

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/11
Reading 11

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the introductions to the texts carefully and used the information to aid their understanding
- followed instructions carefully, responding appropriately to the command words in each question
- considered the marks allocated to each question and developed their response accordingly
- 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 the summary and selecting one precise example from the given text extract in 2(c)
- used only the information and ideas from the specified text in their responses to individual questions
- avoided unselective copying and / or lifting from the text where appropriate
- used their own words where specified in the question
- planned the ideas to be used and the route through extended responses before writing
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition in all questions
- 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. The texts proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both texts and questions. There were relatively few examples of misunderstanding in terms of task requirements, and time-management was generally good, although there was an increase in the number of low tariff questions not attempted. Occasionally a failure to follow the rubric, or complete a task fully, limited opportunities to demonstrate understanding. This was most common in **Question 1(d)(ii)** and **1(e)** where some candidates did not attempt to find three points, in **Question 1(f)** where some candidates included a limited range of ideas in their responses, in **Question 2(c)** where a number of candidates did not select a clear example from the text provided, or in **Question 2(d)** where some candidates offered three choices of language in total rather than three choices from each paragraph as specified in the task, although most candidates did offer six choices this series.

In **Question 1**, the most successful approach taken by candidates was to work through the questions in the order presented, carefully noting 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 line(s) or paragraph(s) specified in each question moving through the text as directed. Less successful responses to **Question 1** tended to lack focus on the text or relevance to 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 explaining 'ancient' but lifting the word 'cultures' instead of offering an alternative to demonstrate understanding. Also, in **Question 1(b)(ii)** some candidates explained the word 'range' but then offered 'with freedom' to explain 'freely' which could not be credited. 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. Even where copying is selective, it should be avoided in **Question 1(f)** to demonstrate evidence of full understanding for the reading mark and produce an effective response to the task.

In **Question 2** candidates were required to explain carefully selected words or phrases from specified sections of the text. **Question 2(c)** supplied a short section of the text to select from as a preparation for the longer response in **Question 2(d)**. More effective answers were able to consider meanings in context, as well as the effects of the powerful language identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose in a clear overview of the featured paragraphs. Middle-range answers tended to focus on the meanings of the language choices showing mostly clear understanding, although at times they tended to be literal rather than considered within the context of the whole text. Less effective responses struggled to develop viable explanations, sometimes repeating the language of the text in their explanations or identifying literary techniques (with varying degrees of accuracy), but then offering general comments about the techniques rather than focusing on the words themselves. These answers did not always choose appropriate language to discuss and/or selected fewer than six examples in total.

In **Question 3** most responses addressed all three bullets in the question, although some candidates found it challenging to develop the ideas from the text. Most candidates wrote as Edgar, writing a report on the work of the 'Meet and Greet' team, with the best responses producing a convincing report and adopting a formal and constructive tone suitable for its purpose. More effective responses developed the ideas and details in the text selectively to work through the bullets logically. They were able to identify the role of the 'meet and greet' team by identifying the duties carried out by Edgar and Jeswin in the text: waiting to welcome customers to the check-in area, checking their paperwork and luggage, and offering any necessary advice and support. Responses were then able to identify the challenges posed by the role by considering the layout and resourcing of the check-in area, the behaviour of the customers, and the experiences of the staff trying to do the role, using details from the text to support and extend the ideas. Suggestions for improvements were usually linked to the challenges covered in response to the second bullet, enabling candidates to use the clues in the text to create viable solutions for the future.

Responses in the middle range tended to use the text rather mechanically, often paraphrasing closely rather than selecting ideas and details to use in their own writing to demonstrate understanding. These responses tended to describe Edgar and Jeswin's experiences, rather than using the details to offer a wider perspective, thus losing opportunities to develop the ideas in the text. Some of these responses barely addressed the third bullet, offering no ideas for improving the experience of workers and passengers at all. Less effective responses tended to lack focus on the text, covering only the main ideas and sometimes inventing material that moved too far away from the text itself, often appearing to have been derived from personal experiences of being at an airport rather than from close reading of the passage. Some responses copied unselectively, 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 and accuracy 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) How have humans always felt about being able to fly, according to paragraph 1?

Most candidates correctly selected the word ‘fascinated’ in response to this question. Occasionally the mark could not be awarded because of excess information from the text, such as human attempts to fly and / or their consequences.

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

- (i) ‘ancient cultures’ (line 2):**
(ii) ‘range freely’ (line 2):

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 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)** some candidates were able to find an alternative word or phrase for ‘ancient’, such as old or from the past, but they repeated the word ‘cultures’ in their explanation of ‘ancient cultures’ thus only partially addressing the task. Some interpreted ‘cultures’ as specifically relating to ‘beliefs’ or ‘religions’ and were therefore not accurate in the context of the text. In **Question 1(b)(ii)** a number of candidates offered the answer ‘with freedom’ to explain ‘freely’ remaining too close to the original to demonstrate secure understanding, although most candidates were able to explain ‘range’ through the use of ‘fly’ or ‘move’. Candidates should be aware that the 2 marks offered for each sub-section of **Question 1(b)** require all parts of the phrase to be explained clearly and precisely in the context of the text.

**(c) Re-read paragraph 2 (‘In Greek mythology ... minor injuries.’).
Give two reasons why some humans created wings for themselves.**

To achieve both marks for this question candidates were required to offer two clear reasons. Most candidates were able to identify the idea that wings were used to escape from prison, but fewer candidates identified the idea that they were looking at how birds could fly. Some suggested that humans wanted to fly like birds, but they didn’t specify the research element clearly enough to be credited.

**(d)(i) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4 (‘Artist and inventor ... trying this out.’).
Identify the two ways in which da Vinci’s flying machines were designed to work.**

To answer **Question 1(d)(i)** candidates needed to identify the two ways in which the flying machine was designed to work. Most candidates were able to identify that it used flapping wings, but fewer were able to identify that the use of human arms and legs, or muscle power, was required. Occasionally marks were lost due to vague answers such as using wings or partial answers such as ‘with their legs’.

