

CHAPTER 3

ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

The following report should be read in conjunction with the English Home Language question papers of the November 2021 NSC examination.

3.1 PERFORMANCE TRENDS (2017–2021)

The number of candidates who sat for the English Home Language examination in 2021 increased by 11 405 compared to that of 2020.

There was an increase in the number of candidates who passed at the 40% level from 104 724 in 2020 to 113 775 in 2021.

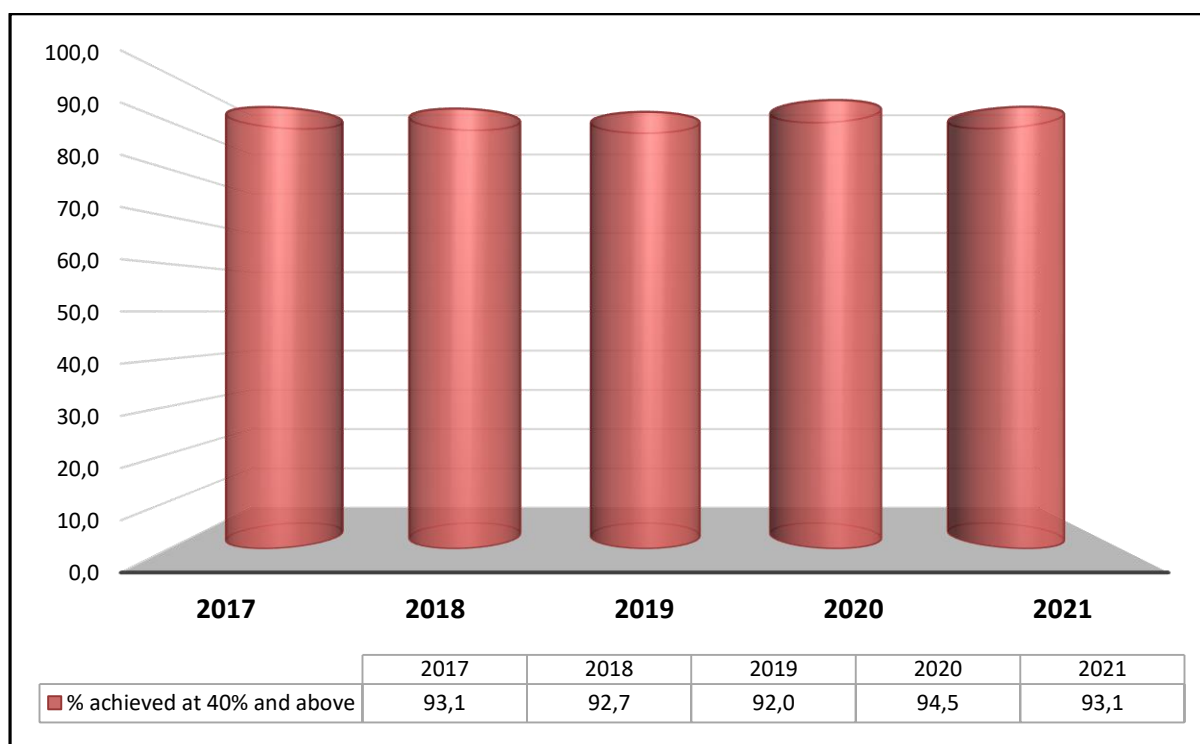
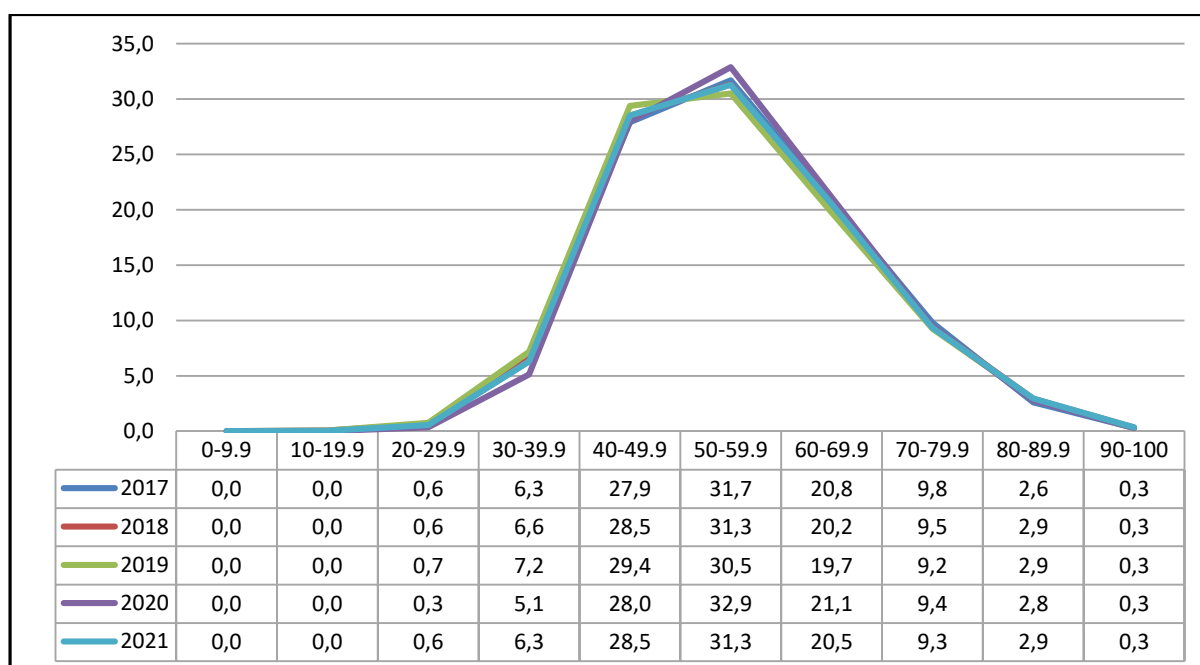
Over the past five years, the pass rates have consistently been maintained in the 92%–94% range. There was a marginal decline in the pass rate at the 40% level from 94,5% in 2020 to 93,1% in 2021.

