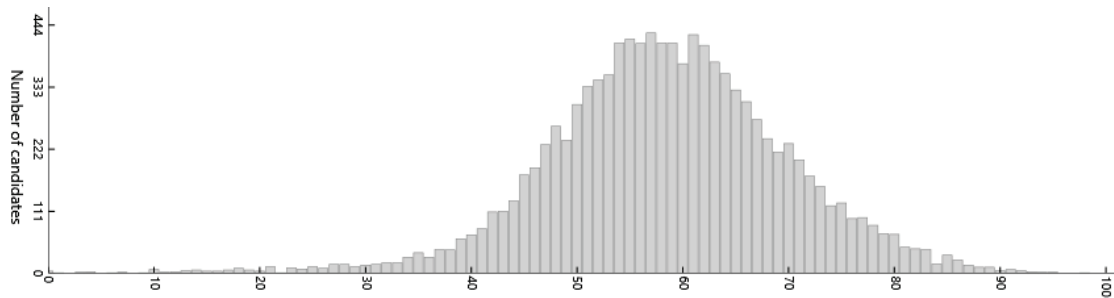




Summary report of the 2018 ATAR course examination: English

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2018	10 926	125
2017	11 161	121
2016	11 288	159

Examination score distribution-Written



Summary

The examination performance this year was pleasing, particularly in Sections Two and Three, and the majority of candidates made reasonable attempts to complete all three sections. It was also pleasing to note the variety of texts chosen by many candidates used to show their understanding of course concepts in Section Two, and there was evidence in their analysis – particularly where intriguing and new comparisons were being made - that many schools are studying a wide range of texts and text types through concept-focused teaching programmes. Candidates wrote thoughtful and sometimes dynamic analysis about song lyrics, poems, podcasts, speeches, short films, multimodal hybrid texts, YouTube advertisements, drama scripts, full-length feature films and documentaries, short stories and novels in Section Two.

While there were some outstanding analytical responses offered in Section One, the skills required to analyse brief written texts and multimodal texts successfully under timed conditions need further attention in classrooms. The changeable nature of the text types that may appear in Section One requires candidates to focus on the ability to identify and explain their interpretation of a text's mode/s, language features and structural features within the parameters of the specific question wording focusing on ideas or meaning. Repeated practice at the classroom level in terms of transferable analysis skills between the textual elements of different texts will increase candidates' comfort and confidence with this skill set.

Attempted by 10 926 candidates Mean 58.16% Max 98.00% Min 0.00%

Section means were:

Section One: Comprehending	Mean 54.17%		
Attempted by 10 903 candidates	Mean 16.25(/30)	Max 30.00	Min 0.00
Section Two: Responding	Mean 60.9%		
Attempted by 10 868 candidates	Mean 24.36(/40)	Max 40.00	Min 0.00
Section Three: Composing	Mean 59.14%		
Attempted by 10 899 candidates	Mean 17.74(/30)	Max 30.00	Min 0.00

General comments

Students are reminded to read and deconstruct questions carefully. In each section, there were questions that caused angst for a proportion of candidates because they misread the terms of the question – *Mother Nature* instead of *human nature* in Question 1, for example, or using *conventions* instead of *innovations* in Question 9. Students are encouraged to remember that the examination is a space for thinking about and reflecting on the texts taught in class, but it was the candidate's role to respond carefully to the terms of *this* examination, not previous years' practice questions or assessments completed at school.

Advice for candidates

- Pay careful attention to the question wording and unpack the meaning of the terms in front of you. In responding to Question 1 in 2018, there were a startling number of candidates who wrote about 'mother nature' instead of 'human nature', which is a sign of panicked writing rather than careful planning. Look at the question, take a breath, map out your response and then begin writing. This applies to each section of the paper, where each year markers can clearly see candidates who are writing for the question that they want, rather than the question that they have been given.
- Paragraphing is essential, particularly for Sections Two and Three. It is inappropriate to submit work in one or two long paragraphs for an entire response. Learn how to use paragraph structures effectively when writing your brief analysis of a text for Section One, in your lengthy and complex response to texts in Section Two, and when writing your composition for Section Three.
- Learn the art of rhetoric, learn the craft of imaginative writing, learn the power of interpretive texts to represent an element of the real world for a particular reason ... and bring these skills to the examination ready for the questions that will be presented to you on the day. Don't pre-prepare and memorise responses that cannot be adapted easily or restructured within the parameters of a specific examination question. Your work in Section Two is to use the close text studies you did in class to answer the particulars of the question that you select ... not the work that you have done before. This is equally important in Section Three, where some weaker candidates use memorised or 'checklist' approaches to persuasive texts (such as speeches) that don't actually suit the question wording.
- In Section Three, always ensure that your opening and closing paragraphs strongly reiterate the audience, context and purpose of the text, so that you are answering the composing question that you have selected. Some of the strongest candidates have shown the ability to craft a title (and, perhaps, a subtitle) that is specific to form, purpose and audience, which helps to shape their composition effectively from the very start.
- Advice from a marker for Section Three: 'Many candidates chose New York or some other American city for their setting. While a foreign destination may seem like a good choice, my advice to students is to stick with what you know intimately. Give the marker a rich account of Donnybrook, Broome or Perth. Create wonderful sensory imagery because you know this place and you will bring your reader there too.'
- Revise with your teacher and on your own *exactly* how to punctuate and format dialogue between characters when you are composing.
- Write neatly to the best of your ability. Leave time at the end of each section to re-read your response and tidy up any phrases or words that are unintelligible. You need to present your writing to the markers so that your ideas can be rewarded, which is very difficult if they cannot be read.