**(d)(ii) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4 (‘Artist and inventor ... trying this out.’).
Explain why da Vinci’s designs were unlikely to be a success in practice.**

In **Question 1(d)(ii)** many candidates were successful at gaining all three marks available by referring clearly to the limitations of human physiology or muscle power when compared to birds, the lack of an engine to launch the machine, and the danger or risk posed to anyone who tried to fly it. Own words versions of any of these ideas were also acceptable. The most common point to miss

was the element of risk involved. A smaller number of responses only offered 1 or 2 of the available points, not targeting the full 3 marks available for this question.

**(e) Re-read paragraph 5 ('In the twenty-first century ... speed and convenience.').
Why might humans not want to fly on an aeroplane in the twenty-first century?**

This question required candidates to show both explicit and implicit understanding from their reading of paragraph 5. Although use of own words is not a requirement in question 1(e), some modification of the text is essential to answer the question clearly and fully. Most candidates were able to achieve at least two of the three marks available, usually through explaining that flying is bad for the environment and noting the high cost of flights. Few gained all three marks, with many candidates overlooking suggestion of the boring nature of long flights and/or the issue of missing seeing the scenery. Where opportunities to score full marks were lost, it was usually because candidates had not provided three clearly differentiated points, or because they copied the final sentence and therefore suggested people wanted to fly instead of answering the question.

- (f) **According to Text B, how should passengers on an aeroplane act to ensure the safety and comfort of everyone on the plane?**

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 about how passengers should act on an aeroplane to ensure comfort and safety of all those on board. The most successful responses were carefully planned, organised and coherent, focusing sharply on the task by referring to a wide range of ideas, reordering and reworking the material where necessary to address the task as well as aid fluency and achieve logical progression. These responses avoided repetition and re-modelled the wording of the text to use own words successfully. 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 include a more limited range of ideas or offered too much supporting detail. There was often inclusion of excess material even where a good range of ideas had been considered, particularly listing a number of reasons for passengers not exhibiting certain behaviours or including references to disabled passengers needing more assistance with baggage and being allowed to use the call bell. Some candidates didn't modify the material to address the task and wrote from the perspective of the airline crew listing what annoying passengers do thus repeating the passage very closely – to address this task successfully modification of the text was essential.

Some responses were too short due to a small number of relevant ideas identified, and other responses very long due to unnecessary information and comments or quotations to exemplify points. The most effective responses tended to adhere to the advised length through adopting a concise and focused approach to the task. Less effective responses were either very brief due to a very limited number of ideas being considered or were excessively long and unselective. Occasionally less effective responses adhered to the advised word count but took far too long to consider a few ideas by including unnecessary details and / or comments.

In most responses there was an attempt to use own words and fewer candidates relied on lifted phrases from the text than in previous sessions. The most commonly lifted sections of text were: 'If you can't lift your bag above your head, please arrange for it to go in the cargo area.', 'walk to the staff area to make such requests', 'You may enjoy loud music ...', 'spend ages putting your shows on and searching under seats', 'This issue should have been addressed at check-in', and 'any strong smells will get magnified'. Some less effective responses lacked precision – for example, suggesting loud music was an issue on aeroplanes but not referring to the necessity of wearing the headphones provided. There was very little evidence of misreading in this task, but a bigger issue in the least effective responses was a tendency to include too much introductory and irrelevant detail, sometimes using the candidate's own experiences of flying rather than focusing on identifying ideas in the text.

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
- directly address the task, modifying the reading material if required
- organise the ideas, grouping them where relevant, to ensure that your response is coherent
- avoid repeating ideas
- avoid including a general introduction or summative conclusion
- use your plan rather than the text as you write your answer to avoid lifting
- write clearly and make sure you express yourself fluently using your own words – avoid lifting phrases
- do not quote from the text
- do not add comments or your own views – use a neutral writing style
- try to keep to the guidance to 'Your summary should not be 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) Edgar **took big, confident steps** while escorting Jeswin to the place they would be working together today.
- (ii) Jeswin **realised at once** that the members of the family approaching could be in need of help.
- (iii) Jeswin **felt happy** that his job was mostly going well.
- (iv) Jeswin believed that the older man was **not guilty** of trying to steal from the other man.

The most successful answers to **Question 2(a)** focused on the underlined word or phrase, located the correct version in the text and gave it as the answer. A few responses copied the whole sentence from the question inserting the correct phrase from the text to replace the underlined phrase in the question, but this approach does waste valuable time for the candidates. Answers that used the text more widely than in the equivalent phrase / sentence could not be rewarded even if the correct word / phrase was included, as candidates do need to exercise precision to demonstrate full understanding.

Most candidates were familiar with the demands of this question, but a few seemed confused about how to respond, offering own words equivalents of the underlined words instead of locating them in the text. Where marks were lost, it was usually due to including too much of the text and therefore moving beyond explaining just the underlined phrase, for example 'Edgar laid his hand on Jeswin's small shoulder and strode onto' or 'Surely he was innocent.' For **2(a)(iii)** several candidates offered 'pleased' alone without including the 'was' to explain the full underlined phrase.

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

- (i) detach
- (ii) documents
- (iii) helpful

In **Question 2(b)** the most successful answers considered the meaning of each word considering its context as used in the text. For example, the word 'documents' refers to a range of paperwork needed to fly rather than simple 'identification'. Many candidates were able to explain 'detach' as 'separate' or 'remove', but some went further than the meaning in context required instead inferring that Jeswin moved further away from Edgar, which could not be credited. 'Helpful' was usually successfully explained also, however, several candidates didn't focus on the idea of constructive advice but instead explained it as important or essential which moved too far away from the word being explained. The most effective 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 Edgar's thoughts and feelings at that time.**

Use your own words in your explanation.

'I've got a report to write for the boss tonight!' huffed Edgar. 'Apparently she doesn't know what our job involves. Hah!'