The percentage of distinctions (over 80%) remained constant at approximately 3,2%. Given the increase in the size of the 2021 cohort, this converts into an increase in the total number of distinctions from 3 434 in 2020 to 3 910 in 2021.

The results reflected above were achieved despite the challenging circumstances brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past two years which affected teaching and learning activities of the 2021 cohort. This appears to have been the result of creative intervention strategies by teachers and subject advisors as well as schools and provincial education departments. The resourcefulness and diligence of the above-average candidates also contributed to the overall performance in the subject.

Table 3.1.1 Overall achievement rates in English Home Language

Year	No. wrote	No. achieved at 40% and above	% achieved at 40% and above
2017	105 705	98 362	93,1
2018	106 577	98 823	92,7
2019	108 483	99 843	92,0
2020	110 784	104 724	94,5
2021	122 189	113 775	93,1

Graph 3.1.1 Overall achievement rates in English Home Language (percentage)**Graph 3.1.2 Performance distribution curves in English Home Language (percentage)**

3.2 OVERVIEW OF CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE IN PAPER 1

General comments

- (a) Candidates who did not do well were unable to display insight and failed to comprehend basic examination terminology.
- (b) The candidates generally struggled with the metalanguage of the subject. Concepts such as *tone*, *diction*, *intention*, and *satire* were misunderstood or unknown to a number of candidates.
- (c) The introduction of grammar-based questions in Questions 3 and 4 exposed the lack of foundational teaching in English Home Language.

3.3 DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION ANALYSIS OF PAPER 1

QUESTION 1: Comprehension

There was a poor understanding of the comprehension text, THE OLD HAVE MADE A MESS OF THE WORLD. THE YOUNG WILL SAVE US. In some instances, the terminology used in the questions was beyond the understanding of the weaker candidates, e.g. *diction*, *tone*, *attitude*, *implications*. These concepts are fundamental to the teaching of English Home Language. The majority of the candidates could not respond to questions that required critical thinking. Responses to higher-order questions were poorly constructed. Far more candidates were 'lifting' directly from the text than in the past.

Common errors and misconceptions

- (a) In Q1.2 many candidates made little reference to 'trading playground insults' and in most cases failed to identify the attitude, as was required by the question.
- (b) Q1.3 was poorly answered because candidates provided a subjective, generalised response to the question. Neither the participants nor their importance was mentioned.
- (c) Weaker candidates responded to Q1.4 by 'lifting' irrelevant quotes from the passage. They were unable to reflect on the metaphor between the child and the adolescent. This resulted in their inability to respond coherently to the implications of the metaphor. They also failed to mention the harm done to the environment.
- (d) In Q1.5 many candidates offered a general explanation of the lines without discussing the purpose of the *diction*. They did not understand the urgency of addressing issues concerning the planet. The candidates did not quote specific words to bolster their response.
- (e) Many candidates lost marks in Q1.6 because they were unable to hone in on the *tone*, as was required by the question. A few candidates only quoted from the passage without making any valid comments or only provided a vague, generic discussion.
- (f) In Q1.7 candidates were unable to evaluate the claims made by the writer, in relation to the title. It was poorly answered as weaker candidates omitted either the reference to paragraph 8 or the title.

- (g) Responses to Q1.8 were poor. Candidates who performed very poorly in this question did not understand the concepts, 'juvenility' and 'maturity'. They could also not justify whether the conclusion was effective or not.
- (h) In response to Q1.9 candidates did not grasp the notion of the hashtag representing defiance. They merely discussed what they observed in the cartoon.
- (i) Q1.10 expected responses to the *composition* of the characters. This concept was misunderstood by most candidates. They failed to link the depiction of the characters to the global establishment's inaction with regard to climate change. In a few instances, candidates only explained the figurative message of the cartoon.
- (j) Q1.11 was adequately answered; however, candidates lost marks either for not referring to both Texts A and B, or for focusing on the entire Text A and not on paragraph 7, as required by the question.

Suggestions for improvement

- (a) Teachers should use every available opportunity to expose learners to current affairs and topical issues in various texts to hone their comprehension skills. These should include visual texts, good verbal texts and even audio texts. If learners understood that not only the passage but also the questions have to be understood, then the quality of their responses would improve.
- (b) There should be a focus on building learners' vocabulary. Learners should be encouraged and motivated to engage with good texts and, while doing so, to use dictionaries, thesauruses and other learning aids. Utilising these resources will assist learners in answering questions in this paper. It will also enable learners *to respond in their own words*, rather than to resort to the blind 'lifting' that occurs far too often and was particularly prevalent in this examination.
- (c) Learners should not respond to questions subjectively; there should be close reference to the passage. They should also be specific, and not use vague pronouns such as 'it' and 'they', without identifying the antecedent.
- (d) Basic concepts such as *diction* and *tone* must be taught from Grade 8 and revised regularly thereafter. Identification of either the tone or specific words (when answering a question on diction) will improve learners' chances of scoring higher marks. Expose learners to different forms of writing in which the writer conveys a particular message/attitude/tone/intention. Provide them with vocabulary that helps them to identify attitude/tone/intention. These concepts apply in literature studies and creative writing as well as in language study.
- (e) Learners must be taught to focus on the whole question and on specific vocabulary. Too often marks are lost in the comparative question. Learners should be taught to mention the text (and paragraph, if required). Their responses should link the two texts – either through their similarities or their differences.
- (f) Close adherence to instructions should be instilled in learners. They must be taught to decode what each instruction requires of them, for example 'critically comment'/'explain'/'discuss'. A list of instructional verbs is found in both the CAPS document (p. 78) and the *Examination Guidelines 2021* (pp. 31–33).

