're not investigating anything. You're a [redacted] rate in a maze."⁶ This line lands with psychic force, not just as a taunt, but an externalisation of Teddy's guilt through another's voice. Freud proposes that "the Superego functions even in the absence of wrongdoing" (Longuenesse, 2012), and here, it manufactures wrongdoing to keep Teddy imprisoned. Even in his outcry to Dr. Sheehan for the truth, shouting, "You're lying! He's real!"⁷ his desperation exposes the inverse; that the lie may be his own. Therefore, his punishment is internal and not imposed by the world. By investigating the erasure of reality through Baudrillard's Perfect Crime and Freud's Superego, a richer understanding of how trauma distorts truth into obsession and punishment, can be discovered. This combination of theories reveal how even without reality, the mind enforces judgment, unveiling how truth resurfaces not as clarity but internal torment.

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External assessment



External assessment (EA) is developed and marked by the QCAA. The external assessment for a subject is common to all schools and administered under the same conditions, at the same time, on the same day. The external assessment papers and the external assessment marking guide (EAMG) are published in the year after they are administered.

Examination — theorised exploration of unseen text (25%)

Assessment design

The assessment instrument was designed using the specifications, conditions and assessment objectives described in the summative external assessment section of the syllabus.

The examination consisted of one item (35 marks). It assessed subject matter from Units 3 and 4. The question was derived from the context of Unit 4 (Area of study: Theorised exploration of texts).

The assessment required students to use their knowledge of text-centred and world-context-centred reading practices and interpretative strategies to construct a theorised exploration of an unseen short literary text.

The stimulus comprised three original short texts of comparable complexity. These texts were written for the purpose of the examination and were designed to elicit a unique student response that was a theorised close reading. The three unseen texts were:

- Stimulus 1 — *Searching the Void*
- Stimulus 2 — *Stranger*
- Stimulus 3 — *Know-Brain-R*

Assessment decisions

Assessment decisions are made by markers by matching student responses to the EAMG.

Effective practices

Overall, students responded well when they:

- synthesised an overall interpretation of the stimulus that was informed by specific understanding of theory. Typically, a thesis statement that used specific terminology relating to a world-context-centred approach drove a response's theorised exploration. For instance, the following thesis statements demonstrate a discerning theorised interpretation, using aspects of world-context-centred to generate an overall conclusion about the stimulus
 - *Searching the Void* emphasises the commodification of individuality within a consumer-driven society, and the futility of challenging this from within
 - *Searching the Void* condemns how capitalist societies assume that artistic achievement and individual expression are inherently masculine
 - *Stranger* communicates how female empowerment must be constantly fought for and vigilantly protected within a patriarchal society

