

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/11  
Reading

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- followed instructions carefully, responding appropriately to the command words in the question
- read the introductions to the texts carefully
- understood the different requirements of the extended response questions
- paid attention to the guidance offered to help them focus their answers – for example, writing no more than 120 words in **1(f)** the selective summary task and using three precise examples from each of the specified paragraphs in **2(d)**
- considered the marks allocated to each question and developed their response accordingly
- avoided unselective copying and/or lifting from the text
- considered the ideas, opinions and details in the text rather than inventing untethered material
- used their own words where required
- planned the ideas to be used and the route through extended responses before writing, selecting only relevant material for each question
- avoided repetition
- checked and edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

## General comments

Candidates' responses indicated familiarity with the format of the reading paper and the requirements of each question. There were relatively few examples of misunderstanding in terms of task requirements and time-management was generally good with few candidates not attempting all questions.

Candidates seemed to find all three texts accessible, and the majority demonstrated engagement through their responses. Occasionally a failure to follow the rubric or complete a task fully limited opportunities to demonstrate understanding. This was most common in **Question 1(f)** where there was a failure to select only relevant ideas, in **Question 2(c)** where a candidate did not select a clear example from the text provided, or in **Question 2(d)** where some candidates selected long chunks of the language in the specified paragraphs rather than selecting words and phrases or discussed fewer than six language choices.

In **Question 1**, the most effective approach taken by candidates was to work through the tasks in the order presented paying careful attention to the number of marks allocated and the space provided for their responses as helpful indicators of how detailed their answers needed to be. They also referred carefully to the lines or paragraph specified in each question moving carefully through the text as directed. Most candidates remembered to base their responses on evidence from the text to evidence their reading skills, but a few offered unsolicited opinion or comment that could not be rewarded. Less effective responses to **Question 1** tended to lack focus on the question. At times candidates used the language of the text where they had been asked to use own words – for example, in **Question 1(b)(i)** by repeating the word 'diet' instead of explaining it, or in **Question 1(e)** where they copied the explanation of how human actions 'are toxic to bees, damaging their mental capacities and ability to reproduce' instead of using their own words and focusing sharply on the question. This was sometimes an issue in **Question 1(f)** where some candidates copied phrases (or whole chunks of text) rather than remodelling the language of the text in their response.

In **Question 2** candidates were required to select and/or explain carefully selected words or phrases from the text. More effective answers were able to identify choices clearly, consider meanings in context and in

**2(d)** suggest the effects of the powerful language identified, often demonstrating further their understanding of the writer's purpose in an overview. Middle-range answers to **2(d)** tended to focus on the meanings of the language choices showing mostly clear understanding. Less effective responses to both **2(c)** and **2(d)** struggled to develop viable explanations, sometimes repeating the language of the text in the comments. These answers did not always choose appropriate language to discuss and/or in **2(d)** only selected three examples in total.

In **Question 3** the majority of responses addressed all three bullets in the question, although many candidates found it challenging to develop ideas for the third one. Most candidates wrote as Abdul with the best responses developing a convincing voice and an appropriate tone for his journal entries demonstrating understanding of the reflective element of the task. er responses used the ideas and details in the text selectively to work through the bullets logically. They were able to describe the research and preparations undertaken by Abdul before their first day selling smoothies at the market, developing his thoughts and feelings about being in a business partnership with Damian, as well as outlining his future plans and concerns for her business by selecting a range of appropriate ideas and details from the text to develop. Responses in the middle range tended to use the text rather mechanically often writing narratively and paraphrasing closely rather than selecting ideas and details to use in their own writing to demonstrate understanding. Less effective responses tended to lack focus on the text covering only the main ideas and sometimes inventing material that was not tethered to the text. Some responses copied unselectively thus providing little evidence of understanding.

Paper 1 is primarily an assessment of Reading, however 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – 5 marks in **Question 1(f)** and 10 marks in **Question 3**. In these questions, candidates need to pay attention to the quality of their writing to maximise their achievement. Candidates are advised to plan and review their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style and to correct errors that may impede communication.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Question 1**

##### **Questions 1(a)–(e)**

In response to Text A candidates were asked to answer a series of short answer questions. More effective responses paid careful attention to the command words in the instructions as well as the number of marks allocated to individual questions. These responses demonstrated sound understanding by selecting appropriate details and evidence from the text in concise, focused answers. Less effective responses tended to write too much or failed to follow the instruction to use own words. Some candidates offered several possible answers thus using time inefficiently and diluting evidence of understanding.

##### **(a) Which bee is the biggest in a colony, according to paragraph 1?**

In **Question 1(a)** candidates needed to state which bee in a colony is the biggest. Most candidates were able to identify that it was the queen; very few candidates did not gain the mark for this question. Occasionally an answer contained excess material from paragraph 1 which indicated insecure understanding thus denying the mark.

##### **(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:**

- (i) ‘special diet’ (line 3)**
- (ii) ‘sole purpose’ (line 5).**

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were instructed to use their own words to evidence understanding of the phrases in the question. Where answers failed to achieve both of the marks available for each phrase it was usually due to the candidate's partial use of the words from the text. For example, in **Question 1(b)(i)** a number of candidates were able to explain 'special' but then used the word 'diet' thus not fully addressing the task. More effective responses were able to explain the full phrase as used in the context of the text by demonstrating understanding of the queen receiving different or unique food or nourishment. In **Question 1(b)(ii)** more candidates successfully explained the meaning of the whole phrase and gained both marks with many using phrases such as 'only' or 'one' to explain 'sole' and 'role', 'job' or 'objective' to explain 'purpose'. Some candidates offered 'reason' alone for purpose rather than fully explaining it with 'reason for existence'.

(c) **Re-read paragraph 3 ('Bees have different ... deep inside them.').**  
**Give two characteristics that make the early bumblebee and the garden bumblebee different.**

To achieve both marks for this question candidates were required to offer two distinct characteristics such as size, tongue length or agility. If they offered a more specific answer such as 'smaller size', or 'longer tongue' they needed to qualify it with which bumblebee they were referring to. Where candidates failed to gain both marks, it was usually because they were not clear about which bumblebee had a specific characteristic, or because they described the tongue as 'larger' rather than 'longer' which was too vague.

(d) **Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5 ('Plants can ... subject of study.').**

(i) **Identify two ways in which bee pollination is needed for plants.**  
(ii) **Explain how humans have benefited from the existence of bees.**

To answer **Question 1(d)(i)** candidates needed to identify two pieces of evidence from paragraphs 4 and 5 to demonstrate why bee pollination is necessary for plants. Correct responses focused on growth, reproduction and producing food. Most candidates found this question relatively straightforward and were able to gain both marks. A small number of candidates did not read this question carefully and copied the final sentence of the paragraph about a bee's life cycle thus failing to answer the question.

In **Question 1(d)(ii)** many candidates were effective in gaining all the three marks available by referring to the range of food made possible due to bees, the existence of cotton, and the way in which bees have inspired the arts or provided educational material. Some candidates did not get the second or third mark because they only offered two explanations perhaps missing the fact that this was a 3-mark question and therefore required three distinct points to be made. Some offered a vague explanation about food without focusing on the range.

(e) **Re-read paragraph 6 ('But bees ... costing us all.').**  
**Why might some humans disregard the threats to bees?**

This question required candidates to show both explicit and implicit understanding from their reading of paragraph 6. Most candidates were able to achieve at least one mark, a reasonable number gained two-marks, but few gained all three. The most common reason for not gaining all three marks available was insufficient focus on the question which asked them to consider why humans would disregard the threats to bees. Many candidates missed opportunities to target full marks by not linking their general references to urbanisation or intensive farming to factors such as human selfishness or ignorance, the need to build houses or to produce enough food which result in humans disregarding their negative effects on bees. A number of candidates seemed to think the focus of the question was the ways in which human behaviour might harm bees and offered irrelevant explanations.

(f) **According to Text B, what should people consider and do before taking up beekeeping?**  
**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.**  
**Your summary should not be more than 120 words.**

This question was based on Text B and required candidates to select relevant ideas from the text and organise them into a focused summary which addressed the task. Most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of the text and offer some relevant ideas to demonstrate understanding of what people should consider and do before taking up beekeeping.

The most effective responses were carefully planned and coherent, focusing sharply on the task by referring to a wide range of ideas in the text. These responses were often preceded by a bullet-pointed plan in which ideas from the text were noted briefly before being included in a fluent own-words response. Responses in the middle range tended to consider a more limited range of ideas, the most common being the hard work and responsibility, the possible restrictions, the need for protective clothing and where to put the beehive. These responses often missed the more subtle points about getting expert advice, the general expense, the potentially negative responses from neighbours, or the need for appropriate cover when away for a long period. Some less effective responses repeated the same ideas or included unnecessary examples such as a long list of the different considerations when choosing an appropriate site for the hive.

Length was often an indicator of the level of the response with some less effective responses being too short due to a limited number of points being offered and other responses very long and wordy due to the inclusion of unnecessary information and/or personal comments. The most effective responses tended to adhere to the advised length through adopting a concise and focused approach to the task. In most responses there was an attempt to use own words although some candidates did rely on lifting phrases from the text and wrote from the perspective of a beekeeper rather than using an informative style. This included some responses where there was evidence of selection and a range of ideas but also a failure to use own words which is an important aspect of summary writing. Examples of the most commonly lifted phrases were 'hard work and a considerable responsibility', 'live somewhere where there are no restrictions on beekeeping', 'spacesuit-like body and head protection', 'bees fly up to eight kilometres when out foraging for nectar and pollen', 'they should be placed on a level site, receive sun during the day and be sheltered from strong winds', 'stripey occupants', 'a lighter construction', 'trusted friend' and 'bees can't be left for long periods'. Some responses copied indiscriminately without any effort to select relevant ideas. There was also a tendency to include too much introductory information and/or irrelevant or general details about bees.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 1(f)

- re-read Text B after reading the question to identify potentially relevant ideas
- plan the response using brief notes to ensure a wide range of ideas from the text is selected
- avoid including unnecessary details which do not address the question
- avoid including examples
- organise the ideas, synthesising and grouping them where relevant, to ensure that your response is coherent
- avoid repeating ideas
- use your plan rather than the text as you write your answer to avoid lifting
- write clearly and make sure you express yourself fluently in your own words
- do not add comments or your own views
- adopt an informative style
- try to keep to the guidance to 'write no more than 120 words'.

#### Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- (i) Abdul does not feel the same confidence about the future as Damian.
- (ii) Abdul shared his very thorough research with Damian.
- (iii) Damian wished to make his range of smoothies more varied.
- (iv) Damian and Abdul look very thoughtfully at all the bees in the acacia tree.

The most effective answers to **Question 2(a)** focused on only the underlined word or phrase, precisely located the correct version in the text and gave it as the answer. Other responses copied the whole sentence from the question replacing the underlined phrase with the correct words from the text. This was an acceptable approach but unnecessary as it wasted examination time. Answers that used the text more widely than in the equivalent phrase/sentence could not be rewarded even where the correct word/phrase was included incidentally. A few candidates seemed confused about how to respond, offering own words equivalents of the underlined words instead of locating them in the text.

**(b) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:**

A few months earlier, Damian and Abdul had been relaxing in Damian's field, near his beehives. It had been the first mild morning for many months and the two men were sipping Damian's home-made acacia honey and berry smoothies.

- (i) **relaxing**
- (ii) **mild**
- (iii) **sipping**

In **Question 2(b)** the most effective answers considered the meaning of each word as it is used in the text. For example, the word 'relaxing' refers to the two men taking a break, chilling or resting rather than 'de-stressing'. The majority of candidates were able to explain 'relaxing' and 'sipping', but a significant number found 'mild' to describe the weather more challenging.

**(c) Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests the thoughts and feelings of Damian about running his own business.**

**Use your own words in your explanation.**

'I agree with that little bee,' announced Damian, smacking his lips in pleasure at the taste of honey and berries. 'We should venture out of our own hives and taste the sweet nectar of life. Get ahead of the crowd. Nice big shop in the middle of town.'

In **Question 2(c)** candidates were required to select one example of language from the specified section of the text and explain how it suggested the thoughts and feelings of Damian about running his own business. A number of candidates did not follow these instructions but instead offered a very general response with no clear language example selected. These responses tended to offer a general paraphrase of the whole section of text and could therefore not be rewarded as the question was not addressed. The most effective responses offered a concise quotation them considered what the writer suggested about Damian's feelings through the language used. The most popular example was 'We should venture out of our own hives and taste the sweet nectar of life' and many responses explored Damian's desire to leave his comfort zone by expanding the business as well as his certainty success enabling them to enjoy a life of luxuries to the full. Other responses considered the example of 'Get ahead of the crowd' and were able to explore ideas about Damian's competitive nature and tendency to view life as a competition to be won, or 'smacking his lips in pleasure' as evidence of his satisfaction and confidence in his own product. Many candidates were able to offer convincing explanations of 'Nice big shop in the middle of town' and show full understanding of Damian's desire to push everything to the maximum as well as his desire to be at the centre of everything suggesting his need for attention and recognition. Some less effective responses tried to do too much, selecting several examples and therefore only offering slight explanations of each. Only one example could be rewarded so offering more was a waste of valuable examination time that could have been spent on **Question 2(d)** where more developed responses are expected.

**(d) Re-read paragraphs 5 and 11.**

- **Paragraph 5 begins 'The delicate tracery ...' and is about Damian's view of the hive and acacia tree as a worker bee comes out to look for nectar.**
- **Paragraph 11 begins 'A worker bee ...' and is about a bee arriving in the kitchen as Damian thinks about his range of smoothies.**

**Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.**

The most effective responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three appropriate language choices from each of the two paragraphs indicated in the question. The most effective approach was to consider the meanings of carefully chosen phrases in the context of the text and then consider the effect in terms of connotations and the atmosphere or attitudes created by the writer's language choices. These responses often offered a clear overview of the writer's intentions

in each paragraph. Less effective responses were sometimes written in note form and offered less developed analysis or repeated the same general ideas about effects, often making rather vague assertions rather than considering specific words more closely. Middle range responses were usually more effective when explaining meanings but struggled to explore the effects, and the least effective responses tended to offer quotations (sometimes rather unselectively) but struggle to find anything relevant to say about them. A small number of candidates chose three language choices in total rather than three from each paragraph as clearly stated in the question. Some candidates used very long language choices linking the first and last words of the choice using ellipsis thus excluding key language from the response. Choices should be precise and fully quoted in the response for effective exploration of language.

The most effective responses selected precise phrases but also considered the individual words within them suggesting how they worked within the context of the whole language choice. Rather than identifying literary devices they engaged fully with the language, considering its impact and connotations fully and linking each choice to a coherent and developed consideration of the paragraph. In paragraph 8 many were able to explore their individual choices within the context of the view of the hive and acacia tree as a bee emerges to look for nectar. They considered phrases such as 'delicate tracery', and 'dancing a dappled shade' as representing the calm tranquility of the orchard as the sun filters through the leaves moving in the gentle breeze, the artistry of the patterns created was often explored, as well as the peaceful nature of the environment created. They could effectively develop these ideas through other phrases such as 'burst into flower' and also 'cascades of clustered white blossom', or 'turn the trees silver' to explore the impact of Spring on the orchard and the stunning spectacle of the scene created.

Some responses focused more on the bees, selecting language such as 'venture uncertainly', 'drew dizzy spirals in the air', and 'orientated' to discuss the first bee emerging from the hive on a quest to find nectar as confused and trying to get its bearings before working out the direction of its mission. These were sometimes linked to the workings of the hive through 'humming in reverential attendance', 'solitary worker accompanied by hundreds of other labourers', and 'all intent on drinking their fill of nectar' indicating the hive working in unison to serve their queen through their labour and sharing one sole purpose. These choices could all be linked successfully yet considered independently.

In paragraph 11 many responses were able to draw an obvious contrast citing the humorous portrayal of Damian engaging with a bee while pondering on ideas for his range of smoothies. Language such as 'swung', and 'settled momentarily' were used to cite the friendly relationship Damian enjoys with bees as if the bee was a neighbour casually popping in for a chat. This was often developed through exploring the phrases 'carefully probe droplets of honey that had puddled' and 'smiling to itself in self-congratulatory glee' as the bee carefully investigating the quality of its own produce, almost as a scientist in a laboratory, then being full of pride and satisfaction with the findings due to the high quality of the produce.

Some candidates focused on Damian's attempts to communicate with the bee through asking it questions and observing its responses. Phrases such as 'segmented antennae rotated through a full 90 degrees' and 'as if in a quizzical hand gesture' were used to explore how the writer presents the bee as if listening carefully and thoughtfully with the phrase 'contemplative silence consumed' used to indicate that the bee has no answers but joins Damian deep in thought. Many candidates were able to appreciate the quirky and humorous nature of this exchange while acknowledging the importance of the bees in Damian's work.

There was generally little evidence of misreading in the two paragraphs specified in the question, but some candidates found it challenging to explore the language chosen without repeating the words of the original text in their explanations. This was mostly through using words such as 'delicate', 'dancing', 'shade', 'dizzy spirals', 'orientated', 'cascades' and 'solitary worker'. Candidates should ensure that they use their own language to demonstrate full understanding and also be credited for meanings of the words used in the text. Some candidates repeated one general idea for every language choice selected, for example, the peace or beauty of the orchard rather than looking closely at individual choices. Some less effective responses also included long quotations with very general explanations rather than engaging closely with specific words. Very rarely no quotations were included at all with a brief description of the paragraphs offered instead. Such responses did not address the question.

Candidates are reminded that it is the quality of their language analysis which attracts marks. Listing of literary devices and/or the selection of plain language from the text is unlikely to lead to a successful response. Many candidates simply identified literary devices offering vague explanations such as 'it creates a strong image' with no attempt to look at the words themselves. In this question candidates should focus carefully on words used in an interesting or unusual way: for example, rather than simply focusing on 'smiling to itself' to explain the bee was happy, adding the words 'in self-congratulatory glee' to the language choice allows a much more developed exploration through considering the pride exuded or the bee's smug delight in its own creation. Candidates need to exercise care when selecting their language choices to include carefully chosen words to maximise their opportunities for developed discussion.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- make sure that the quotations you select from the text are precise: do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- copy words and choices correctly from the text
- in each part of **2(a)** make sure that your selection is from Text C and is clearly identified – remember you are looking for just a word or phrase to match the sense of the underlined words in the question
- in **2(b)** be careful that your explanation is consistent with how the word is used in context (if unsure, try substituting your answer in the text to check it)
- in **2(c)** try to say three separate things about your one chosen example
- in **2(d)** select precise and accurate language choices from the specified paragraphs
- make sure any explanations of meanings make sense within the context of the text
- avoid very general explanations when explaining language use such as 'this creates a strong visual image', or 'this makes the writing effective': always develop such statements by adding further details to exemplify the statement
- in **2(c)** and **2(d)** try to engage with the language at word level by considering connotations/associations of words and thinking about why the writer has selected them
- in **2(d)** start with the contextualised meaning for each choice, then move on to the effect created by the language in terms of how it helps our understanding of the events, characters, atmosphere etc.

#### Question 3

**You are Abdul. At the end of your first day selling smoothies at the market, you write a journal entry in which you reflect on your experiences.**

**In your journal entry you should:**

- explain the most important considerations you had when wanting to set up the business
- explain your thoughts and feelings about your business partner, Damian, and the advantages and drawbacks of being in business together
- describe how you see your business developing in the future and any concerns you may have.

This question required candidates to write Abdul's journal reflecting on his experiences setting up and running a smoothie business with Damian. The three bullet points in the question offered guidance to candidates to help them identify relevant ideas for their journal entry. The first and second bullets required candidates to retrieve relevant information from the text and develop the ideas to express Abdul's considerations when setting up the business and his thoughts and feelings about running a business with Damian. The third bullet required candidates to infer what plans Abdul may have to improve and develop the business in the future using ideas and clues in the text to indicate possible concerns and support the inferences.

The majority of candidates were able to show general understanding of the text addressing the task by using some of the main ideas in the text to support the response. Many of the responses were also able to develop the ideas by creating a convincing voice for Abdul and interpreting the events from his perspective, evaluating the ideas and adapting them accordingly. Where candidates had followed the bullets carefully, they were often able to develop explicit and implicit ideas effectively to include convincing articulation of Abdul's feelings about the new business venture and his experiences in terms of carrying out careful research and planning to ensure its success. Many dealt with his conflicting feelings about Damian very successfully through acknowledging the longevity of their friendship and his appreciation of Damian's creativity and optimism but balancing this with his concerns about Damian's lack of practical acumen and desire to rush into development before establishing the business fully. Less effective responses tended to

track the text often paraphrasing it closely and therefore lacking development of Abdul's perspective on the events. The least effective responses used the ideas in the text thinly, sometimes repeating the same ideas for all three bullet points and only focusing on Abdul's worries.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to explain what considerations Abdul had when setting up the business requiring candidates to select only the most appropriate ideas. This offered opportunities to look at the research he undertook, such as online advice and a survey, as well as the resources purchased such as a van and freezer. The venue and regularity of sales as well as attempts to attract customers by the quality of the product itself could all be included in response to this bullet point, as well as his overriding aim to make a profit. The most effective approach to this bullet was one where candidates extracted the relevant details and developed them by expressing Abdul's cautious approach and meticulous attention to detail. These responses tended to adopt a reflective tone suitable for a journal in which Abdul is looking back on the preparations made to consider whether they were appropriate and effective. Many cited the time Abdul devoted to the business considerations thus allowing Damian to focus on the product itself. There was little evidence of misreading in response to the first bullet, but some responses did not consider the different aspects of Abdul's preparations, focusing almost solely on the research and the sales venue. Some answers used the text very mechanically in response to this bullet, ignoring opportunities to develop a convincing voice for Abdul.

The second bullet offered many opportunities to explore Abdul's thought and feelings about Damian and the advantages and drawbacks of being his business partner. The best responses balanced Abdul's admiration for Damian's qualities, such as his talents for making delicious smoothies, as well as his positive and cheerful attitude. These responses then considered the potential for conflict created by Abdul's much more methodical and cautious approach citing that while Abdul is irritated by some of Damian's over-ambitious ideas, he is also aware that he and Damian make a good team due to the balance of their talents within the business as well as their long-lasting friendship. Less effective responses to this bullet point focused only on Damian's flaws sometimes exaggerating Abdul's irritation and regret about going into the business at all. These responses ignored the parts of the text which clearly demonstrate their good relationship, and the pleasure Abdul experienced from their successful first day. Some less effective responses simply repeated ideas from the text about Abdul not sharing Damian's optimism with very little attempt to extend his thought and feelings beyond this conflict in approach.