- (g) Teachers should demonstrate and teach learners how to formulate responses based on a given text to improve their performance in open-ended and opinion-based questions.
- (h) Higher-order thinking skills must be taught. This will ensure that candidates will perform at a higher cognitive level in questions requiring these skills.
- (i) Learners should be offered frequent opportunities to answer questions of the same complexity as those in the final examination. They should be familiar with the skill of analysing and responding to a question that requires more than a simple response. Responding to a question in its entirety must be taught.
- (j) Questions that demand commentary or a critical discussion should be practised more frequently.
- (k) There is always the possibility that the reading passage in an examination will not be interesting to every candidate, or that it will contain subject matter that might be unfamiliar to the candidate. It is, therefore, essential that teachers broaden the horizons of their learners by exposing them to a variety of reading material, engaging in topical discussions and, perhaps most importantly, teaching them to utilise the reading passage when responding to the questions.

QUESTION 2: Summary

The candidates did not fare as well in this question as they had in the past. There were still too many candidates who ignored the instruction to produce a coherent paragraph, and just presented a point-form summary; alternatively, they produced two or more paragraphs.

Common errors and misconceptions

- (a) Candidates' limited vocabulary put many of them at a disadvantage and they resorted to 'lifting' from the text, or repeating points.
- (b) It was expected of candidates to summarise 'the research undertaken on fake news'. This posed a challenge to many candidates as they were unsure of whether the focus should be on the methodology or the findings of the research.
- (c) A few candidates neglected to strike through their rough drafts. This resulted in markers assessing both the rough and the final drafts.
- (d) In a few cases, candidates changed the structure of the sentences, thus changing the meaning. Incomplete sentences also had an impact on the final mark obtained.

Suggestions for improvement

- (a) The summary is an important aspect of learning and should be taught and practised. The curriculum requires the ability to summarise information from the early grades, and this skill should be honed by Grade 12.
- (b) Learners must follow instructions carefully – no point-form summary should be presented. Teachers must prepare the learners to identify the necessary points and then write them in a neat, coherent paragraph.

- (c) The summary should not be taught in a formulaic way. Learners should be able to glean the main points from any piece of writing. Not all summary questions would require learners to identify specific information.
- (d) It is advisable that learners be taught to re-read the question each time they write down a point.
- (e) Learners must be taught to use their own words when answering the summary. This skill can only be mastered with constant practice.

QUESTION 3: Analysing an Advertisement

The addition of the grammar-based questions was new to this question. The gaps in grammar teaching in context are evident in the performance of the candidates in the last two questions of Question 3.

Common errors and misconceptions

- (a) In Q3.1 many candidates still struggled with understanding and defining the tone of the advertisement.
- (b) Q3.2 proved to be problematic, since candidates could not unpack how the illustration conveyed the advertiser's message. Some candidates provided generalised answers about the visual layout rather than specifically focusing on the illustration.
- (c) In Q3.3 candidates grappled with commenting on two techniques used by the advertiser to influence the reader. They were able to identify the techniques but tended to ignore the influence these techniques had on the reader.
- (d) Providing a suitable synonym for 'intimidating', in context, proved to be a challenge to candidates. Their responses to Q3.4 were generic.
- (e) A few candidates confused 'part of speech' with 'figure of speech', in Q3.5. Knowledge of basic grammar was lacking in a few cases.

Suggestions for improvement

- (a) Teachers must train learners to read the questions carefully and to respond to every aspect of the question.
- (b) Learners must be taught advertising techniques and how to apply them in answering questions, e.g. the link between the visual and the written text.
- (c) The key instruction words need to be identified and learners should be taught how to respond to various instruction verbs.
- (d) Learners must be taught to provide complete answers and a deeper analysis to obtain full marks.
- (e) The teaching of language structure and conventions must be emphasised by every teacher – from Grade 3 to Grade 12.
- (f) Actual advertisements (all media) should be included in teaching this aspect of visual literacy. The purpose of this genre is to introduce and inculcate into learners a critical awareness of a variety of texts. This practice will also refine candidates' skills, for example in the identification of the advertiser's purpose/intention.

QUESTION 4: Analysing a Cartoon

Candidates did not perform as well in this question as in the past. The inclusion of the direct/reported speech question was new and was well received by teachers.

Common errors and misconceptions

- (a) A number of candidates did not understand what it meant to 'Account for the boy's intention', in Q4.1. They either misunderstood what the instruction verb meant or they failed to specify the boy's intention.
- (b) Most candidates did not comment on the change in the mood of the boy, as was required in Q4.2. They could not see the role reversal. There was not sufficient critical discussion.
- (c) In Q4.3, a few candidates struggled to convert the given sentence to reported speech. In some cases, the inverted commas were retained and/or the tenses were not changed.
- (d) A significant number of candidates lacked understanding of satire and this resulted in a very poor performance in Q4.4. Candidates described what was happening in the cartoon but failed to acknowledge the narcissism presented satirically.

Suggestions for improvement

- (a) The questions must be read carefully and once answered, learners must reflect on whether all aspects of the question have been covered.
- (b) Teachers must make sure cartoon techniques, in their entirety, are taught and practised regularly. The impact and effectiveness of techniques used in visual literacy must be taught. When asked to refer to a frame/cartoon/picture/graphic, learners must look at the detail in the picture and avoid generalisations.
- (c) Learners must become *au fait* with examination terminology and instructional words.
- (d) Teaching key visual literacy concepts such as *anti-climax*, *irony* and *satire* must be prioritised. This should preferably be done in the course of literature study.
- (e) Regular exposure to a variety of cartoons is not only an enjoyable way of teaching an abundance of skills, but it is also essential in equipping learners for the visual literacy section of the question paper.
- (f) Conversion from direct to reported speech must be taught more rigorously. Converting a few lines from a drama text to indirect speech might demonstrate the difference between direct and indirect speech.

