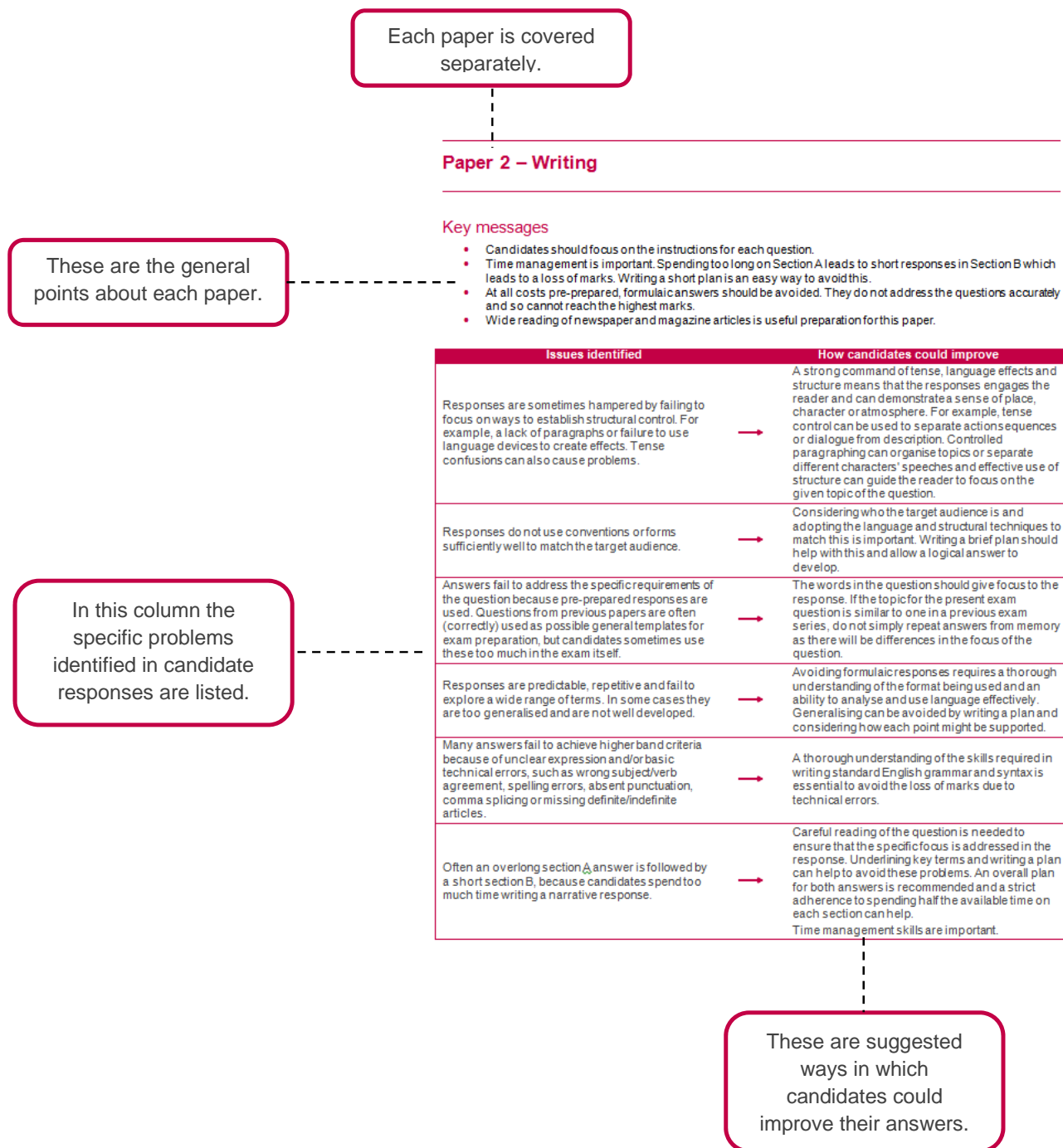




The aim of this document is to highlight the following information:

- the key messages about each of the papers in the series
- the issues candidates faced
- how candidates could improve.

The layout of this document is shown below.



Paper 1 – Passages

Key messages

- Candidates need to have read, and be familiar with, the conventions and language of a range of material. This might include travel writing, memoirs, autobiographies, newspaper articles, blogs or advertisements.
- Candidates must be able to comment on the effects and qualities conveyed by words and phrases.
- Candidates should be able to comment on the way passages develop due to the use of subject, mood and tone.
- Candidates should have the ability to contrast sections of text. They should be able to identify essential aspects of language and consider this in relation to the context of the extract.
- As candidates write, they should focus precisely on the style and tone needed. To do this, they must adapt their writing according to the directed tasks.
- Technical accuracy is needed at all times.