When responding to bullet 3 the most effective responses focused on the evidence in the text such as Damian's ambition to open a shop in the middle of the town, Abdul's fear of rivals, the need to broaden the range of flavours, and Abdul's desire to achieve an eco-friendly business as well as protect the bees. The best responses used these ideas to develop considered suggestions of how Abdul may view the development of the business in the future while acknowledging concerns related to Damian's lack of careful thought and tendency to move too quickly. For example, many candidates conceded that a shop was a great idea but would need more careful planning in terms of its position, as well as thinking about how they would ensure the bees were taken care of. In terms of extending the product range, the best responses considered Damian's suggestion of pizza flavour as likely to be unworkable but then focused on the honey and fruits to suggest ways in which they could further develop an organic or natural approach. Other developments included ideas about improving resources to ensure more product could be made, as well as the possibility of hiring staff. Less effective responses included ambitions for the business which had no grounding in the text at all such as chains of restaurants, or global franchises. These responses often added new material without any tethering to the ideas in the text. These included details about Damian and Abdul's relationship in school, or Abdul planning to set up a completely new business alone.

Candidates seemed comfortable and familiar with the format of journal entry with most adopting an appropriately honest and reflective tone. The less effective responses tended to be too narrative as they relied too heavily on the sequencing of the original text and did not offer reflections and interpretations to adapt the material to indicate what Abdul would be likely to include in his journal. The language used was mostly appropriate and some more effective responses created a wholly convincing voice as Abdul, capturing his caution and diligence but also his intelligence and ambition. In less effective responses the language and voice were rather plain but rarely inappropriate for the character. Some responses were clearly and skilfully written, others struggled to maintain fluency resulting in some awkward expression. Candidates are advised to check through their work carefully to correct errors that may affect meaning and/or fluency. There were few instances of wholesale lifting from the passage, but some candidates were over-reliant on lifted phrases and sentences. Some of the most commonly lifted phrases were Abdul's direct speech in the text: 'All the online advice is that businesses should start slowly. No risk-taking', 'Trying it out once a week in the local market is best', 'My survey suggests that people in the town like smoothies, but they are not prepared to pay too high a price for them', 'facts and figures didn't interest Damian', 'and 'we need a portable

freezer and a big van'. Candidates should be aware that use of own words is necessary both to show understanding of what they have read and also to access writing marks in the higher levels.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- read Text C carefully, more than once, to ensure sound understanding
- pay careful attention to the perspective required for the task: for example, the voice being created and whether you are looking back at the events
- keep the audience and purpose firmly in mind
- do not invent information and material that is not clearly linked to the details and events in the text
- give equal attention to all three bullet points
- briefly plan your response to ensure that you are selecting ideas relevant to all three bullets
- avoid copying from the text: use your own words as far as possible
- do not use details from Texts A and B in your answer to **Question 3**
- remember to use ideas and details from the text but to adapt and develop them appropriately to create a convincing voice and new perspective
- leave some time to check through your response
- do not waste time counting the words: the suggested word length is a guide, not a limit.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/12  
Reading

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- attempted all parts of all questions, paying attention to the marks allocated to each question and organising their response time accordingly
- followed task instructions
- read the details of questions carefully
- based their answers on the correct text and/or section of text
- responded appropriately to the command words in questions
- focused on the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for each question
- avoided repetition of the same idea(s) within an answer
- used their own words where appropriate, avoiding unselective copying and/or lifting from the text
- planned the ideas they were intending to use in longer answers
- checked and edited their responses to correct any unforced errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

## General comments

Candidates' responses indicated that they were familiar with the format of the Reading paper and the general demands of each of the three questions. There were very few instances where whole tasks had not been attempted, though occasionally responses to part questions were incomplete or missing and/or answers were uneven, limiting the possibility of scoring higher marks. Occasionally, candidates attempted to base their answer on the wrong text and/or offered ideas indiscriminately. There were some candidates who missed opportunities to target higher marks by offering mechanical answers that simply played back sections of text with little modification and/or by paying insufficient attention to the details of the question as set.

Candidates appeared to find all three Reading texts equally accessible and engaging, though a failure to recognise the order of events in Text C was evident in some responses. There were relatively few examples of significant misreading across the cohort, though opportunities to evidence understanding of implicit ideas were often missed as a consequence of less careful reading of detail in both texts and tasks. Across the cohort as a whole there were excellent answers to all three questions, with many going significantly above and beyond the expectations for level 5, though candidates do need to ensure that they do not spend too long on one question at the expense of any of the others. For example, it was not unusual for the response to **Question 2(d)** (worth a maximum of 15 marks) to be longer and/or more carefully crafted than the response to **Question 3** (worth up to 25 marks), or for the answer to **Question 2(c)** (worth just 3 marks) to offer more extended explanation of meaning and effect than the response to **Question 2(d)**.

In many of the least effective answers, a failure to complete all aspects of a task and/or a loss of focus on the rubric limited the evidence of understanding and skills offered, or resulted in redundant material: for example, a few candidates offered choices from paragraphs other than 1 and 2 in the language question **2(d)** (sometimes repeating material from the section of text used in **2(c)**). Explanations that were not based on relevant examples could not be credited. Others did not pay attention to the task guidance and so offered just three examples overall in **2(d)** limiting the material for discussion and missing opportunities to target higher marks as a result. Similarly, there were some less well-focused responses from candidates who had scored well in the smaller sub questions but missed opportunities to target higher marks in other higher tariff tasks. For example, some wrote considerably more than the maximum of 120 words advised for the selective summary **Question 1(f)** or wrote their response to **Question 3** in a different form, or from a different

perspective, from that specified in the task guidance. Others unwisely focused solely on the number of words they had written at the expense of other aspects of their answer – spending time counting individual words and/or writing out a full draft version of their answer is unlikely to be an efficient use of time in the context of an examination. Candidates are reminded that the word guidance offered in **Question 2(d)** and **Question 3** is not a requirement of the task in itself: the guidance is offered to help them organise their time efficiently and offer sufficient evidence of their skills and understanding to target higher levels.

In **Question 1**, candidates scoring highly had worked through the tasks in the order presented and made efficient use of their time, for example by paying attention in **Questions 1 (a)–(e)** to the marks and space available as a helpful indicator of the length and detail they needed to offer in each response. They did not add further unnecessary material and focused on answering each question as set. Most candidates were careful to follow the line or paragraph references in the questions to help them to move down Text A in order and direct their attention, though a number of the least effective responses tried to answer questions based on one part of the text from another and/or by unselective copying. A few candidates had not remembered that in a test of comprehension their responses to these initial short answer questions needed to be derived from Text A in order to evidence their Reading skills and should not be based on their personal opinion or outside knowledge.

Less effective responses attempted to include extra guesses in their answers to **Questions 1(a)–(e)** taking up valuable examination time by doing so and often diluting evidence of understanding. Others simply copied out sections of text with limited modification – often negating any suggestion of understanding by doing so. A number of otherwise more effective candidates offered circular answers in one or more of their responses, repeating some or all of the language of the question where own words were specified as required, and/or addressed only part of the question in their answer. Such responses provided limited evidence of understanding as a consequence and these candidates missed out on marks they might reasonably have been expected to target: for example, in **1(b)(i)** by suggesting ‘this means a very small amount. In **Question 1(f)** a few candidates relied heavily on the language of Text B and/or copied out chunks of text (much of which was not relevant to answering the question) limiting the available evidence of their own skills and understanding as a result.

In **Question 2** candidates needed to identify (in **2(a)**) and explain (in **2(b)**) words and phrases from the text, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer via **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task, **Question 2(d)**. More effective answers were careful to refer back to Text C to locate specific relevant choices and consider their meaning in context. In **Question 2(a)** answers that did not indicate clearly the word/phrase that matched the sense of the underlined word/phrase in the question were not providing secure evidence of their understanding. A few candidates attempted to answer **2(a)** in their own words rather than selecting from the text as instructed. Some candidates did not offer answers for all parts of **2(b)**, necessarily missing the possibility of scoring full marks. Likewise, opportunities for marks were missed by a few candidates in **Question 2(c)** who did not clearly identify just one example from the text in their explanation and/or attempted to offer a generalised overview of the whole extract. To aim for higher levels in **Question 2(d)**, candidates should ensure that they have explored and explained the meaning of each of the words they have chosen in some detail before they move on to consider associations and connotations or suggest effects. Most candidates were able to suggest three potentially useful examples for analysis in each half of the **2(d)** task and offer a little basic effect/meaning in context, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently precise or detailed in the examination of their choices. Less effective responses often offered vague, repeated and/or generalised comment. In less effective answers, labelling of devices without explanation of how these examples were working in context, meant opportunities to target higher levels were overlooked. A small number of candidates did not address the **Question 2(d)** task effectively, offering little relevant comment, repeating rather than explaining the language of the original and/or identifying few or no clear choices in one or both halves of the question.

In **Question 3** most responses had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets, though a few candidates lost sight of the task – for example, writing speeches to new game reserve owners or scripting interviews with Frances the narrator rather than her husband Lawrence as directed. Candidates are reminded that responding to the specifics of task as set for that particular text will offer them the widest range of opportunities to demonstrate skills at higher levels in any extended Response to Reading question. Responses across the cohort covered the full range of levels of achievement, with top level answers showing evidence of having established the order of events in the narrative carefully before using, interpreting and developing a wide range of ideas to address all three bullets equally well, integrating key details from the text appropriately. Mid-range responses often missed opportunities as a consequence of uneven focus on the bullets, a lack of planning beforehand and /or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text overall. Less effective responses either offered only brief reference to the passage, included evidence of misreading and/or repeated sections from the text with limited or no modification. Along with unselective copying,

reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and should be avoided.

Though Paper 1 is primarily a test of Reading, 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – divided between **Question 1(f)** and **Question 3**. In these two questions, it is important that candidates consider the clarity, organisation and register of their writing. Where meaning becomes unclear due to inaccurate writing this is likely to limit achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. When responding to **Question 1(f)** and **Question 3**, it is advisable to factor in time to plan and review responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1 Comprehension and summary task**

##### **Questions 1 (a)–(e)**

Short answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** required candidates to read and respond to Text A: The forest elephant. More effective responses paid attention to the paragraph references and command words in the instructions to demonstrate efficiently the evidence of understanding required. Some mid-range responses missed opportunities to target higher marks, for example through overlong or unfocused explanations. The least effective responses often repeated the language of the text where own words were required and/or relied on copying longer sections of text with little or no modification to address the question as set.

Effective responses provided evidence that candidates had understood the need to interpret and use details in the text carefully to answer each of the comprehension questions to show what they could do and understand. They followed the order of the sub questions to work through Text A from the beginning, picking up on pointers where appropriate to help them to identify relevant material. Occasionally, opportunities to evidence understanding were missed where explanations offered were unclear or partial and/or injudicious selection changed the meaning from that of the original text – candidates are reminded that whilst Writing is not assessed in **Questions 1(a)–(e)**, answers do need to be sufficiently precise and clear to communicate details from the text accurately.

**(a) Which type of African elephant can many children identify just from a picture, according to the text?**

In **Question 1(a)**, almost all candidates recognised the reference was to the savannah elephant only, though not all made efficient use of time when responding to this question. Some copied out the whole of the question stem at the beginning of their answer. Though this approach was acceptable, simply writing the key words of their answer was sufficient.

**(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:**  
**(i) 'Very little' (line 4)**  
**(ii) 'highly elusive' (lines 4 and 5).**

In **Question 1(b)** task guidance made it clear that use of own words was required to evidence understanding. Where answers failed to score both marks it was sometimes the result of offering a partial explanation only and/or a failure to consider meaning in context, for example in **Question 1(b)(i)** offering a meaning for 'little' (such as in connection to the animal's size) that did not relate to its specific use in this text and/or offering a relevant meaning for 'elusive' but not dealing with/repeating the word 'highly'. In **1(b)(i)** some effective answers covered both aspects of the phrase by offering alternatives that worked well in context such as 'not much'/'hardly anything'.

(c) **Re-read paragraph 3 ('In March 2021 ... their preservation.').**

**Give two possible reasons why the IUCN updated the forest elephant's status to 'critically endangered'.**

In **Question 1(c)** many candidates re-reading paragraph 3 closely were able to identify all three reasons in the text – though only two were required to score maximum marks. Most had understood that it was the dramatic drop in numbers that prompted the IUCN to update the forest elephant's status and/or that the move was designed to raise public awareness. Many also suggested that the decision was a reaction to previous inaction, recasting the final sentence to communicate that idea clearly. Copying phrases/sections of paragraph 3 indiscriminately diluted evidence of understanding in some answers: for example, 'let alone taken steps to aid their preservation' on its own did not communicate understanding of a reason for the change in the elephant's status.

(d) **Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5 ('Genetic analysis ... curved tusks.').**

- (i) **Identify two methods by which scientists could tell that the savannah elephant and the forest elephant were different types.**
- (ii) **Explain how the physical features of forest and savannah elephants are different.**

Candidates who paid attention to command/key words in the question were best placed to offer creditworthy responses and make efficient use of their time. Effective answers were able to distinguish between the methods used by scientists (targeted in part (i) and the differences in physical features of the two elephants (required for part (ii)). On occasion, candidates offered suggestions in their answer to one part of the question that would have been more appropriate to the other. Responses to 1(d)(i) scoring just one mark had often spotted genetic analysis, but then lost sight of the question, moving on to describe features rather than methods. Likewise in 1(d)(ii), candidates paying attention to the word 'different' were careful to compare the description of each elephant in the text, reworking information to offer secure evidence of close reading and score the maximum 3 marks. At times opportunities to score were missed where information was copied or used incorrectly: for example, some suggested that savannah elephants had thicker, more curved ears/tasks.

(e) **Re-read paragraph 6 ('If we care about ... many other animals.').**

**Using your own words, explain how the rainforest may be affected if the forest elephant ceases to exist.**

In **Question 1(e)** the most effective explanations reworked the relevant information from paragraph 6, using their own words as appropriate, to identify three distinct effects on the rainforest if forest elephants did not exist. Some candidates offered evidence of their understanding of what would be lost – clearly outlining the current role of forest elephant – others explained how things would be without them; either approach was acceptable.

(f) **What makes volunteer tourism in an elephant park worthwhile for the animals and for the human volunteers, according to text B?**

**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible. Your summary should not be more than 120 words.**

In their responses to **Question 1(f)** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas from Text B: Volunteering with elephants and some understanding of the requirements of the selective summary task. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea, misreading and/or inclusion of extra details meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks. A failure to recast information from the passage to address the question sometimes diluted evidence of focus and/or understanding in less effective responses.

Where responses were most effective, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words and to keep their explanations concise. Overview was evidenced in some of the most effective answers where relevant ideas had been carefully selected from different parts of the text and organised helpfully for their reader – for example, to first deal with positives for the animals and

then to move on to how the human volunteers might benefit. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal or no rewording or reorganisation of the original, often resulting in redundancy and/or points that argued against experiences in elephant parks. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and/or sentences from the text. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to demonstrate their understanding and effectively address the selective summary task.

The most effective responses to the selective summary task showed evidence of candidates having planned a route through the content of their answer before writing their response. Many had produced and followed a useful bullet point plan. There were some extremely effective and well-crafted responses that demonstrated both concision and precise understanding over a wide range of relevant ideas. In partially effective answers, excess often arose from attempts to offer unsolicited advice to anyone considering volunteering and/or focus was lost due to misreading of details such as who was paid for volunteering. Some reading less carefully did not make the distinction between volunteers working at the park and tourists visiting on a day trip. On occasion, there was repetition of ideas as the result of an unnecessary introduction or conclusion to the response.

Most candidates appeared to be aware of the need to try to use their own vocabulary where feasible – without changing or blurring the original idea – and to organise points helpfully for their reader. However, some candidates overlooked the need for concision in a selective summary task and offered lengthy explanation, with a few candidates continuing to write far more than the maximum of 120 words advised in the task guidance. Others adhered to the advised length of the response but took far too long to explain just a few, sometimes repeated, ideas.

The majority of candidates showed at least some awareness of the need to select only those ideas relevant to the focus of the question, though not all were able to select ideas efficiently to navigate around more obviously redundant material – for example, the argument that some ‘projects are unethical and frankly damaging to the well-being of elephants’ and/or the anecdotes around the behaviour of shy/brave members of one herd.

More effective responses were not dependant on the structure or language of Text B to communicate their ideas and were consequently able to offer more concise explanations. They remembered to keep in mind the dual focus of ‘animals’ and ‘human volunteers’, centred on worthwhile/positive aspects only and ignored/recast anything appearing in the original text as a disadvantage or less appealing possibility.

Less effective responses sometimes relied on trying to offer an own words version of the whole text in the order it was presented and often repeated ideas and/or included unnecessary or inappropriate detail as a result. In these answers, excess was often a significant feature limiting achievement. A small number of candidates misread or miscopied details in the text, for example suggesting incorrectly that volunteers could buy fruit and vegetables, set animals free and/or singlehandedly improve the image of conservation. Many missed opportunities to target own words and indicate more secure understanding by failing to reword phrases from the text such as ‘my self-confidence soared’ and ‘good balance’. Some copied out rather than interpreted phrases where the relevant idea was more implicit and needed to be teased out – for example suggesting that ‘picking up elephant dung for research’ was an advantage for anyone volunteering rather than showing understanding that the research aspect was what made this activity worthwhile.

The least effective responses were almost entirely reliant on the language of the original. Candidates are reminded that lifting sections of text and splicing them together is unlikely to evidence understanding of either the ideas in the passage or requirements of the task.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 1(f):**

- after reading the task instructions, re-read Text B to identify all those ideas that are potentially relevant to the focus of the question
- discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the specific focus of the question
- plan the ideas you are going to include ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted in your plan - check that they are distinct and complete

- identify in your plan where you have repeated ideas or listed similar examples which could be covered instead by one ‘umbrella’ point
- return to the text to ‘sense check’ any ideas you are unsure of before you try to use them
- organise and sequence your ideas to make them clear to your reader; do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the original text
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the text themselves would understand
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- check back after writing your answer to ensure that you have included all of the ideas you planned to, but not repeated anything
- you do not need to count every word, but you should keep in mind the guidance to write ‘no more than 120 words’ and aim to be concise.

## Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- (i) Different terrains and landscapes were spread far and wide over River Game Reserve.
- (ii) The rain on the night that the elephants arrived was extremely heavy.
- (iii) The elephants escaping the game reserve were moving quickly and with heavy footsteps towards their former home.
- (iv) Celia was strong enough to have pulled Lawrence into the elephant enclosure.

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified the correct word or phrase from Text C: River Game Reserve to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example in each part of **Question 2(a)** – simply and efficiently giving the exact word or phrase only as their answer.

Candidates should note that it is not necessary to write answers to **Question 2(a)** in full sentences and providing only the words required to answer the question is likely to be a more efficient use of their examination time.

Marks were sometimes missed where answers were unfocused – for example, offering responses that covered only part of the meaning of the underlined phrase, or adding in extra words from the text that went beyond the meaning of the underlined words, such as ‘a beautiful mix of river, savannah and forest’ in **2(a)(i)** or ‘through the wires’ in **2(a)(iv)**. Very occasionally, candidates had misread the instruction to ‘identify a word or phrase from the text’ and tried to offer an explanation of meaning in their own words. A few unsuccessful answers to part **ii** were given in relation to the size of the trucks (such as huge/articulated) rather than the rain.

(b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:**

Just as the trucks pulled into the game reserve, a tyre exploded, and the vehicle tilted dangerously in the mud. My heart froze at the elephants’ terrified trumpeting and screeching. It wasn’t until dawn that we managed to get them into the secure enclosure.

- (i) exploded
- (ii) froze
- (iii) screeching

In **Question 2(b)**, some answers offered just one carefully chosen word or phrase as their answer, whilst others offered longer explanations as evidence of their understanding. Either approach could be creditworthy, though candidates should be careful not to dilute evidence of understanding by offering several suggestions and extra guesses of different meanings that are contradictory and/or not in line with the text. Effective answers had considered the precise meaning in context of each of the words underlined, recognising for example that froze was being used figuratively to suggest that it felt to Francis like her heart had stopped and was not connected to cold temperatures or ice. A number of candidates were unsure of the precise meaning of ‘screeching’ – for example, suggesting incorrectly that it meant stopping suddenly or too generally that it was a noise made by the elephants. Many were able to offer a reasonable suggestion for the meaning of exploded in part **(i)** though not all managed to communicate understanding of the force involved and so couldn’t not be credited – for example suggesting far milder, less accurate, guesses such as punctured, deflated or cracked.

(c) Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests Lawrence's feelings about the situation with the elephants.

Use your own words in your explanation.

Night after night, Lawrence stayed as close to the secure enclosure as he dared, singing to those angry elephants, talking to them and telling them stories until he was hoarse. With tender determination and no shortage of foolhardiness, Lawrence breached Celia's terror of humans and gained her trust.

In **Question 2(c)**, those candidates who had focused clearly on using just one example taken from the text extract as instructed were best placed to demonstrate their understanding. Some underlined or bracketed their chosen example in the text, others copied it out as a subheading for their explanation; either approach was acceptable.

Effective answers included those which began with an explanation of the meaning of the key word(s) in their example, ahead of going on to explain what those meaning(s) suggested about Lawrence's feelings at that point. Many responses centred their answer around all/part of the description of Lawrence 'singing to those angry elephants, talking to them and telling them stories until he was hoarse' though not all were able to find their own words to explain it and instead repeated phrases/words from within the extract such as that it showed determination and/or how he wanted to gain their trust. Other candidates selected 'tender determination' as their chosen example and were generally able to exploit this to good effect, suggesting something of the mixture of compassion and sheer grit it indicated. Some who had selected the whole image of 'tender determination and no shortage of foolhardiness' missed opportunities to target higher marks by not explaining/understanding the oxymoron. Some misinterpreted the phrase 'no shortage of foolhardiness' to mean that Lawrence was not being foolhardy and should have been. Relatively few candidates chose to explain the word 'dared' – even when they had selected the example 'stayed as close to the secure enclosure as he dared', though those who did were often able to unpack it particularly effectively and score full marks.

The most effective responses had carefully noted the number of marks available and focused their response to make three distinct points in relation to their one chosen example. Less effective responses often attempted to discuss more than one example – time that might have been more profitably spent in **Question 2(d)** where there were up to 15 marks available. Some less effective responses did not pay careful attention to the instruction to select from the given extract and attempted unwisely to paraphrase the whole extract and/or discuss it in very general terms. On occasion, opportunities were missed to offer evidence of understanding of Lawrence's feelings by selecting an example that did not relate to his feelings – for example 'gained her trust' was selected and misrepresented as evidence that Lawrence trusted Celia.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 1 and 2.

- Paragraph 1 begins 'Whenever Celia, the lead elephant ...' and is about Celia and her elephant babies visiting the narrator and Lawrence's home on River Game Reserve.
- Paragraph 2 begins 'Celia has a soft spot ...' and is about Celia's attitude to Lawrence.

Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.

