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Council for Quality Assurance in
General and Further Education and Training

Predictability of the National Senior Certificate Examinations
English FAL Report
DBE

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Name & Surname	**Subject**
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ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FET	Further Education and Training
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
MCQ	Multiple Choice Question
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
SACAI	South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute
SAGs	Subject Assessment Guidelines

Section 1: Overview of the subject

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) conceptualises language as a fundamental instrument of cognition and communication. It positions language not only as a medium through which individuals think and interact, but also as a cultural and aesthetic resource that enables communities to interpret and make meaning of their lived realities. Through effective language use, learners acquire and construct knowledge, articulate their identities, emotions, and ideas, engage meaningfully with others, and navigate their social and material environments. Moreover, language provides access to a rich repertoire of symbolic representations and conceptual frameworks that empower learners to imagine, critique, and transform their world. In this sense, language serves both as a vehicle for expressing cultural diversity and social relationships and as a tool for shaping and reshaping these constructs.

Within CAPS, language study is structured across three differentiated levels: Home Language (HL), First Additional Language (FAL), and Second Additional Language (SAL). This report focuses specifically on English as a First Additional Language. FAL refers to a language learned in addition to a learner's Home Language and is intended to broaden communicative competence and academic access.

The primary aims of FAL instruction are multifaceted. Learners are expected to develop the linguistic proficiency required to communicate accurately and appropriately, with due consideration of audience, purpose, and context. FAL instruction further seeks to equip learners to use the additional language as a medium of learning and academic engagement across the curriculum. Emphasis is placed on the integrated development of listening, speaking, reading and viewing, and writing and presenting skills, cultivated with confidence and enjoyment as a foundation for lifelong learning.

In addition, FAL instruction aims to foster learners' ability to articulate and substantiate their ideas, perspectives, and emotions both orally and in writing, thereby promoting independent and critical thinking. The curriculum encourages learners to use the additional language imaginatively to explore personal and social realities and to communicate their experiences and insights effectively. A further objective is the development of information literacy, enabling learners to access, evaluate, and

manage information across diverse contexts, which is an essential competency in the contemporary information-driven society.

Finally, FAL education promotes critical and creative engagement with texts. Learners are encouraged to interrogate ethical issues and values, analyse and challenge underlying assumptions, power relations, and perspectives embedded within texts, and engage with texts for a variety of purposes, including enjoyment, research, and critique. Through these aims, FAL instruction contributes to the holistic intellectual, social, and cultural development of learners.

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the predictability of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) English FAL examination papers administered between 2022 and 2024. The findings are organised according to the examinable topics prescribed in CAPS and are accompanied by topic-specific recommendations.

Section 2: Research design

The study employed a qualitative research design based on document analysis to examine the predictability of DBE examination papers administered between 2022 and 2024. Document analysis was considered appropriate as the study relied on pre-existing materials, enabling subject experts to systematically examine and interpret examination papers and marking memoranda. Purposive sampling was used to select ten high-enrolment subjects from the DBE and Independent Examinations Board (IEB). The South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI) was excluded from the study due to its alignment with DBE examination guidelines. English FAL was included among the selected high-enrolment subjects.

Data were collected by a subject expert who analysed all relevant examination papers across the three-year period using evaluation instruments grounded in the principles of content and construct validity. The conceptual framework underpinning this study is discussed in detail in the *Predictability of the NSC* overview report. The expert examined each assessment item, compared trends across years, and evaluated alignment with the CAPS and the Abridged CAPS. Guided by a structured Microsoft Word-based instrument comprising tables and thematic questions, the analysis considered topic coverage, item types, assessed skills, and weighting to facilitate a comprehensive assessment of examination predictability. The thematic questions informing the evaluation are discussed in detail in the *Predictability of the NSC* overview report.

Section 3: Findings from the evaluation of the DBE and IEB question papers

This chapter presents the detailed findings arising from the evaluation of the DBE National Senior Certificate (NSC) English FAL Papers 1, 2, and 3. The findings are drawn from a systematic analysis of examination papers administered between 2022 and 2024 and provide an overview of patterns related to examination predictability.

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate whether the upward trend observed in learner performance in the NSC examinations reflects genuine improvements in learner competence or whether it may, in part, be attributed to increasing levels of predictability in examination design. By analysing selected subjects across three consecutive examination cycles, the study sought to generate evidence-based insights to inform and strengthen Umalusi's quality assurance and standardisation processes. In doing so, it also aimed to contribute to broader scholarly debates on assessment validity, fairness, and integrity in high-stakes examination systems.

The findings are presented separately for each question paper in Section III. They are organised according to themes derived from the evaluation instrument's thematic questions, which are discussed in detail in the research design section of the *Predictability of the NSC* overview report.

The findings for each topic are summarised in tables, with each table accompanied by a corresponding discussion focusing on the six themes: topic coverage, content coverage by subtopic, topic weighting, item types by subtopic, subtopic–skill pairing, and scenario–subtopic–skill pairing.

The analysis of these themes is presented in Sections a to f for each table and evaluates the extent to which the components reflected in each table have contributed to the predictability of the topics assessed in English FAL Papers 1, 2, and 3 between 2022 and 2024.

Before the findings are presented, each theme is defined in Sections a to f below. These definitions apply to the analysis of all three examination papers.

a. Topic coverage

The topics prescribed for examination of the NSC subjects are outlined in Section 4 of the CAPS or the Abridged CAPS. These guidelines help ensure alignment between the examination and the intended curriculum. The analysis of topic coverage focused on the frequency with which each topic was examined over the three years, specifically identifying any emerging patterns that may have contributed to the predictability of topic selection.

b. Content coverage

This section examined the extent to which specific content areas or subtopics within the selected topic have been assessed over three years. By analysing the frequency and repetition of subtopics in the Accounting final examination question papers, the aim was to determine whether any patterns of content selection have emerged that may contribute to the predictability of the question paper.

c. Weighting of the topic

This section explored the distribution of mark allocation or weighting assigned to the selected topic over three years. By analysing whether the marks allocated to this topic have remained consistent, increased, or decreased across examination cycles, the aim was to determine the extent to which predictable emphasis may have emerged.

d. Variation in item types

To evaluate the extent to which question design contributed to the predictability of examination papers, it was essential to examine how specific item types have been used to assess a given topic over time. This included analysing the variety of item types employed (such as multiple choice questions [MCQs], essays, calculations, and practical scenarios), the distribution of marks allocated to each type, and the variation in difficulty levels and cognitive demands. Additionally, the use of command words to guide the expected cognitive response can influence question predictability. This section examined these dimensions over three years to identify patterns that may signal repetition or predictability.

e. Topic and skill pairing

To evaluate the predictability of examination question papers, it was crucial to examine how specific cognitive skills have been paired with particular topics over time. Consistent assessment of the same skills, such as interpretation, calculation, analysis, or explanation, when linked to a specific topic across multiple years, may signal a recurring pattern, potentially leading to predictability. Conversely, variation in skill pairing can help ensure a more comprehensive assessment of the intended learning outcomes. This section explored the extent to which skill demands associated with this topic have remained consistent or varied across the past three years and determined whether such patterns suggest predictability in assessment design.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

Some examination questions use scenarios, visual stimuli, or real-life contexts to test skills within a given topic. The variety or repetition of such contexts over multiple years can influence the anticipation of question types. Consistent use of similar scenarios may contribute to predictability, whereas diverse and novel contexts encourage more profound understanding and critical thinking. This section explored how the contextual framing of questions for each topic has evolved over the past three years and sought to determine whether predictable patterns existed.

3.1 ENGLISH FAL PAPER 1

This section presents an analysis of the DBE final examination question papers for the English FAL Paper 1 topics from 2022 to 2024. The English FAL Paper 1 consists of five topics: comprehension, summary, analysing an advertisement, analysing a cartoon, and language and editing skills. The findings for each topic are summarised in Tables 3.1.1–3.1.10.

Table 3.1.1 below summarises the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the Comprehension topic on the DBE English FAL Paper 1 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.1.1: Findings on the Predictability of the Comprehension Topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 1 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Comprehension							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated per content area/subtopic**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**
2022	✓	Finding Information in Text (7)	30 marks	Short response (7)	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 1 & 2	Recall or Locate Information

	✓	Synonym (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Supporting Detail (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall or Locate Information
	✓	Draw Conclusions (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Contextual Meaning (1)		MCQ (1)	Level 1	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Personal Response (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Infer Meaning (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Suitability of Title (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Visual Clues (4)		Short response (4)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 3	Interpret
2023	✓	Finding Information in Text (8)	30 marks	Short response (8)	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 1, 2, & 3	Recall or Locate Information
	✓	Register (1)		MCQ (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Supporting Detail (2)		Short response (2)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 1	Recall or Locate Information
	✓	Draw Conclusions (2)		Short response (2)	Level 3	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Contextual Meaning (1)		MCQ (1)	Level 2	Level 1	Infer
	✓	Personal Response (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Infer Meaning (7)		Short response (7)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 3	Infer

		Suitability of Title (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Visual Clues (3)		Short response (3)	Level 1	Level 3	Interpret
2024	✓	Finding Information in Text (8)	30 marks	Short response (8)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 1	Recall or Locate Information
	✓	Paraphrase (4)		Short response (4)	Level 1	Level 2	Reorganise
	✓	Supporting Detail (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall or Locate Information
	✓	Draw Conclusions (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Implied Meaning (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Personal Response (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Suitability of Title (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Visual Clues (4)		Short response (4)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Vocabulary (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall

Table 3.1.1 presents a comparative overview of the Comprehension topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components reflected in Table 3.1.1 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 1 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate that comprehension was assessed over the three-year period. There is an acceptable pattern of predictability in the frequency of this topic, as it aligns with the structure and format of examinations specified in the CAPS and examination guidelines. The predictability of this topic should be maintained, as it assesses one of the main curriculum topics: reading and viewing.

b. Content coverage

The findings indicate that comprehension was assessed in each examination over the three-year period without variation. A range of reading skills was assessed consistently, including locating information in texts, providing supporting details, explaining contextual and implied meanings, drawing inferences or conclusions from the text, and evaluating the suitability of a title. A few topics were not assessed each year; for example, the synonym in 2022, register in 2023, and vocabulary in 2024. Additionally, some questions required interpreting visual clues in visual texts, such as graphs or illustrations. Therefore, the content coverage of this topic is highly predictable, as it reflects basic reading skills and comprehension strategies, such as identifying main ideas, scanning for details, making inferences, and evaluating texts.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals that there was no variation in the weighting of this topic from 2022 to 2024. The comprehension and language paper was allocated 80 marks across the three years. Comprehension was allocated 30 marks. The consistency in weighting of the topic leads to acceptable predictability. This level of predictability should be maintained to ensure compliance with examination guidelines and adequate coverage of the curriculum.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation reveals minimal variation in the item types used to assess comprehension. Each examination consists of short questions with one-word answers or one- or two-sentence answers, at least one MCQ, and open-ended questions that require a personal response. There was little or no variation in mark allocation for specific item types. Mark allocation for most items ranged from 1 to 2 marks, with a few questions allocated 3 marks. Variation in mark allocation for short questions is recommended to reduce the predictability of topic weighting in the examination.

There was limited variation in the level of difficulty of similar item types across the three years. The level of difficulty of items in this examination ranged from Level 1 to Level 2 across the three years for both short questions and MCQs. One question on the conclusion in 2023 was rated Level 3 due to the expected response. Likewise, the distribution of cognitive demand ranged from Level 1 to 4. Level 1 and Level 2 items required recall and application of language skills; Level 3 items required inference and interpretation; and Level 4 evaluation questions required a personal response. This distribution is highly predictable as there was no variation in item types across the three years. This level of predictability is acceptable; however, it could be reduced if the mark allocation and difficulty levels varied from year to year.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that comprehension assessment was consistently paired with reading skills, such as recalling information or concepts, locating information in a text, inferring meaning, drawing conclusions, and interpreting visual texts. The pairing of these skills with specific subtopics is highly predictable, as these skills were repeated across the three years. For example, evaluation was paired with the suitability of a text, interpretation with the analysis of visual texts, and finding information and concluding were paired with reading comprehension. There was no variation in topic-skill pairing over the three-year period, thereby making this examination very predictable. To reduce the unacceptable predictability of topic-skill pairing, the examining body

should vary how the analysis of the title is paired with a personal response. More variation in subtopics is necessary to cover the full range of reading and language skills specified in the curriculum.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The observed patterns indicate that comprehension was assessed across two texts, with questions framed over the three years. An article on a relatable, topical issue, combined with a visual text, such as a graph or illustration, was used to provide context for the questions in this examination. Different texts were selected each year; therefore, the scenarios used over the three-year period are unpredictable. This variation should be maintained to minimise the predictability of the examination.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Comprehension topic

Table 3.1.2 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.1.2: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Comprehension Topic Paper 1

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There is acceptable predictability in topic coverage in this examination.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
There is acceptable predictability in content coverage in this topic.

Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
Content coverage should include a full range of reading and viewing skills specified in the curriculum.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Selection of texts that are relatable but challenging will expose candidates to a variety of reading and language skills,
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
There is acceptable predictability of topic weighting.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Topic weighting must be maintained to ensure compliance with curriculum requirements.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
There is an unacceptable level of predictability in the short questions and in one MCQ.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types
Variation in mark allocation for short questions is recommended to reduce the predictability of the weighting of content in the examination.
Include a variety of true/false, MCQ, cloze procedure, and short-answer questions.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
More variety in item types is recommended.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic–skill pairing
There is no variation in topic-skill pairing over the three-year period, thereby making this examination very predictable.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
To reduce the unacceptable predictability of topic-skill pairing, the examining body should vary how the analysis of the title is paired with a personal response.

Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
More variation in subtopics is necessary to cover the full range of reading and language skills specified in the curriculum.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
There is no unacceptable predictability in scenario framing in this topic.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
Different texts must be selected each year to reduce the predictability of scenario framing.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Different texts with a variety of relatable topics must be selected each year to reduce the predictability of scenario framing.

Table 3.1.3 below provides a summary of the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the Summary topic for DBE English FAL Paper 1 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.1.3: Findings on the Predictability of the Summary Topic for DBE English FAL Paper 1 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Summary							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighing of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated per**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**

				content area/subtopic			
2022	✓	Summary (10)	10	Short answer	Level 2	Level 2	Summary writing: Reorganisation and paraphrasing
2023	✓	Summary (10)	10	Short answer	Level 2	Level 2	Summary writing: Reorganisation and paraphrasing
2024	✓	Summary (10)	10	Short answer	Level 2	Level 2	Summary writing: Reorganisation and paraphrasing

Table 3.1.3 presents a comparative overview of the Summary topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components reflected in Table 3.1.3 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 1 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate that the summary was consistently assessed over the three-year period. There is an acceptable and predictable pattern in the frequency of this topic, as it aligns with the structure and format of examinations specified in the CAPS and examination guidelines. The predictability of this topic should be maintained, as it assesses the integration of reading and writing skills, both of which are key curriculum topics.

b. Content coverage

The findings show that the summary was assessed in each examination over the three-year period. Summary writing involves integrating reading and writing skills, which include identifying the main ideas in a text and paraphrasing them. The summary is written in point form and must be of a specific length. These skills are assessed each year, with no variation in format. Thus, there was a high but acceptable predictability in content coverage for this topic. The predictability in content coverage should be maintained, as the skills assessed are important for the development of academic reading and writing. Different texts should be used to avoid unacceptable predictability in content coverage.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals that the summary consisted of a single question, which was consistently allocated 10 marks over the three-year period. The weighting distribution for this topic is acceptable and complies with examination guidelines. Therefore, this topic weighting should be maintained to ensure consistent mark allocation across all examinations.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates that the summary consisted of a short response of 7 points, with a maximum length of 70 words. The summary's point-form format was assessed each year, with no variation in item type or mark allocation. This item type is therefore

highly predictable. The level of difficulty of this item is categorised as moderately challenging (Level 2) without variation over the three-year period. The level of difficulty is influenced by the simplicity of the selected summary texts and the task of writing in point form. The instructions were clear and scaffolded, making the question easy to interpret.

The cognitive demand of the summary is Level 2, given that the question requires reorganising ideas from a longer text into a shorter one, from paragraph form to point form. There was no variation in cognitive demand in this topic over the three-year period. Therefore, the item type for this topic was very predictable. To avoid unacceptable predictability, the examining body should vary the format of the summary between paragraph and point form. Instructions should be less predictable to ensure candidates can fairly demonstrate their summary writing skills without leading clues such as 'use your own words,' 'write seven points,' and 'number your points 1-7.' Candidates should be able to interpret the question and apply the skills taught in preparation for the examination.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that there was no variation in topic-skill pairing over the three-year period. Summary writing requires reorganisation of a paragraph into a list of points relevant to the question's brief. Candidates are assessed on their ability to identify main ideas, select relevant details and exclude irrelevant and supporting details, and paraphrase the original text. Additionally, the use of synonyms, a wide vocabulary, and effective sentence structure are required skills in summary writing. The question, therefore, integrates reading, writing, and grammatical proficiency. These skills are assessed annually, with no variation in the requirements for this topic. Candidates are likely to predict the format and skills assessed in this topic, despite the summary texts varying from year to year. To avoid predictability of topic-skill pairing, instructions should vary each year, and the length of the summary should be determined by the nature of the original text.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate no unacceptable predictability in scenario framing over the three-year period. Different texts were selected for summary writing each year. However, texts used for the summary are typically simple to summarise as the points can be easily identified. The texts are commonly written in simple language that candidates may find difficult to paraphrase, thus leading to the quoting of words from the original text. Therefore, the texts create a high level of predictability about possible answers, as their style and structure influence how candidates respond to the question. To avoid unacceptable predictability in scenario framing, the examining body should vary the summary format, and the text structure should encourage greater depth and rigour in the application of reading and writing skills in summary writing.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Summary topic

Table 3.1.4 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.1.4: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Summary Topic Paper 1

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
No unacceptable predictability was identified in topic coverage.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
The format should alternate between paragraph and point-form summaries.

Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
No unacceptable predictability was identified in content coverage.
Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
Summary texts should vary each year to avoid unacceptable predictability in the content coverage of this topic.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
The predictability in content coverage should be maintained as the skills assessed are important for the development of academic reading and writing skills. Different texts should be used to avoid unacceptable predictability in content coverage.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
No unacceptable predictability in topic weighting was identified.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
Mark allocation for the summary should be maintained.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Marking guidelines should specify how mark allocation will be assigned to content and language.
Identified unacceptable predictability on item types
The point form creates an unacceptable level of predictability in item types.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability on item types
The summary should alternate between paragraph and point form to avoid predictability.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Different texts should be used to assess summary writing skills.
Identified unacceptable predictability on topic–skill pairing
No unacceptable predictability on topic-skill pairing was identified.

Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
To avoid predictability of topic-skill pairing, instructions should vary each year, and the length of the summary should be determined by the nature of the original text.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Change instructions and minimise scaffolding of the question to avoid leading questions.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
The similar style and structure of the texts selected for summary writing lead to predictable examinations.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Different texts should be used each year.

Table 3.1.5 below provides a summary of the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for analysing an advertisement topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 1 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.1.5: Findings on the Predictability of the Analysis of an Advertisement Topic for DBE English FAL Paper 1 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Analysing an advertisement							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table,**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**

	examined (X)			**etc.) and marks allocated per content area/subtopic**	**examine the subtopic**		
2022	✓	Target Audience (1)	10 marks	Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Vocabulary (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Visual and Verbal Clues (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Locating Supporting Details (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Homonym (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply
	✓	Slogan (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Personal Response (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
2023	✓	Advertising Techniques/Headline (2)	10 marks	Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Apostrophe (Possession) (1)		MCQ (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Root Word (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Infer Meaning (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Visual and Verbal Clues/Logo (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Personal Response (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
2024	✓	Infer Meaning (1)	10 marks	MCQ (1)	Level 1	Level 3	Infer

	✓	Advertising Techniques/Headline (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Advertising Techniques (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Visual Clues (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/ Analyse
	✓	Find Supporting Detail (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Recall
	✓	Synonym (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Personal Response (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate

Table 3.1.5 presents a comparative overview of the analysis of an advertisement topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components reflected in Table 3.1.5 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 1 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings reveal an acceptable and predictable pattern in the frequency of this topic, aligning with the structure and format of examinations as specified in the CAPS and examination guidelines. The predictability of this topic should be maintained, as it assesses one of the main curriculum areas: reading, viewing, and critical language awareness.

b. Content coverage

The findings indicate that the analysis of an advertisement was assessed in each examination over the three-year period without variation. A range of skills and content related to the interpretation of advertising techniques were consistently assessed, including

identifying and interpreting visual and written clues, finding supporting details, explaining contextual and implied meaning, making inferences from the text, and evaluating the effectiveness of the text. Different advertising techniques were assessed each year, specifically rotating elements such as headlines, target audiences, slogans, and fonts over the three-year period. In addition, different language structures are assessed in different years; for example, the apostrophe, root word, homonym, and synonym are selected. Therefore, the content coverage of this topic was slightly predictable, reflecting the basic skills required for interpreting visual texts; however, there was also adequate variation.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals that analysing an advertisement was consistently allocated 10 marks across the three-year period. There is acceptable predictability in the weighting of this topic, which complies with examination guidelines. The allocated 10 marks were divided across a range of short questions on this topic. Therefore, the weighting of this topic should be maintained to ensure consistency in mark allocation across all examinations.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates that this topic consists of short questions, at least one MCQ, and a personal response each year. Mark allocation for short questions varied between 1 and 2 marks, and the MCQ remained fixed at 1 mark each year. The questions ranged from Level 1 to Level 2, with most being easy or moderately challenging. Furthermore, there was a consistent pattern in cognitive levels across the three-year period, suggesting that questions requiring recall or finding information in text are categorised at Level 1.

Questions based on language structures required application of knowledge or paraphrasing of text and were therefore categorised at Level 2. Questions based on interpreting visual clues and making inferences were at Level 3. Personal response questions required

evaluation of texts and were categorised at Level 4. There was no variation in the distribution levels of difficulty and cognitive levels across the three-year period. Therefore, there was a predictable but acceptable pattern in item types in this question paper.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that analysis, interpretation of visual and written clues, and evaluation skills were required in this topic without variation over the three-year period. Therefore, the assessment of this topic showed a high but acceptable level of predictability. Analysis of advertisements required identifying advertising techniques and evaluating their impact on persuading customers to buy the advertised product. Candidates were required to critically evaluate how specific techniques, such as logos, headlines, language, font, and visual clues, are used to position the reader. An acceptable range of skills required to analyse an advertisement is assessed over the three-year period.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate that different advertisements were selected to create contextual framing of questions on this topic. There was no unacceptable predictability of scenario framing in this question. The variation in advertisements should be maintained to avoid an unacceptable level of predictability in scenario framing.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Analysis of an Advertisement topic

Table 3.1.6 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.1.6: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Analysis of an Advertisement topic Paper 1

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There is acceptable predictability in topic coverage.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
Texts used to assess and analyse an advertisement should be varied from year to year.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
There is no unacceptable predictability in content coverage.
Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
A range of advertising techniques and language structures should be assessed from year to year.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Questions include a balance of advertising techniques, language structures, personal response, and critical language awareness.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
There is no unacceptable topic weight.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
Topic weighting should comply with curriculum requirements.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Topic weighting should comply with curriculum requirements.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
There is no unacceptable weighting in item types.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types

Questions should include short-answer, MCQ, and personal-response types.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Vary item types to assess different skills.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic–skill pairing
There is no unacceptable predictability in the pairing of topics and skills.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
Topic-skill pairing should vary each year.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Topic-skill pairing should vary each year.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
There is no unacceptable predictability in scenario framing.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
Texts should vary each year to avoid unacceptable scenario framing of items.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Advertisements should represent different products each year to avoid unacceptable scenario framing of items.

Table 3.1.7 below provides a summary of the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for analysing a cartoon topic for DBE English FAL Paper 1 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.1.7: Findings on the Predictability of Analysing a Cartoon Topic for DBE English FAL Paper 1 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Analysing a cartoon							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated per content area/subtopic**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**
2022	✓	Visual and Verbal Clues (5)	10 marks	Short response (5)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 3 Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Register (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Ellipsis (1)		MCQ (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall/Apply
	✓	Font (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Personal Response/ Humour (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
2023	✓	Interpret Visual and Written Clues (6)	10 marks	Short response (6)	Levels 1 & 2 Level 2	Level 3 Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Contraction (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply

	✓	Homonym (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply
	✓	Personal Response (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
2024	✓	Infer Meaning (1)	10 marks	MCQ (1)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 3 Level 3	Infer
	✓	Exclamation Mark (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Draw Conclusions (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Interpret Verbal and Visual Clues (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Stereotyping (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Personal Response (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate

Table 3.1.7 presents a comparative overview of analysing a cartoon over the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components reflected in Table 3.1.7 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 1 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings reveal an acceptable and predictable pattern in the frequency of this topic, aligning with the structure and format of examinations as specified in the CAPS and examination guidelines. The predictability of this topic should be maintained, as it assesses one of the main curriculum areas: reading, viewing, and critical language awareness.

b. Content coverage

The findings show that the analysis of a cartoon was consistent across the three-year period. A range of skills and content related to the interpretation of cartoons was assessed consistently across the three years, including identifying and interpreting visual and written clues such as body language and facial expressions, finding supporting details, explaining contextual and implied meaning, making inferences based on the text, and evaluating the effectiveness of the use of humour in the cartoon. In addition, different language structures were assessed in different years; for example, contractions, homonyms, punctuation, and ellipsis were selected. Therefore, the content coverage of this topic was slightly predictable, reflecting the basic skills required for interpreting visual texts; there was also adequate variation in the content.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals that analysing a cartoon was consistently allocated 10 marks across the three-year period. The weighting for this topic was acceptable and in compliance with examination guidelines. The allocated 10 marks were divided across a range of short questions on this topic. Therefore, the weighting of this topic should be maintained to ensure consistency in mark allocation across all examinations.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates that this question consisted of short questions, at least one MCQ, and a personal response each year. Mark allocation for short questions varied between 1 and 2 marks, and the MCQ remained fixed at 1 mark each year. The questions ranged from Level 1 to Level 2, with most being easy or moderately challenging. Furthermore, there was a common pattern in cognitive levels across the three-year period, which suggests that questions requiring recall or finding information in text were categorised at Level 1. Questions based on language structures required application of knowledge or paraphrasing of text and were therefore

categorised at Level 2. Questions based on interpreting visual clues and making inferences were at Level 3. Personal response questions required the evaluation of texts categorised at Level 4. There was no variation in the distribution levels of difficulty and cognitive levels across the three-year period. There was a predictable but acceptable pattern in item types in this question paper.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that analysis, interpretation of visual and written clues, and evaluation skills are required and were assessed in this topic without variation over the three-year period. Therefore, there was a high, but acceptable level of predictability in the assessment of this topic. Analysis of cartoons requires the description and analysis of body language, facial expressions, use of speech bubbles, and the evaluation of their impact in conveying messages and humour. An acceptable range of skills for analysing a cartoon was assessed over the three-year period.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate that different cartoons were selected to provide contextual framing for questions on this topic. There was no unacceptable predictability of scenario framing in this question. The variation of cartoons representing different characters should be maintained to avoid unacceptable predictability of scenario framing. In addition to the popular *Garfield*, *Calvin*, and *Dennis the Menace* cartoons, cartoons based on the South African context should also be used to reduce the predictability of this examination.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Analysis of a Cartoon topic

Table 3.1.8 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.1.8: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Analysis of a cartoon topic Paper 1

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There was acceptable predictability in topic coverage.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
Texts used to assess and analyse a cartoon should be varied from year to year.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
There was no unacceptable predictability in content coverage.
Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
A range of critical language awareness skills and language structures should be assessed from year to year.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Questions include a balance of visual clues, language structures, personal response, and critical language awareness.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
There was no unacceptable topic weighting.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
Topic weighting should comply with curriculum requirements.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Topic weighting should comply with curriculum requirements.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
There was no unacceptable weighting in item types.

Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types
Questions should include short-answer, MCQs, and personal-response types.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Vary item types to assess different skills.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic–skill pairing
There was no unacceptable predictability in the pairing of topics and skills.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
Topic-skill pairing should vary each year.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Topic-skill pairing should vary each year.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
There was no unacceptable predictability in scenario framing.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
The selection of cartoons should include representation from South African cartoonists to avoid repeating popular Western cartoons.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
There should be a variety of cartoons featuring different characters each year to avoid unacceptable scenarios-framing items.

Table 3.1.9 below provides a summary of the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the Language and editing skills topic for DBE English FAL Paper 1 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.1.9: Findings on the Predictability of the Language and Editing Skills Topic for DBE English FAL Paper 1 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Language and editing skills							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated per content area/subtopic**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**
2022	✓	Concord (1)	20 marks	Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Preposition (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Apostrophe/ Contraction (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Spelling (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Font/Italics (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Tense (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Passive Voice (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Tag Question (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Part of Speech (Noun/ Conjunction) (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Negative Form (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise

	✓	Reported Speech (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Word form/Verb Form (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Complex Sentence (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Degree of Comparison (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Plural Form (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Antonym (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
2023	✓	Concord (1)	20 marks	Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Spelling (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Indefinite Article (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Preposition (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Tag Question (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Tense (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Reported Speech (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Synonym (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Homophone (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Active Voice (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Parts of Speech (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Negative Form (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise

	✓	Complex Sentence (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Degree of Comparison (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Adverbial Form (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Collective Noun (1)		Short response (1)	1	Level 1	Recall
2024	✓	Apostrophe (1)	20 marks	Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Preposition (1)		Short response (1)	Level 3	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Spelling (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Concord (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Tag Question (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Editing (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Reported Speech (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Homophone (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
		Passive Voice (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Parts of Speech (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Negative Form (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Compound Sentence (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Word Form (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise

	✓	Degree of Comparison (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise
	✓	Number Name (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Tense (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Apply/Reorganise

Table 3.1.9 presents a comparative overview of the Language and editing skills topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components reflected in Table 3.1.9 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 1 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate an acceptable and predictable pattern in the frequency of this topic, as it aligns with the structure and format of examinations as specified in the CAPS and examination guidelines. The predictability of this topic should be maintained, as it assesses one of the main curriculum areas: reading, viewing, and critical language awareness.

b. Content coverage

The findings indicate a significant level of predictability in the content coverage of this topic. Language and editing skills include a wide variety of grammatical structures, including punctuation, sentence construction, vocabulary, word forms, and parts of speech. Common language structures were assessed without variation over the three-year period, including concord, passive voice, reported speech, contraction (apostrophe), negative form, question tag, complex sentences, prepositions, and degrees of comparison. Although the contexts in which editing skills were applied and the language structures used differed each year, the same content topics were frequently assessed, thereby creating unacceptable predictability in content coverage. To reduce this

level of predictability, the examining body should vary the parts of speech and sentence types selected. For example, assessing simple rather than complex sentences, direct rather than indirect speech, and active rather than passive voice would help disrupt patterns of frequently assessed content.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals variation in the distribution of mark allocation for this topic over the three-year period. Language and editing were allocated 20 marks in the examination. This weighting aligned with the prescribed weighting for this topic. This weighting should be maintained to ensure compliance with examination guidelines.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates no variation in item types used to assess language and editing skills over the three-year period. Short questions requiring one-word and one-sentence responses, as well as the closed procedure, were frequently used to assess a range of grammatical structures across the three years of examination. There is no variation in mark allocation for similar item types. Mark allocation for specific items varies between 1 and 3 marks across the years. For example, the close procedure consisted of four errors, each of which is allocated 1 mark. Questions on sentence construction are allocated 2-3 marks depending on the number of changes required to rewrite a sentence. There was a high level of predictability in the weighting for this topic.

There was no variation in the level of difficulty for similar item types in this question. Most items were rated at Level 1 and Level 2 over the three-year period. Similarly, there was no variation in cognitive demand during the period from 2022 to 2024. Most questions required basic knowledge of language forms such as spelling, prepositions, and word forms, which were rated at Level 1. Questions requiring reorganisation and application of language skills, such as altering sentence structure, were rated at Level 2. No analysis or

evaluation questions were identified in this topic over the three-year period. The distribution of levels of difficulty and cognitive demand was acceptable for this topic, as higher cognitive demand was assessed in other sections of this examination.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that there was no variation in topic-skill pairing over the three-year period. Skills range from identifying parts of speech and naming language terms to rewriting sentences in the correct form and editing. These skills were assessed in short responses. There was, therefore, a significant predictability in the pairing of topic and skill in this topic. Longer responses that require the editing of a whole paragraph should be included to vary the pairing of items with specific skills.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed show that there is no unacceptable predictability in scenario framing over the three-year period. Different texts are used to create contexts for editing skills each year. This variation should be maintained to avoid unacceptable predictability in the contextual framing of this topic.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Language and Editing Skills topic

Table 3.1.10 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.1.10: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Language and Editing Skills Topic Paper 1

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There was acceptable predictability in topic coverage.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
Texts used to assess language and editing skills should be varied from year to year.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
Similar language structures are assessed over the three-year period.
Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
Different sentence types and parts of speech should be assessed each year.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
A variety of language structures should be assessed each year.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
There was no unacceptable topic weighting.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
Topic weighting should comply with curriculum requirements.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Topic weighting should comply with curriculum requirements.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
There was no unacceptable weighting in item types.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types

Questions should include longer responses that enable the application of editing skills.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Vary item types to assess different language skills.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic–skill pairing
There was no unacceptable predictability in the pairing of topics and skills.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
Topic-skill pairing should vary each year.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Topic-skill pairing should vary each year.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
There was no unacceptable predictability in scenario framing.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
Use different texts to avoid the predictability of contextual framing.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Use different texts to avoid the predictability of contextual framing.

Conclusions

The analysis of English FAL Paper 1 indicates that overall predictability in topic coverage, content distribution, and mark allocation is acceptable and aligned with curriculum and examination guidelines. There is no evidence of unacceptable predictability in the paper as a whole. However, a high level of predictability is evident in topic-skill pairing, recurring item types, and aspects of scenario

framing, particularly in summary writing and language structures assessed over the three-year period. While this consistency ensures compliance and fairness, greater variation in item types, mark allocation, text structures, and language components is recommended to reduce predictability.

Overall, the paper was not unacceptably predictable, but targeted diversification would further enhance its assessment quality.

3.2 ENGLISH FAL PAPER 2

This section presents an analysis of the DBE final examination question papers from 2022 to 2024 for the English FAL Paper 2 topics. The findings for each topic are summarised in Tables 3.2.1–3.2.8.

Table 3.2.1 below provides a summary of the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the Novel topic for DBE English FAL Paper 2 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.2.1: Findings on the Predictability of the Novel Topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 2 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Novel							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**

				per content area/subtopic	**examine the subtopic**		
2022	**QUESTION 1: CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY**						
	✓	Characterisation (6)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (5)		MCQ (1) Short response (4)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Metaphor (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify/Apply and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2022	**QUESTION 2: STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE**						
	✓	Characterisation (6)	35 marks	Match-the-columns(4)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall and Interpret

				Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	
	✓	Plot (4)		Short response (4)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Personification (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify/Apply and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
		Vocabulary (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
2023	**QUESTION 1: CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY**						
	✓	Characterisation (7)	35 marks	Match-the-columns(4) Short response (3)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (6)		MCQ (1) Short response (5)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events

	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/Simile (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2023	**QUESTION 2: STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE**						
	✓	Characterisation (7)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) MCQ (1) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (4)		Short response (4)	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 1 & 3	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Simile (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify/Apply and Interpret

	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2024	**QUESTION 1: CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY**						
	✓	Characterisation (6)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (6)		MCQ (1) Short response (5)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Personification (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify/Apply and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse

	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2024	**QUESTION 2: STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE**						
	✓	Characterisation (8)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) MCQ (1) Short response (3)	Level 1 Level 1 Levels 1 & 2	Level 1 Level 1 Levels 1 & 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Metaphor (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify/Apply and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall

	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer

Table 3.2.1 presents a comparative overview of the Novel topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components listed in Table 3.2.1 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 2 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate that the novel was examined each year over the three-year period. There were two literature titles in this genre, and candidates were required to select one title. There was acceptable predictability in this examination, as the format and structure aligned with the prescribed guidelines for this topic. The examining body should maintain the existing format of this examination and ensure comparability between the two titles by maintaining uniformity in subtopics and mark allocation.

b. Content coverage

The findings indicate a clear pattern of frequency in literary features of prescribed texts, including characterisation, setting, plot, theme, mood, tone, figures of speech, and irony. These subtopics were assessed with little variation in mark allocation across the three years of examination. This level of predictability is acceptable, as these are basic elements of literary appreciation specified in the curriculum. There was also evidence of repetition of specific figures of speech: metaphor, simile, personification, and irony. This

creates a high level of predictability of specific literary features, which can influence rote learning. To reduce the predictability of figures of speech, examinations should include the full range specified in the curriculum.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals no variation in the total weighting of the novel across the three years. Both novels were allocated 35 marks each as specified in the examination guidelines. The total weighting does not suggest a predictable emphasis in the examination. Candidates who select the novel will neither be advantaged nor disadvantaged in comparison to those who select a different genre. The total mark allocation for this genre should be maintained to ensure compliance with examination guidelines.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates that the common item types used to assess the novel were short responses, match-the-columns, and one MCQ per examination over the three-year period. Match-the-columns was used to assess candidates' ability to identify the main characters in the novel and carried four marks each year. There was one MCQ, worth one mark, that tested either characterisation or knowledge of the plot. Most questions are answered in one or two sentences by stating facts, explaining ideas, or inferring meaning. Each examination included two personal response questions, each worth 3 marks. There was no variation in item types across the three years, and there was an insignificant difference in mark allocation for similar item types, thus increasing the predictability of the examinations.

Additionally, there was an insignificant difference in the distribution of difficulty levels for specific item types across the three-year period. The level of difficulty varied between Level 1 and Level 2 for all item types in this section. Since the questions are based on familiar texts, questions requiring candidates to recall facts about characters, setting, and plot were typically simple. Questions requiring candidates to identify and explain figures of speech were moderately challenging, as they involve applying and analysing

a given extract from the text. Similarly, items requiring candidates to discuss the theme or provide a personal response were moderately challenging, as they required candidates to present a logical argument supported by evidence from the text. Items requiring the interpretation of tone or inference of mood were equally moderately challenging. The level of difficulty of the items was highly predictable, with little variation in this aspect of the examination over the three-year period.

There was no variation in the distribution of cognitive demand of item types across the three-year period. Match-the-columns and MCQs commonly assess basic knowledge of the plot and characterisation and are therefore categorised at Level 1. Short responses requiring the identification of figures of speech, such as metaphor, simile, or personification, were rated at Level 2, as candidates are required to demonstrate application of conceptual knowledge in new contexts. Most short responses required candidates to infer, interpret, and analyse features of the text such as character, mood, tone, diction, or plot. Therefore, Level 3 questions were given greater weighting in the literature examination. The examination included two personal response questions, either based on the novel's theme or on one of its main characters. This item was categorised at Level 4, as it requires candidates to make evaluative judgements by agreeing or disagreeing with an argument. Therefore, there was a fair but very predictable distribution of cognitive demand in this examination. It is recommended that this distribution be maintained, but a Level 5 question should be considered to balance the cognitive demand in the examination.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that the examination questions were based on two extracts for each prescribed title. Most questions required candidates to interpret or analyse the given extract while simultaneously testing their understanding of the novel as a whole. Candidates were tested on their ability to identify or name characters, the time and place of events (setting), as well as recall events within the story. Additionally, candidates must infer implied meaning and interpret ideas. Candidates were required to express their

opinions on ideas conveyed in the story and to substantiate their ideas using evidence from the text. Therefore, a range of cognitive and language skills was assessed in the examination over the three-year period.

