

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/11

Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to engage not only with the wording of each question but also with the connotations of key words within the passage.
- In **Question 1**, candidates are advised to take notice of the number of marks per question as this will help them to focus their responses clearly on how to achieve these – especially in the vocabulary **Question (1 g)**.
- Centres are advised to emphasise the importance of vocabulary building in the years leading up to the IGCSE examination and, in particular, the importance of morphology in helping candidates to achieve a precise understanding of key phrases.

## General Comments

- In general this paper appeared to be well received and allowed candidates of a range of abilities to demonstrate their reading understanding in **Question 1** and writing skills in **Question 2**. The paper and the tasks were accessible for the vast majority of the candidates. As in previous series, some of the more advanced vocabulary and the response to the third bullet point in **Question 2** were the most discriminating elements of the Question Paper.
- There was clear evidence that the subject matter of the passage was interesting and accessible although, in some cases, this interest resulted in an over-concentration on the sections about bears and dangers.
- Overall, the majority of responses to the Reading questions revealed that candidates had a secure general understanding of the passage about Kamchatka. As mentioned in the Key Messages section, it is of the greatest importance that candidates focus closely on the precise wording of the questions and attempt to ensure that they deal with specific details in order to produce complete answers. It is also important that they take note of rubric instructions, such as those indicating that ‘own words’ should be used to answer some questions, in order to give clear evidence of understanding.
- There was no evidence that candidates felt constrained by any lack of time in which to complete the tasks. Where there were questions where no response was given, the evidence was that this was caused by a lack of comprehension, rather than a lack of time.
- Most candidates wrote to at least adequate length in their responses to **Question 2** and many showed awareness of the requirement to use a spoken register for this task. The most successful responses swiftly established a convincing persona for the speaker and responded both imaginatively and perceptively to the content and implications of the passage, using quite sophisticated writing skills. Less successful responses to this question tended to be over-reliant on the content and language of the original, repeating, rather than developing details.
- Centres are reminded that from June 2015 there will be a revised format for this paper (details can be found in the 2015 syllabus). In particular, there will be two reading passages with a summary question based on the second passage. From June 2015 the summary will be marked for both Reading and Writing, and Centres are advised to emphasise to candidates that indiscriminate lifting from the original passage will be penalised under the Writing marking criteria.

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### **Question 1**

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question for the candidates, with the majority securing at least one mark. The most frequently correct responses were that the writer and his companions were confronted by a large adult bear and that it was a mother that was separated from its cub. Fewer candidates made the equally valid point that the writer and his companions had intruded on the bear's territory although some showed understanding of this by relating the statement 'we were in the one spot humans should never be' to the question. Less successful responses tended to focus on the fact that the intruders were close to the bear or simply made reference to guns/weapons. In some responses, there was confusion as to whether the mother bear was looking at the visitors or beyond them. The more successful responses showed awareness that two reasons had to be offered in response to the question, reflecting that the layout of the paper was generally successful in guiding candidates with regard to both the length and format of the response. This trend appeared throughout the paper.
- (b) Most responses gained at least one mark by focusing on the idea of photographs being taken by the 'intruders', although some took 'huddled together' as indicating fear. Very few candidates referred to the actions of the bears, often interpreting *them* as the intruders, reflecting a misreading of the question and the passage.
- (c) Many responses focused on the area being unpopulated. At times this was combined with a sense of the size of the area. Fewer just referred to the fact that it was the size of the area which made gathering information difficult which was necessary for the mark to be awarded. With these answers, 'huge', 'very big', 'vast' and 'massive' were the main descriptions offered. Many responses, however, did not quantify the 'big' or 'large' sufficiently to gain a mark; others cited the size of the bear population as being the source of the difficulty in calculating the size of the population indicating a failure to grasp the significance of the question.
- (d) Most responses identified that the visitors were uncertain where to look or to point their binoculars. There was greater difficulty, however, in providing a clear explanation of 'frenzy', and often the attempt to explain the word consisted of simply repeating it (or by using the related adjective, 'frenzied') which gained no marks. The most frequent successful explanation was to say that the birdwatchers became 'very excited' at the sight of the sea eagles ('excited' without any qualification was not sufficient to gain the mark). Attempted synonyms such as 'happy' and 'shocked' did not gain the mark unless they were qualified but words such as 'crazy', 'astonished', 'amazed', 'in awe' 'beside themselves' were deemed acceptable for the excitement point.

Some responses did not identify the requirements of the question appropriately, focusing instead on the sea eagles' physical attributes.

- (e) (i) A large number of responses successfully identified a relevant fact about Mount Koryaksky. Some misinterpreted the requirements of the question, however, offering information about the region ('300 snow dusted volcanoes') rather than the volcano itself ('last erupted in 2009').
- (ii) Only a small number of responses correctly interpreted 'decade' as meaning a span of ten years. In a significant number there appeared to be some confusion with the homophone 'decayed', with explanations such as 'worn away' or 'falling apart' suggested as a result. Some answered the question in a circular fashion claiming that the word 'decade' implied that the volcano had erupted a 'decade ago' whereas a significant minority thought that the word referred to one hundred years.
- (f) Most responses answered this question successfully, correctly identifying Alexey's rifle, flare gun and the electric fence as sources of protection. Incorrect responses included references to the bears' relative lack of aggression (compared with the American grizzly), their largely pescovegetarian diet or the metres of scrubland separating the bear from the visitors.

- (g)(i) As in previous series, the questions requiring explanation of vocabulary proved to be demanding although it is encouraging to note that for both 1 (g) and 1 (h) far fewer candidates attempted to write about words or phrases that were not required by the questions. In general, responses were more successful in paraphrasing 'overdue', offering 'late' as the preferred synonym, than they were in explaining 'mauling'. An explanation of the latter word proved more difficult, with many offering 'attack' as an alternative, which did not convey the savagery of the original word and the severity of the potential physical injury. Many chose to paraphrase one of the words only whilst keeping the other in its original form.
- (ii) This proved to be a more difficult question than 1 (g)(i) and a number of candidates omitted it altogether. When responses were offered, many showed that they understood the word 'terrain' but few appreciated that it was 'impassable'. Having noted the impact of the prefix on the rest of the word, some, however, were able to identify the extremity of meaning, suggesting 'too hard to build on' or 'too hard to get through' as a result. This would imply that some Centres have profitably explored key aspects of morphology in preparing their candidates for the examination.
- (iii) In many responses 'positively' was correctly identified as an intensifier even if the meaning of 'menacing' had not been successfully explained, suggesting that some candidates had a grasp of grammatical relationships within the phrase, even though its precise meaning eluded them. In the more successful responses, 'very scary' was the most common phrase offered for which two marks were awarded. Many responses, however, completely miscued on this question, thinking presumably that 'positively' meant good/desirable/nice, and continued on from this misinterpretation to translate 'menacing' as 'worth visiting' or 'beautiful'.

Clearly candidates with an appreciation of grammar were often at a distinct advantage with questions such as 1 (g)(ii) and 1 (g)(iii). It should be emphasised that those who score most highly are those who engage directly not only with the meaning of the passage but also with the precise requirements of each question.

- (h) Full marks were very rare for these three sub-questions. Whereas many were able to offer a relevant paraphrase, relatively few were able to move beyond this by commenting further on how the writer's use of language helped to convey the nature of the bears' behaviour. Some responses used some of the wording of the question to focus their answer as in, 'This gives me the impression that they are laid back'. While this strategy was partly successful, it sometimes resulted in candidates commenting on their impression at the expense of giving a clear explanation of the bear's behaviour which engaged with the precise wording of the passage. Both elements were needed in order to gain full marks.

With regard to the phrases explored, most candidates understood that 'barging' indicated strength. Whereas 'strolling' was regularly understood as 'walking', giving, as one candidate suggested, 'an impression that the bear is relaxed and calm'; others interpreted the word as meaning 'patrolling', suggesting that the bears were guarding the perimeter, either in the search of predators or even looking for a way to escape which showed a less secure understanding of the passage. 'Gorging' was often correctly interpreted as 'eating to excess', although some interpreted it as 'goring', thus giving rise to responses which commented on the bear's vicious, deadly behaviour. 'Lumbered out from behind a bush' was the most problematic phrase for many as they interpreted this as an indication of the bear's predatory instincts and consequently missed the reference to the size, plodding nature and slow movements of the bear, and concentrated instead on inventing a sly bear, lying in wait for victims, and dashing/rushing out of the bush with homicidal intent. A few, perceptive responses saw that the four phrases complemented and reinforced one another to present a composite picture of the bear in its various moods.

- (i) Most responses gained between 4 - 7 marks for this question with many instances of full marks being awarded. The least successful responses came from those who apparently did not register fully that the summary required details of the *geographical* features of the area and consequently focused on such details as the size of the bear population and the flight time from Tokyo. However, most responses were able to identify appropriate geographical features, stating the location and name of the mountain as a minimum. The relevant points listed in the mark scheme were as follows:
1. A peninsula / Kamchatka Peninsula / a fish tail attached to the mainland / nearly an island
  2. in Far East Russia / Siberia / Eurasia
  3. between two seas / between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Bering Sea

4. very large
5. sparingly / unpopulated region / less than one person per sq km / half of residents (200,000) live in the capital / 400,000 live in the area as a whole
6. has a lake / Kurilstoye Lake
7. has (open) meadows
8. (crystal-clear) rivers
9. no roads / impenetrable terrain
10. (designated) wilderness reserve
11. 300 (snow-dusted) volcanoes / 29 active volcanoes / Land of Fire and Ice / Mount Koryaksky is 28 km from the capital

## Question 2

### Reading

The responses indicated that most candidates seemed to have understood the passage quite well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task, although some concentrated on creating an appropriate register at the expense of the question's reading requirements. Almost all responses were able to comment on what the writer enjoyed about the visit. Although many showed a good understanding of the passage, not all aspects of the question were addressed fully. Often one bullet point was addressed at the expense of the others, which meant that a top band mark could not be awarded, although nearly all responses fell into Bands 1 - 4 with very few in Bands 5 - 6 for either element of the question. Although the requirements of bullet points 1 and 2 were often addressed relevantly, bullet point 3 proved more problematic as despite referring to 'the need to maintain wildlife habitats' in their final paragraph, the subsequent information in many responses often reflected a lack of understanding of the phrase's implications. Some responses interpreted this bullet point as the need to protect oneself or the residents of Kamchatka from a potential bear attack. Others took the need to express information in their own words to extremes by giving details of trips to other locations, encountering a completely different range of animals, thus limiting the marks available.

Centres should continue to emphasise to candidates that, of the 50 marks available on the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. The third bullet point proved to be a key discriminator for the higher bands and its omission in some responses serves to emphasise how important it is for candidates to read the instructions for this question very carefully and to incorporate this guidance in their planning. Less successful responses to this question often comprised excessive lifting from the passage resulting in a lack of organisation, with random information about bears and volcanoes being lumped together with no clear reference to the guiding bullet point. The most successful responses seamlessly incorporated such references, usually in the candidate's own words, and included a credible conclusion to the speech as well as a suitable beginning, while at the same time sustaining a convincing oral register.

In general, the third bullet point proved to be successful in distinguishing the more successful responses with candidates referring to the fragility of the ecosystem, the significance of the salmon for the bears and the importance of animals enjoying their natural home. Less successful attempts remained focused on the view that 'wildlife habitats *should* be maintained' and did not develop their response any further than this. The least successful tended to repeat much of the passage, sometimes simply copying phrases and sentences with little sense of order or understanding.

### Writing

The talk format was sufficiently accessible to allow all candidates to write at length and most wrote enthusiastically, managing to include some hints of a spoken register through ellipses, parenthetical phrasing, tag questions and direct address and successfully tailored their responses to the target audience. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In the most successful responses, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide and responses at this level contained vocabulary choices which were both pertinent and sophisticated. Less successful responses, however, revealed an absence of paragraphing with a failure to paragraph even when moving from one bullet point topic to another one. There were frequent spelling errors despite many of the misspelt words being printed in the passage and serious limitations in sentence structure (largely through comma splicing). Other punctuation marks – the question mark for example – were rarely used when needed. Many responses which were otherwise praiseworthy were spoiled by the failure to punctuate correctly.

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In conclusion, it would appear that this paper allowed for successful discrimination across the full range of performance and that each candidate was able to respond to it at her/his own level. The overall performance was of an encouraging standard and the vast majority of candidates approached the tasks with seriousness and commitment and with clear evidence that they had been well prepared for the examination. Perhaps the key point to bear in mind for those sitting this paper in future series is to remember that 80% of the marks are awarded for reading skills and concentration on these should be central to all preparation.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/12

Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to engage not only with the wording of each question but also with the connotations of key words within the passage.
- In **Question 1**, candidates are advised to take notice of the number of marks per question as this will help them to focus their responses clearly to achieve these marks – especially in the vocabulary **Question 1 (g)**.
- Centres are advised to emphasise the importance of vocabulary building in the years leading up to the IGCSE examination and, in particular, the importance of morphology in helping candidates to achieve a precise understanding of key phrases.

## General Comments

- In general this paper appeared to be well received and allowed candidates of a range of abilities to demonstrate their reading understanding in **Question 1** and writing skills in **Question 2**. The paper and the tasks were accessible for the vast majority of the candidates. As in previous series, some of the more advanced vocabulary and the response to the third bullet point in **Question 2** provided the expected discriminators.
- There was clear evidence that the subject matter of the insert was found to be interesting and accessible although, in some cases, this interest resulted in an over-concentration on the sections about the history of Tetepare and the types of wildlife to be found there.
- Overall, the majority of responses to the Reading questions revealed that candidates had a secure general understanding of the passage about the Solomon Islands. As mentioned in the Key Messages section, it is of the greatest importance that candidates focus closely on the precise wording of the questions and attempt to ensure that they deal with specific details in order to produce complete answers. It is also important that they take note of rubric instructions, such as those indicating that ‘own words’ should be used to answer some questions, in order to give clear evidence of understanding.
- There was no evidence that candidates felt constrained by any lack of time to complete the tasks. Where there were ‘no responses’ to questions, the evidence was that this was caused by lack of comprehension - not lack of time.
- Most candidates wrote to at least adequate length in their responses to **Questions 2** and many showed a good understanding of the interview format required for this task. The most successful responses swiftly established a convincing persona for the speaker and responded both imaginatively and perceptively to the content and implications of the passage using quite sophisticated writing skills. Less successful responses to this question tended to be over-reliant on the content and language of the original, repeating, rather than developing, details. Presentation of the majority of scripts was tidy, only a small number having numerous crossings out or poorly formed handwriting.
- Centres are reminded that from June 2015 there will be a revised format for this paper (details can be found in the 2015 Syllabus). In particular, there will be two Reading passages with a summary

question based on the second passage. From June 2015 the summary will be marked for both Reading and Writing, and Centres are advised to emphasise to candidates that indiscriminate lifting from the original passage will be penalised under the Writing marking criteria.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Question 1**

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question for the candidates, with the majority securing at least one mark. The most frequently correct responses were that the writer was happy (or 'grinning') and that he was 'mesmerised' by the dolphins. Fewer candidates made the equally valid point that the writer was unaware of the distance he had travelled as his attention was on the dolphins. The less successful responses tended to repeat details of what he observed taken from the first paragraph, depending on lifting large sections of text. The more successful responses kept a focus on the selection of specific and relevant detail. As with several questions on the paper, there was not a requirement to render the details in the candidate's own words; hence careful and selective quotation was sufficient to gain full marks on this question.
- (b) Most responses gained at least one mark by identifying that Tetepare is in the South Pacific. Many candidates gained the second mark by stating that it is '1600 kilometres from Queensland or Australia'. A smaller number of candidates gained the second mark by identifying that Tetepare is part of the chain of islands that belong to the Solomon Islands' nation. As with 1(a) the less successful responses tended to lift material unselectively from the appropriate paragraph while more successful responses focused on relevant detail.
- (c) To gain the mark for this question it was necessary for the candidate to make the connection with King Solomon whose name was given to the islands. A significant number of candidates quoted the phrase 'named for the promise of gold', but this was not sufficient to gain the mark as it was necessary to identify the source of the name.
- (d) A large number of candidates achieved at last one mark by identifying that one special aspect of the Solomons' ecosystem was that there was the opportunity for visitors to gain a 'close up view of nature'. Many also gained the second mark which depended on explaining that this view of nature was not spoiled by crowds of tourists causing any disturbance. Some of the less successful responses were the result of a loss of focus that produced a summary of features that would have been more relevant to **Question 1(i)**.
- (e) The key to this question was for the candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the difference between fact and opinion. The most successful responses therefore identified a factual point for the first part of the answer and an opinion for the second – the points could only be credited in this order as the answer booklet required a fact followed by an opinion. This was a task where some candidates failed to gain marks by unselectively lifting lengthy sections of text from the specified paragraph to the extent that it was not clear that they had understood the requirements of the task.
- (f) Whilst a large number of candidates gained at least one mark for this question, the great majority were successful at identifying the second bullet point: that the TDA now protects wildlife and forests. While many did make some comment on the problem of logging they did not make clear that TDA opposed this and it was this detail that was required to gain the second mark.
- (g)(i) As in previous series, the questions requiring explanation of vocabulary proved to be demanding although it is encouraging to note that for both 1 (g) and 1 (h) far fewer candidates attempted to write about words or phrases that were not required by the questions and that the majority of candidates focused very clearly on the italicised words in 1 (g). In answering 1 g (i) most responses were successful in explaining that 'terrestrial' meant on land and that 'marine' meant in the water.
- (ii) This proved to be a more difficult question than 1 g (i). While a large number of candidates were able to explain 'fringed' as being 'surrounded by' only a relatively small number were able to find a suitable synonym or explanation for 'mosaic'.

- (iii) As with 1 g (ii) many responses correctly identified ‘abundance’ as meaning many, while fewer candidates were able to explain the word ‘thrive.’
- (h) Full marks were very rare for these three sub-questions. Whereas many were able to offer a relevant paraphrase, relatively few were able to move beyond this by commenting further on how the writer’s use of language helped to convey the atmosphere of the islands. Some responses used some of the wording of the question to focus their answer, as in, ‘This gives me the impression that there was a busy fish market’. While this strategy was partly successful, it sometimes resulted in candidates simply repeating what was in the original text or commenting on their impression at the expense of giving a clear explanation of what effect was achieved by the wording of the passage.

With regard to the phrases explored, most candidates understood that a ‘sleepy backwater’ was somewhere quiet and some were able to add that this suggested that it was cut off from the modern world. Many also commented on the liveliness and sense of activity in the fish market while fewer made the further suggestion that this contrasted with the other rather ordinary buildings such as shops and offices. Of those who chose ‘a castaway feel’ most commented the implication that this was a place where one might feel removed from civilisation with fewer noting the possible suggestion of there being something romantic about this feeling. The fourth phrase ‘Etched in sharp relief against a pale blue sky’ caused those who chose it most difficulty. Many gave explanations that might have better fitted other phrases in this question. Some identified the suggestion of a strong contrast between land and sea. Very few responses made any comment about the word ‘etched’ and how it might suggest permanency.

- (i) As noted above, this question is subject to a slightly different approach from 2015 and responses will be credited for a candidate’s attempt to express key ideas in their own words. Most responses gained between 4 – 6 marks for this question with a number of instances of full marks being awarded. The least successful responses came from those who apparently did not register fully that the summary required details of features of Tetepare and in some cases selecting details from paragraphs outside those identified in the question. However, most responses were able to identify appropriate some features of the island. Another aspect of less successful responses was in focusing exclusively on the types of wildlife to be found there at the exclusion of other features. The relevant points listed in the mark scheme were as follows:

1. Many concrete buildings/shops/offices.
2. a (lively) fish market
3. a diving resort/Fatboys
4. a reef/a jetty
5. it is remote/there are few visitors
6. abundance of wildlife
7. large/uninhabited rain forest
8. protected waters
9. home endangered species
10. black sand beaches
11. a lagoon.

## Question 2

### Reading

The responses indicated that most candidates seemed to have understood the passage quite well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task, although some concentrated more on repeating detail than on creating an appropriate register. Almost all responses were able to convey Allen Bero’s enthusiasm about living on the Solomon Islands. Although many showed a good understanding of the passage, not all aspects of the question were addressed fully. Often one bullet point was addressed at the expense of the others, which meant that a top band mark could not be awarded, although nearly all responses fell into Bands 1 – 4 with very few in Bands 5 – 6 for either element of the question. The requirements of bullet points 1 and 2 were often addressed relevantly and showed a detailed understanding of the lifestyle and of the limitations of being so far from technology and the modern world. However, bullet point 3 proved more problematic. The more successful answers showed some awareness of the possible negative aspects of development in a natural (and unspoiled) habitat, while less successful responses lost

focus on the islands' natural attractions (and the need to protect them) and enthused about the possible construction of theme parks and holiday centres, or in a relatively small number of cases, it did not receive much attention.

Centres should continue to emphasise to candidates that, of the 50 marks available on the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. The third bullet point proved to be a key discriminator for the higher bands and its omission in some responses serves to emphasise how important it is for candidates to read the instructions for this question very carefully and to incorporate this guidance in their planning. Less successful responses to this question often comprised excessive lifting from the passage, resulting in a lack of organisation with random information about types of wildlife and details of island history with no clear reference to the guiding bullet point. They also tended to repeat much of the passage, sometimes simply copying phrases and sentences with little sense of order or understanding. The most successful responses seamlessly incorporated such references, usually in the candidate's own words, and were used to demonstrate the efforts of the TDA to protect the islands thereby providing a credible conclusion to the interview.