Effective responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of **six** choices (three relevant selections from each paragraph) often beginning by explaining the literal meaning of the choice and then moving on to explore effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language through detailed discussion of focused choices centred around images, individual words or phrases. Where candidates had considered all of the key words in slightly longer choices, they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses, though candidates do need to be careful to choose and explain examples of interesting or powerful language use precisely and deliberately, rather than simply offer whole sentences from the paragraph with a general comment in the hope there will be something useful in there. Occasionally some candidates did not indicate any clear choices for explanation, offering instead a general summary of each paragraph that did not address the task and could not be credited.

Some candidates used each of their choices as a sub-heading for their explanation of it to good effect, though candidates repeating the language of the text within their explanations missed opportunities to target higher marks. The most effective responses considered words within their choices individually, as well as suggesting how they worked within the longer phrase and/or in the context of the description as a whole. Rather than selecting the first three choices in each half they came across, or the most 'obvious' literary devices, effective responses often set out to identify those relevant selections that they felt best able to explain. Some of the most effective responses spent some time exploring interesting contrasts between how the words were working in this context and their initial expectations of those words – for example noting that 'gossipy catch-up' might usually refer to casual conversation between close human friends, yet here the interaction was between a human and an elephant. The best responses had often recognised that the romanticised and amusing presentation of the relationship was coming to readers from the perspective of Frances. Responses at level 5 frequently analysed their choices precisely and offered answers that were balanced across both parts of the question. In the mid-range, answers were often uneven in favour of one paragraph or the other and opportunities were missed where the same or very similar general suggestion was offered for more than one choice.

Choices from paragraph one often centred around the idea of the elephants' curiosity with candidates recognising that their motivations were being offered to us as if they were capable of human thought. Not all however had understood that although the visits being described came in paragraph one of the text these events were happening a considerable time after the elephants' arrival, with the elephants now perceived by Frances as presenting little or no actual threat to either humans or the cat. 'Immediately curl up like periscopes' was a popular choice – though where it had been chosen simply as it was an example of a simile candidates sometimes found difficulty in explaining it. Some answers suggested that there might be military associations in the use of periscopes to scan – connecting with the idea of spying on a target ahead of a mission – but missed opportunities to connect to other choices in the paragraph such as 'daring(fruit) raid' or 'charge' to offer an overview. Likewise images connected to the 'exuberant elephant babies' movement and/or physical presence in paragraph one were identified by many, though fewer considered precisely the nature of the features and actions described, with only the most effective answers explaining precisely how 'gangling', 'floppy' and 'swinging' might suggest their uncoordinated, carefree immaturity. A number commented generally that the baby elephants sounded 'cute'/like toys but did not always support that suggestion with close reference to relevant words such as 'bundle', 'tiny' and 'floppy'.

Occasionally, limiting their comments to an explanation of just one word within longer choices meant some candidates offered partially effective explanations only – for example, not all considered the word 'appetising' in 'appetising whiff' and so overlooked what it suggested about the elephants' intentions regarding the fruit. Many less effective answers dealing with the popular choices of 'blissful slumbers' and/or 'rudely disturbed' did little more than repeat /replay the wording of the text, sometimes going on to demonstrate misunderstanding by suggesting incorrectly that the baby elephants chased Lawrence.

More general initial comments around the endearing relationship between Celia and Lawrence as described in paragraph two were carefully supported by examination of relevant choices in a good number of answers, with some candidates then going on to compare and contrast effectively the potential power of the beast as suggested by rumbles and the control/affection implied by the careful/relaxed movement of the animal. Others limited their success overall by simply repeating over and over in relation to paragraph two, the idea of the Celia and Lawrence having a comfortable friendship/the two caring for each other, without discussing how, in what way(s) or why a particular image suggested that. Some misinterpreted 'ambles' as suggesting a quick forceful movement and/or offered the incorrect idea that Celia loved Lawrence so much she was struggling through dense scrubland to be with Lawrence.

The least effective answers to **2(d)** offered generic empty comments such as 'The writer's use of language is very effective' and 'The writer has used lots of adjectives and images to describe how the elephants visit the house'. Comments like these are not helpful to candidates since they do not evidence any understanding of how language is working in a particular given section of the text and can create a false sense of security, meaning candidates move on without saying anything more concrete. Satisfactory responses to the task offered a clear explanation of the literal meaning of each example they had chosen, whilst stronger answers also identified effect. Candidates working at higher levels were often able to visualise images, using explanation of precise meaning/what you could 'see happening' in context as the starting point for their explanation of effect. Less effective

responses often only labelled devices and/or offered no more than a generic explanation of the writer's reasons for using them.

Repetition of the vocabulary of the text to communicate ideas in the explanations offered was common in less effective responses – in particular, 'soft', 'scent' and 'greeting' were often repeated. Repetition of the same generalised explanation for each choice by some candidates often meant that they missed opportunities to present more convincing evidence of their understanding. Likewise labelling of devices was offered by some candidates in place of more fruitful exploration and explanation of the language itself, meaning opportunities to target higher levels were missed.

In **Question 2(d)**, it is the quality of the analysis when considering how language is being used which attracts marks. Candidates are reminded that their Writing skills are not being assessed in this question. They should be encouraged to work at the very edges of their vocabulary range as they explore and explain each choice – reaching to find the right words to help explain their choice precisely, rather than limiting their answer to those words they are sure they can spell correctly, could be helpful for some candidates.

Answers which simply list literary devices used and/or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks. Selections in **Question 2(d)** need to be clear and deliberate, helping to focus the analysis which follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are unlikely to be useful and/or result in very thin general comments at best. Opportunities were missed in a small number of answers where choices were from one paragraph only or only three choices were offered overall. The most effective answers were often able to 'talk their reader through' their understanding of words within relevant choices, considering different possibilities of meaning, associations and connotations, ahead of arriving at an understanding of how and why these particular words might have been used by the writer in this context.

#### Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- make sure that the quotations you select from the text are precise; do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- copy words and choices correctly from the text
- in each part of **2(a)** make sure that your selection is from Text C and is clearly identified; remember you are looking for just a word or phrase to match the sense of the underlined words in the question
- in **2(b)** be careful that your explanation is consistent with how the word is used in context (if unsure, try substituting your answer in the text to check it)
- in **2(c)** try to say three separate things about your one chosen example
- in **2(d)**, choose 3 examples from each of the two specified paragraphs (6 choices in total)
- only offer an overview in **2(d)** if you have spotted that there is a relevant connection between your chosen choices in a paragraph
- where you are trying to explain meaning, read your answer back to check that your explanation makes sense
- when explaining how language is working avoid empty comments such as 'the writer helps us to picture the scene'; you need to say how your chosen example does this to show your understanding
- make sure your explanations in **2(d)** deal with each of the key words within an identified choice separately as well as how they work together
- when you are unsure how to explain the effect in **2(d)**, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice and work from there
- when you are trying to explore and explain images, consider the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create
- allow time to edit your answers – for example, to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

### Question 3

You are Lawrence. You are interviewed about the elephants in River Game Reserve for a magazine article about animal conservation.

The interviewer asks you the following three questions only.

- How did you come to be responsible for the elephants and what were your concerns before they arrived?
- What challenges did you face when the elephants came into your care and how did you deal with them?
- How are the elephants settling now and what advice would you give other game reserve owners about elephants?

Write the words of the interview.

Having worked through **Question 2** and already familiarised themselves with Text C, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to adopt the perspective of the narrator's husband, Lawrence, in this extended Response to Reading task. The task guidance invited candidates to write the words of Lawrence's interview with a journalist writing an article about animal conservation for a magazine. Some candidates missed the opportunity to offer and develop a range of key ideas appropriately by opting instead to answer the question as Frances and limited the development they were able to offer as a result.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood both the narrative and task in at least general terms. Some in the mid-range though misused potentially useful details and information in their explanation of how the elephants came to be at the reserve (bullet one) and/or confused timescales – for example, suggesting that Lawrence had first met the elephants when they attempted a fruit raid on his house and/or that Lawrence and Celia had been firm friends before her herd moved in. Some moved away from evidence in this text completely to suggest that Lawrence had been volunteering at an elephant park and/or had bought a reserve where elephants were previously being exploited or mistreated. Where candidates had planned their response beforehand, they were often able to draw on relevant ideas and details from throughout the text to address each bullet effectively, with some choosing to begin their answer with bullet 3 by offering advice to other game reserve owners supported by evaluation of Lawrence and Frances' own experience as detailed in the text.

In mid-range answers, ideas for bullet two were often only touched on through recounting some of the details of the elephants' arrival in the trucks and subsequent escape, whereas more secure responses were able to offer development by interpreting the experience from Lawrence's viewpoint looking back. In bullet three, some candidates did little more than repeat the question asserting that the elephants were settled now, without any details in support of that and/or a failure to address the second part of the question re advice. Candidates responding to the text and task more carefully were able to pick up on suggestions that though challenging and potentially risky, the experience of adopting the elephants was something had Lawrence found rewarding, with the elephants now acclimatised and feeling like part of the family. Many were able to advise against underestimating the intelligence of the animals and also teased out a range of ideas effectively by considering the subtle differences in behaviour and response between the herd as whole, the baby elephants and the lead elephant, Celia. The best answers often recognised that the process of settling in the elephants had taken several years and were able to suggest both the patience required and the effect that the twists and turns in that process had had at various points on the feelings of the humans involved.

Responses that relied on mechanically tracking back through the text and replaying the passage often offered a more limited range of ideas overall, missing opportunities to evidence understanding of implicit ideas and suggestions. The least effective responses copied sections of text with minimal modification and/or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading of key details and information for example, some reading less closely suggested that Celia was Lawrence's wife and/or that Frances was Lawrence's husband.

The best answers showed evidence that candidates had identified relevant ideas and details from the text before writing, considering which bullet the information they had located best suited and how the perspective of Lawrence, might differ from/add to that of the narrator Frances. For example, some answers suggested that Frances' amused recollections were somewhat different from her initial feelings and that she had needed time to become relaxed and trusting of the elephants.

On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of an interview and many were able to write reflectively, establishing and maintaining an appropriately formal/casual register according to their interpretation of the scenario. Occasionally, candidates chose to write as if Lawrence was on a TV or radio show, which though outside the details of the task did not generally get in the way. However, where candidates lost sight of both the form and purpose for writing for example writing a speech for new reserve owners and/or a letter home about their experiences of working with elephants, responses were likely to be less effective. In the least effective responses, overreliance on the language of the text limited success and/or expression became awkward as a consequence of poor control and/or inconsistencies of style. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to read back through their response to correct any mistakes or weaknesses in their use of language – for example to ensure that meaning is clear and that the register sounds consistently appropriate. In the least effective answers, copying whole sections of text was not uncommon. This adversely affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- remember to base your answer on the ideas and details you find in Text C only
- keep in mind the audience, form and purpose for your response
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage; look for the clues and evidence in the text to help you make judgements about characters and situations
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points: the bullet points are designed to help you to identify a wide range of relevant ideas
- plan a route through your answer beforehand: you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and / or link ideas from each
- do not copy directly from the text: use your own words as far as you can to express ideas
- try to do more than just repeat details of what happened: developing ideas allows you to better show your understanding, for example by explaining feelings or commenting from the point of view of the character you are writing as
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

Paper 0500/13  
Reading

## Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- worked through the texts and tasks in the order set
- attempted all parts of all questions, paying attention to the marks allocated to each question and organising their response time accordingly
- followed instructions and references carefully to base their answers on the correct text/section of text for each task – for example, indicating clearly the one example from the text extract they were using in **2(c)** and choosing six examples in total from the correct paragraphs in **2(d)**
- used their own words where specified in the question
- avoided unselective copying and/or lifting from the text where appropriate
- planned their ideas for extended responses before writing – keeping the focus of the question in mind
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition of the same idea within an answer
- developed relevant ideas, opinions and details from the text in the extended Response to Reading task rather than inventing untethered material
- checked and edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas, or unclear points.

## General comments

Candidates' responses indicated familiarity with the format and question types on the paper. The texts proved to be engaging and accessible to nearly all candidates and candidates responded positively to both texts and questions. Most candidates attempted every question on the Reading paper; examiners reported very few incomplete papers. There were some excellent answers to all three questions, though some candidates missed opportunities to target higher marks by offering mechanical answers that simply played back sections of text with little modification and/or by paying insufficient attention to the details of the question as set. Candidates do need to ensure that they read the questions carefully, particularly in the lower tariff questions, and do not include information in one question that belongs in another.

In **Question 1**, candidates scoring highly had worked through the tasks in the order presented and made efficient use of their time, for example by paying attention in **Questions 1(a)–(e)** to the marks and space available as a helpful indicator of the length and detail they needed to offer in each response. They focused on answering each question and did not add further unnecessary material. Most candidates were careful to follow the line or paragraph references in the questions to help them to move down Text A in order, though several of the least effective responses tried to answer questions based on one part of the text from another and/or by unselective copying – often negating any suggestion of understanding by doing so. They also often included extra guesses taking up valuable examination time, as well as diluting evidence of understanding. Several candidates addressed only part of the question in their answer. Such responses provided limited evidence of understanding therefore and missed marks they might reasonably have expected to target – for example in **1(b)(i)** 'distance' was often repeated rather than explained. In **Question 1(f)** a few candidates wrote excessively long explanations or relied heavily on the language of Text B and/or copied out chunks of text, rather than remodelling the language of the text in their response, which limited the available evidence of their understanding as a result.

In **Question 2** candidates were required to select and/or explain selected words or phrases from Text C. In **Question 2(a)** those who copied out whole sections or sentences from the text, rather than identifying the exact word/phrase that matched the sense of just the underlined word/phrase in the question, were not providing secure evidence of their understanding. Likewise, opportunities for marks were missed by a few candidates in **Question 2(c)** who did not clearly identify just one example from the text in their explanation and/or attempted to offer a generalised overview of the whole extract. To aim for higher levels in **Question 2(d)**, candidates should ensure that they explore and explain the meaning of each of the words they have chosen in some detail before moving on to consider associations and connotations or suggest effects. Most candidates were able to suggest three potentially useful examples for analysis in each half of the **2(d)** task and offer a little basic effect/meaning in context, though several candidates were not sufficiently clear, careful or detailed in the examination of their choices. Vague and generalised comment and/or labelling of devices without explanation of how these were working in this instance was a feature of less effective responses. A small number of candidates offered little relevant comment, repeating rather than explaining the language of the original, and/or identifying few or no clear choices in one or both halves of the question

In **Question 3** most responses had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets, though a few candidates lost sight of the task or text – for example, writing a letter from Simon’s perspective or confusing Tassos with the Underground City. Candidates are reminded that responding to the specifics of the task as set for that text will offer them the widest range of opportunities to demonstrate skills at higher levels in any extended Response to Reading question. Responses across the cohort covered the full range of levels of achievement, with top level answers offering responses that used, interpreted and developed a wide range of ideas to address all three bullets equally well, integrating key details from Text C. Mid-range responses often missed opportunities as a consequence of uneven focus on the bullets and/or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text overall. Less effective responses either offered only brief reference to the passage, included evidence of misreading and/or repeated sections from the text with limited or no modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and should be avoided.

Candidates should be aware that although Paper 1 is primarily a test of Reading, 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – divided between **Question 1(f)** and **Question 3**. In these two questions, it is important that candidates consider the clarity, organisation and register of their writing. Where meaning becomes unclear due to inaccurate writing this is likely to limit achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. It is advisable to factor in time to plan and review responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Question 1 Comprehension and summary task**

##### **Questions 1(a)–(e)**

Short answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** required candidates to read and respond to Text A: What are earthscrapers? More effective responses paid attention to the paragraph references and command words in the instructions to demonstrate efficiently the evidence of understanding required, as well as the number of marks allocated to individual questions. Less effective responses tended to write too much or failed to follow the instruction to use own words. Some candidates offered several possible answers thus using time inefficiently and diluting evidence of understanding.

**(a) What is the name of the type of building that is built a long distance downwards into the ground?**

In **Question 1(a)**, most candidates recognised that earthscrapers or inverted skyscrapers was the name of the type of building that is built a long distance downwards into the ground. Some candidates made use of the question stem to help focus their answer, whilst others simply wrote the key words of their answer – either approach was acceptable. Some read less carefully and offered incorrect answers such as ‘skyscrapers’ or offered misspellings of earthscrapers.

**(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:**

- (i) ‘impressive distance’ (line 4)
- (ii) ‘countless structures’ (line 5).

In **Question 1(b)** task guidance made it clear that use of own words was required to evidence understanding. Where answers failed to score both marks, it was sometimes the result of offering a partial explanation only, for example, in **Question 1(b)(i)** offering a meaning for ‘impressive’ but repeating rather than explaining ‘distance’, and in **Question 1 (b)(ii)** suggesting the phrase meant ‘an infrastructure’. In **1(b)(i)** effective answers often explained ‘distance’ simply as length, depth or way, as opposed to ‘height’. In **1(b)(ii)** they recognised that in context ‘countless’ referred to many, lots of or numerous rather than something infinite. Effective answers to both parts of **1(b)** were able to evidence that they had securely understood the meaning of both aspects of each question, most often by offering straightforward synonyms for each word.

**(c) Re-read paragraph 2 (‘Countless structures ... architectural plans.’). Give two reasons why an underground car park could not be described as an ‘earthscraper’.**

In **Question 1(c)** candidates re-reading paragraph 2 closely were able to identify two distinct reasons in the text; most had picked up on at least one of the suggestions that the setting was shallow and/or that no earthscrapers had been built yet. Some offered a second idea by repeating their first using different language such as they are not deep enough or earthscrapers are fictional. There was also some confusion around describing carparks as multifunctional rather than earthscrapers.

**(d) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4 (‘One proposal ... the project.’).**

- (i) **Give two ways in which Mexico City might benefit if an earthscraper was built.**
- (ii) **Explain why building the Mexico City earthscraper could be seen as problematic?**

Candidates who paid attention to command/key words in the question were best placed to offer creditworthy responses and make efficient use of their time. Effective answers in **1d(i)** were able to give two ways in which Mexico City might benefit if an earthscraper was built from the three described in the text. Likewise, in **1d(ii)**, candidates paying attention to the word ‘problematic’ used information from the text, reworking it to offer secure evidence of close reading and score the maximum 3 marks. On occasion, candidates offered suggestions in their answer to one part of the question that would have been more appropriate to the other or **Question 1(e)** – for example, suggesting erroneously that the construction would be expensive or cause pollution. Other missed opportunities by offering incomplete ideas – for example, not explaining clearly the need to employ an exceptional workforce by just referring to ‘human ingenuity’ – or by merely stating the problem of ‘restricted space and growing populations’ without focusing on the perceived ‘benefit’. A small number of responses lost marks by copying from the section of the text in its entirety without any modification to show understanding.

**(e) Re-read paragraph 5 (‘There are mixed feelings ... to consider too.’).**

**Using your own words, explain why some people might be against earthscrapers.**

**Question 1(e)** required candidates to show both explicit and implicit understanding from their reading of paragraph 5. Most candidates were able to achieve one mark, a reasonable number gained two marks, but fewer gained all three. The most common correct idea was it was expensive to construct or there were other financial priorities. Many candidates were able to cite the effect on the environment, or that energy was needed to cool and heat it. Where marks were lost, it was usually because the candidate seemed unaware that this was a three-mark question so three clearly differentiated points were needed, or they copied unselectively from the text and therefore offered ‘traffic congestion and pollution above ground’ instead of suggesting that these would increase as a result of the construction of earthscrapers.

(f) **According to Text B, in what ways can someone buying and living in their first underground home ensure that it is a positive experience?**

**You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible. Your summary should not be more than 120 words.**

**Question 1(f)** was based on Text B: Buying an underground house and required candidates to select relevant ideas from the text and organise them into a focused summary which addressed the task. Most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of the text and offer some appropriate ideas for someone buying and living in their first underground house to ensure it is a positive experience. Effective responses were often preceded by a bullet-pointed plan in which ideas from the text were noted briefly before being included in a fluent own-words response. The most effective responses were carefully planned, organised and coherent, focusing sharply on the task by referring to a wide range of ideas from the text, reordering the material where necessary to aid fluency and achieve logical progression, avoiding repetition and re-modelling the wording of the text to use own words effectively. Responses in the middle range tended to include a more limited range of relevant ideas; the most common was being positive, buying a pre-built home, joining an existing underground community, having good drainage and effective insulation. Several candidates failed to read the question carefully and presented 'research' as being 'challenging' rather than focusing on 'research' as a prerequisite of a 'positive experience'. Some candidates failed to spot similar ideas such as finding an underground community and a potential support network. This led to repetition. There was often inclusion of excess material even where a good range of ideas had been considered, particularly focusing on the stories they had read online – often phrases such as 'subsequent leaks, mould and repairs' were lifted. Some less effective responses closely paraphrased the whole text, included irrelevant ideas and details, and repetition as outlined above. A common misreading was that homeowners should get pets or encourage frogs as predators to keep 'uninvited' wildlife out.

In most responses there was an attempt to use own words, although a large number of candidates did rely on lifting phrases from the text. The most commonly lifted sections of text/phrases were, 'a positive mindset was required', 'find a pre-built home in an underground community', 'advice and a potential support network', 'The huge dome-shaped glass entrance gave us considerable natural light', 'There was also an open area at the centre of the house', and 'we installed a small pond for turtles and the several varieties of frogs and toads that are found locally'. Where candidates rely heavily on the wording of the text, despite selecting some appropriate ideas, the focus and quality of their response will be affected. These responses often showed limited focus on the positives of buying and living in an underground home and were often not structured helpfully. The least effective responses also tended to include too much introductory and irrelevant detail through not adapting the language and style of the original text.

Length was often an indicator of the level of the response in the selective summary task, with some responses being too short due to a small number of relevant ideas identified, and others very long and wordy due to unnecessary information and comments or quotations to exemplify comments. The least effective responses were overly reliant on the language of the original, with a small number of responses offering no creditable content as they were entirely copied from the text. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and/or sentences from the text as this is unlikely to evidence understanding of either the ideas in the passage or requirements of the task. The most effective responses tended to adhere to the advised length through adopting a concise and focused approach to the task while adapting the style to produce a plain, informative text.

**Advice to candidates on Question 1(f):**

- after reading the task instructions, re-read Text B to identify just those ideas that are potentially relevant to the focus of the question
- discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the specific focus of the question
- plan the ideas you will include in your response ahead of writing
- check that you have included a wide range of ideas in your plan, and that they are distinct and complete
- check any repeated ideas and whether they could be covered by one 'umbrella' point
- return to the text to 'sense check' any ideas you are unsure of before you try to use them
- organise and sequence your ideas to make them clear to your reader

- avoid repeating ideas
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the text themselves would understand
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- check back to ensure that you have included all the ideas you planned to
- try to keep to the guidance to 'write no more than 120 words'.

## Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- Milo warns the group that the way down into Underground City could be challenging.
- The narrator and Jodie both looked closely at the phone to read about Underground City.
- Underground City appears awe-inspiring on the narrator's phone.
- Before they enter the chamber, the visitors have to lean forwards and lower their heads.

