

Literature and Performance

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0-6	7-13	14-20	21-26	27-34

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The most common choice in this interdisciplinary subject was the adaptation of a text to film. There were some rare examples of adaptation to theatrical product as with *Hamilton* and *The Phantom of the Opera*, for example. Some texts such as *The Great Gatsby* and the works of Jane Austen appeared often, along with Disney versions of children’s books. Screen versions of plays themselves, *Hamlet* and *A Doll’s House*, are representative of another category of choice. Some offerings such as transcribed skits of Dave Chapelle or the lyrics of Kendrick Lamar as they appear in video push the boundaries of the subject legitimately. However, contrary to the clear prohibition of such offerings in the Subject Specific guide, several essays proposed original adaptation of texts. Finally, several essays were submitted that considered text only. Obviously, essays in the last two categories were subject to the penalties for Research Questions inappropriate for the subject. Overall, the most common strengths were inventiveness, close study of both forms, and a clear sense of academic research. The weaknesses were in unpromising topics, purely personal evaluations, and unrealistic expectations about how very large issues could be adapted to the chosen task.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: focus and method

The essential challenge in an interdisciplinary subject is to be able to balance the demands of both disciplines. The Research Question must offer a viable frame in which to achieve this within the limit of 4000 words. In some instances, the question was well articulated and appropriately balanced between the two forms. Candidates sometimes did not see that the essay, while initiated by interest and appreciation for one or both of the two entities, needed to be an exploration of a question that can be investigated through both primary and secondary research. The works needed be analysed and interrogated by blending the insights of the candidate and those of such research material as critical essays or reviews of

performances. Often the Research Question was articulated in vague or general terms or directed to too many aspects.

Methodology varied from clear and competent to other approaches which suggested first drafts rather than finished products. The best demonstrated a clear sense of direction from the outset and laid out the examination of both text and performance and their effects in clear sections of discussion supporting the response to the Research Question. The weaker essays devolved into general investigations which never managed to make a clear case leading to a conclusion. It was not always evident with such essays that the research cited in the bibliography has been very well assimilated or applied.

Criterion B: knowledge and understanding

As is often the case with critiques of their studied literature, candidates generally demonstrated knowledge of their chosen texts with varying degrees of understanding of their complexities and could provide analysis of these ranging from modest to excellent. About various forms of performance—film, theatre, musicals and the like—a number seemed less competent. The transdisciplinary nature of the subject requires some competence in the terminologies of both texts and performances, and this was variably evident across the candidature. Extending what was personally grasped and evaluated to the enhanced perspective of research proved a consistent challenge to many students.

Criterion C: critical thinking

The best performances in this heavily weighted criterion showed the successful melding of individual interest and response with well-selected and well-assimilated secondary research. Some students found it very difficult to see their task within a research context and some did not appear to see that as necessary. Here, as in essays in both literature and theatre a clear argument must be built around close analysis of both the original text and the adaptation. Students who established clear parameters and goals with their Research Question were the ones who delivered the most successful essays. Other less successful productions remained at a level that was either primarily descriptive or had so many aspects to deal with that none went beyond the superficial. These weaknesses made both the inferences and conclusions along the way as well as the final conclusion either obscure or unpersuasive.

Criterion D: presentation

Performance in this criterion was generally satisfactory, with essay conventions reasonably observed. Not all students seemed to be clear about the need for the delivery of an argument but those who clearly understood the nature of the process did very well here when they additionally met the demand for the appropriate layout of their essay. Those who clearly titled the different sections of the essay enhanced the successful reception of their ideas.

Criterion E: engagement

In this first iteration of Criterion E, there was a wide variety of approaches. Only a few met the demand for the highest marks. Most often the three sections were handled in a narrative mode. While this is a natural impulse and to some degree necessary material, in many

instances, narration outdistanced reflection quite considerably, although most managed some of this in the final report of the viva voce/final reflection. Many students made clear their personal engagement with the process and offered convincing evidence that this was so.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Supervisors need to familiarize themselves with the Literature and Performance Subject Guide as well as the Subject Specific criteria in the EE guide. It is unfortunate to see students losing 12 marks owing to the fact that the essay was not appropriate for Literature and Performance or was entered under an erroneous heading, as seemed to be case with several essays that were written about texts only.

While an analysis and evaluation of the primary sources is likely to lead the essay, there should be at least some use of secondary sources to validate both information and evaluation.

It is wise to make clear at the outset the method followed in the research and the one to be followed in the essay; some candidates neglected the latter entirely.

Candidates should be clear about the difference between an appreciative or descriptive discussion of the two forms and one that involves and presents research.