National
Qualifications
2026

# 2026 English

# Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

# Higher

# Question Paper Finalised Marking Instructions

These marking instructions have been prepared by examination teams for use by Qualifications Scotland appointed markers when marking external course assessments.

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**General marking principles for Higher English: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation**

*Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.*

**(a)** Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.

**(b)** If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.

**(c)** We use the term 'possible answers' to allow for any variation in candidate responses. Award marks according to the accuracy and relevance of the candidate's response.

**Marking instructions for each question**

**Passage 1**

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | | | Award **2 marks** for detailed/insightful comment plus quotation/reference.<br><br>Award **1 mark** for more basic comment plus quotation/reference.<br><br>Award **0 marks** for quotation/reference alone.<br><br>Marks may be awarded 2+2, 2+1+1 **or** 1+1+1+1 | **4** | Possible answers include:<br><br>• 'scorching' suggests extreme, damaging heat<br>• list 'heatwaves . . . havoc' suggests the scale of the impacts affecting Europe<br>• 'wreaking havoc' suggests chaos/widespread destruction<br>• parallel structure/list 'In Athens . . . In Italy' suggests global scale of the problem<br>• colon introduces contradiction between appearance and grim reality ('streaked with grey: not clouds, but smoke')<br>• balanced structure 'not clouds, but smoke' highlights contrast between expectations and shocking reality<br>• 'floods' suggests uncontrollable, damaging volume of water<br>• 'unbearable' suggests intolerable heat<br>• 'barely a pause' suggests rapid change in weather patterns<br>• 'biblical (downpours)' suggests epic, extreme nature of the weather<br>• 'downpours' suggests torrential, incessant rain |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | • ‘unquenchable’ suggests fires could not be extinguished<br>• parenthesis ‘— biblical downpours . . . fires in Canada —’ emphasises the extreme contrasts in weather/the intensity of bad weather<br>• ‘confronting’ suggests a problem which must be faced directly<br>• ‘emergency’ suggests crisis, immediate threat |
| **2.** | | | Candidates must use their own words. No marks for straight lifts from the passage.<br><br>Marks may be awarded 1+1 | **2** | Possible answers include:<br><br>• people don’t consider it an urgent, important problem (‘low priority’, ‘17th out of 21 national issues’)<br>• some people (even those directly affected) haven’t changed their mind (‘Even when the impact is personal . . . hard to shift’)<br>• some people (even those directly affected) still don’t link natural disasters to environmental problems (‘around a third saw no connection’)<br>• no impact/emotional engagement (‘unmoved’) |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
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| **3.** | | | Candidates must use their own words. No marks for straight lifts from the passage.<br><br>Award **2 marks** for detailed/insightful comment.<br><br>Award **1 mark** for more basic comment.<br><br>Award **0 marks** for reference alone.<br><br>Marks may be awarded 2+1 **or** 1+1+1 | **3** | Possible answers include:<br><br>• (innately) we put current, pressing problems first ('prioritise the urgent', 'lion suddenly coming out of the woods')<br>• (innately) we are less good at making plans, thinking about long-term, underlying problems ('over the important', 'not to work out how to save our civilisation over the next hundred years')<br>• we don't like thinking about the end of human life on earth ('own destruction')<br>• we are easily/conveniently distracted by other matters ('any excuse to look elsewhere', 'something urgent and diverting') |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4.** | | | Award **2 marks** for detailed/insightful comment plus quotation/reference.<br><br>Award **1 mark** for more basic comment plus quotation/reference.<br><br>Award **0 marks** for quotation/reference alone.<br><br>Marks may be awarded 2+1 **or** 1+1+1 | **3** | Possible answers include:<br><br>• 'vastly wealthy', 'billions' suggests they are prepared to spend a fortune to get their own way<br>• italicisation of '*they*' highlights the domineering self-centred attitude of these companies<br>• 'peddling' suggests they are promoting their ideas persistently **and/or** there is something duplicitous, deceitful in their actions/message<br>• 'one key (message)' suggests their single-minded, ruthless approach<br>• colon introduces the key message being promoted to mislead the public (': doubt')<br>• 'doubt' suggests deliberately undermining public confidence/certainty<br>• comparison to another discredited industry ('Like the tobacco industry') suggests the unprincipled nature of the oil and gas companies<br>• 'sweet-talk' suggests language designed to manipulate or deceive the public<br>• parallel structure/repetition of 'to sweet-talk . . . to persuade' emphasises how urgently, unrelentingly they are promoting their ideas<br>• list of 'real or human-made or even that serious' suggests the variety of different lies they are using to cast doubt on the climate crisis<br>• repetition of 'or' in 'real or human-made or even that serious' emphasises the number of alternative objections they offer<br>• 'despicable' suggests how disgraceful their methods are |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | • '(driven by) greed' suggests their intense desire for wealth<br>• 'gargantuan (profit)' suggests the money they are making is monstrous, grotesque<br>• balance of 'gargantuan profit' against 'habitable' planet' suggests how wrong-headed, destructive their tactics are<br>• (positioning of) 'Sadly' suggests how awful/regrettable their behaviour is<br>• 'push (their message)' suggests how forceful, manipulative they are **and/or** suggests they are promoting an illicit/immoral message to the public<br>• 'relentlessly' suggests they promote this message in an unceasing, high-pressure way |