There was a high level of predictability in the pairing of concepts and skills over the years. The theme was consistently paired with personal responses. Figures of speech were assessed in two parts: candidates were first required to identify the figure of speech and then explain its literal and figurative meanings. The double meaning in the irony had to be explained in detail. The main characters were identified using the match-the-column question. This level of predictability needs to be reduced by varying topic-skill pairings each year. For example, an open-ended question based on the plot or context of the novel, or an MCQ based on mood or tone. These variations will help reduce the level of predictability of the examinations.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate that the questions in the literature paper were posed in the context of extracts from the prescribed texts. The extracts used in the three-year period varied from year to year. There was limited predictability of the contextual framing of questions in this period.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Novel topic

Table 3.2.2 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.2.2: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Novel Topic Paper 2

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There was acceptable predictability in topic coverage in the question paper.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
No unacceptable topic coverage was identified in the examination.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
There was also evidence of repetition of specific figures of speech: metaphor, simile, personification, and irony. This creates a high level of predictability of specific literary features, which can influence rote learning.
Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
To reduce the predictability of figures of speech, the examinations should include the full range of figures of speech specified in the curriculum, such as dramatic irony, metonymy, hyperbole, and critical language awareness.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
All aspects of literary analysis covered in the curriculum should be considered for the examination of the novel.
More open-ended questions that challenge candidates to think creatively and critically should be included to reduce the likelihood of rote preparation.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
The topic weighting in this section was acceptable, as all titles were allocated 35 marks as prescribed in the examination guidelines.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
The predictability of subtopic weighting needs to be reduced by varying the mark allocation for specific items.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper

Since this was a choice paper, all titles must be given equal weighting to maintain uniformity across the assessed genres.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
There was a significant level of unacceptable predictability, as there is no variation in item types across the three years.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types
Using different item types to assess various literary features will reduce the predictability associated with this topic.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Match-the-columns and MCQs should be used to assess features such as setting and plot, not only characterisation.
Mark allocation for different item types should vary to reduce predictability.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic–skill pairing
There was unacceptable predictability in topic-skill pairing in the assessment of literary features of the novel.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
There should be a variation in topic-skill pairing each year to reduce unacceptable predictability.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Open-ended responses should be used to assess different features of the novel, except for the theme and characterisation.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
There was acceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
The prescribed titles need to be changed, as over time, it becomes difficult to select extracts that have not been used previously.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
To maintain the scenario framing of items, the selected extracts should provide a viable context for assessing various features of the novel, particularly figures of speech that have not been assessed in the previous two years, to reduce predictability.

Table 3.2.3 below provides a summary of the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the drama topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 2 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.2.3: Findings on the Predictability of the Drama Topic for DBE English FAL Paper 2 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Drama							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated per content area/subtopic**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**
2022	**QUESTION 3: MACBETH**						
	✓	Characterisation (6)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (5)		MCQ (1) Short response (4)	Level 1 Levels 1 & 2	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse

	✓	Figures of Speech/ Personification (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Stage Directions (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 5	Create
2022	**QUESTION 4: MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!**						
	✓	Characterisation (6)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (3)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/Simile (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall

	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (6)		MCQ (1) Short response (5)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Stage Directions (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 5	Create
2023	**QUESTION 3: MACBETH**						
	✓	Characterisation (6)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (3)		MCQ (1) Short response (2)	Level 1 Levels 1 & 3	Levels 1, 2, & 3	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/Simile (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate

	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Stage Directions (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 5	Create
2023	**QUESTION 4: MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!**						
	✓	Characterisation (6)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (5)		MCQ (1) Short response (4)	Level 1 Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Personification (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate

	✓	Stage Directions (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 5	Create
	✓	Mood (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2024	**QUESTION 3: MACBETH**						
	✓	Characterisation (6)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (2)		MCQ (1) Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Metaphor (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer

	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Stage Directions (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 5	Create
	✓	Paraphrase (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 2	Reorganise
2024	**QUESTION 4: MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!**						
	✓	Characterisation (8)	35 marks	Match-the-columns (4) Short response (4)	Level 1 Level 1 Levels 1 & 2	Level 1 Level 1 Levels 1& 3	Recall and interpret
	✓	Plot (3)		MCQ (1) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/Simile (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (6)		Short response (6)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate

	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
		Stage Directions (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 5	Create

Table 3.2.3 presents a comparative overview of the drama topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components listed in Table 3.2.3 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 2 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate that drama was examined each year over the three-year period. There were two literature titles in this genre, and candidates were required to select one title. There is acceptable predictability in this examination, as the format and structure align with the prescribed guidelines for this topic. The examining body should maintain the existing format of this examination and ensure comparability between the two titles by maintaining uniformity in subtopics and mark allocation.

b. Content coverage

The findings indicate a clear pattern of frequency in literary features of prescribed texts, including characterisation, setting, plot, theme, mood, tone, figures of speech, irony, and stage directions. These subtopics were assessed with little variation in mark allocation across the three years of examination. This level of predictability is acceptable as these are basic elements of literary appreciation specified in the curriculum. There is also evidence of the repetition of specific figures of speech: metaphor, simile,

personification, and irony. This creates a high level of predictability of specific literary features, which can influence rote learning. To reduce the predictability of figures of speech, examinations should include the full range specified in the curriculum.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals that there was no variation in the total drama weighting across the three years. Both drama titles were allocated 35 marks each, as specified in the examination guidelines. The total weighting of this topic does not suggest a predictable emphasis in the examination. The total mark allocation for this genre should be maintained to ensure compliance with examination guidelines.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates that the common item types used to assess drama are short responses, match-the-columns, and one MCQ per examination over the three-year period. The match-the-columns was used to assess candidates' ability to identify the main characters and carries four marks. The MCQs were allocated one mark, and tests either characterisation or plot. Most questions were answered in one or two sentences, stating facts, explaining ideas, or inferring meaning. Each examination included two personal response questions, each worth 3 marks. In addition, the examination presented a question centring on stage directions, in which candidates were required to imagine the body language and facial expressions of characters when uttering certain expressions from the extract. This type of question required candidates to create new ideas not originally found in the text. There was no variation in item types across the three years, and there was an insignificant difference in mark allocation for similar item types, thus increasing the predictability of the examinations.

Item difficulty levels were consistent for specific item types across the three years. The level of difficulty varied between Level 1 and Level 2 for all item types in this section. Since the questions were based on familiar texts, questions requiring candidates to recall facts about characters, setting, and plot were typically easy. Questions requiring candidates to identify and explain figures of speech

were moderately challenging, as they involve applying and analysing a given extract from the text. Similarly, items requiring candidates to discuss the theme or provide a personal response were moderately challenging, as they required candidates to present a logical argument supported by evidence from the text. Items requiring the interpretation of tone or inference of mood were equally moderately challenging. The level of difficulty of the items was highly predictable, with little variation in this aspect of the examination over the three-year period.

Furthermore, there was no variation in the distribution of cognitive demand of item types across the three-year period. Match-the-columns and MCQs commonly assess basic knowledge of the plot and characterisation and were therefore categorised at Level 1. Short responses requiring the identification of figures of speech, such as metaphor, simile, or personification, were rated at Level 2, as candidates had to demonstrate application of conceptual knowledge in new contexts. Most short responses required candidates to infer, interpret, and analyse features of the text such as character, mood, tone, diction, or plot. Therefore, a greater weighting of Level 3 questions was reported in the literature review. The examination included two personal response questions, based either on the theme of the drama title or on one of its main characters. This item was categorised at Level 4, as it required candidates to make evaluative judgements by agreeing or disagreeing with an argument. In addition, the examination included a question on stage directions, requiring candidates to imagine the body language and facial expressions of characters as they uttered certain lines from the extract. This type of question required candidates to create new ideas not originally found in the text and was therefore categorised at Level 5. Therefore, there was a fair but very predictable distribution of cognitive demand in this examination. It is recommended that questions include both lower- and higher-order questions to balance the cognitive demand in the examination.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that the examination questions were based on two extracts for each prescribed title. Most questions required an interpretation or analysis of the given extract, while also testing candidates' understanding of the entire drama.

Candidates were tested on their ability to identify or name characters, the time and place of events (setting), as well as recall events in the story. In addition, candidates' ability to infer implied meaning and interpret ideas was required. Candidates were required to express their opinions on ideas conveyed in the story and to substantiate their ideas with evidence from the text. Therefore, a range of skills was assessed in the examination over the three-year period.

There was a high level of predictability in the pairing of concepts and skills over the years. The theme was consistently paired with personal responses. Figures of speech were assessed in two parts: candidates were first expected to identify the figure of speech and explain its literal and figurative meaning. The double meaning in irony was expected to be explained in detail. The main characters were identified using the match-the-column question. Stage directions were assessed only through a creative response. There was no variation in how specific subtopics or concepts were paired with skills across the three-year period, thus leading to increased predictability of the question paper over time. This level of predictability should be reduced by varying topic-skill pairings each year. For example, an open-ended question based on the plot or context of the play, or an MCQ based on mood or tone. These variations will reduce the level of predictability of the examinations.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate that the questions in the literature paper were posed in the context of extracts from the prescribed texts. The extracts used over the three-year period varied from year to year. There was limited predictability of the contextual framing of questions in this period.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Short Stories topic

Table 3.2.4 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.2.4: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Short Stories Topic Paper 2

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There was acceptable predictability in topic coverage in the question paper.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
No unacceptable topic coverage was identified in the examination.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
There was also evidence of repetition of specific figures of speech: metaphor, simile, personification, and irony. This creates a high level of predictability of specific literary features, which can influence rote learning.
Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
To reduce the predictability of figures of speech, examinations should include the full range of figures of speech specified in the curriculum, such as dramatic irony and critical language awareness.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
All aspects of literary analysis covered in the curriculum should be considered for the examination of drama.
More open-ended questions that challenge candidates to think creatively and critically should be included to reduce the likelihood of rote preparation.

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
The topic weighting in this section was acceptable, as all titles were allocated 35 marks as prescribed in the examination guidelines.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
The predictability of subtopic weightings needs to be reduced by varying the mark allocation for specific items.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Since this is a choice paper, all titles must be given equal weighting to maintain uniformity across the assessed genres.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
There was a significant level of unacceptable predictability, as there is no variation in item types across the three years.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types
Using different item types to assess various literary features will reduce the predictability associated with this topic.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Match-the-columns and MCQs should be used to assess other literary features, such as setting and plot, as well as characterisation.
Mark allocation for different item types should vary to reduce predictability.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic–skill pairing
There was unacceptable predictability in the pairing of topics and skills in the assessment of literary features of drama.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
There should be a variation in topic-skill pairing each year to reduce unacceptable predictability.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Open-ended responses should be used to assess different features of drama besides the theme and characterisation.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items

There was acceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
The prescribed titles need to be changed, as over time, it becomes difficult to select extracts that have not been used previously.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
To maintain the scenario framing of items, the selected extracts should provide a viable context for assessing various features of drama, particularly figures of speech that have not been assessed in the previous two years, to reduce predictability.

Table 3.2.5 below provides a summary of the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the Short Stories topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 1 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.2.5: Findings on the Predictability of the Short Stories Topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 1 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Short Stories							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated per content area/subtopic**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**
2022	**QUESTION 5.1: 'THE NEW TRIBE'**						

	✓	Characterisation (4)	18 marks	Match-the-columns (4)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Plot (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference(2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2022	**QUESTION 5.2: 'THE FUR COAT'**						
	✓	Characterisation (3)	17 marks	MCQ (1) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall
	✓	Plot (4)		Short response (3)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Figures of Speech/Simile (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2023	**QUESTION 5.1: 'REJECTION'**						
	✓	Characterisation (4)	18 marks	Match-the-columns (4)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall and interpret

	✓	Plot (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Metaphor (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2023	**QUESTION 5.2: 'EVELINE'**						
	✓	Characterisation (2)	17 marks	Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Plot (8)		MCQ (1) Short response (7)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 3	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
2024	**QUESTION 5.1: 'TRIUMPH IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY'**						
	✓	Characterisation (4)	18 marks	Match-the-columns (4)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall and Interpret

	✓	Plot (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2024	**QUESTION 5.2: 'THE WIND AND A BOY'**						
	✓	Characterisation (3)	17 marks	MCQ (1) Short response (2)	Level 1 Level 2	Level 1 Level 3	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Plot (3)		Short response (3)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Figures of Speech/Simile (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer

Table 3.2.5 presents a comparative overview of the Short Stories topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components listed in Table 3.2.5 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 2 from 2022–2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate that the short stories were examined each year over the three-year period. Two titles in this genre were selected from an anthology of short stories, and candidates were required to answer questions based on both short stories. There is acceptable predictability in this examination, as the format and structure align with the prescribed guidelines for examining this topic. The examining body should maintain the existing format of this examination and ensure that different short stories are selected each year.

b. Content coverage

The findings indicate a clear pattern of frequency in literary features of prescribed texts, including characterisation, setting, plot, theme, mood, tone, figures of speech, and irony. The subtopics were divided between the two short stories, and they were assessed with little variation in mark allocation across the three years of examination. For example, figures of speech and themes were assessed in the context of the first title, whereas setting and mood were assessed in relation to the second title. There was variation in how subtopics were divided each year. This level of predictability is acceptable, as these are basic elements of literary appreciation outlined in the curriculum. There was evidence of repetition of specific figures of speech: namely, metaphor, simile, personification, and irony. This creates a high level of predictability of specific literary features, which can influence rote learning. To reduce the predictability of figures of speech, examinations should include the full range specified in the curriculum.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals no variation in the total weighting of short stories across the three years. Both stories were allocated 35 marks, which is split on an 18/17 basis as specified in the examination guidelines. The total weighting of this topic does not suggest a predictable emphasis in the examination. Candidates who select the short stories as one of the genres will neither be advantaged nor disadvantaged in comparison to those who select a different genre. The total mark allocation for this genre should be maintained to ensure compliance with examination guidelines.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates that the common item types used to assess the short stories were short responses, match-the-columns, and one MCQ per examination over the three-year period. Match-the-columns was used to assess candidates' ability to identify the main characters in the novel and was worth 4 marks each year. This item type was consistently used in the assessment of the first short story. However, an MCQ, allocated one mark, was used to assess the second story and tested either the characterisation or the knowledge of the plot. Most questions were short responses answered in one or two sentences to state facts, explain ideas, or infer meaning. Each examination included two personal response questions, each worth 3 marks. Each story had a personal response question, each allocated 3 marks. There was no variation in item types across the three years, and there was an insignificant difference in mark allocation for similar item types, thereby increasing the predictability of the examinations.

