

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/11

Essay

Key messages

- Candidates should choose a question they have enough to write about – essays should be between 600 and 700 words long.
- It is good practice to make a plan before beginning an essay.
- A short, focused introduction is more effective than one which states many of the ideas that will be mentioned later in the essay.
- Candidates should write in clear, formal English, avoiding contractions and overly informal vocabulary.
- Essays should contain paragraphs showing a developing and structured argument.
- Candidates should try to provide a range of perspectives in an argument.
- Essays should end with a clear conclusion which evaluates and brings together ideas from the rest of the essay.
- Candidates should use clear, specific examples to support the points being made.
- It is advisable to check through the essay for errors and correct them.

General comments

Most essays were clear and had some grasp of the subject area within the question they had chosen. Less successful responses relied on vague, undeveloped and assertive claims, often lacking balance, a range of perspectives, or any specific examples in support. Stronger responses were informative and well argued, making use of appropriate examples. Some of the responses showed evidence of careful planning, although some candidates were uncertain about which question to tackle. Nevertheless, many essays adhered to a standard structure: an introductory paragraph, followed by exposition and discussion, and concluding with a few final remarks. Fewer essays than last year were left unfinished or were short of the suggested 600–700 word count.

The vast majority of candidates used paragraphs, mostly effectively, to structure their argument and enable the reader to more easily follow what they had to say. A number of essays featured very little correct ‘signalling’/‘transition’ through the essays. Some essays included the appropriate use of words which signalled structural development such as *initially, secondly, furthermore, moreover, however* and *therefore*. *Although* was often used as an incorrect substitute for *however*. The standard of technical accuracy and clarity of written expression was generally good. Many responses could be improved by the use of more punctuation, particularly commas for subordinate clauses. Advanced punctuation is still noticeable by its absence, but many responses were easy to follow. Structurally, it was very common for candidates to have an introduction, conclusion, a majority of paragraphs in support of one overall viewpoint and, prior to the conclusion, the consideration of one argument from the opposing perspective. Sometimes evaluation was brief at the end of the essay because, seemingly, candidates had run out of time. Some candidates evaluated one opposing viewpoint to their thesis rather than evaluating all arguments, whilst the most successful essays were able to evaluate a range of different arguments, integrating evaluation throughout.

Many candidates needed to make their arguments more focused on the wording of the question. This does not mean repeating the wording of the question at the end of each paragraph, but simply addressing key words and ideas within their arguments.

Examples and relevant material could have been used to better effect by linking them to the question more directly – and using them to develop evaluation. Learners would be well-advised to think more carefully about what material they can use before choosing a question. The better responses were careful not to overly describe the details of an example, drawing the focus clearly back to the discussion. A notable number of responses used more examples than needed often listing them, rather than examining them. Students should ensure that their examples enable the argument to be developed in an effective manner.

Made-up scenarios - 'Let's say...' or 'Picture this...' are less effective. Vague claims such as 'according to an article' or 'on CNN10...' are unconvincing and rarely enhance an argument.

Greater ambition in the use of vocabulary and phrasing would have improved a lot of the responses, as would proofreading to eliminate errors. Many students had clearly been taught how to construct essays, so this was an area of strength. Some students effectively used suitable discourse markers to link ideas. Candidates are advised against using clunky phrases such as 'For starters...', 'To add on...' and 'To wrap it all up...'.

Overly colloquial elements of spoken discourse were not as common in the scripts marked; however, there is still a trend with candidates marked at all levels to use features of spoken discourse within their response. The most popular examples of these were where the candidates would directly address a question to the reader and then provide an answer after it, ending clauses with question tags and using 'well', 'yes' and 'no' as spoken discourse markers that begin or are integrated into sentence constructions. With regards to these features, candidates would be better to remember that, while it may be felt that rhetorical features should be used to enhance the development of their argument, these conventions are used in spoken contexts. The context of their response is both written and academic; therefore, features of spoken discourse, should be avoided and replaced by features more conventional to written academic discourse. Other candidates used colloquial words like *kid* and *teens* or expressions such as *okay/OK*, *crazy*, *like I said*, *stuff*, *wanna* and *gotta*, all reducing the appropriateness of their expression.

There were several instances of misspelling of words in the question (especially with 'artificial intelligence', 'technology' and 'celebrities'). Other common misspellings included: *government*, *environment*, *plagiarism*. Some candidates were disadvantaged by using abbreviations for certain words as it undermined the formal style of their arguments e.g. *tech* for 'technology'; *info* for 'information'; *intel* for 'intelligence'.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Responses to this question were focused and showed understanding of issues related to the safety of the players as well as the spectators. There were very good examples that included specific games in the NFL and NBA, highlighting how safety could be better improved with more metal detectors to prevent shootings at sporting events and better barricades to prevent spectators from running onto the pitch or field of play. Stronger responses were notable for their specific references to events or situations where the safety of players, staff or sports fans/supporters were compromised such as 'Malice at the Palace', the fatal accident of Justin Wilson in the 2015 ABC Supply 500 IndyCar Series race and the 'Estadio Nacional disaster' and the resulting changes that have occurred in those sports from those incidences. It was pleasing to see candidates engaging with the safety of sporting events at a more local, college and community level showing understanding of the question and demonstrating that candidates can use local and personal examples effectively when appropriately chosen. Weaker responses were characterised by simply describing the dangers inherent in certain sports that players or fans face and this impacted the candidate's response to the question 'is enough being done?'.

Question 2

Many essays showed understanding of the question, agreeing that while it is important for celebrities to give back to their community because they have the platform for it, they should not be forced to donate their time and money to charity since they are also humans with several needs and even busier schedules. Many candidates argued that the celebrities had earned the money, so they were entitled to spend it as they pleased. Weaker arguments were very general giving no names of celebrities or actual charitable causes and these responses were made up of assertion and opinions that celebrities were lazy or selfish. There was very little consideration of what they may already 'give' to society in terms of taxation, for example. Better responses explored notions such as celebrities owing a debt to the public that propelled them to fame and highlighted the importance of giving back to (their) communities, especially those who 'came from nothing'. Better arguments observed that there were wealthy business people who might also be expected to contribute, or that effective government aid should reduce the need for charity altogether. Some candidates gave specific examples of celebrities who have donated generously to charity (such as Taylor Swift, who donates to foodbanks in each city where she performs to fund them for a year). The key to this question was the word 'duty' and the better candidates spotted this and explored the difference between a duty and the wish to give something back.

Question 3

This question provided excellent scope for learners to show off their knowledge of history. There was a strong focus on the US constitution, with some candidates spending too much time describing and explaining this. The view that the constitution protects people from the government was a popular one and this was often well explained. Common approaches involved the exploring of the First Amendment, the Bill of Rights and The Civil Rights Act of 1964. Better arguments explained the Bill of Rights giving examples of apartheid in South Africa, and the rights of citizens in China in comparison to the US. There was some good assessment of specific instances of when the constitution had or had not safeguarded peoples' rights, bringing in examples like the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam protests. The best arguments were able to take a nuanced approach of when a constitution worked and when it did not, and this led to some clear evaluation. Learners also often brought in examples from overseas to compare with the US model, sometimes on the superficial level of how much worse things were in North Korea, for example, but sometimes drawing acute comparisons and contrasts.

Question 4

Many candidates spent most of their essays describing the circumstances that caused conflicts and the developments that occurred in specific conflicts. This meant their arguments became digressive because they were not using that exemplification to highlight to what extent these examples meant war should or should not be the last option to resolving conflict. Considerations included practical, economic, political and ethical: initial, versus long-term benefits; public attitude; general reluctance to explore options; benefits and drawbacks regarding practicality and efficiency versus posturing. There was some sense of the increasing necessity of avoiding armed conflict, given the sophistication of modern weaponry alongside international alliances; perceptive candidates noted how these had dragged countries into protracted and bloody warfare in the past (WW1, for instance), but rightly speculated that the consequences could be even more severe and brutal nowadays. Many candidates listed the bad things that happen in war, with little attempt to address the different ways of resolving conflicts, beyond focusing on discussing issues around a table; similarly, there was little comment on when war might be the only option. Many arguments discussed loss of life, pain for bereaved families and destroyed buildings being the main consequences of war. Economic implications were also discussed, some relating their answers to Germany's war debt, for example. Popular examples included the War of Independence with the British, the need to stop Hitler's relentless expansionism and ideology relating to persecuted groups resulting in WW2 and the events of WW1. The Ukraine/Russia and Israel/Gaza wars were frequently discussed, but the understanding of these wars was sometimes very simplistic, despite them being contemporary examples.

Question 5

Many candidates produced balanced responses to this question which included multiple relevant examples of the harm that tourism inflicts upon a country and its people. Points discussed included: overcrowding; environmental damage to oceans, beaches, the flora and fauna due to the development of hotels and infrastructure; air pollution; littering and the impact on locals; the destruction of specific historical sites or theft from them and tourists' inconsiderate behaviour. Positives included the economic benefits, increased cultural understanding, and the impact on our well-being. A lot of responses cited examples from within Florida and the large number of tourists visiting Disneyland, the issues during Spring bank holiday in Miami and the environmental impact on the Everglades. Other popular examples included Hawaii, Japan, China, Egypt and Mexico. Few responses analysed the term 'always' in the question. Less successful responses described problems caused by tourism in detail without exploring whether the benefits were greater than these issues.

Question 6

The success of responses to this question invariably relied upon whether they had some depth of understanding of AI. Candidates were often able to show a good understanding of the benefits and harm of AI, by discussing the use of AI in education. AI art development was clearly a subject many candidates were aware of and felt strongly about, as they explained how it threatened the livelihood of artists. Many discussed the impact of AI on the job market and how some repetitive jobs could be taken over by AI and how this would affect the country economically. The music industry was also another area where candidates suggested that AI should be feared, as too many artists were having their voices copied and used on other songs. Some candidates discussed the fear of AI 'taking over' and destroying humanity, with most agreeing that this was unlikely. Others discussed the impact of AI on culture, our attention span and our entertainment. Generally, responses offered balanced arguments, although some candidates used it as an opportunity to express their concerns about AI and the dangers of technology in general, in particular social media. Social media was also cited as an example where AI has triumphed with its use on platforms such as

Snapchat, whereby people can directly text the AI bot and have a conversation with it, should they choose. Some candidates explained that AI was everywhere and therefore unavoidable, so we should embrace it. They cited examples such as AI in supermarkets where there are self-service checkouts and the use of Alexa in people's homes and on their laptops. The use of AI in electric vehicles and Tesla, in particular, was commonly cited as an argument both in favour of and against the use of AI. Some weaker arguments tended to rely on exemplification from science-fiction films, or took the question off focus, using it to answer a pre-prepared question on technology.

Question 7

Many responses to this question showed understanding that, to a large extent, mathematics is an important part of education as it is used in everyday activities, securing employment in some fields, and getting more advanced tasks done. Several arguments stated that mathematics should be made optional at some point in school, as many people do not go on to use whatever they learnt in mathematics. Stronger responses included examples of which careers needed maths as well as giving examples of what types of maths had to be learnt in order to fulfil that career. Some did note the idea of mathematics teaching you to think (logically) which was a good argument for it being taught in schools. The stronger arguments analysed the importance of mathematics in developing critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and logical reasoning. Some arguments were more simplistic, assertive and stereotypical, stating that maths/algebra is 'boring' and 'virtually no one will use it', but often did not explain why this was the case. While others did note that 'mathematics was all around us', their appreciation of this was often limited to aspects such as working out your bills or being able to count your change.