In general, the third bullet point proved to be successful in distinguishing the more successful responses with candidates referring to the fragility of the ecosystem, the significance of the possible increase in tourism and the need to retain the Solomons' sense of being a refuge from the overly technological world outside.

### Writing

The interview format was sufficiently accessible to allow all candidates to write at length and most wrote enthusiastically, managing to include some hints of a spoken register and to give a genuine sense of interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Many responses also gave a convincing and believable expression of the character's enthusiasm for his home and lifestyle. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In the most successful responses, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide and responses at this level contained vocabulary choices which were both pertinent and sophisticated. Less successful responses, however, revealed an absence of paragraphing with a failure to paragraph even when moving from one bullet point topic to another one. There were frequent spelling errors despite many of the misspelt words being printed in the passage and serious limitations in sentence structure (largely through comma splicing). Other punctuation marks – the question mark for example – were rarely used when needed. Many responses which were otherwise praiseworthy were made less successful by the failure to punctuate correctly.

In conclusion, it would appear that this paper allowed for successful discrimination across the full range of performance and that each candidate was able to respond to it at her/his own level. The overall performance was of an encouraging standard and the vast majority of candidates approached the tasks with seriousness and commitment and with clear evidence that they had been well prepared for the examination. Perhaps the key point to bear in mind for those involved with this paper in future series is to remember that 80% of the marks are awarded for reading skills and concentration on these should be central to all preparation.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/13

Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

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- Centres are advised to emphasise the importance of vocabulary building in the years leading up to the IGCSE examination and, in particular, the importance of morphology in helping candidates to achieve a precise understanding of key phrases.

## General Comments

- In general this paper appeared to be well received and allowed candidates of a range of abilities to demonstrate their reading understanding in **Question 1** and writing skills in **Question 2**. The paper and the tasks were accessible for the vast majority of the candidates. As in previous series, some of the more advanced vocabulary and the response to the third bullet point in **Question 2** provided the expected discriminators.
- There was clear evidence that the subject matter of the insert was found to be interesting and accessible although, in some cases, this interest resulted in an over-concentration on the section about Tutankhamun and the building of tombs.
- Overall, the majority of responses to the Reading questions revealed that candidates had a secure general understanding of the passage about a visit to Nile and the Valley of the Kings. As mentioned in the Key Messages section, it is of the greatest importance that candidates focus closely on the precise wording of the questions and attempt to ensure that they deal with specific details in order to produce complete answers. It is also important that they take note of rubric instructions, such as those indicating that ‘own words’ should be used to answer some questions, in order to give clear evidence of understanding.
- There was no evidence that candidates felt constrained by any lack of time to complete the tasks. Where there were ‘no responses’ to questions, the evidence was that this was caused by a lack of comprehension, not a lack of time.
- Most candidates wrote to at least adequate length in their responses to **Question 2** and many showed awareness of the requirement to use an appropriately formal register for this task. The most successful responses swiftly established a convincing persona for the writer and responded both imaginatively and perceptively to the content and implications of the passage using quite sophisticated writing skills. Less successful responses to this question tended to be over-reliant on the content and language of the original, repeating, rather than developing details. Presentation of many scripts was sometimes untidy with frequent crossings out and poorly formed handwriting.
- Centres are reminded that from June 2015 there will be a revised format for this paper (details can be found in the 2015 Syllabus). In particular, there will be two reading passages with a summary question based on the second passage. From June 2015 the summary will be marked for both

Reading and Writing, and Centres are advised to emphasise to candidates that indiscriminate lifting from the original passage will be penalised under the Writing marking criteria.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Question 1**

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question for the candidates, with the majority securing the one mark available by identifying the time of day as being evening or sunset. The most common error on this question was where candidates put several conflicting times of day e.g. 'midday, afternoon and evening'. The mark could only be awarded where a candidate gave an unambiguous statement of the time of day.
- (b) There were three marks available on this question and most responses gained at least one mark by focusing on the ruins of Karnak. The most successful responses added some comment on the silence, the sense of freedom to wander and the thoughts that the writer might have whilst walking around the site. A number of candidates also identified that the writer enjoyed looking for signs of the original colour scheme left behind on the plaster. It was important in answering this question that the candidate made some attempt to select information and to put it in their own words – answers that simply quoted the whole of the first sentence would not be credited as this did not demonstrate selection or clear understanding.
- (c) Many responses focused on the expectation being caused through our over-saturation by Hollywood images of the region. To gain the second mark candidates needed to make some comment regarding the contrast between expectations and the reality of the actual experience when visiting the temple.
- (d) Most responses identified that the presence of fast food restaurant at the site was unexpected or seemed out of place. There was greater difficulty, however, in providing a clear explanation of the idea that the presence of the fast food restaurant did not spoil the writer's experience of the site.
- (e) A large number of responses successfully identified the writer's feeling that despite the beauty of the paintings they were no more than paintings. Fewer candidates identified that the reason for this comment was that the expectation had been that there would be carvings.
- (f) (i) As in previous series, the questions requiring explanation of vocabulary proved to be demanding although it is encouraging to note that for both **1 (f)** and **1 (g)** far fewer candidates attempted to write about words or phrases that were not required by the questions and that the majority of candidates focused very clearly on the italicised words in **1 (f)**. Relatively few responses gained both marks for **1 f (i)**. To get both it was necessary to explain that there was a 'continuous line' and that it 'moved slowly'. Many responses got sufficient sense of this to gain one mark, but many candidates had difficulty in understanding the word 'trickles' as it was used here.
- (ii) This proved to be a difficult question and few candidates obtained two marks for it. The word 'starkness' was explained clearly by a large number of candidates (as 'bleakness' or 'emptiness'). However, the use of 'keenly' proved more complicated and only a relatively small number of candidates gave an acceptable explanation (e.g. 'strongly' or 'sharply').
- (iii) As with **1 f (i)** and **1 f (ii)**, a large number of candidates gained one mark for this question by giving an explanation of 'impossibly' (e.g. something that was 'difficult to believe'). However, fewer candidates found it easy to explain the word 'slight' and some did not offer any explanation of this word. Acceptable explanations here were: 'very small' and 'insubstantial'.
- (g) Full marks were very rare for these three sub-questions; there were many cases of candidates getting 3 – 4 marks, but few got above that. Whereas many were able to offer a relevant paraphrase, relatively few were able to move beyond this by commenting further on how the writer's use of language helped to convey the atmosphere inside the Temple at Karnak. Some responses used some of the wording of the question to focus their answer as in, 'This gives me the impression of a mysterious atmosphere'. While this strategy was partly successful, it sometimes resulted in candidates commenting on their impression at the expense of giving a clear explanation of the effect which engaged with the precise wording of the passage. Both elements were needed in order to gain full marks.

With regard to the phrases explored, most candidates understood that ‘crumbling’ and ‘silent’ suggested a place that caused the writer to reflect on the past although fewer gave any explanation of ‘evocative’. ‘Free to wander in solitude’ was generally well understood and some connected this with idea of the writer being able to connect with the past. Fewer responses were successful in exploring the phrase ‘traces of original colours have managed to cling to millennia-old plaster’; many again commented on reference to the remains of the past, few commented on the use of the word ‘cling’ which might be seen as implying strength or tenacity. The fourth phrase ‘I found the temples magnificent and mysterious’ was generally understood to suggest that the writer was overwhelmed by the experience or that what she saw was unusual or eerie. A very few, perceptive responses saw that the four phrases complemented and reinforced one another to present a composite picture of the temple ruins and the presence of the past.

- (h) As noted above, this question is subject to a slightly different approach from 2015 and responses will be credited for a candidate’s attempt to express key ideas in their own words. Most responses gained between 4 - 6 marks for this question and there were a reasonable number of instances of full marks being awarded. The least successful responses came from those who apparently did not register fully that the summary required details of the *architectural* features of the area and consequently focused on more generalised comments about the age and beauty of the temple or who copied indiscriminately from the passage. However, most responses were able to identify appropriate architectural features, and generally those responses that kept this focus scored in the range noted above. The relevant points listed in the mark scheme were as follows:

1. Sandstone/carved columns
2. more than one building/a ‘complex’
3. Great Hall/chamber
4. 134 columns/capitals of columns in flower shapes
5. vaulted roof (now collapsed)
6. marble floor
7. statues (with faces)
8. a sanctuary
9. a courtyard
10. main walkway
11. stone floors (in temples).

## Question 2

### Reading

The responses indicated that most candidates seemed to have understood the passage quite well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task, although some concentrated on creating an appropriate register at the expense of the question’s reading requirements. Almost all responses were able to comment on what the writer enjoyed about the visit. Although many showed a good understanding of the passage, not all aspects of the questions were addressed fully. Often one bullet point was addressed at the expense of the others, which meant that a top band mark could not be awarded, although nearly all responses fell into Bands 1 - 4 with very few in Bands 5 - 6 for either element of the question. Although the requirements of bullet points 1 and 2 were often addressed relevantly, bullet point 3 proved more problematic either through not being addressed in any detail or because the candidate lost focus on the nature of the trip and focused more on more generalised aspects of the education of candidates.

Centres should continue to emphasise to candidates that, of the 50 marks available on the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates’ responses are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. The third bullet point proved to be a key discriminator for the higher bands and its omission in some responses serves to emphasise how important it is for candidates to read the instructions for this question very carefully and to incorporate this guidance in their planning. Less successful responses to this question often comprised excessive lifting from the passage resulting in a lack of organisation with random information about sites and experiences in the Nile valley being lumped together with no clear reference to the guiding bullet point. The most successful responses seamlessly incorporated such references, usually in the candidate’s own words, and included a credible conclusion to the letter

In general, the third bullet point proved to be successful in distinguishing the more successful responses, linking the writer's experience to the potential for an educational experience for fellow candidates with clear reasons being advanced, while at the same time sustaining a credible and suitably formal register. Less successful attempts tended to repeat the details of the passage and say that other candidates would enjoy the experience too. The least successful responses repeated much of the passage, sometimes simply copying phrases and sentences with little sense of order or understanding.

### Writing

The letter to the Head teacher format was sufficiently accessible to allow all candidates to write at length and most wrote enthusiastically, managing to include some hints of an appropriately formal register and to use persuasive techniques appropriate to their target audience. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In the most successful responses, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide and responses at this level contained vocabulary choices which were both pertinent and sophisticated. Less successful responses, however, revealed an absence of paragraphing with a failure to paragraph even when moving from one bullet point topic to another one. There were frequent spelling errors despite many of the misspelt words being printed in the passage and serious limitations in sentence structure (largely through comma splicing). Other punctuation marks – the question mark for example – were rarely used when needed. Many responses which were otherwise praiseworthy were made less successful by the failure to punctuate correctly.

In conclusion, it would appear that this paper allowed for successful discrimination across the full range of performance and that each candidate was able to respond to it at her/his own level. The overall performance was of an encouraging standard and the vast majority of candidates approached the tasks with seriousness and commitment and with clear evidence that they had been well prepared for the examination. Perhaps the key point to bear in mind for those involved with this paper in future series is to remember that 80% of the marks are awarded for reading skills and concentration on these should be central to all preparation.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/21  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read both passages carefully, paying attention to detail
- read all questions carefully, paying attention to key words and the specific focus of each section
- give equal attention to each section of a question
- spend time planning answers before writing
- use their own words and not rely on the language of the passages to convey their ideas
- select just the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- only make a point once in a response
- ensure ideas are fully explained in **Question 2** responses
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- practise note-making, sequencing and concise expression.

## General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated familiarity with the rubric and general understanding of what was required in each question. Answers suggested that both passages had been equally accessible. Almost all candidates offered responses that at least attempted to address the task as set with very few writing less than the suggested length. Those who wrote significantly more than the question recommended might in many instances have been better advised to spend a little more time planning and editing their response to ensure they were not drifting off course. Instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question were rare across the cohort as a whole.

There were very few significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages, although at times details had been missed or misinterpreted. For example, in responding to Passage A **Question 1**, a number of candidates had evidently not noticed that the rats were *outside* the building and a few made no mention of the manager, Jed.

Copying was rarely an issue in **Question 1**, though lifting of key phrases was not unusual – 'welded shut' and 'flickered spasmodically' counted amongst the most popular. Those who found ways to incorporate these details through the voice of the response rather than the passage were not only demonstrating more secure writing skills but usually found it more straightforward to take their ideas further. For example, commenting that it was impossible to open the windows rather than simply stating that they were welded shut often meant answers could go on to consider the significance of that more naturally. Some suggested that this might make the dormitory uncomfortable due to a lack of fresh air, others that a lack of ventilation might encourage the spread of disease, or that not being able to escape could be a problem in the event of a fire. In both **Question 1** and **Question 3**, understanding the need to rework material to meet the demands of the task rather than repeat or replay it is important.

When answering **Question 2**, candidates must select appropriate choices of words and phrases and then go on to offer specific and detailed comments in relation to each choice. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to ensure they are giving precise explanations of the effects of those choices, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose and unpicking the images they have selected.

Whilst the number of choices should ideally represent a range in each half of the question, producing long lists with little or no effective explanation is to be avoided. Similarly, offering labels for devices used without considering how the choice itself is effective in context is self-limiting. Time spent choosing a range of the most interesting examples rather than offering every word they thought could be significant might have resulted in more efficient explanation from some candidates and fuller exploration of stronger, more considered choices. For those who struggle with teasing out effects, considering the meaning of the words in context is a good place to start.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to find a good number of points though not always balanced over the two passages. There was a noticeable improvement in candidates' use of own words though some tendency to include comment and unnecessary detail. In **Question 3**, candidates must be aware that whilst using their own words is important, the meaning must not change so that the summary is factually inaccurate or points become over-general. There were fewer examples of excessively long responses. Where candidates submit typed scripts however, it should be noted that the guidance of a page is for *handwritten* scripts. Typed scripts typically include far more words per line; this needs to be considered when answering **Question 3** and the length adjusted accordingly.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to remember that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important they consider the quality of their writing - planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, awkward expression or over-reliance on the language of the original passage. Most responses were written in an appropriate register and many were ambitious, if not always precise, in their use of vocabulary. Some candidates however wrote far more than the guidelines for each question resulting at times in responses that lost focus. Candidates should be advised that whilst **Question 1** requires an extended response, writing at great length can be self-penalising. Lengthy answers for **Question 3** suggest limited focus on the task itself.

A strong focus on the actual wording of the questions during the planning of each answer will allow candidates to ensure that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage, and that there is a coherent and logical structure to the response.

#### Comments on Specific Questions

##### **Question 1**

**Imagine you are Mrs Wilkie. Write a letter to the Public Health Department of the city, demanding that 'Sammy's Place' be shut down. In your letter you should write about your concerns about the conditions at the hostel, the mismanagement of the hostel and the likely consequences of allowing the hostel to stay open. Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words**

**(20 marks)**

Stronger responses to this question selected, modified and used well the relevant ideas from the passage to create a highly convincing case for closure of Sammy's Place from the perspective of the ferocious and forthright Mrs Wilkie. Her voice was often heard in expressions of horror, parental outrage and various admonishments about the fecklessness and unprofessional attitudes of the staff, as well as the inadequacies of the accommodation on offer. Strong answers were able to integrate supporting detail from the start and express firmly their displeasure at the conditions they discovered at the hostel, tethering any development to the passage. Mrs Wilkie's methodical criticism of Jed and his over-relaxed management style was often a feature of the very best answers. Rather than simply repeating the evidence of inefficiency around the hostel, strong responses teased out the separate aspects of management failure she may well have noted.

The best responses continued the attention to detail when incorporating their ideas for the third bullet and offered a convincing catalogue of likely disasters drawn from clues in the text, often with further development. For example, there were warnings of the faulty wiring leading to fire, made worse by inadequate escape routes from overcrowded dormitories. Similarly, a possible gas leak leading to an explosion was considered all the more worrying since ineffective management meant they were unlikely to cope in an emergency. There were many ways in which the hints in the passage might have been drawn out and developed. Better answers exploited a range of those possibilities. A feature of the strongest responses was full and equal attention paid to the three bullet points.

Mid-range responses made reasonable use of the passage, but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas as they were presented in the original. In these answers the ideas frequently appeared in the same order as in the passage, often using some of the same words and tending towards retelling the narrative of

Mrs Wilkie's visit. Whilst there was some awareness of the need to address all three bullets, responses at this level were often uneven. It was quite common for candidates to present a reasonably convincing overview of conditions but then offer only the more obvious points in the remainder of the answer. Picking up on there being no-one at reception, and a noisy party taking place late at night was reasonably straightforward; competent answers went further than this and explored a little more fully the nature of the management incompetence and irresponsibility before moving on to their warnings in the final section. Those answers that offered a fairly good range of ideas up to the last bullet and then made only general assertions of unspecified health hazards and disasters – or restricted their suggestion to disease or the rats moving indoors - also missed opportunities.

Relatively few answers failed to at least attempt to address the third bullet, though a small number lost the direction at this point and introduced mitigating positives like low priced Internet access and help with visa applications– points better suited to **Question 3** and suggesting a loss of focus on purpose. Others drifted into offering ways to improve the hostel or issued threats of prosecution – sometimes losing sight of the audience too and addressing the management or an imagined owner of the hostel.

A minority of responses did not write from the perspective of Mrs Wilkie, as was asked for in the question. Whilst this did not limit the success of a candidate's response in itself, candidates needed to ensure that they used an appropriate tone and persona for a letter of complaint. A few recognised the need to complain but chose to write as Sacha, a small number as Mr Wilkie and some began as Mrs Wilkie but signed off with their own names.

In some answers, careless reading was evident in the misuse of facts. There was some confusion concerning sinks, where the rats were, and what exactly was cracked. Some suggested the imminent collapse of the building having misread the cracks as being in the walls rather than the dormitory sink. Contrary to details in the passage, some had Mrs Wilkie staying at Sammy's Place for days or even weeks.

A few candidates lost both time and focus by inventing their own material - introducing disreputable owner Sammy for example, or even Ariana the sub aqua course teacher. A small number focused so completely on expressing Mrs Wilkie's outrage that they forgot to make good use of the passage.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to capture Mrs Wilkie's character and unwavering determination to get the hostel closed down. The better written responses often adopted a formal and over-bearing tone, using the overwhelming evidence in the passage to support her purpose. Responses frequently included language appropriate for Mrs Wilkie's character and status. Many were firmly expressed and convincing.

### **Advice to candidates on Question 1**

- read the details of the question carefully to determine its voice, style and purpose
- select the most appropriate ideas from the passage and modify to suit the task
- plan the answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- extend and develop a number of the ideas relevantly
- create and maintain a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- use own words rather than repeat material from the passage

### **Question 2**

**Re-read the descriptions of (a) the dormitory in paragraph 5, beginning ‘Her dormitory was actually rather unpleasant...’ and (b) Mrs Wilkie in paragraph 8, beginning ‘Later that evening, Sacha suddenly became aware ...’. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**(10 marks)**

Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question – in this case the dormitory in part a and Mrs Wilkie in part b. Very few candidates were unable to suggest any relevant choices. Many were however less precise or selective than they needed to be, diluting the evidence that they had understood where language was being used for effect. Candidates are directed to the relevant paragraphs and so must show that they are selecting examples deliberately rather than happening upon them chronologically by offering ‘choices’ every few words in each paragraph. Choices often needed to be more carefully targeted. There were frequent examples of putting

too much into one quotation and consequently key words within the choice were not considered. For example, ‘encrusted with years of dead flies’ was often identified as worth discussion but ‘years’ and ‘dead flies’ were discussed at the expense of the more interesting choice of ‘encrusted’. A few candidates recognised the general humour of the passage and saw a nice irony of the usage, comparing the flies to jewels.

Responses that discuss the specific meanings of the relevant choices they select are credited. Those which go on to consider associations and connotations in relation to those choices are beginning to show an understanding of their effects in the context of the passage. The strongest answers offer clear evidence that candidates have understood how the language is working through precise selection of a range of relevant choices in each half and close consideration of effect.

Whilst many candidates were able to offer a number of choices plus at least some comment in each half, explanation was often better in one half than the other. In mid-range answers, whilst choice was often reasonably secure, the explanation was less so. For example, ‘welded shut’ was frequently selected with the assertion it ‘meant that the room was like a prison’. Some better responses explained their way to that point. For example, some proposed that ‘welded shut’ suggests it is as if the window has been permanently and deliberately sealed, like metal stuck together using heat so that it is one solid piece and can not be opened at all, hinting that you would not be able to escape from the room and were being imprisoned. For higher marks, candidates need to work to explain how exactly they have arrived at an interpretation rather than offer partial explanation of their ideas.

Many candidates used terms that suggested they were going to discuss language – semantic field, association and connotation – but made only very general suggestions in relation to their selected examples. Attempts to feature spot by some candidates also lead to inappropriate choices at times – for example, offering shame, guilt and annoyance as a tricolon missed the point that it was referring to Sacha not Mrs Wilkie and was not therefore a relevant choice.

Weaker responses tended to offer and repeat slight or general observations. Some explained the significance of the details themselves rather than the way they were described. For example, a number suggested the flickering light bulb was significant as it showed neglect – a valid point for question one – rather than explaining the meaning or effect of the words ‘flickering’ and ‘spasmodically’.

