



INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
MAY 2025

ENGLISH PRIMARY LANGUAGE: PAPER II

MARKING GUIDELINES

Time: 3 hours

100 marks

These marking guidelines are prepared for use by examiners and sub-examiners, all of whom are required to attend a standardisation meeting to ensure that the guidelines are consistently interpreted and applied in the marking of candidates' scripts.

The IEB will not enter into any discussions or correspondence about any marking guidelines. It is acknowledged that there may be different views about some matters of emphasis or detail in the guidelines. It is also recognised that, without the benefit of attendance at a standardisation meeting, there may be different interpretations of the application of the marking guidelines.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC: SHAKESPEARE AND NOVEL LITERATURE ESSAY (35 MARKS)			
- The candidate may use a mind map to plan their essay but no marks are awarded for planning. - Length of response: approximately 600 words in length. This is a suggested length as the cohesiveness and development of the essay will take precedence over the length. There is no penalty for length other than the development of the argument in the essay itself. A word count at the end of the essay is NOT required. The rubric is not a checklist (tick-box) but should be considered as a guide when evaluating the Literary Essay. Half marks may be awarded.			
Level	%	35	ASSESSMENT (Knowledge, Argument, Thinking, Structure)
7++	100	35	FULL MARK ESSAY (Extended Abstract Level) EXCEPTIONAL Highly eloquent response; exhibits academic rigour; strong individual voice; confident knowledge of text.
			- The essay that is awarded full marks has greater depth and scope than a level 7+. - Candidate displays an exceptional ability to develop an argument that is academically superior. A nuanced argument. - Resonates a sophisticated tackling of the topic. - Quotations integrated with exceptional ability. - Quotations and substantiation build an argument that is logically flawless and which exceeds expectations. - The style of the essay is fluid and elevated. - The essay is error free.
7+	99–90	34 33 32 31,5	DISTINGUISHED/IMPRESSIVE (Extended Abstract Level) EXCEPTIONAL/ELEVATED An impressive and distinguished essay; succinct; selects information to build an argument with sophistication; has depth of knowledge; dips into the text with confidence; consistent question focus.
			- Quotations enhance a tightly constructed argument. - Analytical concepts developed with precision. - All aspects of the topic have been addressed with confidence and distinction. - Candidate displays a thorough and impressive, in-depth knowledge of the text, perhaps even drawing on moments of the text that distinguish the candidate's superior, refined knowledge and understanding. A nuanced argument. Exceptional ability to select information to develop a succinct, carefully crafted argument. Impressive/exceptional evidence of candidate's original voice. - Demonstrates impressive individual thought and understanding through analysing and developing an arresting argument. Impressively integrates and elaborates on specific textual references/evidence. - Maintains consistent focus without deviating from the central concern(s) of the question. - Candidate is able to construct exceptionally critical, relevant and consistent connections between topic question and argument, displaying a convincing, impressive line of logical progression. Exceptionally lucid and logical. Thorough development of literary essay structure; focused introduction and conclusion. Excellent transitions between paragraphs, which enhance the development of the argument. - Writing reflects an impressive command of register, spelling, diction, language and punctuation. - Essay signposted throughout, indicating that the candidate has engaged with the question with a commendable degree of confidence. Transfers knowledge of the question in an elevated manner.