Question 8

Candidates often struggled to offer a developed argument and many responses would have benefitted from including detailed examples. Some candidates did not answer the question about whether reading more books would have a positive impact on society, instead, discussing the more generalised positives of reading which included having an improved vocabulary, providing relaxation and being more open-minded. The question focused on books, so candidates who only explored the reading of material on the Internet, in blogs and on webpages slightly misunderstood the focus and hampered the breadth of their argument. Better arguments contrasted the experience of reading material online with that of the benefits, or not, of reading either a physical or an e-book. Arguments against reading, when attempted, were often not convincing e.g. using paper is bad for the environment, people would not have any friends and it was a waste of time (a point which was often asserted and not developed). Some suggestions highlighted how books could teach morality, such as The Bible and Qur'an. They argued that some children's books often taught about how to cope with issues and how these texts had a positive impact on society. In contrast, some responses discussed how some graphic novels were very violent and did not lend themselves to having a positive impact on society. Book clubs were also mentioned as a positive way to impact society and unite people. Many responses would have benefitted from exemplification.

Question 9

Many arguments focused on art as a form of expression versus the need for artists to make a living. A variety of interpretations of art were offered, including painting, writing and music. Many used music as a vehicle to argue that art is about making money and many advanced the argument that, while creation of art is not necessarily enhanced by a financial motive, artists, like everyone else, need to make a living. The question provoked some emotive responses with some strong views that art should merely be about money and not creative talent. Successful arguments often explored how art is a creative passion and creating it for commission somehow detracts from this artistic process. Stronger responses could relate this to wider consumerist and capitalist ideas. Specific examples were often missing from responses to this question, but better answers did consider a range of works and artists including Banksy, DaVinci and a variety of named music artists.

Question 10

This question produced some knowledgeable responses. Successful responses discussed how technology, including AI, was harming the music industry. They provided detailed explanations of Autotune, considered how AI was used in songwriting and referred to the deep faking of artists. AI used in producing instrumental sounds and the negative impact that this was having on musicians was also considered. TikTok was frequently mentioned as a way that technology was helping and harming the music industry. Weaker responses did not cover the wider implications of the question and discussed how music harms society, with little or no consideration of the role of technology in this. Others focused on social media, which had some

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potential, but sadly this often became a general discussion of the problems of social media rather than considering the specific issues around music promotion.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/12

Essay

Key messages

- Answer the question set and avoid digression from this.
- Keep descriptions and explanations concise.
- Link and apply the information and examples to the argument.
- Analyse and evaluate throughout the essay.
- Spend time writing a sound conclusion rather than a simple summary.
- Check carefully for grammatical errors.
- Pay attention to punctuation, especially commas.
- Use and maintain an academic tone and register.
- Avoid the use of abbreviations such as '*didn't*', *couldn't* or *won't*'.
- Use a range of precise vocabulary.
- Use legible handwriting.

General comments

The majority of candidates were well prepared, and most essays were placed in Level 3, while some achieved higher bands due to their analysis, evaluation and accurate, controlled communication throughout the response.

Careful question choice is essential and candidates are advised to read through all the questions before selecting one, as a hasty selection can lead to generalised responses without concrete examples. There were two questions (**Questions 2 and 9**) which attracted the majority of candidates. These responses had a tendency to be descriptive essays instead of focused arguments. Understanding the difference between descriptive statements and evaluations is crucial for success in this exam.

Reading the chosen question several times before answering can reinforce the understanding of key terms, ensuring that candidates address what has been asked in the question. Candidates responded to the topic of science (**Question 2**) or television (**Question 9**) without paying due attention to the precise wording of the question. This approach was also seen in responses to **Questions 4 and 10**. It is essential that candidates think carefully about what the question is asking because there were many digressive responses or responses which contained lists of examples and background information, such as the history of science or what life was like in the prehistoric era. When a question refers to 'your country', the expectation is that there will be clear indications which country the essay aligns with and this was often not the case, as examiners could only discover this through inference or occasionally, not at all.

Introductions and conclusions are important, with introductions demonstrating the understanding of the question and conclusions providing measured judgments based on examples and arguments provided in the response. Many answers had introductory passages that did not focus on the question or provided unrelated 'scene-setting'. Examples were frequently listed without explanation of their relevance to the question. Candidates are advised to offer an overall judgment in their concluding paragraphs rather than summarising points.

Communication

Candidates are reminded that they should write in an academic register. This means avoiding the use of informal vocabulary such as 'kids', 'stuff' and 'loads of'; colloquial expressions such as 'Well, let's look at' or 'if I remember correctly'; and contractions such as 'I'll', 'we've', 'don't' and 'can't'. Candidates are strongly advised to proof-read and edit their responses to avoid the numerous errors which were seen across most

essays. Candidates should pay particular attention to commas and full stops, using the appropriate pluralisation and the use of apostrophes.

Proper paragraphing is essential for structuring arguments and making essays easy to read. Connecting the paragraphs with varied logical connectors helps the argument to progress and also helps the reader see the direction that the argument is taking. Candidates should ensure that they clearly write the question number before writing their response.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates who selected this question performed fairly well, although there were some who did not link their answers to their own country. Most answers addressed the challenges faced by teachers and students in creating and embracing opportunities for creativity in school. The idea of creativity was mainly focused on the arts and the inclusion of creative subjects within the school curriculum. Many candidates discussed school events that encouraged creative thinking such as performances or competitions or student committees that came up with creative solutions to problems. Some higher scoring responses considered whether this was more a question of the approach to education in general and looked at the opposing ideas of debate and discussion as opposed to rote learning and the pressure to perform in exams. Successful answers recognised the need for a balance between creative subjects and academic disciplines. Some candidates mentioned the limitations of outdated teaching methods, while also noting some positive changes that were occurring both in their country's private and state schools. The better responses were able to discuss their country's school system as well as make comparisons with international educational systems.

Overall, a good understanding was shown about the range of creative activities provided, the impact of the curriculum and exams, the expectations of parents, the difficulties faced by teachers, and their motivation and time offered. Many answers demonstrated a thoughtful understanding of the topic, though more analysis and discussion on implications would have been beneficial.

Question 2

This question asked whether science has made life easier or more difficult, so it was important to not just catalogue the benefits and drawbacks but to link scientific advances to whether our lives have become easier or more complex. Candidates agreed that science and technology have indeed improved many aspects of our lives, with advances in medicine, transport, communication, household appliances, agricultural production, food supply, and entertainment. Weaker responses lacked organisation as they attempted to list beneficial scientific and technological developments and did not link information together. The most successful responses talked less about technology and more about the ideas of science and their contribution to modern day society in general.

Although candidates were able to think of negative consequences of scientific and technological developments, they seldom linked them to the argument of increased difficulty or complexity to people's lives in terms of the choices and decisions that people, businesses and governments must make. Candidates must relate the problems they state, e.g. job losses, laziness, decreased social interaction and potential mass destruction, to the question of 'easier lives'. Stronger responses considered the difficulties of ethical issues and the hard choices that have arisen from medical experimentation, environmental exploitation, weapons development and the everyday difficulties presented with increased personal device use. Nuanced answers highlighted the pitfalls but then went on to suggest that the misuse of science was to blame rather than science itself and while causing these problems in the first place, science is the solution in the future.

Question 3

This was a popular question which produced a range of interesting answers and most candidates were able to provide examples from everyday life relating money to happiness. Weaker responses were vague and largely outlined the importance of family over the excessive pursuit of money and what it can buy in the most general sense. More detailed responses explained the advantages that money can bring – better access to education, health care, leisure and geographical mobility. Stronger responses developed the idea of philanthropy and expressed the idea of the satisfaction gained from helping others whether on a large or small scale. A few candidates considered other lifestyles which are less dependent on money such as those in religious orders or tribes, while others referred to places like Bhutan or Finland as 'happy' countries.

Weaker responses did not account for key terms in the question that 'a lot' of money is needed to be happy, hence their answers dealt superficially with the reasons why people need money. Successful answers argued that the amount of money needed for a happy life depended on personal circumstances and many judged that material goods and luxurious living are less important than good health, family and friends. Candidates were often philosophical when they discussed what encompasses happiness and how massive wealth can become a burden. Overall, candidates had diverse opinions on this topic, with most emphasising the importance of family and experiences over material wealth.

Question 4

This question on the management of natural disasters received a variety of responses from candidates though few were able to understand the question fully. The emphasis was the extent to which their country's residents and government should go to be more prepared for natural disasters. Many essays described causes of natural disasters and preventative measures without evaluating which measures should be prioritised and whether they were effective or affordable in their country's context. Most candidates focused on the importance of preparedness and prevention in their own countries, drawing examples from recent events such as earthquakes or floods. Some candidates provided detailed knowledge about methods of prevention and offered suggestions for what governments should be doing and stronger answers criticised government failures, citing factors such as corruption or failure to enforce regulations. Good responses also compared their country's level of preparedness with other countries, such as Japan, and argued that they should adopt similar programmes. A number of weaker responses were by candidates from countries that rarely experience any natural disasters and therefore, should not have chosen this question as they had little to say.

Question 5

This question about political leadership styles and their impact on creating hope or fear was tackled by candidates with varying degrees of success. Some essays focused solely on historical figures who created either fear or hope while others attempted to provide a balanced viewpoint. Stronger answers provided examples from current leaders as well as those from history, showing an understanding of the complexities involved in political leadership and its effects on society. Successful responses outlined democratic, autocratic and dictatorial systems of government with good examples and discussed how these systems impact on leaders who promote fear and hope through their actions and policies. Examples of 'fearsome' leaders included Hitler, Stalin and Kim Jong Un who are known for using authoritarian tactics to maintain control over their populations. Answers usually concentrated on political leaders who created fear rather than those who created hope, although most scripts did attempt balance and looked at both; Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi were most cited as the creators of hope. Top answers analysed how political leadership styles can create a balance between fear and hope in society, arguing that some level of fear may be necessary to maintain order, but too much fear can lead to repression and loss of freedom.

Question 6

This question offered scope for a wide-ranging discussion to those who selected it. Candidates who successfully tackled this question were able to discuss the extent of tolerance for different beliefs, bringing up examples that would be intolerable and their implications on society. Candidates were expected to draw out wider societal impacts but not all responses achieved this fully. Some answers focused solely on matters of politeness, for example, taking one's shoes off when entering someone's home. Better answers examined which religious and political beliefs should be understood and tolerated, which beliefs should be challenged and opposed as well as the implications for harmony and behaviour in neighbourhoods, countries and globally. Several thoughtful responses concluded that simply tolerating other's beliefs was not enough and understanding and respect needed to be built on tolerance. Gender rights were also discussed in the context of different belief systems and the need for tolerance to dispel sexual and racial stereotypes. Strong answers also considered that extremist, discriminatory and violent beliefs should not be tolerated at all.

Question 7

Successful responses linked specific examples from a candidate's own country to the improvement of its people's lives. These candidates focused on disaster management, space research, weather forecasting, effective communication across remote areas and GPS navigation. Weaker responses did not account for the difference between satellite technology and technology that might use satellite data, for instance, phone applications and so often digressed about social media and mobile phones. There were also candidates who did not read the question carefully enough or missed the reference to 'your own country' and talked about the general benefits of satellite technology. Some of the better responses were critical of the cost and

resources invested in making and launching satellites for their own country when privately owned satellites are available.