Candidates frequently tended to do better on part b, where they responded with more precision to examples of language linked to the military/weaponry. They were often less able to tease out precise effects of the geographical images in part a. Dealing with the images of the map, meandering rivers and mountain ranges imaginatively could have produced more thoughtful comment and helped to move candidates on from general comments that the sink was disgusting and dirty. Better responses considered more than one aspect of an image and were not satisfied with a single association.

**The following response from a candidate in this examination series is not intended as a model answer and might well have gone further, but offers an example of an appropriate answer to this question.**

**(a) the dormitory in paragraph 5**

*Overall the dormitory is described as unhygienic and dirty as it seems it has been for some time. The images ‘relief map’, ‘river like cracks meandering’ and ‘mini mountain ranges’ create the effect of the sink being like a challenging physical landscape which has to be navigated. Relief map means a map showing the different contour heights of the area and it means that the reader imagines the toothpaste being much higher and larger than it actually is to exaggerate the disgusting ridged nature of the sink. The river like cracks mean small fractures in the sink which seem so extensive and large are meandering or winding through the sink again exaggerating how run down and broken the sink is. Meandering is a verb personifying the cracks to try to emphasise that the sink and the hostel are going downhill. Mini mountain ranges means small bumped areas that seemed to have been formed by powerful tectonic activity and mountains have connotations of being vast giving the effect that the tooth paste must have accumulated over a huge amount of time to have ended up this large*

*The windows are described as welded shut. This means permanently closed and un-openable but welded has connotations of iron and steel manufacture exaggerating how strongly it was shut, how long it has been closed for and also creating an image of someone deliberately doing this. Encrusted extends this image, meaning stuck down on something or grown on something and*

sounds permanent linking back to how long this neglect has gone on for. The light is described as having flickered spasmodically. This means the light blinked on and off – but the sound flickered makes it almost onomatopoeic as it sounds like the movement of a candle spasmodically also has connotations of spasms, uncontrollable and random movements emphasising how broken and irritating this light is.

**(b) Mrs Wilkie in paragraph 8**

Overall Mrs Wilkie is described as overbearing and combattive – very unpleasant. The words ‘commanded’, ‘demanded’ (mentioned twice for emphasis) and in readiness for battle create a semantic field of control and awaiting an argument. Her attitude being linked to a battle, meaning a war of opposing enemies with lots of death is an exaggeration to portray how cross and fuming she is. Commanded means requests or tells someone that they do not have a choice but to obey which gives the effect that Mrs Wilkie is bossy and controlling. Demanding has similar connotations meaning forcibly asking. Mrs Wilkie’s eyes are described as ‘blazing’, ‘laser eyes’ and having ‘pinpointed’ Sacha. This creates the effect that she is all seeing and that even her gaze is strong. Blazing means burning strongly which emphasises how energised and forceful she is as it has connotations of fire – a force to be reckoned with. ‘Laser eyes’ continues this. A laser can be used in medicine or destruction for malicious purposes. It has connotations of being precise and yet potentially painful. It is as if her eyes can scan like a computer to find who she wants dehumanising her. ‘Pinpointed’ means she has identified Sacha’s location exactly and sounds like the language of combat again. She also hurled her luggage which means to throw with force creating an image of her tossing the bag a great distance. Thunderous compares the woman’s voice to the sound of a whole violent storm exaggerating her anger yet again and making her seem as a threatening or scary figure

**Advice to candidates on Question 2**

- focus on the question carefully to ensure that all choices offered are relevant
- re-read the paragraphs before making final selections in each
- choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful.
- do not offer long quotations, or lists of shorter quotations, with a general comment
- remember to identify choices clearly using quotation marks
- avoid just repeating the same explanation – if there is a pattern, consider how each choice adds to it exactly
- avoid repeating the language of the choice in the explanation
- if unsure of effect, try to at least give the meaning in context for each of your choices
- do more than just spot literary devices or techniques- explain how examples found are working in context
- to explain effects, consider the layers of meaning words can have
- include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them.

**Question 3**

**Summarise (a) the reasons why travellers might use hostels, as described in Passage B; (b) what back-packers may appreciate about Sammy’s Place, as described in Passage A.**

**(20 marks)**

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question and present them fluently and concisely, using their own words as far as possible. Writing for Question 3 needs to be informative, clear and to the point. There were twenty-three content points available in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. The content points were evenly spread across (a) and (b). There were very few examples of wholesale copying and the majority of candidates attempted to convey relevant material using their own words wherever possible.

Candidates avoided note form on the whole, though many offered answers that dealt with one point per sentence and often became list like as a result. Combining similar ideas is one way to help avoid this and improve the fluency of responses- for example, ‘Travellers may appreciate the cheapness of both the accommodation and access to the Internet.’ Planning a route through the answer and organising content ahead of writing the prose response proved helpful to a number of candidates who scored well as a result. Those candidates who used the same order and organisation of the text often included unnecessary examples of the same idea, repetition of points and irrelevant material as a result. For example, it was not unusual for responses to give details of the history of Youth Hostels from Passage B – unhelpful when

identifying reasons in the present for visitors using hostels. A number of weaker answers wrote unselective responses that were too long in part **a**, leaving limited space for their answer to part **b**. Others wrote in minuscule handwriting in an attempt to write no more than a page.

Strong responses avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, concentrating on giving a factual selective summary, more or less equally balanced over the two sections and comfortably within length guidelines. Passage B contained a number of examples which candidates needed to condense into a single point, for example, learning unusual or specialist skills. In Passage A, a significant degree of selection was required to exclude unnecessary information and ideally the style adopted needed to be far more informative and objective than the original passage. The strongest answers did this successfully.

**Produced by a candidate in this examination series, the following response makes over fifteen Reading points. It offers an example of how a successful response may be presented. It is not intended as a model answer and indeed might well have been further improved.**

**(a) the reasons why travellers might use hostels**

*One reason why travellers might use hostels is that they exist in many countries around the world in many different locations such as tourist destinations, large cities and cut-off locations where other accommodation might not exist. Hostels can be aimed at different groups of people not only School children but also travellers and those at busy festivals and sporting events. Some hostels provide travellers with a unique experience by being situated in a historical building or a building that has been specially renovated for a specific purpose such as wildlife observation. Similarly many hostels serve as a base for outdoor activities and some run special activities due to their location. Not only do some hostels have modern decoration and unique meals but other modern conveniences include free access to the Internet and safes in single bedrooms.*

**(b) what back-packers may appreciate about Sammy's Place**

*One thing that backpackers may appreciate about Sammy's Place is that not only is the accommodation cheap but Internet access is available at low cost and free food is available from a box in the kitchen fridge so living costs are low. Furthermore, backpackers are not obliged to do chores such as washing up and laundry and are offered money to clean the hostel. The hostel management do not mind and in fact take part in parties with loud music and there are no rules about bedtimes. The hostel is convenient for relatively cheap and frequent bus excursions also having a noticeboard from which backpackers can learn about jobs in the area*

Less successful responses did not adopt the correct focus for this question, sometimes presenting Section **(b)** as an account of Sacha's experiences of Sammy's Place or including the drawbacks of Sammy's Place. Some lost focus on the passages and the task – for example explaining at length why young people appreciate Internet access. In responses to **Section (a)** there was some copying of the phrases 'doing chores to keep down costs', 'outdoor pursuits like hill-walking, windsurfing and bike touring' and 'guests are able to learn specialist agricultural techniques' despite these phrases being easy to paraphrase to demonstrate understanding. Occasionally candidates offered indistinct or blurred points in less fluent English as a result of trying unnecessarily to avoid using any words from the passage at all - the free food box became the 'complementary nourishment container'.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3**

- read the question carefully
- re-read the passage after reading each part of the question and identify the precise information required
- plan your answer - list relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and organise them - linking any points that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences – some of which include more than one point
- do not write an introduction or conclusion
- aim to include at least fifteen points balanced over both halves of the question
- use your own words as far as possible but be careful not to lose the sense of the point in hand
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- do not add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/22

Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- give equal attention to each section of a question
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to show their significance in the context
- use own words where appropriate and not copy whole phrases from the original
- be careful to give only information that is focused on the question
- only make the point once
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task
- spend time planning answers before writing the final response

## General comments

Candidates' responses to the paper covered a wide range. Responses indicated that candidates found both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed.

For **Question 1**, to achieve marks in the top band, candidates need to demonstrate a thorough use of the passage by including a range of supporting detail as evidence of close reading, and effective development as evidence of a sound level of understanding. Most candidates made at least some attempt to address all three parts of the task, write at appropriate length and adopt a suitable style for a news report.

For **Question 2**, candidates need to show skills of selection and the ability to discuss language use. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in Passage A. Most candidates selected a sufficient number of relevant examples and attempted to explain the meanings and effects of the writer's language.

In **Question 3**, most candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points. Most responses were an appropriate length. There were some examples of copying from the passages and part **(b)** was often less focused and concise.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is similarly essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated. There needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions; the importance of planning cannot therefore be over emphasised. Effective planning ensures that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage, and that there is a coherent and logical structure to the response. There was evidence that many Centres now expect their candidates to plan first.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to remember that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. Most candidates answered their questions in appropriate English, although some responses were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passages. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing and avoid using lifted material from the passages.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

**Imagine that you are a reporter. You hear that a man has been lost in mysterious circumstances while walking in the countryside. You arrive early the next morning to investigate the disappearance and to interview people who may be able to add information and comments to your news report. Write your report for your newspaper. In your report you should explain what is known about the situation and events leading up to Hilyer being reported missing; suggest why it might have been dangerous for a visitor to walk alone in that area; explore some theories people you interviewed might have about what happened to Hilyer. Base your news report on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points.**

**(20 marks)**

In many responses the material in Passage A had been effectively modified and adapted into an informative, engaging and convincing news report. Most were written in a suitable style and with vocabulary appropriate for the genre. Most included material relevant to all three of the bullet points in the question.

The first part of the task required candidates to provide the background and context of Hilyer's disappearance and to explain the circumstances leading up to it. Most responses did this satisfactorily and made references to three or more of the key narrative points. In the majority of answers this section was the most detailed part of the report and included information about the area, the three friends, where they stayed, what their plans were and how they came to split up leaving Hilyer by himself. Good responses used a range of well integrated detail. They also modified and re-organised the material; instead of following the narrative of the passage they allowed information and events to be revealed at appropriate points. There was scope to develop the information and better responses commented on the different personalities of the characters and their reactions to their surroundings. For example, Frensham was more cautious. He heeded Mrs Grace's advice and, despite their sense of well-being, he recognised that the beauty of the landscape was deceptive. Hilyer however was intrigued by the warnings. He was more adventurous and did not 'keep to the right path' as advised. Less good responses did not modify the material. They displayed a mechanical use of the information and often followed the sequence of the narrative of the passage. Some did not paraphrase Mrs Grace's warnings, either here or further on in the report, but copied all or parts of the quotation from the first paragraph. Better responses conveyed some information through convincing interviews with the characters; some expressed Anita's regret at splitting from the group and Grant's guilt for losing his temper and leaving Hilyer alone. In less good responses, the direct speech was copied from the passage, for example, 'I'd like to set the record straight' and 'Go on I'll catch up later'.

For the second part of the task most responses included details of the possible dangers of the 'wild forest' and the village of Malbrun, and in good answers these were developed effectively. Some made reference again to Mrs Grace's warnings to stay away from these two areas because of the wild animals, the deep waters, the paths that trap people, and the young man that was locked up overnight. In less good responses these points were not modified and in some cases they were copied entirely as quotations from the passage. It was not clear in some answers whether the warnings referred to the dangers of the village or the forest. Good responses referred to observations of other characters, either Hilyer's two companions or the reporter himself, who had presumably surveyed the area and formed his own impressions. Some mentioned the point that Frensham had only seen one other rambler that day, highlighting the remoteness of the area, and that he also heard gunshots and passed a high fence. In some responses these were commented on by Anita who had a powerful pair of binoculars and would possibly have seen anything untoward. The best reports used clues and detail from the passage to focus on the specific dangers for lone travellers, even those with a map, who are not familiar with the isolated area. Some referred to the dense looking forest, the land that suddenly fell away and the grey hills that all looked the same, making it easy to lose direction. In some responses the reporter had ventured towards Malbrun and seen the blocked paths, barbed wire and deserted houses, causing him to speculate about events there. A few reports included a narrative account of Hilyer's experiences in the village; and referred to the mechanical figures, the pockmarked walls and frightening noises. The reporter would not have known of these events and therefore these details could not be rewarded. The best responses developed relevant detail from the passage, for example, commenting on the deceptive view of the countryside and the feeling of isolation, Frensham's thoughts on the gunshot or Mrs Grace's information about the strangers and lights in the sky.

In most responses the final part of the report was the least developed. Most included reasonable theories about what may have happened to Hilyer, although they were sometimes brief with little evaluation or explanation of the possible outcomes. Less good responses made reference to Mrs Grace's warnings and

suggested that Hilyer had been attacked by animals, drowned or lost in the forest. Some suggested his abduction by UFOs, a possibility because of the lights at night. Good responses referred to some details in the second part of the report, as evidence, without reproducing or repeating the information; they also questioned the plausibility of each of the explanations. The best responses displayed good evidence of intuitive reading; deductions and evaluations were based on the clues in the passage. Some reports voiced their suspicions of Frensham: he was the last person to see Hilyer and was questioned at length by the police, he admitted losing his temper and his reporting of the gunshots and the rambler (not corroborated by Anita) may have been a ploy to mislead everyone. Some reports suggested that the gunshot may have been hunters or linked to the suspected military site at Malbrun. This theory was sometimes linked to the previous abduction of the young man and the high wire fence and barbed wire around the village and the initial lack of interest by the police. Good responses made further comments about Hilyer's character, some suggesting that he was intelligent and resourceful enough to deal with any problems and return unharmed or that the warnings would intrigue rather than deter his curious nature. Some criticised his over inquisitiveness, his disregard of the advice about potential dangers, and his ignorance and lack of respect for the local area. In less good responses ideas and development were not derived from the passage; some invented a background and history for Hilyer that was not relevant to his disappearance. Some reports had weak endings that strayed away from the main issue, giving advice to potential visitors and promises of further updates. Good reports contained endings that raised questions, increased the speculation and dramatised the 'mysterious' disappearance engaging the attention of the audience.

The writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the report, and how well it used language to explain the circumstances and theories surrounding the disappearance. Higher writing marks were awarded for a range of effective and interesting vocabulary. Good responses were well structured and used an appropriate register and language. Less good responses relied on the wording of the passage, displayed a limited range of appropriate vocabulary and did not sustain the style of a news report.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 1

- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- answer in your own words, adapting material from the passage to the type of response you are writing
- identify all the ideas in the passage that might be relevant to the question
- develop ideas to display your understanding of the passage
- use plenty of detail to support your ideas- re-read the passage to ensure you have enough
- create and maintain a suitable voice, tone and style for the response

#### Question 2

**Re-read the descriptions of: (a) the view as the walkers set off in paragraph 2, beginning, 'After breakfast....' and (b) the village and what happened in the workshop in paragraph 8, beginning 'His initial, shocked reaction...' Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**(10 marks)**

Candidates are required to select examples of appropriate language from both paragraphs. Most responses were balanced with an equal number of choices, and many candidates identified a sufficient number of words and phrases. Paragraphs 2 and 8 contained a range of interesting language and images from which appropriate examples could be selected. Less good responses only included one or two examples in each section which is not sufficient to display an understanding of the writer's use of language and to secure marks in the higher bands.

Credit is given for the ability to select evocative or unusual words that have an extra layer of meaning, or which have certain connotations, and for displaying an understanding of their effects in the context of the passage. Good answers contained a range of appropriate examples with clear explanations of why the writer used specific words and phrases. In **section (a)** some responses included the words 'marvelling' and 'in high spirits'. These are not relevant to the view and could not be rewarded. Less good responses contained examples of quite ordinary language, for example 'tiny sheep on the valley floor'. Part **(b)** was, in some responses, less focused and contained more inappropriate examples, for example, 'wearing army gear', 'barbed wire' and 'film set'. These do not allow deeper meanings, associations or effects to be explored; they were often accompanied by simple or literal meanings.

Some responses contained long quotations followed by general comments that did not refer to individual words. These did not demonstrate the skill of selection and were counted as one choice. Sometimes the

phrase ‘wearing army gear lunged at him’ was included without an explanation of the word ‘lunged’. Similarly, the phrase ‘pockmarked with tiny bullet holes’, was included and the word ‘pockmarked’ was not addressed. Long examples detract from the importance of key words and explanations of them are often ignored. In good responses short quotations were followed by specific references to individual words and precise explanations of their use.

Comments about the overall effects of language can only be rewarded if they are supported by specific examples; without analysis at word level they are likely to be fairly general observations. In part (a) some responses commented that the beauty of the view was in contrast to the ominous feelings of danger and threat. Although such comments display an understanding of the passage they do not always display an understanding of the writer’s choice of specific words. In part (b) some responses stated that workshop had an eerie and haunted feeling, without explaining how specific words and phrases contributed to this effect.

Some responses were written in a grid format with word-meaning-effect columns and not in continuous prose. The responses were usually undeveloped and mechanical and were often awarded marks in the lower bands. They often contained literal meanings that were not explained in context, and repetition of meanings and effects. A grid format reduces choices to single words, and there is no opportunity to group examples or provide an overview.

The naming of a literary device, even when accurately identified, can only be rewarded when accompanied by an explanation of how it works within the context of the passage. Repetition of the original wording, for example, ‘the word tapering shows that the path tapered away’ does not display a satisfactory level of understanding and cannot be rewarded.

The best responses identified images and analysed the writer’s use of language with precision and clarity. There were some very clear explanations of the phrases, ‘work of a famous painter’, ‘catastrophic earthquake’ and ‘rattling and roaring’.

**The following response was written by a candidate in this examination session and includes some of the selected quotations in the mark scheme. Though it is not intended as a model answer, and explanations might have gone further at times, it gives an indication of an appropriate type of response to the question.**

- (a) *In paragraph 2, through Hilyer, the writer compares the landscape to the ‘work of a famous painter’. The reader is reminded of a view of an idyllic countryside, delicately and beautifully coloured as if with the touch of a paintbrush. The track is described as ‘shiny, yellow ribbon, in a simile, evoking an image of a brightly coloured but delicate path. Ribbons are associated with gifts and special occasions. The forest is personified as if it ‘swallowed it up’. This effectively paints a picture of dense green trees through which the path simply disappears as if into a hungry mouth. The sheep are described as ‘white patches’ suggesting the valley looked like a quilt dotted with smudges of white. The hills are compared to ‘uniformed guards’ giving the impression of them watching over the landscape and protecting it, silent and strong.*
- (b) *The village is described as the victim of a ‘catastrophic earthquake’. This evokes an image of absolute destruction after a natural disaster. The buildings are left completely unprotected, razed and destroyed. The walls are described as ‘pockmarked’ suggesting they have an uneven texture and are defaced. The door which ‘creaked...as if in a ghost town’ creates a foreboding and unsettling atmosphere. The phrase ‘vast jangling of unrestrained metal’ is effective auditory imagery, giving an effect of an uncontrolled and overwhelming, loud, harsh clattering and clangling sound that evokes fear in Hilyer. The alliteration ‘rattled and roared’ brings to mind the actions of a wild and furious creature, invoking terror and fear.*

#### Advice to candidates on Question 2

- avoid general comments such as ‘the writer makes you feel that you are really there’ or ‘this is a very descriptive phrase’. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.
- choose single words and phrases of two or three words that seem powerful to you.
- do not write out whole sentences, or the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices

- when you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.
- learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

**Question 3:**

**Summarise (a) what causes the narrator's feelings of pleasure and admiration, as described in Passage B; and (b) Hilyer's emotions and reactions, as described in Passage A.**

**(20 marks)**

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify points that were relevant to the specific focus of the question in each part and to present at least 15 of them succinctly in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 24 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the responses. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

Most responses contained a satisfactory number of points, securing high marks for content; some achieving the maximum of 15 points. In most summaries, **section (b)** contained fewer relevant points and relied heavily on the wording and narrative style of Passage A. The writing marks were mainly satisfactory; there were some areas of concision and attempts to use own words. Few responses were excessively long, though some were quite wordy.

Some of the writing marks are awarded for focus. In **section (a)** most responses were focused on specific aspects of the city and included references to the temple, arch, forum and amphitheatre. Less good responses wrote in general terms about the Roman architecture without naming specific examples, and referred to the atmosphere, the artefacts and general feelings of pleasure. Some referred to the activities of the candidates, teachers and tourists instead of focusing on the fact that the city was more pleasurable because it was not crowded. Some included detail from the beginning of the passage; that the bus had arrived early and that they had time to spare and headed towards the bus station and roundabout. These points were not relevant to feelings of admiration and could not be rewarded.

In most responses part **(b)** was less focused. Some responses included details of Hilyer's actions, descriptions of the village and the events that took place there. Less good responses lapsed into a narrative account that was not focused on Hilyer's emotions, thought and feelings.