7	89–80	31 30 29 28	COMMENDABLE/EXCELLENT (Extended Abstract Level) SOPHISTICATED/HIGHLY DEVELOPED A sophisticated and perceptive essay that is commendable and well structured; substantiation from text enhances argument (which requires minor polish for a level 7+). • Argument is thoroughly developed. • All aspects of the topic have been addressed with sophistication. • Candidate displays a thorough, accurate and confident knowledge of the text. • Insightful understanding of the novel. • Excellent ability to select information to develop a succinct argument, which is clearly focused and perceptive. • Commendable evidence of candidate's original voice. • Demonstrates sophisticated individual thought and understanding through analysing and developing a highly developed argument. • Commendably integrates and elaborates on specific textual references/evidence, although at times these could have been used with greater effect. • Maintains consistent focus without deviating from the central concern(s) of the question. • Candidate is able to construct critical, relevant and consistent connections between topic question and argument, displaying a convincing, sophisticated line of logical progression. • Lucid and focused, although there may be a sense that further logical development could have enhanced this essay further. • Commendable development of literary structure; focused introduction and conclusion. • Excellent transitions between paragraphs. • Writing reflects an impressive command of register, spelling, diction, language and punctuation, although there may be minor stylistic flaws. • Essay signposted throughout, indicating that the candidate has engaged with the question with a commendable degree of confidence. • Transfers knowledge of the question in a commendable manner.
6	79–70	27 26 25 24,5	COMPETENT/GOOD TO VERY GOOD (Extended Abstract Level) SKILFUL/PROFICIENT An above average response; proficient and skilful; competent and focused; accurate; sound argument; logical; dips into the text skilfully; minor lapses. • Argument is developed competently and may have minor lapses. • All aspects of the topic have been addressed with conviction OR part of the topic has been addressed with depth and sophistication (suggesting that if all aspects of the question had been tackled this essay could have been awarded a 7 or 7+). • Candidate displays a competent, accurate knowledge of the text, although there may be minor gaps that do not impact on the strength of the argument. • Proficient understanding of the novel. • Skilful ability to select information to develop an argument, which is mostly focused and competent. The argument in instances could have been developed further. • Skilful evidence of candidate's original voice. • Demonstrates competent individual thought and understanding through analysing and developing an argument with skill. There may be minor lapses, which could have been enhanced with further development. • Integrates and elaborates on specific textual references/evidence skilfully/proficiently, although at times these could have been used with greater effect. • Candidate is able to construct relevant and consistent connections between topic question and argument, displaying a convincing, proficient line of logical progression.

			• Lucid and focused, although there may be a sense that further logical development could have enhanced this essay further. • Competent development of literary essay structure; focused introduction and conclusion. • Skilful transition between paragraphs. • Writing reflects a competent command of spelling, language and punctuation, although there may be minor stylistic flaws. An essay in this category may be one where the candidate displays an ability to develop an argument that is highly commendable and distinguished (which would result in a level 7 or 7+) but is hindered by major stylistic flaws. • Essay signposted throughout, indicating that the candidate has engaged with the question with a commendable degree of confidence. • Transfers knowledge of the question in a skilful manner.
5	69–60	24 23 22 21	ACCEPTABLE/SUFFICIENT (Multi-structural Level) SATISFACTORY/ADEQUATE An acceptable, satisfactory essay that has broadly tackled the question. An essay that 'does the job'; answers all aspects of the topic or part of the topic tackled well; broad and general in places but voice in evidence; accurate.
		AVERAGE = 24	• Argument is developed in an adequate manner and may have minor lapses/some generalisations. • All aspects of the topic have been addressed adequately, although these may be understood only in part OR part of the topic has been addressed competently, suggesting that if all aspects of the question had been tackled this essay could have been awarded a 6. • Candidate displays adequate knowledge of the text, although there may be minor gaps that do not impact on the argument. • Considerable understanding of the novel – there must be a sense that the text has been read and understood in broad, general terms. • Adequate/sporadic ability to select information to develop an argument, which is satisfactory and competent. The argument in instances requires further enhancement and development. • Some/sporadic evidence of candidate's original voice. • Demonstrates adequate individual thought and understanding through analysing and developing an argument sufficiently. There may be minor lapses, which could have been enhanced with further development/the argument is not fully sustained/developed throughout. • Evidence of specific textual references/evidence that is adequate/ acceptable, although at times these could have been used with greater effect. • Candidate is able to construct adequate connections between topic question and argument, displaying a satisfactory progression. • Generally focused, although there may be a sense that further logical development could have enhanced this essay further. • Adequate development of literary essay structure; satisfactory introduction and conclusion. • Adequate transition between paragraphs. • Writing reflects a satisfactory command of register, spelling, language and punctuation, although there may be minor stylistic flaws. An essay in this category may be one where the candidate displays an ability to develop an argument that is competent (which would result in a level 6) but is hindered by major stylistic flaws. • Essay signposted generally, indicating that the candidate has engaged with the question in a satisfactory manner. • Transfers knowledge of the question in an adequate/satisfactory manner.