Question 8

There were a sizeable number of excellent essays to this question showing real enjoyment of and engagement with the stories considered and not simply recounting the plots. The question asks for an exploration into the relevance of literature from the past in contemporary society, with a focus on understanding how these works continue to resonate and provide valuable insights today. In response, candidates often referenced myths; folktales; classic and modern literary texts. Examples included the Iliad and Odyssey, the Ramayana, Shakespearean plays, Austen's novels, Orwell's 1984 and J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series among others.

Candidates highlighted that these literary works are relevant because they explore universal themes such as love, power, morality, justice, and human nature which continue to be significant in contemporary society. They discussed how the study of past literature helps us understand our cultural heritage, language development, personal history, exploration of other cultures, and the examination of societal issues from a historical perspective. Some candidates also pointed out that while some stories may have become irrelevant due to changes in societal values or norms, others still hold relevance as they continue to address contemporary concerns such as racism, sexism, and power dynamics. They cited examples like fairy tales where princesses are often portrayed as needing rescue by a prince or novels where it was not socially acceptable for women to remain unmarried.

Overall, candidates demonstrated an appreciation of the enduring nature of literature from the past and its continued relevance to contemporary society. They were able to provide thoughtful analysis on how these works continue to resonate with readers today, offering valuable insights into human experience across time periods and cultures.

Question 9

This question about whether television has any educational benefit was very popular among candidates. Many candidates chose to agree or disagree with the statement that television has no educational benefits. The question asked for the extent of agreement with the statement so stronger candidates made arguments both for and against the statement and arrived at a well-measured conclusion. Many candidates listed numerous examples of television programmes/programme types without linking them to the 'educational benefits' of television. A surprising number of candidates did not provide any examples of television programmes. Weaker responses included descriptions of the negative effects of watching television on people's eyesight, social interactions and increased levels of obesity, but these were not relevant to the question's focus on educational benefits. They also made assertions about people's universal access to television, the amount of time they spend watching programmes as well as unfounded links between watching television, drug abuse and violence. Weaker responses also had lengthy introductions describing the invention of television and the development of streaming platforms.

Candidates argued that the educational benefits of television include cartoons that teach preschool children basic literacy and numeracy; documentaries catering to older viewers and instructional programmes. Soap operas also contribute by addressing complex family issues and foreign languages can be learned through watching foreign films with subtitles. News programmes were also recognised as informative and educational sources. Better answers gave clear examples of programmes from different channels that were specifically educational, explaining what the viewers saw and why for many of them, especially children or visual learners, these were a better way to learn than from books and traditional classroom lessons.

Counter-arguments stated that television is primarily for entertainment purposes, leading people to watch uncritically and unsupervised, especially children who may encounter inappropriate content like violence or explicit sex. Many focused on extreme cases of television addiction that could lead to obesity and social isolation but few candidates make clear links back to the lack of educational benefits. Better answers distinguished between purely entertaining programs and educational material while acknowledging the potential educational spin-offs from entertainment shows.

Question 10

This question was popular among many candidates, with most discussing their favourite musicians and the impact they have on society and culture. A number of weaker responses wrote extensively about the history of music, its different genres and purposes. Better answers addressed the work of musicians in promoting

peace, tolerance and cultural understanding. Some chose to highlight the role of musicians in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Stronger responses evaluated the overall societal impact of these contributions and the longevity of the contributions of musicians who lived centuries ago.

Many well-informed candidates provided examples of influential musicians like Bob Marley, The Beatles, and various Asian performers who incorporated social or political messages into their lyrics. Other areas of contributions included invoking patriotic feelings as in national anthems; live concerts bringing people together and fostering solidarity; specific musicians who express their personal feelings in their lyrics which might well help listeners explore and understand their own feelings; and the benefits to a country's economy from income generated through musicians' tours.

Counter-arguments focused on musicians whose primary interest was money or who had negative behaviours that set a poor example for society. Overall, this was a question that produced many well-informed and evaluative responses.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/13

Essay

Key messages

- Write a brief plan.
- Focus on the key words of the question.
- Remember that essay questions or prompts are open to legitimate interpretation. For example, with reference to **Question 1**, history is not always written.
- Ensure introductory and concluding paragraphs are concise.
- Clear paragraph links indicate a progression of ideas.
- Avoid unnecessary words and phrases.
- Aim to vary sentence lengths to add interest and detail.
- Examples should be used to illustrate and develop the argument or debate.
- Evaluate a problem from a range of different perspectives.
- Avoid assertions or overstatements.
- Essays should be written using formal English.
- Do not use abbreviations such as 'etc'.
- Set time aside to proofread and correct errors.

General comments

Most of the candidates seemed well prepared for the examination. A few essays were considerably less than 600 words and limited in scope. Consequently, the marks given to these were often at the lower levels. As well as knowledge of the topic, selecting a question which the candidate is engaged with is a clear advantage. Those that wrote about subject matter that they were interested in captured the attention of the reader.

The basic requirement of this paper is to communicate clearly; in the words of the mark scheme where errors 'do not impede communication'. A few candidates adopted a conversational, informal style. An AS level essay requires candidates to express themselves in a formal and academic manner.

Candidates may feel under pressure to reach the required word count by including unnecessary words and phrases. Many essays maintained a running word count paragraph by paragraph throughout the essay which is unnecessary. As a rule, three to four sides of A4 with normal handwriting should fulfil the length of essay requirements. Candidates should develop the habit of making every word count not the number of words. Unnecessary expressions should always be avoided.

On the essay paper, AO3, clear and meaningful communication, is the assessment objective that usually determines the level in which an essay is placed. The quality of attention to the other assessment objectives, AO1 and AO2, covering examples, evaluation and analysis, is always recognised, but clear written expression is essential to achieve high marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

History is always written from the point of view of the powerful. Discuss.

This proved to be a popular question. Candidates demonstrated a knowledge of history that encompassed the earliest times to the present day. In considering the key words, 'always' and 'powerful', many candidates were able to offer nuanced responses. The diaries and recollections of ordinary people were referred to, for

example 'The Diary of Anne Frank' and the testimonies of survivors of The Holocaust and other atrocities. A few candidates argued successfully that history is not always written but can be pieced together by examining archaeological artefacts, for example. Other candidates pointed to the significance of oral histories, passed on through generations in pre-literate societies. The role that museums play was also mentioned. The statement 'History is always written from the point of view of the powerful'. was scrutinised in the words of one candidate with the observation that the powerless often 'construct their own counter-narrative'. A few candidates suggested that their history textbooks painted a rosier picture of their nation's history than might be deserved. These counter-narratives surfaced in many essays; the memories of war veterans or those oppressed on grounds of gender or ethnicity. One essay opened with a reference to the musical 'Hamilton' and the song 'History has its eyes on you'. The candidate went on to state 'perhaps its metaphorical eyes are only set on the powerful'. This eye-catching introduction set the scene for an interesting debate upon the question.

Question 2

To what extent is financial management the responsibility of the individual?

There were only a few responses to this question. Among these, some candidates took a very strong line on personal responsibility while others drew attention to the factors outside the individual's power to influence. A few candidates recognised that social contexts beyond an individual's control have an influence on independent decision making in financial management. These responses came mainly from candidates who are experiencing the challenges faced by families and individuals across the world. Other responses highlighted the threat of identity theft and the influence of subtle advertising although one candidate wrote that it is 'your fault if you did not pay attention to the fine print in a loan for your college, for example'. A few candidates made the point that personal management of finance should be a core subject in schools.

Question 3

Assess the importance of everyone in a community being a good neighbour.

Most of the candidates referred to local examples to support their answers: helping the elderly in various ways, offering a welcome to new residents, organising community events, and reducing noise pollution. A few candidates criticised their local communities for not offering the younger members recreational facilities. Responses in this vein argued that there would be less generational tension if seniors remembered that they were once young. A few candidates sought to extend the context of the question with one candidate pointing out that 'the world is a global village' and another arguing that world religions never limit the neighbour to 'the person next door'. Those that saw the potential for the question to include both local and global examples were able to provide interesting answers.

Question 4

To what extent should humans be responsible for the welfare of animals?

This was a popular question. Weaker responses described how to look after pets responsibly and focused on the mistreatment of animals in zoos and other enclosures. Better responses investigated the wider picture of our responsibility towards the animal kingdom in general, focusing on the environment and extinction issues caused by humans. References to animal shelters and zoos were mostly negative. It was argued that such places need more funding and that zoos, if they need to exist at all, should provide more than entertainment. Many felt that animals' contribution to our welfare in a variety of ways should compel us to take responsibility. There were references to assistance dogs, animals used in therapeutic settings, animals used in transportation and those species that ensure the vital role of pollination continues. Our disregard for marine life was often mentioned as well. Other candidates pointed out the avoidable harm that disturbs animal security: deforestation, disposal of plastic, poaching and other invasive activities. Because humans are superior to animals in terms of cognitive functions, especially the ability to communicate effectively, many candidates wrote that there was only one ethical option; take responsibility for animal welfare.

Question 5

Food is a work of art not just a necessity. Discuss.

Most of those who responded to this question made it clear that food is scarce for many people and often desperately necessary for survival. This question elicited some excellent answers. Candidates were keen to point out that the attractive presentation of food is a delight in itself prior to eating it. A few candidates

referred to paintings that feature food, mainly still lives, and the tempting illustrations that are found in cookery books. The popularity of programmes devoted to cuisine on television was seen by many candidates as evidence for food as a work of art. Celebrity chefs were often referred to as other examples of how food and its preparation has become a mainstream preoccupation. Several candidates regretted the popularity of mass produced and easily prepared food. One essay celebrated the fragrance and flavour that can characterise dishes, concluding that 'fast foods typically have no soul to them'. Another candidate wrote that 'food on the plate should be as colourful as the flowers in the garden'. That remark might be seen as a hyperbole but it was striking that many candidates were acutely aware of the connection between art and the presentation of food.

Question 6

To what extent has online shopping improved people's lives?

This was a very popular question. Few responses looked beyond the usual points of convenience, individual stores closing and people being less active due to the use of smartphones. There were other illustrations, such as the pleasure of in store browsing, including meeting other people; the danger of being scammed online; and the money saved on fuel by not having to drive to the store. Many candidates mentioned the needs of the disabled and the house bound. A few responses, while considering the more obvious points, added touches of creative and original thought. There was an essay that reflected upon childhood nostalgia and the candy store and another which described the vitality of local and farmers' markets. One candidate pointed out that any pleasure to be had in browsing in individual shops disappeared once supermarkets became commercially successful although another observed that 'going to the mall offers the modern version of small-town shopping'. While being able to do almost everything online was generally appreciated, there was clear evidence that much has been lost in our world of digital ease, for those who are able to access the technology. One candidate commented that for many people in poorer or more remote places, there would be no such thing as online shopping.

Question 7

Surveillance is only justified in the pursuit of criminals. Discuss.

A few candidates attempted this question and all agreed that to prevent crime and catch criminals, surveillance is essential. Candidates were also universal in their agreement that for a variety of reasons it is unreasonable to expect privacy in a public area, for example on the roads, at transportation hubs and at sports events. Surveillance in stores was seen as essential in order to deter and, if need be, capture shoplifters. The belief that surveillance is just as much about prevention or deterrence as detection was commonly held. A few added productively to their essays by considering what might be seen as unlikely scenarios in relation to the question; the surveillance of migratory animals and other species' behaviour to improve conservation. Satellite surveillance was only mentioned in one essay although this is a major aspect of contemporary surveillance. Candidates attracted to this question might have asked themselves if there are contexts other than catching criminals where surveillance might be helpful.