He marched towards the group. 'Good morning. Your documents, please, so I can make sure they are in order before you drop your luggage off.' Edgar flipped through identity documents with the dexterity of a master player shuffling a deck of cards, before surveying the three suitcases. 'Take it you packed those suitcases yourselves and they haven't been out of sight since you got here? Go to the roped area over there. Shouldn't be too long to wait.'

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 Edgar's thoughts and feelings at that time. A significant number of candidates did not follow these instructions but instead offered a very general response with no focus on the writer's language and no language choice selected. Where a paraphrased version of a language choice was offered, it was occasionally possible to credit an

explanation if they lifted a word such as ‘dexterity’, but they often lacked any reference to specific words used by the writer and therefore could not be credited.

The most successful responses offered a concise quotation then considered how the writer was able to convey Edgar’s thoughts and feelings at that time through the language used. The most popular example was ‘Edgar flipped through identity documents with the dexterity of a master player shuffling a deck of cards’ and candidates were able to explore the suggestion that Edgar is highly experienced and efficient thus able to execute his duties quickly without having to think about what he is doing – an expert. Many responses also tackled ‘I’ve got a report to write for the boss tonight!’ huffed Edgar’, exploring his annoyance and indignation, as well as frustration with his boss for expecting him to do extra duties outside working hours.

Other responses explained ‘He marched towards the group’ as evidence of his superiority, military precision, and efficiency in the execution of his role. Some candidates chose very plain language such as ‘Go to the roped area over there’ which could not be credited as it offered no opportunities to explain interesting/powerful examples of language. Some less effective responses tried to do too much, selecting several examples. 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 and more marks are available. Several responses simply paraphrased the whole paragraph without selecting a language choice at all. A small number of candidates misread this paragraph and assumed that Edgar was tired or found his job too challenging – these incorrect ideas could not be credited.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 2 and 4.

- **Paragraph 2 begins ‘You’re going to be...’ and is about Jeswin’s and Edgar’s experiences at the beginning of this day.**
- **Paragraph 4 begins ‘Edgar’s expression began ...’ and is about the arrival of the first passengers of the day.**

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 successful 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 successful approach was to consider the meanings of carefully chosen phrases in the context of the text and then consider connotations, effects and impacts created by the writer’s language choices. These responses often offered a clear overview of the writer’s intentions in each paragraph. Less successful responses were sometimes written in note form and offered less developed analysis or repeated the same ideas about effects, often making generalised assertions rather than considering specific words more closely.

Middle range responses were usually more successful when explaining meanings but struggled to explore the effects fully, and the least effective responses tended to offer quotations (sometimes unselectively) but 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, although this was less frequent than in previous sessions. Some candidates chose inappropriate language choices – sometimes plain language offering limited opportunities.

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 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 2 many were able to explore their individual choices within the context of the unusually quiet airport concourse at the beginning of the working shift as Edgar prepares Jeswin for the oncoming rush of passengers. They considered Edgar’s superior knowledge as he manhandles Jeswin to show him the vast empty space that he knows will soon be bursting at the seams, as well as the descriptions of the concourse as a confusing maze where customers follow an almost military procedure to hand their luggage over and have their documentation checked. These responses could develop these ideas through analysing the effects of the writer describing Edgar’s ‘ironic grimace contorting his

round face' suggesting that he is mocking Jeswin because he knows how manic the airport will get as the crowds arrive, as well as his aggressive movement when he 'twisted Jeswin's little shoulder through a dizzying one hundred and eighty degrees' to show him the vastness of the space in which they will be working. Some responses focused more on the descriptions of the concourse as 'eerily silent' which was often explained as being unsettling as it is so unusual for a check-in area to be empty of queues. These responses could then move on to explore the description of it being 'comprised of many empty roped-off labyrinths' citing the confusing layout which made customers feel as though they had to conquer a maze to get to the desks. This was often chosen alongside choices such as 'passengers would negotiate' or 'surrendered into the safe hands' to offer analysis that focused on the challenges faced by customers which made them feel as though checking in their luggage was a military operation. These choices could all be linked successfully yet considered independently offering candidates a great deal of scope for precise and developed analysis of the language used in paragraph 2.

In paragraph 4 many responses appreciated the descriptions of the passengers and Edgar's response to them. Many candidates opted to discuss 'radiate mild exasperation' as evidence of Edgar's failure to hide his feelings of annoyance and impatience as the first customers of the day appear. Another popular choice was the 'small knot' of passengers with some good analysis of their insecurity in the alien space leading to them keeping close together. This was often linked to 'wandering uncertainly' as implying their utter cluelessness and many went on to suggest that the luggage trolley 'performing a shaky dance' reflecting the inadequacies and incompetence of the passengers themselves when viewed from Edgar's perspective. Many responses also cited the increasing incompetence described in this paragraph resulting in the risks posed when a small child 'hung' from the luggage trolley 'trying to deter three disobedient suitcases from unscheduled disembarkation' with some good analysis of the personification of the suitcases indicating deliberate troublemaking as well as the use of airline terminology.

Where effects were less successfully explained, it tended to be due to repeating the same idea for all three language choices in the paragraph. In paragraph 2 this tended to be through trying to link every choice to Jeswin being new to the job even where the language wasn't really related to him at all. In paragraph 4 it tended to be repeating the idea of the passengers being lost, or again, every choice being linked to Jeswin feeling nervous about his first day of work.

There was very little evidence of misreading in the two paragraphs specified in the question, but some less effective responses included very long quotations with 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 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 should also be aware of where paragraphs end, especially where there is a page break.

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 is unlikely to lead to a successful response. Examples of plainer language such as 'You're going to be very busy today' or 'Jeswin turned' cannot be credited in this question therefore candidates need to exercise care when selecting their language choices to maximise their opportunities for developed discussion.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- select three precise and accurate language choices from each of the specified paragraphs (six in total)
- make sure explanations of meanings make sense within the context of the text – avoid literal meanings unless this is the case
- avoid very general explanations such as 'this makes you feel as if you are there', or 'this is an example of powerful language and imagery'
- try to engage with the language at word level by considering meaning in context then connotations / associations of words and why the writer has selected them
- start by considering the contextualised meaning, then move on to explore and explain the effect created by the language in terms of how it helps the reader's understanding of the situation, characters and atmosphere, for example
- avoid repeating the same explanations of effects for each language choice: try to be more specific about analysing at word-level.