| **5.** | | | Candidates must use their own words. No marks for straight lifts from the passage.<br><br>Award **2 marks** for detailed/insightful comment.<br><br>Award **1 mark** for more basic comment.<br><br>Award **0 marks** for reference alone.<br><br>Marks may be awarded 2 **or** 1+1 | **2** | Possible answers include:<br><br>• many people have not grasped that experts are united in their acceptance of climate change ('only 14% of Americans understand there is consensus')<br>• ineffective messaging from experts/activists ('this specific failure in communication', 'their language is sometimes part of the problem')<br>• experts/activists have not been sufficiently forceful/vocal in emphasising the severity of the danger ('have not always been communicating the threat loudly enough') |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **6.** | | | Award **2 marks** for detailed/insightful comment plus quotation/reference.<br><br>Award **1 mark** for more basic comment plus quotation/reference.<br><br>Award **0 marks** for quotation/reference alone.<br><br>Marks may be awarded 2+2, 2+1+1 **or** 1+1+1+1 | **4** | Possible answers include:<br><br>• 'rejected' suggests the term was dismissed, not fit for purpose<br>• 'gentle', 'soothing' suggests the terminology is unhelpfully calming, reassuring<br>• 'better beach weather' unhelpfully suggests something desirable, attractive, idyllic<br>• list of 'hot is sexy . . . cool . . . new' suggests the variety of ways in which 'heat' sounds desirable, instead of dangerous<br>• repetition of/short, punchy sentence(s) 'hot is sexy. Hot is cool. Hot is new' emphasises unhelpfully vibrant appeal of 'heat' (NB: if more than one short sentence dealt with individually, reward only **one** example)<br>• 'hot is sexy.'/'Hot is cool.'/'Hot is new' suggests contradiction between attractive connotations of 'hot' and warning message being conveyed<br>• short, punchy sentence ''Climate change' doesn't work either' emphasises categorical rejection of this term<br>• 'ambiguous' suggests term is unclear, open to interpretation<br>• 'not immediate' suggests term is not direct enough, lacks urgent sense of danger<br>• 'hints' suggests the message is not direct/forceful enough<br>• balance of/contrast between 'in the future' and 'right now' emphasises urgent action is required now, not at some vague time in the years ahead |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | • ‘multiple’ suggests there are many unhelpful terms<br>• ‘fall at a more basic hurdle’ suggests the immediate failure of these terms<br>• ‘simply’ intensifies the public’s fundamental incomprehension<br>• list of ‘Net zero . . . justice’ suggests the scale/variety of terms that have failed<br>• ‘blank faces’ suggests the public’s lack of understanding<br>• balance/juxtaposition of ‘not moved, just confused’ emphasises the gulf between the intention of these terms and their actual lack of impact<br>• ‘not moved’ suggests these terms have no emotional impact<br>• ‘(just) confused’ suggests public bewilderment<br>• short, punchy, (climactic) sentence ‘People . . . confused’ sums up total failure of messaging |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **7.** | | | Candidates must use their own words. No marks for straight lifts from the passage.<br><br>Award **2 marks** for detailed/insightful comment.<br><br>Award **1 mark** for more basic comment.<br><br>Award **0 marks** for reference alone.<br><br>Marks may be awarded 2+1 **or** 1+1+1 | **3** | Possible answers include:<br><br>• they should rethink their strategy ('change tactics')<br>• a specific/familiar/accessible term or picture should be used by everyone ('a single word everyone understands', 'settle on the image')<br>• this term or picture should be used exhaustively/ until it is firmly embedded in the public consciousness ('repeated so often', 'fixed in people's minds')<br>• they should no longer rely on ecological evidence alone to convey their message ('that the catastrophic environmental facts will persuade people all by themselves')<br>• money should be invested in informing people ('devoted relatively few resources to reach or persuade the public') |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **8.** | | | For full marks, candidates must deal with both imagery and sentence structure, but not necessarily in equal measure.<br><br>Award **2 marks** for detailed/insightful comment plus quotation/reference.<br><br>Award **1 mark** for more basic comment plus quotation/reference.<br><br>Award **0 marks** for quotation/reference alone.<br><br>Marks may be awarded 2+2, 2+1+1 **or** 1+1+1+1 | **4** | Possible answers include:<br><br>**Imagery**<br>• 'propaganda war' suggests a desperate struggle to win public support<br>• 'battlefield' suggests the need to directly confront opponents' arguments head-on<br>• 'frontline' suggests we need to be engaged at the very centre of the debate<br>• extended martial metaphor ('war . . . battlefield . . . frontline') suggests a life-or-death war of words, which we need to tackle with resolve and commitment<br>• 'tools' suggests using methods specifically designed to convey ideas in the most effective way<br>• 'parched' suggests life-threatening dryness<br><br>**Sentence structure**<br>• shorter, punchy sentences 'They need . . . And they need' emphasise an unequivocal call for action<br>• repetition/parallel sentence structure 'They need . . . And they need . . . They need' emphasises action is imperative<br>• colon introduces the summative/fundamental point that there is both concern and optimism (': a message of both fear and hope')<br>• list 'beauty, life and lives' suggests the scale/variety of (fundamental) aspects of our existence threatened<br>• single dash '— and hope that . . . the worst' dramatically adds a climactic point that change is possible/needed |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **9.** | | | Key areas of agreement are shown in the grid. | **5** | Candidates can use bullet points in this final question or write a number of linked statements.<br><br>The following guidelines should be used:<br><br>**Award 5 marks** for identification of three key areas of agreement with detailed/insightful use of supporting evidence.<br><br>**Award 4 marks** for identification of three key areas of agreement with appropriate use of supporting evidence.<br><br>**Award 3 marks** for identification of three key areas of agreement.<br><br>**Award 2 marks** for identification of two key areas of agreement.<br><br>**Award 1 mark** for identification of one key area of agreement.<br><br>**Award 0 marks** for failure to identify any key areas of agreement and/or misunderstanding of task.<br><br>NB: A candidate who identifies only two key areas of agreement may be awarded up to a **maximum of 4 marks**, as follows:<br><br>• **2 marks** for identification of two key areas of agreement plus: |