Question 8

Evaluate the importance of traditional stories to the people of your country.

The few that attempted this question referred to their own country or a country they had an attachment to. All these responses were detailed, interesting and thoughtful. There were references to countries where the oral tradition of storytelling is still alive having been passed down through the generations. Some candidates from South American countries had fascinating tales to tell, one example being of evil women or witches being turned into animals. One candidate wrote that it was 'not uncommon that in small country towns people killed owls' because it was thought they had evil powers. Another candidate referred to the genre of Magical Realism associated especially with the Colombian writer, Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Stories associated with the exploits and struggles of a nation's liberation heroes were seen as relevant. Those that answered this question were fully aware of the power of the story in forging a country's identity; in the words of one candidate, 'keeping words and knowledge alive will help keep people alive'.

Question 9

Learning is more effective when students travel to places outside the classroom. Discuss.

There were several responses to this question of differing quality. Weaker responses asserted that classroom-based learning was boring and therefore being outside was preferable at least for the students if not the teachers. A few specific field trips and visits to zoos and museums added colour to some responses. One candidate, in a strong response, argued along the lines of it being pointless studying drama without have the experience of a trip to the theatre to watch a live performance. Another higher-level response recounted environmental science experiences of observing creatures in their natural habitats; experiences which the classroom cannot offer. A few thoughtful candidates qualified their enthusiasm for outside of the classroom activities by pointing out that 'some schools and parents cannot afford to pay for outside transportation and certainly not for trips abroad'. The best answers combined approval of outside the classroom learning with an appreciation of what can be achieved in the classroom; working with others and acquiring the fundamental skills of reading, writing and numeracy. As one candidate stated, 'there needs to be a blend of sensory interaction and the structure of a classroom setting'.

Question 10

Free speech should mean that news media is never censored. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

This was quite a popular question and generally thoughtfully answered. The constitutional right to free speech and expression was often referred to. Candidates argued that because most countries, apart from totalitarian states and dictatorships, are 'demographically split by political party interests' the news media should be able to reflect the multiplicity of views without interference. The breadth of today's news media was recognised as going well beyond traditional outlets, the newspaper and television channels. The part social media plays in disseminating the news and often distorting it was mentioned with one candidate writing that news via social media 'can create echo chambers and further political polarisation'. There was some fruitful discussion of the selection of news stories to appeal to target audiences. These responses justified the subtle blending of selection and censorship. Another candidate added to this idea by pointing out that mainstream news outlets in effect censor the news by protecting the ruling interests of a country through failing to highlight injustices that do not accord with their political bias. It was also suggested that without whistleblowers 'many things would never get into the news' and that censorship of their information would 'begin the quick dive into political corruption'. It was also recognised that censorship may be necessary in times of war to maintain national morale and keep military planning secret. Candidates recognised that there are limits to free speech but not to the extent imposed upon people in previous and current dictatorships.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/21
Comprehension

Key messages

- Unless a question specifically requires a personal opinion or an overall view, it is essential that candidates offer answers that are precise, detailed and based on relevant material from the Insert. Broad generalisations and personalised responses attract little to no credit.
- Although **1(e)** requires responses to be written in continuous prose, it is worth noting that it is not an essay-style question, so candidates do not need to include an introduction or a conclusion.
- It is highly recommended that candidates keep referring back to both the questions and the material in order to familiarise themselves with the relevant details as much as possible, then include all such details in their responses.
- Many candidates noted the word limit in **2(f)** and adhered to it; however, some candidates wrote more than was permitted. One of the key skills examined on this paper is the ability to compose succinct responses, resulting in correct answers appearing after the word limit not gaining credit. Some candidates offered responses that were not written in complete sentences in order to overcome the restriction of the word count, thereby affecting the credit awarded.
- It is highly recommended that if a question does not instruct the candidate to write a response in their own words or within a certain word limit, candidates copy the relevant wording from the material. Responses in own words to certain questions (for example, **1(a)**, **1(c)**, **1(d)**, **1(f)**, **2(a)**, **2(b)**, **2(c)**, and **2(e)**) were sometimes not detailed enough to gain credit.
- In **2(g)**, some candidates copied words and phrases from the material and placed them in quotation marks. When responding to questions requiring the use of the candidate's own words, words and phrases that are copied from the material cannot be credited, even when the candidate acknowledges and attributes them by placing them in quotation marks.
- It is crucial that candidates read the question carefully and respond to the focus required by that question. For example, in **1(e)**, some candidates offered the advantages regarding the content of the slip and the process of how to cast a vote, while other candidates gave the disadvantages of the slip being included in a magazine.
- It is important that candidates note the section of material that they have been directed to in the question e.g. the Background for **1(a)(i)**, the Additional Information for **1(c)**.
- It is essential that candidates note which person mentioned in the material has been cited in the question, such as Caitlynd Boychuk in **2(e)(ii)**, rather than Supriya Srivastar.
- Regarding questions worth one mark (e.g. **1(d)**, **2(a)**, **2(c)**, **2(d)**, **2(e)(i)** and **2(h)**), it is important to note that only the first response or idea is marked.
- Some candidates offered untargeted responses, which were not creditworthy. For example, in response to **1(a)(ii)**, they copied out either every item of bracketed material or some of the bracketed material with the subsequent conversation included.

General comments

- Some candidates did not supply answers to all the sub-questions. It is highly recommended that candidates attempt every part of a question.
- It is recommended that when candidates are allowed to copy from the material, they copy words carefully. For example, the words '*environment*', '*palate*', '*assaulted*' and '*coordination*' proved to be difficult words to copy for some candidates.
- It is recommended that candidates indicate clearly if their answer to a question is not in the correct response area for that question. When candidates cannot fit their response into the response area, they are advised to request an additional booklet rather than write in the margins.
- Candidates are strongly advised not to use ellipsis. Such responses are rarely creditworthy, as candidates often omit key words or phrases.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) In (i), candidates scoring highly on this question offered evidence gathered from the Background. Examples of creditworthy responses included the following: 'Mungo chose which three members of the editorial team would be helping him on his own, without asking them first'; 'Mungo wanted to have a say in the shortlist, despite not visiting the restaurants with Khris, Gina and Denis', and 'Only Mungo would be in the photographs presenting the trophy to the winning restaurant owner'. Weaker responses were characterised by candidates offering responses that were either too vague (for example, 'Mungo decided to run a competition', which lacked the idea of announcing it to his staff) or did not answer the question (e.g. evidence taken from the Extract from the morning meeting, such as 'Mungo told his team that he already had a shortlist in his head').

In (ii), candidates gaining the most credit noted the direction to refer to the material in brackets, then selected the relevant stage directions that highlighted Mungo's controlling style of leadership. Candidates referring to Mungo either being disappointed or smiling broadly needed to explain the context for each one, as such reactions were not inherently controlling on their own. Some candidates might have gained credit if they had noted that the question was focused on Mungo; instead, they referred to Mungo speaking '*with authority*', when it was Gina who did so. A few candidates offered untargeted responses (see Key Messages).

(b) In (i), candidates gaining the most credit noted that Khris had only started work there on 1 December and offered thoughtful explanations for the use of 'Mr Martiines': 'He doesn't yet feel comfortable to call him by his first name', 'He has not yet established a close relationship with Mungo', 'He is still scared of Mungo because he hasn't been working there long and wants to be respectful when talking to him' and 'It means he is still new and yet to build rapport with his boss Mungo'. Some candidates thought that the relevant piece of Additional Information was that Khris spent a lot of his free time playing video games, meaning that he was shy or had fewer social interactions. Misunderstandings included that the meeting took place on 31 December, that Khris had only worked at Frugali City Life for one month or that he had started work at Frugali City Life on 1 January.

In (ii), candidates scoring highly included information found in Point 4 in the Additional Information and gave insightful explanations as to why Gina spoke '*with authority*': 'She knows that she is an important asset to Mungo', 'She wanted to speak with authority to show Mungo that he wasn't wrong in promoting her' and 'so she may believe that her skills are more valued by him than anyone else's'. Weaker responses were characterised by candidates making reference to the fact that she could speak with authority because of her job as the Restaurant Critic (a fact gleaned from the Background, not the Additional Information), or offering responses that were either too speculative ('She would feel able to challenge Mungo') or too vague as they were not linked to the idea of authority ('She was keen to stay on his good side').

In (iii), responses scoring highly included information from Point 14 and offered nuanced explanations, such as 'meaning that when Mungo smiled at him, Denis believed he might get a pay rise' or 'so being the only one agreeing with Mungo's view on not liking Truly Delicious gave him hope for a pay rise being more likely to happen'. A few candidates referred to Denis seeking a promotion, rather than a pay rise. Regarding 1(b) in general, some responses would have gained more credit if candidates had included the evidence from the Additional Information, as directed.

(c) Stronger responses were characterised by candidates copying out all the relevant details from Mungo's untrue statement relating to the important business meeting he had to get to and the information in Point 3 about the lunchtime round of golf he had scheduled. Some candidates would have gained credit if they had not offered vague answers (for example, 'Mungo needed to get to a meeting' and 'He organised lunch with friends') or not confused which statement was the untrue one (e.g. stating that Mungo's lunchtime round of golf was the untrue statement).

(d) Candidates gaining credit noted the contradictions and offered exact quotes from both the websites and the online reviews, which included all the relevant details. Weaker responses gave answers in the candidates' own words which were too vague. For example, in (i), 'the acoustics were distracting'; in (ii), 'The food was not that tasty'; and, in (iii), 'Take your time eating'. Some candidates might have gained credit if they had noted that the question did not ask them to locate evidence in the online reviews that backed up the restaurants' claims (for example, in (i), citing the quality of the food did not answer the question, as there was no contradiction between the claim on the website and the online review).

(e) Some candidates exhibited good organisational and analytical skills. These candidates incorporated connectives, conjunctions and linking phrases to good effect, so that their answers were fluent and structured in such a way that the considerations offered were signposted clearly as disadvantages of both the content of the voting slip and the process of how to cast a vote. A few responses included informal language (for example, 'kinda', 'gonna,' and 'like' used incorrectly) and abbreviations (such as POV), but many candidates used the correct register. Most candidates complied with the instruction to answer in continuous prose. Candidates gaining the most credit exhibited the ability to interpret the evidence offered in the material and read between the lines to show understanding of the disadvantages of both the content of the voting slip and the process of how to cast a vote. They gathered pieces of information from across Section A to create three clearly expressed, convincing points. They offered disadvantages that had been developed, whether by explanation, exemplification and/or linking two pieces of information from different parts of Section A, thereby highlighting their ability to present sustained and relevant analysis. They also understood that the most convincing responses are nuanced ones. Examples of candidates developing points well included the following: 'One disadvantage is that there is no way to make sure that only one slip is filled in per person, so the owner of one of the restaurants may be able to buy a lot of copies of the magazine and turn in the slips to stack the voting in their favour'; 'Additionally, most people in Frugali do not own a smartphone or computer, so they may have to either physically turn it in or not vote at all', and 'If voters want to physically turn in their vote, they will have to climb five flights of narrow stairs, which may be difficult for some people, especially the elderly'.