There was no variation in the distribution of difficulty levels for specific item types across the three-year period. The level of difficulty varied between Level 1 and Level 2 for all item types in this section, except for one question on the explanation of irony in the 2023 examination paper, which was considered difficult due to the expected response. Since the questions were based on familiar texts, questions requiring candidates to recall facts about characters, setting, and plot are typically simple. Questions requiring candidates to identify and explain figures of speech were moderately challenging, as they involved applying concepts and analysing a given

extract from the text. Similarly, items requiring candidates to discuss the theme or provide a personal response were moderately challenging, as they were expected to present a logical argument supported by evidence from the text. Items requiring the interpretation of tone or inference of mood were equally moderately challenging. The level of difficulty of items was highly predictable, as there was little variation in the distribution of levels of difficulty over the three-year period.

Furthermore, the distribution of cognitive demand across item types remained consistent over the three-year period. Match-the-columns and MCQs commonly assessed basic knowledge of the plot and characterisation and were therefore categorised at Level 1. Short responses requiring the identification of figures of speech, such as metaphor, simile, or personification, were rated at Level 2, as candidates were expected to demonstrate the application of conceptual knowledge in new contexts. Most short responses required candidates to infer, interpret, and analyse features of the text, such as character, mood, tone, diction, or plot. Thus, a greater weighting of Level 3 questions was reported in the literature review. The examination included two personal response questions, either based on the novel's theme or on one of its main characters. This item was categorised at Level 4, as it required candidates to make evaluative judgements by agreeing or disagreeing with an argument. Therefore, a fair yet highly predictable distribution of cognitive demand was observed in this examination. It was recommended that this distribution be maintained, but a Level 5 question should be considered to balance the cognitive demand in the examination.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that, as the questions were extract-based, they primarily required the interpretation or analysis of specific texts while simultaneously testing candidates' comprehension of the entire story. Candidates were tested on their ability to identify or name characters and the setting, as well as recall events in the story. Moreover, candidates' ability to infer implied meaning and interpret ideas was required. Candidates were required to express their opinions on ideas conveyed in the story and

to substantiate their ideas with evidence from the text. Therefore, a range of cognitive and language skills was assessed in the examination over the three-year period.

There was a high level of predictability in the pairing of concepts and skills over the years. The identification of main characters was consistently paired with the match-the-column item type, and the MCQ with the plot. The theme was consistently presented as a discussion question, whereas the personal response focused on character in relation to the plot. Figures of speech were assessed in two parts: candidates must first identify the figure of speech and then explain its literal and figurative meanings. The double meaning in irony was expected to be explained in detail. This level of predictability influences rote preparation and can be reduced by varying topic-skill pairings each year. For example, an open-ended question based on the plot or context of the story, or an MCQ based on mood or tone. These variations help reduce the level of predictability of the examinations.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate that the questions in the literature paper were set in the context of extracts selected from the prescribed texts. The extracts used were selected from different stories each year. In 2022, 'The New Tribe' and 'The Fur Coat' were selected; in 2023, 'Rejection' and 'Eveline,' and in 2024, 'Triumph In The Face Of Adversity' and 'The Wind And A Boy.' Therefore, diverse scenarios were used over the three-year period. Hence, there was no predictability of the contextual framing of questions in this period.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Short Stories topic

Table 3.2.6 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.2.6: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Short Stories Topic Paper 2

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There was acceptable predictability in topic coverage in the question paper.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
No unacceptable topic coverage was identified in the examination.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
There was evidence of repetition of specific figures of speech: metaphor, simile, personification, and irony. This creates a high level of predictability of specific literary features, which can influence rote learning.
Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
To reduce the predictability of figures of speech, the examinations should include the full range of figures of speech specified in the curriculum, such as dramatic irony, metonymy, hyperbole, and critical language awareness.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
All aspects of literary analysis covered in the curriculum should be considered for the examination of the novel.

More open-ended questions that challenge candidates to think creatively and critically should be included to reduce the likelihood of rote preparation.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
The topic weighting in this section was acceptable, as short stories were allocated 35 marks as prescribed in the examination guidelines.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
The predictability of subtopic weighting needs to be reduced by varying the mark allocation for specific items.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Since this is a choice paper, all titles must be given equal weighting to maintain uniformity across the assessed genres.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
There was a significant level of unacceptable predictability, as there is no variation in item types across the three years.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types
Using different item types to assess various literary features will reduce the predictability associated with this topic.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Match-the-columns and MCQs should be used to assess a variety of features, such as setting and plot, rather than characterisation alone.
Mark allocation for different item types should vary to reduce predictability.
Identified unacceptable predictability on topic–skill pairing
There was unacceptable predictability in the pairing of topics and skills in the assessment of literary features of short stories.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
There should be a variation in topic-skill pairing each year to reduce unacceptable predictability.

Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Open-ended responses should be used to assess different features of short stories, except characterisation.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
There was no unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
The prescribed titles need to be changed, as over time, it becomes difficult to select extracts that have not been used previously.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
To maintain the scenario framing of items, the selected extracts should come from different short stories each year. Extracts should create a viable context for assessing various literary features, particularly figures of speech that have not been assessed in the previous two years, to reduce predictability.

Table 3.2.7 below summarises the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the Poetry topic in DBE English FAL Paper 2 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.2.7: Findings on the Predictability of the Poetry Topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 2 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Poetry							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**

				allocated per content area/subtopic	**examine the subtopic**		
	QUESTION 6.1: 'Captive'						
2022	✓	Vocabulary (4)	17 marks	Match-the-columns (4)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Simile (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify/Apply and Interpret
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (1)		MCQ (1)	Level 1	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2022	**QUESTION 6.2: 'Mid-term break'**						
	✓	Theme (3)	18 marks	Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse/Interpret
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Literal and Figurative Meaning (2)		Short response (2)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Figure of Speech/ Personification (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 2 & 3	Identify and Interpret

	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (5)		Short response (5)	Levels 2 & 3	Level 3	Infer
2023	**QUESTION 6.1: 'Sonnet 73'**						
	✓	Identify Sonnet Structure (4)	17 marks	Match-the-columns (4)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall and Interpret
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Figurative Meaning (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Metaphor (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Levels 2 & 3	Identify/Apply and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 3	Infer
2023	**QUESTION 6.2: 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'**						
	✓	Onomatopoeia (1)	18 marks	MCQ (1)	Level 2	Level 1	Apply/Identify
	✓	Paraphrase (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 2	Interpret
	✓	Alliteration (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Metaphor (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 2 & 3	Identify/Apply and Interpret
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall

	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference(4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
2024	**QUESTION 6.1: 'The slave dealer'**						
	✓	Main Idea (4)	18 marks	Cloze procedure (4)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Irony (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Metaphor (1)		Short response (1)	Level 2	Level 2	Identify/Apply and Interpret
	✓	Theme (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 3	Analyse
	✓	Setting (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 1	Recall
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Paraphrase (2)		Short response (2)	Level 1	Level 2	Infer
2024	**QUESTION 6.2: 'Hard to find'**						
	✓	Figurative Meaning (1)	17 marks	Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 2	Recall and Interpret

	✓	Vocabulary (1)		Short response (1)	Level 1	Level 1	Recall Events
	✓	Tone (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret
	✓	Alliteration (1)		MCQ (1)	Level 2	Level 3	Interpret/Analyse
	✓	Figures of Speech/ Personification (3)		Short response (3)	Levels 1 & 2	Level 1	Identify/Apply and Interpret
	✓	Personal Response (3)		Short response (3)	Level 2	Level 4	Evaluate
	✓	Implied Meaning/ Inference (4)		Short response (4)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer
	✓	Mood (2)		Short response (2)	Level 2	Level 3	Infer

Table 3.2.7 presents a comparative overview of the Poetry topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components reflected in Table 3.2.8 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 2 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate that poetry was examined each year from 2022 to 2024. Two poems in this genre were selected from an anthology, and candidates were required to answer questions based on both poems. There is acceptable predictability in this examination, as the format and structure align with the prescribed guidelines for examining this topic. The examining body should maintain the existing format of this examination and ensure that different poems are selected each year.

b. Content coverage

The findings reveal a clear pattern of frequency in literary features of prescribed poems, including implied meaning, vocabulary, setting, theme, mood, tone, figures of speech, sound devices, and paraphrasing. Some subtopics were divided between the poems, while others were assessed in both poems with minimal variation in mark allocation across the three years of examination. For example, figures of speech were assessed in the context of both titles each year, whereas items assessing setting, mood, tone, irony, and theme were divided between the two titles. There was some variation in how subtopics were selected across the three years. For example, text features such as irony and personification were assessed in alternate years, in 2022 and 2024. The metaphor was assessed in 2023, and alliteration was assessed in 2023 and 2024. There was adequate variation in the assessment of vocabulary, poetic structure, and understanding of the main theme of the poem. Each of these three subtopics was assessed once over the three-year period.

The level of predictability in the content is acceptable, as these are basic poetic elements common to literary appreciation and are specified in the curriculum. Although there is evidence of repetition of specific figures of speech: metaphor, simile, personification, and irony, the variation in frequency minimises the possibility of rote learning. To reduce the predictability of figures of speech, examinations should include the full range specified in the curriculum.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals that there was no variation in the total weighting of poetry across the three years. Both poems were allocated 35 marks, which is split on an 18/17 basis as specified in the examination guidelines. The total weighting of this topic does not suggest a predictable emphasis in the examination. Candidates who select poetry as one of the genres are less likely to be advantaged by the level of predictability of this topic in comparison to those who select the novel or drama. The total mark allocation for this genre should be maintained to ensure compliance with examination guidelines.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates that the common item types used to assess poetry were short responses, match-the-columns, and one MCQ per examination over the three-year period. In 2024, a close procedure question replaced the match-the-columns question. Match-the-columns was used to assess different content each year. In 2022, the item assessed vocabulary; in 2023, it assessed the identification of the poetic structure of a sonnet. Therefore, there was limited predictability of item-topic pairing in this item type. Similarly, an MCQ, allocated one mark, assessed the different topics over the three-year period. Most questions required short responses, typically answered in one or two sentences, to explain ideas or infer meaning. Each examination included two personal response questions for each poem, each worth three marks. There was reasonable variation in item types across the three years, and an insignificant difference in mark allocation for similar item types. Thus, the examinations were sufficiently predictable.

There was no variation in the distribution of difficulty levels for specific item types across the three-year period. The level of difficulty varied between Level 1 and Level 2 for all item types in this section, except for one question on implied meaning in the 2022 examination paper, which was considered difficult due to the expected response. Since the questions were based on familiar texts, questions requiring candidates to describe elements of poetry and explain the literal meaning were typically simple. Questions that required candidates to identify and explain figures of speech were moderately challenging, as they involved applying concepts and analysing a given quote from the text. Similarly, items requiring candidates to discuss the theme or provide a personal response were moderately challenging, as they required candidates to present a logical argument supported by evidence from the text. Items requiring the interpretation of tone or inference of mood were equally moderately challenging. The level of difficulty of items is highly predictable, as there was little variation in the distribution of levels of difficulty over the three-year period.