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified the correct word or phrase from Text C: Visiting Underground City to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example in each part – simply and efficiently giving the exact word or phrase only as their answer. Candidates should note that it is not necessary to write answers to **Question 2(a)** in full sentences. Some responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out the entire question in each case, substituting the word or phrase from the text and then underlining the relevant section of their answer.

Marks were sometimes missed where answers were unfocused – for example, offering responses that added in extra words from the text that went beyond the meaning of the underlined words, such as 'together' in **2(a)(ii)**, 'I said. "Let's book it.'" in **2(a)(iii)** or 'low roof' in **2a(iv)**. Very occasionally, candidates had misread the instruction to 'identify a word or phrase from the text' and tried to explain meaning in their own words or identified an incorrect word - most notably 'sniffed' in **2a(ii)**.

(b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:**

Milo is waiting for us to gather round him. He smiles expansively and beckons us closer. His eyes pick out Ben and a young girl, the only two children present.

- expansively
- beckons
- pick out

In **Question 2(b)** the most effective answers considered the meaning of each word paying attention to its context as used in the text. For example, the word 'expansively' in **2b(i)** refers to smiling broadly or widely rather than simply being happy. Many candidates were able to explain 'beckons' in **2(b)(ii)** as gestures, waves, signals or ushers, but some candidates offered 'asks' or 'tells' which did not show full understanding. In **2(b)(iii)**, 'pick out' was usually effectively explained as 'select', 'choose' or 'noticed', though others were unsure of its meaning and suggested it was 'to see' or 'look at' which were not appropriate in this context. Candidates should be careful not to dilute evidence of understanding by offering various suggestions and extra guesses of different meanings that are contradictory and/or not in line with the text. The best answers to **Question 2(b)** thought carefully about meanings in context and offered viable answers which would accurately replace the words in the text without altering the meaning.

(c) Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests Simon's thoughts and feelings on the journey back to the hotel.

Use your own words in your explanation.

I notice how the volcanic rock and soil that had made burrowing underground so easy once means that this is not a land of fertile forests. A handful of lonely broken trees wither in the dry flat land as far as the eye can see. An evening walk to see this open landscape under a vast sky is a tempting idea. My camera would capture some spectacular panoramic vistas. Meanwhile, Milo is telling us about a must-visit outdoor market selling local crafts. Not my favourite thing to do ...

In **Question 2(c)**, those candidates who had focused clearly on using just one example taken from the text extract as instructed were best placed to demonstrate their understanding of how it suggests Simon's thoughts and feelings on the journey back to the hotel. Some underlined their chosen example in the text, whilst others copied it out as a subheading for their explanation: either approach was acceptable.

Effective answers included those which began with an explanation of the meaning of the key word(s) in their example, ahead of going on to explain what those meaning(s) suggested about Simon's thoughts and feelings on the journey. Many responses centred their answer around the image of how Simon wanted to 'capture some spectacular panoramic vistas' and were generally able to exploit their chosen example to good effect, often suggesting the beauty of the area and how Simon wanted to record these sights forever by taking a photograph. Some who had selected the whole image still missed opportunities to target higher marks by not explaining how 'spectacular' and/or 'panoramic' helped to contribute to the sense of the amazing, sweeping views. Others effectively chose the image of 'A handful of lonely broken trees wither in the dry flat land as far as the eye can see' and were often able to score full marks by describing Simon's sadness at the view of the few isolated trees that were dying and visible up to the horizon. Others developed the idea of it being a wasteland or like a scene of destruction.

The most effective responses had carefully noted the number of marks available and focused their response to make three distinct points in relation to their one chosen example. Less effective responses often attempted to discuss more than one example – time that might have been more profitably spent in **Question 2(d)** where there were up to 15 marks available. Some less effective responses did not pay careful attention to the instruction to select from the given extract and attempted unwise to paraphrase the whole extract and/or discuss it in very general terms, whilst others still located Simon in Underground City. On occasion, opportunities were missed to offer evidence of understanding through circular answers that simply repeated the language of the text or misreading of key words: for example, some candidates attempted to describe the trees as 'broken' or 'wither[ing]'. Others chose 'lonely broken trees' for example, though commented on 'dry flat lands' thus not explaining the selection they had made so did not receive credit.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 1 and 5.

- Paragraph 1 begins 'We descend ...' and is about the stairway down into Underground City.
- Paragraph 5 begins 'Jodie was right ...' and is about the heat and family visits to the sea.

Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.

Effective responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three appropriate language choices from each of the two paragraphs indicated in the question. The most effective approach was often to consider the meaning of each of the carefully chosen phrases in the context of the text and then consider its connotations, effects and impact. Focused responses were then able to offer a clear overview of the writer's intentions in each paragraph. Less effective responses tended to offer less developed analysis or repeated the same ideas about effects, most notably that it was mysterious in Underground City in paragraph one or the intensity of the heat in paragraph five, often making rather generalised assertions rather than considering specific words more closely. Middle range

responses were usually more effective when explaining meanings but struggled to explore the effects fully, and the least effective responses tended to offer quotations, sometimes rather unselectively, and struggled to find anything relevant to say about them. Some candidates chose three language choices in total rather than three from each paragraph as clearly stated in the question/leading to some underdeveloped responses. A number of candidates chose inappropriate language choices – sometimes plain language, such as 'We descend the stairway' or 'allows just two visitors abreast', offering limited opportunities. Candidates need to exercise care when selecting their language choices to maximise their opportunities for developed discussion.

The most effective responses selected phrases but also considered the individual words within them suggesting how they worked within the context of the whole language choice. Rather than simply identifying literary devices they engaged fully with the language, considering its impact and connotations fully and linking each choice to a coherent and developed consideration of the paragraph. In paragraph one, many were able to explore their individual choices within the context of Simon's descent into Underground City and the mixture of trepidation and excitement. They considered the journey of entering the unknown through 'a dark labyrinth unfurling', as though it opened up like a maze, winding downwards, creating a sense of mystery at the thought of something lurking below. Many focused on the difficulty of moving within the narrow space and knocking against one another and the hard walls through the choice 'jostle shoulders and unforgiving walls', that then evoked a feeling of claustrophobia. Others focused on 'project alluring shades of tan, gold and red onto the exposed stone walls' where the descriptive language suggests how attractive warm colours were cast onto the bare walls, creating a magical atmosphere. These choices could all be linked to an overview, yet considered independently, offering candidates a great deal of scope for precise and developed analysis of the language used in paragraph 1.

When considering choices from paragraph five, many responses were able to appreciate how the overwhelming heat is only broken up by visits to the beach where the air is much cooler. Many candidates opted to discuss the constant heat as 'the sun had been unrelenting' and how it seemed to be doing it out of punishment or deliberately torturing the humans. Another popular choice was 'fresh breezes whipped the heaviness out of the air' creating a feeling of relief as the cool gusts replaced the still heat, almost as though it was chasing away an oppressor. This was often linked closely to 'begged for hydration' and the impression of the apparent yearning of the vegetation in its desperation for water. Many candidates focused on 'fun in the sea energised us' and how they felt vitalised or brought back to life by going in the sea. Finally, many candidates explored the 'parched' nature of the surroundings, suggesting that everywhere was dried out with heat or had been baked in the sun. Less effective responses described the writer as being thirsty or crying 'dry tears', rather than appreciating that it was the surroundings and the leaves that had wilted as a result of the intense heat.

There were also candidates who used the language of the text repeatedly in their explanations: most commonly 'dark', 'unforgiving', 'muted', 'pushes', 'escaping', 'whipped', 'energised', 'hydration', 'dry' and 'cracked'. There was some confusion about the 'lighting is muted' with some candidates suggesting there was absolutely no light or there was complete darkness. Others managed to capture the speed of the wind in 'cold air pushes past us, a desperate thief escaping the scene of it crime', though few were able to effectively explore the notion of a place where an illegal act has been committed and the feeling of trepidation at what they might find at the bottom. Some less effective responses also included very long quotations with general explanations rather than engaging closely with specific words. On occasions where no quotations were included with a brief description of the paragraphs offered instead, these responses did not address the question at all. In a small number of responses, the wrong paragraphs were used so no choices could be credited: candidates are advised to look at the section of text supplied in the question as well as the paragraph number to ensure that they select language choices from the correct paragraphs.

Candidates are reminded that it is the quality of their language analysis which can be credited. Listing of literary devices or the selection of plain language from the text, including generalised statements such as 'this creates a vivid picture' or 'the metaphor creates an effect' are unlikely to lead to an effective response.

**Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- make sure that the quotations you select from the text are precise; do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- in each part of **2(a)** make sure that your selection is from Text C and is clearly identified; remember you are looking for just a word or phrase to match the sense of the underlined words in the question
- in **2(b)** check that your explanation is consistent with how the word is used in context – you can try substituting your answer in the text to check it fits
- in **2(c)** try to say three separate things about your one chosen example
- in **2(d)**, choose 3 examples from each of the two specified paragraphs – 6 choices in total
- in **2(c)** and **2(d)** try to engage with the language at word level
- in **2(d)** always start with the contextualised meaning before moving on to the effect created by the language
- when discussing language avoid very general explanations such as 'it makes you feel like you are there', 'this is an interesting olfactory image' or 'this is a powerful example of language' without further explanation
- in **2(d)** avoid repeating the same explanations of effects for each language choice.

**Question 3**

**You are Jodie. After your holiday to Tassos, your friend asks you whether you would recommend Tassos as a holiday destination for them and their young children.**

**Write a letter to your friend in which you:**

- describe the area of Tassos and give your thoughts about it**
- explain why you visited Underground City and give your thoughts about the experience**
- describe what else there is to do in Tassos and give your advice about the best ways to make sure that the holiday is enjoyed by the whole family.**

Having worked through **Question 2** and already familiarised themselves with Text C, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to adopt the perspective of Jodie, in this extended Response to Reading task. The task guidance invited candidates to write a letter from Jodie to a friend offering potential recommendations for Tassos as a holiday destination for them and their young children. A few candidates attempted to answer the question as Simon, or an unknown person not identified in the text and limited the development they were able to offer as a result. Others confused Tassos as Underground City, one that had beaches and hot, scorching temperatures at the same time as cool air and dead trees, rather than the name of the wider area, or thought that Jodie and her family were staying in a hotel underground.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood both the narrative and task in at least general terms. Some in the mid-range though missed potentially useful details about the local area, such as its location being close to the coast and/or its barren landscape for bullet one. Others moved away from evidence in the text completely to suggest that the hotel where they were staying had a swimming pool and spa or was in Underground City. Candidates are reminded that their response to **Question 3** needs to be relevant to the details of the text and task in hand in order to effectively evidence their Reading skills.

Where candidates had planned their response beforehand, they were often able to draw on relevant ideas and details from throughout the text to address this first bullet effectively and offer development about the heat and the hotel: for example, by describing the temperature as being intolerable and the fact that their hotel was not luxurious.

In mid-range answers, ideas for bullet two were often only touched on through recounting details of finding Underground City on-line, the friendly guide and visiting the communal areas, whereas more secure responses were able to offer development by explaining the entrance to Underground City and the inherent danger this posed who those who entered, particularly for children. Candidates responding to the text and task more carefully were able to pick up on suggestions that because Simon was feeling guilty about the lack of activities for Ben in their hotel, it was his idea to visit Underground City. They described Jodie's disappointment at not being able to visit all of the areas underground, as well as how pleased she was that Ben made a friend and that he would enjoy it more. Some reading less closely misread eight-year-old Ben as being Jodie's partner and either choosing the hotel or searching online for a family-friendly trip. Others misunderstood the nature of the teaching areas in Underground City and described classes currently being

taught by teachers with students avidly listening, whilst others confused Anna and her mother or described numerous children visiting Underground City, when the text describes 'only two children present'.

When responding to the third bullet, the most effective responses picked out a range of clues from throughout the text to develop appropriate ideas about what else there is to do in Tassos and the best ways to make sure that the holiday is enjoyed by the whole family. They suggested the ease of accessibility to the beach, whilst having fun in the sea and organising air-conditioned transportation helped to mitigate the effects of the heat. They included alternative activities such as visiting the outdoor market or taking evening walks. Less effective responses tended to lack range in response to this bullet often making very general suggestions not really linked to ideas in the text or copied sections of text with minimal modification. The inclusion of extraneous material included details about alternative leisure activities, such as diving or fishing or recommendations for restaurants and lengthy descriptions about meals they had enjoyed. Occasionally, these insecure responses strayed into speculation about the dangers in the market, including potential pickpockets – suggestions not supported by or rooted in the text.

The most effective responses showed evidence that candidates had identified relevant ideas and details from the text before writing, considering which bullet the information they had located best suited and how the perspective of Jodie might differ from/add to that of the narrator, Simon. For example, some answers offering evidence of thorough evaluation recognised Jodie's initial scepticism about visiting Underground City compared to Simon, though it turned out to be a good idea, whilst Simon was not so keen on visiting the market compared to Jodie's excitement. Responses that had relied on mechanically tracking back through the text and replaying the passage often offered a more limited range of ideas overall, missing opportunities to evidence understanding of implicit ideas and suggestions. The least effective responses copied sections of text with minimal modification and/or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading of key details and information, for example, some suggested that the outdoor market was underground.

Overall, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of a letter, and many were able to write using an appropriate register for Jodie for their imagined audience. Where candidates lost sight of the purpose for writing, responses were generally less effective; expression often became awkward as a consequence of poor control and/or inconsistencies of style. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to read back through their response to correct any mistakes in their use of language – for example, to ensure that meaning is clear and that the register sounds consistently appropriate. In some instances, candidates signed off using their own name rather than as Jodie. In the least effective answers, lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of whole sections of text common in these responses, which affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- remember to base your answer on the ideas and details you find in Text C
- make a brief plan to ensure that you are selecting ideas relevant to all three bullets
- pay careful attention to the written style to be adopted – for example, the register required for the purpose and audience of the task and maintain that in your answer
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points: the bullet points are designed to help you to identify a wide range of relevant ideas
- do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage; look for the clues and evidence in the text to help you make judgements about characters and situations
- do not copy directly from the text: use your own words as far as you can to express your ideas
- remember to use ideas and details from the text but to adapt and develop them appropriately to create a convincing voice and new perspective
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

**Paper 0500/21**  
**Directed Writing and Composition**

## **Key messages**

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

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

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- understand how different audiences, purposes and genres should influence the style adopted
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task.

## **General comments**

Candidates were familiar with the format of the examination paper and understood what was required for both the directed writing and composition questions. There were few incomplete scripts or scripts in which the instructions regarding which questions to answer were not followed. Nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task, with very few rubric infringements seen. A small number of candidates did not attempt **Question 1** but wrote competent responses to one of the composition questions. Most responses were written in candidates' own words although there were a few responses which were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert. Some lifting of phrases or sentences was fairly common but where this lifting of material was more extensive, marks were inevitably limited for both Reading and Writing. In **Section B**, most candidates understood how the content of descriptive and narrative writing differs, although there were some stories submitted for the descriptive writing tasks, and discursive or polemical pieces submitted for the narrative tasks which made it difficult for Examiners to award high marks for Content and Structure. This was more common in **Question 2** and **Question 4**.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of the desirability of involving young people in music in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for an article for young people. The register required here was generally well understood, with a friendly and persuasive tone and the use of some stylistic devices, although some responses used contractions such as 'gonna' and 'kinda' which were inappropriately colloquial.

The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than excessively lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on or employing the ideas in the texts in a coherent response. Even in responses which offered only limited coverage of the ideas in the reading material, some opinion or recommendation was usually given about the best way to inspire young people to become involved in music, as given in the task, though not always probing or offering judgements about the ideas: only a small minority simply reported the views and ideas in the texts with no comment whatsoever on them. More effective evaluation tended to challenge some ideas in the texts rather than reproduce them and to suggest an understanding of the role of personal taste and agency.

Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. Here salient ideas in the texts were not fully addressed, such as the morality or

practicality of enforcing music theory lessons and public performance as a scheduled subject in schools or designating the instrument to be learnt. A number of responses at different levels of writing skills focused on whether or not music itself was an important or desirable thing in young people's lives, which was not the point of the task, thus missing numerous opportunities for evaluation which were actually offered by the task.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response, and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. Less effective responses were sometimes little more than a summary in paraphrase of the two passages in the Reading Insert. The structure and organisation of ideas required in an article for their peers, such as an arresting yet friendly opening and a thoughtful and convincing conclusion, were well understood by many candidates, though there were also responses which were flat and discursive in style after a brief introduction, or overly formal and impersonal in a style unconvincing in this context.

In **Section B**, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of good writing in each. In this examination session the narrative options were markedly more popular than the descriptive, accounting for 70 per cent of the responses overall.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were effective, organised and sustained. The first question produced responses across the mark range. In responses to this option there were some convincing and evocative descriptions of different types of families, the most effective powerfully appealing to the readers' senses through the deliberate use of developed images and evocative language, but at a less successful level were often census-like identifications of the members of a family, often apparently the writer's own. Responses to the second descriptive option were generally more effective, and less likely to engender narratives. Here the tone was often nostalgic as forgotten toys and once-precious possessions were described, if often cloaked in a surprising amount of dust. Some very effective evocations of childhood innocence were seen, sometimes bittersweet in tone. Less effective responses were inventory-like, prosaic or very simply structured. Responses to this question were sometimes weakened by overlong or narrative preambles to the finding of the box in the task, including parental insistence on de-cluttering, planned house moves, laborious and dusty climbs into attic rooms, and lengthy struggles with recalcitrant locks, but there were also a number of high-level responses which were engaging, evocative and very well structured, using flash-back and other manipulations of time to evoke the personality of the child whose older self no longer required the box's contents. The least effective responses to this question were sometimes almost entirely narrative or described the items in the box in terms reminiscent of a retail catalogue or a stocktaking exercise.

The first narrative option was by far the more popular, but both produced responses across the range of abilities. In response to **Question 4** a large proportion of narratives involved mobile phones and social media in stories of pranking, blackmailing and stalking which were often genuinely tense or disturbing. There were many stories of abandoned lovers, missed opportunities or betrayal by a trusted friend. There were a range of crime and horror stories. Examiners noted that in many less effective responses to **Question 4** the idea of the message had only the most limited or almost incidental significance. Some inventive responses to this question manipulated narrative perspective to make an unreliable narrator the messenger. The given phrase for **Question 5** was often reproduced in an anomalous manner, the tense at variance with the surrounding narrative, although it was usually relevant to the plot. This question allowed for a very wide range of scenarios and elicited some engaging and well-constructed narratives in various genres, but the dominant theme in this examination session was success or failure on the sporting field, particularly in football matches. Many responses were little more than match commentaries, in third- or first-person, without characterisation or effective scene-setting. Responses to both questions which were coherently constructed and which included credible characters and scenarios were always more effective. Less effective responses to both questions were over-packed with incident succeeded by an ambiguous or poorly-managed ending. Some highly effective responses created tension and pace, supporting the narrative detail with the deliberate manipulation of paragraph and sentence length for effect.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

**Write a magazine article for young people with the title, 'Music matters'.**

**In your article you should:**

- evaluate the ideas, attitudes and opinions given in both texts**
- give your own views, based on what you have read, about the best ways to inspire young people to become involved with music.**

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

**Address both of the bullet points.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

**Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 25 marks for the quality of your writing.**

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the article was also accurate and precise in vocabulary, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task and audience, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. More effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the effectiveness of the candidates' responses.

### **Marks for reading**

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about the best ways to inspire young people to become involved in music. Perhaps inevitably given the age of the candidates the majority made more use of the material in Text A, which many found relatable, especially in its rejection of compulsion in musical education, but the several opportunities for high-level evaluation offered in Text B were usually missed: often the only point picked up and commented upon was the designation by schools of the instrument to be learnt. Other ideas about the necessity of acquiring perseverance, discipline and skill in high-level musical education were often ignored or perhaps less readily understood: it seemed that many candidates were misled by the rather hectoring tone of Text B so that its valuable points about these issues were ignored or rejected. There were responses which managed to synthesise ideas from both texts to craft a fully developed response in the form of an article, offering a range of evaluative points, and these could be awarded marks for Reading in Level 6 or high in Level 5. These showed a mature and thorough grasp of the subtleties of the issues involved: 'Yes, while the benefits of music are endless, a passion and love for it cannot be forced.'; '... it may well be that playing a musical instrument unlocks a more creative and individual way of thinking, but what is individual about being lined up in an auditorium and forced to play the same piece of music as everyone else ... over and over?'

In other responses writers rebutted the assertion in Text B that many of the proclaimed benefits of musical education could not be found anywhere else by arguing that precision, creativity and perseverance could develop from many other pursuits, including computer gaming, and that indeed the internet offered endless opportunities for learning and studying music and for forming communities far beyond one's immediate circle or school. Across the ability range the evaluative point most frequently made—and often the only one—was about the counter-productive effect of forcing a child to play or have lessons in an instrument or genre of music which they hated or which did not 'speak to them'. The anecdote in Text A was adopted or sometimes developed as if personal to the writer to create an argument, or to provide a point of entry to some most effective evaluative comment: 'At what cost are we prepared to put our children in misery? And for the outcome of a single hesitant scale? Not all children are aspiring Mozarts!'. In many less effective iterations the story was simply reproduced without any evaluative development, but the effective ones tailored argument and advice around it, while never losing sight of the task, the texts and the audience.

Some of the most effective responses were those where the writer from the beginning took a determined stance on the subject and, while recognising other arguments, succeeded in attacking a key idea from either text, for example Text A's implication that musical achievement would happen naturally if children were just presented with the opportunity of finding their own way: 'Well that rather depends on what the desired end product is; I can't believe that many of our great concert artists sprang from just twanging a guitar in a garage!' In other responses Text B's assertion that great life skills and character-building would grow from enforced and regular public performance was challenged: '... the petrifying stress of making a mistake – of messing up in such a formal atmosphere would surely haunt a young child ...' Where even a single evaluative point was firmly made Examiners could award marks at the bottom of Level 5 if there was otherwise reasonable coverage of the reading material. Where coverage was more extensive and more evaluative points were made the response could move up the mark range in this Level. Examiners noted an increase in this examination series of brief responses which precluded the awarding of marks in Level 5 or above because they were not 'thorough' or 'developed' responses as required by the Mark Scheme, but where some comment on or development of key ideas in the texts was offered Examiners could award marks in Level 4.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, sometimes without specific reference to particular points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks at the lower end of Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments usually focused more exclusively on the pragmatic, reproducing some of the benefits of either approach. Examiners noted in this session a small but significant minority of well-written responses which could not be awarded marks for Reading above Level 3, or occasionally Level 2: these sometimes lengthy and thoughtful responses about the importance of or love of music seemed only based on the writer's own experience, without any reference to the task in the question or to the specific ideas in the texts. They were sometimes very well written and employed an effective register, and so had marks in widely differing Levels for the two components of the question. Where the beginnings of evaluation of explicit points were evident marks at the top of Level 4 could be awarded, while in undeveloped or brief responses, a mark of 7 at the bottom of Level 4 could be given if a comment had some firm roots in the text.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was some coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but where these were listed or simply recorded, or comments were relevant but simple. A mark of 5 or 4 was usually given where answers were thin or partly lifted directly from the texts. Often, there was a clear paraphrase of both texts but little comment on them. Where there were some brief opinions, usually at the end of the response, they tended to be more general and not strongly anchored in the specific ideas in the texts. There was also sometimes, at this level, misunderstanding of some details in the texts or an unbalanced grasp of ideas: some misunderstanding of the writer's perspective in Text A was evident, but little or no reference was made to the ideas in Text B. These responses were sometimes muddled but also opportunities for evaluation were lost elsewhere because responses were limited to asserting why music matters rather than doing the assigned task. This approach usually obviated relevant evaluation. Less effective responses tended simply to paraphrase and list ideas and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material.