- *Stranger* implies that the consequences of patriarchal excess fall on the marginalised, who live in distrust of others for self-preservation
- *Know-Brain-R* uses posthuman zombies to ironically showcase the alienation and inertia of humanity under late-stage capitalism, where relationships are monetised
- *Know-Brain-R* criticises the infantilisation of minority groups through tokenistic and profit-driven ‘advocacy’
- applied a range of relevant strategies to develop a complex theorised exploration, by aligning specific theoretical concepts from text-centred and world-context-centred approaches to the selected stimulus text. Examples of this application where students applied
 - world-context-centred theoretical concepts include
 - for *Searching the Void* — Marxist criticism concepts such as commodity fetishism, false consciousness, commodification and exchange value. Feminist criticism concepts such as masquerade, male gaze and ‘the other’ were also applied to this text effectively
 - for *Stranger* — feminist criticism concepts such as sexage, gender performativity, essentialism, ecofeminism, gender melancholia and écriture féminine. Marxist and postcolonial criticism concepts were also applied to this text effectively
 - for *Know-Brain-R* — postcolonial criticism concepts such as subaltern, third space theory and orientalism as well as Marxist criticism concepts such as alienation and class struggle. Post-humanist concepts relating to cyborgism, anthropocentrism and the ‘Frankenstein barrier’ were also applied to this text effectively, as well as queer theory concepts such as heteronormativity and conditional acceptance
 - text-centred theoretical concepts include
 - psychoanalytic criticism concepts such as Jungian archetypes, persona, The Real, objet petit a, repression, lack and desire
 - postmodernist criticism concepts, such as simulacrum and hyperreality
 - structuralist, semiotic and post-structuralist concepts such as binary oppositions, denotation and connotation, aporia, différence and trace
 - narratological concepts such as focalisation, narrative distance, mimesis and diegesis
- developed ideas through linking applied theoretical concepts purposefully to create a complex theorised reading. Examples of how responses connected ideas included
 - using cause–effect patterns to show relationships between applied theoretical approaches, e.g. a response to *Stranger* may explain how William’s ‘favours’ and ‘empty promises’ for wealth reflect his desperation to be seen as economically successful, based on cultural expectations of ideal masculine roles. The fragility of William’s masculinity and his resultant psychoanalytic lack is largely transferred to Beatrice, who bears the consequences of William’s ‘unrewarding’ promises
 - combining theoretical concepts to synthesise specific understanding of the stimulus text, e.g. a response to *Searching the Void* may explore how the hyperreal nature of Void’s sculptures creates a simulacrum that is untethered from its political intentions, particularly due to the artist’s anonymity. Combining this postmodern theory with Marxist commodity fetishism can help explore how art cannot be divorced from the economy
- used specific textual analysis to strengthen and explicitly support the theorised interpretation. For instance, in *Know-Brain-R* the human characters project their own desires and insecurities onto the zombie characters. The humans reflect on their own ‘anxieties’ with the ‘emotional demands’ of others who ‘expect so much’, and envy the zombies’ ‘raw, instinctual, in-the-moment, cool with everything’ demeanour. Their jealousy hints at a psychoanalytic desire to not be burdened by the superego and its internalised social rules.

Practices to strengthen

When preparing students for external assessment, it is recommended that:

- students apply more specific theoretical concepts within world-context-centred and text-centred theoretical approaches. For instance, some responses
 - discussed broader world-context-centred ideas such as consumerism, gender inequality or colonisation without referring to specific concepts within Marxism, Feminism or postcolonial theory. Similarly, some responses applied post-humanist or ecocritical theory superficially by referring only to anthropocentrism, without relevant supporting concepts. For instance, these post-humanist responses could be improved by considering how the cyborg's (zombie's) immortality threatens notions of anthropocentric transcendence, reinforcing the need to control non-human intelligence to maintain superiority
 - referred to broad literary devices and aesthetic features such as symbolism and narrative point-of-view, without specific text-centred theory. Similarly, some responses referred to aspects of genre theory and narratology, but only to describe broad effects of the text, e.g. how internal focalisation invites readers to empathise with a character. Additionally, when stimulus texts are a transcript (e.g. *Know-Brain-R*), focalisation is external through dialogue. It is important to not confuse characters expressing their feelings aloud with internal focalisation. For this reason, internal focalisation should be applied if relevant to the stimulus text. In this case, other text-centred theoretical concepts would be more applicable. This could include analysis of how the connotations of signifiers such as 'post-lifer' and 'pulser' promote ideological myths, how linguistic agentivity reinforces zombies as passive objects, or how Hannah Arendt's notions of speech and action can be applied to the customers to interrogate their hypocrisy
- teachers assist students to understand the difference between discerning, informed and adequate thesis statements. A thesis statement provides evidence for several assessable elements in the EAMG, including development, understanding literary texts and understanding theory. A signposted thesis statement in the introduction can provide an overall conclusion about the text's meaning that draws on aspects of theory. This can then be developed into further implications or conclusions in later arguments. For instance
 - an adequate thesis statement provides a satisfactory interpretation of the text, e.g. an adequate thesis is that '*Searching the Void* positions readers to see how women's talents are overlooked in society'. This is a suitable interpretation, providing broader connection to aspects of Feminist theory
 - an informed thesis statement provides a knowledgeable interpretation of the text, e.g. an informed thesis is that '*Searching the Void* expresses that patriarchal capitalism leads to identity and art being commodified for profit'. This interpretation is conversant with the details of the text and draws on more specific aspects of Marxist theory
 - a discerning thesis statement provides a perceptive and astute interpretation of the text, e.g. a discerning thesis is that '*Searching the Void* reveals how feminine subversion is misread and commodified by the capitalist male gaze, making attempts to challenge the system from within ineffective'. This interpretation provides a thoughtful conclusion about the stimulus text's meaning, drawing on specific aspects of theory that are central to the response's close reading
- teachers help ensure students build skills to demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of the chosen stimulus by engaging with the whole text. Some responses read the stimulus text selectively, focusing on the overt binary oppositions rather than the nuances or complexities of the text. For instance, some responses