There was no variation in the distribution of cognitive demand of item types across the three-year period. Match-the-columns and MCQs commonly assessed basic knowledge and were therefore categorised at Level 1. Short responses that required paraphrasing and identifying figures of speech, such as metaphors, similes, or personifications, were rated at Level 2, as candidates must demonstrate the application of conceptual knowledge in new contexts or rewrite quotes from the poem. Most short responses required candidates to infer, interpret, and analyse features of the text, such as setting, mood, tone, or diction. Therefore, a higher weighting of Level 3 questions in the literature examination was presented. The examination included two personal response questions, based either on the persona/speaker or the suitability of the poem's title. This item was categorised at Level 4, as it required candidates to make evaluative judgements by agreeing or disagreeing with an argument. Therefore, there was a fair but very predictable distribution of cognitive demand in this examination. It is recommended that this distribution be maintained, but a Level 5 question should be considered to balance the cognitive demand in the examination.

e. Topic and skill pairing

There was low predictability in the pairing of concepts and skills over the three years. Various subtopics were paired with the match-the-column item type and the MCQ. A similar topic-item pairing was evident in the consistently framed theme as a discussion question and in the short responses about mood, tone, setting, and implied meaning. There was some variation in the topics paired with personal response over the years; however, a level of predictability can be identified in this item type. The suitability of the title or the judgements on the persona were commonly assessed through an open-ended personal response. Figures of speech were assessed in two parts: candidates were first expected to identify the figure of speech and then explain its literal and figurative meanings. The double meaning in irony must be explained in detail. This level of predictability influences rote preparation and must be reduced by varying topic-skill pairings each year. For example, an open-ended question based on the theme or tone of the poem, or an MCQ based on persona or setting, can reduce the level of predictability of topic-item pairing. These variations help reduce the level of predictability of the examinations.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate that poetry questions in the literature paper were set in the context of poems selected from the prescribed anthology. The poems selected for contextual framing of questions varied each year. In 2022, 'Captive' and 'Mid-term break' were selected, in 2023 'Sonnet 73' and 'The lake isle of Innisfree,' and in 2024 'The slave dealer' and 'Hard to find.' Therefore, diverse scenarios were used across the three-year period. Hence, there was no predictability of the contextual framing of questions in this period.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Poetry topic

Table 3.2.8 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.2.8: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Poetry Topic Paper 2

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There was acceptable predictability in topic coverage in the question paper.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
No unacceptable predictability of topic coverage was identified in the examination.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
There was evidence of repetition of specific figures of speech: metaphor, simile, personification, and irony. This creates a high level of predictability of specific literary features, which can influence rote learning.

Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
To reduce the predictability of figures of speech, the examinations should include the full range of figures of speech specified in the curriculum, such as dramatic irony, metonymy, hyperbole, and critical language awareness.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
All aspects of literary analysis covered in the curriculum should be considered for the examination of the novel.
More open-ended questions that challenge candidates to think creatively and critically should be included to reduce the likelihood of rote preparation.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
There was an acceptable topic weighting in this section, as poetry is allocated 35 marks as prescribed in the examination guidelines.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
The predictability of subtopic weighting needs to be reduced by varying the mark allocation for specific items.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Since this is a choice paper, all titles must be given equal weighting to maintain uniformity across the assessed genres.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
There was a significant level of unacceptable predictability, as there is no variation in item types across the three years.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types
Using different item types to assess various literary features will reduce the predictability associated with this topic.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Open-ended questions requiring a personal response should assess a variety of content topics.
Mark allocation for different item types should vary to reduce predictability.

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic–skill pairing
There was acceptable predictability in topic-skill pairing in the assessment of literary features of poems.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
There should be a variation in topic-skill pairing each year to reduce unacceptable predictability.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Open-ended responses should be used to assess different features of poems.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
There was no unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
The prescribed titles need to be changed, as over time, it becomes difficult to select extracts that have not been used previously.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
To maintain the scenario framing of items, different poems should be selected from the anthology each year in a three-year cycle. Extracts should create a viable context for assessing various literary features, particularly figures of speech that have not been assessed in the previous two years, to reduce predictability.

Conclusions

The analysis of the English FAL Paper 2 over the three-year period indicates a moderate level of predictability. This is primarily attributable to the recurring use of specific content topics, consistent topic-skill pairing, and the repeated application of similar item formats across the examination cycles. Such patterns may increase predictability through familiarity with the format and pattern recognition.

However, the use of different extracts, texts, and poems each year significantly mitigates the risk of unacceptable predictability. While structural and format-based similarities are evident, the variation in textual content ensures that the cognitive demand and interpretive engagement remain sufficiently diverse.

Overall, Paper 2 demonstrates a moderate level of predictability; however, this does not compromise the integrity of the examination. Although certain recurring formats contribute to pattern consistency, the variation in prescribed texts and extracts maintains the integrity and fairness of the examination.

3.3 ENGLISH FAL PAPER 3

This section presents an analysis of the DBE final examination question papers for the English FAL Paper 3 topics from 2022 to 2024. Paper 3 assesses creative writing and is divided into three subtopics: Essays, Longer Transactional Texts, and Shorter Transactional Texts. Each subtopic has choice questions that allow candidates to choose from a range of text types within each section. Section A consists of eight essay topics, three of which are based on the interpretation of pictures. In Sections B and C, examiners select four longer transactional text types and three shorter transactional text types, respectively, from a range of texts specified in Section 4 of the CAPS and examination guidelines. The findings for each topic are summarised in Tables 3.3.1–3.3.6.

Table 3.3.1 below provides a summary of the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the Essay topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 3 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.3.1: Findings on the Predictability of the Essay Topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 3 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Essays							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated per content area/subtopic**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**
2022	✓	Narrative/ Reflective/ Descriptive Essay (50)	50	Essay (50)	Level 2	Level 5	Creative writing skills: Content and planning Language, style, and editing Structure
		Discursive/ Argumentative Essay (50)		Essay (50)	Level 3	Level 5	Creative writing skills: Content and planning Language, style, and editing Structure

	✓	Interpretation of Pictures Essay (50)		Essay (50)	Levels 2 & 3	Level 5	Creative writing skills: Suggestion of a suitable title or topic Literal/figurative interpretation of visual stimuli Content and planning Language, style, and editing Structure
2023	✓	Narrative/ Reflective/ Descriptive Essay (50)	50	Essay (50)	Level 2	Level 5	Creative writing skills: Content and planning Language, style, and editing Structure
	✓	Discursive/ Argumentative Essay (50)					Creative writing skills: Content and planning Language, style, and editing Structure
	✓	Interpretation of Pictures Essay (50)					Creative writing skills: Suggestion of a suitable title or topic Literal/figurative interpretation of visual stimuli

							Content and planning Language, style, and editing Structure
2024	✓	Narrative/ Reflective/ Descriptive Essay (50)	50	Essay (50)	Level 2	Level 5	Creative writing skills: Content and planning Language, style, and editing Structure
	✓	Discursive/ Argumentative Essay (50)					Creative writing skills: Content and planning Language, style, and editing Structure
	✓	Interpretation of Pictures Essay (50)					Creative writing skills: Suggestion of a suitable title or topic Literal/figurative interpretation of visual stimuli Content and planning Language, style, and editing Structure

Table 3.3.1 presents a comparative overview of the Essay topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components listed in Table 3.3.1 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 3 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate that all essay types specified in the curriculum and examination guidelines were examined each year. Candidates may choose one out of the five essay types (narrative/descriptive/argumentative/reflective/ discursive) from the eight topics in Section A. However, essay topics that provide a context for essays differ each year. Candidates were allowed to determine which essay type they would like to write in response to the selected topic. There was a predictable pattern in the frequency of essay types in Section A, which is in alignment with the examination guidelines for Paper 3. Candidates are encouraged to choose to write a specific type of essay in which they are most skilled. Therefore, candidates are not expected to master all essay types. Less challenging essay types, such as narrative and descriptive essays, may be the default choices candidates make in this section. However, essay types that are more academic and more challenging for candidates, such as discursive and argumentative essays, may be less popular. Marking guidelines allow candidates to use a combination of genres in their responses. This open-ended approach to assessing essay questions is an advantage to candidates, as it allows them to demonstrate their creativity without any boundaries. The level of predictability in this section is acceptable, as it is a choice paper that assesses creative writing skills. The predictability of topic coverage (essay types) should be maintained, given that topics vary each year and the level of predictability is limited.

b. Content coverage

The findings indicate that no specific content was assessed in Section A of Paper 3, as writing skills were assessed across different topics each year. No topics have been repeated within the 2022 to 2024 period. Thus, there was no evidence of predictability, in

terms of content coverage, in Section A. The selected essay topics were expected to cover a variety of relatable, age-appropriate topics, such as personal experiences, personal opinions on current affairs, philosophical reflections on universal topics, and literal and figurative interpretations of visual stimuli. Essay topics based on the themes covered in the literature paper may also be included, as candidates may already be familiar with them, and they may have a higher cognitive demand.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals that the total weighting of Paper 3 equals 100 marks. All essays in Section A were allocated 50 marks, and this has remained consistent across the three-year period. This is acceptable predictability as it ensures comparability of content coverage across the three examination years. The mark allocation remained consistent and appropriate for the length of the essay, which is 250–300 words. The marking guidelines indicated the mark allocation as follows:

- Content and planning (30 marks)
- Language, style, and editing (15 marks)
- Structure (5 marks)

Thus, there is acceptable predictability in the distribution of topic weightings across the three years. It is recommended that this mark allocation be maintained as the rubrics are consistent with the marking guidelines for each section of the examination paper.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates that all items in Section A of Paper 3 were essay-type/long questions. There was no variation in mark allocation for all items in Section A, as all essays were allocated 50 marks regardless of the complexity of the topics in this section. All essays had the same cognitive demand as they were rated at Level 5 (evaluation/creation). The level of difficulty may vary depending on the complexity of the topic.

There was a variation in the level of difficulty for similar text types assessed in Section A of Paper 3. In 2022, all essays were rated as moderately challenging (Level 2). In contrast, in 2023 and 2024, five essays were judged as moderately challenging, and three essays as difficult (Level 3) for the average Grade 12 candidate, primarily due to the content and stimulus difficulty. Essay topics framed as proverbs or idioms may be challenging, as candidates must first interpret the figurative language before addressing the prompt. In addition, philosophical topics require mature thinking and deep reflection. Some topics may require candidates to have a nuanced understanding of a subject, which can limit their responses, particularly under exam conditions where in-depth research is not possible. A candidate's knowledge of a topic can either advantage or disadvantage them. Topics that require candidates to compare two concepts or ideas, for example, argumentative and discursive essays, are more challenging. In these essays, candidates must argue for or against a topic or present a balanced argument.

In addition, it is common to find that one of the three picture-interpretation topics (1.6, 1.7, and 1.8) is slightly more difficult than the others. For example, in 2023, Question 1.8 required interpreting a picture depicting a broken chain and birds in flight. This picture was more abstract than the other pictures. Candidates were required to first unravel the symbolic meaning of the picture and make connections between the two visual clues represented by a broken chain and flying birds. Figurative interpretation, rather than a literal interpretation, was required in this question, whereas the other two questions could have been interpreted literally. In 2024, Question 1.7 was rated at Level 3 due to stimulus difficulty. The topic was based on a picture of a cooking robot, which required a nuanced understanding of technology and its impact on the future. The picture may be interpreted as referencing AI, robotics, or time travel, which may be a difficult topic to discuss under exam conditions for the average candidate.

Difficult and moderately challenging topics that do not appear in the same order each year make the examination less predictable. The low proportion of difficult topics in this section of the question paper was reasonable, as the examination is designed to assess writing skills and to give candidates free rein to use their own ideas and experiences, real or imagined, to respond to a given topic.

Despite this, most questions in this paper were deemed moderately challenging. This reflects the inherent complexity of writing, which requires candidates to interpret prompts, structure their essays, and articulate ideas logically. Although a topic might be judged as simple, the task of writing an essay is challenging for the average candidate, particularly for a learner who is writing in an additional language in which they are not fully proficient. However, difficult questions help distinguish achieving candidates from average candidates.

There was no variation in cognitive levels in Paper 3. All questions were rated at Level 5 (evaluation/creation) as candidates' creative writing skills were assessed in every examination year. Hence, there has been no variation in the distribution of cognitive demand over the past three years.

There was acceptable predictability in the format, structure, and mark allocation in this examination, which aligns with the required curriculum coverage as prescribed in the CAPS and examination guidelines. Section A consisted of choice questions, in which candidates could choose a topic from a preferred text type. There is a slight possibility of rote preparation as candidates are not restricted to a specific text type when choosing a topic. Teachers and learners may choose to focus on one text type, such as a narrative essay, to the exclusion of more challenging academic essay types, including discursive and argumentative essays.

It is recommended that the marking guidelines should take into consideration adherence to genre structure. Candidates should be required to write a specific essay type that is suitable for the essay topic selected. This will encourage learners to explore all genres rather than rely on rote preparation.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that, in Section A, creative writing skills and the ability to make value judgements were assessed. The skills assessed include interpreting topics, suggesting a suitable title for the topic, literal/figurative interpretation of visual stimuli, content and planning, using appropriate language, style, and editing skills, logical organisation of ideas, and structuring an essay into an introduction, body, and conclusion. Items 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8 appeal to the candidates' ability to analyse visual clues and creative skills, as they require them to develop a topic and plan an essay based on the selected image. Although the skills assessed remained invariant over the three-year period of examinations, the images used varied each year. Overall, there is an acceptable degree of predictability of skills demand in this section.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate that Paper 3 utilised scenarios to create realistic contexts for various types of texts. These scenarios required candidates to either suggest a literal or figurative interpretation. The topics in Section A ranged from personal experiences to idiomatic expressions, creating a level of acceptable predictability. The diverse range of topics covered over the three-year period provides an effective stimulus for candidates to write creatively. Although the images used in the three picture-interpretation topics vary each year, there was a pattern of at least one picture of the animal in Question 1.8 across the three years. In 2022, a picture of a dog appeared; in 2023, a picture of flying birds was shown; and in 2024, the same question featured a galloping horse. Although there is no likelihood of predictability of which image will be used in the examination, the use of animal pictures in the same question in three consecutive years increases the chances of candidates' ability to predict this question. It is recommended that examiners vary the order of the questions to reduce predictability. Examiners should consider other objects that can stimulate thinking about the range of topics based on the critical outcomes of the National Curriculum Statement, such as entrepreneurship, community, diversity, heritage, sportsmanship, and social justice (CAPS, pp. 4-5).