## **Marks for Writing**

### **Style and audience**

Candidates needed to adopt an appropriate style and register for an article for young people, whose specific concerns and points of view could be understood. Most responses showed a clear understanding of the required register, even where technical writing skills were ineffective, and this allowed Examiners to consider marks in Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Some effective responses used a friendly but slightly more authoritative and rhetorical style, as if the intended reader of the article needed to be made aware even of the existence of opposing views on the subject: 'Did you know that there are schools where young children are forced to play and perform on instruments they didn't choose, without anyone listening to their wishes?' In some, sophisticated language use allowed subtle and nuanced ideas to be conveyed while still maintaining a believably friendly style. A smaller number of responses adopted a light-hearted approach and style while still evaluating key ideas: 'Do you really need those awful violin lessons to become the next rock sensation?' Here arguments were presented in an engaging way but made their case clearly and effectively. At all levels of achievement having a distinct point of view supported the effectiveness of the writing because it could become impassioned and highly persuasive.

In the middle range of marks, Examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical skills were lacking if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and audience. A clear attempt to engage the audience often worked well, with brief references to possibly shared experiences

of disliked instruments or tedious practice. These often maintained an effective register without resorting to the overly-colloquial slang and even expletives of a few responses. In these, expressions such as 'gonna' or overly loose sentence structures were used which were not appropriate for a response in the context of an examination where a range of writing skills is assessed. Sometimes the opening and closing paragraphs were written in a very informal, 'chatty' style but the intervening paragraphs reproduced points from the texts in a style close to the original.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent style or argument. Where the reading material was heavily lifted or copied, there was often little of the candidate's own style for Examiners to reward, though this kind of response was rare. More commonly, phrases and sentences were lifted and, in some cases, increasingly so as the response developed. In a small number of responses lengthy quotes from the texts were supplied; that inverted commas were used did not disguise the fact that too much of the response was not the candidate's own writing. At the lower level, awkward paraphrasing was seen with syntactically incorrect insertion of phrases from the text. In this examination session several instances of inappropriate reference to 'Text A' and 'Text B' which would negatively affect the register were seen.

## Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged were clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the first paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed but as a cohesive piece. The opening and concluding sections of the most effective responses, apart from occasional rhetorical flourishes or salutations, tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case. The point of view being developed determined the sequence of ideas in these responses rather than their sequence in the original texts.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed, and usually avoided the repetition of similar ideas which appeared in both. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide coherent judgement or recommendation and were more dependent on the sequencing of the original texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas. While some brief opinion was sometimes given at the end of the response, these views were imposed on the structure of the original texts rather than argued for, and a concluding recommendation was often in apparent contradiction to the weight of selected points preceding it. It was not unusual to see responses which set out all the possible benefits and advantages of formal music education but concluded, 'So just do your own thing—it'll be great!' or some similar exhortation. Some of these less effective responses were very long and involved a considerable amount of repetition. Elsewhere introductory paragraphs were often very laboured and artificial: 'I have been reading some articles about being made to learn a musical instrument or not and I'm going to tell you all about it.'

## Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled as well as appropriate in tone and register was given a Writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only engaging in style and convincing in their deliberations but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures were varied and consciously used to persuade the reader.

Some complex sentence structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views, and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation within sentences.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though perhaps not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually fairly plain, the language used was generally precise. A range of basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical mis-agreement, often between plurals and verb forms. Words commonly misspelt in this range included 'whether', 'embarrassing', 'perseverance', 'practice' and 'failure'. Faulty sentence structures, fluctuating tense use or too much lifted or

copied material often kept Writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Level 4. Here, the omission of definite or indefinite articles was common, as were tense errors, and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Level 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content nor the style of the response was the candidate's own.

Examiners noted an increasing tendency for writers to use capital letters randomly, or even to write whole responses in capital letters.

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

- **be prepared to challenge the ideas in the reading texts**
- **look for contradictions in the arguments and point them out**
- **group ideas from both texts together and discuss them rather than repeat them**
- **think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience**
- **ensure that you understand the specific focus of the question to avoid misinterpretation or 'drifting'**
- **check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passages or given in the task**
- **do not lose marks by using capital letters randomly.**

#### **Descriptive writing**

**Write a description with the title, 'The family'.**

**Write a description of a box full of items you no longer need or use.**

Descriptive Writing was a rather less popular choice for candidates than in previous sessions but Examiners could still award a wide range of marks for these responses. Both questions were interpreted in a variety of ways which Examiners could reward appropriately. In the first task, there were many detailed, organised and effective descriptions of families of different types, many apparently being affectionate depictions of the writer's own family, and others of unconventional or mysterious members of imagined families. The second question, a little more popular than the first, elicited a range of objects and some very evocative and nostalgic responses. The box often contained discarded but now fondly remembered toys and in effective responses small details of their physical appearance often conjured up vivid childhood memories and a convincing atmosphere. Sometimes the collection was predictable, and included one-eyed teddy bears and partly dismembered dolls, but these could still be very effective evokers of childhood or family experiences.

Descriptions, as is always the case, were more effective if they contained vivid and specific details rather than more general or stereotypical ideas and images. In responses to the second question, a substantial number depicted old school books, broken toy cars or board games, usually in primary colours and covered in a great deal of dust. These often lacked the close focus and detailed description that creates the 'convincing picture' and 'developed ideas' of Level 5 or 6, such as a response focusing on the articulated doll found by a now-adult successful fashion designer: '... its crooked-seamed ugly red dress was one of my early attempts at dressmaking; this doll had nursed the very first steps of what would become my future career. I smiled at her, and of course she smiled back ...' Elsewhere attempts at detailed image-making were less convincing as in the description of a hairbrush, 'Its bristles stood tall as mighty oak trees.' Some of the most effective responses to **Question 2**, several earning marks in Level 6 for Content and Structure, depicted unusual or even sinister and disturbing families, such as one that was possibly vampiric; the description was subtle and understated, and all the more effective for that, suggesting their huddled movements when out walking after dark, the curious noiselessness of their footsteps, or the greyish pallor of the plump son whose hair was surprisingly a glossy chestnut. Another, after a most atmospheric description of a tropical harbour at nightfall, depicted the emergence of a family of rainbow parrot fish: '... a flicker of orange, a flash of emerald green scales ... strong beaks protrude from their faces as their fins sway in fluid movements, driving effortlessly through the water's cold embrace ...' One response awarded marks high in Level 5 for Content and Structure seemed initially to be a rather prosaic depiction of a wealthy, successful and popular family, but became a striking evocation of the influence this family exerted on the others in the neighbourhood: 'Seeing this perfect family always made everyone reflect on their own lives – one couldn't help feeling smaller, inferior, even embarrassed; your imperfections suddenly stood out. Resentment against

the Johnsons was inevitable ...’ Examiners noted several instances of families being described as they appeared in public and then as they were behind closed doors, sometimes very effectively. For both descriptive writing questions, unusual, closely observed details created convincing, evocative scenes and atmospheres in the best responses. Where they were sustained and developed and showed skill in building a detailed, convincing overall picture, Examiners could award marks for Content and Structure in Level 6. These consciously-crafted pieces held the reader’s attention by linking the different elements described in an engaging, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure, often provided by the narrator’s reactions or attitudes or a specific atmosphere, as well as carefully chosen detail and striking images. When writing in the descriptive genre, candidates often struggle to provide suitable introductions and conclusions, but in response to **Question 3**, at varying levels of accuracy of writing skills, numerous responses chose a significant moment, a rite of passage, a time of transition, to effectively provide a structure: ‘I never meant to find it. I came across it while packing to go away to college. Nevertheless here I am with an old shoebox in my hands.’ A few items were depicted – fraying ballet shoes, a broken polaroid camera – in a way that evoked the progress from adolescence to new-found maturity in a moving reflection on impending, and rather alarming, independence.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details with well-managed structures, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but usually more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve less striking images and more stereotypical ideas. In response to **Question 3**, some writers struggled to employ effective structures without resorting to excessive narrative, for example detailing the family situation which led to the de-cluttering of the almost-inevitable attic or the gaining of access to the locked box.

Responses awarded marks in Level 4 for Content and Structure tended to become more narrative in intent although Examiners rewarded description where it was found. Here description was often entirely objective and inventory-like, for both questions, but in responses awarded marks in Level 3, there was evident some lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing, even though some were fairly accurately written. These were sometimes entirely narrative or the details included were mundane and stereotypical: ‘The mother had long blonde hair and a big smile on her face, and the daughter did too.’

High marks for Style and Accuracy often reflected the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, similar details were often included but better responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to create specific effects. Highly effective responses showed a confident ability to use both simple and complex language, striking images and personification, as well as a range of sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres. In less effective responses, vocabulary was occasionally wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide-ranging vocabulary was lost by its imprecise use and lack of clarity. Occasionally, obscure, even archaic language sometimes revealed a lack of understanding of its meaning rather than a wide range of vocabulary. In a few responses, there seemed evident a determination to employ a learned corpus of vocabulary, where it was inappropriate or even impaired meaning.

As is often the case in less secure descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. This was more apparent in the second descriptive option, perhaps because the writers were describing objects from different points in their lives or struggling with a flashback formula. In this examination series rather more than previously, incomplete or verbless sentences affected marks given in the middle range, even where other technical aspects of style were more accurate. Lapses in grammar, perhaps minor in isolation but more damaging when persistent, also kept responses out of Level 4 for Style and Accuracy. These included mis-agreement, especially between pronouns and verbs, and the omission of definite and indefinite articles was also common and damaging to otherwise accurate, if simple, styles.

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

- **try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content; choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus**
- **keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a specific atmosphere**
- **write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses**
- **use vocabulary precisely: complex words used wrongly do not help your style.**

### **Narrative writing**

**Write a story with the title, 'The message'.**

**Write a story which includes the words, '... it had to be now ...'.**

Narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range, **Question 4** being by far the most popular composition choice overall, and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses, numbers of which were awarded marks in Level 6 for both components of the answer. These most engaging responses often included vivid descriptive detail to create the setting and characters. Examiners occasionally saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title and which, on occasion, seemed more suited to titles set in previous examination sessions or were pre-prepared: this was much more apparent in **Question 5**.

An ability to shape the narrative and to produce moments of tension, mystery or drama and to vary the pace of the story were essential elements of more effective responses to both questions.

In **Question 4**, many responses involved text or other online messages which went astray with dramatic repercussions: these were effective when tension was effectively created and the outcomes depended on the characters and the dynamics of their relationships. Some very engaging narratives were genuinely disturbing, involving tales of stalking or threat, the message often anonymous or coming from an unseen predator. Others were rather more predictable plots, being based on the wait for results, be it from college or job interviews, selection for a team, or the birth or death of a family member. Where these were conveyed with convincing characterisation and scene-setting, and with effective management of the ending they could still achieve marks in Level 6 or at the top of Level 5. There were a number of stories of wartime operations, at different levels of achievement for content and structure: some were fast moving and engaging adventures, but others were far too packed with incident to be well managed within the time frame, occasionally featuring the survival or destruction of whole nations being dependent on a single message, credibility becoming a real issue. One highly effective response with a tightly controlled time frame and setting was set in a dystopian society where murder was allowed and unpunished by the authorities on occasions as a means of population control. The device used by the writer to render this engaging and credible was to have the narrator trapped in his small apartment with an attacker trying to get in, as the minutes ticked away until the message rendering such attacks criminal again was broadcast.

Another highly effective response to **Question 4** created a light-hearted and humorous version of the building of Hadrian's wall as the protagonists, two homesick centurions, waited to be rewarded for their bright ideas. It nonetheless had a deadly twist at the end which was entirely convincing. This response was an interesting example of the two components of a question being awarded marks in different levels, because the ingenious plot was not matched by a high level of technical accuracy. The majority of responses were awarded marks for content and structure at the lower end of Level 5 and in Level 4: these had generally well-managed, usually chronological structures and some development of plot and character. Where too much incident was packed into the narrative, scene-setting and characterisation suffered. These responses could sometimes be engaging too, at least initially, but as was noted by Examiners the response was often too brief or underdeveloped to carry large and dramatic events. In Level 3, stories were often simple accounts of events devoid of characterisation beyond mention of some physical feature.

While most narratives addressing this question were indeed chronological accounts with varying degrees of development, some candidates chose more ambitious structures, perhaps telling the story from the vantage point of hindsight or occasionally from multiple perspectives. While such structures were more difficult to control, Examiners could often reward these approaches for their ambition and engagement.

For **Question 5**, there were many different plotlines, characters and events which allowed candidates to show their narrative writing ability, but several themes dominated at all levels of achievement: sporting stories, most often involving football matches between globally famous teams, and tales of romance. To achieve high marks for content and structure, such narratives had to have convincing scene-setting and characterisation, and the creation of drama and tension beyond the placing of a penalty shot or the mending of a simply-narrated relationship. The most effective narratives had the given words in the task at the centre of the action, creating tension, uncertainty and decision-making, and were not merely incidental or 'tacked-on', frequently in a syntactically awkward manner. A number of responses were awarded marks in Level 6: one was a compelling story of an understudy in a West-End production who had never had the opportunity to play the lead in any major play; when chance placed her centre-stage she forgot the lines at a crucial moment, but was unexpectedly helped to success by the very actress whom she believed had held her back in her career. Another involved the narrator becoming trapped in a closet during a game of Hide and Seek

and conveyed the fear and claustrophobia most convincingly from a young child's perspective. In many responses to **Question 5**, at all levels of achievement, the plot was credibly managed, but the effectiveness of the response depended upon the care taken with characterisation and scene-setting. In narratives involving high-level sporting competition, there were many laborious play-by-play accounts, but there were also stories which were enlivened by the passionate enthusiasm of the narrator. At lower Levels Examiners noted numerous accounts of 'real' championship matches which included the names of the famous players. Sometimes these responses drifted into the discursive, preventing Examiners from awarding high marks for content and structure.

Many responses to both narrative questions began strongly but could not be awarded marks in the Level first considered by Examiners because of the ineffectiveness of their endings or faults in the plot's resolution: 'It was all a dream ...' was too often noted by Examiners. This particularly affected some otherwise engaging and convincing responses to **Question 4**.

Examiners awarded marks in Level 6 for Content and Structure for narratives which created convincing, interesting scenarios and characters in responses to both questions. While the events in a story were important in creating such credibility, Level 6 responses paid careful attention to characterisation and how events are driven by character traits and choices.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless cohesive and reasonably credible for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt to create a developed, relevant story. Responses in this range were more usually chronological accounts but were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some satisfying, if not always engaging, resolution. For higher marks for Content and Structure stories needed to be well-managed with some conscious shaping of the narrative beyond a simple retelling of events.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of effective narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events, lacking attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather than ineffective organisation were typical at this level: here there was a tendency to say simply what happened or to state who the characters were rather than drawing the reader in by characterisation and setting. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than developing characters as credible and rounded. While the majority of less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative and the reader was less engaged as a result.

High marks for **Style and Accuracy** were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and, where this was coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate while Level 4 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary. Speech punctuation and paragraphing were usually problematic at this level although the writing had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as ineffective sentence control, faulty sentence separation and grammar errors. Common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in lower Level 4 responses such as mis-agreements, missing articles and imprecise, sometimes over-ambitious vocabulary. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tense control, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar.

The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A common reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was ineffective demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed but sometimes sentence separation was missing altogether. Though the mixing of tenses and the use of incomplete sentences were perhaps more prevalent in the descriptive writing, these weaknesses also limited the marks available in the narrative writing.

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

- think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative.
- consider imaginative ways to tell your story, apart from a chronological account.
- characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader; do not rely only on events.
- check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes, taking special care to avoid misspelling words given in the tasks; accurate speech punctuation and paragraphing will help to lift your mark.
- use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create particular effects.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

**Paper 0500/22**  
**Directed Writing and Composition**

## **Key messages**

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

Scripts awarded high marks showed evidence that candidates were able to:

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise responses effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions or engaging, credible narratives
- understand how different audiences, purposes and genres should determine the style adopted
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task.

## **General comments**

Most candidates were familiar with the format of the examination paper and understood what was required for both the directed writing and composition questions. There were only a few very brief scripts, incomplete scripts or scripts in which the instructions regarding which questions to answer were not followed. There were a small number of responses to **Question 1** which were entirely copied from the texts, though Examiners noticed an increase in the number of **Question 1** responses which contained only a few comments which were not copied from the texts. A few scripts included no response to **Question 1** but nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted it, as well as either a descriptive or narrative writing task. Most responses were written in candidates' own words. Some lifting of phrases or sentences was fairly common but where this lifting of material was more extensive, marks were inevitably limited for both Reading and Writing.

In **Section B**, most candidates understood how the content of descriptive and narrative writing differs, although there were stories submitted for the descriptive writing tasks which made it difficult for Examiners to award high marks for Content and Structure. **Question 5** was sometimes addressed in more of a descriptive than narrative style and some responses to this question were simple accounts of holidays rather than developed narratives. These approaches sometimes limited the Content and Structure mark available because the mark scheme directs Examiners to reward features of narrative writing.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the question of whether young people should or need to learn to cook for **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for an article with an audience of young people. The register required here was interpreted in different ways with some responses more formal in style while others adopted a conversational tone which showed an awareness of what would engage a younger readership. In a less appropriate attempt to adopt a suitable register, some used an overly colloquial, less accurate style, using words such as 'kinda' and 'gonna'. Effective responses made use of more subtle stylistic devices to show an understanding of young people, their lives and concerns.

The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response. Some opinion was usually given, based on ideas in the texts, about whether learning to cook was necessary in the modern world, with a minority simply reporting the facts and ideas in the texts with no comment on them. More effective responses

tended to comment on specific ideas in the texts rather than offer general impressions about cooking and to probe some ideas in the texts rather than reproduce them. Rather than outlining the various attitudes about learning to cook which appeared in the texts, some interesting discussions addressed the ways in which modern life made such skills redundant, an unnecessary waste of time or simply a personal hobby.

Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. There was often at this level some misunderstanding of which named protagonists held which beliefs, for example, and some salient ideas in the texts were not quite addressed, such as whether learning to cook was necessary nowadays. There was some assertion rather than argument, particularly with reference to the assumed unhealthy nature of ordered food.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. Effective evaluation often addressed ideas about cooking for family and friends helping to create a happy home environment or the ways in which learning to cook helped young people transition into independence and adulthood. Less well considered responses sometimes gave a summary of the ideas in the texts but without the focus on how learning to cook would affect the lives of young people. The structure and organisation of ideas required in an article, often including some rhetorical sub-headings or clear lines of argument, were used more effectively in better responses to persuade and argue a case. Less effective responses were often written in a straightforward style with less consistent awareness of the audience and purpose of the task.

In **Section B**, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of good writing in each.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. There were some imaginative descriptions of streets and roads for **Question 2**, some showing detailed familiarity with specific highways in candidates' towns and cities and focused on the stark contrast between the conditions before and during the rainstorm. Less effective responses to this question were sometimes framed narratively with overlong preambles about why the narrator was travelling on the road and less detailed observation of what could be seen and heard. For the second descriptive question, there were some highly original interpretations, such as moving house and carrying pianos under the watchful eyes of curious neighbours or, more metaphorically, carrying the crushing burden of fear and isolation at school. Ineffective responses here described quite ordinary scenes or ones which lacked context, such as carrying a large box into a house. Some responses focused on the strain on the body of carrying such objects but fairly quickly ran out of ideas and language with which to describe such effects.

Both narrative writing questions proved popular across the range of abilities. In **Question 4**, the title was used in a very wide variety of interesting ways. Effective narratives were sometimes constructed around the idea of a moment of enlightenment in which the phrase in the question ('I saw the light') was used figuratively, although many effective responses used the idea of seeing the light more physically as ambulance headlights, emergency room lights or torchlight in the darkness. This use of light to help structure the narrative's resolution was often important in the creation of a believable response to this question.

**Question 5** elicited some highly engaging and well-constructed narratives. Effective narratives featured islands which were significant in different ways and gave stories more than an interesting backdrop. Shipwrecks or more commonly plane crash scenarios featured often, though, as always, only effective writers were able to evoke believable characters and landscapes in such extreme circumstances. Ineffective **Question 5** responses tended to be simple chronological accounts of holidays on rather stereotypical tropical islands in which the activities on each day were recounted.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

**Write an article for a teenage magazine with the title 'What's the point of learning to cook?'**

**In your article you should:**

- **evaluate the ideas, attitudes and opinions given in both texts about young people and cooking**
- **give your views on whether or not young people need to cook and want to cook.**

**Base your article on what you have read in both texts, but be careful to use your own words. Address both of the bullet points.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

**Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 25 marks for the quality of your writing.**

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the article was also accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task and audience, Examiners awarded high marks for Writing.

More effective responses here focused carefully on the implications of ideas in the texts, with the highest Reading marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views evaluatively and with confidence. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement in the Reading component of the mark. These implicit ideas often involved the changing landscape of modern life, the proliferation of food delivery apps and whether the benefits of learning to cook justified the amount of time and commitment required. Many responses, for example, discussed the ease with which food could be delivered and some thoughtful candidates assessed the implied criticism of young people in Text A for their use of modern technology as unfair or unfounded. One candidate suggested that Text A's writer showed a distaste for young people's use of technology which 'shed more light on his own insecurity as a chef than on young people's ability to make a choice about cooking for themselves, a choice previous generations simply did not have.' Similarly, some candidates sensitively discussed the unrealistic demands of cooking and the sense of guilt induced in Text B's writer as unnecessary and undesirable in this day and age when only aspiring chefs needed to learn to cook.

Inferences which could be drawn from some ideas in the texts were also used in more effective responses. Some, for example, emphasised the boost in self-confidence and self-esteem that learning to cook could give a young person as well as the opportunities it provided to show practical care and affection in ways which helped families to bond together.