| Question | | | Expected response(s) | Max mark | Additional guidance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | **either**<br><br>• a further **2 marks** for detailed/insightful use of supporting evidence to a total of **4 marks**<br><br>**OR**<br><br>• a further **1 mark** for appropriate use of supporting evidence to a total of **3 marks**<br><br>A candidate who identifies only one key area of agreement may be awarded up to a **maximum of 2 marks**, as follows:<br><br>• **1 mark** for identification of one key area of agreement, plus a further mark for use of supporting evidence to a total of **2 marks** |

| | Area of Agreement | Passage 1 | Passage 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **crisis is happening now** | **scientific agreement that extremes of weather are affecting us on a global scale now** ('planetary emergency', 'consensus . . . that global warming is happening') | **we already have a global crisis** ('already disrupting the lives of billions of people', 'raging all around us right now') |
| 2 | **lack of urgency/need for speed** | **people appear unconcerned** ('low priority', 'unmoved', 'almost any excuse to look elsewhere') | **politicians are not responding quickly enough** ('political response is not meeting the urgency of the crisis') |
| 3 | **fossil fuel companies' immoral behaviour** | **fossil fuel companies have spent a fortune on a campaign of disinformation minimising the danger** ('one billion dollars peddling one key message to the public: doubt') | **fossil fuel companies have been trying to deceive the public** ('well-funded disinformation campaign . . . designed to confuse, muddy and mislead', 'promoting myths and lies about environmental solutions') |
| 4 | **need for improved language/communication** | **environmentalists need to convey their ideas more clearly** ('these terms meet blank faces', 'settle on the image', 'that image has to be used again and again') | **environmentalists need to focus on unambiguous language** ('problems . . . are caused by the language used by scientists and campaigners', 'Changing other terms would also help inform people and redirect the climate conversation') |
| 5 | **need for a more pro-active approach** | **environmentalists must stop believing facts alone will convince people** ('climate movement has devoted relatively few resources to . . . persuade the public', 'only one side is on the battlefield') | **environmentalists need to be pro-active rather than reactive** ('One way to combat disinformation is to get ahead of it', 'Pre-emptive messages…can be effective in preventing misunderstanding') |
| 6 | **need for inspiration/hope** | **environmentalists need to inspire hope** ('message of both fear and hope', 'we still have time to avert the worst') | **our outlook needs to be much more positive and inspirational** ('we need to talk not of sacrifice and deprivation but of opportunity and improvement', 'humans flourishing in a post-fossil fuel age', 'we're not waiting for an energy miracle; we've already had one') |

**[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]**