PLEASE TURN OVER

			• Introduction and/or conclusion flawed, with further development and synthesis required. • Writing is flawed. • Weak command of spelling, language and punctuation. • Does not transfer knowledge of the question and if it does, it will do so with lapses.
2	39–30	13 12 11 10,5	POOR/MUDDLED/VAGUE (Pre-structural Level) TENUOUS/UNFOCUSED/INACCURATE A tenuous, poor essay; muddled and vague and/or inaccurate; no evidence that text has been read; not worthy of a pass. • A weak response, which is off topic. • Essay lacks coherence. • Inability to state a personal opinion. • Difficult to identify any distinct argument; unfocused. • Candidate displays poor/incomplete/flawed knowledge of the text. • The essay is vague, muddled and lacks focus. • Little/no/flawed substantiation. • Paragraph links problematic. • Reliance on narrative that is inaccurate. • Essay not signposted. • Introduction and/or conclusion flawed/missing, with further development and synthesis required. • Writing is marred by errors, although these do not impede understanding. • Weak command of spelling, language and punctuation.
1	29–20	10 9 8 7	EXTREMELY WEAK/FEEBLE (Pre-structural Level) INEPT/UNSKILLED An extremely weak essay; a feeble attempt to engage with the text at times. • A weak, flawed response, which is completely off topic. • Inability to state a personal opinion. • Difficult to identify any distinct argument; unfocused. • A creative/reflective response that has little relevance to the text or the question. • Candidate displays a poor/incomplete/flawed/no knowledge of the text. • The essay is vague, muddled and lacks focus. • Little/no/flawed substantiation. • Paragraph links problematic. • Essay not signposted. • Introduction and/or conclusion flawed/missing, with further development and synthesis required. • Writing is marred by errors that impede understanding. • Weak command of spelling, language and punctuation.
0	19–0	6 5 4 3 2 1 0	INCOMPETENT (Pre-structural Level) LACKING ABILITY/INEFFECTUAL A totally incompetent essay that displays no link to the text or the question. • This piece will not meet the requirements of the task on any level. • Vague, irrelevant, flawed. • Inappropriate response to the topic. • Compromised response: insufficient evidence to indicate any engagement with the text or the question.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC: FILM ESSAY (30 MARKS)			
- The candidate may use a mind map to plan their essay but no marks are awarded for planning. - Length of response: approximately 600 words in length. This is a suggested length as the cohesiveness and development of the essay will take precedence over the length. There is no penalty for length other than the development of the argument in the essay itself. Reference to filmic techniques is essential in this essay. A word count at the end of the essay is NOT required. The rubric is not a checklist (tick-box) but should be considered as a guide when evaluating the Literary Essay. Half marks may be awarded.			
Level	%	30	ASSESSMENT (Knowledge, Argument, Thinking, Structure)
7++	100	30	FULL MARK ESSAY (Extended Abstract Level) EXCEPTIONAL Highly eloquent response; exhibits academic rigour; strong individual voice; confident knowledge of film(s).
			- The essay that is awarded full marks has greater depth and scope than a level 7+. - Candidate displays an exceptional ability to develop an argument that is academically superior. - Resonates a sophisticated tackling of the topic. - Specific references and filmic techniques integrated with exceptional ability. - Substantiation builds an argument that is logically flawless and which exceeds expectations. - The style of the essay is fluid and elevated. - The essay is error free.
7+	99–90	29 28 27	DISTINGUISHED/IMPRESSIVE (Extended Abstract Level) EXCEPTIONAL/ELEVATED An impressive and distinguished essay; succinct; selects information to build an argument with sophistication; has depth of knowledge; dips into the film(s) with confidence; consistent question focus. Impressively integrates and elaborates on specific filmic references/evidence/techniques.
			- Filmic references enhance a tightly constructed argument. - Analytical concepts developed with precision. - All aspects of the topic have been addressed with confidence and distinction. - Candidate displays a thorough and impressive, in-depth knowledge of the film(s), perhaps even drawing on moments of the film(s) that distinguish the candidate's superior, refined knowledge and understanding. Exceptional ability to select information to develop a succinct, carefully crafted argument. Impressive/exceptional evidence of candidate's original voice. - Demonstrates impressive individual thought and understanding through analysing and developing an arresting argument. - Maintains consistent focus without deviating from the central concern(s) of the question. - Candidate is able to construct exceptionally critical, relevant and consistent connections between topic question and argument, displaying a convincing, impressive line of logical progression. Exceptionally lucid and logical. Thorough development of literary essay structure; focused introduction and conclusion. Excellent transitions between paragraphs, which enhance the development of the argument. - Writing reflects an impressive command of register, spelling, diction, language and punctuation. - Essay signposted throughout, indicating that the candidate has engaged with the question with a commendable degree of confidence. Transfers knowledge of the question in an elevated manner.