Question 3

You are Edgar. That night you write the report that your boss has asked for about the work the ‘Meet and Greet’ team do. In your report you should:

- explain what the role of meeting and greeting passengers involves at present
- evaluate potential problems for both ‘Meet and Greet’ staff and passengers
- suggest how the experiences of both passengers and ‘Meet and Greet’ staff could be improved.

Write the words of the report.

This question required candidates to write a formal report about the role of the ‘meet and greet’ team for Golden Tours. The purpose of the report was for Edgar to give feedback to his boss about the current responsibilities of the team, the problems encountered, and make suggestions for improvements. The three bullet points in the question offered guidance to candidates to help them identify relevant ideas for their report and to structure it helpfully. The first and second bullets required candidates to retrieve relevant information from the text and adapt or modify it to fit the requirements of the report. The third bullet required candidates to infer what improvements could be made to enhance the experiences of both customers and staff.

Most candidates were able to show general understanding of the text addressing the task by using some of the main ideas to support the response. Many of the responses were also able to develop the ideas by writing in a credible style for a formal report, evaluating the ideas in the text and adapting them accordingly. Where candidates had followed the bullets carefully, they were often able to develop explicit and implicit ideas effectively to write a constructive and informative report about the role and experiences of the Golden Tours ‘meet and greet team’ and how it could be improved in the future. Most candidates addressed the bullet points in chronological order using them to structure the response coherently. Less successful responses tended to be unselective or closely paraphrase the text without adapting the style therefore offering a rather narrative account of Edgar and Jeswin’s experiences with little sense of the purpose or audience. The least effective responses used the ideas in the text very thinly, often offering very general ideas about the candidates’ own experiences of checking-in at an airport with few references to the text. Some less effective responses only addressed one or two of the bullets.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to explain what the role of meeting and greeting passengers currently involved. This gave candidates opportunities to look at the Edgar and Jeswin’s actions in the text and pick out relevant ideas. The best responses selected appropriate ideas such as getting to the check-in area before the customers arrive, welcoming them in a courteous manner, checking all documentation is present, advising the on where to take their luggage, and spotting where customers needed extra help, support or advice. These responses recognised that in response to this bullet point they were focusing on the day-to-day duties involved in the role. Less effective responses tended to copy lines 11-12 from the text which limited the range offered. There was little evidence of misreading in response to the first bullet, but some responses muddled the role of the meet and greet team with the check-in staff, sometimes using their own experiences of being at an airport instead of focusing on the text.

The second bullet offered many opportunities to identify potential problems for members of the team and passengers by looking carefully at the text and selecting appropriate examples to adapt and modify for use in the report. The best responses selected carefully and were able to remodel the material developing the ideas. They were also able to cite the confusing layout of the check-in area, long queues for customers, and the unsteady trolleys. In terms of problems for the staff they could develop ideas around the overwhelming nature of the job with too many responsibilities leading to very brief breaks and the potential for luggage or get lost or security to be compromised. Some also observed that Edgar was training Jeswin when trying to also do his job. Many cited the conflicts between passengers needing to be sorted out too. These responses supported the ideas with details from the text such as the roped-off areas, wobbly trolley wheels, 15-minute lunch break, and confusion about the stolen wallet. Some less effective responses simply focused on the misunderstanding between the passengers and Jeswin’s intervention giving a narrative account of the incident rather than using it as an example of a wider problem. Less effective responses often ignored the text instead using their own experiences of being at an airport to address the second bullet. Some candidates used Text B to outline problems caused by passengers on a plane, which was clearly irrelevant in this task.

When responding to the third bullet, the most successful responses used the problems identified for bullet 2 and suggested solutions to remove or improve them, usually making neat links and enhancing the cohesive structure of the report. These responses picked out a range of clues from throughout the text to develop appropriate ideas, citing issues such as the lack of time to train staff, the difficulty keeping an eye out for

unattended luggage while dealing with customers. They were then able to suggest designated training sessions and added security staff as potential solutions. Increased staffing was the most commonly made suggestion with clear development of the need for better breaks and designated responsibilities. Others suggested that training should be improved more generally. Many noted that the layout of the concourse could be less confusing for passengers, or that improved signage may help people to be more confident about the route through the airport. Other responses simply suggested replacing damaged luggage trolleys and offering more support to families with children, or special check-in desks for elderly people following the misunderstanding with the elderly passenger accused of stealing. Less successful responses tended to lack range in response to this bullet often making very general suggestions not really linked to ideas in the text sometimes focusing on angry and disrespectful passengers abusing the staff (sometimes referring to Text B), or people who had lost their passports or luggage. As a result there were some thin responses to this bullet. Some responses did not attempt to address the third bullet at all. Candidates should be reminded that even where there is a common theme across different texts, in Question 3 they are being assessed on their reading understanding of Text C only so should focus on using only ideas from the correct text. Using ideas from other texts leads to a loss of reading focus.