QUESTION 5: Language and Editing

Candidates once again fared poorly in this question. There are still too many centres that neglect the teaching of basic grammar – it is expected that a Grade 12 candidate should know the following: punctuation, sentence structure, ambiguity, reported speech and other terminology, as clearly indicated in the CAPS document.

Common errors and misconceptions

- (a) Many candidates were unaware of the pronunciation of 'faux' in Q5.1; therefore they could not provide its homophone.
- (b) Although a few candidates could convert the sentence into the passive voice successfully, they introduced a concord error in their response to Q5.2.
- (c) In Q5.3 the candidates identified the redundancy successfully but some candidates also removed the word 'full'.
- (d) Very few candidates gave the correct meaning of the abbreviation 'aka', as was required by Q5.4.
- (e) In Q5.5 candidates were unable to provide the adjectival form of the word 'muscled'.
- (f) Q5.6 was poorly answered. Most candidates could not correct the tenses from the past tense to the past perfect tense.
- (g) Candidates' rudimentary knowledge of the function of the hyphen resulted in a poor performance in Q5.7.
- (h) In Q5.8 candidates could not identify and correct the concord error.

Suggestions for improvement

- (a) The *CAPS* document conveniently lists the language structures and conventions which are to be taught. Teachers should utilise this document and remember that regular practice in applying these skills is essential. Some basic skills should have been taught in earlier grades, but learners need to practise regularly to retain these skills.
- (b) Learners should be exposed to texts with errors and be provided with guidance on how to correct the errors. This can be done both orally and in writing.
- (c) Teachers must ensure that the jargon of the language paper does not become a stumbling block to the learners. This can be achieved by familiarising learners with the metalanguage of this section.
- (d) English Home Language requires teachers to ensure that learners are able to transfer knowledge of concepts across the three papers, e.g. when teaching *register*, learners should be able to use this knowledge in the language paper and in the creative writing paper.
- (e) When preparing learners for the final examination, teachers need to plan carefully and include frequent exercises and class tests to monitor the learners' progress and identify problem areas for remediation. This will yield good feedback to learners and have a positive impact on their results.
- (f) Past question papers are useful revision tools, but they should not become a limiting or prescriptive source. Learners deserve to be given as many opportunities as possible to interact with texts from a broad range of sources.
- (g) Learners should practise writing out the full sentence when responding to questions that require them to remove the redundancy, to correct a concord error, etc.

3.4 OVERVIEW OF CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE IN PAPER 2

General comments

- (a) It was encouraging to see a slight increase in the number of candidates who excelled in this paper. They displayed detailed knowledge of and insight into the prescribed texts. Their responses were characterised by excellent vocabulary, mature thinking and sustained arguments.
- (b) There were fewer candidates who did not comply with the requirements of the paper and the selection of questions.
- (c) There appeared to be little improvement in the majority of candidates' engagement with their prescribed literary texts. It would appear that many candidates are not reading the novel and/or drama and that there is an over-reliance on film versions or summaries provided in study guides. This is indicative of a poor culture of reading within the broader society. Aliteracy will always have a detrimental effect on performance in this examination.
- (d) Candidates' inadequate linguistic and comprehension skill, as well as their literal interpretation of the prescribed texts, were to their detriment as they were unable to understand the requirements or respond appropriately to the cognitive demands of the questions. Their ability to express themselves effectively was also impeded.
- (e) Most candidates were unable to engage with the texts on a figurative level or present a critical discussion when required to do so.
- (f) Too many candidates displayed only a cursory or superficial understanding of the prescribed texts. There was a lack of detailed knowledge of plot, character, theme, genre and a lack of awareness of literary techniques. They presented generalised responses that did not respond adequately to what had been asked.
- (g) Many candidates appeared unable to respond to the instruction words used, e.g. 'explain' and 'critically discuss'. They lacked the ability to identify the specific requirements of a question and to respond to all aspects of the question in cases where questions had two parts. This contributed to the candidates not being awarded the third mark in the contextual questions.
- (h) There were a number of candidates who resorted to 'lifting' from the poems and/or extracts in an attempt to respond to the questions.
- (i) An ongoing concern is the increasing number of candidates who used pre-prepared essays and answers that appeared in previous years' marking guidelines as responses to this year's questions. Working through past papers and marking guidelines to teach learners how to analyse questions and present responses is excellent practice; however, regurgitating previous answers should be strongly discouraged.

3.5 DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION ANALYSIS OF PAPER 2

SECTION A: POETRY

Common errors and misconceptions

- (a) More candidates responded to the poetry essay (Q1) this year, although the weaker candidates simply resorted to paraphrasing or 'lifting' instead of critically engaging with the content of the poem and the question.
- (b) Most candidates provided examples of *diction* and *imagery* from the poem but were not able to explain how these aspects are used to convey the speaker's criticism of the role of the Church in people's lives. In many cases, no reference was made to *tone*.
- (c) Many candidates appeared to be unaware of the context in which 'The Garden of Love' was written, which negatively affected their ability to respond appropriately.
- (d) There were some candidates who presented their personal views and beliefs in response to Q1 instead of analysing the poem.
- (e) In the contextual questions (Q2, Q3 and Q4), most candidates failed to respond to the specific requirements of the questions. They appeared unable to decode/interpret the question and to respond accordingly. For example, in Q4.1 many candidates' responses neglected to explain the relationship between the trees and the wind as stipulated in the question.
- (f) Too many candidates did not focus on the lines/image referenced in the question. This was particularly noticeable in Q3.2 where many candidates included a discussion of the lines following those stipulated in the question. This meant that their responses were generalised and/or vague.
- (g) Many candidates were unable to explain the effect that a technical aspect has on a poem (Q4.2).
- (h) The majority of candidates managed to identify and explain the images in Q2.3, Q3.3 and Q4.3 but still seemed unable to discuss the effectiveness of the image. Also, the instruction to link the image to 'the context of the poem' was largely ignored by candidates.
- (i) In Q2.4, Q3.4 and Q4.4 most candidates identified examples of *diction/sensory imagery* but failed to link their examples to the message being conveyed. Many candidates simply repeated the statement made in the question about the message, while some offered a general response without offering any substantiation.
- (j) Many candidates responded to the poems in a very literal manner, with little or no understanding of the figurative meanings of the poems. They appeared to be unaware of the connotations of words/phrases in context or of the symbolism employed in the poems.
- (k) 'A Hard Frost', in particular, appears to be poorly understood by the majority of candidates. They displayed a very limited knowledge of what frost actually is, confusing it with snow. They were unable to respond appropriately to Q2.2 as they failed to understand that the reference to flowers is a metaphoric representation of the effect of the frost on various objects.