Writing marks are also awarded for concision. Less good summaries contained some wordy explanations, overlong descriptions and comments. In part **(a)** some responses contained unnecessary details of the main features, sometimes using the wording of the passage, for example, 'first century Roman temple, which stands proudly at the top of a flight of steps' and 'a Roman arch, remarkable for the clarity and quality of its carvings'. Some commented that the concerts at the amphitheatre were 'a far cry from the entertainments enjoyed by the Romans two thousand years ago'. There were some wordy descriptions of the activities and atmosphere at the harbour; only one mark could be awarded for referring to the colourful boats and lively atmosphere.

In passage **(b)** some responses included descriptions of the sights in the abandoned village, for example the bullet holes in the wall, the ruined houses, and the appearance and movements of the metal figures. It was necessary to briefly explain the reasons for Hilyer's emotions, however, in some summaries the circumstances which prompted his feelings and responses were often explained in too much detail resulting in a loss of both concision and focus.

Responses are rewarded for use of own words and in most summaries there were attempts to paraphrase the language used in the passages. Part **(a)** often contained some imaginative alternatives, for example, 'a bronze effigy of a famous Irish author' and 'enjoying a delicious hot beverage'. These points were rewarded as they clearly conveyed the meanings in the passage. It was not always possible to use own words when including some of the architectural features, such as the amphitheatre and the Roman arch, without losing the intended meanings, and this is not regarded as copying.

In Part (b) there were also attempts to use synonyms, particularly for the words 'he sensed something was wrong', and for 'curious' and 'afraid'. There was very little indiscriminate copying though in some responses there was lifting of phrases which often resulted in a loss of concision.

Not all of the summaries were written with fluency. Higher marks are awarded where candidates use varied and fluent sentence structures. In some scripts there was little evidence of note taking or planning of responses. Taking brief notes of the salient points from the passage helps to avoid the copying of phrases and the inclusion of unnecessary detail or explanations. It also indicates where points have been repeated. Relevant information can be re-organised and similar points can be combined into longer sentences, enhancing the fluency and also the concision of the writing.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page. Small handwriting and word-processing can fit up to 18 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed. Most of the responses were an appropriate length and very few were excessively long.

**The following response written by a candidate this session is not intended as a model answer. It does though demonstrate one approach to the question with points explained clearly and paraphrased into the writer's own words where possible.**

**(a) The narrator's feelings of pleasure and admiration;**

*The narrator enjoyed the atmosphere of Pula, which was colourful and lively, and how it was quite warm in the morning. He found pleasure in drinking the local coffee and reading the menus of the local cuisine which sounded delicious. He also liked how the city was not too crowded and was filled with marvellous architecture. The Roman amphitheatre, an authentic Roman temple, the sculpture of James Joyce which looked very real, and the intricate carvings of the Roman arch were all admired by the narrator, and he felt a sense of timelessness and history.*

**(b) Hilyer's emotions and reactions:**

*At first Hilyer joked about the isolated nature of the area and was in a good mood admiring the landscape. Later he was indecisive about whether to go to the village and reacted fiercely when his friend argued against it. Furious, he entered the village but his anger was soon replaced by a feeling of foreboding. However, his curiosity and impatience dismissed his fear. His first impression of the village was that it had been destroyed, the victim of a disaster. Afterwards his encounter with the automatons left him with a feeling of terror and panic, reacting by running away.*

This summary is an appropriate length and includes a good number of relevant points from both passages. Part (a) is well focused, concise and displays a judicious selection of the attractions of Pula and there is no evidence of copying of phrases from the passage. In part (b) there is an attempt to use own words and points are expressed clearly. There is some loss of focus at the end; the final two sentences do not contain any points that can be rewarded, and the word 'terror' repeats the feeling of fear included earlier.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3**

- make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean.
- use your own words as far as possible. Do not copy whole phrases from the original.
- write no more than one side of average handwriting.
- write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage.
- be careful to give only information that answers the question.
- make a point only once.
- be specific; do not generalise.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/23  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read the passages thoroughly, remembering to take account of the information at the top of each passage.
- read each question carefully
- adopt a suitable voice and register for each of the tasks
- plan answers to target the relevant points for each bullet in **Question 1** and the required focus for each part of **Question 3**
- give equal attention to each section of each question
- focus on the structure and sequence of each answer
- make each point once only in an answer
- avoid copying whole phrases or sections of the passages, and use own words as much as possible.

## General Comments

Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passages, showing some enjoyment of the ‘wildlife’ topics.

Candidates showed understanding of the basic requirements of each question. The use of time was good overall and there were few instances where answers to individual questions were not offered.

To do well in **Question 1**, candidates need to select, modify and develop relevant ideas from the passage, including a range of supporting detail as evidence of close reading. Most candidates were able to show at least some attempt to focus on the three bullets. Stronger answers worked to balance all three bullets, seeing events as if through Tom Murphy’s eyes and using rather than replaying or retelling the material.

For **Question 2**, candidates must make appropriate choices of words and phrases and should offer specific and detailed comments about these choices. For marks in the higher bands candidates need to explore and explain the effects of the choices, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer’s purpose. The answer should be written in prose and there was negligible use of the restricting ‘grid form’ of answer this series.

In **Question 3**, there were few excessively long responses. Responses at times needed to be more focused however. Candidates need to avoid including unnecessary material, copying the passages and repeating points made earlier in the answer.

The skills of selection and modification of the material are at the heart of this paper; candidates showed their ability to do this at varying levels over the three questions, each testing a different aspect of reading ability.

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### **Question 1**

**Imagine that you are Tom Murphy. Write a journal entry for the day you took your friend to see a grizzly bear in Yellowstone Park. In your journal entry you should explain what you knew about this bear and its whereabouts, the risks and possibilities once you had found the bear and what you think about your friend's reactions and behaviour that day. Base your journal entry on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words**

**(20 marks)**

Having read through the passage, candidates need to understand that they must manipulate the viewpoint, so that Tom Murphy can recount, in his journal, the events of that day and behaviour of his friend. This first question requires a 'shift of viewpoint,' testing the skill of candidates in using what they have read. Those who did not 'become' Tom recounted the events of the passage with little modification and were not able to address the third 'bullet' point, thus missing the opportunity to score higher marks.

It cannot be emphasised enough that careful reading of the instructions and the helpful information preceding the passage will aid candidates to focus their responses correctly. Many were able to write as Tom Murphy, the wildlife expert, showing off his knowledge and his disapproval or amusement at his friend's behaviour. They developed ideas about the friend's fear of bears: the danger of having no trees to climb up if they were chased by an aggressive bear, or his friend's muffled laughter which could have awoken a sleeping bear with an acute sense of hearing. These examples were sometimes given by candidates and count towards 'character' for Tom and the third bullet point. Other points candidates liked to use were the friend's horror of finding the porcupine quill in bear dung and the awesome crunching of bison bones. With these latter examples, it was important that they were used to show the friend's fear or amazement, bullet point three. This can be the difference between developing the given material according to the question and a recount of the story.

Candidates sometimes went into the field of creative writing which would not attract any extra marks, perhaps speaking of tracking friendly bears with groups of friends or giving 'teddy bear' characteristics which were far from the implications of the text. Some responses merely rephrased many of the events in the passage or copied whole phrases, sentences or even paragraphs, attracting fewer marks as a result.

The best answers balanced the three sections of the task. They could take on the character of Tom, making the comments of a wildlife expert and having a sense of authority. 'Tom' could talk knowledgeably about knowing where to find the grizzly, its unpredictable habits, strengths and weaknesses, thus covering the first two 'bullet points.' The third bullet point requires more interpretation of the passage as 'Tom' must comment on his friend's behaviour at each stage of the day.

Stronger responses were able to absorb the material, select and integrate the ideas into a 'wildlife expert's' journal without relying on the format of the passage. These are high-order skills.

Mid-range responses were able to use the passage reasonably well, showing similar features but without such sustained development; they relied more on the order and leaned on the wording of the passage. Here, the first section often predominated with fewer ideas presented for the second and third bullet points. A method for such candidates to expand their ideas would have been to take on the persona of Tom Murphy with conviction, trying to imagine events through his eyes. Using the listed sections or bullet points as a focus, the candidate might have selected details from the passage and considered Tom's thoughts on each point.

Opportunities for expansion of these sections were missed; for example, having understood that the writer of the passage has 'spent so many sleepless hours being terrified of a grizzly bear,' Tom's journal could show growing impatience or amusement as his friend is afraid of being attacked, shocked by the bear being capable of eating a whole porcupine, cringing at the crunching of bison bones, not coming to get a closer look when the bear sleeps, giggling and finally napping instead of appreciating the spectacular bear.

Methodically using the events with the focus of the bullet points will help candidates to make a full response firmly based on the text. Candidates should be encouraged to realise that their work may well be lively and interesting for someone to read, and to think what they themselves would like to read in such an account. In this paper, a journal entry was required; this is less formal than a report and is set in the modern era. These are additional factors that candidates can use in their answers.

The least successful answers retold some of the events unselectively, only repeated the given information for the second section, or were thin in content. Perhaps the second or third sections were not mentioned at all. Some invented endings, 'back' stories, or even events and different characters. None of these is necessary. There could be confusion of events and details due to careless reading; for example, when the porcupine quill in the grizzly dung was thought to be a useful weapon in case the bear attacked.

This mark for writing is given for overall style, including structure and order of the writing. Clarity of expression, appropriateness, and fluency are included along with convincing character and sound structure in the higher bands. The frequency and quality of explanation is a further factor. Candidates who made an attempt to create the voice of Tom Murphy, the wildlife expert, could attract a higher mark.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 1

- read the question carefully to determine its voice, style and purpose
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- answer in your own words, adapting material from the passage to make it an appropriate response written in the required style
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- select the most appropriate ideas from the passage
- develop and modify some of the ideas relevantly
- create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.

#### Question 2

**Re-read the descriptions of (a) the sunrise in paragraph 1, beginning 'The sun was rising ...' and (b) the bear in paragraph 4, beginning 'When we got there ...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

**(10 marks)**

The response is written in continuous prose thus enabling the candidates to have sufficient room to express their ideas about the words and phrases. Marks are given for the ability to select these as specified in the question and then to describe how they work in context. This involves the ability to recognise images and explain any connotations they hold. Recognising devices such as metaphors or assonance only attracts marks where the candidate can explain their usefulness.

Marks are awarded for the selection of appropriate phrases in both sections. More are available for explanations of their meanings and up to 10 in total for demonstrating understanding and exploration of the effects created by the writer. This is perhaps for some candidates the most demanding question on the paper as they require good reading skills and a wide vocabulary in order to give added meaning to their explanations.

Understanding how a writer uses devices, such as metaphor, personification or simile can improve answers, but only if a candidate can show what the device provides to a reader, how it works within the context. Naming devices alone does not attract marks.

Precision and close analysis of the words is the key to success in this question. Candidates should avoid generalisations such as 'it creates an effect on the reader,' or 'this caused the reader to read on.' Comments about the uplifting beauty of the sunrise or the character of the bear would not attract marks unless accompanied by selected phrases and explanations to support them. Ideas beginning, 'This gives the impression that...' have to include *how* and *why* the impression is given or they will not progress the answer further.

The best answers selected their examples with care, making sure they fitted the question. It is necessary for candidates to produce an answer which is balanced between the two parts and to discriminate between a good choice and a poorer one. These answers, in A for example demonstrated an understanding of the writer's use of colour and painting imagery and the ideas associated with liquid movement given in the use of 'spilled,' flowing gently,' living expanse of water,' and 'rippling.' These high quality comments would be continued consistently into part B to achieve a high mark. Candidates could offer an overview of each section, bringing together their ideas as a whole.

Mid-range responses gave a mainly suitable selection with a mixed range of explanation, possibly touching on effects at times. Single words or overlong phrases might be included which made the comments imprecise. An overview of the paragraph could be given, correctly saying, for example, ‘the sunrise was a beautiful mixture of colours that moved as the clouds blew along the valley,’ but not supporting this idea with a selection of phrases from the text, so gaining little credit.

The least successful answers had a sparse selection often mixed with unsuitable phrases. This was sometimes caused by lack of focus on the question, so, for example, ‘The sun was rising over the Absaroka Mountains,’ was used in (a). Explanations were slight, sometimes repeating the words of the text such as, ‘The sunrise was like a moving watercolour.’

**Though not intended as a model answer, the example that follows gives an indication of how candidates were able to respond appropriately to the question**

**(a) the sunrise in paragraph 1**

*Throughout this paragraph the author creates effects by using certain words and phrases to describe the sunrise. Firstly he says, ‘The light that spilled,’ giving an image of light that is thick or dense, almost like water. The word ‘spilled’ emphasises this water image, giving us the idea there is so much beautiful light that it overflows and pours out.*

*Describing light as, ‘shadowed and broken,’ gives us both a physical and metaphorical image. Firstly physical, as the light is seen at different angles and causes the clouds to have shadows, and then metaphorically it tells us how the light has been split and broken from its original form.*

*The author starts to introduce a theme of Art by describing the sunrise as, ‘a moving watercolour.’ This tells us that its beauty and rich colours are not overpowering but like watercolour paint in a picture which looks translucent yet vibrant. The next addition to this theme comes from the phrase, ‘waves of subtle pastels,’ showing how the colour is again softer or ‘subtle’ but still bright. This adds to the water theme by using the word, ‘wave.’ ‘Living expanse of water,’ tells us how the sunrise has made the valley bright and alive as it moves with colours on it. The image of the sunlight hitting the waves making it, ‘a rippling mirror of shimmering pink and gold,’ shows us the movement of the reflection full of beautiful bright colours which change as the wind blows gently. The phrase, ‘golden August pastures,’ repeats the rich gold colour and tells us it is harvest time and the pink colour gives a warm feeling.*

**(b) the bear in paragraph 4**

*The writer starts by describing the bear’s coat as, ‘glistening black,’ showing its natural beauty and how the light makes it almost shine. The writer extends this image of the shimmer of the bear by describing how its coat ‘scintillated in the sun.’ He tells us how the rich fur coat of the bear reflects and gleams in the sun making the bear stand out.*

*‘Massive’ helps us to understand the huge size and potential power of the bear. The writer says, ‘his claws were almost delicate.’ This could describe an almost gentle side to the bear yet this is a contradiction as these claws are powerful weapons capable of tearing and ripping flesh. ‘Bone white’ shows the dense white claws and hints at the reality of the danger and killing force of this bear that can easily break and shatter our bones. Another view of this bear is shown when it’s digging, ‘using its claws very dexterously’ in a delicate task. This shows the intelligence and skill of the bear which is also a wild, unpredictable killer.*

**Advice to candidates on Question 2**

- avoid general comments which do not discuss how the language used by the writer is working
- choose single words and phrases of two or three words that seem powerful to you.
- do not write out whole sentences, or the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- if you spot an example of a literary device or technique being used which you think is important, explain how exactly it is adding to picture or sense at that point
- if you are finding it difficult to discuss effect, expand on an explanation which could cover a ‘dictionary definition’ and explain how that adds to the reader’s understanding
- when explaining effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase

### Question 3

**Summarise: (a) the current threats to the polar bear population, as described in Passage B and (b) the characteristics of grizzly bears and their behaviour, as described in Passage A.**

This question is to be answered in continuous prose and the candidates own words. Up to fifteen marks were available from a possible twenty three, evenly distributed between the two parts of the question.

The summary requires the different skill of writing concisely as the whole answer should only be one page in length (depending on the size of handwriting). Focused selection is required again in this question. Passage B contained plenty of information not required for the answer and was less familiar to the candidates, having not been used in the previous questions. This meant that candidates needed to read and re-read both passages carefully and pay attention to the precise requirements for both parts of the question. Using underlining or highlighting in the text is a good way for them to focus on what is needed.

Candidates mostly seemed well prepared for this question. Answers were usually the correct length and written in continuous prose, although notes or bullet points were seen occasionally. Where the response was wholly in note form, a penalty was applied to both marks. Bullet points should not be used; points should be linked within and between sentences to form a fluent and concise response to the question. For this series, there were fewer examples of the response written as a narrative or commentary and there was little copying.

Points need to be selected precisely as required by the question. For some candidates this was the most difficult skill. Passage B contained examples of the same point, requiring the candidates to focus on the central meaning without repeating the point in a slightly different form. The best answers were well focused on both the task and texts and reworked points clearly and concisely in the candidates' own words. They may have offered more than the fifteen points required for the answer.

Mid-range responses occasionally lost focus and included explanations of points already made, for example: 'Polar bears are dying out because of global warming when the ice melts. They are badly affected by our climate changing.' Where such repetition occurred frequently, the answer became too long. Long answers do not attract a high mark for writing.

The least successful answers may have been written in the wrong form such as commentary or narrative, for example retelling part of the story from Passage A. There could be copying and inclusion of parts of the passages that were nothing to do with the focus of the question, such as describing how the grizzly bear reburied the carcass, dug another hole and went to sleep in it which looked very funny. Using Passage B, these candidates would paraphrase the section about historical polar bear numbers, thus failing to gain marks for content and also losing marks for focus.

Some points offered by candidates were not made sufficiently precisely to attract marks. Candidates needed to be aware that when looking to avoid the words of the passage, they should reword ideas carefully to retain their specific meaning. Examples here include:

'As the ice melts, polar bears come into contact with humans,' whereas the passage shows it to be coming 'into conflict with humans' that poses the threat.

'Grizzly bears have white paws when they are older.' This is incorrect as it is the claws that turn white.

'Grizzly bears can break bones.' This is insufficient as the strength of their jaws is required to gain a mark.

**Though not intended as a model answer, the example that follows gives an indication of how candidates were able to offer points clearly and for the most part using own words.**

#### **(a) the current threats to the polar bear population**

*The main cause of the drop in polar bear numbers is global warming. The polar bears are losing some of their land as the ice caps are melting earlier and freezing later after the summer. The polar bears lose the access to their main food, seals, because of the melting ice. They get weak because they have to live longer on stored body fat in the summer. Baby bears die because their mothers can not find food for them and also the litters are smaller.*

*As there is more industry in the Arctic, there is more pollution and some oil spills. This spoils the white fur of the bears that they need for camouflage and can make their fur fall out. When they lick themselves, they eat the poisons which can give them kidney failure, brain damage and kill them.*

**(b) the characteristics of grizzly bears and their behaviour**

*The grizzly bears have dark, thick coats and long delicate claws that are white when the bear is older. They can use their claws delicately like fingers to dig out a bison carcass. They can hear much better than humans although their eyesight is poor. They can kill bison and porcupines and crunch their bones with their strong teeth, then dig a hole and go to sleep in the sun.*

**Advice to candidates on Question 3**

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read each passage after reading each part of the question, in order to find the precise information required
- plan your answer carefully by listing relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and link any that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences
- do not write an introduction
- aim to include at least fifteen points balanced over both halves of the question
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- write in an informative style and never add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/31

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- create thoughtful and well-structured arguments, produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision

## General comments

Most scripts showed a good grasp of what was expected in both the directed writing and the composition. Responses were substantial and purposeful, on the whole, with relatively few brief or undeveloped answers. There was evidence in many scripts of a clear awareness of how marks were awarded in the different questions and writing genres and most followed the rubric.

Most responses showed an understanding of the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passage in their responses. Better answers questioned the writer's arguments about how to treat animals and differentiated between the conservationists and the sentimentalists, developing their own views and opinions based on the passage, while most in the middle mark range tended to reproduce the points made in it. Weaker answers drifted away from the material or listed some points simply.

In the compositions, better responses showed a clear understanding of the features of argumentative, descriptive or narrative writing and in all three genres there was developed and structured writing. Some weaker descriptive writing tended to slide into narrative or in some cases was entirely narrative in character; these responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good descriptive style, such as a focus on detail and a more limited time span.

The best responses in both questions were characterised by the careful selection of precise vocabulary and sentence structures to create specific effects. The reader was often intrigued in the early stages of compositions and the writing was consciously shaped in all three genres in order to engage and sustain the reader's interest. In weaker responses, an appropriate register and effective style was more difficult to achieve. In **Question 1**, for example, the required format for a speech was sometimes forgotten. In this question and in the compositions, there was insufficient attention paid to basic punctuation in weaker answers. Capital letters were sometimes used rather indiscriminately, appearing frequently where not required but not used for proper nouns, in speech or at the beginnings of sentences. Semi-colons were much in evidence but only quite rarely used accurately.

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### **Section 1. Directed Writing**

**Question 1: Read carefully the transcript of a radio broadcast about people's attitudes to animals in the Reading Booklet. Then answer Section 1, Question 1 on this Question Paper.**

**You have been asked to write a speech to broadcast in response.**

**Write the words of your speech.**

**In your speech you should:**

- **identify and evaluate arguments in the transcript**
- **explain why you do or do not agree with the broadcaster's views.**

**Base your speech on what you have read in the transcript. Be careful to use your own words.**

**Begin your speech: 'The recent broadcast about people's attitudes to animals raised important issues...'.**

**(25 marks)**

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

Most answers showed an understanding of the purpose of a speech in response to the broadcast and in better responses the writer's arguments were scrutinised and commented on purposefully. Good answers evaluated ideas successfully in and recognised the broadcaster's viewpoint. They also wrote fluently using the key features of a speech. Many, however, simply listed and agreed with the writer's views on the different points and did not adopt the critical stance which is required for marks in the higher bands. Weaker responses focused on only a few points and often produced a response about animal rights in general, rather than covering the range of points made in the article.