Many candidates seemed familiar with the format of a report with the best responses adopting an appropriately informative and formal tone and register. Middle-range responses tended to be written in a rather plain narrative style relying heavily on the sequencing of the original text and sometimes just describing what Edgar and Jeswin did that day. In less successful responses the language was rarely inappropriate for the genre, although such pieces tended to lack a sense of purpose or awareness of audience. Generally, accuracy was good with some skilfully written responses. Others struggled to maintain fluency resulting in some awkward expression caused by errors in grammar and punctuation. Candidates are advised to check through their work carefully to correct errors where possible. There were few instances of wholesale lifting from the passage, but some less effective responses were over-reliant on lifted phrases and sentences throughout the response.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read Text C carefully, more than once, to ensure sound understanding
- briefly plan your response to ensure that you are selecting ideas relevant to all three bullets
- do not refer to ideas in Texts A and B
- pay careful attention to the written style adopted – for example, the register required for the purpose and audience of the task
- 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
- remember to look for ideas and clues throughout the text to develop for the third bullet
- avoid copying from the text: use your own words as far as possible
- 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 12

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- followed instructions and references carefully to base their answers on the correct text/section of text for each task
- avoided copying the language of the text where explanations were required in their own words
- worked through the three texts and questions in the order set
- answered all parts of all questions
- planned their responses for higher tariff tasks in advance of writing – keeping the focus of the question in mind
- considered the marks and space allocated to each question, targeting their response time accordingly
- paid attention to the specific guidance offered in tasks – for example, by indicating clearly the one example from the text extract they were using in **2(c)**, choosing examples from the correct paragraphs in **2(d)** and identifying just the correct word/phrase in each part of **2(a)**
- developed relevant ideas, opinions and details from the text in the response to reading task rather than inventing untethered material
- avoided repetition
- checked and edited their responses to correct any incomplete ideas or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated familiarity with the format of the Reading paper and general understanding of the demands of the three tasks. There were, however, some candidates who did not pay attention to the guidance in the task instructions and missed opportunities to evidence skills and understanding. Instances where whole tasks had not been attempted were rare, though there were occasions where part or all an answer was based on the wrong text and/or the focus/perspective of the task had been over-looked, limiting opportunities to target higher marks. Where candidates had written far too much for some questions, it was not unusual for answers to other part questions to be incomplete or missing.

Responses to the tasks indicated that candidates found the three texts equally accessible and engaging. Occasionally, a loss of focus on the rubric and/or details of a question as set limited the evidence of understanding and skills offered in the answer. For example, a few candidates attempted to choose and explain more than one example in **2(c)** and/or identified one choice but talked in general terms about the extract. A few still tried to offer explanations in their own words for **2(a)** rather than select from the text as required. Similarly, there were some less well-focused responses to higher tariff tasks from candidates who had scored well in smaller sub questions. For example, some candidates introduced excess, writing far more than the maximum of 120 words advised, for the selective summary **Question 1(f)**; other candidates did not address all three bullets in **Question 3**, or discussed choices from outside of the identified paragraphs in **Question 2(d)**.

In **Question 1**, candidates scoring highly had worked through the tasks in the order presented and usually made efficient use of their time. The best answers paid 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 answer, providing clear, unambiguous responses. They did not add further unnecessary material and focused on answering each question as set. Most candidates followed the line or paragraph references in the questions carefully to help them to move down **Text A** in order and to direct their attention. Almost all remembered that in a test of

comprehension their responses to these initial short answer questions needed to be derived from the text to evidence their Reading skills, not drawn from personal opinion or experience.

Less successful responses sometimes offered circular answers to lower tariff questions which repeated the language of the question and /or text where own words had been specified as being required. Where questions asked for key ideas, information or detail from the text, some included extra details which were not required or relevant to the answer, sometimes copying incorrectly, and diluted evidence of understanding as a result. In **Question 1(f)** a significant number of candidates relied heavily on copying whole sections of text and/or repeating the language of the text, limiting the available evidence of their own skills and understanding. A small number of candidates attempted unwisely to answer this summary task by offering and explaining quotations from the passage. A few candidates failed to address the task, basing their answer to **Question 1(f)** on Text A and/or Text C.

In **Question 2** candidates needed first to identify **(2(a))** and explain **(2(b))** words and phrases from **Text C, The lost cave**, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer via one example from the extract in **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task, **Question 2(d)**. More effective answers were careful to refer to the text to locate specific relevant choices and consider meaning in context. Opportunities for marks were missed by those candidates in **Question 2(c)** who did not clearly identify one example from the text extract to explain and in **Question 2(a)** by some who copied out whole sentences from the text rather than identifying the exact word/phrase that matched the precise sense of just the underlined word/phrase in the question. 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 were able to suggest six potentially useful examples for analysis - three in each half - for the **2(d)** task and offer basic effect or meaning in context, though several candidates were not sufficiently clear, careful or detailed in the examination of their choices. In less successful responses, repetition of the language of the text, misreading of detail or simple labelling of devices (without explanation of how these were working) meant opportunities to target higher levels were missed. A small number of candidates offered few or no choices in **Question 2(d)**.

In **Question 3** most candidates' responses attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task, though a few lost sight of the text or task – for example, writing creatively about their own ideas for making money or speculating wildly about treasures to be found concealed in the cavern. Most candidates had remembered to write from Shaima's perspective, with the best focused on interpreting Rohaan's account in the text as Shaima looked back one year later. Some candidates lost sight of the response type required (interview) and wrote a speech or narrative instead. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities as a consequence of uneven focus, some lifting and/or presenting a narrow range of ideas from the text. Less successful responses either offered only brief reference to the passage, included evidence of misreading and/or repeated sections from the text with very little modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

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

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, Mountain River Cave**. More effective responses had paid careful attention to the command words and paragraph references in the task instructions to demonstrate effectively and efficiently the evidence of understanding required. Some mid-range responses missed opportunities to target higher marks, for example by offering overlong, unclear or ambiguous explanations, striving to offer own word answers where these were not needed and/or repeating language of the text where own words were required. Candidates should note that where use of own words is necessary to evidence understanding task guidance specifies that. Less well focused answers on occasion negated evidence of understanding by including additional incorrect material and / or extra

guesses and irrelevant material – an inefficient use of examination time. Occasionally candidates copied out entire sections of text for **1(e)** rather than using key details from the text in their explanation and could not be credited.

The most successful 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 the text from the beginning and were careful not to introduce ideas outside or in contradiction to those suggested by the text.

- (a) Re-read paragraph 1 ('Vietnam is home ... 200 metres.'). Give two examples of spectacular landscapes (apart from the Mountain River Cave) in Vietnam:**

In **Question 1(a)**, the vast majority of candidates were able to successfully identify both examples, from sentence two of the text:

'From "cascading rice terraces" to "mazes of rivers with rice paddies" ...'