- (l) The Unseen Poem (Q5) was generally well answered by candidates. However, some candidates did not respond adequately to the instruction in Q5.1 to provide an 'impression of the environment'; instead they offered a description that was lifted from the poem. There were many candidates who handled Q5.3 and Q5.4 poorly, for the same reasons provided in points (h) and (i), and a number of candidates provided their own attitude toward urban life rather than the speaker's attitude.
- (m) Basic literary terminology (e.g. *tone* and *imagery*) appears to be beyond the grasp of many candidates. This is extremely concerning as it is the foundation of the study of poetry. Page 25 of the CAPS document details the aspects that need to be explored when teaching poetry.
- (n) As mentioned in the general comments, candidates' 'lifting' of responses from previous marking guidelines is becoming increasingly problematic and must be strongly discouraged.

SECTIONS B AND C: NOVELS AND DRAMAS

Common errors and misconceptions

- (a) There were many candidates whose responses to the essay questions (Q6, Q8, Q10, Q12 and Q14) were inadequate. Weaker candidates simply ignored the question and resorted to a superficial re-telling of the story. Very little attempt was made to analyse and interpret the question.
- (b) Most essays lacked critical discussion and often focused on only one aspect of the question. For example, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, reference was made to the superficial nature of characters but not to their hypocrisy; in *Life of Pi*, the relationships between Pi and his mother and the French cook were often neglected and the impact of these relationships on Pi's ability to endure was not explored. The 'tragic consequences' were often ignored in the essays on *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *The Crucible*.
- (c) Very few candidates understood that a literary essay required the formulation and development of an argument. A thesis statement was missing in the introduction of many essays, which meant that the argument lacked focus/direction. There was inadequate reference made to the text to support the argument being developed.
- (d) The repetition of the question is not an effective introduction and repeating it at the end of each paragraph does nothing to develop the argument. Not only is it monotonous but it often highlights candidates' inability to create a link between their point and the question.
- (e) There was little to no evidence of effective planning being undertaken before the essay was written. This resulted in poorly structured essays which lacked a coherent and logical argument. Writing the essay and then re-writing it does not constitute planning.
- (f) Stylistic weaknesses that have been addressed in previous diagnostic reports were still evident in very many essays. A colloquial, chatty register and stock phrases such as 'in my opinion' are inappropriate.
- (g) Many responses reflected a flawed and/or inaccurate content knowledge and poor understanding of the plot and characters. This points to the prescribed text(s) not having been read and an over-reliance on the film versions of the texts.

- (h) There were still some candidates who relied on pre-prepared essays and previous marking guidelines that were unrelated to the topics set in this year's examination. There was seldom an attempt to adapt this information to the new focus, which indicated that candidates had not come to grips with the demands of the question.
- (i) Overall, candidates' responses to the contextual questions (Q7, Q9, Q11, Q13 and Q15) were superficial and generalised and discussions, where those were required, were not developed. Little insight into the texts was displayed. Again, a lack of content knowledge hampered performance, even in the lower order recall questions such as Q7.1 and Q9.1.
- (j) Poor knowledge of the plot meant that candidates were unable to contextualise an extract. This was especially true for the Shakespearian texts (Q11 and Q13) where the complexity of the language hampered candidates' ability to respond appropriately.
- (k) Many candidates did not read the questions in their entirety and the specific requirements of the questions were often ignored. Q7.5 and Q9.3, for example, required candidates to indicate their response to the character's state of mind, but this part of the question went unanswered. In Q7.2 and Q11.2 candidates were expected to draw conclusions about a character based on his/her behaviour in the extract, but the majority of candidates offered only a generalised character sketch.
- (l) Candidates' limited vocabulary meant that certain words, for example 'wonder' in Q9.2, were misunderstood and not discussed appropriately in the context in which it appeared.
- (m) Questions that required candidates to 'discuss the significance', such as Q7.3, Q9.7 and Q15.7, were poorly answered, as the meaningfulness in the broader context of the text was overlooked.
- (n) The line references that were provided in the questions (for example, Q7.5 and Q11.3), and that were meant to indicate the focus of the response, were often ignored by the candidates.
- (o) Questions about irony (Q9.6, Q11.5 and Q15.4) and stage directions (Q11.6, Q13.7 and Q15.5), which have been standard questions over the past few years, were very poorly answered.
- (p) It was apparent that many candidates were not familiar with the historical and/or social context in which the prescribed text is located, which meant they were unable to respond appropriately to some of the questions, for example Q6 would have benefitted from a general understanding of Victorian society, while Q11.5 required an understanding of the Divine Right of Kings and Q15.3 called for candidates to have a general awareness of the treatment of women in Puritan society.

Suggestions for improvement

- (a) Teachers should use previous years' papers to model their internal assessment tasks; this will ensure that all the cognitive levels are covered.
- (b) Learners should be exposed to past question papers so that they become familiar with the phrasing of questions and the standard expected in the NSC examinations. The Unseen Poems set in past papers, for example, should be used as practice exercises.