7	89–80	26 25 24	COMMENDABLE/EXCELLENT (Extended Abstract Level) SOPHISTICATED/HIGHLY DEVELOPED A sophisticated and perceptive essay that is commendable and well structured; substantiation from film enhances argument (which requires minor polish for a level 7+). Commendably integrates and elaborates on specific filmic references/ evidence/techniques, although at times these could have been used with greater effect. • Argument is thoroughly developed. • All aspects of the topic have been addressed with sophistication. • Candidate displays a thorough, accurate and confident knowledge of the film(s). • Insightful understanding of the novel. • Excellent ability to select information to develop a succinct argument, which is clearly focused and perceptive. • Commendable evidence of candidate's original voice. • Demonstrates sophisticated individual thought and understanding through analysing and developing a highly developed argument. • Maintains consistent focus without deviating from the central concern(s) of the question. • Candidate is able to construct critical, relevant and consistent connections between topic question and argument, displaying a convincing, sophisticated line of logical progression. • Lucid and focused, although there may be a sense that further logical development could have enhanced this essay further. • Commendable development of literary structure; focused introduction and conclusion. • Excellent transitions between paragraphs. • Writing reflects an impressive command of register, spelling, diction, language and punctuation, although there may be minor stylistic flaws. • Essay signposted throughout, indicating that the candidate has engaged with the question with a commendable degree of confidence. • Transfers knowledge of the question in a commendable manner.
6	79–70	23 22 21	COMPETENT/GOOD TO VERY GOOD (Extended Abstract Level) SKILFUL/PROFICIENT An above average response; proficient and skilful; competent and focused; accurate; sound argument; logical; dips into the film(s) skilfully; minor lapses. Integrates and elaborates on specific filmic references/evidence/ techniques skilfully/proficiently, although at times these could have been used with greater effect. • Argument is developed competently and may have minor lapses. • All aspects of the topic have been addressed with conviction OR part of the topic has been addressed with depth and sophistication (suggesting that if all aspects of the question had been tackled this essay could have been awarded a 7 or 7+). • Candidate displays a competent, accurate knowledge of the film(s), although there may be minor gaps that do not impact on the strength of the argument. • Proficient understanding of the film(s). • Skilful ability to select information to develop an argument, which is mostly focused and competent. The argument in instances could have been developed further. • Skilful evidence of candidate's original voice. • Demonstrates competent individual thought and understanding through analysing and developing an argument with skill. There may be minor lapses, which could have been enhanced with further development. • Candidate is able to construct relevant and consistent connections between topic question and argument, displaying a convincing, proficient line of logical progression.