A small number of candidates offered only one example and/or inaccurate suggestions such as 'rice paddles'. Some candidates made use of the question stem to help focus their answer, whilst others simply wrote the key words of their answer alongside each bullet in the response area – either approach was acceptable.

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

- (i) 'located in the heart' (line 3)**
(ii) 'formed between' (line 4)

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 having explained just one aspect of the phrase, for example in **Question 1(b)(ii)** attempting to explain 'formed' only and repeating the word 'between'. More effective answers were able to indicate that they had securely understood the meaning of both aspects of the question in the context of the text – for example, in **1(b)(i)** that 'located in the heart' meant the cave could be found in the centre of the park.

A small number of candidates offered no evidence of understanding by simply repeating the words of the question and/or did not pay careful attention to the words in context – for example proposing in **1(b)(i)** that 'the heart is an organ used to pump blood'. Others failed to demonstrate secure understanding by introducing incorrect details such as suggesting that the cave was formed 450 years ago.

- (c) Re-read paragraph 2 ('Mountain River Cave ... he'd found the cave entrance.'). Give two reasons why Ho Khanh might have felt wary about investigating Mountain River Cave further.**

In **Question 1(c)** most candidates were able to identify two of the three distinct reasons why Ho Khanh might have felt wary about investigating Mountain River Cave further according to paragraph 2 of the text. A few candidates had not read closely and tried to base their answer on paragraph 3.

- (d) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4 ('The cave was ... millions of years.').**
(i) Identify two reasons why a member of the public might be unable to visit the cave.
(ii) Give the evidence that Mountain River Cave has existed for a very long time.

For **part 1(d)(i)** most candidates offered a lack of fitness/being unfit and arriving in the rainy season as two reasons why a member of the public might be unable to visit the cave, though a number cited the two year waiting list as one of the limiting factors and could be credited for that. Candidates who were less focused on the details of the task sometimes missed opportunities to target full marks – for example, by attempting to base their answer to **1(d)(i)** all / in part on Ho Khanh's experience paragraph 2 or by simply asserting that cave experts needed to be physically fit, without making the implications of that clear to answer the question. In **1(d)(ii)**, opportunities to score full marks were sometimes missed by misinterpretation of details from the text – such as the suggestion that fossil fuels were found in the cave, the stalagmites were 80 centimetres tall, or that the cave grew more than 10 centimetres per thousand years.

- (e) **Re-read paragraph 5 ('To reach Mountain River Cave ... Mountain River Cave entrance.'). Using your own words, explain why the journey to Mountain River Cave might be seen as difficult.**

In **Question 1(e)** the most successful explanations showed that candidates were able to derive three distinct reasons of the four available in the specified paragraph. Candidates who recast the relevant information using their own words as instructed were best able to demonstrate that they had teased out and understood the implied reasons why the journey to Mountain River Cave might be seen as difficult, with many offering all four ideas succinctly. Some candidates wrote far too much for this question, expending time that could have been more profitably focused on other questions and/or checking responses for accuracy.

- (f) **According to Text B, what could make visiting a cave dangerous?**

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** and some understanding of the requirements of the task. However, there were examples of significant copying/ lifting and/or a reliance on note form in some answers which diluted evidence of skills and understanding. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea, inclusion of unsolicited advice to anyone thinking of visiting caves and/or the addition of ideas from Text A/B meant opportunities were missed by many candidates to target higher marks.

Where responses were most effective, candidates had made a consistent attempt to focus on making the dangers of visiting caves explicit through careful use of their own words and to keep their explanations concise. Many had recognised the opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills by adapting the more informal and expansive style of the original text to a more formal, efficient style suitable for a written summary when presenting an objective overview of the dangers of visiting a cave. Less assured responses had often missed this chance – for example, echoing the text with exclamations such as 'Please do not enter' and 'Now comes a fun part'.

Some mid-range answers did not immediately direct their response towards the focus of the task, offering redundant advice of how to avoid dangers. Overview was evidenced in some of the most successful answers where relevant ideas had been carefully selected from different parts of the text and then re-organised efficiently for their reader to avoid repetition of references to creatures which might be a danger if disturbed. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal or no rewording or re-organisation of the original, often resulting in significant excess through redundancy and repetition. Some unwisely introduced information and/or language from Text A or Text C – adding to the materials rather than slimming it down as required by a selective summary task. A few based their response entirely on the wrong text and/or copied their whole answer 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. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully 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. There were some extremely effective and well-crafted responses that focused specifically and exclusively on reasons why visiting caves might be dangerous as presented by Text B, demonstrating both concision and precise understanding of a wide range of relevant ideas. Some answers at the top end offered all twelve distinct ideas and were not distracted to include reference to the narrator's credentials/experience or repeat questions directed at the reader in the original text as some other less skilful responses were.

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. On occasion, candidates overlooked the need for concision in a selective summary task and significant excess arose as a result of lengthy explanation. Some candidates continued 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 only a handful of ideas. Candidates producing effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a wider range of relevant ideas, communicating these accurately and concisely in their own words.

Most candidates showed at least some awareness of the need to avoid excess, though not all were able to select ideas efficiently to navigate around more obviously redundant material – for example, the lists of the different species of animals that might be found in caves and the tempting features/aspects of ‘magical grottos’. A significant proportion of students added lengthy descriptions of the ways in which the different animals might be dangerous having already included other more relevant points, not having recognised that by doing so they were adding excess.

Less effective responses sometimes tried to replay the whole text in the order it was presented, often diluting evidence that the text and/or task had been understood as a consequence of significant excess through repetition and/or reliance on the language of the original. Many of these least effective responses also tended to have misread key details in the text and/or introduced their own opinions – for example, some suggested that being scared by dangerous creatures was a problem. Occasionally, some candidates indicated a loss of focus by including ideas from Text A and/or Text C that were irrelevant to this task, such as suggestions that collapsed ceilings or intrusive ivy were dangerous for anyone visiting a cave.