One less common but valid inference challenged the idea that learning to cook was more economical than relying on deliveries. The waste of ingredients and time implied by the anecdote and the comment that there was 'lots of room for error' in Text B undermined for some candidates the assertion that cooking for oneself was cheaper. Some further argued that to spend many hours learning to cook was unjustified when there were more pressing demands on young people's time in terms of academics and careers. Similarly, while some emphasised the benefit to the individual's confidence in learning to cook, another valid inference was made that the sense of inadequacy and humiliation felt by the writer of Text B made learning to cook a riskier choice.

In less effective responses where sensible use was made of the texts without such probing and challenging of ideas, there were often opinions about whether young people should learn to cook based on the various attitudes discussed in the texts. Some straightforward reproduction of explicit ideas often concluded with a judgement about the appeal of learning to cook for young people, usually suggesting that being able to cook would be useful in the future. Some concluded that there was no reason any more to learn to cook because delivery apps were much more convenient. In many middle-range responses, fairly simple compromises

such as cooking for yourself on some days of the week but allowing for deliveries on other days showed a clear understanding of the topic as a whole but lacked evaluation of specific ideas in the texts.

### **Marks for reading**

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about how the modern world had changed the equation in the debate about whether young people should learn to cook.

Most responses in Level 5 or 6 for Reading included reference to various ways in which being able to cook improved young people's self-esteem, independence in the future and their relationships with their family and friends. More nuanced and developed ideas included people's tendency to have a rosy view of the past in which the ability to cook contributed to a rather idealised family life which was not entirely credible. As one candidate wrote, 'Learn to cook if you want but be under no delusion that it will transform your life into some Hollywood movie. There'll be a kitchen full of dishes and not everyone will like what you've cooked.' Another candidate commented on the place of home cooking in creating this nostalgia: 'No warm feelings of togetherness and loving family life were ever created by a call to a delivery app but at whose expense will such a lovely picture be created?' The extent to which these kinds of ideas were addressed often determined whether a response could be given a Level 5 mark for Reading and in some cases a range of more evaluative comments merited a Level 6 mark.

Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically offered one or two evaluative ideas but sometimes with less consistent probing and challenging of ideas in the texts. There were often sensible ideas about how individuals might benefit from learning to cook, such as opening up career opportunities as a chef, but wider considerations about how modern technology had changed perceptions about the need to learn to cook or the meaning of cooking in modern life were less well addressed. Most candidates did not understand or detect the deliberate irony in Text A's evocation of the past and how young people used to cook, tending to take at face value the idea that all young people were willing and able to cook in the past.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to particular points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments were usually less selective and included some details which were factually accurate but not evaluative, such as the availability of online recipes, and in some responses the anecdote in Text B was rephrased but not really commented on. More general, if valid, ideas were also typical at this level with many responses including suggestions about how frequently food delivery apps should be used. At this level, there was often also some misreading of details so that Jimmy Marron and the writer of Text B were thought to be the same person and Lawrence, the host in Text B's anecdote, was also confused with the writer of the text.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was some coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but these were listed or simply recorded. Often, there was a clear paraphrase of both texts but limited comment on them. Where there were some brief opinions, usually at the end of the response, they tended to be more general and not strongly anchored in the specific ideas in the texts. The regretful tone of Text B was sometimes replicated but without considering its implications and there was sometimes some drifting from the main focus of the task to a discussion of the perceived poor nutritional values of delivered food, a point not made in the texts.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words. Less effective responses tended to paraphrase and list ideas and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. In a few cases the entire response was copied from the texts. Where a mark of 6 was awarded, some firmer roots in the passages were needed, whereas 5 was generally given for thin or lifted responses in which there was some secure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

### **Marks for Writing**

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

#### **Style and audience**

Candidates needed to adopt an appropriate style and register for an engaging, informative article for an audience of young people. Most responses showed a clear understanding of the required, largely formal but engaging register, even where technical writing skills were ineffective, and this allowed for Examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Some high scoring

responses used a rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in a more combative or humorous way. These responses made their case effectively and with some impact. At the highest level, responses were more subtle, often adopting a direct, personal tone which gave a sense of a shared landscape between the young person writing the articles and those reading it. One candidate, for example, appealed to the reader's perception of how young people wanted to live: 'I do not know about you but I have better things to do than make a complete fool of myself while trying to cook. There'll be time to learn to cook later but there's a life out there to be lived right now!'

In the middle range of marks, Examiners could sometimes award marks for Writing in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage young people often worked well. Conversely, some responses were generally accurate but were largely summaries of the reading material rather than adopting the style of an article or the register appropriate for a young audience. Sometimes, in reaching for an engaging, age-appropriate style and register, colloquialisms and slang were used, detracting from the maturity required by the arguments and the circumstances of examination writing.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent style. Where the reading material was heavily lifted or copied, there was often little of the candidate's own style for Examiners to reward. These kinds of responses were fairly rare though perhaps more common than previously. Phrases and words from the texts were often copied but in some cases several sentences were also copied. More commonly, a range of expressions was lifted to express some ideas which could then not be credited for either Reading or Writing. For example, the reference to 'Any enthusiasm has drained away' in Text B was lifted without grammatical adaptation. In more effective responses, ideas were incorporated into the writer's own style and selected for their usefulness to the overall argument rather than copied.

## Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged were clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the introductory paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed but as a cohesive piece, though this was rare. The opening and concluding sections of the most effective responses tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case. The argument being pursued determined the sequence of ideas in these responses rather than the sequence of the original texts.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered to some degree in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. This often avoided An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more dependent on the sequencing of the original texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas, with some contradiction of points taken from each text. The idea that While some brief opinion was sometimes given at the end of the response, these views were asserted and imposed on the structure of the original texts rather than argued for.

## Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled as well as subtle in tone and register was given a Writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only engaging in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used, often rhetorically, to engage the reader. Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation within sentences.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though perhaps not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually fairly plain, the language used was generally accurate. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. There were lapses in the use

of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical mis-agreement, often between plurals and verb forms. Common spelling errors in this mark range included some frequently used words such as 'convenient', 'delicious' and 'delivery'.

Faulty sentence structures, fluctuating tenses or too much lifted or copied material often kept Writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was quite common, as were tense errors, and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Level 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content or the style of the response was the candidate's own.

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

- **be prepared to challenge the ideas in the reading texts**
- **look for contradictions in the arguments and point them out**
- **group ideas from both texts together and discuss them rather than repeat them**
- **think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience**
- **check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.**

**Section B**

**Descriptive writing**

**Describe a busy road before and after it rains.**

**Describe moving something heavy.**

The first descriptive writing question was a very popular choice for candidates and Examiners awarded a wide range of marks for these responses. A sense of place at a specific time before a rainstorm, brought to life in some vivid ways in the most effective responses to this question, was often key to the success of the piece. Some named city streets and highways were described in detail with a strong sense of familiarity on the part of the candidates. These descriptions included some vivid pictures of pedestrians walking along the road, such as the saffron robes of monks 'like bright flashes of colour amid the drab grey of morning commuters' and the street vendors hawking their wares in various stalls alongside the road. Such descriptions gave candidates opportunities for other sense impressions such as the 'rich dark scent of strong coffee' or a fleeting waft of perfume from a passer-by, though many responses included references to the smell of exhaust fumes or the melting tarmac of the road in blistering heat. The atmosphere of boredom or irritation shown by drivers in heavy traffic was a productive focus for many writers. In one response, for example, the distant rumble of thunder 'broke through the torpor of the man driving to work on the same busy road for the thousandth time, like a line of a song long forgotten'. The wandering attention of another driver was described in interesting detail: 'A scruffy bird pecking at the cracks between paving stones caught his eye, reaching into his memory for better times, sunnier times, with his children on the beach chasing seagulls off the picnic stretched out on a blanket on the sand.'

In some responses, figurative language was used to good effect. A quiet country lane on which a lone car travelled was described as 'a ribbon of tranquillity meandering through the green countryside' and on a much busier city road the heat of the sun 'bore down malevolently on the seething, sweating masses below.' The implied contrast in the task – 'before and after it rains' – gave many candidates an opportunity to create cohesive, well-constructed descriptions in which details described before the rain became transformed after the storm. The potholes in the road, for example, created 'slaloms of obstacles to swerve around' before the rain whereas once filled with rainwater they became 'bone-crunching lakes hidden under the gushing river of water' after the storm. Street vendors, previously vying for pedestrians' attention, now rushed to save their produce as they scurried for cover. In some responses, the rain was a welcome relief from searing heat and the language and images used to provide the contrast underscored this sense of relief: 'The young delivery driver, sweltering in his over-packed, cheap car, wound down his window and breathed in the cool air, smiling under the splashing rain as if it was a gift from God.' These contrasting details often helped to give responses an effective structure.

**Question 3** was a less popular choice but elicited a range of different kinds of heavy objects or sometimes moods and states of mind, all carried with difficulty. In more concrete descriptions, objects such as heavy pieces of furniture featured commonly, such as a piano which had to be winched through an apartment window or a huge box whose contents were only revealed at the end of the piece to contain a litter of puppies. Descriptions of strained sinews and aching muscles were sometimes effective though some candidates quickly exhausted their vocabulary and images to describe the effect on the body of carrying a heavy object. In other descriptions, the idea of 'moving' was interpreted more loosely and sometimes gave more scope for detail. One highly evocative piece, for example, described a suburban street in which a removal van arrived, much to the fascination of prying neighbours, from which a magnificent piano was carried onto the pavement. The focus here was on the effects created on the neighbours, the family moving their belongings into the house and the sights, sounds and other sensations created by the moving of the piano.

The question was sometimes interpreted more metaphorically. There were some evocative responses describing characters carrying the heavy burden of guilt, depression or loneliness. These were often made effective by setting them in specific places and contexts, such as the description of an isolated and frightened child navigating a day in school. The sense of a heavy burden of anxiety and fear was brought alive by some interesting images, such as the 'crushing weight of misery' which was described as 'pushing my shoulders down and my eyes to the floor.'

In both descriptive writing questions, unusual, closely observed details created engaging, evocative scenes in the best responses. Where they were sustained and developed and showed skill in building a detailed, convincing overall picture, Examiners could award marks for Content and Structure in Level 6. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's attention by linking the different elements described in an interesting, cohesive response. Level 6 responses often employed this cohesive structure, as well as carefully chosen detail and striking images or extended motifs which held the piece together.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but usually more predictable or less ambitious. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve less striking images and more stereotypical ideas or, as was sometimes the case for **Question 3**, were a little brief as candidates ran out of ideas to describe the same effects.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become more narrative in intent, and while most responses at this level were organised and paragraphed, the details included were simple and there was less use of images or a range of vocabulary.

A lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in responses at Level 3, although they were sometimes fairly accurately written. These were often entirely narrative or brief and undeveloped.

### **Narrative writing**

**Write a story including the words '... I saw the light ...'.**

**Write a story with the title, 'The island'.**

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range though **Question 4** proved to be a more common option than **Question 5**. There was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses as candidates took the opportunities offered by the open questions to determine the genre, style and content for themselves. Examiners occasionally saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title, which sometimes seemed more suited to titles set in previous examinations or were pre-prepared. In some cases, this lack of relevance affected the mark for Content and Structure because the words to be included in the narrative in **Question 4** responses, or the island setting in **Question 5**, were incidental rather than integral to the narrative as a whole.

Effective responses were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative and to produce moments of tension, mystery or drama and to vary the pace of the story were essential elements of more effective responses to both questions. In **Question 4**, more effective responses often used the device of seeing a light as a form of rescue from difficult situations. These varied across the ability range though similar scenarios were used in responses which were both less effective and highly effective. For example, accidents or finding oneself lost in various circumstances were common threads in **Question 4** responses but the

success of the piece often relied on how well realised the characters were or how well the descriptive elements in the narrative helped to bring alive the setting and make credible the scene depicted. Flares in war zones, seeing a welcome light while trying to find a way back to familiar places or people, realising that the light was in a hospital as the narrator came round after an accident: these all featured in many responses though in more high-scoring ones the story was well-developed and structured to engage the reader. In one response, twin sisters whose different characters were depicted with economy and clarity swapped seats and jerseys in a car which then crashed. The story ended with a chilling detail as their mother pulled away from the narrator, the surviving daughter, realising that the light in the hospital was shining on the face of her favourite, now dead twin. Here, as in many effective narratives, the characterisation ensured that the dramatic story was credible and genuinely engaging. In another effective response, an arrogant, over-competitive swimmer, coached by his father, saw another bright, hospital light after learning a lesson in humility in a race in which he was injured. One intriguing use of a light in the cockpit of a plane gave way to a nightmarish scene of an airplane crash, complete with vivid details of the narrator's sensations. This well-realised, compelling segment was revealed at the end to be the fevered imaginings of a newly trained pilot embarking on her first proper flight.

Some more figurative use was made of the 'light' idea in the task and these narratives were often quite effective. Realising that a character or situation was not what was assumed, leading to a moment of revelation or sudden enlightenment often worked quite well as the basis for an effective narrative if, as always, the candidate paid attention to scene-setting and characterisation rather than simply relating events.

Most narratives addressing this question were chronological accounts with varying degrees of development, characterisation and shaping although some candidates chose more ambitious structures, telling the story from the vantage point of hindsight or from two different characters' perspectives. While such structures were more difficult to control, Examiners could often reward these approaches for their ambition and engagement.

More commonly in the middle range, narratives were fairly straightforward accounts in which events tended to dominate and there was more limited attention paid to characterisation and setting. Plotlines often involved more mundane or, conversely, rather unlikely, extreme scenarios. These narratives were often organised and somewhat cohesive but did not really engage the reader.

Examiners saw some stories which were not always well-adapted but based on previous questions or which sometimes had limited relevance to the task in hand. Content and Structure marks were sometimes detrimentally affected in these cases.

For **Question 5**, there were many different plotlines, characters and events which allowed candidates to show their narrative writing ability. In many responses, the setting of an island was essential to the narrative, providing some sense of jeopardy or an inability to escape from difficulties. Many protagonists found themselves on the island as a result of storms or the malfunctioning of boats, while many others involved plane crashes. As mentioned above, these scenarios were common to responses across the mark range but effective responses relied less on events and more on characterisation, the withholding of some information to create intrigue and descriptive elements which brought the island setting to life in a credible way. In one response, the island became a restorative, healing environment for a character who was mocked as a failure by others, including his family, in an incident told economically to highlight the character's sense of hopelessness and victimhood. Stories about airplane crashes on deserted islands, another common scenario, were made more effective by strong descriptions of the surroundings and a clear sense of one or two characters, their motivations and personalities, rather than a series of events. In one response, the apparently lone survivor from a plane crash was terrifyingly woken from fitful sleep by another and the relationship between them which developed created real interest for the reader until they were rescued.

Less effective responses to this question tended to make more predictable use of the island setting and although many in the middle range were organised and sequenced fairly cohesively, characters lacked some subtlety and depth compared with the more well-realised scenarios mentioned above. Most plotlines at this level involved similar themes such as airplane crashes but holidays on idyllic islands also featured, sometimes with zombies or other murderers. These turns of events were often not properly signalled and the characters were often not developed enough to engage the reader's interest and sympathy.

Ineffective responses to this question were typically simpler versions of these scenarios in which there was some organisation but little sense of character emerged or where brevity and simplicity precluded Examiners from awarding higher marks for Content and Structure. Simple accounts of holidays in island resorts were common in the lower mark ranges.

Examiners awarded marks in Level 6 for Content and Structure for narratives which created convincing, interesting scenarios and characters in responses to both questions. While the events in a story were important in creating such credibility, Level 6 responses paid attention to characterisation and how events were driven by character traits, choices and relationships.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless cohesive and reasonably credible for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt to create a developed, relevant story. Responses in this range were more usually chronological accounts but contained a suitable ending depicting some satisfying, if not always engaging, resolution. Whichever interpretation was given to the tasks in both narrative questions, for Level 5 marks for Content and Structure stories needed to be well-managed with some conscious shaping of the narrative beyond a simple retelling of events.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of effective narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events, lacking attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather than ineffective organisation were typical at this level. In **Question 4**, for example, these resolutions sometimes involved simple accounts of getting lost in forests, caves or haunted houses from which characters were rescued by others carrying torches. At this level there was a tendency to say simply what happened or to state who the characters were rather than drawing the reader in by characterisation and setting. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than developing credible characters. While the majority of less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative and the reader was less engaged as a result.

High marks for Style and Accuracy for all composition questions were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and where it was coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Correct punctuation of speech was rare, even where responses showed a high degree of accuracy otherwise.

Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate while Level 4 responses were plain in style and there was a more limited range of vocabulary. Speech punctuation was almost always problematic at this level, creating confusion for the reader, although the writing had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as ineffective sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors.

Quite common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 marks, such as mis-agreements, missing articles and imprecise, sometimes over-ambitious vocabulary. Switches between tenses were very common in both descriptive and narrative writing at this level. In descriptions, tenses sometimes fluctuated between past and present and in narratives there was often confusion between different forms of past tense. For example, 'She had seen the island in the distance' was used where 'She saw the island in the distance' was grammatically required. Occasionally, the use of obscure, archaic vocabulary, the meaning of which was not well understood, seriously affected the clarity of the writing and resulted in lower marks for Style and Accuracy.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the misspelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A common reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was ineffective demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed but sometimes sentence separation was missing altogether.

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

- **think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative**
- **consider imaginative ways to tell your story, not just a chronological account**

- **characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader; do not rely on actions**
- **check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes: accurate speech punctuation will help to lift your mark**
- **use complicated vocabulary only where you can do so with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create particular effects.**

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

**Paper 0500/23**  
**Directed Writing and Composition**

## Key messages

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

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

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- understand how different audiences, purposes and genres should influence the style adopted
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task.

## General comments

Most candidates were familiar with the format of the examination paper and understood what was required for both the directed writing and composition questions. There were few very brief scripts, incomplete scripts or scripts in which the instructions regarding which questions to answer were not followed. Nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task. Most responses were written in the candidates' own words although there were a few responses which were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert. Some lifting of phrases or sentences was fairly common but where this lifting of material was more extensive, marks were inevitably limited for both Reading and Writing. In **Section B**, most candidates understood how the content of descriptive and narrative writing differs, although there were some stories submitted for the descriptive writing tasks where the narrative structure made it difficult for Examiners to award high marks for Content and Structure as a descriptive composition.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of, and engagement with, the idea in **Question 1** of giving a speech to the local community about going cash-free. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a speech delivered at a meeting of local residents. The appropriate register for a speech in the context stated in the question was generally well understood, with most responses structured clearly and using appropriate greetings and comments that might be delivered to an audience. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response. Some opinion was usually given about the potential benefits and drawbacks concerning an area becoming cash-free, based on ideas in the texts, with only a minority simply reporting the opinions and ideas in the texts with no comment on them. Again, more effective responses tended to comment on specific ideas in the texts rather than offer general impressions about the matter and what it might mean to different people. Sometimes, responses reflected general ideas about the use of cash and becoming cash-free in the texts without any clear focus on the effects on the local community. More effective evaluation tended to probe some ideas in the texts rather than reproduce them.

Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. Some salient ideas in the texts were not addressed, such as the range of exclusion that could possibly occur in a community by going cash-free. Occasionally, the drawbacks became so dominant in the response as to weaken any argument in favour of the proposition at all. There was some assertion rather

than argument, where candidates simply stated that going cash-free was a good or a bad thing for their local area, listing the points in the texts as they went along. Often, a regimented balance was suggested, listing the positive and negative views on ambition, and this approach could prevent any clear overall opinion or view being offered at all.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help develop the response, and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. Considering the range of individuals, businesses and the wider community as suggested in the bullet points gave the opportunity for the expansion of the response. The balance between the positive aspects of going cash-free and the possibly negative effects that this might have on some in the community presented an effective approach to structure. Less well considered scripts sometimes gave a summary of the ideas in the texts but without the focus on how the individuals and businesses could be advised to approach developing and adapting their understanding of the ideas to help them manage the changes. The structure and organisation of ideas required in a relatively informal, but clearly focused and directed speech allowed for some rhetorical devices such as questioning, direct address and exclamation. Less effective responses were often written in a less focused style with less consistent awareness of the audience and purpose of the task.

In **Section B**, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of good writing in each.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. There were some effective descriptions of various appropriate locations where the musician might be, setting a clear scene and often developing a sense of excitement and anticipation, followed by some sort of musical presentation. Less effective responses were mostly narrative in approach with less effective development of descriptive detail. For the second question, there were many vividly described and well managed, evocative descriptions of the changes in the weather. Less effective responses simply stated the changes that were happening without effectively engaging the reader, and questions from previous examinations were sometimes used with limited relevance to the specific task here.

Both narrative writing questions proved popular across the range of abilities. **Question 4** elicited some highly engaging and well-constructed narratives. The feelings and emotions of being consumed by fear and then overcoming it allowed for effective development of content and structure, with a wide range of physical and mental situations being managed. The 'mountain to climb' in **Question 5** was developed in a variety of ways, often with a literal mountain being the mission, or in some responses there was a metaphorical mountain that had to be conquered. Less effective responses to both narrative questions lacked a clear sense of narrative drive and direction, lacked clear relevance, or tailed off without any structured conclusion.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

**There is a proposal for your local area to become cash-free. You want to share your views on this proposal at a meeting of local residents.**

**Write a speech giving your views on whether or not the proposal should go ahead.**

**In your speech you should:**

- **evaluate the ideas, attitudes and opinions given in both texts**
- **consider some of the ways that being cash-free might affect individuals, businesses and the wider community.**

**Base your speech on what you have read in both texts, but be careful to use your own words.**

**Address both of the bullet points.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

**Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer and up to 25 marks for the quality of your writing.**

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the speech was also accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task and audience, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. More effective responses here focused carefully on the ideas in favour of and against the ideas concerning a local area becoming cash-free as used in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement. These implicit ideas often involved the extent to which the positive or negative features of this proposal affected the individuals, businesses and the wider community as mentioned in Text A and B. Many responses, for example, made reference to the implications of handling cash, mentioning issues such as hygiene and theft. The misgivings addressed in Text A that some people would become 'excluded' were also developed and evaluated in a number of responses. Inferences which could be drawn from some ideas in the texts were also used in more effective responses. The implicit ideas surrounding the point in Text B concerning how children can learn useful mathematical skills when managing simple cash transactions could lead to effective evaluation. One less common but valid approach was a development of the personality of the speaker, remaining closely focused on the texts and then examining how particular local characters could cope with the pressures and demands of changing to a cash-free society. Evaluating the motives of banks and businesses behind the drive to become cash-free was another useful way to evaluate the ideas in the reading material.

In less effective responses, there were straightforward points and ideas taken from the texts about the proposal, with little consideration of the local area and the individuals who would be affected. On the other hand, some responses focused so much on developing the individual characters being addressed that they used fewer relevant ideas from the text.

In responses given marks in Level 6 for Reading, Examiners often rewarded some careful grasp of the implications of specific ideas in the texts. For example, some concluded that, while there was conflicting evidence about the practicality of going completely cash-free, there was an implied inevitability of this happening that was rooted in the texts.