Advice for teachers

- Comparison is an integral concept in the Year 12 ATAR experience and comparing brief texts from a variety of modes and genres is a beneficial strategy to help your students understand the act of comparing using the syllabus concepts. Studying longer, full-length texts is an important part of the course, too, but this needs to be balanced with the need to compare short extracts and texts often.
- All texts are equal in Section Two. There is no hierarchy of text types that will achieve higher marks in the examination. High-scoring candidates have performed strongly with an exceptional understanding of shorter texts, such as short films, poems and short stories; music video clips and accompanying lyrics; TED talks for a particular purpose and within a specific context; podcasts for specific cultural or political contexts; interactive online multimodal texts requiring user participation to direct a narrative; and, literary print texts that have been enhanced by augmented reality.
- Encourage your students through composition and analysis exercises to explore how voice is crafted through tone, syntax manipulation, diction, punctuation, figurative language and descriptive language
- The content in Units 3 and 4 places equal weighting on *genre* and *mode*. Revision of the importance and meaning of mode in this syllabus is needed, so that your students can engage more successfully with this term and the textual features used to create meaning in, and across, different modes.
- Revise paragraph length and the use of transitional devices to 'break' a paragraph and continue with the same thread of an idea or argument. In addition, the punctuation of dialogue when quoting text in Section Two and when composing in Section Three needs more deliberate and specific practice in classrooms.
- For Section Three, do not instruct students to write a Statement of Intent as it will not be read. Instead, teach your students the ability to craft an effective title (and, where necessary, a subtitle) specific to the form, purpose and audience for whom they are writing.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Comprehending (30 Marks)

The decision to have one visual text, one interpretive extract and one multimodal text was made to further explore the scope of the ATAR English design brief for Section One. The 2016 and 2017 iterations of the examination both featured one prose extract, one interpretive text extract, and one visual/multimodal text.

The 2018 paper, the third iteration of the ATAR course examination, explored the part of the Section One design brief, which states that 'one or more of the texts can be multimodal'. Text 3, which works quite differently to the visual image for Question 1 was selected.

All questions were grounded in syllabus concepts and required candidates to comprehend and analyse in complex ways in a short period of time. The difference in scope in the three questions was to explore the possibilities of the section with a focus on ideas, representation, voice, interpretation and mode/multimodality.

Most candidates attempted all three questions, which was a pleasing indication of examination time management strategies and the accessibility of the questions in Section One this year.

There were issues with weaker candidates listing points of analysis, rather than synthesising them within the parameters of the question wording. Some responses read like 'metalinguage checklists' down the page and needed further shaping into thoughtful explorations of the concepts within the questions. The strongest responses were able to attend to the question wording using a well-structured thesis sentence at the beginning, and then, in one or two paragraphs, synthesise multiple points of evidence from different textual features, depending on the question asked.

Section Two: Responding (40 Marks)

Feedback from the 2017 Chief Examiner and marking panel overwhelmingly supported the position that the Section Two questions had too many elements embedded. The 2018 panel reviewed the number and phrasing of elements in Section Two questions for clarity and conciseness. It is significant to note, then, that the mean of this section did not increase at all between 2017 and 2018, which may have been expected given the reconfiguration of question elements.

The Section Two questions worked to use a combination of syllabus terminology and more specific phrasing that invited candidates to make links with their studied texts and aspects of context. It was a deliberate decision to 'loosen' this section from the strict syllabus wording that was necessary to use in the first two iterations of this examination design to help teachers and candidates come to terms with the syllabus.

There were some very strong candidates this year who offered comparative essays and discursive essays that explored the question wording in dynamic and intelligent prose, while also referring to the question wording consistently. It is important for students and teachers to note that there are a wide variety of essay types that do not all require a rigid TEEL paragraph structure with overly repetitive phrasing. Discursive essays are just as valid as analytical essays in Section Two, provided that they work to thoughtfully attend to the requirements of the question. However, there were many candidates who reinterpreted terms this year by using other words that were not synonymous.

Of concern this year were the number of responses with only two body paragraphs, often lengthy yet without showing an understanding of paragraph structure. Two body paragraphs for a four-page essay was inappropriate structure. Many candidates needed to employ transitional devices and paragraph breaks more effectively.

There were concerns from teachers and candidates this year that the specific word 'context' was not used at all in Section Two. The examination panel chose instead to select phrases that referred to periods of time or 'circumstances'.

Section Three: Composing (30 Marks)

It was pleasing to see that some candidates were beginning to shape their compositions to demonstrate a very clear engagement with, and understanding of specific forms. While Statements of Intent are decreasing in appearance, some schools must still be teaching them as compulsory, which is inaccurate. Overall, the use of paragraphs and paragraph breaks are areas that need to be improved. The correct punctuation of dialogue also seemed to be challenging for many candidates.

It is very difficult to produce quality imaginative, persuasive or interpretive writing that engages audience and meets the demands of the question in sixty minutes. However, given that creating is 35% of the course, an improvement in the third year of this course and examination was expected. One marker gave excellent advice to candidates regarding this section: 'See this section also as a *thinking* section and as one that measures creativity and critical thinking, from question choice to genre to audience to topic explored.'

There is a tendency for responses in the Composing section to lack a sense of authenticity in diction and voice. It would be a useful teaching point to focus on using contextually appropriate dialogue and voice for characters, particularly if very distinct scenarios such as the early 1900s, the Holocaust, colonial Australia or 20th Century England are written about, as was the case in this examination. Modern day slang and phrasing instantly removed a level of sophistication from such responses.