Some candidates could have attained higher marks if they had considered **both** the content of the voting slip **and** the process of how to cast a vote as instructed. Candidates covering only one aspect of the question could access a maximum mark of 6 (Level 3) for their responses. Some responses would have attracted more credit if they had offered some analysis, rather than simply citing a list of disadvantages with little or no development, meaning that their responses were limited to Levels 1 and 2. Some candidates did not note the focus of the question, and either offered disadvantages that were irrelevant, such as the fact that not everyone reads magazines, or offered the advantages of the content of the slip and the process of how to cast a vote. Some disadvantages were too vague on their own to gain any credit e.g. 'The content is sparse'. Some developments were too vague to be creditworthy e.g. 'which can be difficult for voters'. Some responses were too speculative e.g. the influx of people dropping off their votes would lead to overcrowding in the street and inside Beaumont Buildings. Some responses included statements that were too assertive, such as 'nobody has devices in Frugali'. Common misunderstandings, mostly related to the content of the slip, such as: the slip did not contain information about the restaurants (these candidates not noting that an accompanying article was mentioned in the Background), there were only three choices, voters were only allowed one choice, voters should have been allowed to rank the restaurants, voters might not have tried the restaurants, voters were not allowed to pick their own restaurants. Some candidates selected random facts, then cited them

in their answers without any development, so that their response was more of a narrative than an analysis. Weaker responses were also characterised by the repetition of disadvantages, and/or a disadvantage and its development being separated from each other in the answer, thus affecting the clarity and fluency of the response.

(f) Candidates attracting the most credit explained one reason why readers might vote for Restaurant International and did not refer to the restaurant's website, as directed. Their responses included all the key details from the material. Weaker responses were characterised by candidates either offering two different reasons or making reference to the website extract of Restaurant International. Some candidates offered vague responses, such as 'it has a large area' or 'it accommodates many people'. Some candidates cited general advantages linked to why a reader might visit the restaurant, rather than why they might vote for it e.g., it sounded as if it would be very 'Instagrammable', so it would be good for posting on social media. Some responses were too speculative e.g. readers would vote for it because it is a wealthy company, so it would benefit the city economy.

Section B

Question 2

(a) Candidates gaining credit noted the line references and quoted all the relevant elements. Some responses were too vague (e.g. 'It is an easy skill'), some cited information from lines 1 to 3 (instead of lines 4 to 7) and some offered the idea that classes were springing up (a consequence).

(b) Many candidates scored highly on this question, noting the information in lines 8 to 10 and quoting all the relevant elements. Weaker responses were characterised by the following: vague responses e.g. 'It improves balance', without reference to '*coordination*'; responses in the candidate's own words that were too vague e.g. 'low-impact exercise that is better on your body', so no reference to '*joints*'; or responses citing information from lines 13 to 17 (a paragraph about mental and emotional well-being).

(c) Creditworthy answers offered either 'It is inexpensive' or 'it is cheaper to buy than most gym equipment' as the first response. Some candidates would have gained credit if they had not offered 'accessible' as their first response.

(d) Candidates gaining credit noted the instruction to identify the exact word in the material and quoted only the relevant word that had exactly the same meaning, so, for example, offered '*aficionados*' in (i) rather than '*hula-hooping aficionados*' (which was not creditworthy) and '*rusty*' in (ii) rather than '*you are rusty*'. Some candidates misread the question, either offering their own definitions of the two words or including the two words in their own sentences to show usage.

(e) In (i), creditworthy answers cited 'It is not something you see every day' as the first response. Weaker responses repeated the question e.g. She gets funny looks because she is hula-hooping' or offered answers that changed the focus, such as 'because she is doing a children's activity'. In (ii), candidates scoring highly noted the information about mental and emotional well-being in lines 20 to 25 and quoted all the relevant elements. Weaker responses offered vague points e.g. 'She is in a state of flow', omitting the idea of 'at one with her hoop'. Some candidates referred to 'active meditation' (a benefit for Supriya Srivastar, not Caitlynd Boychuk).

(f) Candidates scoring highly noted the line references, included all the key elements in their summary, as outlined in the nine bullet points in the mark scheme, and responded in continuous prose. Weaker responses were characterised by candidates either offering vague responses (e.g. 'She turned a passion into a career' and 'She found a community and learned skills') or citing information about Fi Hull found in lines 35 to 38.

(g) Creditworthy phrases seen included the following: 'she wanted to test her limits' for bullet point 1, 'she was eagerly anticipating' for bullet point 2, 'she quickly became hooked' for bullet point 6 and 'she lost track of time' for bullet point 8. The phrases most commonly lifted from the material were '*as a personal challenge*', '*found herself looking forward to*', '*started enjoying it so much*' and '*10 minutes of practice would turn into two hours*'. Some candidates answered using their own words but did not gain credit for the content of their responses as they were too vague (e.g. 'she made it a

goal' for '*As a personal challenge*' and 'it began to become a hobby' for '*started enjoying it so much*').

(h) Creditworthy synonyms beyond the mark scheme were noted: 'ecstasy' for '*elation*' in (i), 'hypnotic' for '*mesmerising*' in (ii) and 'reluctance' for '*inhibition*' in (iii). There are three ways candidates could have gained higher marks. Candidates are required to use the same grammatical form as in the question (e.g. 'very happy' is not the correct grammatical form to replace '*elation*'), provide only one synonym per question (especially as only the first answer is marked), and ensure that the synonym offered matches exactly the original word (e.g. the synonym should match '*inhibition*', rather than encompass the idea in the material of being '*without inhibition*').

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Comprehension

Key messages

Candidates are advised to read the material provided in the insert, and all the questions, before they begin writing any of their responses in either **Section A** (logical reasoning) or **Section B** (reading comprehension). Thorough reading should ensure that candidates know exactly what is expected of them for each question, taking into account the varying demands of the tasks set. In particular, they should determine:

- from which part of the material to select information for their answers, especially when specifically directed, e.g., to focus on the Additional Information, the leaflet(s), or the question-and-answer sessions (**Section A**), or by means of the line references and/or key words appearing in question stems (**Section B**)
- how much information should be offered in response to each sub-question, considering the number of marks available, whether development of ideas is important (e.g. **Question 1(b)**, the extended response question), and any instructions regarding the number of reasons or ideas to provide (e.g. **Question 2(a), 2(d)(i), 2(d)(ii) and 2(f)**)
- any instructions such as 'using your own words as far as possible' (**Question 2(c)**), or to summarise within a specified number of words (**Question 2(b), 2(d)(i), 2(e) and 2(f)**)
- where the application of one's own knowledge, interpretation or wider thought is required, i.e. the answer does not (directly) appear in the material (**Question 1(a)** explanation, the development in **Question 1(d)** and **1(e)**, and **Question 1(f)**).

General comments

The vast majority of candidates proved able to demonstrate sound understanding of the material in both **Section A** and **B**. There was also a good degree of engagement with the questions set. Very few rubric infringements were observed, with blank response areas being rare. Few scripts at all scored very low total marks. The majority of candidates appeared to be well prepared for the range of question styles appearing in the question paper. As is usual on this component, candidates tended to perform better in response to questions in **Section A** than in **Section B**.

Candidates were generally able to communicate their ideas clearly in written English, and mostly organised their writing in the appropriate response areas. It was rare to see any responses rendered completely incomprehensible as a result of errors of poor grammar, spelling or expression, although occasional lapses of clarity and precision were evident, sometimes impacting the marks awarded.

Some candidates found it more challenging to select the essential relevant points from the material, and to offer sufficient detail and precision, in questions with more specific demands. This was especially evident in those questions imposing a word limit (**Questions 2(b), 2(d)(i), 2(e), and 2(f)**) or requiring ideas to be presented mainly in candidates' own words (**Question 2(c)**).

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The scenario presented in **Section A** of the material was related to the forthcoming election of class representatives in a fictional college. Some of the nuances relevant to the individual characters were thoughtfully used in response to the questions set. There were occasional lapses of logic and misunderstanding evident in the selection of material for responses, as explained in the more detailed comments below. Candidates are advised to read the questions carefully, especially with regard to which sections of the material to consider, where specified (**Question 1(b)**, where any references to the question-and-answer session were not answering the question as set), and also to the exact focus of the question set (see observations on **Question 1(d)** and **1(e)**).

(a) Most candidates found it straightforward to identify the relevant idea about Olivia from the Additional Information (point 7), since this was the sole mention of her in that section of the material. As a result, it was necessary to convey the point with some precision to gain credit and, in particular, to mention her hopes of achieving 'top grades' (or *good results*) in 'her ballet and piano examinations'. For the second mark, some inference was necessary, as well as general understanding of the scenario presented in **Section A**. Successful explanations for Olivia having 'refused emphatically' to stand for election as class representative included the time, responsibility and potential distraction from these goals involved in undertaking the role, including attending the meetings and writing up the notes, and the time, workload and dedication required to practise for her ballet and piano examinations. Less convincing explanations reiterated the idea of those examinations taking up her focus or making her busy or referred solely to the time involved in *running for election*, rather than eventually holding the position of class representative. This was unconvincing, since the election campaign process only involved producing a leaflet and undertaking a 15-minute question-and-answer session. Few candidates mentioned that Year 13 comprised final-year students, or the references elsewhere to preparations for university applications, which might have explained an already high academic workload for Olivia.

(b) In this extended response, candidates showed good overall understanding of both the scenario in general and of Elisavetta's potential unsuitability as a candidate for class representative, as evidenced in her leaflet and the Additional Information. A number of candidates made reference, either explicitly or implicitly, to the content of the question-and-answer session. This was deliberately not included in the rubric, so any such material could not be credited. Such instructions are intended to direct candidates to the most relevant parts of the material for answering the question, and to avoid overlap with, or reversal of, ideas more pertinent to other questions.

The essential skill assessed in **Question 1(b)** is the ability to make connections across different parts of the material, and/or to explain the relevance of the information selected, in context of the question and scenario. For ten marks, it was necessary to develop four reasons why Elisavetta might not be suitable. A minimal fourth development would suffice to reach Level 4. Most candidates were able to offer at least three reasons, but usually only successfully developed two of these, and sometimes rather minimally, limiting their responses to Level 3. Some responses remained in Level 2, usually evidenced by only one development, even though two or more valid ideas had been presented. Very few responses were placed in Level 1, which is characterised by the selection of just a couple of relevant points, by one isolated developed point, or by severe weakness of expression and clarity. The latter cases were rare as mentioned in the general observations above.

In this question paper's logical reasoning exercise, there were only two candidates, rather than the three options sometimes presented in **Section A**. Even when making a case regarding one of just two choices, it is necessary to consider the overall logic of the scenario. For example, some candidates relied on generalised criticisms of Elisavetta's leaflet, such as being *too self-centred* which is not a valid disadvantage when presenting oneself as a candidate for election. Candidates claiming that Elisavetta had *focused too much on herself*, as evident in *the (over)use of 'I'*, had not looked in sufficient detail at Armando's leaflet. As such, it is not the logical choice to criticise Elisavetta in this regard, even had the overall point been valid.

A number of candidates noted, correctly, that the style and tone of Elisavetta's leaflet was too informal for the purpose, questioning her understanding or *appreciation of the serious nature of the*

election and the role of class representative. Developed points cited specific evidence of her informality, focusing either on language choices ('Hi Everyone!', 'Well, I've made it...', 'Yay!', 'What a girl' and 'Three great reasons!') and/or the *heart-shaped balloons in the border*. In the words of one perceptive candidate, Elisavetta's leaflet looks *more like a party invitation than a serious attempt to be elected for an important role within the college*.