### **Marks for reading**

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about how this proposal to go cash-free

would affect the individuals, businesses and the wider community, and offering opinions to an audience of local residents in the form of a speech.

Most responses included reference to various ways in which going cash-free might have advantages or disadvantages for the community. The effects on various people in society who were judged to be particularly likely to be involved were outlined in Text A with the issues concerning the effects on the young being the main idea drawn from Text B. The information in Text A that banks and 'big businesses' are in favour of this proposal was often developed. Many candidates tried to explain the difference between the proposed advantages for most people and the reality for the older and poorer members of the community, which were points made in Text A. The call for a slower and steadier progression rather than rushing forward was drawn from Text B, otherwise the true value of 'hard-earned cash' might not be understood. The extent to which these ideas were countered by thoughtful arguments, developed from ideas in both Texts, often determined whether a response could be given a Level 5 mark for Reading and in some cases a range of more evaluative comments merited a Level 6 mark. Some more subtle ideas were developed and explored. For example, that profit was the real motive lying behind the banks and the businesses that were most in favour of the proposal, and that if banks already offered training to smaller businesses, then they should offer education for the older generation to help them cope with these inevitable changes.

A fairly common approach in Level 5 and low Level 6 responses was mentioning that there could be some effect on individuals handling larger amounts of cash. Paper notes are not very hygienic and there is the risk of losing cash or having it stolen. Many responses mentioned the fact that online accounts are not always secure and have their own issues such as hacking and identity theft. Another effective evaluative point was that the poorer and already disadvantaged groups in the community could become further disadvantaged if the proposal went ahead. Where a range of thoughtful inferences were made, Examiners could award marks in Level 6.

Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically offered one or two evaluative ideas but sometimes with less development or focus on the individuals, businesses and the wider community.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, often without specific reference to specific points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments were usually less selective and included some details which were factually accurate but not persuasive, such as details about how banks charge for their services without going on to link this to the proposal to go cash-free.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was some coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but where these were listed or simply recorded. Often, there was a clear paraphrase of both texts but limited comment on them. Where there were some brief opinions, usually at the end of the response, they tended to be more general about a need for balanced approach but not strongly anchored in the specific ideas in the texts.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words. Less effective responses tended to paraphrase and list ideas and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. In a few cases the entire response was copied from the texts. Where a mark of 6 was awarded, some firmer roots in the passages were needed, whereas 5 was generally given for thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was some insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

### **Marks for Writing**

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

### **Style and audience**

Candidates needed to adopt an appropriate style and register for a speech to a specific audience at 'a meeting of local residents'. Most responses showed a clear understanding of the required register, even where technical writing skills were ineffective, and this allowed for Examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in an appropriate way to an audience but making their case effectively and with some impact. At the highest level, responses were pitched at a subtle level, questioning the audience and considering their views and thoughts.

In the middle range of marks, Examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to address the local residents by using some detail worked well. Conversely, some responses were generally accurate but were largely summaries of the reading material rather than adopting the style for a speech or the register appropriate for the audience. Sometimes, in reaching for the register, the style could be rather strained and unconvincing in expression, for example referring to the audience as, 'you guys'.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent style. Where the reading material was heavily lifted or copied, there was often little of the candidate's own style for Examiners to reward, though these kinds of responses were rare. More commonly, phrases and sentences were lifted, such as, 'Cash is a dinosaur', 'excluded from mainstream commercial life' and 'increasingly easy to glide around restaurants'. In more effective responses, ideas were incorporated into the writer's own style and selected for their usefulness to the overall argument rather than copied.

### **Structure**

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged were clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the introductory paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed but as a cohesive piece. A number of responses underused the points made in Text B. The opening and concluding sections of the most effective responses tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case. The argument being pursued determined the sequence of ideas in these responses rather than the sequence of the original texts.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. This often avoided the repetition of similar or contradictory ideas which appeared in both texts and not offering any expansion or explanation, such as going cash-free is seen as both a good and a bad thing, without offering any judgement. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more dependent on the sequencing of the original texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas, with some contradiction as implied above. While some brief opinion was sometimes given at the end of the response, these views were asserted and imposed on the structure of the original texts rather than argued for.

### **Accuracy**

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled as well as subtle in tone and register was given a Writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only engaging in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used, often rhetorically, to engage the reader.

Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation within sentences.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually fairly plain, the language used was generally accurate. A range of basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. There were lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical misagreement, often between plurals and verb forms. Common spelling errors in this mark range included some frequently used words in the texts such as 'businesses', 'cashless' and 'dependence'.

Faulty sentence structures, fluctuating tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept Writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was common, as were tense errors, and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Level 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content nor the style of the response was the candidate's own.

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

- be prepared to challenge the ideas in the reading texts
- look for contradictions in the arguments and point them out
- group ideas from both texts together and discuss them rather than repeat them
- think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

**Section B**

**Descriptive writing**

**Question 2** Write a description with the title, 'The musician'.

OR

**Question 3** Describe a sudden change in the weather.

Both descriptive writing questions were chosen by a range of candidates (**Question 2** was attempted by 15.7 per cent of candidates and **Question 3** by 24.1 per cent of candidates) and Examiners awarded a wide range of marks for both responses. Both questions elicited responses about a wide variety of locations, people and atmosphere which Examiners could reward appropriately.

In the first task, there were many detailed, organised and effective descriptions of different musical venues and different types of musician. Often, candidates made use of a sense of excitement and anticipation followed by a performance, with responses imbued with some kind of significance for the writer which helped to elevate the description from simple, concrete details. The second question elicited a range of weather conditions, moving both from good to bad and from bad to good. In both questions, the choices made were important to the success of the piece: locations, people and an atmosphere which could be brought vividly to life because of a strong connection between them and the writer tended to elicit more vivid and effective responses, while objects described more clinically, or material which did not seem very special to the writer, sometimes carried less impact and effectiveness.

Responses, as is always the case, were more effective if they contained vivid and specific details rather than more general or stereotypical ideas and images. In both questions, some responses lacked real clarity, so the situation described was not effectively detailed. Lower in the mark range, responses to both questions were rather prone to narrative, though Examiners rewarded description wherever it appeared. In both questions a minority of responses included narrative sections about how the narrator got to the location before focusing on the task.

Some effective responses to the first question included interesting and evocative details about the musician as well as some description of the surrounding area, always with the task firmly in mind. Street performers, virtuoso concert performers, and rock stars were popular choices for the musician. Better responses included a level of detailed observation that gave the description credibility and interest rather than relying on cliché and often incorporated details of how the musician was seen as interesting and perhaps special to the narrator. Some less commonly used ideas also elicited very effective responses, these included music examinations, parents watching their child perform at a school concert, and some precise descriptions of specific instruments.

In the second descriptive writing question, effective responses clearly developed engaging description of the sudden changes in the weather being witnessed. There were often dramatic weather events, describing storms and tornadoes. At times, and less dramatically, it went from warm to wet or from cold to hot with little sense of the 'sudden' nature of the change as mentioned in the title. Effective responses came from well-described descriptions of any sudden change in the weather, whether extreme or not. Many responses focused on a clear location, a city, or a beach, and sometimes the location was significant to the narrator and described their feelings as the more extreme weather took its toll on the surroundings. Less common were descriptions of changes in the weather occurring during a climb or a walk. Some responses focused too much on using over florid language that lacked any real sense of time and place.

In both descriptive writing questions, unusual, closely observed details created engaging, evocative scenes in the best responses. Where they were sustained and developed and showed skill in building a detailed, convincing overall picture, Examiners could award marks for Content and Structure in Level 6. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's attention by linking the different elements described in an interesting, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure, often provided by the narrator's reactions or a specific atmosphere, as well as carefully chosen detail and striking images or extended motifs which held the piece together.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but usually a more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve less striking images and more stereotypical ideas.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become more narrative in intent, especially in the first question, with accounts of the narrator's day and their journey to the location. While most responses at this level were organised and often paragraphed, the details included were simple and there was less use of images or a range of vocabulary. In the first question, the individual character of the musician was not effectively developed or detailed. In the second question, the weather described was more of a list of adjectives to do with sun and rain with no sense of engagement.

Some lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in responses at Level 3, although they were sometimes reasonably accurately written. In this Level responses were sometimes mainly narrative in approach.

High marks for Style and Accuracy often reflected the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, similar details were often included but better responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to create specific effects. Highly effective responses showed a confident ability to use both simple and complex language, striking images and effects, as well as a range of sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres. In less effective responses, vocabulary was sometimes wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide-ranging vocabulary was lost by its imprecise use and lack of clarity. Obscure, sometimes archaic language sometimes revealed a lack of understanding of its meaning rather than a wide range of vocabulary. As is often the case in less secure descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. Incomplete or verbless sentences also affected marks given in the middle range, even where other technical aspects of style were more accurate. These instances were perhaps a little more frequent than has been the case in the recent past. Lapses in grammar, perhaps minor in isolation but more damaging when persistent, also kept responses out of Level 4 for Style and Accuracy. These included disagreement, especially between pronouns and verbs, and the omission of definite and indefinite articles was also common and damaging to otherwise accurate, if simple, style.

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

- **try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content; choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus**
- **keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a specific atmosphere**
- **write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses**
- **use vocabulary precisely: complex words used wrongly do not help your style.**

### **Narrative writing**

**Question 4 Write a story that involves overcoming a fear.**

**OR**

**Question 5 Write a story with the title, 'A mountain to climb'.**

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses. **Question 4** was attempted by 42.2 per cent of candidates, with **Question 5** being attempted by 18.1 per cent. Examiners occasionally saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title or which, on occasion, seemed more suited to titles set in previous examinations. In some cases, this lack of relevance affected the mark for Content and Structure.

Effective responses were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative and to produce moments of tension, mystery or drama and to vary the pace of the story were effective elements of more effective responses to both questions. **Question 4** allowed for a wide range of possible fears to overcome. There were many responses featuring the fear of heights or water, the fear of failing an examination, stage fright, or a phobia of snakes or spiders. There were a number of battlefield narratives where being afraid in a desperate situation led to conquering both the fear and the enemy. Once again, there were some candidates with a sensible fear of zombies, but it seemed less sensible to feel a need to overcome that fear. These all had varying degrees of tension and could achieve the range of marks available. Some very effective responses used the title to create a convincing scene of some significance to the narrator. Some particularly effective responses featured a fear of dentists and some detailed knowledge of dentistry instruments being displayed, and the fear that strikes when a taxi seems to be going the wrong way. In both cases things worked out well and the fear was overcome.

In most cases, the effectiveness of the narrative was not so dependent on what happened but on the care taken to include interesting, well-realised characters and believable scenarios, however the story unfolded. More commonly in the middle range, narratives were fairly straightforward accounts in which events tended to dominate and there was more limited attention paid to characterisation and setting. The title was almost always used relevantly, although at times the overcoming of the fear was a relatively incidental detail in comparison to the phobia that was being expanded.

In **Question 5** most responses developed a narrative around the physical climbing of a mountain. There were many ascents of Everest or K2, with many climbs detailing a number of credible or less credible events along the way. A number made productive use of a metaphorical interpretation of the title, suggesting that some emotion or state of mind had been the 'mountain to climb'. Such examples included relationships that seemed in danger, or a medical condition which threatened a character in the narrative. Where the metaphorical approach was chosen, it was more effective to make more than one passing mention of this being the 'mountain', this reference usually being dropped in at the very end of the narrative. Most narratives addressing this question were chronological accounts with varying degrees of development, characterisation and shaping, although some candidates chose more ambitious structures, telling the story from the vantage point of hindsight. While such structures were more difficult to control, and tenses were sometimes used insecurely, Examiners could often reward these approaches for their ambition and engagement.

Examiners awarded marks in Level 6 for Content and Structure for narratives which created convincing, interesting scenarios and characters in responses to both questions. While the events in a story were important in creating such credibility, Level 6 responses paid attention to characterisation and how events were driven by character traits, relationships and choices.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 remained clear and well-managed in structure and approach, as well as being reasonably credible and engaging for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt to create a developed, relevant story. Responses in this range were more usually chronological accounts but were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some satisfying, if not always engaging, resolution. For the first question, this often included the circumstances concerning the fear itself which were usually overcome and resolved but not always in convincing ways. Whichever interpretation was given to the tasks, literal or more figurative, for Level 5 marks for Content and Structure stories needed to be well-managed with some conscious shaping of the narrative beyond a simple retelling of events.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of effective narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events, lacking attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather than ineffective organisation were typical at this level. In the first question, these sometimes involved simple accounts of a series of events such as buying the mountain climbing equipment, the journey to base camp and the meals that were eaten. At this level there was a tendency to say simply what happened or to state who the characters were rather than drawing the reader in by characterisation and setting. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than developing characters as credible and rounded. While the majority of less effective narratives had a simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative and the reader was less engaged as a result.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate while Level 4 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary. Speech punctuation was usually problematic at this level, sometimes creating confusion as to who was speaking and often without punctuation other than speech marks. However, the writing at this level had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as ineffective sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors. Common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 marks, such as disagreements, missing articles and imprecise, occasionally over-ambitious vocabulary. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. Incorrect use of capital letters, the omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors, such as random capitalisation and the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A common reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was ineffective demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed but sometimes sentence separation was missing altogether. Though the mixing of tenses and the use of incomplete sentences were perhaps more prevalent in the descriptive writing, these issues also limited the marks available in the narrative writing.

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

- **think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative**
- **consider imaginative ways to tell your story, apart from a chronological account**
- **characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader. Do not rely on events**
- **check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes; accurate speech punctuation will help to lift your mark**
- **use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create particular effects.**

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

**Paper 0500/03**  
**Coursework Portfolio**

## **Key messages**

Candidates did well when they:

- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and context for each of the three assignments
- read critically and thoroughly evaluated the implicit and explicit ideas, opinions, and attitudes they identified in a text in **Assignment 1**
- assimilated ideas from a text to provide developed, thoughtful and sophisticated responses in **Assignment 1**
- supported their analysis, evaluation and comments with a detailed and specific selection of relevant ideas from a text in **Assignment 1**
- wrote original and interesting responses which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of events and situations
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect in all assignments
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of argument, description, or narrative
- demonstrated a high level of accuracy in their writing
- engaged in a process of careful editing and proofreading to identify and correct errors in their writing.

The best practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was when:

- centres followed the guidelines and instructions set out in the Course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook
- centres used the centre checklist and included it with their coursework sample as requested
- an appropriate text was used for **Assignment 1**, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond
- centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience
- teachers gave general advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- following feedback, candidates revised and edited their first drafts to improve their writing
- candidates checked, revised, and edited their final drafts to identify and correct errors
- teachers provided marks and summative comments at the end of the final draft of each assignment which clearly related to the appropriate mark level descriptors
- teachers indicated all errors in the final drafts of each completed assignment
- centres engaged in a process of internal moderation and clearly indicated any mark adjustments in the coursework portfolios, on the Individual Record Cards, and on the Candidate Assessment Summary Forms.

## **General comments**

A significant number of candidates produced interesting coursework portfolios which contained varied work across a range of contexts. There was evidence to show that many centres set tasks which allowed candidates flexibility to respond to subjects related to their personal interests or experiences. The majority of

coursework portfolios contained writing of three different genres. There were very few incomplete folders seen by moderators.

Moderators reported an improvement in the number of centres following the instructions in the coursework handbook and in this session most centres provided the correct paperwork and completed all relevant forms accurately. The Moderation Team reported that many centres provided summative comments closely related to the mark schemes at the end of each completed assignment. These were extremely helpful in helping moderators to understand how and why marks had been awarded and centres are thanked for following the process as instructed in the Coursework Handbook.

The major concern for all moderators was that some markers of the coursework portfolios did not indicate errors in the final draft of each assignment and/or provide a summative comment which referred to the marking level descriptors to justify the marks awarded. Some folders had no teacher annotation or marks on the assignments at all. Failure to follow this process often resulted in inaccurate or inconsistent marking and was one of the main reasons for adjustment of marks by moderators.

### **Administration**

Successful administration was when centres:

- completed the centre checklist and included it in the coursework sample
- annotated all errors in the final draft of each assignment
- carried out a thorough process of internal moderation which was clearly signposted on the assignments themselves as well as on all relevant documentation
- supplied marks and specific comments relating to the mark schemes at the end of the final draft of each assignment
- accurately completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and ICRC, including any amendments made during internal moderation and listed the candidates in candidate number order on BOTH documents
- ensured that each coursework folder was stapled or tagged and securely attached to the Individual Candidate Record Card (ICRC)
- submitted their sample of coursework folders without using plastic or cardboard wallets.

### **Internal Moderation**

Centres who followed the instructions for carrying out internal moderation as directed in the Coursework Handbook are thanked for engaging in this important process. There was a general trend of greater accuracy of marking by centres where there was clear evidence of internal moderation than centres where no internal moderation process was evident on the coursework folders and documentation.

Some centres did not record changes made at internal moderation on the candidates' Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRCs) which caused some confusion about the final mark awarded to candidates. Centres are requested to ensure that any changes made at internal moderation are signposted clearly on the work itself then also recorded on the ICRC as well as on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF). This is essential to ensure that the correct marks are recorded for all candidates.

### **Using the coursework handbook**

A cause of concern for all moderators was that some issues persist even though there are clear instructions in the Coursework Handbook, and the same concerns have been raised in previous Principal Moderator Reports. To ensure effective and accurate marking is achieved, and that all paperwork arrives safely for moderation, it is essential that all the instructions given in the Coursework Handbook, and on the relevant forms, are carefully followed. Centres are now required to complete a checklist and include it with the sample to ensure that all administrative procedures have been followed correctly.

Below highlights the three most significant issues related to the administration and annotation of candidates' work which led to mark adjustments by moderators:

#### **1 Indicating all errors in the final version of each assignment**

- Some of the assignments showed little or no evidence of complying with the instruction in the Coursework Handbook that markers should indicate all errors in the final draft of each assignment. This

process helps markers to effectively and accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of work and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. If this process does not take place, it is difficult for markers to make a balanced judgement. In several centres there was evidence across all three assignments that markers had awarded marks from the higher levels of the assessment criteria to work containing frequent and often serious errors that had not been annotated by the marker. This inevitably led to a downward adjustment of marks by the moderator. It is important for all who mark the coursework portfolios to fully understand the importance of indicating and taking into account all errors in the final draft of each assignment. To avoid adjustment of marks for accuracy, it is essential that centres engage in this process and clearly indicate errors in their candidates' work.

## 2 Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC)

- Some centres did not attach the portfolios of work to the ICRC in accordance with the instructions in the Coursework Handbook and point 4 on the electronic version of the ICRC (although this was a smaller number than in previous sessions).
- Some confusion was caused when a small number of centres included ICRCs for the whole cohort as well as the ICRCs for the sample sent; centres only need to send the ICRCs (securely attached to the coursework portfolio) for the candidates in the sample submitted for moderation.
- On some folders there were errors in the transcription of internally moderated mark changes, or it was unclear which mark was the final one. Where internal moderation has taken place, any mark changes should be transferred from the assignment to the ICRC to ensure that the moderator has a clear understanding of all mark changes.

## 3 Coursework portfolios

- Moderators reported that some centres used plastic or cardboard wallets to present candidates' work as an alternative to securely attaching the individual assignments to the ICRC; this caused extra work for moderators and increased the risk of work being mislaid. Centres are requested not to place coursework folders into plastic or cardboard wallets and are reminded of this on the coursework checklist.
- Some centres included more than one rough draft; this is unnecessary and can lead to confusion. Please ensure that the rough draft included is clearly labelled as a draft.
- Occasionally rough drafts contained annotations and specific feedback; centres are reminded that when markers offer feedback on rough drafts, it should be general advice. No errors should be indicated, and the marker should not offer corrections or improvements. Overmarking of rough drafts can be raised as malpractice by moderators.
- Some centres included documentation not required for the moderation process; the only paperwork that should be included in the sample is clearly indicated in the Coursework Handbook. There is also a checklist for all submissions which centres should complete and include with their coursework sample.

### **Comments on specific assignments:**

#### **Assignment 1**

Candidates were successful when:

- they responded to interesting and appropriate texts which contained engaging content
- they demonstrated analysis and evaluation of the individual ideas and opinions identified within a text
- the form, purpose and intended audience of their writing was clear to the reader
- they wrote in a fluent, accurate and appropriate style.

Moderators commented that most candidates responded to texts which were of an appropriate length and challenge, and which appealed to the interests of the candidates. Successful texts included articles exploring issues relevant to young people, for example, online schools, social media, national issues in the candidates' own countries, and environmental issues. Less successful texts were those which were old and outdated, texts expressing hateful or offensive opinions, long informative texts on a given topic, or texts which were of limited personal interest to the candidates. Texts selected for **Assignment 1** should be an appropriate length, explore ideas and offer opinions, and use rhetorical or literary devices designed to provoke or sustain the reader's interest to ensure that the text offers scope for candidates to fully engage and respond to it in a sustained piece of writing. Centres are encouraged to use a good range of relevant and up-to-date texts for **Assignment 1**. Other less successful texts were ones where the candidate fully agreed with and endorsed

the writer's views and opinions because they offered few opportunities for evaluating ideas and opinions, as required by the mark scheme. It is also crucial to select texts for their quality of written communication: moderators reported seeing a small number of poorly written texts taken from a variety of websites. Many of these were too long and tended to be informative, offering very little scope for rigorous evaluation or analysis. Moderators also reported seeing texts which contained potentially offensive material despite this being mentioned in previous reports. This may indicate that candidates were allowed to make their own text choices, but centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that all texts used for **Assignment 1** are fit for purpose, and this includes avoiding offensive or unsuitable material. Disagreeing with completely unreasonable or offensive viewpoints also provides fewer opportunities for rigorous evaluation and can be far less challenging for able candidates. Responses which attack the writer rather than engaging with the ideas and opinions should be avoided.

Some centres set one text for a class or sometimes whole cohort. When this approach was adopted by a centre there was usually a tendency for candidates to produce responses which were very similar in content and structure due to heavy scaffolding. This made it difficult for candidates to create the original and sophisticated responses expected of the higher-level assessment criteria and was sometimes a reason for adjustments of marks. Centres are advised that teaching a text to a whole class and offering a scaffolded plan for the response may be a useful teaching strategy for initially developing the necessary skills and knowledge for **Assignment 1**, but this approach should not be used for the final coursework submission.

If centres are unsure about how to approach and set tasks for **Assignment 1**, they can refer to the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Both documents provide advice and guidance about task setting and text selection and can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge website.