### **The marks for reading**

Good responses followed the bullet points but adopted the evaluative stance required for marks above Band 3. Most candidates responded with understanding to the issues in the broadcast and were able to access at least some of the points. The higher level responses showed recognition of the ironic nature of the piece and were able to evaluate some of the complex issues within the text. These responses appreciated that perhaps certain comments by the broadcaster weren't intended to be taken entirely at face value and were intended to stimulate debate. Higher level responses often recognised the flaws in the writer's argument and came up with some thoughtful and valid evaluative comments. It seemed to be only the best responses that took a mature attitude towards the deceptively simplistic idea that Elgar thought more of horses than people. This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 2 and above. A mark of 7 was given where there were glimpses of evaluation of some of the points but a more consistently critical stance was required for higher marks. Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage, often with straightforward agreement, Examiners could not award marks above Band 3.

It was fairly common for middle band responses, and also occasionally stronger candidates, to confuse the views of the broadcaster with those of the 'conservationists' and/ or the 'sentimentalists'; for example, some responses stated that the conservationists believed that animals should be preserved in zoos and not in the wild.

A more superficial grasp of how to treat animals, rather than the differing views of sentimentalists and conservationists, was evident in this range. Although some responses covered the points made in the broadcast systematically, agreeing with some and disagreeing with others, there was at this level less scrutiny of the ideas in it and limited comment on them. This simple agreement or disagreement did not, however, always amount to the evaluation described above in relation to better responses. A mark of 5 or 6 could be awarded, depending on the breadth of coverage in the answer and the extent to which candidates used their own language and expression rather than the writer's. In other cases, there was a little evaluation of one or two points – usually keeping animals in zoos or the acceptability of traditions and customs in different parts of the world – but other ideas in the passage were not referred to at all. Here, despite some

evidence of depth in the response, the range of points covered was too narrow for a mark in Band 2. Responses at this level could have been improved by a wider coverage of the points made by the writer as well as a deeper grasp of the issues being weighed up in the broadcast.

The content of the broadcast seemed to evoke quite strong feelings. In some cases this led to rather impassioned responses about the treatment of animals which occasionally lacked focus on the text. Weaker responses often referred to general issues about animal rights without much reference to the text. Some simply made vehement protests or insulted the speaker in the text, rather than evaluate the material with considered disagreement. Some responses in the lower bands were quite vitriolic, claiming they felt passionately about the issues involved, again without reference to the text. One unproductive approach in responses at this level and below was the inclusion of extraneous material including personal anecdote, narrative, generalised discursive endorsement of the views presented or expositions on animal rights. Many responses did not show use of own words, as advised, and tended to reproduce phrases from the original for example ‘question the rights of outsiders to interfere’ and ‘a stroll through the forest’ and some invented statistics to show how few people can afford to go on safari, for example. These features suggested an insecure grasp of the task in **Question 1**. Other less successful approaches included a tendency to drift away from the passage into details which were not in the article and were not really suggested by it either. For example, some responses used the ‘medicinal use of various parts of animal bodies’ as a springboard to discuss animal experimentation or ‘animals are farmed’ to engage in a debate about the relative merits of battery farming. Ideas and details which could be inferred from the passage were rewarded by Examiners, but in some less successful responses candidates’ own views were detached from the source material and sometimes a little naïve, responding to the fate of animals at the expense of humans’ needs. A better understanding of the requirements of the task, as well as how marks are awarded, was needed in these cases.

### **The marks for writing**

15 marks were available for style and audience, the structure of the answer and technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

#### **Style and audience**

The speech form allowed many responses to employ some degree of rhetorical style effectively. However, the weaker responses over used this technique, repeating the content from the transcript, for example, ‘Would you like to be locked up in a cage?’ and ‘How would you like to meet an angry bear in the woods?’

Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of their own speech and establishing the differences between the conservationists and the sentimentalists, though better responses showed more awareness of their audience in the way their openings were phrased and continued to address the audience throughout. Many candidates in the middle range were in agreement with the broadcaster in their introductions and conclusions, that ‘the needs of people have to come first’ and although the tone of these paragraphs was appropriate, perhaps the evaluation of the article was rather limited. In weaker responses, introductions were more mechanical. More often at this range, the format and intended audience were forgotten, so that the speech was written as a letter and was either over formal or too informal, representing everyday conversation.

#### **Structure**

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their own arguments cogently. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved emerged rather than, or as well as, a discussion of the specific points made by the broadcaster. A sense that there was a balance of factors to be weighed was conveyed by these successful responses which were often subtly argued but yet clearly structured. Responses given 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the broadcast in a response which was adequately structured, often with some concluding comments outlining the candidate’s own view. Responses given marks below Band 3 were characterised by brief or no introductions and a simple list of some of the writer’s points in sequence.

#### **Accuracy**

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Responses given 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Responses given marks in Band 4 sometimes

showed some clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which precluded Examiners from awarding Band 3 marks and in addition, there was sometimes a simplicity of language and style. Sentence separation errors also appeared at this level and the frequency of errors became self-penalising, as did insecure grammar and awkward phrasing.

### **Ways in which this type of answer could be improved**

- Use the details in the passage but think about the attitude of the writer to the topic as a whole also.
  - Try to develop ideas from the passage, using inferences that are suggested in it, but without drifting beyond it.
  - Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for a speech, an article or a letter, for example.
  - Check your writing for basic punctuation errors that will inevitably reduce your mark.

## **Section 2: Composition**

## Question 2: Argumentative/Discursive writing

- (a) Discuss the role of music or dance in young people's lives. (25 marks)**

OR

- (b) What do you think makes a person successful in life? (25 marks)

Better responses here made use of a wide range of different ideas in a focused and relevant discussion of the topic. Average responses contained some good ideas which were relevant and gave opinions about the topic which were valid. The discussion was not as developed or was less well-structured and points were not sequenced as helpfully for the reader. In the first question, candidates sometimes ran out of material, or tended to return to ideas or repeat them, whereas weaker responses to the second question adopted a narrow interpretation of 'success'.

In the first question most responses discussed both music and dance and were not penalised for doing so. Some of the more thoughtful and better quality responses, however, discussed one or the other and developed complex discussions. Where responses focused on the role of music, in the main, they were able to explore different aspects of music's influence in young people's lives, such as formation of character and forming of social connections. Weaker candidates tended to make quite simple comments about the different types of music that are available or simple comments about how good music is.

Where responses commented on the role of both music and dance or dance alone, they did not engage with the question as well and did not develop a convincing line of argument, therefore affecting the cohesion of their responses at times.

There were very few weaker responses, but those that received below Band 3 for Content and Structure and Style and Accuracy were more reliant on listing with less discussion and at this level, responses were assertive rather than carefully argued or discussed.

The alternative question was a more popular choice and many candidates responded impressively to this task, supporting thoughtful arguments with interesting and sometimes surprising personal insight into 'success'. Many were able to convincingly articulate abstract and complex notions of what constitutes success and were able to offer a series of logically sequenced points expressing their individual views of what makes a person successful, whilst taking account of other potential arguments and incorporating these in to the overall argument. Some stronger responses at this level focused on the difficulty of defining success, as the definition would be unique to each individual; they often went on to explain and justify their own definition of success. These higher level responses tended to widen the issue out and examined broader ideas on what makes a person truly successful and happy in life. Alternatives to wealth as a measure of success were explored by the higher level responses. Responses mainly equated success with working hard, doing well in exams and getting a good job with plenty of money. Very few were unable to make some relevant suggestions.

The strongest candidates were able to convincingly articulate abstract and complex notions of what constitutes success and were able to offer a series of logically sequenced points expressing their individual

views of what makes a person successful, whilst taking account of other potential arguments and incorporating these in to the overall argument.

Middle band answers tended to list a series of qualities or factors needed to achieve success, often with some good development, whereas weaker responses took the same approach of listing qualities but without much development. These weaker responses made only a few points/ideas and repeated the ideas.

The style and accuracy of responses to these questions varied across the mark range. Better responses showed much precision and control of language and sentence structures and the subtlety of ideas was sometimes matched by an engaging flexibility of expression. Middle range scripts, given marks in Band 3 or just below, were usually plain in style but conveyed straightforward ideas clearly. Otherwise competent responses sometimes slipped into Band 4 because the writing contained frequent errors including more serious ones such as weak sentence separation and other basic punctuation mistakes. When these were combined with simple and limited vocabulary, the mark was often lower. The style and register were also insecure at this level.

### **Ways in which the writing of arguments and discussions can be improved**

- **Make sure you understand what the question is asking for.**
- **Justify your opinions with apt examples – avoid simple assertions.**
- **Check for basic errors such as using commas where full stops are needed and misuse of capital letters.**
- **Use clear and precise English and eliminate expressions which are too informal or conversational in style.**

### **Question 3: Descriptive Writing**

- (a) **Describe a small group of people relaxing, and then the moment that destroys the atmosphere of calm.**

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

- (b) **Describe a party in full swing, and then what the place is like when all the visitors have gone home**

**(25 marks)**

The two descriptive pieces seemed to be equally popular.

The first question provided a great variety of responses across the range. The best responses not only demonstrated linguistic and stylistic skills but used a variety of devices to create atmosphere. Complex atmospheres relating to senses experienced were developed and frequently focused on the setting rather than the group of people; responses were still able to create atmosphere successfully in most cases. With the nature of this question involving an event which destroys the calm, many responses contained an element of narrative. The stronger responses however, remained firmly focused on description and the creation of atmosphere whilst narrating events. Weaker responses however became more narrative in quality.

Middle range responses tended to give a lengthier preamble about 'calm'. Some candidates in this range were a little too ambitious in their attempts to use sophisticated vocabulary and over-elaborate sentences. This sometimes resulted in forced, awkward or stilted expression.

The second question also produced responses across the range of marks. This piece produced some rather stereotypical images at times, especially in weaker responses which often relied on teenagers facing the consequences of a 'surprise party'. However, it also produced some lively and engaging pieces which incorporated details skilfully in both parts to explore the change in atmosphere. The two parts of the question were often well balanced and used the contrasting scenes in the question to best advantage. The best responses took a multi-layered approach to observe a very wide range of details. They did not simply focus on those drinking and dancing the night away but also on smaller groups within the scene.

Weaker answers often narrated the build up to the party e.g. choice of clothing and method of transport to the party, rather than focusing on the creation of atmosphere.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were often lower than those for Content and Structure. Better responses chose precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences. In weaker responses, tenses were used insecurely, and incomplete or poorly separated sentences adversely affected candidates' marks. Although there were fewer examples than previously of strings of incomplete, verbless sentences, this was often because there was more narrative than descriptive content in the weaker responses.

### **Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved**

- Avoid too much narrative preamble and remember to provide descriptive detail.
- Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.

### **Question 4: Narrative Writing**

- (a) **Write a story called 'The Path that led to Nowhere'.**

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

- (b) **Write a story that involves your attempt to cook a meal for others.**

**(25 marks)**

The first question was the more popular of the two options.

This task allowed for a free range of creative and original responses. Some responses built up to a climax and focused on thoughts and feelings rather than events. Responses at higher levels took a metaphorical approach to 'the path' and explored it with varying degrees of complexity, generally successfully. Stronger responses thought of the path as a spiritual or emotional one, or a wrong turning taken in life, often with dire consequences. One response told a semi journalistic tale of a violent terrorist attack on a shopping mall which ultimately led the perpetrators to nowhere.

There was a tendency in middle and lower band responses to write about a journey of friendship or family ties severed, though many features of a narrative were absent. At this level, the path that leads to 'nowhere' was interpreted literally by candidates, sometimes leading to getting lost or surreal scenarios which were difficult to resolve effectively, leading to unsatisfactory endings.

Relatively few candidates attempted the second task

This question produced some engaging responses. A small number of responses used the question to develop a clever and complex plot, with well-established character(s) and settings, some of which managed to develop an effective narrative voice. The best responses spoke directly to the reader and used some effective self-deprecation, humour and techniques such as exaggeration, which were often used to explore character.

Descriptions of the cooking process could be rather mechanical at times in middle band answers and some responses tended to focus on recipes. For some lower level responses, this seemed quite helpful, as the process of cooking the meal provided a structure to some extent. Responses in the middle and lower bands provided very straightforward tales and this question was largely attempted by those who seemed to have experienced a culinary disaster. There was a ring of truth about many of these horrors. This question seemed to provide the opportunity to use semi/autobiographical material very effectively.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. Speech was over-used only in weaker responses but there were many scripts where the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the

story itself was quite well-structured. Again, basic punctuation errors with capital letters, the spelling of simple words and misused homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy.

#### **Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved**

- Remember that stories need more than events to interest the reader.
- Plan the ending before you begin so that you can shape your story appropriately.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.
- Originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic, but keep the details credible.
- Check your writing for errors, especially missing full stops.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/32

Directed Writing and Composition

## **Key Messages**

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were ten marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- **use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre**
- **structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively**
- **create thoughtful and well-structured arguments, produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging and developed narratives**
- **construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects**
- **select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision**

## **General Comments**

Examiners found that in the great majority of scripts a secure understanding was shown of the tasks undertaken and of the different skills required in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, at all levels of achievement, were developed and there were relatively few very brief scripts. There were also fewer scripts than in some previous series where more than one composition question had been attempted, with one from each genre being the most common rubric infringement. When this did happen, each response was marked by Examiners and the highest overall mark was taken forward, but there was inevitably an effect on the marks awarded if insufficient time had been devoted to any task.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in Question 1, often with a sound grasp of the issues addressed in the passage. Most candidates, across the mark range, expressed their ideas in their own words and were not overly dependent on the passage for the wording of their answers. Better answers here also tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument of their own. Weaker candidates tended to reiterate the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence, and although they sometimes agreed or disagreed with the points made in the transcript, there was limited evaluation of their validity. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material, and responses drifted into a general consideration of how decisions should be made in schools, or anecdotes derived from the candidate's own experience.

Better responses paid attention to the audience and style required for a letter to the head teacher, with some accomplished responses addressing Mr Aziz in an appropriate tone: questioning and informing but also respectful. Many, however, showed only a limited awareness of the intended audience and missed opportunities to present their views on the ideas in the passage in a formal but engaging style.

In the compositions, the three genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers in this series. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged. Discursive tasks were addressed thoughtfully – often quite philosophically on the topic of 'ambition' – and although there was some narrative content in the descriptive writing, most responses here showed a clear awareness of the need to create atmosphere. Weaker narrative writing was characterised by inconclusive or unsatisfying endings, sometimes

with simple storylines which were largely a series of events. Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in particular genres, such as the conscious shaping of narratives to sustain the reader's interest, the use of detail in descriptions and the organisation and cohesion of ideas in discursive/argumentative responses.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Section 1**

**Question 1:** Read carefully the local newspaper article printed in the Reading Booklet insert about candidate councils in Schools. Then answer **Section 1, Question 1** on this Question Paper.

**Imagine you are a candidate in Mr Aziz's School.**

**Write a letter to him, in which you:**

- **identify and discuss his views against School councils**
- **evaluate why and how a School council could be good for everybody.**

**Base your letter on what you have read in the article, but be careful to use your own words.**

**Begin your letter, 'Dear Mr Aziz...'.**

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

High marks were awarded where the ideas in the passage were scrutinised thoughtfully and where the letter was both accurate and appropriate in style. Better responses here tended to adopt a considered style and handled the ideas in the passage confidently, often selecting and discussing specific points in a cohesive argument. The pupils' own views were distinguished from those of Mr Aziz and responses showed a clear understanding of the underlying issues in the passage, for example the value of student councils if their decisions were to be considered by the school. In the middle range of marks, one or two ideas were discussed more critically, most often the wasting of the school's time and the methods of selecting a school council member. At times, however, rather than considering both Mr Aziz's views and the views of the student, there was sometimes too strong a support of Mr Aziz, or an over robust denial of his ideas. Weaker responses tended to list Mr Aziz's points, as well as Mrs Smith's ideas and they needed to pay more attention to the second bullet point in the task.

The marks for reading

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance towards the ideas expressed in the passage and recognised the absolute tone and forthright nature presented by Mr Aziz. The discussion in these responses often centred on the assumptions behind his ideas; that the students were ill-disciplined and immature and not deserving of consultation. Development included the nature of the developing working relationship between the educators and the students as well as the personal skills that could be developed by a student working on a school council. The range of benefits of a successful school council was addressed thoughtfully, with reference to Mrs Smith's school as a starting point. A degree of comment on the nature of education itself was a valid consideration, given Mr Aziz's strongly held views on what makes a good school. At the highest level, a cohesive argument emerged, encompassing the specific points made by the head teacher and showing a clear overview of the passage.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 2 where the ideas were evaluated to some degree. A mark of 7 was awarded for many responses where there was clear evaluation of one or two ideas in the passage although some points were reproduced with limited critical comment. At this level, responses tended to identify some of the main points made by Mr Aziz and then say why he needed to consider an alternative viewpoint. There were references made to the ideas a student council would consider and how the school could benefit. There was some rebuttal of Mr Aziz's views with a degree of explanation. Some of Mr Aziz's ideas were developed here, and there was an assessment of the value of the school council. These evaluative points, even where other ideas were accepted at face value and reproduced, were often enough for Examiners to award a mark of 7, but a more sustained critical approach was needed for a higher mark.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the evaluation mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sensible understanding of the

specific points made in the passage and of Mr Aziz's view that a student council was an unworthy idea for a number of stated reasons. His ideas, and the other ideas represented in the passage were stated rather than developed or evaluated. A mark of 5 or 6 could be given where there was more straightforward reproduction of a range of points with some overall understanding of the points made.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some at this level gave a summary of how a school council works in their school without significant use of the reading material itself. There were responses presented from a personal point of view, or very one-sided responses, with limited reference to the material.

A mark of 2 or 3 was awarded where there was some connection with one or two of the ideas in the passage but limited understanding of them, with 4 given for responses which covered the material thinly but showed some grasp of ideas considered.

#### Marks for writing

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

#### Style and audience

A respectful tone was required for a letter to be sent by the writer to their head teacher and most responses were written in an appropriate register. The instructions on the examination paper provided the necessary voice for the writer, and the tone and register were successfully managed by the large majority.

Better responses also signalled their own point of view early in the response, often by expressing their intentions in the opening section of the letter. Mr Aziz was addressed occasionally throughout the letter and some rhetorical devices were used to focus the intended reader's attention. These were rewarded for their sense of audience, even where there were technical weaknesses.

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience and although the tone adopted was formal there was an inconsistent sense of audience for the letter. It was not appropriate for the tone to be too informal or abusive towards Mr Aziz.

#### Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their own arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a convincing argument which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, a clear overview of the issues involved was given.

Responses given 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. Candidates tended to agree with some points and disagree with others, with a concluding paragraph which appealed to Mr Aziz to consider the writer's ideas.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of paragraphs in the passage. If the passage was sketchily understood, this often led to a confused and contradictory sequence of ideas.

#### Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error.

Responses given 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. The use of commas where full stops were needed, or commas where no punctuation was needed, began to creep into writing at this level. Apostrophes were commonly misused or omitted. 'Student Council' without the definite or indefinite article was a common error here.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures often kept writing marks for Question 1 in Band 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation

errors which meant that Examiners could not award in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Incomplete sentences were frequent and the use of capital letters for proper nouns was insecure.

## **Section 2: Composition**

### **Question 2: Argumentative/Discursive writing**

- (a) **How important are ambitions in your life and the lives of other young adults. (25 marks)**

**OR**

- (b) **'There's no place for art or music in the School curriculum these days.' How far do you agree? (25 marks)**

Both questions were popular choices at all levels of achievement and most candidates were able to convey their views on the topic and offered developed, relevant ideas on both topics.

The first question elicited some strong responses, particularly where candidates considered the idea of ambition and what it can mean to people. Better responses discussed with some sensitivity the 'usual' models of ambition, such as desire for wealth and status, often progressing to address other possible interpretations of ambition and Examiners found much to reward here in terms of content and structure. The disadvantages of being over-ambitious or unrealistically ambitious were sometimes considered here, together with examples of ambitious people in various areas of sport, business and entertainment. Better responses considered the breadth of the question and did include 'other young adults' rather than writing only about 'your' ambitions. Ambition concerning examination results was a regular consideration.

Average responses tended to focus less on the concept of ambition but to offer one or two relevant aims for an ambitious person. While there was often some range of ideas, overall cohesion was lacking at this level, with what you might gain from being ambitious being listed rather than linked between paragraphs.

Weaker responses were characterised by the simplicity of ideas or the assertiveness of the comments made and there was some repetition and returning to the same idea. Although relatively few in number, responses given marks in Band 4 or below tended to run out of ideas quickly or offer only very vague attempts to define ambition.

In the first question, the idea of ambition and its importance was clearly addressed in better responses, while in the second, good candidates often wrote with some passion and engagement about the value of art and music in the school curriculum. Average responses were characterised by relevant, valid ideas with perhaps less range and a more straightforward style and structure. In the first question, weaker responses tended to rely on vague or clichéd definitions of ambition and in the second, there was limited depth of argument or range of examples.

There were some engaged and thoughtful responses to the second question in terms of their content and structure. The majority supported the inclusion of art and music in the school curriculum, although some felt that they got in the way of what were described as more 'useful' subjects such as science and mathematics. Better responses focused on why young people in particular were drawn to art and music and what benefits these subjects offered a student. Many wrote about the power of the creative subjects to lift the spirits and inspire creativity and self-expression in young people and to offer a much needed break from demanding timetables. Opportunities for fame and fortune in the acting or music industry were also discussed by some as a practical outcome of young people studying the arts. Marks in Band 2 or above for content and structure were given for these thoughtful responses.