- focused solely on the journalist's misgendering of Void within *Searching the Void*, neglecting exploration of Void's choice for anonymity
- narrowly focused on patriarchal oppression in *Stranger* but did not consider Beatrice's empowerment, the implication she may have murdered her husband, or the colonial subtext surrounding the stranger and the setting
- focused on the inequality between zombies and humans in *Know-Brain-R*, but did not consider the nuances within testimonials that emphasised the loneliness and exhaustion of human characters, or the suggestion that zombie inclusion has generated substantial political backlash
- students practise synthesising perspectives from theoretical approaches into an overall interpretation of the stimulus. In some cases, it may be appropriate to apply aspects of more than one world-context-centred theoretical approach, e.g. many responses to *Searching the Void* used Marxist and feminist criticism together, along with text-centred approaches such as structuralism and psychoanalysis. As world-context-centred approaches typically drive the overall interpretation of the stimulus, if using more than one, it is important that students connect these approaches to draw a synthesised conclusion.

For instance, a response to *Know-Brain-R* that uses Marxist criticism, queer theory and post-structuralism, but features a thesis that only states how '*Know-Brain-R* represents the impact of capitalism on the working class' does not draw together its theoretical perspectives into a cohesive overall interpretation.

This could be improved by stating that '*Know-Brain-R* allegorically represents how queer minorities are only conditionally accepted based on how they conform to the economic base'. This overall interpretation draws together aspects of Marxist criticism and queer theory, developing a more synthesised response. As text-centred theoretical approaches typically help to analyse how these conclusions play out through signifiers, binaries, language and genre, it may not always feature within the overall thesis, but instead the development of the thesis in subsequent arguments.

Additional advice

- Many interpretations benefited by considering the stimulus' layers of meaning, developing a stronger understanding of the text's complexities. In this way, they were able to be clear about how successfully the text is reinforcing or resisting specific ideologies, e.g. 'While *Stranger* aims to reassert female autonomy through its rejection of patriarchal control, its isolated and fledgling empowerment reflects the ways marriage has historically been used to prevent collective sisterhood and sustained agency.'
- Students should avoid using author-centred or reader-centred theoretical approaches in an external assessment response. The syllabus specifies for this assessment that students use knowledge of text-centred and world-context-centred interpretive strategies. While some author-centred or reader-centred concepts may have some applicability, they should only be used if framed within the close scrutiny of language (text-centred) and analysis of the stimulus' ideologies and sociocultural representations (world-context-centred). For instance, discussing concepts such as intentional fallacy, death of the author or interpretive communities strays too far from analysis of structural inequalities through deconstruction of the text as an artefact.

Samples

Extended response

The following excerpts are in response to the stimulus text *Search the Void*. It required students to produce a close theorised reading.

Effective student responses:

- featured a discriminating theorised interpretation of the stimulus text
- featured discerning application of specific aspects of text-centred and world-context-centred approaches to the stimulus
- demonstrated a discerning thesis that was strengthened through arguments.

These excerpts have been included:

- to illustrate a discriminating theorised interpretation of the stimulus text
- to demonstrate a discerning application of aspects of text-centred and world-context-centred approaches to the stimulus and a complex range of relevant strategies for a theorised exploration.

Excerpt 1

understanding the Void

"Searching the Void" is a non-fiction think piece set in 2020 within Western Capitalist and Patriarchal culture. The text follows a young journalist determined to ^{solve} ~~search~~ the mystery behind the fate of "notorious artist and provocateur" - Void. ~~void~~ Following a lead from a young woman named Cypher the young journalist comes to find that the elusive and enigmatic Void is indeed the young woman herself. ~~Searching the Void~~ By applying Marxist and Feminist theory, "Searching the Void" is critical of patriarchal discourses of gender and the proliferation of consumer-driven existence under capitalist hegemony. ultimately, these critiques intersect to expose the unstable, inauthentic and illusory nature of a society that values the commodification and consumption of the world around it.