Length was sometimes an indicator of the relative success of a response. Some responses were far too short with only a small number of relevant ideas identified, and others very long and wordy due to the inclusion of unnecessary information, comments or quotations. 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. 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)**:

- check you are sure on the particular focus of the summary question, then re-read Text B to identify and discard any material which is not relevant
- identify the potentially relevant ideas you can use in your answer – you might find it helpful to list them in a plan and/or number them on the text in the insert
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted in your plan, checking that they are distinct and complete – for example, try to spot repeated ideas which could be combined
- 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 them
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- check back to ensure that you have included all of the ideas you planned to
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write ‘no more than 120 words’ and aim for concision.

Question 2

- (a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**
- (i) The ivy completely covered the rock face.
 - (ii) Shaima thought about a time in the future when she might be able to attend a live excavation.
 - (iii) Shaima did not know what was happening in the garden.
 - (iv) Rohaan looked closely into the cave mouth.

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified in each part the correct word or phrase from Text C to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example – simply and efficiently just giving the word or phrase as their answer. Other responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out the entire sentence in each case, substituting the word or phrase and then bracketing or underlining their answer. Marks were sometimes missed where answers lacked focus (for example, copying out whole sentences or including extra words or longer sections of text that went beyond the sense of the underlined word(s)) – for example, including ‘events outside’ in their answer to part (iii).

- (b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined:**
- (i) lifted
 - (ii) freed
 - (iii) remaining

In **Question 2(b)**, successful answers had carefully considered the precise meaning in context of each of the words underlined. Less successful responses simply repeated/reflected the word in their explanation – for example, ‘freed means he set himself free’ – or did not offer an accurate explanation for understanding of the word specified in context to be credited – for example, neither ‘stood up’ nor ‘carried’ covered the meaning of the word ‘lifted’ in the sentence, ‘Rohaan lifted himself to his elbows.’

- (c) **Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests Rohaan’s feelings when he first sees the cave entrance.**

He looked at what was left of the rock face. A gaping hole stared defiantly back at him, as if inviting a stand-off. Rohaan dropped his eyes to break the gaze and received an immense surprise. Half a metre from the base was the floor of a cave entrance. It was surely inviting him to look inside.

In **Question 2(c)**, where candidates had focused clearly on using just one carefully selected example taken from the text extract, they were best placed to demonstrate their understanding – usually beginning with an explanation of meaning in context, ahead of going on to explain what that suggested in relation to the writer’s feelings. Those making efficient use of time often identified their example, by underlining it in the text of the question or used it as a subheading for their answer. Successful responses often centred around the choice of the hole ‘inviting him to look inside’ or ‘received an immense surprise. Several candidates however appeared to have selected ‘dropped his eyes to break the gaze’ without understanding the meaning of dropped – offering incorrect suggestions for meaning such as ‘Rohan was intrigued and was really trying to see what was in there’ or suggesting vaguely that it ‘showed Rohan’s surprise’.

Most successful 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 successful 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 and more opportunities for relevant development of explanations. 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 due to a lack of focus on the task – for example, a few candidates simply repeated the wording of the question and text asserting that their chosen example ‘showed Rohan’s feelings of surprise’ without suggesting where or how.

(d) **Re-read paragraphs 5 and 10.**

- **Paragraph 5 begins ‘In the garden ...’ and is about how Rohaan becomes momentarily covered by ivy when it suddenly comes loose from the rock.**
- **Paragraph 10 begins ‘Armed now with a torch ...’ and is about Rohaan’s first experiences as he enters the cave.**

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.

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of **six** relevant selections – three from each of the two specified paragraphs – often starting by explaining literal meaning in context and then moving on to consider effect (for example, discussing connotations and suggesting the impacts created by the writer’s language choices). Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language in each case through detailed discussion of focused choices. Where candidates considered all the key words in slightly longer choices, they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses.

Candidates relying on repeating the language of the text within their explanation were less well placed to demonstrate understanding fully and often offered only partially effective or very thin explanation as a result. The most effective responses considered all the key words within their choices individually, as well as suggesting how they worked within the longer phrase and/or in the context of the description. Rather than selecting the most ‘obvious’ literary devices, successful responses often set out to identify those relevant selections that they felt best able to explain. Some of the most effective responses explored how their judiciously selected choices worked both individually and together to influence the reader’s impression, building to an overview. Responses at level 5 frequently showed imagination and precision when discussing images, for example in relation to ‘armed with a torch’ and ‘advanced’. A small number of candidates selected only three choices in total over the whole question, or answered one part of the task only, limiting their achievement as a consequence. A few candidates misinterpreted instructions to offer 3 choices from some/all of the paragraphs between 5 and 10.

When dealing with paragraph 5, many answers had identified ‘surrendering to one last mighty heave’ as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the suggestions that this was a battle between Rohaan and the plant, though some misread the text and suggested it was Rohaan giving in. A number were tempted by the image of a breaking chrysalis shell but had misread ‘chrysalis’ as ‘crystal’ and offered inappropriate explanations that could not be credited.

Some mid-range answers offered more careful selection and explanation in one half of the answer than the other – failing to target higher levels by repeating words such as ‘collapsed’, ‘sprang’ and ‘suddenly’ when discussing paragraph 5 rather than finding synonyms to evidence understanding of meaning. Many candidates were able to offer effects – for example, proposing that ‘sprang’ suggested a surprise attack and/or powerful jump of a predatory animal, or that ‘one last mighty heave’ suggested a heroic (and/or comedic) effort on Rohaan’s part. Answers at the top end had often noticed and explored the presentation of events as a war/ battle when events being described involved nothing more serious than pulling out a plant, citing the writer’s decision to pair mischievous with assailants as hinting at the comedic value of the scene. Similarly, those answers demonstrating secure or better evidence of understanding in relation to the language used in paragraph 5 has often focused carefully on the specific and different movements being described – for example, exploring words such as ‘toppled’ and ‘writhed’.