Examiners gave 7 or 8 for responses where there was relevant material and most were properly paragraphed but there was some uneven development of ideas or limited overall cohesion. These were often rather pedestrian in style, with less to engage the reader. Similar ideas, about the power of art and music to change mood or to calm nerves were made but there was less range of ideas.

Weaker responses tended to repeat material or to return to the same ideas or, in some cases, assess the different subjects on the current curriculum, sometimes matching them with the stereotypes of young people who are attracted to different subjects.

Style and accuracy marks were awarded across the range in both questions, with the higher marks given for writing which accurate, stylish and authoritative. Some rhetoric and sense of audience in the style often lifted a Band 3 response into Band 2. A clear voice which challenged and engaged the reader sometimes compensated for minor errors in accuracy but equally, there were responses which were otherwise clear and competent which slipped into Band 4 because of persistent comma-splicing or faulty sentence construction.

Limited, simple vocabulary also kept some fairly accurate writing in Band 4. Commas used instead of full stops, sentence structures which lacked control, as well as a range of minor errors kept many responses out of Band 3. Where errors were sometimes less damaging in themselves, they were often too basic and too frequent for a mark in Band 3. Punctuation within sentences was weak at this level, and the prevalence of unnecessary capital letters was also noted by Examiners.

### Question 3: Descriptive Writing

- (a) You are waiting outside a room where you are to undergo an important interview. Describe your surroundings and your feelings as you wait. (25 marks)

OR

- (b) Describe the scene at a station or an airport where arriving passengers are met by friends and relatives. (25 marks)

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range. In the first question, a range of potential interview scenarios was in evidence. In the second question, airports and stations were equally popular choices of location.

The best responses to the first question created real tension and atmosphere, with the location carefully created. The description was often of feeling and emotions, as well as the area and the other people involved. At this level, sometimes minutely observed details or sounds were used to create an absolute clarity of atmosphere. There was usually a strong focus on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator as well as on descriptive details, and better responses made good use of the idea of a building up of anticipation and tension. Originality and clarity of detail, as well as the use of evocative and subtle imagery in creating atmosphere, were characteristic of responses given marks in Band 1.

Middle and lower range responses tended to be a little more stereotypical in the scenes described. Ticking clocks predominated and there were many sweaty palms. While there was some descriptive focus in the middle mark range, responses relied more on predictable details concerning bosses and receptionists and interview clothes.

There was very little confusion between the descriptive and the narrative genre in this question. Perhaps a few candidates' marks could have been improved at this level by a better understanding of the differences between narrative and descriptive writing, particularly with regard to the need for 'some attempt to create atmosphere' in order for Examiners to award marks in Band 3.

Good responses to the second question were also characterised by originality and careful realisation of the scene selected. Some responses focused very effectively on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator, often someone on the outside and rather detached from the arriving passengers and their friends and relatives. The senses were used skilfully to create a detailed and vivid picture of the scene and these images were effectively evoked. Some descriptions were stronger here and more original, detailing a range of characters' senses and emotions.

In the middle range, there was more clichéd content, although often there was a clear attempt to evoke atmosphere and some effective details were included. Descriptions at this level tended to focus on what people at the station or airport were doing, or how they were dressed, but there was usually a range of detail and the response was placed into Band 3.

Band 4 responses relied on a rather basic account of the passengers and the other people at the scene. Some listing of luggage, foodstuffs and drinks was offered, or a kind of itinerary as the narrator travelled through the station or airport.

Marks in Band 1 and high Band 2 for style and accuracy were awarded for the most controlled writing in which a wide range of descriptive vocabulary was used precisely and often sparingly. Band 1 responses were characterised by an assured and effective style in which descriptive effects were achieved using carefully chosen language and imagery.

In the middle range and below, a more straightforward vocabulary was employed and where there was sufficient control and accuracy a mark in Band 3 was awarded. In some cases, the writing was overwhelmed by strings of sentences without any verbs – one of the pitfalls of descriptive writing for some in this range – so that Examiners were precluded from awarding marks in Band 3. Examiners noted that simple, limited vocabulary and style, combined with frequent errors, often kept marks low even where the content was well-chosen, relevant and appropriately descriptive in focus.

#### Question 4: Narrative Writing

- (a) Write a story entitled 'The Storm' (25 marks)

OR

- (b) 'The truth had to come out in the end.' Write a story which ends with those words. (25 marks)

It was possible to approach the first question in different ways. There were a number of metaphorical or figurative ways of interpreting a 'Storm', involving narratives that focused on an emotional development which had led the protagonist to some traumatic and 'stormy' event. These responses sought to reveal the extremes of emotion the narrator or protagonist had experienced. Some of these narratives sustained the metaphorical conceit to great effect. The majority were more meteorological in nature, with a physical storm at the heart of the narrative. If the narrative had effectively developed content and fully engaged the reader, both approaches could gain the higher band.

Average responses tended to adopt a more literal approach. The description of the storm itself was often quite effective at this level. Where responses showed some skill in creating characters and establishing settings, often building some tension in the main body of the response, it was possible for Examiners to award marks in Band 3, even if the story itself was poorly resolved. Weaker responses lacked real narrative content and drive. Most of these simply created a series of events with limited attention to the story's credibility or shape. Some responses were almost exclusively descriptive in nature, with no narrative direction. The distinction between descriptive writing and narrative writing has to be established.

The second question proved an equally popular choice. There were some well-crafted narratives which effectively developed character and setting and engaged the reader throughout a tightly structured and tense piece. Detective and crime fiction was popular, but many other skeletons emerged from the narrative closet as the 'truth' came out. The best responses showed the development and shaping of plot and effective characterisation needed for Band 1,

Average responses presented less well developed and more predictable responses. These were not consistent in their structure; either the conclusion was reached too quickly or was not sufficiently prepared.

Weaker responses tended to be lacking in focus, overall credibility and engagement, or had a general lack of clarity.

Marks for style and accuracy varied considerably among those who chose the narrative option. Better responses used a range of sentence structures and well-chosen vocabulary to help create specific effects and to add colour and pace to their narratives. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Weaknesses in constructing sentences and frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks for style and accuracy below Band 3. A few responses were very brief and faulty in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/33

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there ten marks available for reading in Question 1.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- create thoughtful and well-structured arguments, produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision

## General Comments

The great majority of candidates showed confident awareness of what was expected of them in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the paper. There were very few responses which were unacceptably brief or undeveloped, and rubric infringements where more than the required number of questions was attempted were rare. Where insufficient time was taken to write considered and substantial responses, this was inevitably reflected in the marks awarded. In both sections of the paper, the more successful responses showed clear evidence of planning.

At all levels of achievement, candidates showed clear understanding of the reading material and the task in **Question 1**, and often demonstrated strong engagement with the topic. Many excellent answers which challenged the writer's thesis showed a sophisticated knowledge and awareness of modern means of communication. Some strong responses enthusiastically and sympathetically supported the writer's views, but were still able to develop them in a suitably evaluative manner. An unquestioning acceptance of the writer's views often typified weaker responses. Even here, there was very little lifting of, or indiscriminate copying from, the passage. Responses showed a clear understanding of the requirements of the task in this respect.

The best responses combined an assured grasp of the content and attitudes of the material with an independence of thought reflected in the structure of their writing: rather than a methodical consideration of the points in the same sequence as the original, they were evaluative of the whole thrust of the article from the outset, selecting and commenting on its details to support their views. . In the middle bands, candidates often agreed with the writers' views, developing them with personal anecdote which was sometimes in the persona of an elderly person bewildered by modern technology. Here, the writing was often of a fluency and accuracy typical of higher bands, and these candidates sometimes demonstrated in their Section 2 compositions an originality of thought and invention absent in their handling of the reading material.

In **Section 2**, there was usually a clear awareness of the differing requirements of the three genres, and there was much writing of a high standard across the different types. As always, the best responses were typified by careful planning and structuring, a wide-ranging and precisely employed vocabulary, and a high level of technical accuracy: coherent and cohesive arguments were constructed in response to **Question 2**; **Question 3** evoked many excellent descriptive pieces with much evidence of conscious crafting for effect, which did not drift into narrative, and responses to **Question 4** frequently engaged the reader's interest from the beginning, and also provided a satisfactory and believable resolution to the story.

Weaker responses in both **Section 1** and **Section 2** sometimes struggled to find the appropriate register and tone for their intended audience, and were marred by the frequency of basic errors in punctuation and syntax. The use of commas where full stops were needed was evident at varying levels of achievement, and there were a troubling number of compositions which were un-paragraphed in the setting out of dialogue.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

**Read carefully the magazine article in the Reading**

**Booklet Insert and then answer Section 1, Question 1, on this Question Paper.**

**Write a letter to the editor in which you**

- identify and evaluate arguments presented in the article
- explain why you do or do not agree with the writer's views

**Base what you write on the article, but be careful to use your own words.**

**Begin your letter,**

**'Dear Editor,**

**I feel strongly about the article you published recently...'**

**(25 marks)**

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of the writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

High marks were awarded where the views expressed in the passage were subjected to rigorous examination and there was an overview of the writer's position on 'The death of the letter': the style of the response was both appropriate and displayed a high level of accuracy. Points from the passage were selected to support the candidate's views in a cohesive and cogent argument. The letter format would be followed at the beginning and end of the response, and the mode of address was consistently appropriate. The underlying assumptions of the writer were recognised, and more contentious claims scrutinised and challenged. Marks in the middle band were awarded when responses showed understanding of the passage, and subjected some points to more extended discussion and some evaluation. There tended to be a focus here on the satisfaction to be gained from opening hand-written letters, the sentimental value of the personal letter to soldiers and others away from home, and the role of handwriting in assessment of the writer's suitability for employment. Sometimes the method followed by these candidates, of tracking through the passage paragraph by paragraph, resulted in contradictory assertions which reduced cohesion in the overall argument. Weaker responses seized on one or two points only, showing limited understanding of others, or indulged in lengthy anecdotes of limited relevance to the material.

#### **The marks for reading**

The best responses were evaluative throughout, recognising the seductive truths in the passage such as the presence in handwriting of a deceased loved one, the evidence of effort undertaken in posting a handwritten letter, or the ubiquity of junk-mail, but often mounting a challenge to the assertions in the passage about the threatened evolutionary changes to hand-eye coordination or the loss of 'poetry, romance, beauty'. The writer's underlying resistance to modern developments in technology was taken to task, as in "Let me remind you, Sir or Madam, the fact that something has roots in ancient history does not mean we should emulate it or use it as a parameter for our times." These candidates sometimes seized gleefully upon the inherent ironies of being required to respond in a handwritten form to an article disseminated in the printed press, its claims only capable of being publicised by the modern technology it seemed to disdain. At this level, there was always a clear overview of the passage shown.

Marks in Band 2 were awarded when there was more than simple agreement or disagreement with the ideas in the passage, however well developed or supported; the value of some at least was weighed and held up to scrutiny. A mark of 7 was often awarded to relatively short responses if the beginnings of genuine evaluation could be seen. Here, candidates often began by expressing surprised agreement or lament about their own age-group's familiarity with the handwritten letter, but came to question –tentatively sometimes – the writer's claims about the bewildered elderly: "My grandmother thinks it's great to keep in touch with my aunt in Australia on Skype and email"; "Technology has made communication much easier and faster!" A more sustained evaluation, perhaps of several points or showing a more assured overview, was required for a mark at the top of the Band.

Marks in Band 3 were awarded where understanding of the main points of the passage was demonstrated by adequate coverage with some development and sensible comment. At this level, a methodical approach was adopted, agreeing or less often disagreeing with the points in each paragraph with some explanation of their stance. Elsewhere, candidates focused on just a few points which perhaps particularly resonated with them, sometimes developing them with personal anecdote: "I only got E-cards on my birthday and it was very disappointing. You are so right in what you say!" These responses often lacked overview of the main message of the passage, or at the lower end of the Band, became less connected to the passage. Straightforward reproduction of a range of points demonstrating some understanding of the main issues could be given a mark of six of five, and there were many such responses evident.

Responses which earned a mark in Band 4 often displayed only a cursory grasp of the text, sometimes picking out for agreement one point, such as young people not being able to sign their names, and offering a brief comment in support. This was sometimes followed by vague and not always relevant discussion of the evils of the modern world or of other forms of technology. Responses which lifted or paraphrased material from the passage with sufficient comment to show some understanding were awarded a mark of 3, or 4 if a little more grasp of the issue was demonstrated

The small minority of responses falling below this Band were given a mark of 2, or very occasionally 1, where some connection to the ideas in the passage could be discerned, but not development sufficient to demonstrate a grasp of the writer's intent.

### **The marks for writing**

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

#### **Style and audience**

An appropriately formal tone and style of address was required for a letter in response to such an article, and most candidates achieved that, only rarely lapsing into third person. Almost all candidates began with the provided salutation but, interestingly, continued as if the Editor was the author of the passage. In the event, this made little difference to the success or otherwise of their writing. More important was the tone of address in a letter which anticipated publication in a public forum. The best responses demonstrated an impressive authority and confidence. The great majority wrote in their own voice: a small number adopted a persona, usually an elderly person deprived of the supposedly many handwritten letters received before the advent of email or, unusually, an employer dismayed by the poor handwriting skills of applicants for jobs. Again, the most accomplished, evaluative responses demonstrated their stance from the start, the candidates signalling the direction their argument would take. The Examiners also rewarded for their sense of audience those who responded to the humour in the passage with witty admonishment, for example: "No one could deny the importance of the handwritten love letter in the pocket of the doomed soldier in the trenches, but those thousands to whom they were never delivered would no doubt have relished their loved one's words in a quicker form--even Times New Roman!"

In the middle to lower mark range, responses were usually appropriate in tone and form, but they often followed and reproduced the wording of the passage quite closely, rarely venturing outside the confines of the writer's style and vocabulary, and usually offered fulsome praise for the views expressed: these sentiments were often unconvincing, issuing from the age group most accustomed to, and expert at, rapid electronic communication. Weaker responses sometimes showed an insecure sense of the addressee, and relied on rhetoric rather than argument, such as, "How would you like to get a birthday card that was only typed and not even a name on it?"

## Structure

The most successful responses were those where the arguments were framed in a coherent, cohesive response, prioritising points in a fluent and authoritative style and often independent of the order and structure of the passage. Ideas were supported with cogent detail, often showing a sophisticated, wide-ranging awareness of the technology and development of modern communication and its benefits, and brief and often witty reference and anecdote. In the middle range, responses which showed some evidence of having been planned were ordered to support a thesis, but a majority followed the structure of the passage in a predictable and sometimes laboured manner, sometimes at the expense of their argument. Marks at the lower end of Band 3 were awarded when candidates simply reproduced the points in the order of the passage then supplied a concluding sentence which stated their own view in a basic way or asked for consideration and a reply. Responses given marks below Band 3 were sometimes only partly relevant to the task or were comprised of only a couple of confused or contradictory remarks or of largely lifted material.

## Accuracy

Responses in Band 1 combined a fluent and authoritative style, typified by sophisticated, precisely employed vocabulary and a wide range of sentence structures, with a very high level of technical accuracy. An impressive number of candidates gained high marks for this element. Responses given 8 or 9 were often clearly and competently written, but their vocabulary was less ambitious. Below this level, there were frequent errors of sentence separation, the use of commas instead of full stops being the major fault in this band. This, combined often with weak paragraphing, restricted the writing mark to a Band below that awarded for reading. Two types of writing typified responses awarded marks in Band 4 and below: the first, more common one lacked evidence of controlled shaping, and simply followed the patterns of speech. There were very frequent basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, the weakest using capital letters randomly and lacking them for proper nouns and the beginnings of sentences. The second was often characterised by secure spelling and quite ambitious vocabulary, but marred by serious structural faults in sentences and syntax, errors of agreement and tense, and an uncertain use of prepositions. Here, meaning was sometimes blurred by the levels of error. It should be stressed that only a small proportion of the candidature fell into this lowest level.

### Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Consider the point of view of the writer of the passage and how that affects their opinions
- Think about the key arguments in the passage as well as the specific points being made
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well as some depth in evaluating them
- Be prepared to challenge the views expressed in the passage
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully for example about the correct style for a letter, an article or a speech
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops and capital letters
- Check your spelling, especially of key words from the passage

## Section 2: Composition

### Question 2: Argumentative/Discursive Writing

(a) ‘Today’s media is too powerful.’ Do you agree?

(25 marks)

OR

(b) ‘Everything is done by robots nowadays, from building cars to looking after the elderly.’

Give your views on the use of robots in some areas of life.

(25 marks)

This genre of writing was a popular choice at all levels of achievement, although the first option was more often selected. Most responses showed an awareness of the requirements of this type of writing, and were able to convey their views clearly, offering developed, relevant ideas on both topics. The best responses to the first question were enthusiastically engaged with the subject, often expressing strong views on the extent and influence of modern media in cogent arguments of great maturity. Few responses to the second topic were seen in the top band of achievement, although there were a small number which were extremely enlightening and informative. In the middle ranges, the success of most responses to the first topic was affected to a greater or lesser degree by the omission of any initial definition of what was understood by 'the media', with the result that the terms of the argument were often unclear, or only discovered incidentally as the response proceeded. A high proportion of candidates focused on the subject of celebrity culture. Valid ideas were often clearly, even stridently expressed, if often within a limited range. In the second question, weaker responses tended to be limited to the ideas offered in the words of the task, especially that of robots in manufacturing industry, expressing few of their own ideas. At this level, responses to the first question were often confined to comments about social media, mobile phones and television.

The most accomplished responses to the first question showed a wide ranging awareness of the many potential areas of discussion it offered, and then clearly defined the parameters of their own argument in an authoritative introduction. These often concentrated on the power of the mass media in influencing not only public opinion but also government policy, and were most impressive in their maturity. The best often recognised the 'necessary evil' of such power in creating a much more informed and aware populace. As often in discursive writing, the most successful candidates showed wide general knowledge, and enlivened their discussions with relevant anecdote and reference to topics in the news. A surprising number of responses expressed ideas about conspiracy at the highest level between governments and 'media barons' to deny vital information to the 'general public', thus 'keeping them in the dark' about officialdom's perceived machinations. Perhaps with the topic of **Question 1** in mind, other successful responses in Band 2 focused on the vastly increased levels of communication of all sorts via social media and the Internet, often in a very thoughtful and reflective discussion.

Examiners gave marks of 7 or 8 to those responses which expressed relevant ideas with some development and illustration. These might be limited in their range, often to a discussion of the influence of advertising on young people's body-image, or the malign activities of the paparazzi, but they were often valid and fresh, and expressed in a sufficiently orderly manner to earn a mark in this middle band for content and structure.

Weaker responses were typified by a lack of definition and focus, with the nature of the media under scrutiny never made clear. These also were repetitive or contradictory, and without any clear structure to frame their argument.

The alternative question about robots elicited fewer responses, and these tended to fall within the middle band of achievement. A small number in the top band combined a great deal of information and technical knowledge with an ability to discuss the implications for society of Robotic Science in terms of health, employment and social isolation. These were greatly rewarding for the reader. The average response displayed only limited awareness of the development of robots, apart from the humanoid variety and those which are used in car manufacture, focusing instead on the other offered idea about their use in the care of the elderly-- or rather the undesirable tendency in modern society to neglect the elderly. At the lower end of the middle range, these responses often drifted away from the topic or simply 'petered out'. The weakest responses were typically naive and simple, offering a few ideas in a personal, anecdotal style, and were very brief.

Style and accuracy marks were awarded across the range, with those in the top band given to writing which was authoritative, fluent and accurate. Sometimes weaknesses such as a limited vocabulary or the frequency of minor errors were compensated for, to some extent, by the liveliness of the writing or the display of a clear sense of audience. While many responses demonstrated a high and consistent level of technical accuracy, some, including those arguing their point of view cogently and with a degree of rhetorical flair, were restricted to a mark for writing in Band 4 because of persistent comma splicing or faulty sentence construction. Examiners also noted the prevalence of misused or omitted capital letters. At this level, there was often poor or arbitrary organisation and sequencing, and occasionally none at all.

**Ways in which the writing of arguments and discussions can be improved:**

- Make sure you have enough ideas about the topic which is offered to sustain your response. Try to link your ideas together in a cohesive argument or discussion.
- Avoid simple assertions: explain your ideas in such a way as to convince your reader of your point of view
- Check for basic errors, especially misused commas and full stops, and misspelt common words
- Try to develop ideas into paragraphs and avoid repeating the same point

**Question 3**

**Descriptive writing**

- (a) **Describe an occasion when you received disappointing news. Include the thoughts and feelings of those involved.**

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

- (b) **You are being interviewed. Describe the people conducting the interview, and your thoughts and feelings as it progresses.**

**(25 marks)**

This was a popular genre across the mark range, with the first option the more popular. In both questions, the focus was on the thoughts and feelings of those involved in the activity, and both required the use of the first person. At all levels of achievement, responses usually began with some context for the required scene, weaker responses sometimes developing their writing more narratively than descriptively. Stronger descriptions were framed in a much more controlled manner, providing just enough context to clarify the situation satisfactorily. In the middle range some responses were more narrative in manner than is usually desirable for this genre, but included such vivid detail that the engaging atmosphere was satisfactorily created. Here, the Examiners were able to award marks in the middle band.