Excerpt 2

Furthermore, ~~the~~ within the text, Void's artworks operate as symbols to solidify the Marxist critique ~~an~~ of the commodification of art. The two artworks^{created with evocative imagery}—“an ATM machine trying to hug a frightened kitten” and the “expensive handbag that had been given legs with weeping eyes”—are ~~a~~ symbolic of the erasure of humanity that occurs when profit accumulation is privileged over fundamental aspects of humanity; compassion, freedom and connection. ~~The~~ “Void's biting criticism of the shallowness and alienation caused by consumer culture” is indicative of what Karl Marx theorises to be alienation: the tendency for capitalist systems to make workers feel as though they are not at home in the world. Marx theorised this occurs in four stages; alienation from the product, from the labour that produces that product, from other workers and finally from the species essence.

The following excerpts are in response to the stimulus text *Stranger*. It required students to produce a close theorised reading.

These excerpts have been included:

- to illustrate discerning application of aspects of text-centred and world-context-centred approaches to the stimulus and a complex range of relevant strategies for a theorised exploration
- to show an authoritative examination of how the writer's generic style, structure or textual features shape the text
- to demonstrate a discriminating interpretation of the stimulus text and discriminating understanding of its complexities.'

Excerpt 1

'Stranger' is a narrative short story internally focalised from the perspective of Beatrice, a homodiegetic narrator, who describes that in "the waves of heat", she is approached by a stranger attempting to seek refuge on her property. Through an application of text-centred and world-centred reading approaches, it is revealed that the text challenges the way in which patriarchal societies maintain power through restricting women, and suggests that any attempts to do so are futile in nature, as femininity is a sublime force that is able to transcend all social convention.

To begin, the key binary opposition that underpins the text is between 'male' and 'female', where the former term is characterised in terms of order, rationality, and mind, whereas the latter term is characterised in terms of chaos, irrationality, and body. Traditionally, patriarchal hegemony tends to privilege the 'male' term and thus, silences the 'female'. However, through their characterisation of Beatrice and her husband, the author inverts these conventional gender roles, and as such, destabilises the meaning of the binary. This is achieved in several ways. Firstly, when the "dirty and torn" stranger asks for access to clean water, it is evident that "without a horse", he must have been "walk[ing] for days". When telling him where to find a well, she states that her "husband is on his way home" - however readers are soon informed that this is false, where her justification for lying is that "strangers are a threat" and "threats must be treated as such". When shaking the strangers "calloused hand", Beatrice reminds herself to "show no fear", suggesting that in some ways, that Beatrice has internalised the patriarchal hegemony that states that men are a threat towards women and that need protection from their husbands. This is further compounded by Beatrice's statement that despite "not expecting...[her] husband any time soon", her "instincts tell...[her]...not to disclose this information. In this way, the author draws upon Judith Butler's theory of 'Gender Performativity', which rebukes essentialist notions of gender identity and instead argues that gender identity is socially constructed through repeated and performed acts. This is most evident in the story as in an attempt to protect herself in the absence of her husband, Beatrice adopts characteristics and traits that are considered to be traditionally masculine; for example, when shaking the stranger's hand, she "assert[s] confidence by squeezing hard and looking directly into his eyes"