The two most common developed points credited were: Additional Information point 2 (Elisavetta having 'once found a classmate in tears, but told the girl that she was too busy to stop and talk') disproving the claim made in her leaflet that her peers 'know that [they] can come to [her] anytime, anywhere, and [she'll] take the time to listen to [them]'; Additional Information point 12 ('Elisavetta was supposed to help Brianna organise a charity event two years ago, but kept making excuses instead') contrasted with the claim, made in her leaflet, that she had 'never let any of [her classmates] down when it comes to getting things done'. Less successful developments here merely offered single-word terms to describe Elisavetta's behaviour in each case, such as *irresponsible, lazy, unsympathetic* or *unreliable*, rather than detailing the specific contrasts.

Some candidates relied on listed adjectives criticising Elisavetta without any serious attempt at justification. A number of candidates felt her to be *dishonest*, due to the apparent discrepancies between her claims and the other evidence presented. This was acceptable as a general observation but was much more convincing when connected with the specific untruths identified above.

Additional Information point 9, Elisavetta's recent realisation 'that she had not taken part in any extracurricular activities to write about on any university application form', was an example of a correct selection from the material. Most candidates offered this general disadvantage of Elisavetta's candidacy, but often did not explain why. Vague claims were made regarding her *lack of experience*. Better answers specified the types of skills involved, such as *leadership, teamwork and empathy*, or her lack of involvement in such activities showing a *lack of interest in wider school life, which would be necessary to be a successful class representative*. The most successful attempts at development here tended to be those questioning Elisavetta's motivation in putting herself forward for election, apparently driven more out of *panic and desperation to have something good to write about on her university application forms, rather than any genuine interest in doing a good job / helping improve school life for her peers*.

In contrast to the above point, Elisavetta's leaflet claimed that she is 'not afraid to speak up or call out things if something's unfair'. This is less convincing as a negative trait, given the task facing the successful candidate at council meetings. An occasional response suggested that such an *attitude might be too aggressive and not approved of by teachers*, which is a fair inference to draw. For more credit, the idea needed to be linked, for example, with the presence of Mrs Eriksson at all the council meetings. More perceptive responses considered it unlikely that Elisavetta would indeed be willing – or, perhaps, even permitted – to confront Mrs Eriksson as forcefully as she claims, given their somewhat unfortunate first encounter.

With regard to Elisavetta's collision with Mrs Eriksson's car, this was clearly a valid disadvantage in isolation. Too many candidates, in attempting to develop the point and explain its significance, focused on accusing Elisavetta of having *disregard for people's property and the rules of the road* which is less relevant to her prospective duties as class representative. There was also some misunderstanding of 'face-to-face encounter', with some responses implying that a heated – or even physical – altercation had taken place in the college car park. A few candidates hinted at the idea of Elisavetta's having *made a poor first impression on Mrs Eriksson / the Deputy Principal* but often did not connect this with the Deputy Principal's attendance at 'every council meeting to ensure students follow the rules when discussing matters and voting on resolutions' (Additional Information point 3).

A complete example of a response awarded ten marks, including four well-developed points, and no losses of focus, was: *Elisavetta's leaflet lists all the reasons she thinks she would be a suitable candidate, the first being that she always focuses on getting things done. However it is later stated that she has not taken part in any extracurricular activities, and made excuses when she was supposed to help Brianna organize a charity event. [introduction and a valid point, with two connected pieces of evidence by way of development] Elisavetta additionally stated that her classmates can approach her, yet has previously turned away an upset girl because she was too busy. [a second developed point] As Mrs. Erickson would attend every meeting, she might have a bias against Elisavetta after their cars collided in the college car park. [a third developed point]*

Elisavetta may not be able to note down the meeting minutes and publish them to the college in an appropriate style, considering her leaflet was informal and had a large number of hearts in the border and bullet points. [a fourth developed point]

(c) (i) Most candidates were able to identify the contrast between Armando's claim, in his leaflet, that he is 'exceptional at winning arguments' and his being 'on the winning side 35 per cent of the time' (Additional Information point 5). It was acceptable to state that he was successful only about a third of the time, or that his record was to lose on 65 per cent, or two thirds, of occasions, all of which showed understanding of the 'exaggerated claim' Armando had made. Some candidates presented the 35 per cent success rate in debates as positive evidence of his claim regarding his debating skills, which demonstrated a misunderstanding. Others claimed that such skills would be unnecessary in the role as class representative, which is neither true nor a clear explanation of why the claim is best described as 'exaggerated'. Few responses presented only his three-year membership of the Debating Society as the exaggeration, whereas this would be a verifiable fact, and there was no evidence to contradict its accuracy. Several answers incorrectly referenced Armando's producing articles for the college newspaper very quickly as the exaggeration, usually linked to his ambitions to attend 'a top-ranking university' (Additional Information point 11) and the attendant workload, as the reason for not fulfilling this promise. Again, this would be verifiable and was not mentioned elsewhere in the material. This point was a clear advantage for Armando, given the requirement for one class representative each time to publish notes 'within 48 hours' of each meeting (Additional Information point 4).

(ii) Some candidates erroneously provided the answer to **Question 1(c)(i)** in response to **Question 1(c)(ii)**. Most responses successfully identified the promise, made in the leaflet, that Armando would 'be at all the meetings'. As with references merely to the Debating Society in **Question 1(c)(i)**, occasional responses mentioned only Armando's attendance record, not itself something that was a 'promise... he would not be able to keep'. When attempting to explain the correct choice, a number of candidates supplied their own, general reasons for Armando potentially not being able to attend every council meeting, such as *illness* or other circumstance enforcing an *absence from school*, or that he could *not know this in advance for the whole year*. Other incorrect responses again relied on his aiming 'to go to a top-ranking university', suggesting he would be too busy with his studies and other activities. This was unconvincing for someone who had already put themselves forward for the election. The correct response followed logically from Armando's being a member of the Debating Society, as per **Question 1(c)(i)**. It also relied upon understanding the possible *clash* between the timings of the council meetings (Additional Information point 1) and those of the Debating Society (Additional Information point 13), both of which are scheduled *on Mondays*.

(iii) Of the three sub-questions in **Question 1(c)**, this question proved most challenging to gain both available marks. While most candidates identified Additional Information point 8, regarding Armando's friendship with Brianna, fewer were able to connect this to Additional Information point 10, the necessity to appoint a deputy in case of absence from meetings. Once again, this followed logically from the content of **Question 1(c)(ii)**, and the potential clash of the council and Debating Society meetings. Other incorrect responses either restated the question stem, about helping Armando, or made general suggestions about how she could help or advise her friend, given her prior experience. More than the occasional response also noted what a marvellous class representative Brianna had been the previous year. This was not the correct answer, but it is worth noting that the only evidence for this assertion comes from Elisavetta's leaflet.

(d) Focus on the exact wording of the question was essential here. A number of candidates wrote too generally in criticism of Elisavetta's performance in the question-and-answer session, and missed the emphasis on why Mr Beppe specifically, as the class teacher, might disapprove of Elisavetta's candidacy enough to overturn the election result, if she were declared the winner. It was creditworthy to criticise, for example, her *lack of confidence*, being *hesitant, unsure and lacking preparation*, making *rash and unconsidered statements about getting rid of punishments entirely*, and her apparent desire merely to *appeal to her classmates' whims*. For the second mark to be awarded, it was necessary to provide some sense of the impact on the Year 13 class or on college life, or to explain why a teacher might be unimpressed by Elisavetta's responses and attitude. A good example included the *potential disobedience and disorder in the college* as a result of Elisavetta's claim regarding punishments, if students were *incited not to follow any of the rules*. Other successful responses include: *She claims she would abolish all punishments, but teachers including Mr Beppe know how essential punishments are to maintain students' discipline in school / That is ridiculous and could cause embarrassment for Mr Beppe at the council meeting / Mr Beppe*

might not be impressed by her answer as it will be difficult to maintain discipline / Elisavetta answered without thinking and was easily influenced by her classmates. Mr Beppe may be fearful that she will just do whatever the students tell her without thinking.

(e) Candidates found it challenging to offer creditworthy responses here. There was a tendency to describe and narrate what had been said during the question-and-answer session. In many cases, ideas and explanations articulated by other classmates were wrongly attributed to Armando. This was especially true of the lengthy example relating to being punished for being a minute late to classes, and why this was unfair. There was also some over-reliance on vague terms describing the rules and punishments, such as *petty, unfair* and *useless*, and on repeating ideas from earlier questions relating to Armando's supposed prowess at winning arguments. Some responses also made too much of his consulting his peers to learn their opinions which, in itself, would be insufficient to ensure actual change. A successful three-mark response was: *Armando only proposes to abolish the rules that are not necessary for the smooth running of the college (1). His classmates looked pleased with the answer and support him [idea of his being convincing, rather than mere agreement] (1), so it is likely that he will convince the council (1).* Another good example included: *Armando has a good grasp and understanding of the necessity of college rules (1) and also approaches an issue or conversation in a serious and pleasing manner (1) thus making teachers and the college authorities more likely to listen to his suggestions and consider them seriously (1).*

(f) This was an open question, requiring some inference and application of own knowledge and ideas in order to provide a reasoned answer. Some candidates, in their attempt to provide an explanation, merely reversed their observations relating to the classroom and reception environments respectively, an approach which could only be considered worthy of one mark. Other suggestions lacked logic, such as claiming to reduce multiple voting. It seems unlikely that this could be successfully prevented by moving the ballot boxes out of classrooms. Similarly, claims relating to *convenience* and being *easier to count the votes* were unconvincing. As in **Question 1(e)**, there was some over-reliance on vague terms, such as the prevention of *bias, unfair voting, cheating, malpractice* and similar. Stronger responses were more specific, relating to the potential for ballot boxes to be *tampered with* in some way if left in classrooms, such as by *removing or changing voting slips*. Such ideas were often successfully linked with the likelihood of *(constant) monitoring or supervision by staff* – or, on one occasion, *CCTV cameras* – present in the reception area. There were also references to the notion of *intimidation* by peers, *anonymity* and *reduced distraction during lessons*. One or two perceptive candidates proposed that the move would *lend gravitas to proceedings and give an all-important appearance of a fair and formal process*. An example of a successful two-mark response was: *Students cannot bully or coerce others into voting for them at reception, where the ballot box is under supervision by respected school authorities.*

Section B

Question 2

In general, candidates engaged well with the subject matter of the **Section B** material, relating to the game of chess. Differentiation resulted from candidates' relative ability to convey the precise detail and nuance of the original material, in response to the questions set. The sub-questions in the reading comprehension part of the paper which proved most challenging were in **Section B**, specifically questions requiring candidates to express relevant points mainly in their own words (**Question 2(c)**), or within a limited number of words (**Questions 2(b), 2(d)(i), 2(e) and 2(f)**). Unless specifically instructed to do so (**Question 2(c)**), or where the rubric might well necessitate altering the presentation of ideas found in the material (the summary questions), candidates are best advised to reproduce *exactly* the points they have identified, i.e., they should use the same terminology as in the original. In the questions assessing summary skills (those with word limits), continuous prose should be used. There were instances of candidates using brackets within their responses to word-limited questions, which can cause confusion as to which words are intended to be considered for assessment by examiners. Candidates are best advised to cross out any work they do not wish included in the 'word count'.