			• Lucid and focused, although there may be a sense that further logical development could have enhanced this essay further. • Competent development of literary essay structure; focused introduction and conclusion. • Skilful transition between paragraphs. • Writing reflects a competent command of spelling, language and punctuation, although there may be minor stylistic flaws. An essay in this category may be one where the candidate displays an ability to develop an argument that is highly commendable and distinguished (which would result in a level 7 or 7+) but is hindered by stylistic flaws. • Essay signposted throughout, indicating that the candidate has engaged with the question with a commendable degree of confidence. • Transfers knowledge of the question in a skilful manner.
5	69–60	20 19 18	ACCEPTABLE/SUFFICIENT (Multi-structural Level) SATISFACTORY/ADEQUATE An acceptable, satisfactory essay that has broadly tackled the question. An essay that 'does the job'; answers all aspects of the topic or part of the topic tackled well; broad and general in places but voice is evidence; accurate. Evidence of specific filmic references/evidence/techniques that is adequate/acceptable, although at times these could have been used with greater effect. • Argument is developed in an adequate manner and may have minor lapses/ some generalisations. • All aspects of the topic have been addressed adequately, although these may be understood only in part OR part of the topic has been addressed competently, suggesting that if all aspects of the question had been tackled this essay could have been awarded a 6. • Candidate displays adequate knowledge of the film(s), although there may be minor gaps that do not impact on the argument. • Considerable understanding of the film(s) – there must be a sense that the film(s) ha/haves been understood in broad, general terms. • Adequate/sporadic ability to select information to develop an argument, which is satisfactory and competent. The argument in instances requires further enhancement and development. • Some/sporadic evidence of candidate's original voice. • Demonstrates adequate individual thought and understanding through analysing and developing an argument sufficiently. There may be minor lapses, which could have been enhanced with further development/the argument is not fully sustained/developed throughout. • Candidate is able to construct adequate connections between topic question and argument, displaying a satisfactory progression. • Generally focused, although there may be a sense that further logical development could have enhanced this essay further. • Adequate development of literary essay structure; satisfactory introduction and conclusion. • Adequate transition between paragraphs. • Writing reflects a satisfactory command of register, spelling, language and punctuation, although there may be minor stylistic flaws. An essay in this category may be one where the candidate displays an ability to develop an argument that is competent (which would result in a level 6) but is hindered by stylistic flaws. • Essay signposted generally, indicating that the candidate has engaged with the question in a satisfactory manner. • Transfers knowledge of the question in an adequate/satisfactory manner.