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Essay topic

Table 3.3.2 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.3.2: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Essay Topic Paper 3

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
The level of predictability in essay topic coverage is acceptable, as Paper 3 is a choice paper that assesses creative writing skills.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There was no unacceptable predictability of topic coverage, as the questions in this paper are open-ended.
Candidates should be allowed to choose an essay type that best suits their creative ability.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
There was no evidence of unacceptable predictability in terms of content coverage in Section A.
Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
The predictability of topic coverage (essay types) should be maintained, as essay topics vary each year, and the level of predictability is limited.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
The selected essay topics should cover a variety of relatable, age-appropriate topics, such as personal experiences, personal opinions on current affairs, philosophical reflections on universal topics, and literal and figurative interpretations of visual stimuli.

Essay topics based on the themes covered in the literature paper may also be included, as candidates may already be familiar with these topics and, as such, they may have a higher cognitive demand.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
There was acceptable predictability in the topic weightings in Section A across the three years.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
Topic weighting does not create unacceptable predictability of this topic.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
It is recommended that this mark allocation be maintained as it is suitable for the length of essays, and the marking guidelines/rubrics provide a clear breakdown of the distribution of marks according to the assessment criteria for this topic.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
There was a slight possibility of rote preparation, as candidates are not restricted to a specific text type when choosing a topic. Teachers and learners may choose to focus on one text type, such as a narrative essay, to the exclusion of more challenging academic essay types, including discursive and argumentative essays.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types
It is recommended that the marking guidelines take into consideration adherence to genre structure. Candidates should be required to write a specific essay type that is suitable for the essay topic selected. This will encourage learners to explore all genres rather than rely on rote preparation.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Marking guidelines should either credit or penalise the use of incorrect genres for the selected essay topics. Candidates should be required to identify the features of genres embedded in selected topics and apply this knowledge in their responses.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic–skill pairing

The predictability of topic-skill pairing in essay writing is acceptable. Candidates are taught the conventions of essay writing, including structure, coherence, style, and editing. These skills should be assessed as prescribed in the curriculum.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
Sufficient guidance should be given in terms of instructions, but not be prescriptive, to ensure candidates can apply the writing skills taught, and to demonstrate their creative skills.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Instructions should be clear but not explicitly guide candidates on the requirements of the elements of an essay, as this should be taught as specified in the curriculum.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
Although there is no likelihood of predictability of which image will be used in the examination, the use of animal pictures in the same question in three consecutive years increases the chances of candidates' ability to predict this question.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
It is recommended that examiners vary the order of images within items based on their interpretations to reduce predictability.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Examiners should consider other objects that can stimulate thinking about the range of topics reflected in the critical outcomes of the National Curriculum Statement, such as entrepreneurship, community, diversity, heritage, sportsmanship, and social justice.

Table 3.3.3 below summarises the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the Longer Transactional Texts topic in the DBE English FAL Paper 3 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.3.3: Findings on the Predictability of the Longer Transactional Texts Topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 3 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Longer Transactional Texts							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not examined (X)**	**Content area/subtopics covered, including mark allocation**	**Overall weighting of the topic in marks**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated per content area/subtopic**	**Level of difficulty per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Cognitive level per item type used to examine the subtopic**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**
2022	✓	LETTER TO THE PRESS (30)	30	Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 3	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
	✓	OBITUARY (30)		Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format

							Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone
	✓	REPORT (30)		Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 3	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
	✓	DIALOGUE (30)		Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning and format Language, style and editing Appropriate tone
2023	✓	E-MAIL (30)	30	Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register

	✓	FRIENDLY LETTER (30)		Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
	✓	REVIEW (30)		Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Discussion of the features of a book
	✓	INTERVIEW (30)		Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone
2024	✓	LETTER OF APPLICATION (30)	30	Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing

							Appropriate tone and register
	✓	MAGAZINE ARTICLE (30)		Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 3	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register Suitable title
	✓	OBITUARY (30)		Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone
	✓	DIALOGUE (30)		Longer Transactional Texts (30)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone

Table 3.3.4 presents a comparative overview of the Longer Transactional Texts topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components listed in Table 3.3.4 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 3 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate that in Section B of Paper 3, examiners selected four longer transactional text types from a range of texts specified in Section 4 of the CAPS and examination guidelines. Candidates must choose one longer transactional text from the four texts. Topic coverage in this section is predictable as there was no variation in mark allocation or examination format over the three-year period. The predictability of this topic should be maintained to ensure compliance with examination guidelines.

b. Content coverage

The findings indicate a partial variation in the selection of formal and informal letters, reports, reviews and magazine articles over the three-year period. However, there was a predictable pattern of selecting similar text types in Section B of Paper 3. Over the past three years, the obituary and dialogue have been examined twice, in 2022 and 2024. Although the scenario or context of the text differs each year, there will be a high level of predictability for these examinations if the same text types are examined in consecutive or alternating years. Consequently, candidates can easily estimate which text type is likely to be selected for the examination and focus on it in their exam preparation. This level of predictability is unacceptable as candidates do not experience full exposure to the range of genres specified in the curriculum. It is recommended that the variation in letter type be maintained. Text types that are more frequently selected should be rotated annually to reduce the frequency of the same text types. Examinations should include other longer transactional texts, such as speeches, curriculum vitae, agendas, and meeting minutes.

c. Weighting of the topic

The weighting of longer transactional texts (30 marks) remained consistent across the three-year period. The mark allocation complied with the examination guidelines and was appropriate to the length of each question. There is acceptable predictability in the weighting of topics in this examination paper across the three years. It is recommended that this mark allocation be maintained as the rubrics are consistent with the marking guidelines for each section of the examination paper.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates that there was no variation in item types and mark allocation across the three-year period. All items in Section B of Paper 3 were long questions that assessed creative writing skills. Four types of longer transactional texts were selected each year, and the 30-mark allocation remained unchanged despite changes in the phrasing of the topic or the selection of text type.

The difficulty of the subtopics in Section B ranges from difficult to moderately challenging. In 2022, Question 2.1 (*Letter to the press*) and 2.3 (*Report*) were rated at Level 3 and in 2024, Question 2.2 (*Magazine article*) was also considered difficult for the average candidate. The format and style of these texts, and the complexity of the topics, were judged as more challenging than those in the other sections. Most topics in this section were moderately challenging, as candidates were assessed on their ability to interpret the question brief, format, style, and grammatical accuracy. There was no variation in cognitive levels in this topic. All questions were rated at Level 5 (creation) as candidates' creative writing skills were assessed in every examination year. The level of cognitive demand is highly predictable, as there has been no variation in cognitive demand over the past three years.

There was acceptable predictability in the format, structure, and mark allocation in this examination. This aligned with the required curriculum coverage as prescribed in the CAPS and with assessment and examination guidelines. The examination consisted of MCQs in each section, and candidates could choose a topic based on their preferred text type. Although there was a degree of

variation in longer transactional text types; for example, different types of letters were examined each year, there was also a relatively high degree of predictability in this section. Teachers and learners were more likely to focus on the obituary and dialogue in preparation for examinations than on other text types, such as the report and magazine article, since the latter texts are rarely selected by examiners. It is recommended that examiners should explore the full range of text types in Section B. Different texts should be examined to reduce the predictability of this topic.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that Section B consisted of longer transactional texts. This section assessed the same range of writing skills, including writing that is purpose-, audience-, and context-specific. These texts were both formal and informal, according to the brief or scenario provided in the question topic. Candidates are required to interpret the topic, use either a formal or an informal register, and structure each response according to its format. For example, a letter to the press must follow the correct format, including the address of the sender, an appropriate salutation, and a close. The tone and register must be formal, and the structure must consist of an introduction, body, and conclusion. In contrast, a letter to a friend may have an informal register and reflect the personal nature of the relationship between the sender and the receiver. The assessment criteria for all texts in Section B include content, planning and format, as well as language style and editing.

The texts selected in this section varied annually, except for the obituary and dialogue, which were assessed twice in the past three years. The types of letters assessed over the three-year period varied; therefore, predictability for this category of longer transactional texts decreased. The obituary was assessed twice in the past three years. The skills required to respond to this question included interpreting the brief, using a formal tone (depending on the topic), providing biographical information about the deceased, the cause of death, and a tribute to the deceased. This type of text has a high degree of predictability, as candidates can easily memorise the details required to write an obituary and make only minor alterations to suit the brief. For example, in 2022, the obituary

is framed as a tribute to a mother's friend. In 2024, the obituary is described as a tribute to the captain of the local sports team. Candidates can easily alter the name and use, roughly, the same details in different topics.

It is recommended that examiners consider other types of texts for Section B, as outlined in the examination guidelines, to ensure that Grade 12 learners are taught the full range of transactional writing skills, particularly workplace writing skills, that can be developed through texts such as agendas, minutes, and reports.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate a good range of scenarios used to create authentic contexts for the different types of texts examined in Section B of Paper 3. Formal texts tend to focus on work- or school-related scenarios, such as a sports team captain, organising a competition for local youth, or writing a report to the school principal about a workshop attended. These topics cover a wide range of relatable themes that test candidates' creative writing skills and use appropriate style and tone to suit the purpose of the writing and the audience. Informal texts cover varied topics that reflect real-life contexts, including relationships with family and friends. Therefore, there is a slight possibility that the scenarios used may influence the anticipation of the questions in this topic. It is recommended that the themes selected be varied beyond mundane topics such as offering condolences for a death, going on holiday, and sports and school competitions. More mature and topical issues, such as global warming, ethical leadership, gender-based violence, and responsible digital citizenship, should be considered for this topic in future examinations.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Longer Transactional Texts topic

Table 3.3.4 below summarises identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.3.4: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Longer Transactional Texts Topic Paper 3

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There is acceptable predictability in the coverage of topics in longer transactional texts. Candidates can adequately prepare for examinations if they are informed of their structure and format, particularly how texts are categorised by type and length.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
The level of predictability on topic coverage should be maintained to ensure clarity of examination guidelines.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
The frequency of certain text types creates unacceptable predictability.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
It is recommended that examiners consider other types of texts for Section B as outlined in the examination guidelines to ensure that Grade 12 learners are taught the full range of transactional writing skills, particularly workplace writing skills that can be developed through texts such as agendas, minutes, and reports.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting

The weighting of longer transactional texts is acceptable for the length of these texts and the duration of the examination. The breakdown of marks accounts for content, language, and structure.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
No unacceptable weighting was given to the topic. The allocation of 30 marks for this topic accounts for the content, structure, format, and style of the text.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
The weighting of 30 marks should be maintained. Marking guidelines should specify the breakdown of marks.
Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
The predictability of the item type is appropriate. The body of responses should be between 120 and 150 words in length. The length allows candidates to provide detailed responses to questions and to demonstrate a range of writing skills.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types
There was no unacceptable predictability on item types.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
A variety of text types should be assessed each year to allow candidates to demonstrate a range of writing skills.
Identified unacceptable predictability on topic–skill pairing
There is a high level of predictability of topic-skill pairing in this section of the examination due to the frequency of text types assessed and the nature of skills assessed in this examination.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
A variety of text types should be assessed each year to allow candidates to demonstrate a range of writing skills.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper

The variety of texts, such as letters, magazine articles, and reports, should be maintained to reduce the predictability of the question paper.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
There was unacceptable predictability in the scenarios used for diary entries and the obituary.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
Scenarios used for diary entries and the obituary should be varied to cover more universal topics, rather than focusing solely on relationships with family or friends, or on school and sports activities.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
A range of relatable topics reflecting diverse experiences should be used to maintain a consistent scenario framing across letters, magazine articles, and reports.

Table 3.3.5 below summarises the analysis conducted to determine the level of predictability for the Shorter Transactional Texts topic in DBE English FAL Paper 3 examinations from 2022 to 2024.