- (c) Learners must be taught that a formal register must be used in the answering of this paper. Colloquial expressions are not appropriate under any circumstances. The correct spelling of characters' names is important, as is using the correct pronoun when referring to a character. Learners must also distinguish between the terms poet/author/playwright.
- (d) Teachers must guard against fanciful/inaccurate interpretations of the prescribed texts and should refer to more than one study guide to ensure that a well-informed interpretation is provided to learners.
- (e) Whereas some websites are useful, teachers should guard against substandard material. No secondary material can be studied in the place of the actual text.
- (f) Learners must be discouraged from using the paper as a platform to express their personal philosophies.
- (g) Learners must be encouraged to develop a thorough/detailed knowledge of the texts they are studying. This will assist them to contextualise events/character behaviour/lines referenced in the contextual questions. Ideally, the prescribed texts should be read more than once prior to the final examination being written. Teachers should avoid using the film versions of the texts in their teaching and should discourage learners from relying on the film or on summaries to get them through the exam.
- (h) Teachers must take cognisance of the historical and/or social context in which a text is written as this plays a vital role in understanding the text. Reading the introductory notes in the prescribed text is mandatory before reading the actual text. They must also make learners aware of other literary features such as author's intention and characteristics of genre. Both stories in *Life of Pi*, for example, must be taught.
- (i) Teachers should make learners aware of the finer points of the text, as the contextual questions will concentrate more intensively on specific details in the text and generalised responses will be insufficient to gain maximum marks.
- (j) Learners' critical thinking skills must be developed. These skills can be honed by asking learners to argue a point or defend an opinion. This approach should form part of the daily lesson plan so that learners can gain confidence in developing these skills in an informal, non-threatening forum. Teachers must give learners multiple opportunities to practise answering these types of questions.
- (k) The meaning of words must be taught in the context in which they are used and the connotations of words must also be discussed so that learners understand their impact on the meaning of the text, for example 'hard' in 'A Hard Frost' and 'dump' in 'Vultures'.
- (l) Vocabulary that will assist learners to express their understanding of a text should also be taught. For example 'endurance' and 'hypocrisy' are useful words to know when discussing *Life of Pi*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Crucible*.
- (m) Teachers should discuss the poetry and literary essay rubric with their learners so that learners understand what is expected of them.
- (n) Emphasis must be given to the structure of the literary essay (introduction, body and conclusion) as well as the appropriate register (formal) and language conventions

(sentence construction and punctuation). Learners must write in the present tense and avoid using the first-person pronoun.

- (o) The literary essay requires a focused and critical discussion. When writing a poetry essay, learners must be taught to discuss how specific words (diction) and images are used by the speaker to create a particular effect in relation to the set question. Learners should be taught to integrate succinct and pertinent quotes into their arguments. If learners are unable to quote accurately, they should rather provide a specific reference. Learners should, however, be discouraged from ‘lifting’ quotations from the poem/extract simply for the sake of being able to quote.
- (p) A thesis statement that responds to the question and positions the argument should be clearly stated in the introduction of a literary essay.
- (q) The PEE/PEEL method of structuring an argument must be taught: make a *point* and support it with an *example* that is *evaluated* in relation to the question. Learners should not simply repeat the question at the end of each paragraph in an effort to create the impression that an argument has been developed. Instead, the statement and an example should be *linked* to the question to substantiate the argument.
- (r) Learners must be encouraged to plan their literary essay; there is a range of techniques such as mind-mapping and tabulations which learners can use to plan and structure their essays.
- (s) The meaning of basic literary terms such as *image*, *tone*, *attitude* and *irony* and how to discuss them in relation to the texts being studied should be taught from Grade 10. Teachers should provide learners with a glossary of appropriate words to assist them in expressing such concepts. Learners should be dissuaded from using generic terms such as ‘negative’, ‘happy’, ‘sad’ etc. Tone/feeling wheels will assist in this regard and are easily found on the internet.
- (t) The decoding of questions and how to link aspects of a question must become a priority in the teaching of literature. The practice of underlining or highlighting key words should be promoted. Learners must be encouraged to re-read the question and their response to ensure that they have responded sensibly and cogently to the requirements of the question. Instruction words such as ‘Account for’ and ‘Discuss’ must be taught and constantly reinforced.
- (u) Learners must be taught that questions that ask them to ‘place the extract in context’ require them to focus on the significant events that immediately precede the extract that has been given. If they are asked for their response, they need to mention an emotion/feeling that is evoked by what has been described. A ‘critically comment on ...’ question requires learners to provide an evaluation and opinion over and above the meaning that is conveyed in the text. When the question requires them to use the extract as a ‘starting point’, learners must first refer to what is presented in the extract and then provide details from the rest of the text. When asked to refer to ‘the novel/play as a whole’, learners must incorporate material from elsewhere in the text.
- (v) Responses should be succinct and mark allocation should be used to determine the detail included in the response. A 3-mark question, for example, will require a well-developed response and critical insight. Learners must be discouraged from writing lengthy, unfocused answers, particularly in the contextual questions.

- (w) Teach poetry appreciation skills and the technical aspects of poetry – the importance of structure/typography; variation in stanzas; use of punctuation and other stylistic devices. Learners also need to be taught how to identify and deconstruct an image by explaining the comparison being made between two things. Consider introducing the prescribed poems as unseen poetry practice prior to the teaching thereof.
- (x) When engaging with a drama, the actual text must be taught; summaries or watching the film version of the play is no substitute. If learners are unfamiliar with the text, they are unable to contextualise the extracts or draw specific information required by the contextual questions.
- (y) Stagecraft must be taught so that learners understand how to respond to a question about directorial choices/staging. Learners must realise that *tone* is not the same as volume or pitch, and *body language* is not the same as action. The choices offered by learners must be specific and the justification that is provided must be appropriate in the context of the dialogue. All three elements of the question must be addressed. This skill can be practised by asking learners to act out lines from the text.
- (z) Learners must be told that they are entitled to agree with some aspects of the question and disagree with others. A ‘mixed response’ is often the more appropriate response to a question.
- (aa) Lastly, a lack of reading culture is detrimental to learner performance. Teachers are urged to introduce supplementary reading from as early as Grade 8, since this will have a positive impact on learners’ performance and their general appreciation of literature.