Excerpt 2

Moreover, the author employs the symbolism and imagery of nature throughout the story, which can be interpreted to metonymically represent the way in which patriarchal societies impose restrictive ideologies upon women; and thus, the author suggests that attempts to suppress a woman's autonomy are self-destructive as femininity is a sublime force that is able to transcend social convention. This is first alluded to and most evident in the introductory paragraph where Beatrice describes that when standing on the verandah, the "waves of heat...blur[red] the antipodean horizon". According to her, the land was meant to be a place "of new beginnings", but instead "death is part of the landscape". This can be seen as a metonym for the imposition of patriarchal hegemony upon a society. However, what is most interesting about this aspect of the story is that when the stranger first approaches Beatrice, she describes the way in which the "tributaries of sweat roll from his brow, snaking their way down to his rugged face", suggesting that this imposition of ideology is futile in nature. To contrast, it is suggested that while patriarchal ideology is self-destructive, it is also revealed that femininity is a sublime force that is able to transcend social convention. This is mostly exemplified by the fact that Beatrice and her female cat, Clementine, have "against the odds,...survived in this environment". This aspect of the text can be explained utilising Julia Kristeva's theory of the semiotic and symbolic, where in feminist theory, the semiotic represents femininity (driven by irrationality) and the symbolic represents masculinity (driven by rationality). However, it is pertinent to note that the symbolic's attempt to order the semiotic will ultimately be unsuccessful as it will never be able to fully comprehend the meaning of the semiotic. Thus, in the text, the symbolic represents the "intolerable" landscape, whilst the semiotic can be interpreted as referring to Beatrice and Clementine's ability to survive the heat. Furthermore, another interesting aspect of the text is the description that "death is part of the landscape", where the "bones of long dead cattle litter the ground; scavenging animals struggle against the elements". In a sense, these deceased animals can be interpreted to emblemise the death of her husband and foreshadow the death of the stranger (although this is never explicitly stated). As such, this can be seen as a broader symbol of the way that a patriarchal society's attempt to impose restrictions on women is simultaneously futile in nature and is thus, self-destructive. Therefore, this upholds the notion that femininity is a sublime force that is able to transcend social convention.

The following excerpts are in response to the stimulus text *Know-Brain-R*. It required students to produce a close theorised reading.

These excerpts have been included:

- to illustrate discerning application of aspects of text-centred and world-context-centred approaches to the stimulus and a complex range of relevant strategies for a theorised exploration
- to show an authoritative examination of how the writer's generic style, structure or textual features shape the text
- to demonstrate a discriminating interpretation of the stimulus text and discriminating understanding of its complexities.

Excerpt 1

The infomercial transcript, titled Know-Brain-R, promotes a mobile app aiming to connect humans and zombies under the guise of fostering inclusivity in ^a post-colonial society, ^{however} ~~but~~ ultimately further exacerbates a socioeconomic class divide in its servicing of human needs and capitalist greed. This is foregrounded through the allegorical representations of humans as the bourgeoisie and zombies as the proletariat, as well as the 'othering' of 'post-lifers,' reinforced through their opposition to 'pulsers' and skewed narrative viewpoint. Thus, both world and text centred theories may be applied to Know-Brain-R to reveal to audiences how ^{internalised} ~~systematic~~ prejudice can be easily manipulated by those in positions of power to further their own privilege, and at the cost of marginalising their lower counterparts.

Excerpt 2

According to Marxism, a Capitalist society operates based on the prioritisation of generating profit through the private exchange of goods and services for money. Subscription to this may result in a class divide, where the upper class (bourgeoisie) owns the factors of production, and the lower class (proletariat), who form the vast majority of the population, must ~~work~~ perform labour to earn wages. This hierarchy is insinuated by the text through the presenter's dialogue, 'every zombie contributes toward our growing economy through physical, labour heavy jobs that help the living deliver high quality service.' This is corroborated by Sammy, who states that zombies 'courier... deliveries locally or using public transport,' and 'look after... kids in the company childcare centre.' This ~~suggests~~ reveals how zombies are expected to work menial jobs to directly service the upper class ~~in allowing~~ ^{by} enabling them to broaden their ~~income~~ earning capacity, whilst ^{unknowingly} contributing to ~~their own~~ the bourgeoisie's perception of zombies as a commodity. ^{The} commodification ^{of zombies} is evident as the infomercial essentially advertises 'connecting' with zombies by inflating their perceived exchange value. That is, what humans who 'download the app on all platforms today' and will receive if they 'find their own "chill mates"'. The app manipulates the human ~~desire to~~ fear of being 'feeling alone' and 'worrying about what everyone around ^[them] you is thinking all the time,' to enlist reliable consumers and hone in on their target