The best responses to the first question produced writing of a very high order, earning marks at the top of Band 1. These were highly evocative, often creating an overall picture of considerable clarity and employing a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary. There were relatively few responses in which overly elaborate and multi-syllabic words in sentences were used without precision. One candidate, earning full marks with the evocation of his family's response to the refusal of a work permit, used a vocabulary of the tersest economy: the relatively simple lexis of the poor immigrant family was employed with great precision, creating a most moving and poignant effect. The given scenario of 'disappointing news' was interpreted in many convincing and original ways. Better responses described a few people whereas weaker scripts focused on more, and were often more superficial as a result. A particularly fine response only involved one other person with the protagonist, evoking her 'thoughts and feelings' entirely by minute observation and description of the fleeting expressions on her face. A response to the second question was very successful in describing the unexpected changes in the demeanour of previously familiar teachers when the writer was being interviewed about an accusation of cheating.

Responses in the middle bands often featured news of bereavement in the family, or failure to pass an examination or driving test. These were often touching and convincing, if sometimes rather predictable in vocabulary--'devastated' and 'heartbroken' appeared very frequently. Here also, the writing sometimes became driven by narrative, even though descriptive details were included. Examiners must see 'some attempt to create atmosphere' to consider a mark in Band 3. Some laboured responses to the second question told the whole story of the interview and its outcome, adding a little description of each of the people on the interviewing panel. Band 4 responses were often simple accounts of an interview for some unspecified position, not always supplying the outcome. At the lower end of the middle range and in the responses in Band 4 to both questions, candidates relied on reporting to the reader what their and others' feelings were rather than evoking and describing them.

Marks in the top band for style and accuracy were awarded to those candidates whose writing not only employed a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary in the creation of images and effects but was also

controlled and crafted to produce a harmonious whole virtually free of error. As with **Question 2**, evidence of planning characterised these most successful responses. In the middle ranges, vocabulary was plainer or less-precisely applied, and images less striking: weaker candidates seemed limited to accounts of personal experience, especially in response to the first question. Consecutive sentences beginning with 'I' (often lower case) typified these responses.

The most frequent issue in awarding style and accuracy marks for descriptive writing was the use of sentences without a main or finite verb. The mark scheme does allow Examiners to award a mark higher than Band 4 where sentence construction is persistently faulty. Thus, scripts in which writing marks in Band 2 or 3 for **Question 1** were awarded often did not reach this standard here.

**Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:**

- Remember the key requirements of descriptive writing: you are not writing a story.
- Try to be original, in both the scenarios and the images you create.
- Make deliberate choices in your vocabulary to create atmosphere.
- Write complete sentences with proper verbs: the same rules of grammar apply to all types of writing.

**Question 4**

**Narrative writing**

(a) 'Do not panic! I'm sure that there's a solution.' Write a story beginning with these words.

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

(b) Write a story with the title 'The End of the Road'

**(25 marks)**

Narrative writing was the choice of a high proportion of the candidature, and both options were popular, 4(b) marginally more so. Examiners were able to award marks at the top of Band 1 in a pleasing number of cases, but at all levels of achievement engagement with the tasks was evident, with both titles eliciting some lively and often intriguing narratives. Again, both titles seemed to invite and encourage the inclusion of narrative and descriptive detail which enhanced the narrative. Some very successful responses to the first option continued the heightened tone of the given sentence in fast paced, exciting and convincing stories, while others used flashback effectively before building their narratives towards satisfactory conclusions. High marks were also awarded to responses to 4(b) which used the title metaphorically; these responses were often engaging and moving. Responses given high marks also created credible situations and characters, even where they had written fantasy stories, as was sometimes the case with responses to 4(b). The creation of convincing dialogue, used pointedly and sparingly, was also seen at the highest level.

In the middle band, narratives were often straightforward, cohesive stories which were clearly told and showed awareness of the need to provide a climax and resolution, even if these were not entirely successful. At this level, there was usually a clearly outlined plot and some attempt to provide details of setting and character. Some background was given to frame plot and character, but in responses to both questions details were sometimes rather clichéd and obvious: trees and leaves were green, doors were large and wooden, for example. Responses to 4(a) involved boisterous children breaking Mother's favourite vase, on several occasions. Where responses to 4(b) took a literal approach to the title, actions important to the plot were often unexplained, undermining credibility: overgrown, repulsive-smelling lanes were followed rather than the usual route home; strange, forbidding houses belonging to perfect strangers were entered without invitation. Overall, however, there were few responses which undermined the effectiveness of their narratives by predictable endings. As evident in the other writing genres, planning was a crucial element in successful responses.

Weaker responses in Band 4 produced a series of events, depicting character by brief physical description and providing limited context or setting for the plot. These unplanned responses ended after a few lines or paragraphs as initial ideas dried up; elsewhere writing tended to lack a sense of narrative purpose and was without resolution. Here, and to a lesser extent in the middle band, plot elements imported from horror films or computer games were sometimes used and were rarely assimilated into the plot.

Examiners were able to award high marks for style and accuracy for responses where vocabulary and sentence structures were varied and effective and free of repeated error. In the top band, syntax and sentence structure were often effectively manipulated for effect, especially in the creation of narrative tension. In this genre, any weakness in punctuation, especially of dialogue, was exposed, and sometimes proved a pitfall for otherwise fluent and accurate writers. In the middle band, where there were a few basic errors of spelling and punctuation and a more restricted vocabulary, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8: conversely, clear and accurate sentence structure and straightforward paragraphing could compensate for less interesting content and structure. Marks in Band 4 were given when writing was marred by comma-splicing, weak punctuation, and faults in tense control and agreement. Occasionally only a mark in Band 5 could be awarded because serious errors in sentence structure and syntax impeded communication.

**Ways in which the writing of narratives could be improved:**

- **Plan your story so that you do not run out of ideas for the plot, and you can bring it to an interesting conclusion.**
- **Remember that you can use your own interpretation of the titles.**
- **Make your story believable by creating realistic characters and settings.**
- **Leave some time to check through your work for errors which will seriously affect your mark, such as basic errors in spelling, capital letters and punctuation.**

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/04  
Coursework Portfolio

## Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write independently of undue guidance from published materials or from teachers;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and semi-colons;
- proof-read their work carefully, as marks may be deducted for typing errors.

## General comments

There was again a significant increase in candidate entries for this component, particularly for syllabus 0522. Many Centres successfully took the coursework option for the first time.

While the choice of tasks, much of the writing and the assessment by Centres were competent, many opportunities to gain higher marks were lost.

## **Good Practice:**

- There was an understanding that coursework provided an opportunity for candidates to learn to be better writers over a period of time, by expressing their own ideas and experiences of the world about them.
- After initial, brief guidance by teachers as to the nature of tasks, candidates were left to write as individuals and to think with originality for themselves.
- Teachers monitored their efforts, checking for authenticity and offering general suggestions on early drafts, but remembering that their advice should not constitute corrections.
- Candidates were encouraged to proof-read their work, looking particularly for errors of punctuation. Successful candidates were correct in their use of full stops at the ends of sentences and were sparing in their use of semi-colons, showing understanding of where they were appropriate.

Candidates aiming for the highest grades demonstrated independence as writers, formulating their own versions of tasks and thinking inventively and at a high level of maturity. The best Centres used at best only a small amount of stimulus material for the first assignment, briefly introduced tasks capable of flexible responses, allowed a short time for candidates to discuss possible approaches and then set candidates to work on their own. Some Centres prepared for coursework by teaching skills, such as how to structure an effective speech and the type of language that was appropriate, or how a short story works, studying the presentation of characters, the build-up of tension and the provision of an effective climax. They were careful to ensure that tasks were appropriate in maturity for a sixteen-year-old and that they required a suitable level of thought and the opportunities to demonstrate skills. They understood that coursework was provided for educational reasons so that by practice, each candidate could improve as a writer and thinker.

Many Centres clearly understood the rationale behind coursework and approached it with enthusiasm and energy.

## Bad Practice

It sometimes appeared that coursework had been undertaken without an understanding of the work that it entailed. Some of the points listed below are detailed further in later sections of the report.

- Candidates were frequently not left to work independently of published material or undue guidance by teachers. They are reminded that marks are awarded for content, structure, style and accuracy. Moderators reported that in one particular task, that set on WaterAid, too much guidance had been given on both the content and the structure. This resulted in similar responses that showed little if no originality of thought. While the style and accuracy may have been satisfactory, the overall mark was frequently too high. This task proved unsuitable for CIE coursework.
- It appeared that writing frames had been used by some Centres for Assignment 3. Since this was a test of reading, it was for the candidate to understand the main drift of the chosen text and to make individual selections for comment, and this should not have been provided in any way by an external source. Please note, therefore, that writing frames are not allowed. Where guidance had been given as to the selection of ideas and opinions the mark for reading was commonly too high.
- For reading, it was clear in some cases that the mark scheme in the syllabus had either not been used or had not been understood.
- Some of the tasks set were potentially too simple for the candidates. An example of this was ‘Don’t get me started...’ which led to poor choices of content, uncertain structure, and insecurity of language register. This proved to be a task that was suitable for candidates at the middle or lower end of the marking criteria. Only a few candidates were able to make something effective out of it.
- A disturbingly large number of candidates were unaware of the need to place a full stop at the end of a sentence or to use an appropriate conjunction to join sentences into a fluent pattern of thought. As a result they wrote groups of short sentences with commas between. In addition, some candidates used virtually no commas at all. There were many examples of the wrong use of semi colons, sometimes splitting a simple sentence into two halves for no reason. Often there were far too many semi colons in a piece of work. What was more concerning was that frequently there was no indication that these errors had been noticed, or if they were, had not been taken into consideration when awarding marks. As a result, many Centres had their marks adjusted. Given the excellent opportunities for drafting and redrafting and for considering the effectiveness of one’s work that candidates do not have in examinations, it was expected that these errors would have been corrected.
- There were also some issues with drafts. Please see the comments given below.

Centres are strongly warned about providing candidates with too much support, particularly about the content and structure of assignments and about specific corrections made on drafts.

Details regarding the educational aims and objectives are set out in the Syllabus, in all published reports to Centres and in the Coursework Training Manual. It is vital that all Centres offering the coursework alternative read these documents and understand and follow the advice.

## Task setting

In general, task setting was appropriate and there were very few examples where the choice did not meet the requirements of the syllabus. The only exceptions were where the genre of Assignment 1 was too similar to that of Assignment 3, which occurred when candidates had been set an argument based on a stimulus article for Assignment 1. Where an informative piece had been set for Assignment 1, such as an account of a School visit, there had to be a marked difference in style between it and whatever was set for Assignment 2. This was normally achieved by writing a fictional narrative.

Overall, the more variety of language, genre and content that could be achieved in the three responses, the higher the mark might possibly be, in balancing strengths and weaknesses.

There were some problems in Assignment 2. There were too many stories that were depressingly violent or which dealt with dramatic tragedy. Where these were personal and sounded convincing, they could be moving. However, many stories were gratuitously unpleasant even to the point where the reader was disengaged by the absurdities of the stories.

There was also a great increase in the writing of monologues. These are difficult to do well and come with inherent problems. For more details, please see the comments below.

On the whole the choice of article for Assignment 3 was suitable for the exercise and appropriate to the age group. There were some inappropriate news reports and some very poor articles from the Internet written in disconnected short paragraphs and frequently having very few ideas and opinions for candidates to engage with. Many of the articles were the same ones that have been appearing for some time, and teachers are advised to keep a look out for something new and original. After all controversial articles appear almost daily in the newspapers.

### **Assessment of coursework**

#### **Writing**

In nearly every case, the rank order of candidates within the Centre was satisfactory and often good. Most candidates were placed in the right Band, but there was a reluctance to use Bands 4 and 5. Some Centres' distribution was too heavily skewed to Band 3.

An unreliable system of annotation leading to assessment has become common. It consists of writing in the margin whenever a candidate appears to hit a targeted objective in a particular Mark Band. For example, a candidate may use an apt phrase that deserves some note, but unfortunately the rest of the response may be written in disappointing vocabulary. The problem with this is that the achievement is often only partial and not sustained, so it is only a slight indicator of where the assignment is to be assessed. The only safe procedure is to list achievements against the Mark Bands that have been made throughout a large part of the response. It is not clear where this system has come from, but it is not sound.

Some Centres were severe in marking writing. This was almost always because the responses were largely accurate but more specifically were written in a good range of language and used fluent sentences.

The chief reason for reducing Centres' writing marks was as follows:

- Punctuation errors, particularly of full stops, commas and semi colons (see above)
- Straightforward, sometimes limited range of language
- Insecure structuring of sentences and lack of fluency
- Simplistic responses to undemanding tasks
- Failure to proof read
- Poor use of the spell check leading to the use of wrong words and wrong spellings.

Of the last two bullets, it is fair to say that some candidates made little use of their time to read their work and to make positive alterations.

#### **Assessment of reading**

The mark scheme was frequently applied correctly. It was comparatively easy to score a mark of 5 or 6 where the selection of ideas and opinions was sound and where there was some value in what were usually simple and undeveloped comments.

It was less easy to score a mark in Band 1. Here there was the expectation of an overview of the text as a whole and an intelligent selection of ideas and opinions to support that view. The best candidates did this and sometimes cleverly used brief quotations of words and phrases taken from various parts of the text to tie together a general argument. They were clearly worth 10 marks. Credit could also be given for candidates who clearly covered the main arguments in the whole text and developed their responses consistently at some length.

A number of Centres were too generous in their award of Band 1 marks. Band 2 was achieved by evaluating at least some of the ideas and opinions. However, a feature of Band 2 was a lack of consistency. For example, one candidate awarded a mark of 9 had only dealt with two ideas at any length and two or three more were tacked on at the end. The mark hovered between 6 and 7. Another feature of Band 2 was that the responses were to ideas and opinions that were not arranged in any obvious order of importance or relevance, and unfortunately, in some cases candidates had obviously been guided as to which ideas to use, which is not allowed because it undermines the principles of the assessment.

Centres should use the published mark scheme which is found in the syllabus under 6:Appendix.

## Administration by Centres

The work of the Moderators was not merely to scrutinise the quality of the work but also to make a number of clerical checks on the marks submitted by Centres.

The first document that was needed was **the Coursework Assessment Summary Form**, or CASF otherwise known as WMS). This was required for all candidates and not just those in the moderation sample. The Moderator noted all the changes that had been made at Internal Moderation and also used the document to check the range of marks awarded for reading. The document also gave some guidance as to the marking of different teachers in the Centre.

The Moderator then checked the marks on the CASF against those on the copy of the **MS1** (or electronic equivalent). Where there was a discrepancy, this was recorded on the CIE marks system. A check was also carried out against the marks on the folders in the sample. There were frequent discrepancies that were discovered during these checks.

For the reasons given above CASFs (also known as WMS) were required for all the candidates in a Centre and not just for those in the sample.

Copies of all articles used for Assignment 3 were required by the Moderator who had to read them before addressing the work. There were several cases where these were not supplied.

An early draft of **one** piece of work was also required. This was usually included and in some cases there was a draft for all three pieces of work. The Moderator needed the draft to make two separate checks, although this did not normally affect the marking of the folder.

Many Centres did not include the top and bottom folder from their mark range in addition to the sample that was requested.

Finally the regulations stipulated that each folder in the sample should be securely fixed and that it should not be in plastic folders, which only added to the complicated handling job that the Moderator had to undertake. For example, where a large number of folders were submitted, the Moderator had to make an initial sub-sample across the mark range and then a subsequent choice of folders to examine certain points in the range. It was not always safe to use paperclips, and a few folders were not fixed together at all. The most convenient method was by stapling.

## Summary of the contents of the folder

- 1: The folders required from each Centre by CIE
- 2: In addition, the top and bottom folder in the Centre's mark range
- 3: The CASFs (WMS) for all the candidates in the Centre
- 4: The Moderator's copy of the MS1 or electronically submitted mark list.
- 5: An early draft (see below) of one of the assignments
- 6: A copy of the article used for Assignment 3, preferably with the candidate's annotations.

## Annotation

Many Centres were meticulous in their recording of errors on the final versions of the assignments and it was clear that the marks awarded reflected this. Teachers also provided evaluations of the work at the end of each assignment or in Centre-generated report forms. These annotations and the comments at the ends of assignments gave the Moderator confidence in the work of the Centres.

Moderators make no marks on the samples they receive. However, they are aware of the errors of accuracy and the shortcomings of style in the work. A frequent complaint was that there were few or no indications that such errors had been taken into consideration in awarding the marks, or had even been noted and accepted as errors. Some work bore no marks or comments at all.

Good practice was to comment on content and structure, and style and accuracy, and to balance strengths and weaknesses for the benefit of each candidate's progress as a writer. It was important that positive comments were balanced by suggestions where improvements could be made. In many cases all the remarks were positive as if shortcomings were not important in assessment. This often led to over-marking.

## Drafts

Some Centres were meticulous in commenting on drafts at the end of the assignment.

The reasons for a draft is that candidates should be prepared to make amendments by

- Revising and making improvements to whole sections, for example changing an ending or altering the length of a particular section;
- Editing, by changing words and phrases to improve the effectiveness of their communication;
- Correcting punctuation, grammar, proof-reading errors and so on.

These changes should be made in the candidate's handwriting and in a different colour from that of the teacher's notes.

The teacher's notes should be at the end of the work, not in the margin or in the body of the text. There were still examples of teachers who circled individual errors in the text or who corrected them. This is specifically not allowed because it is the candidate's responsibility to make alterations and corrections to a draft, not the teacher's.

There were a number of infringements of this rule, and too many drafts appeared unchanged in their final versions and had no comments from the teacher or indications of alterations by the candidate.

## Internal moderation

In most cases, internal moderation or other forms of standardisation provided a reliable rank order. However, there were occasions where the Moderator could not make a judgement because of lack of agreement with the order. For example, in one Centre there was one set that was severely marked, another generously marked, three inconsistently assessed and a final set that was correctly marked.

Internal moderation must take account of all the candidates in the Centre. The easiest way is for two senior assessors to agree their own marks first and then to sub-sample all the other sets. If they agree severity or leniency of marking, all the mark range or some of it can be adjusted. Where they cannot agree because the marking is inconsistent, the teacher has to be instructed to re-mark at least some of the candidates. The set is then re-moderated.

The reason for disagreement with the rank order is usually because individual set teachers mark to different agendas, giving undue attention to one or more of the objectives.

The results of internal moderation appear on the CASF and a common comment was that there was no evidence that internal moderation had taken place. There must be such evidence.

## Authenticity

Centres will be only too aware that coursework is always under attack because candidates may copy work from a source that is not their own. They should also be aware that Moderators are often able to identify pieces of work that do not seem right. In order to counteract this, it is important to plan the work so that it is monitored and the possibility of copying from elsewhere is diminished. The easiest way to do this is to set tasks that reflect the candidates' personal experiences and thoughts and to create the first draft in class. This can be checked. The next stage, presumably the second draft, can be done at home and can then be checked against the first draft. The final draft can be done in class, (or the second and third stages can be reversed). In any case, monitoring should ensure that teachers feel confident that the work is original. If the work is suspicious, it is wise to check by using an internet search engine. Where cases of copying are discovered the offending work must be removed before the folder is assessed.

While there was no doubt that the work was largely that of the candidates, there were several examples of copying that were detected by Moderators. These included pieces by two candidates that were the same and pieces that could be traced to websites on the Internet.

All suspect cases are always forwarded to the Regulations Team at Cambridge.

## Assignment 1

Once more there was some excellent work in the form of speeches, addresses and talks. This allowed candidates to escape from over-formal English and demonstrate an engaging sense of audience. Where the

choice of topic was the candidate's own, there was usually a sense of individual interest and some energy in the writing. There was a good deal of rhetorical language, but sometimes the use of the question was excessive and interrupted the flow of the argument. Most of the work was well structured and avoided any traps such as the use of non-standard English.

This was not true of the topic 'Don't get me started', which was often given to weaker candidates. The problem lay in the choice of content. Very often it was limited and development was slight, or even immature, as in the case of the rant about not being able to wear trainers at School. Versions of this topic dealing with School, individually named teachers, referees and buses also descended into argument without logic and sometimes abuse.

Writing a rant usually involved a very insecure range of language, some of it non-standard, and there was often little structure and too much repetition. This was the sort of thing that candidates in lower year groups might have written and was typical of marks far lower down the range than may have been intended.

Of course it was possible to provide a very good response. One candidate wrote about males in a well-structured and entertaining way that constituted good writing, while another wrote a most original piece about abortion; a third attacked homophobic attitudes. These candidates were not tempted by the topic's title to under-estimate their abilities.

There were other forms such as traditional essays (best when the candidate chose an individual topic of personal interest), letters, for example to the head teacher, and reviews of films and plays.

The WaterAid appeal, used by several Centres, undermined the aims of coursework. These were not original but used the same type of content, restructured weakly to make it sound original. Luckily the style and accuracy made it possible to differentiate the responses, but this was an inappropriate topic because too much had obviously been provided for the candidates so that it was very difficult to assess either content or structure.

It was not good practice to set the same topic to a number of candidates.