AVERAGE = 20

4	59–50	17 16 15	MARGINAL/BASIC (Uni-structural Level) SKETCHY/BELOW AVERAGE/UNDEVELOPED A basic, undeveloped essay that attempts to engage with the question albeit limited and/or unsuccessfully in parts; has glimmer(s) of analysis; does not always dip into the film(s); padded with narrative; slight evidence of voice. An attempt to use film techniques – mentioned but not developed. • An attempt to develop an argument, although it might be lacking relevance in parts/sweeping generalisations/narrow or inaccurate in parts. • Simplistic interpretation/partly accurate understanding/narrow interpretation of the topic/vague reference to the topic. • Candidate displays simplistic/flawed knowledge of the film(s) and the argument is drawn simplistically. There may be glimmers of analysis and engagement. • Broad, general understanding of the film(s) – there must be a sense that the film(s) has/have been understood in broad, general terms/comments show thought, but are not tied to the topic. • An attempt to develop an argument, which may be successful in parts/unconvincing argument, which lacks substantiation or development. There may be some substantiation used without flair. • Slight evidence of candidate's original voice. • Demonstrates sporadic/inconsistent individual thought and understanding through analysing and developing simplistically. There may be lapses which could have been enhanced with further development/the argument is not fully sustained/developed. • Essay is padded with intermittent narrative and occasional argument. • Filmic references and techniques are unconvincing at times and may be either inaccurate or flawed. • Candidate is able to make an inconsistent attempt to use some basic transition words or phrases, resulting in a superficial progression on the whole. • Marginally focused with a sense that logical development could have enhanced this essay. • Introduction and conclusion are simplistic and may not point to an arguable position. • Writing is simple, unadorned/reflects an inconsistent and limited awareness of register/inconsistent grammar, spelling and paragraphing. • Essay lacks signposting throughout/limited, superficial signposting. • Transfers knowledge of the question in a simple, basic manner albeit unimpressively and with limited success.	
3	49–40	14 13 12	SIMPLISTIC/SUPERFICIAL/INADEQUATE (Uni-structural Level) UNSOPHISTICATED/ONE-DIMENSIONAL/LIMITED A simplistic, superficial/flawed essay that struggles to engage with the question; thin voice; narrative; just meets pass mark. A very limited understanding of the medium of film. • A weak response but still worthy of a pass. • Inability to sustain a personal opinion. • A flawed argument or no argument at all/provides a simple answer to the question. • Essay lacks clear and logical development of ideas. • Candidate displays a simplistic knowledge of the film(s) and there are gaps in understanding and/or interpretation. • There will be areas in the essay that are problematic or illogical. • Not much evidence of candidate's original voice – inability to sustain or develop an argument. • Little or no substantiation or filmic referencing and techniques/flawed substantiation or referencing. • Critical thinking skills used superficially, if at all. • Reliance on narrative. • Absent or ineffective transitions between paragraphs. • Essay not signposted/signposted inadequately.	PASS = 12

			• Introduction and/or conclusion flawed, with further development and synthesis required. • Writing is flawed. • Weak command of spelling, language and punctuation. • Does not transfer knowledge of the question and if it does, it will do so with lapses.
2	39–30	11 10 9	POOR/MUDDLED/VAGUE (Pre-structural Level) TENUOUS/UNFOCUSED/INACCURATE A tenuous, poor essay; muddled and vague and/or inaccurate; no evidence that film(s) has/have been studied; not worthy of a pass. No understanding of the medium of film. No/flawed filmic substantiation. • A weak, flawed response, which is off topic. • Essay lacks coherence. • Inability to state a personal opinion. • Difficult to identify any distinct argument; unfocused. • Candidate displays poor/incomplete/flawed knowledge of the film. • The essay is vague, muddled and lacks focus. • Paragraph links problematic. • Reliance on narrative. • Essay not signposted. • Introduction and/or conclusion flawed/missing, with further development and synthesis required. • Writing is marred by errors, although these do not impede understanding. • Weak command of spelling, language and punctuation.
1	29–20	8 7	EXTREMELY WEAK/FEEBLE (Pre-structural Level) INEPT/UNSKILLED An extremely weak essay; a feeble attempt to engage with the film(s). A film review rather than a literary essay. • A weak, flawed response, which is completely off topic. • Inability to state a personal opinion. • Difficult to identify any distinct argument; unfocused. • Candidate displays a poor/incomplete/flawed/no knowledge of the film(s). • The essay is vague, muddled and lacks focus. • Little/no/flawed filmic substantiation. • Paragraph links problematic. • Reliance on narrative. • Essay not signposted. • Introduction and/or conclusion flawed/missing, with further development and synthesis required. • Writing is marred by errors that impede understanding. • Weak command of spelling, language and punctuation.
0	19–0	6 5 4 3 2 1 0	INCOMPETENT (Pre-structural Level) LACKING ABILITY/INEFFECTUAL A totally incompetent essay that displays no link to the film(s) or the question. A film review rather than a literary essay. • This piece does not meet the requirements of the task on any level. • Vague, irrelevant, flawed. • Inappropriate response to the topic.

Total: 100 marks