3.6 OVERVIEW OF CANDIDATES’ PERFORMANCE IN PAPER 3

General comments

- (a) The candidates’ performance in Paper 3 followed the usual pattern. Gifted writers displayed their creativity and powers of expression; average candidates were able to write coherent, albeit mundane pieces; weaker candidates only performed adequately if they chose topics and genres wisely.
- (b) Candidates selected a reasonably wide range of topics. The full spectrum of genres was in evidence and a metaphorical approach was deftly used in several instances. However, they shied away from a specific quotation and the formal report.
- (c) The increased duration of the examination to 3 hours benefitted the majority of candidates, although several candidates could still not finish three pieces.

3.7 DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION ANALYSIS OF PAPER 3

SECTION A: Essays

Common errors and misconceptions

- (a) Q1.1 proved to be a popular choice which many candidates could relate to, particularly in the circumstances prevailing during the past two years. Drawing from real-life experience gave many responses a sincere, authentic quality.

- (b) Although Q1.2 elicited some profound responses and well-argued, relevant essays of a mature calibre, several weaker candidates misinterpreted the Adichie quotation completely.
- (c) In Q1.3 responses were generally sincere and drawn from candidates' own experiences. The topic is an oft-debated theme in society, to which all learners are exposed. Strong arguments were presented on westernisation undermining traditions. In certain instances, the arguments were not well-sustained and the focus on lifestyle overlooked tradition *per se*.
- (d) While Q1.4 was quite a popular choice, many responses were rather mundane. The responses which were more evocative and imaginative scored well. Vivid imagery was often used to describe the pursuits of teenagers in summer, whereas the less skilful candidates could not conjure up a sense of the unique 'magic' of summer in this country.
- (e) There were several pedestrian responses and few novel ideas in response to Q1.5. Three definite angles, which were overlooked by several candidates, had to be addressed. Candidates harnessing a metaphorical approach often performed well.
- (f) Responses to the visual in Q1.6.1 ranged from pedestrian to extremely intelligent and evocative narratives. Responses were generally above expectations. The metaphoric responses were engaging and focused on unconditional love and loyalty. Literal responses were rather scant and immature in some instances.
- (g) In Q1.6.2 responses generally considered the influence of technology. The responses were often insightful and displayed specialised knowledge on technological advancements. Given the pre-eminence of the theme, Fourth Industrial Revolution, candidates were well-equipped to express themselves knowledgeably on the relationship between technology and humans.
- (h) A number of candidates chose to respond to Q1.6.3 with a figurative 'journey-of-life' themed essay. The car evoked an array of colourful narratives. This topic was accessible to candidates, as the idea of ending their school career elicited poignant, sincere responses. The metaphorical responses linked the aspect of a journey to freedom and happiness. However, some essays were marred by repetition.

Suggestions for improvement

- (a) Creative writing should be prioritised in Grade 12, as in all the preceding grades. Teachers might feel compelled to complete the literature syllabus before setting aside time for practice in writing, a problem that has become more prevalent owing to lost teaching time. Learners should be prepared for the completion of three substantial pieces in the allocated three hours.
- (b) Interpretation of topics is key to scoring well in Paper 3. Learners must be taught how to scrutinise topics, considering every word in the topic, so that they respond appropriately to nuanced topics. Planning is essential in order to maintain focus and pre-empt rambling and repetition.
- (c) The selection of a topic about which a learner can write convincingly and authentically is crucial. The attempt to mimic films and drama series is ill-advised. Highly clichéd writing remains a problem. Overused expressions make an essay hackneyed and uninspiring. More class discussions of trending topics and stories will encourage originality.

- (d) As far as visual stimuli are concerned, there must be a discernible link between the essay and the visual stimulus. Basing writing and even speeches on visual stimuli in the classroom adds a new dimension to creative writing.
- (e) Learners should not memorise essays, with the intention of adapting them to respond to an examination topic. This practice is a thinly-veiled attempt to improve on their performance but which leads to a much lower score than an expression of original thought and expression. Teachers should boost their learners' confidence in the validity of their own experiences and opinions. Articles from the internet, newspapers and magazines should be incorporated in lessons to stimulate interest in current affairs.
- (f) Learners must be discouraged from stringing together long lines of what they deem to be impressive vocabulary. In fact, verbosity obscures meaning, causing the essay to come across as contrived and convoluted.
- (g) Learners need to be given constructive feedback on writing tasks. When assessing essays, teachers should write constructive comments. Learners should be familiar with the descriptors in the rubric in order to understand what the objective of the task is.
- (h) The teaching of basic language skills and vocabulary enhancement is essential. Sentence construction is a general problem, with the ubiquitous comma splice plaguing the writers and hence the readers/markers. Spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and general grammar rules need to be taught thoroughly in the lower grades and revised in the Grade 12 year. Learners who do not read widely cannot improve their vocabulary. Slang and abbreviations reveal a sloppy, thoughtless approach to the task.
- (i) Learners should be taught not to use redundant phrases, for example 'we as people'. They should ensure, while editing their work, that every word adds value to their writing.
- (j) Code-switching could be an effective technique which lends colour to the learner's writing. There is an important caveat concerning this practice: a word or phrase from another language must be translated into English so that the marker fully understands the content of the essay.
- (k) Focusing on tenses would go a long way to improving writing. Learners should be sensitised to the error of switching tenses, particularly when there is no logical reason for doing so, for example, a flashback.
- (l) Structure is an important component of essay-writing. Teachers should re-visit paragraphing, since many learners write only three paragraphs. Varying the length of paragraphs is a useful technique. Coherence is achieved when logical connectors are in evidence and the progression from the introduction to the conclusion is clear. No sub-headings should be used in an essay.
- (m) More time should be spent on the technical issues of producing a good answer script. Legibility remains a problem: only that which can be read and deciphered can be credited. Learners should also be taught to strike through rough work so that only the final product is marked.