Issues identified		How candidates could improve
Language features such as hyperbole or alliteration are simply identified. Some responses only provide a narrative of the text.	→	Demonstrate good analytical skills by interpreting the use of language in the passages and the effect this has on the reader. Language features should be exemplars of linguistic analysis.
Responses do not stay within the prescribed word limits.	→	Do not waste time by writing an opening paragraph that simply summarises the passage or introduces the audience.
The tone of the passage is confused with its subject matter, e.g. a passage is wrongly described as having a 'medical tone'. Words such as 'informal' and 'formal' are over used and are too imprecise.	→	Passages often change in tone and good responses recognise this and are able to accurately describe these changes.
Some candidates do not make full use of the reading time and in may only focus on the earlier parts of the passage.	→	Make sure that all answers are given equal time. Complete the commentary first so there is familiarity with the form, style and linguistic techniques in the passage.
Paraphrasing of the passage is not a good way to respond to the directed writing task.	→	Directed writing is an opportunity to demonstrate writing skills whilst using the style and linguistic features seen in the passage.
Candidates repeat or simply reinforce the same points where there are many things to comment on in a passage.	→	Where there are many aspects in the passage to comment on, make a point succinctly and then move onto a different example.
The implication of key words and the way they can develop an argument is often missed.	→	As well as commenting on linguistic devices, key words and their effects should be considered.
Sometimes candidates misread or forget to address all parts of the question.	→	Checking for key terms in the question is important. Using the same subheadings as in the passage can often help to inform responses and develop purposeful writing.
Providing lengthy quotations or writing about considerations outside of the passage lead to answers that lack focus.	→	Close examination of the key words and linguistic devices is required. This should be supported by short, relevant quotations. Moving away from the content of the text should be avoided.
Responses stray from the original text. For example, when responding to a passage that has an argument, candidates may simply write as a representative of one side. In other cases writing about something that is liked or disliked can distract from the style and language of the original.	→	At all times responses should use the original passage as the model for the style, tone and language. Responses must be focused and should not drift into irrelevant information or present personal views. Focus on technical accuracy is important.

Paper 2 – Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should focus on the instructions for each question.
- Time management is important. Spending too long on Section A leads to short responses in Section B which leads to a loss of marks. Writing a short plan is an easy way to avoid this.
- At all costs pre-prepared, formulaic answers should be avoided. They do not address the questions accurately and so cannot reach the highest marks.
- Wide reading of newspaper and magazine articles is useful preparation for this paper.

Issues identified		How candidates could improve
Responses are sometimes hampered by failing to focus on ways to establish structural control. For example, a lack of paragraphs or failure to use language devices to create effects. Tense confusions can also cause problems.	→	A strong command of tense, language effects and structure means that the responses engages the reader and can demonstrate a sense of place, character or atmosphere. For example, tense control can be used to separate action sequences or dialogue from description. Controlled paragraphing can organise topics or separate different characters' speeches and effective use of structure can guide the reader to focus on the given topic of the question.
Responses do not use conventions or forms sufficiently well to match the target audience.	→	Considering who the target audience is and adopting the language and structural techniques to match this is important. Writing a brief plan should help with this and allow a logical answer to develop.
Answers fail to address the specific requirements of the question because pre-prepared responses are used. Questions from previous papers are often (correctly) used as possible general templates for exam preparation, but candidates sometimes use these too much in the exam itself.	→	The words in the question should give focus to the response. If the topic for the present exam question is similar to one in a previous exam series, do not simply repeat answers from memory as there will be differences in the focus of the question.
Responses are predictable, repetitive and fail to explore a wide range of terms. In some cases they are too generalised and are not well developed.	→	Avoiding formulaic responses requires a thorough understanding of the format being used and an ability to analyse and use language effectively. Generalising can be avoided by writing a plan and considering how each point might be supported.
Many answers fail to achieve higher band criteria because of unclear expression and/or basic technical errors, such as wrong subject/verb agreement, spelling errors, absent punctuation, comma splicing or missing definite/indefinite articles.	→	A thorough understanding of the skills required in writing standard English grammar and syntax is essential to avoid the loss of marks due to technical errors.
Often an overlong section A answer is followed by a short section B, because candidates spend too much time writing a narrative response.	→	Careful reading of the question is needed to ensure that the specific focus is addressed in the response. Underlining key terms and writing a plan can help to avoid these problems. An overall plan for both answers is recommended and a strict adherence to spending half the available time on each section can help. Time management skills are important.