Table 3.3.5: Findings on the Predictability of the Shorter Transactional Texts Topic for the DBE English FAL Paper 3 Examinations from 2022–2024

Topic: Shorter Transactional Texts							
Year	**Topic examined (✓) or not**	**Content area/subtopics covered,**	**Overall weighting of the**	**Item type/types (e.g., MCQ, essays, short**	**Level of difficulty per item type used**	**Cognitive level per item type used to**	**Skill assessed per subtopic**

	examined (X)	including mark allocation	topic in marks	answers, table, etc.) and marks allocated per content area/subtopic	to examine the subtopic	examine the subtopic	
2022	✓	INVITATION (20)	20	Shorter Transactional Texts (20)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
	✓	DIARY ENTRY (20)		Shorter Transactional Texts (20)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
	✓	INSTRUCTIONS (20)		Shorter Transactional Texts (20)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
2023	✓	FLYER (20)	20	Shorter Transactional Texts (20)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
	✓	DIARY ENTRIES (20)		Shorter Transactional Texts (20)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register

	✓	DIRECTIONS (20)		Shorter Transactional Texts (20)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
2024	✓	POSTER (20)	20	Shorter Transactional Texts (20)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
	✓	DIARY ENTRIES (20)		Shorter Transactional Texts (20)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register
	✓	INSTRUCTIONS (20)		Shorter Transactional Texts (20)	Level 2	Level 5	Content, planning, and format Language, style, and editing Appropriate tone and register

Table 3.3.5 presents a comparative overview of the Shorter Transactional Texts topic across the three-year period. The analysis, presented in Sections a to f, evaluates whether the components listed in Table 3.3.5 have contributed to the predictability of the DBE English FAL final examination question Paper 3 from 2022 to 2024.

a. Topic coverage

The findings indicate that in Section C, examiners selected three shorter transactional text types from a range of texts specified in Section 4 of the CAPS and examination guidelines. This pattern aligns with the examination guidelines. There was no variation in mark allocation or examination format over the three-year period. Therefore, the structure creates an acceptable level of predictability

of the topic assessed in this section of the examination paper. This level of predictability should be maintained as the selection of subtopics (text types) varies from year to year.

b. Content coverage

The findings indicate a predictable pattern of similar text types in Section C of the examination. Over the past three years, instructions have been examined twice, in 2022 and 2024. Although the scenario or context of the text varied each year, there is a high level of predictability in these examinations when the same text types are examined each year or in alternate years. Consequently, candidates can easily estimate which text type is likely to be selected for the examination and focus on that particular text type in their exam preparation. This level of predictability is unacceptable.

To reduce predictability, examiners should vary the selection of text types, particularly in Categories B and C. Short Message System texts should be included to diversify this category. The examination guidelines specify two texts from Category C: directions and instructions. This limits the range of variation to two texts, increasing the predictability of texts in this category. The assessment body should introduce additional, shorter transactional texts into the curriculum to reduce the predictability of Category C texts and, to a lesser extent, Category B texts.

c. Weighting of the topic

The analysis reveals that the mark allocation for shorter transactional texts remained consistent over the three years. The mark allocation, along with the examination guidelines, was appropriate for the length of each question. It is recommended that this mark allocation be maintained, as the rubrics were consistent with the marking guidelines for each section of the examination paper. Therefore, there is acceptable predictability in the weighting of topics in this examination paper across the three years.

d. Variation in item types

The evaluation indicates no variation in item types and mark allocation in this topic across the three-year period. All items are long questions that assess creative writing skills. Candidates were required to choose one topic from three shorter transactional texts selected each year. The 20 marks allocated to each item remained unchanged despite changes in the topic phrasing or the selection of text type.

There was no variation in the level of difficulty in Section C within the 2022 to 2024 period. All items were moderately challenging across the three-year period. There was no variation in cognitive levels in this question paper. All questions were rated at Level 5 (creation) as candidates' creative writing skills were assessed in every examination year.

There is acceptable predictability in the format, structure, and mark allocation for this examination. This aligns with the required curriculum coverage as prescribed in the CAPS and examination guidelines. Although there was a degree of variation in the selection of shorter transactional text types, there was also a higher degree of predictability in this section, particularly in Category C texts, which consist of only two text types (directions and instructions). Teachers and learners are more likely to focus on instructions in preparation for examinations than on other text types, as this text is more frequently examined than other text types in this section.

It is recommended that a wider variety of texts be introduced in Section C to reduce the high level of predictability of examinations. More modern texts, particularly digital or e-texts, should be considered to accommodate a wider range of communication skills, both for social and work-related purposes.

e. Topic and skill pairing

The findings provide evidence that all items in Section C of Paper 3 were long responses, referred to as shorter transactional texts, with a prescribed minimum body length of 80-100 words. Instructions and directions had a similar format: written in point or paragraph form and in imperative form. Therefore, there was no variation in the topic-skill pairing across the three years, making this topic highly predictable. A variety of texts should be added to this section to reduce predictability. Texts with a slightly different format and style will add variety to this section of the examination paper.

f. Scenario framing of items for a topic

The patterns observed indicate that, in examining shorter transactional texts, scenarios were used to create real-life contexts for the types of texts assessed. There was an interesting variety of scenarios used in the three examination years, which provided an effective stimulus for candidates to write either instructions or directions. There is very little predictability in the contextual framing of questions in this topic, as scenarios vary from year to year.

Summary of findings and recommendations for the DBE English FAL Shorter Transactional Texts topic

Table 3.3.6 below summarises the identified patterns of predictability across key components of question paper design, along with corresponding recommendations to reduce predictability and strategies to maintain effective assessment practices without compromising variability.

Table 3.3.6: Summary of Findings and Recommendations on the Predictability of the 2022–2024 DBE English FAL Shorter Transactional Texts Topic Paper 3

Identified unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
There is acceptable predictability in the coverage of topics in shorter transactional texts. Candidates can adequately prepare for examinations if they are informed of the structure and format, particularly how texts are categorised by type and length.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic coverage
The level of predictability should be maintained to ensure clarity of examination guidelines.
Identified unacceptable predictability in content coverage
A few texts were listed in the three categories of shorter transactional texts. The narrow range of texts increases predictability, as examiners tend to alternate between two or three texts in each category, thereby influencing the level of predictability for this topic.
Recommendations to avoid predictable content coverage
Additional texts should be introduced to increase the range of texts assessed in Section C.
Strategies to maintain content coverage that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Introduce texts with a variety of formats and styles to develop a wide range of communication skills.
Identified unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
The weighting of shorter transactional texts is acceptable for the length of these texts and the duration of the examination. The breakdown of marks accommodates content, language, and structure.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in topic weighting
The weighting of 20 marks should be maintained.
Strategies to maintain topic weighting that do not lead to a predictable question paper
The weighting of 20 marks should be maintained.

Identified unacceptable predictability in item types
The predictability of the item type is appropriate.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in item types
The predictability of the item type is appropriate.
Strategies to maintain the assessment of item types that do not lead to a predictable question paper
The length (80-100 words) of responses to texts in this section is suitable. Examinations should assess candidates' ability to write concisely and clearly while ensuring that their responses are complete and accurate. They should demonstrate the ability to write for a variety of purposes and audiences for social or business purposes.
Identified unacceptable predictability on topic–skill pairing
There was a high level of topic-skill pairing in this section of the examination, given the limited range of texts across the different categories.
Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability through topic–skill pairing
A wider range of texts should be introduced to challenge candidates to write for different purposes and reduce the risk of rote learning.
Strategies to maintain topic–skill pairing that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Variation in the format of different texts will help reduce predictability. Instead of open-ended questions where candidates may write in point or paragraph form, instructions can require closed responses to increase the difficulty of the questions. For more graphic text types such as invitations, flyers, and brochures, assessment tasks should require a degree of creativity and originality rather than merely requiring candidates to fill in predetermined details.
Identified unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
No unacceptable predictability was identified in the framing of scenarios in shorter transactional texts.

Recommendations to avoid unacceptable predictability in the scenario framing of items
To avoid predictability, scenarios should cover more universal themes and topics relevant to modern lifestyles. For example, directions should include GPS features. SMS texts should be written in the context of modern purposes of communication.
Strategies to maintain scenario framing of items that do not lead to a predictable question paper
Scenario framing should be maintained in items that depict relatable topics that candidates will respond to easily under examination conditions.

Conclusions

The analysis of the English FAL Paper 3 reveals varying levels of predictability across sections. In Section A, there is no evidence of unacceptable predictability. Essay topics differ annually, and the distribution of topics, skill coverage, and mark allocation over the three-year period is balanced and fair, thereby not contributing significantly to overall examination predictability.

However, Sections B and C demonstrate notable elements of predictability. In Section B, the frequent assessment of specific, longer transactional text types, such as diary entries and obituaries, and the repeated use of similar scenarios, increases the likelihood of pattern recognition and rote preparation. This repetition contributes to an unacceptable level of predictability, although candidates have options within the section.

Section C contributes most significantly to overall predictability due to the limited range of prescribed shorter transactional text types and the consistent format and style of instructions. Although scenarios vary, the predictable structure and topic-skill pairing allow candidates to anticipate response patterns.

In conclusion, while Section A is not predictable, Paper 3 demonstrates elements of unacceptable predictability, particularly in Sections B and C. Greater variation in text types, scenarios, and instructional formats is recommended to enhance the integrity and unpredictability of the examination.

PART IV DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 4: Discussions, Conclusions, and General Recommendations

Sections 3.1–3.3 presented comprehensive findings arising from the evaluation of each topic assessed in the DBE English FAL NSC examination papers. These findings were derived from a systematic analysis of examination papers administered between 2022 and 2024, aimed at identifying patterns of predictability across the sampled subjects.

Building on this foundation, this chapter discusses the findings in relation to the study's conceptual framework and broader assessment principles. It further provides evidence-based recommendations informed by the observed trends and concludes with reflections on the implications of the findings for assessment quality, validity, and future examination design.

4.1 Discussions

Evidence presented in Sections 3.1–3.3 indicates that, across the majority of topics assessed in DBE English FAL Papers 1, 2, and 3, the examinations generally demonstrate acceptable levels of predictability, with only a few areas requiring refinement to strengthen assessment integrity.

English FAL Paper 1

The analysis of Paper 1 demonstrates that overall predictability in topic coverage, content distribution, and mark allocation is acceptable and aligned with curriculum and examination guidelines. There is no evidence of unacceptable predictability when the paper is considered holistically. The structure remains consistent with assessment policy, thereby supporting reliability, fairness, and standardisation.

However, a relatively high level of predictability is evident in topic–skill pairing, recurring item types, and aspects of scenario framing. This is particularly noticeable in summary writing tasks and the assessment of language structures and conventions

over the three-year period. While such consistency promotes compliance with curriculum requirements and ensures comparability across examination cycles, it may enable strategic preparation based on familiarity with the format. Greater variation in item types, mark allocation patterns, text structures, and language components would reduce pattern recognition and further enhance cognitive differentiation.

Overall, Paper 1 is not unacceptably predictable, but targeted diversification would strengthen its assessment quality.

English FAL Paper 2

The analysis of Paper 2 over the three-year period indicates a moderate level of predictability. This is primarily attributable to the recurring assessment of specific content focus areas, consistent topic–skill pairing, and the repeated use of similar question formats. These structural consistencies may increase predictability through familiarity with recurring patterns and response expectations.

Nevertheless, the annual use of different extracts, prescribed texts, and poems significantly mitigates the risk of unacceptable predictability. Although structural similarities are evident, variation in textual content ensures that learners must engage in fresh interpretation, analysis, and contextual understanding each year. The cognitive demand, therefore, remains sufficiently dynamic despite format-based consistencies.

In conclusion, Paper 2 demonstrates moderate but not unacceptable predictability. Structural repetition is balanced by textual variation, thereby maintaining the integrity, fairness, and validity of the examination.

English FAL Paper 3

The analysis of Paper 3 reveals differentiated levels of predictability across its sections. Section A shows no evidence of unacceptable predictability. Essay topics differ annually, and the distribution of topics, skills coverage, and mark allocation over the three-year period is balanced and equitable. This variation limits pattern anticipation and supports authentic written expression.

In contrast, Sections B and C demonstrate notable elements of predictability. In Section B, the frequent assessment of specific longer transactional text types, such as diary entries and obituaries, and the recurring use of similar scenario contexts,

increase opportunities for pattern recognition and formulaic preparation. Although candidates are given a choice within the section, the repetition of certain text types contributes to an unacceptable level of predictability.

Section C contributes most significantly to overall predictability. The limited range of prescribed shorter transactional text types, together with consistent instructional formats and stable topic–skill pairing, allows candidates to anticipate structural and stylistic expectations. While scenarios vary superficially, the predictable response framework may encourage rehearsed rather than adaptive writing.

4.2 Conclusions

While English FAL Papers 1 and 2 demonstrate acceptable to moderate levels of predictability that do not compromise examination integrity, Paper 3 exhibits elements of unacceptable predictability, particularly within Sections B and C. To enhance the overall robustness of the assessment, greater variation in transactional text types, scenario framing, instructional phrasing, and item formats is recommended. Such diversification would reduce opportunities for rote anticipation, strengthen construct validity, and promote a more authentic demonstration of writing competence.

4.3 General Recommendations

It is recommended that examination designers adopt multi-year rotation matrices to regulate the recurrence of subtopics, skills, item types, and scenario framings. Moderation processes at the assessment body level should incorporate explicit cross-year comparisons to identify emerging patterns, particularly in subjects where upward trends in learner performance have raised concerns about predictability. In addition, the development and expansion of item-type and scenario banks would help diversify question structures, reduce reliance on familiar templates, and mitigate unintentional patterning.

Targeted diversification, particularly in Paper 3 and in recurring topic–skill pairings, would strengthen construct validity, enhance cognitive differentiation, and reduce opportunities for rote preparation. A deliberate strategy of controlled variation across

examination cycles would further promote fairness, authenticity, and assessment integrity.

Finally, the routine implementation of predictability audits, using the six analytical dimensions outlined in the tables, would support ongoing monitoring and help prevent the emergence of unintended patterns.