(a) Most candidates recognised that the introductory question to **Section B** was likely to involve ideas appearing in the first paragraph of the material. Irrelevant information was frequently included from the first four lines, especially, but also from later parts of the material, including lines 16 to 18 and, on several occasions, lines 54 to 57. Attempts were also made, among those incorrect responses, to render the key points linked with chess's lack of popularity prior to the screening of the series,

The Queen's Gambit. Candidates are well advised not to change the wording of the relevant points they identify in such questions. There is nothing to gain by doing so and marks can be lost by altering the precise meaning of the original. Examples include suggesting *old people* or *the elderly* (instead of 'old men'), *long* and/or *boring* (for 'hours of boredom') and *great intelligence* or *superior intellect* (rather than 'genius levels of memory and logic'). For all three marks, it was necessary to render some sense of 'associated with', such as *deemed to be...*, *having...*, *involves...*, *needs...* or similar. Again, it was sensible simply to copy 'often associated with' from the material.

(b) This first of the four questions testing summary skills required candidates to restrict their responses to 'about 30 words'. Candidates must remember to write in complete sentences to access full marks to word limit questions. Candidates are advised not to repeat the question stem, or include other unnecessary material, by way of introduction. A number of candidates exceeded the word limit by some considerable margin in responses to this question.

Although some re-working of the essential elements is useful in such questions, to adhere to the word limit imposed by the rubric, provision of new synonyms for single-word terms is unnecessary. It saves no words but may lose the meaning of the original. Examples here include 'perseverance', 'commitment' and 'determination'. Attempts at copying 'perseverance' were not always successful and, in some cases, the transcription errors prevented the award of a mark, by rendering the resultant term ambiguous. More often full marks were not gained because valid ideas appeared after the word count, or because significant details had been omitted. These include references to Allan Scott as the 'producer' and/or '(co-)creator' of the series, and, especially, to the '8 different directors' involved along the way. Some useful conflation of the '30 years, 8 different directors and 9 rewrites' idea was evident, such as *It took multiple/numerous years, directors and rewrites* [only seven words]. A successful three-mark response, in a single complete sentence, was: *Allan Scott echoed the abilities of perseverance and commitment, two qualities related to chess* (1), by *producing and co-creating The Queen's Gambit with determination* (1) *in 30 years by changing several directors and scripts.* [29 words]

Occasional responses erroneously included material better placed in responses to other questions. The clear references in the question stem to 'Allan Scott', and to the similarities of 'character' between him and chess, indicate that lines 9 to 12 contain the appropriate information.

(c) **Question 2(c)**, worth five marks, required candidates to answer using their own words. Candidates are permitted to repeat, in such responses, some specialist vocabulary with no obvious synonyms, such as 'prince', 'mother' and 'board', and the proper nouns (e.g. 'India' and 'Ashtāpada') appearing in the material. It is also permissible to respond with adjectives or verbs derived from nouns in the material, and similar, or with different verb forms, such as *traced* (from 'trace'), *originated* (derived from 'origins'), *relaying* (in place of ' relayed'), *grief* ('grieving' in the material) and *in use/using* (but not 'used'). Terms too commonly repeated from the material, sometimes several times within the same responses, were 'young(er)(est)', which was not essential for credit but for which *least aged, least mature, last/latest born, juvenile or junior* were successfully substituted, and 'the scene', whereas *the circumstances, what had happened, the scenario, the incident or the events* were among the more obvious – and most popular – creditworthy alternatives. Marks were most frequently gained for conveying the ideas of 'the tragic... tale'; 'the (youngest) prince (of the realm) was killed'; 'his brother relayed the scene', and 'to their grieving mother'.

Examples of mark-scheme points successfully conveyed in candidates' own words include: *People believe that chess first came about / People have speculated that the invention of chess / Chess is thought to have its foundations / Chess is assumed to have started / This demonstration is what is generally theorised to have led to the development of chess* ('Some trace the origins of the game'); *the sad story / a heart-breaking story / the upsetting narrative / a devastating fable* ('a tragic... tale'); *during the years of the Gupta kingdom / when the royal Gupta family ruled India from among India's Gupta lineage* ('from the Gupta dynasty in India'); *the son of the royal house was murdered / was slain / was slaughtered / was martyred / was assassinated / died / lost his life / his unfortunate expiry / his sad demise / his passing* ('the... prince... was killed'); *in the foremost ranks of the contingent / leading the fighting / at the head of the fighting / skirmishing head-on with the enemy soldiers* ('on the frontline of battle'); *his sibling displayed what had occurred / the older prince simulated how it happened / the heir to the throne physically communicated the details of the incident / conveyed his brother's final moments / to visualise the chronology of events / the older man recounted the occurrence / showcased the situation / replicated each move of the fateful event* ('his brother relayed the scene'); *to the queen, who was beside herself with grief / to his mourning*

mother / to his devastated parent / to his sorrowful mother / to the bereaved matriarch / to the grief-stricken mother / to the sad(dened) mother ('to their grieving mother'); on a 64-square board / on a large squared board similar to a modern chess board / on a square board resembling our chess boards ('on an eight-by-eight board'), and that had earlier been employed to play Ashtāpada / which had been utilised for Ashtāpada up until that point ('which at the time was used for a game called Ashtāpada').

Candidates sometimes successfully conveyed two, or more, ideas within one statement, such as *The prince's older brother re-enacted the way he died* (2 marks); *He demonstrated these events to his sorrowful mother* (2 marks); *The surviving prince explained to his mother, who was mourning the death of her last-born son, exactly how he had died* (3 marks), and *He replayed the scenario on a board of 64 squares* (2 marks).

(d)(i) This was the second question requiring candidates to summarise key ideas in about 30 words. Candidates tended to be most successful when attempting to convey that 'playing chess helps improve memory and problem-solving skills' and involves 'increased self-esteem and empathy'. Since both these ideas included the notion of 'improvement' or 'increase', there were some successful examples of conflation, including: *Players would experience improved memory, problem-solving skills, self-esteem and empathy.* [10 words, 2 marks] Where the third available mark was gained, it was most often for the idea of 'players [entering] a flow state – a rewarding sense of total involvement in a task'. The fourth creditworthy point, relating to chess players having to 'memorise many complex combinations of moves and their possible outcomes', tended to be the most elusive to convey precisely and succinctly.

When candidates selected the important information and communicated it accurately, it proved fairly straightforward to accomplish the task within 'about 30 words', using full sentences and without having to alter the original wording significantly. Once again, candidates who attempted to offer synonyms for single-word terms sometimes lost the necessary precision for full credit, without saving themselves any words in their own versions. An example is *sympathy*; not quite the same as 'empathy'. Some candidates offered more words in their summary responses than had been present in the material, such as *ability to memorise* for 'memory'. Similarly, with 'problem-solving skills', an attempt such as *assists a person to solve all his problems* both uses many more words than the original and fails to convey the same sense at all.

(ii) Candidates generally found this question accessible, as there was no requirement to limit the number of words or to render the concepts in one's own words. There were also several routes to the two available marks, although some precision was required, for example in the inclusion of comparatives, such as '[It can] help you feel more in control' and 'It can help you become more resistant to negative emotions.' Once again, candidates tended to have greater success when repeating the terms from the material, instead of offering attempted synonyms. For example, while *negativity* was close enough to 'negative emotions' to be an acceptable alternative, and *You gain a sense of accomplishment* could be credited in place of 'It makes you feel competent and confident', there is a notable difference between 'treat depression' (as in the material) and *cure depression*. Similarly, feeling 'more in control' is not the same as *feeling controlled*.

(e) Once again, candidates were required to limit their answers to this question to 'about 30 words', something which proved quite challenging to candidates. Nevertheless, candidates performed quite well here, with a large majority gaining one or two of the three available marks. One tendency noted with this particular question was for candidates to convey only part of the relevant points sought. The most common correct ideas conveyed were: 'It's about control and sacrifice'; that he loves knowing 'which moves' he wants 'to sacrifice' for his 'desired outcome', and that his 'opponent will think they are winning a match', an example of the latter point being: *He allows opponents to believe they have the stronger hand.* [10 words]. As mentioned above, it was common to omit a crucial part of these points in less successful attempts, such as either 'loving' or 'knowing' the sacrifices needed to win. A good example of this point being rendered in few words included: *He enjoys making calculated sacrifices to win.* [7 words]

Other responses commonly credited were: his ability to 'work out three moves ahead (in every direction)', this being 'enough to defeat most people', and the opponent being 'so preoccupied with' his 'apparent mistake' that 'they'll miss [his] true motive'. Being 'an aggressive player' often appeared without reference to 'that attitude stays firmly on the board'. Where that element was attempted, it was sometimes misinterpreted, to imply that he is *firm* while playing. More successful renditions were: *Though aggressive in play, McKnight is not so in life* [10 words], *He limits his*

aggression to the chess board and *He is only aggressive on the chess board* [both only 8 words]. The wording of the original material, stating first that McKnight had, as a youngster, been able to 'work out five moves ahead' but 'now... can do three', led some candidates to state that *he does three moves (in order to win)*, missing the essential sense of calculation, visualisation and strategy. An example of successful conflation here included: *Being three moves ahead is enough to defeat most people*. [2 marks, 9 words]

Candidates often cited the notion of falsely making the opponent think they are winning – the preoccupation [of the opponent] with his apparent mistake, leading them to miss his true intentions. Candidates tended to omit one of these crucial ideas. There was also occasional confusion created by the use of pronouns (when *he* or *his* were repeated), when referencing the opponent, especially with regard to who was thought to be winning, and by whom. The sense of 'not to control other people but to anticipate what your opponent might do' also seldom appeared in its entirety, usually with the first element having been omitted, but sometimes with the second appearing after the 30-word limit had been applied.

An example of three of the creditworthy points successfully conveyed in exactly 30 words, and in complete grammatical sentences, was: *He is able to think three moves ahead (1) and know which moves to surrender to obtain his wanted outcome (1). He anticipates what his opponent might do, instead of controlling them (1)*. The following example conveys four points (so more than required for three marks) within 30 words, and the first three points – sufficient for full marks – within 22 words: *John's approach is based on control and sacrifice (1). He works out three moves ahead in every direction (1), enough to defeat most people (1). His sacrifices predispose them into thinking they're winning (1)*.

Occasional responses missed that the focus of the question was on 'Jon McKnight's current approach to playing chess' and described his capabilities 'aged nine'. This information was irrelevant but tended to use up available words, given that it appeared early within the appropriate line references, and so also in candidates' answers. McKnight's having made 'really good friends through playing chess' is a consequence, rather than an approach, so could not gain credit. A similar point applies to those who cited line 45, 'an effective way to see things from the other person's perspective'. When summarising from within given line references, candidates should refer back to the question, since not all the material within that section will necessarily be relevant. Selection of relevant points, as well as conveying these succinctly, is part of the test of summary skills.

(f) This was the fourth 'summary skills' question and a number of candidates exceeded the 20-word limit. Of the four word-limited questions, it was also the one in which candidates most often did not write in complete sentences. Such an approach cannot gain the maximum available marks. Most candidates managed to score at least one mark here, usually for the idea of 'establish[ing] trust (in the relationship) between therapist and patient'. Since more general 'relationships' appeared in the first creditworthy point, there was some unsuccessful conflation but, more often, candidates missed the first mark by citing only the idea of enabling 'people to open up'. Most responses ran out of words before repeating 'participation helps to nurture a less formal environment in which emotions, thoughts and feelings can be more easily and directly expressed'. Those who did manage to abbreviate it, for example by selecting only one of the overlapping 'emotions, thoughts and feelings', frequently omitted the comparative 'more'. The shorter 'proven to be effective in helping neurobehavioural conditions' was also sometimes successfully included within the permitted '20 words'. Examples of two valid points being communicated in complete sentences and within the word limit include: *Chess allows people to open up and build on relationships but also to establish trust between a patient and therapist* [20 words] and *Playing chess creates a relationship of trust between therapist and patient but also aids in fixing neurological conditions*. [18 words]

(g)(i) All four of the sub-questions in **Question 2(g)** required candidates to identify vocabulary from the material, prompted by a synonym given in the question stem. In responding to any such questions, the appropriate word or phrase must be selected both for the similarity of the intended meaning and the correct (identical) grammatical form. Care should also be taken to avoid extraneous material (see comments on **Question 2(g)(iv)** below). Occasional responses attempted to provide their own synonyms, or to define the given terms, rather than seek them from the material, with the aid of the line references provided. Of the four sub-questions, this first one proved the most accessible to the majority of candidates. There were some incomplete responses, i.e., only *hog* or *limelight*, rather than the correct '(to) hog the limelight'.