Some of the topics showed maturity and were developed well. They included:

*Money can not buy love  
Feeding the homeless  
The corrupting influence of the media  
Improving Schools  
How to write an essay  
Life in Britain is unfair  
Green spaces  
The one-child policy  
Indian women's rights  
Monarchy*

There were some good ideas for speeches:

*A Prime Minister's address  
A God speech  
Five things I would save*

Personal accounts included:

*Pony club camp  
Personal rituals  
Motocross  
My local area*

## **Assignment 2**

This assignment was an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their range of language in descriptive, personal and narrative writing. However, there were some Centres that encouraged their candidates to use vocabulary too freely, with the result that meaning became unclear through the overuse of adjectives. Some of the best writers certainly used a wide range of language but it was sparing and always appropriate. The

use of the words ‘cacophony’ and ‘engulf’ was generally excessive and they rarely helped in engaging the reader.

More personal writing would have been very acceptable. Centres that set the autobiographical fragment generally succeeded in providing some convincing and moving writing. Although these were often about sad experiences, because they were based on reality, they were engaging. Very few stories of aliens, zombies and violent criminals were. Candidates were carried away with the horrible and the weird and wrote narratives that were scarcely credible. Again it was a matter of maturity, knowing the sort of storyline that was likely to impress or at least knowing how to communicate a storyline.

There were many monologues and these were more challenging than at first might appear. They had to have some structure. Otherwise they became repetitive and often outpourings of emotions that were not always convincing. The language range was not always as good as that of a narrative or description. There needed to be enough content to complete the assignment satisfactorily. There were many monologues based on experiences in the First World War, and while these were readable, they were very similar and it was difficult to find any that were outstanding as writing.

However, Centres frequently set exercise that produced some good writing, for example as follows:

### **Own experience**

*‘What happened when I refused to eat my cucumber at School lunch...’*

*My most poignant memory*

*My mad relative*

*‘The stranger in the photograph is me’*

### **Descriptive**

*In nature’s lap*

*Symphony in yellow*

*The supermarket*

*A moment in time*

*Streets of Thailand*

### **Narrative**

*Piano in G Minor*

*Sinister Street*

*The piercing silence*

*A warm and sticky liquid*

*‘As my own past opened the door...’*

*Snake in the orchard*

Finally, a large number of assignments had no title, which was not recommended.

### **Assignment 3**

Many of the articles chosen for this assignment were appropriate. However there were some exceptions as follows:

- Newspaper stories that just recorded events and did not discuss them
- Internet articles written in short, unstructured paragraphs, with much repetition and little argument
- Multiple articles, usually in twos or threes, that gave candidates too much to deal with
- Overlong articles of more than two sides of A4
- Whole literary texts (for example *Romeo and Juliet*)
- Advertisements where there was virtually no reading material.

Most articles were controversial, contained at least some identifiable arguments, ideas and opinions, and were about themes that candidates could easily relate to. However, several reports on individual Centres mentioned that the chosen article only had a small number of ideas and opinions and that this was not beneficial to the candidates. These included Bill Bryson’s article about walking and Jeremy Clarkson’s blog on airport security.

A number of articles, such as the Bhopal advertisement, had been in circulation for several sessions and some were common to several Centres. It is recommended that Centres try to find some new articles to use.

It was evident that in some cases candidates had been cued as to which ideas and opinions they should discuss, and in one case a writing frame was used to indicate the ideas and opinions. This is not allowed as it is part of the assessment that candidates should understand the text and make the selections for themselves. It was recommended that candidates should respond to ideas throughout the article and not just to a few at the beginning, since they needed to prove that their reading of the whole article had been effective.

However, this assignment was generally done well although it was occasionally over-marked (see above). Some of the articles were well sourced and interesting. These included the following topics:

*Chinese mothers*  
*World cup slavery*  
*Dress code*  
*Gay marriage*  
*Facebook (several different articles)*  
*Sexism*  
*The Syrian crisis*  
*Cruel animal testing*  
*School holidays*

#### **Final comments**

This report has underlined some of the issues that urgently need addressing. However, a good deal of the work was well planned and carried out with an understanding of the educational advantages of the component. Where there were discrepancies, it proved that coursework was not something that could be lightly undertaken and that there was a good deal of commitment and hard work that was necessary to achieve the results that Centres obviously wanted.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/05

Speaking and Listening

## Key messages

The main message:

- to ensure that candidates do not rely too heavily on their prompt material. The production and use of a script is not permitted and it is contrary to the ethos of this test. Centres should discourage this at the planning stage and insist on candidates using a variety of bullet-pointed prompt material instead. The syllabus suggests a postcard size prompt card, but other aids could be used, for example, brief PowerPoint slides, flip charts, or smart phone applications.

The test is an assessment of speaking skills in **Part 1**. Over-reliance on scripted material and the use of extended notes promotes reading and writing skills over speaking skills.

Other messages:

- Moderators suggest that some candidates need to prepare more thoroughly for the examination. Success in **Part 1** is clearly linked to researching the chosen topic, planning for a confident and assured delivery, practising the delivery, but also preparing for a strong contribution in **Part 2**.
- Candidates should try to make their **Part 1** presentations livelier, by perhaps incorporating more creative presentational styles, but certainly by relying less on reciting factual information. There is scope for further creativity in **Part 1** – e.g. taking up a ‘voice’ or presenting a dramatic monologue. Presenting empathic work using literary texts often leads to quality work.
- In **Part 2**, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware of their expected role in the discussion. The candidate’s role should not be that of a passive interviewee, but should be one which is more proactive and seeks to engage with the listener in a collaborative manner.
- It is permissible for teachers to work with their candidates (once the candidate has decided upon a topic) to help enhance the content and to advise upon the approach taken for the delivery. Differentiation by task setting is therefore encouraged for this component. A more capable candidate is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content - and such a candidate should be encouraged to do this. Moderators recommend more teaching of general speaking and listening skills in the context of a topic-based presentation and subsequent discussion. Over-rehearsal with candidates is not encouraged, but broad-based coverage of useful methodologies is encouraged.
- Teachers should be reminded that, whilst candidates are encouraged to choose their own topic, they should do so with the advice of the teacher. Candidates should not choose, or be guided, to talk about topics that are inappropriate or likely to self-penalise.
- Teachers should advise candidates to restrict **Part 1** to 4 minutes, and **Part 2** to between 6 and 7 minutes - as specified in the syllabus. It is difficult to justify the awarding of high marks to **Part 1** presentations which are short (under 3 minutes) and it is counter-productive to allow **Part 2** presentations to run over 7 minutes. This session again saw problems at some Centres with timings, and problems here often lead to problems elsewhere. The timings for the two parts of the test are distinct - i.e. short **Part 1** presentations cannot be compensated for with longer **Part 2** presentations (or vice versa).
- All Centres should use digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common

computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). There is no need to use the blue cassette inserts – a list of the candidates in the sample, their numbers, and the mark given to each, either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself) or on a separate sheet is sufficient. Centres should re-name the individual tracks on the CD to the candidate number and name (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.).

Messages relating to assessment:

- In **Part 1**, Moderators advise Examiners to be sure that a candidate has met the criteria for Band 1 fully before awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual presentation is of the standard, factually-based, reportage style, even if well done, then a low Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available, and a Band 3 mark perhaps more appropriate. Pedestrian presentations should be placed in Band 3.
- Candidates who present very short **Part 1** presentations or those which rely heavily on a script are not likely to achieve higher than Band 4, where "delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest" is the most likely and appropriate descriptor.
- Extremely short **Part 1** presentations (under one minute) are likely to satisfy only the Band 5 criteria: "Content is mostly undeveloped....and the audience is generally lost".
- Examiners are reminded not to award marks for content per se - it is the *development* of the content which is being assessed; in both **Part 1** and **Part 2** of the Test. For example, "What work experience did for me..." could achieve a Band 1, or indeed, a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.

An important message relating to protocol:

- The test must be conducted only once. It is a formal examination and as such, candidates must not be given a second attempt. If a test has been conducted twice, the Centre should inform Cambridge directly of the rationale and reasons for this.

A message relating to preparation by the Teachers/examiners

- It would be a sensible approach for Examiners to obtain a list of the topics that candidates are planning to talk about in advance of the examination. This would allow the Examiner to consider areas which might be productive in the **Part 2** discussion. However, this preparation must not be shared with the candidates prior to the examination and the Examiner must not regard this advice as the go-ahead to use a script - i.e. if the candidate takes the discussion in other, useful areas, these should be pursued. The aim in **Part 2** is for both parties to be involved in an organic discussion - if scripted material appears to be present in this part of the examination, this is likely to result in maladministration of the test.

**General comments**

The more interesting and successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from brief, bulleted notes, about a topic they felt passionately about and which they had researched thoroughly. Some successful tasks included some kind of visual presentation to the Examiner, such as sharing a Powerpoint slide or some photographs. Other interesting presentations were done in the form of a 'muse' or monologue – sometimes in the form of a conversation with an invisible character. The most successful standard presentations were given by candidates fired by a passion who also utilised a variety of devices to maintain their listener's interest. In all the best examples there was a real sense of engagement with the topic. Where candidates chose well, prepared thoroughly and were fully committed to the task the results were always good, particularly where the Centre had correctly understood and disseminated guidance given by Cambridge and the Examiners had been briefed thoroughly with regard to their vital role in ensuring that candidates are able to give their best.

Conversely, where Centres were ill-prepared for the test and Examiners were not fully aware of their role, the candidates were not as successful. In these Centres, the candidates' preparation of their topics was not always conducive to performing successful speaking tasks, and they were often ill-prepared for the discussion part of the examination – and these factors were usually more significant than the choice of topic. There was certainly too much reliance on Wikipedia in cases where topics had been chosen with less care.

Centres are reminded that for **Part 1**, the candidates should be involved in the choice of topics. While Moderators understand that at large Centres, manage the tests may seem easier if generic themes are

followed, the same theme for all candidates is not recommended. It may well be that in larger Centres it makes sense for each classroom teacher to propose a range of themes so that candidates can work in groups and practise presenting their topics to each other. Peer assessment and formative feedback is certainly encouraged. However, such generic themes must allow for individual expression.

Please note that this is a formal examination and as such an appropriate examination room is required. Candidates should not be examined in the presence of other candidates. A quiet, secure room is crucial for the success of the examination. Some Centres are reminded that the test should be conducted by a single Examiner. While a second person may be present, the test itself must be conducted entirely by one Examiner - i.e. it is not permissible for two people to be asking questions or discussing matters with the candidate.

#### *Materials required by the Moderator*

As a reminder to Centres, Cambridge requires three different items in the package sent to the Moderator: 1) the recorded sample on as few CDs/DVDs as possible (or preferably, on a single USB drive) and using separate re-named tracks for each candidate, 2) the Summary Forms for the entire entry, and 3) a copy of the Mark Sheet that has already been sent to Cambridge confirming the final marks. In addition, any letters relating to the work undertaken by the candidates or regarding issues experienced by the Centre should also be placed in the package for the attention of the external Moderator.

- (1) Please note that without the recordings, Cambridge is unable to moderate the work from a Centre and this will affect the results issued to candidates.
- (2) The Summary Form is the form that records the separate marks awarded to the two parts of the test, in addition to the total mark. The Examiner who conducts the examination is responsible for filling out the Summary Form. He or she should sign the form and date it – in effect; this is the form which is the working record of the examining undertaken, and is therefore of most use to the external Moderator. Please identify the candidates in the sample by using asterisks on the Summary Form. It would also be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the Summary Form as they appear on the Mark Sheet.
- (3) The Moderator needs a copy of the Mark Sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the Summary Forms.

#### Comments on specific questions

##### **Part 1 - The Individual Task**

The dominant task in **Part 1** remains the informative presentation. Candidates select a topic and provide historical and/or contemporary information about it. A small number of these presentations remain purely factual, but many engage with an issue or controversy relating to the topic. Where the chosen topic relates directly to the candidate's personal situation or their country or location, there is usually scope for more engaging content.

Personal experiences and interests are a common focus - for example, recent trips abroad, reading, sport, music. These kinds of presentations vary in their degree of success, with less successful tasks simply describing likes, dislikes and experiences without further exploration, depth or insight.

Candidates sometimes attempt to use techniques such as addressing the listener and using rhetorical devices, but care needs to be taken so that these approaches are effective and not just a gesture.

Centres and candidates are of course free to focus on topics which lend themselves to standard presentations. However, Moderators encourage topics with a specific focus; along with a greater range of presentational styles.

**Some examples of productive Part 1 tasks from this session:**

- the importance of time
- could I survive without my mobile phone?
- multi-culturalism - is it growing or fading?
- what I do not like about the 21st century
- playing the role of a tourism officer promoting own country
- a person I would really like to interview; why, and what questions I would ask
- why the world needs more superheroes
- phobias and how I relate to them
- roadside curbs, and why I hate them
- why the voting age should be lowered to 14.

**Part 2 - Discussions**

Moderators are happy that in many cases, Examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion, and that the conversations were generally productive extensions of the Individual Tasks. This is clearly a strength of this examination.

It was clear in many cases that candidates had planned for further discussion. The best way to do this is to imagine being the Examiner and to draw up a list of probable questions, or areas of interest that might be appropriate for further discussion given the scope of the topic.

However, where this had not occurred, Moderators felt the discussions were lacking. It is not the sole responsibility of the Examiner to work hard to sustain discussion - the candidate needs to plan for this and this element of **Part 2** has indeed been built into the assessment criteria for both listening and speaking. It is, however, the responsibility of the Examiner to move the discussion along and to ensure that a 6 to 7 minute conversation occurs. Ideally, this would be a discussion where more challenging ideas and content would be introduced as the discussion develops.

The most effective Examiners clearly took notes as the candidates completed their presentations, and then based the discussions very closely on what the candidates had actually spoken about. This usually led to conversations which arose naturally from the individual task. More work is needed, however, for candidates to take a greater part in developing the discussions. Some candidates, and some Examiners, seemed to be unaware that this is expected. In a number of Centres, there seemed to be an understanding that the candidate would deliver his or her talk and then wait to be formally questioned by the Examiner. This clearly led to a more stilted and less effective discussion. In the stronger **Part 2** performances the candidates were encouraged to take control of the discussion and there was a genuine feeling that it was a two-way conversation based on an equal footing between the candidate and the Examiner.

Examiners should therefore avoid adopting a very formal 'interview' approach in **Part 2**. The aim is to be supportive of the candidate; to share an interest in his/her topic, and to share views, ideas and to work with the candidate to develop the conversation. It is important that the spontaneity of discussion is maintained - it is a conversation which is sought and not an interview.

In general however, candidates and Examiners stayed on task, though there were a few instances of Examiners using the allotted time to involve candidates in discussions about other matters - for example, their future plans - when this was not part of the candidate's talk. Such transgressions are likely to result in lower marks as the assessment criteria assume that content in **Part 2** relates directly to content in **Part 1**.

The least successful discussions were those where the Examiner talked too much - sometimes jumping in too quickly and interrupting the candidate. Some Examiners should be careful not to answer their own questions. A few Examiners asked too many closed questions, which unsurprisingly elicited short and weaker responses, which do not encourage development. Open questions are much more effective.

*Concluding comments*

It is clear that some Centres need to offer further training to their Teachers/Examiners to conduct these task-oriented tests as the syllabus and other Cambridge supporting documentation (e.g. the Handbook for Speaking and Listening) stipulate. Where Centres do not comply with the rubrics, the result is often disastrous and the effect is usually felt by the candidates whose achievement and performance is clearly affected. This is unacceptable and such Centres should seek direct guidance from Cambridge when they receive their individual reports on the work undertaken for the session.

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However, Cambridge wishes to commend Centres who have responded well to what might be a new examination for them - Cambridge does appreciate that a different culture is required for what is a new assessment methodology and that this takes time to establish itself. There were many cases where Moderators reported refreshing and lively work, where it was clear that the candidates had enjoyed taking control of their own learning and had responded well to being allowed to be active in the skills of research, oral presentation and subsequent discussion.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

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Paper 0500/06

Speaking and Listening Coursework

## Key Messages

- When planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered, it is important for a centre to decide which of the two distinct Speaking and Listening pathways, **either** Component 5 **or** Component 6, is to be the chosen route.
- Component code errors, where centres enter for the wrong component, are not uncommon and can cause problems for all concerned. The two components are very different in their format and execution. Component 6 is much more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- To successfully implement the course, Component 6 centres are recommended to use both the current syllabus and ‘Speaking and Listening Handbook’ to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.
- Cambridge requires a centre to provide four different items in the package sent to the Moderator. These are a **recorded sample** on CD, DVD or USB drive, the **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered, a **copy of the marks** (the MS1) that have already been sent to Cambridge and the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** for the candidates included in the sample. Each of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre’s performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.
- In particular, the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** should be treated as working documents that are completed as each task is undertaken. Specific information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful.
- Clerical and mathematical errors continue to undermine the moderation process. It is an expectation that the sample presented by a centre has been carefully checked before being submitted to Cambridge. This avoids time being wasted during moderation and allows for a more efficient process to take place.
- Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and confirm that the sample requested is the one sent. A sample representing the full range of the centre’s marks is expected with both the highest and lowest performing candidates included. We encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format such as mp3, wav and wma, but not AUP, that can be played by standard computer software.
- Please follow the specific instructions in the current syllabus that outline the way in which the recordings of candidates undertaking tasks should be introduced by the Teacher/Examiner. For paired activities it is essential that the Moderator is able to distinguish between the candidates in the activity so that successful moderation can take place. The simplest way of achieving this is for the candidates to introduce themselves and their roles in the activity.
- Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 06 tasks but it is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as ‘responds fully’, ‘develops prompts’ or ‘employs a wide range of language devices’ in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

## **General Comments**

- Through the syllabus, Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please use these documents.
- It is worth noting that the Component 5 Summary Form is different to, and is not interchangeable with, the Component 6 equivalent. Any choice as to which component to undertake should be made before any assessment takes place.
- For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is again encouraged.
- The same is true of any chosen topic in that the interest of the candidate in the subject matter, the level of preparation and the enthusiasm to perform are the key elements for a successful outcome.

## **Comments on Specific Tasks**

Once again, Moderators have noted that the tasks which worked most successfully were the ones which were candidate driven rather than teacher led. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, Tasks 1 and 2 do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. The balance between preparedness and a candidate's ability to think about changes in the direction of the discussion and to react accordingly needs to be maintained if higher skill levels are to be achieved. It is very difficult to achieve a band 1 response in Task 1 if the performance is heavily scripted.

### **Task 1**

It was reported that a wide range of topics were being undertaken, but the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. When choosing topics it is important to take into account that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. This component allows the candidate and teacher to work together to ensure the topic choice is suitable. Rehearsal and development of the task are encouraged.

*Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:*

- My involvement in .....
- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- Existentialism (or any philosophical viewpoint on which the candidate is knowledgeable)
- Keeping fit and eating healthily
- Body image and the media
- A review of a film or book that is developed beyond narrative to include analysis and consideration.

### **Task 2**

There should be only two participants in Task 2. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a candidate who has been assessed may make up the pair. It is unacceptable for this task to be performed by three candidates. In effect, any Task 2 activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a Task 3 Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes a non-compliance issue and will be treated accordingly.

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about or engaging in a lively extended role play that allows them to fully demonstrate their discursive strengths. The key element is that candidates should be encouraged to hone their skills in choosing the correct register, particularly formal speech, and to extend their vocabulary. With regard to role-plays, it should be borne in mind that this is an assessment of language skills rather than drama skills. Some candidates are adept at assuming a role, but do not really prepare themselves to fulfil the language requirements as well as they might.

Generally, responses to Task 2 that are teacher-led, either with a teacher interviewing a candidate or with two candidates being led by a teacher, are less successful than a developed discussion between two candidates. It is recommended that this approach is only considered where it is deemed the candidates are too weak to initiate the discussion without external assistance.

A pathway that has become popular for Task 2 is the ‘interview’ where one candidate acts as the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. This can work well but there is an inherent weakness in the activity if all the interviewer does is ask a set of pre-prepared questions. This restricts the level of performance, particularly for the Listening element. One way to counteract this problem is for candidates to swap roles halfway through so each has the opportunity to demonstrate a wider range of relevant skills.

*Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:*

- Are tattoos and body piercings suitable for teenagers?
- Video games v outdoor sports
- Do we still need the Royals?
- Abortion – for and against
- The influence of reality television on the teenage audience
- Footballers’ wages – but this needs careful planning
- Planning an event (where both candidates are enthusiastic)
- Environmental issues
- Should certain drugs be legalised?
- Obesity in children
- The Internet: Good or bad?

### **Task 3**

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical and possibly controversial or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful as long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. To this end it is advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

*Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:*

- The Birlings participating in a television debate
- Performing an extra scene from a play that has been written by the candidates
- Dangerous dogs (or any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint)
- Time capsule
- Championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite.

### **General Conclusions**

- Moderators continue to report that the general standard of assessment by centres is at, or close to, the correct level.
- Where centres have followed instructions and included the appropriate documentation and sample recordings, moderation has been smooth and successful and this is noted with gratitude.
- Conversely, problems have arisen where centres have not followed the instructions regarding sampling and documentation or where clerical errors have occurred because documentation was not checked with sufficient rigour before being sent to Cambridge. It is an expectation that centres provide the requisite documentation and that it is accurate.