## Reading

Although some centres were accurate with their marking of reading, as in the previous moderation sessions, there was a significant trend for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria. Candidates who successfully met the higher-level assessment criteria were those who demonstrated a consistently evaluative approach to most of the ideas and opinions in a text, and provided a developed, sophisticated response which made direct reference or included quotes from the text. Candidates who engaged in a general discussion about the topic or subject of a text, or those who did not thoroughly evaluate a text, tended to produce work which more appropriately met the Level 4 assessment criteria in Table B (reading). The most common reasons for adjustments to a centre's marks for reading were when moderators identified a trend of candidates engaging in a general discussion about the topic of a text/s, or when the number of points covered were 'appropriate' rather than 'thorough'.

## Writing

Many candidates responded to texts in an appropriate form and style. Letters were the most popular choice of form, and many candidates demonstrated some understanding of audience and purpose. When candidates were less successful with writing, it was often because the form, intended audience and purpose of the writing was not clear. This made it difficult for the candidates to meet the highest-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments to writing marks for **Assignment 1**. Successful responses to **Assignment 1** tasks were those in which the writing was highly effective, almost always accurate, and consistent throughout in the application of form and style. Work which showed insecurity with form and style, such as the omission of an appropriate ending to a letter, a limited or inconsistent use of rhetorical devices for speeches, or lack of clarity of the intended audience, tended to meet the assessment criteria for Level 5 or below, Table A (writing) or below. The moderators noted that there was a general tendency for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria.

Another common reason for the adjustment of marks for writing was because of the accuracy of the candidates' writing. When errors impaired meaning, such as the incorrect construction of sentences or use of grammar, typing errors, or the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck, the overall quality and efficacy of the discussion was affected. Errors such as these are classed as serious and make it difficult for candidates to meet the higher-level assessment criteria; this type of writing is more characteristic of writing achieving marks from the middle to the lower levels of the assessment criteria. Moderators also noted a tendency for centres to over-reward vocabulary that had some merit in its selection but was not always used precisely or effectively in the response.

## Advice to candidates for Assignment 1

- thoroughly explore, challenge, and discuss the ideas in the text
- avoid making general comments about the topic or subject of the text, instead, ensure that comments are specifically related to the ideas, opinions or attitudes identified in the text
- avoid criticising or attacking the writer: focus on what the text says
- look for, and use inferences made implicitly in the text
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the text and comment on them
- develop points to create a thorough, detailed, and clear line of argument or discussion
- make sure that the audience and purpose is clear and adapt the written style accordingly
- proof-read assignments to ensure punctuation, vocabulary choices and grammar are correct.

## Assignment 2 (description)

The majority of tasks set for **Assignment 2** were appropriate and encouraged candidates to write in a descriptive style. Many students wrote engaging and vivid descriptions from experience or their imaginations, which were a pleasure to read. Moderators also noticed that there were relatively fewer descriptions which slipped into narrative than in previous sessions, but this is still a regularly observed flaw in descriptive writing assignments, sometimes due to the nature of the tasks set. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which invited candidates to describe an experience or holiday which tended to lead to tasks more suited to narrative writing. Centres are reminded to set descriptive tasks and remind candidates to avoid using narrative writing techniques in their responses.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those where the candidates had carefully selected vocabulary to create a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place or person, and which were well sequenced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. Successful responses included descriptions of towns or cities in which candidates lived, important rituals or festivals, or significant settings or places. Less successful tasks were those which asked candidates to describe events or scenarios of which they had no personal experience, or settings and situations in which the candidate clearly had no interest or engagement. Many of these responses relied on unconvincing descriptive writing which did not engage the reader. This type of writing is characteristic of work achieving marks from the middle to lower levels of the assessment criteria, although it was noticed that many centres awarded marks from the higher-level assessment criteria. This was quite often a reason for adjustment of marks from Table C (content and structure).

Whilst many candidates showed a secure and confident understanding of language, there was still a general tendency by a number of centres to award marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to work which contained ineffective overuse of literary techniques. Some moderators commented that this seemed to be actively encouraged by some centres. To achieve marks from the higher-level assessment criteria, candidates need to demonstrate a confident and secure understanding and use language for specific effect. This is difficult for candidates to achieve if they over-use adjectives, include inappropriate images or idioms and/or use obscure or archaic language. The overworking of language and/or use of unconvincing imagery was a common reason for moderators adjusting marks downwards.

Another common reason for adjustments to marks was when moderators identified a trend of awarding marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to writing that contained a limited range of sentence structures, incorrectly constructed sentences, or contained frequent errors with punctuation and grammar. Writing that achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register, and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. The moderators saw some writing which displayed these characteristics, but a significant number of the assignments receiving marks from centres from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D more frequently displayed the characteristics of writing expected from Level 4 or below. Many candidates 'told' the reader about the scene being described, rather than engaging the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images. The moderators also noticed a general trend for candidates to use repeated sentence structures and create almost list-like descriptions.

In addition, the work of a significantly large number of candidates contained frequent and serious errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of the candidates' work. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, tense inconsistencies, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Quite often, the meaning of sentences was blurred, or meaning was lost altogether. Errors which affect the meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as 'minor'. As mentioned earlier in this report, the absence of the indication of all errors made it difficult for the moderators to determine whether errors had been considered when marks had been awarded; moderators noted that on some weaker

assignments no errors had been annotated and the summative comment declared a high level of accuracy. Accurate and effective application of the assessment criteria is achieved through the careful weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and the application of a mark which 'best fits' the assessment criteria. To achieve this, it is essential that errors are identified and indicated by the markers. Engaging in this process allows markers to effectively balance the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and apply marks that are most appropriate to their candidates' work.

Information and guidance on how to apply the mark schemes are given in the Coursework Handbook. Examples of good tasks and exemplification of the standard of work expected at the different levels of the mark scheme are also provided in the Coursework Handbook.

### Advice to candidates for Assignment 2

- use a range of vocabulary suited to the context and content of the description
- create images appropriate for the context and content of the description
- create an engaging imagined scenario using language designed to have an impact on the reader
- avoid slipping into a narrative style
- proof-read responses to identify and correct common errors such as missing articles and prepositions, switches in tenses and typing errors
- avoid repetitive sentence structures; instead use a range of sentences to create specific effects.

### Assignment 3 (narrative)

Much of the task setting for **Assignment 3** was generally appropriate and moderators saw some engaging and effective narratives which were well controlled and convincing. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which did not invite narrative responses as they were too informative. Successful narratives were those in which candidates created stories characterised by well-defined plots and strongly developed features of narrative writing such as description, strong characterisation, and a clear sense of progression. The narration of personal experiences and events, or responses where candidates were able to create convincing details and events within their chosen genre, tended to be more successful. Candidates were generally less successful when their understanding of audience and genre was insecure, and the resulting narratives lacked credibility and conviction. Moderators commented that this sort of writing was often seen when candidates were writing in the genre of detective or murder mystery stories. Stories such as these, although containing a definite beginning, middle and ending, were often unrealistic and incredible, or lacked development of character or plot. Some responses failed to conclude properly, ending with an unconvincing or unsatisfactory cliff hanger. This sort of writing is classed as 'relevant' or 'straightforward' and should expect to be awarded marks from Level 4 or below from Table C (content and structure). Moderators noticed that there was a trend with a significant majority of the work sampled for centres to award marks from Levels 5 and 6 to writing which more appropriately fitted the Level 4, or below, assessment criteria. This was quite frequently a reason for marks being adjusted.

When moderators saw very accurate work containing precise well-chosen vocabulary, and which maintained a consistent register throughout, they could agree when centres awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D (style and accuracy). As with **Assignments 1** and **2**, moderators noticed a significant trend for centres to award marks from the highest levels of the mark scheme to work which contained frequent and persistent errors and which more accurately met the assessment criteria from Level 4 or below in Table D. This was a common reason for the adjustment of marks. The comments made for **Assignment 2** with regards to accuracy and the annotation of errors are also relevant to **Assignment 3** and should be noted by all who mark coursework.

### Advice to candidates for Assignment 3

- create stories that are realistic, credible, and convincing
- remember that characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage the reader
- avoid clichéd scenarios and consider an individual and original selection of content
- carefully proof-read and check assignments for errors in punctuation, the use of prepositions and articles, tenses, and in sentence construction.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

---

**Paper 0500/04**  
**Speaking and Listening Test 04**

## **Key messages**

Centre administration was of a high standard with Summary Forms completed accurately and recordings uploaded appropriately.

Timing within the test remains a serious area of concern for a number of centres.

**Part 1** should last for 3 – 4 minutes. A significantly short **Part 1** response will affect the mark that can be awarded. Equally, an overlong response to **Part 1** will also affect the mark awarded.

**Part 2** should last for 7 – 8 minutes. It is the responsibility of the Examiner to ensure the correct timing is adhered to. Conversations that run for significantly less than the minimum 7 minutes required do not allow candidates the opportunity to access the full range of marks available because certain descriptors in the higher levels cannot be satisfied.

**Part 2** should consist of a conversation between the candidate and the Examiner. If an audience is present, it should be passive and play no part in the performance of the test.

**Part 2** is designed to be a conversation so if it is conducted as a series of unrelated questions, it is not an appropriate model to use for the most successful outcome. Questions should be used to prompt candidates to explore ideas and opinions related to the topic content introduced in the **Part 1** talk but a **Part 2** that consists solely of questions followed by answers is not a natural conversation and cannot be credited as such when awarding marks.

Centres should avoid grouping marks in the top level unless this is strongly evidenced in the candidates' performances. Centres that simply award marks in Level 5 for either **Part 1** or **Part 2**, without recourse to applying differentiation where it is needed, actually disadvantage those candidates who may have performed to a higher level. This was particularly noticeable in **Part 2**. The way that moderation works means that inflating marks for those candidates who do not justify them through performance will almost certainly mean downscaling is applied.

## **Administration – General comments**

For most centres, administration of the test was diligent, accurate and easy to follow. Summary forms were completed to a high degree of accuracy and samples uploaded to SfA were of a very good sound quality.

Where there were issues, the following guidelines will help to clarify administrative requirements:

- Each candidate's test requires a full formal introduction to be made by the Examiner prior to the beginning of **Part 1**. This introduction should include the centre name and number, the candidate's full name and candidate number, the date on which the test is being recorded and the name of the Examiner. This is important information for the Moderator. The overwhelming majority of centres were compliant with this requirement and are to be congratulated for their diligence.
- Whilst it is perfectly acceptable for centres to create their own version of the Summary Form (the OESF), it is important that any such version includes all the same information required on the form provided by Cambridge. A form that does not have a full breakdown of the marks for each candidate in the cohort is not acceptable. All forms should have, therefore, a breakdown of the marks that includes a mark out of 20 for **Part 1**, a mark out of 10 for **Part 2** Speaking, a mark out of 10 for **Part 2** Listening

and a total mark out of 40. A form that truncates **Part 2** into one mark out of 20 is not acceptable for the Moderator.

- Centres are reminded that for moderation to take place effectively and efficiently summary forms are required that show the breakdown of marks for the whole cohort of entered candidates and not just those in the sample requested. Centres should check whether all the OESFs for their entered cohort have been uploaded to Submit for Assessment successfully. Failure to upload all the correct OESFs means the moderation process is delayed.
- It is the centre's responsibility to check the quality of the recordings being made, preferably as an ongoing process during each recording session, to ensure that the recordings are clearly audible and without interference. On a few occasions, the Examiner was clearly audible but the candidates were not, presumably because of the Examiner's proximity to the microphone but not the candidates. Any problems with the quality of recordings should be reported to Cambridge immediately so that candidates are not adversely affected by such issues.
- A very small percentage of centres uploaded videos of their candidates performing their tests. The use of videos is discouraged.

### **Conduct of the test – General comments**

Overall, across the component entry, the standard of examining was very good with candidates being given plenty of opportunities to express their ideas and demonstrate their range of oratory skills productively. There were centres, however, who did not follow the rubric set out in the syllabus but still awarded highly inflated marks for their candidates. Subsequently, upon moderation, scaling was applied, and these marks were reduced.

Where there were concerns regarding the conduct of the test affected centres should heed the following advice:

- It is strongly advised that each test should begin with the Examiner's formal introduction and be followed immediately by the candidate performing **Part 1**, the Individual Talk. If an Examiner feels that a candidate is very nervous and needs a moment of calming prior to the formal test beginning, it is recommended this is done before the recording is started. Examiners formally starting the test then engaging in 'off topic' conversation with candidates before asking them to begin their **Part 1** task is strongly discouraged. Any pleasantries exchanged should be completed before the recording is started and the formal introduction is made.
- Given that both Speaking and Listening are assessed in **Part 2**, it is important that the conversations last long enough for candidates to demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the Examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation of 7 minutes is met so that candidates are given the fullest opportunity to demonstrate the range of skills they possess. Short conversations will mean the full range of marks available for **Part 2** cannot be awarded.
- If a candidate has exceeded the maximum 4 minutes for **Part 1** the Examiner should not compensate by shortening the time allowed for **Part 2**. Candidates must be allowed the required 7 – 8 minutes to complete a full response to **Part 2**, irrespective of the length of the talk in **Part 1**.
- It is also important that the conversations offer sufficient challenge to allow candidates to demonstrate the range of skills they possess. Focused questioning and prompts are needed to move the conversation forward, together with an adaptability on the part of the Examiner to absorb the candidate's previous comments and to extend the conversation as a result. A **Part 2** that is merely a question-and-answer session is not a natural conversation and as a consequence is limited in terms of the marks that can be awarded.
- Examiners who rely on a pre-determined set of questions disadvantage their candidates, in particular with regard to the mark for Speaking in **Part 2**. A question from the Examiner should lead to an answer from the candidate which then may lead to a comment or prompt from the Examiner that is connected to the same content matter. This will in turn lead to another connected response from the candidate; and so the conversation develops naturally.
- Examiners who dominate conversations or who frequently interrupt candidates during the conversation do so to the disadvantage of those candidates. Good Examiners prompt candidates then allow them the opportunity to respond in full and to develop their ideas before moving the conversation forwards again.
- An audience is permitted to witness a test being conducted but it must never play any active part in its performance. The audience must not interact with the candidate or Examiner under any circumstances and the audience should certainly never be allowed to ask the candidate questions during **Part 2**.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Part 1 – Individual Talk**

The following comments by Moderators reflect performance in **Part 1** in this series:

*Successful topic areas for more able candidates included: talks on, for example: 'Argentina' from a candidate who was clearly proud of his country; talks on more unique interests such as 'Authority', 'Bad Habits', 'Beyond Books', 'Fast Fashion', 'Blended Families', 'The Value of Travel'. The common thread in all of these is that they reflected the candidates' interests and intellects.*

*Higher level candidates used rhetorical devices, imagery and other effective language techniques.*

*Choosing a challenging, interesting topic and then researching and planning your talk makes for a successful Part 1 and gives plenty of scope for the conversation in Part 2.*

*A clear focus is paramount to delivering a top-level talk whereas vague titles tend to be wishy-washy and rambling especially if there has been little preparation.*

*Most of the issues with Part 1 were to do with timing – some extremely long and others extremely short. Preparation is key – not just with how to get points across but also to keep to the time limits.*

*More concentration on using techniques/language devices is needed to help candidates deliver presentations in more interesting and original ways. This would help middle range candidates improve their marks.*

Almost without exception, the responses to **Part 1** were in the form of a presentation. This format remains a safe and acceptable one, particularly if an attempt to analyse and reflect on personal experiences is included. For many candidates this choice remains a safe and productive way to achieve a good mark in **Part 1**, but only when well-timed and clearly structured.

Less successful responses to **Part 1** tended to lack focus because a strong structure had not been created and time constraints had not been considered. Largely narrative responses that follow a linear path, such as talking through the events of a holiday or simply restating facts about a topic choice, tend to be unimaginative and rarely achieve higher than Level 3. This is why topics such as 'My Favourite Football Team (or video game, K-Pop band, movie, hobby)' do not tend to be very successful. Generally, these kinds of topic only become more successful if there is an added element that expands the talk beyond adequate. For example, 'How My Hobby Has Been Life-changing' immediately introduces more sophisticated elements into the talk through introspection, analysis and evaluation.

Candidates should be applauded for their considerable efforts when preparing their talks. However, learning a talk word for word and trying to deliver it verbatim can sometimes lead to issues with fluency and effect. In essence, the **Part 1** talk is a performative piece, so it is important that candidates use a wide range of devices to ensure (imaginary) audience interest. Simply reciting a learned piece without considering the impact on the listener is counter productive.

Very strong performances in **Part 1** successfully combined excellent knowledge and development of a topic, a tightly defined structure timed accordingly and a confident delivery style. It should be noted that the bullet point descriptor 'lively' in Level 5 does not have to mean that a candidate delivers an animated performance. A candidate who delivers a talk in a confident and assured tone without being overtly 'lively' can perform equally well for the second descriptor in Level 5. Subtle changes of tone can be very effective in fully engaging an audience.

Some examples of **Part 1** topics from this series that worked well include:

Drumming

My passion for horse riding

Artificial Intelligence – its impact in medicine

Turning ideas into reality

Multilingualism

The value of travel

Impact of tourism on the environment

Time Travel

Gender discrimination

Traditional books v e-books

African penguins

Luxury consumption

Authority

The dangers of fast fashion

Some examples of **Part 1** topics from this series that were less successful include:

Video Games

A.I.

Global warming

Social media

Sport

Gaming

My holiday

My favourite celebrity

Football

Hobbies

British history

It should be considered that any of the topics named in either of the above lists has the potential to be either successful or less successful, but topics that are too vague, too generalised and poorly thought through lead to poorer performances. The topics 'Football' and 'Social Media' are particularly prone to performances that rely more on perceived general knowledge than focused preparation. It does not follow that just because a candidate plays or watches football or spends time on social media the talk will be automatically interesting, well-structured or successful.

## **Part 2 – Conversation**

The following comments from Moderators reflect performance in **Part 2** in this series:

*Some Examiners are extremely good at extending and enhancing points made by candidates which result in very engaging and interesting discussions which enable the candidates to demonstrate their skills. Others, however, are still inclined to write a number of questions to ask while the candidate is speaking and then work through these without building on how the candidates respond.*

*Many discussions were lively and interesting. Examiners seemed better at asking shorter, open questions allowing candidates to move discussions into more conceptual areas where they were able to, thus satisfying the criteria for the higher grades. Fewer Examiners dominated discussions to the extent that they have in many previous sessions.*

*Candidates who had relied on cue cards or visual aids in **Part 1** were often stronger in **Part 2** when more natural, spontaneous speaking skills could be assessed.*

Successful **Part 2** conversations were well conducted and Examiners asked appropriate and interesting questions which enabled the candidates to extend and develop their ideas. Often the use of prompts, instead of a steady stream of questioning, was more effective in eliciting developed responses from candidates.

Unlike in **Part 1**, the Examiner can influence the quality of the candidate's performance in **Part 2**. Concise but challenging prompts often led to candidates developing their ideas more successfully than when a question was convoluted or closed. Some Examiners struggled to inspire candidates with closed questioning and by offering too many of their own ideas during the conversations. Indeed, where a candidate was moved down a level during moderation, it was sometimes due to a lack of detailed response, caused by uninspired questioning. The use of pre-determined questions or a perfunctory question-and-answer technique limits the candidate's ability to engage in a real conversation where responses are elicited by what is said immediately before.

Poor timing is also a major contributor to candidates achieving fewer marks than they could in **Part 2**. A **Part 2** that lasts for significantly less than the minimum of 7 minutes required cannot fulfil the descriptors in Level 5, and most likely not in Level 4 either. The descriptors for **Part 2** are assessed on the basis of a full **Part 2** being performed. Allowing only 2 – 4 minutes for **Part 2** does not provide the necessary evidence of consistent and detailed responses required. In effect, short conversations limit the range of marks that can be awarded.

It should be noted that the ‘changes (alterations) in the direction of the conversation’ descriptor does not mean that Examiners should steer the conversation away from the central topic to something completely different. ‘Changes in the direction’ can mean introducing a new perspective on the topic or challenging a previously stated opinion but any ensuing conversation should still be focused on the topic presented in **Part 1**.

### **Advice to centres**

- Make sure candidates know the timings of the test. Ensure that their Individual Talk is 3 – 4 minutes long. If necessary, you can help them in the test by interceding before 5 minutes and initiating the conversation.
- When considering the timing of **Part 1**, please remember that **Part 1** begins when the candidate starts speaking and does not include the Examiner’s introduction.
- Helping a candidate choose the most appropriate topic is key to them being successful in the test. At the planning stage a gentle suggestion to choose an alternative topic may be very beneficial in some cases.
- Try to dissuade candidates from simply reeling off a memorised talk in **Part 1** that may have artificial fluency but lacks any emotional attachment and suffers from robotic intonation. It is much better to prepare using a cue card so that what is said has some level of spontaneity.
- Ensure a full 7 – 8 minutes is allowed for the conversation in **Part 2**. The Examiner can control the timing of this. Short **Part 2s** cannot access the full range of marks available.
- It is important that Examiners bring out the best in their candidates during the discussion with a move away from a question-and-answer approach. Responding to points made by the candidate and probing further into their answers will enable a more fluent and meaningful discussion.
- Administering the conversation in **Part 2** can be quite challenging for Examiners so it may be necessary to practise just as the candidates should. Knowing the topic in advance and preparing some relevant back-up questions may help the Examiner but they should not be restrictive, and the candidate should have no prior knowledge of them.
- Scaffold questions strategically to encourage higher level responses from more able candidates. This will help them to access the higher mark ranges.
- Avoid saying too much yourself in **Part 2** – Examiners can speak too much. In addition, interrupting too keenly with another prompt can affect the candidate developing their own ideas. Always expect the candidate to be about to expand on ideas before giving the next prompt/question.
- Be careful not to make judgements based on personal interpretations of a comment made by a candidate. This is a test of speaking and listening not the perceived accuracy of what is said.

### **Advice to candidates**

- Choose your topic carefully so that you can not only speak for the full amount of time in **Part 1** but also have enough knowledge and interest to fully participate in the ensuing conversation.
- Practise your presentation but do not learn it word for word.
- Have bullet point notes (but not full sentences) to help prompt you in **Part 1** but not the ‘full speech’. You will be tempted to read it or, at the very least, deliver it without appropriate liveliness and intonation. ‘Talk through’ each bullet point in a confident and enthusiastic way.
- Structure your Individual Talk carefully, making sure that it develops points and stays within the 3 – 4 minutes allowed. Long talks do not earn more marks! On the contrary, an overlong talk will be regarded as not being ‘well organised’ (a bullet point required for Level 5 marks).
- Respond to the prompts and questions from the Examiner in **Part 2** as fully as possible by developing your ideas, giving examples and leading off into other aspects of the topic if you can.
- Prepare for **Part 2** of the test by predicting some of the questions that the Examiner may ask but do not prepare memorised responses.

- Watch good examples of speeches/presentations/talks to learn how good speakers make their speeches engaging and interesting and how they incorporate effective language devices. Try to copy these techniques.
- Practise simulations of **Part 2**. There are as many marks available for **Part 2** as for **Part 1** so treat each part as equally important.