- (ii) Most candidates answered this question successfully. Terms such as *mastery* [not a person] and *master* [a verb in the material] were common distractors, as well as the less frequent appearance of the named character *Beth Harmon*, in place of the correct 'prodigy'.
- (iii) Some candidates offered references to *(chess) therapy, therapy sessions, participation and theory of the mind* here, or gave only part of the correct response, e.g., *lessons*, rather than 'life lessons'. Ungrammatical attempts included *anticipate* [verb] and *neurobehavioural* [adjective].
- (iv) This proved to be the most challenging of the four sub-questions in **Question 2(g)**, with very few candidates successfully identifying 'can win the day' as the correct expression, prompted by the 'able to be...' of the question stem. The most common incorrect responses included: *win the day* [too vague]; *a sprinkling of luck can win the day* or even *focus, forethought, determination and, sometimes, a sprinkling of luck can win the day* [superfluous material included]; *triumphs; obstacles, and who overcomes obstacles and triumphs (in a man's world)*.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/23
Comprehension

Key messages

It is essential that candidates read the question carefully and note the specific instructions and guidance. For example, in **1(e)**, candidates were asked to refer to the conversation only; in **1(f)**, candidates were advised to not repeat material from **Section A**; in **2(i)**, candidates were asked to avoid repeating material from **Section B**. Candidates who did not follow these instructions were unable to gain credit for their responses.

Where candidates are instructed to answer using their own words, it is highly recommended to avoid using the words in the original text. It is unlikely that words from the original material will gain credit, however technical vocabulary is occasionally allowed.

In word count **Questions 2(c)** and **2(g)**, candidates must note the word count and provide succinct responses. Responses appearing after the word limit will not gain credit. Candidates are advised to avoid writing an introduction or repeating the question in their answer. Some candidates used far fewer words than the word count and were unable to cover all of the required points.

If a question does not instruct candidates to write a response within a certain word limit or using their own words, it is highly recommended that candidates copy the relevant text from the material. Some responses were not detailed enough to gain credit and the re-wording of the original material unnecessarily affected the precision of the responses.

General comments

- It is recommended that candidates write their answers as legibly as possible.
- It is strongly advised that candidates focus on their use of language. Weaker responses were not clearly expressed.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) In this question, candidates were directed to the Background information and asked to identify the Royberts' two aims for their much-needed family break. Candidates gaining the highest credit were able to locate the relevant material and express their answer clearly. For example, 'They aim to spend time together and make memories.'

Some candidates were unable to locate the correct information or provided answers which lacked the required detail and could not gain credit. For example, 'They want to get away from home.'

(b) Candidates were asked to consider the advantages and explain why the Royberts might choose Beautiful Breaks. Here, candidates were required to make connections between the Royberts and Beautiful Breaks using the information provided in **Section A**. Candidates gaining the highest credit were able to develop three clear advantages. For example, 'Diego prefers fast food and the guests have access to a local artisan pizza van every evening. There are many footpaths so Enzo can be active all day which he needs in order to sleep well. High-quality camping facilities are offered at Beautiful Breaks and sleeping outside is a passion Martina and Diego share. They would get a chance to use the tent they bought last year.'

Candidates gaining some credit noted relevant points about Beautiful Breaks but did not link the points to the family. For example, 'The park has a sculpture trail map and there's a chance to win a return visit.' Similarly, candidates gained some credit for highlighting valid points regarding the Royberts family. For example, 'Martina and Diego bought a tent last year and it has not been used yet.'

Weaker responses were characterised by a lack of detail and misunderstandings. A number of candidates incorrectly noted that Enzo enjoys taking photographs of nature and winning the sculpture trail quiz would result in a free trip next weekend. Furthermore, references to Lucas enjoying the extensive children's play areas could not gain credit as Lucas has an injured foot and this would be highly unlikely. Generalised statements relating to the outdoors and a variety of activities could not gain credit because this is true of both Beautiful Breaks and Finton's Farm Tour.

(c) In this question, candidates were asked to explain three reasons why Martina and Diego would be less likely to choose Finton's Farm Tour. Candidates who scored highly were able to link ideas from different parts of **Section A** material and make connections, whilst providing adequate detail. For example, 'Reservations to sample Finton's culinary delights have a six-month waiting list and they plan to go next weekend. There are rumours that Diego could lose his job. Finton's meals are \$100 per adult which could be expensive if Diego doesn't have a job. The increased traffic at weekends could lead to delays which could cause issues and frustration during their weekend trip.'

Candidates gaining some credit were able to provide valid points but did not link ideas across the Section A material. For example, 'The tour only lasts approximately 60 minutes.' This is a clear disadvantage for Finton's Farm Tour.

Weaker responses were too generalised and lacked the required detail. For example, 'Reservations need to be made well in advance' and 'Finton's Farm is very expensive.' The omission of 'Finton's restaurant' meant that such responses were too vague and could not gain credit. Common misunderstandings included references to the noise levels at the farm, as well as the surroundings being dangerous.

(d) Candidates were required to explain why Lucas might like to visit Finton's Farm Tours. Stronger responses were very clear and detailed. For example, 'Lucas might want to visit Finton's Farm Tours because he could learn and experience crop harvesting and planting which he used to enjoy doing in their family garden,' and 'Lucas recently injured his foot and, at Finton's Farm, they can ride on a tractor so he won't have to walk much.'

Weaker responses were characterised by a lack of detail and were too vague to gain credit. For example, 'Lucas is interested in history,' 'He used to help his Mum in the garden' and 'He might enjoy somewhere that doesn't require walking.'

A common misunderstanding included references to the rare breed animals.

(e) In (i), candidates were directed to the conversation and asked to explain what can be learned about Martina's character that is negative. Candidates gaining the highest credit were able to locate the relevant information in the conversation and provide a clear response. For example, 'She believes she deserves a treat and doesn't take her family into consideration' and 'She wants to spend family time at Finton's because of her own preferences, undermining Diego's sacrifice and showing how she is a self-centred person, with little regard to what her husband thinks or wants.'

Some responses noted that Martina appeared to be selfish but did not give any further information. Generalised responses regarding 'family time' could not gain credit as they lacked the required detail. Furthermore, statements concerning 'long hours at the office' were taken from the Background and not the conversation so could not gain credit.

In (ii), candidates were asked to explain why Diego could be described as family-orientated. Responses gaining full credit cited detailed points from the conversation only. For example, 'He explains to Martina that they need family time where everyone can enjoy their time together and he brought up the point that the boys missed her.'

References to household responsibilities and caring for the boys could not gain credit as they were taken from the Background.

(f) Candidates gaining full credit on this question were able to offer two convincing reasons why people need quality family time. For example, 'Family time builds communication skills and teaches life skills.' and 'It helps to build trust and a family can get to know each other better.'

The question instructed candidates to not repeat material from **Section A**. A number of candidates discussed the importance of spending time together, making memories and having a break from work. Such responses were uncreditworthy.

(g) In this question, candidates were asked to explain the meaning of the quote by George Santayana. Candidates achieving full credit were able to link the idea of family to art or creativity. Some excellent responses were noted. For example, 'Families are made like mosaics in that each piece is a beautiful memory that makes up the whole picture.'; 'The family is a beautiful and special creation that is a once in a lifetime blessing.'; 'Like a masterpiece, families should be cherished and appreciated.'

Weaker responses were characterised by very generalised statements which lacked detail and precision. For example, 'Families are very special.'

Section B

Question 2

(a) In (i), candidates needed to cite '(To) study climate change.' A rewording of the question was taken as an introduction and allowed, if it was immediately followed by the correct response. For example, 'The crew were studying climate change in the Arctic.' Candidates are encouraged to find the correct response in the text and copy it.

In (ii), candidates needed to note that the expedition was 'the longest and the largest.' Both elements were required in order to gain credit.

(b) In (i), responses gaining credit were detailed and precise. For example, 'To devote her photography to the (fragile) polar environment.' Responses lacking the required precision could not gain credit. For example, 'To continue with photography in the Arctic.'

Detail and precision were also required in (ii). In order to gain full credit, candidates needed to note that help was far away and that the first few legs took place during the long polar night. Weaker responses lacked precision and could not gain credit. For example, 'It took place during the night.'

(c) In word-count questions, candidates are strongly advised to avoid writing introductions and repeating the question. It is also recommended that candidates make full use of the word count in order to cover all of the necessary points. Candidates gaining the most credit were able to clearly note the key points in about 50 words. For example, 'The participants were trained to overcome worst-case scenarios. They swam through rough waters to get to a life raft. There was a loss of communication due to the wind and thunder. They practised shooting rifles and flare guns in total darkness while people screamed.'

(d) In this question, candidates were instructed to answer using their own words as far as possible. Candidates gaining credit were able to offer some excellent synonyms: 'she was the photographer' for '*when I was photographing them*'; 'sweating badly' for '*with sweat dripping down my body*'; 'the author had to spend much longer in the intense heat' for '*I stayed there for hours where temperatures neared 120 °C*'.

(e) Responses gaining credit provided the necessary detail. For example, 'They had to protect themselves from 3000 polar bears. They had to distribute 5 sleeping bags and their limited supplies among the group of 14 people. They had to learn how to acquire water.' Responses lacking the required precision were unable to gain credit here.

(f) In (i), candidates were required to note that photographing was difficult because the author's hands became cold and in order to overcome the problem, she covered her camera so that mittens could be worn whilst taking the photographs. Common misunderstandings included references to wind and snow covering the viewfinder.

In (ii), responses needed to state that there was an excessive amount of wind, snow and darkness. All three elements were required to gain credit. Weaker responses were too vague and noted there was a lot of wind, snow and darkness rather than too much of it.

(g) In this question, candidates were advised to answer in about 20 words. Many candidates avoided an introduction and were therefore able to access full marks within the word count. For example, 'She tried to shoot her signal pistol to scare away the polar bear but she couldn't because of her frozen hands.'

Weaker responses contained incomplete sentences and incorrect suggestions that the author was trying to shoot the bear.

(h) In (i) and (ii), candidates gaining credit noted the wording of the question and were able to state the exact meaning of the two words in the material. Where candidates offered a list of synonyms, only the first response could be credited, if correct.

(i) The final question on the exam paper asked candidates to explain the benefit to those experiencing extreme challenges. Candidates were instructed to not repeat material from **Section B**. Candidates gaining credit offered detailed responses. For example, 'They feel victorious if they prove what they are able to accomplish'; 'extreme challenges can make individuals mentally and physically stronger than before'; 'challenges allow people to grow and find their full potential.'

Weaker responses included a repetition of material from **Section B** or were too generalised to gain credit. For example, 'You can overcome your fear' and 'It develops your character.'