SECTION B: Longer Transactional Pieces

Common errors and misconceptions

- (a) Candidates who understood the background and audience of the formal speech in Q2.1 wrote impressive, convincing pieces. However, it would appear that the Olympic Games and the concept of sport codes were unfamiliar to many candidates. Since it was a formal speech, presented to be televised, a formal register was required. Colloquial pieces that seemed more like impromptu speeches were not credited with high scores.
- (b) While good articles in Q2.2 were mature and persuasive, thus convincing the youth they would benefit by staying in South Africa, the weaker pieces lacked strong substance and powerful arguments. The articles often resembled a simple piece of prose, listing the advantages of life in South Africa. Once again, the audience had to be borne in mind in order to achieve an authentic transactional piece.
- (c) The topic in Q2.3, the e-mail, was multi-layered. Several candidates ignored the instructions below the stimulus, which provided the context. The purpose of the e-mail was to persuade the advertiser to consider the NPO as a suitable beneficiary. Many candidates misunderstood the topic, as well as the word 'beneficiary'. The format also proved to be problematic in cases where this genre had not been taught.
- (d) The dialogue (Q2.4) was generally well-answered. There were interesting responses and humour often added an enjoyable dimension to these pieces. Stage directions were used effectively by well-prepared candidates. In certain instances, the language used was inappropriate. For example, profanity and vulgar words surfaced occasionally, to the detriment of the candidate. An effective piece would show an understanding of register suitable for the audience. Although an employer/employee relationship is not necessarily formal, the tone of the speakers should be realistic.
- (e) In Q2.5, good writers gave convincing arguments and opinions on the topic of beauty pageants. Many pieces presented flimsy, superficial points on the topic. The letter to the press requires that conventions such as the correct format be observed. The content mark in the rubric is affected by an incorrect format. The ever-present problem of a candidate's misunderstanding the purpose of a letter to the editor persists.
- (f) The formal report remains the Achilles' heel of transactional writing. Candidates who had been well-prepared to tackle this technical piece of writing in Q2.6 were able to cover the topic adequately. However, the majority of candidates had no inkling of what a formal report is and often resorted to a formal letter of complaint.

Suggestions for improvement

- (a) Transactional writing should be taught on a regular, ongoing basis throughout a learner's high school career. This component of the examination carries as many marks as two setworks do. Practice of the various genres should not be neglected in Grade 12; notes and writing tips cannot replace actual practice of writing the various pieces. Contextualising the writing in actual scenarios that occur in real time would increase learners' understanding of the intention of each piece of writing.
- (b) In the FET phase, teachers of Grades 10 to 12 should collaborate to ensure that all transactional pieces are taught in the course of the phase. Teachers need to revise the format and the skills annually and give feedback on both formal and informal tasks, as required by the curriculum.

- (c) When writing a speech, learners need to address the topic as quickly as possible; they must be taught to underline key words in the topic and ensure that they respond to all aspects of the topic. Poor marks are awarded when candidates do not read, decode, and respond to all the facets of the topic. The audience must be considered to achieve the correct register and style.
- (d) In the writing of an article, language proficiency, tone and register are critical in ensuring a good mark. Teachers should expose learners to current magazine articles so that they have a frame of reference before they attempt to write an article. Learners should be encouraged to include interesting examples or case studies to add colour to their articles.
- (e) Teachers should pay attention to the teaching of the e-mail, as a new addition to the curriculum. Learners need to understand the nature and purpose of the piece in order to succeed in what is a deceptively simple topic. Certain writing activities can be dovetailed effectively, for example the writing of an article or letter to the press in the classroom, followed by an e-mail addressing issues in the letter or article for homework. Group work or work done in pairs lends a new dynamic to transactional tasks.
- (f) The dialogue should give a sense of real-life discourse. Dynamic interchange is desirable. The concluding lines should be an effective close instead of a blunt, nondescript ending. When teaching a dialogue, the appropriate use of language and punctuation should be highlighted. It is not acceptable to use slang/profanity/obscene expressions indiscriminately. It is also inappropriate to use language that is too formal and stilted. The language must suit the purpose and the audience. Punctuation should be utilised more thoughtfully. A drama text could be used as a model for format, structure, punctuation, stage direction, etc. This approach could also help learners to identify the relatedness of texts.
- (g) The letter to the press should be practised to avoid the constant format and stylistic errors that re-surface every year. Learners should understand that the editor only publishes the letter and should not be addressed as the party who should rectify a problem. Issues such as libel could also be addressed with the learners. Generation Z understands the banning of certain individuals from twitter: this could be a useful springboard for a discussion on the legal parameters within which letters to the press have to be written.
- (h) It is suggested that subject advisors host workshops that train teachers on the formal report. The lack of knowledge of this piece, with its prescribed format, is evident at every level. Neither the marking centre nor a marking discussion lends itself to this kind of training.
- (i) Learners should have access to marking rubrics in order to give them an idea of areas in which they need development.
- (j) It is recommended that examination papers set at school level, as well as papers overseen by the district, are set at the same standard as the final examination. Common papers often deviate significantly from the paper with which the learner will have to grapple at the end of the year.
- (k) The teaching of the basics of grammar should be prioritised in the lower grades so that cursory revision in Grade 12 is sufficient to prepare the learners for Papers 1 and 3. Greater collaboration between teachers as well as subject advisors of different phases is key to better coverage of the basics of language. Knowledge of language and the ability to write coherently are essential life skills.