Some candidates had misread details of the text or were unsure of the basic meaning of the words they had selected, and their explanations were limited as a result – for example, some had not understood that ‘toppled’ described an involuntary action by Rohaan and implied a loss of balance, suggesting incorrectly instead that it meant Rohaan stepped or moved backwards deliberately as he was scared of the ivy.

Many of the choices offered from paragraph 10 related to the uncomfortable experience of exploring the cave – with choices including contorted and confined, but often missing how

increasingly added to the sense of the walls closing in and how contortion suggested unnatural, even painful movements. Some of the most convincing explored in detail the images of the ‘walls swallowing the light’ and the ‘treacherously loose stones’.

The least successful answers to **Question 2(d)** offered inappropriate, generic comments such as ‘The writer uses images that help us imagine what it looked like’ or repeated the description of the paragraph in the question as an ‘overview’. Such comments are unlikely to be a useful starting point for discussion of how language is working in the extract and can often create a false sense of security, meaning candidates move on without saying anything more concrete to evidence their understanding. Satisfactory responses offered a clear explanation of the literal meaning of each word within the example they had chosen, whilst more effective answers reached for more precise vocabulary and in doing so touched on effect. Candidates working at higher levels were often able to visualise images, using explanation of what you could ‘see/hear happening’ in context as the starting point for their explanation of effect.

In **Question 2(d)**, 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. It is the quality of the analysis which attracts marks in a language question. 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 less likely to be useful and often result in very thin general comments at best. On occasion, opportunities were missed in answers where choices had been selected from one paragraph only. Some of the least successful answers to **Question 2(d)** appeared to have been answered last and were very brief, generalised and/or incomplete. The most successful answers were often able to explore and discuss 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 and accurate – 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 from the text is clearly identified – remember you are looking for a word or phrase, not a whole sentence
- in **2(b)** be careful not to include extra incorrect guesses that might detract from the evidence that you understand the meaning of the word you are explaining
- in **2(c)** clearly identify the one example from the text excerpt you are going to explain
- in **2(d)**, choose three examples from each of the two specified paragraphs (six choices in total)
- where you are trying to explain meaning check that your explanation makes sense
- when explaining how language is working avoid empty comments such as saying that ‘the writer uses lots of adjectives, verbs and nouns’
- make sure your explanations deal with each of the key words within an identified choice separately as well as how they work together
- when you are trying to suggest effect and are unsure, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice
- 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 Shaima. A year after Rohaan discovered the cave in your garden, you have written a book about the experience and what has happened since then. You are interviewed for a television show to promote your book.

The interviewer asks the following three questions only:

- Can you outline what Rohaan was doing at first in the garden and how he discovered the cave?
- What made him realise that his discovery was significant?
- How did the discovery affect your plans for the garden and have your lives changed since then?

Write the words of the interview.

Base your interview on what you have read in Text C, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your interview with the first question.

Having worked through **Question 2** and already familiarised themselves with **Text C**, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to think their way into Shaima's perspective as she looks back on the events detailed and/or suggested in the text. Some made effective use of details given in the introduction to the text and the task – for example, developing the hint that the RS in the name of Rohaan's planned business might stand for Rohaan and Shaima, and/or recognising that the timescale of one year on allowed plenty of opportunity for Shaima to have heard all of the details of Rohaan's experience. A few candidates insisted that viewers would need to read Shaima's book to find out what happened and missed key elements of Rohaan's experience from their answers.

Almost all candidates chose to address the bullets in the order set and followed the instruction to begin with the first question and limit the interviewer's questions to the three provided, though some answers built the interviewer's part considerably. Where candidates had focused on offering full answers to each of the specified , they were often able in addition to include smaller prompts and requests for more detail from their interviewer that both allowed for development of ideas and contributed helpfully to the creation of a convincing voice. However, less well focused response often spent far too long introducing this week's star guest, exchanging pleasantries and advertising next week's programme at the expense of providing evidence of close reading by answering the questions set. Several responses to question 3 appeared to be incomplete and/or did not deal with one or more of the bulleted questions.

The first bulleted question invited candidates to revisit details in the text related to what Rohaan was doing at first in the garden and how he discovered the cave. Most candidates were able to offer several relevant ideas, with answers aiming at higher marks taking up the opportunity to reflect and as a consequence extend and develop ideas from the text. Almost all mentioned more straightforward explicit ideas – for example, referencing Rohaan's intention to create an office in their garden and the decision to clear the ivy plant to create more space. Many had identified that the discovery of the cave was accidental, with the best answers often recognising and using this as a natural link into the answer to question/bullet two. Generally it was bullet one which was answered most securely at all levels, though there was some copying in less effective answers that tended to carry on into bullet two and dilute evidence of understanding.

Many answers to bullet two missed opportunities by only reporting on the discovery of animal remains. More effective answers offered evidence that they had read more closely, for example by commenting on the potential historical and scientific significance of the find. A number mentioned the torch, though fewer recognised the clue in 'now' to deduce that Rohaan must have gone to get it in the interim and/or that the darkness encouraged Rohaan's curiosity to explore. A few developed the suggestion in 'path' that this may have been a well-worn route at some point and/or constructed by someone and some developed the idea that the cave had apparently laid undiscovered for a very long time. Misreading by some candidates led to unlikely suggestions that Rohaan had found a tavern or a caravan underground.

When developing the implications of their find – how the discovery affected their plans for the garden and how their lives had changed since the events of a year ago (bullet three) – most responses cited their improved financial situation and the public interest in their story, along with the opportunity it presented for Shaima to take part in a real archaeological dig of her own. Where candidates had relied heavily on reproducing the text in response to bullets one and two, they often wrote very little and/or struggled to offer ideas rooted in the text for this third section.

For the most part, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of an interview though some tried to present it using reported speech rather than simply writing the words of the response to each question. A few wrote long descriptive or narrative sections about arriving at the studio for the interview and/or the audience's reactions – offering little / no evidence of their reading skills. Some candidates copied language / sections of text from Text A, Text B and/or question 2a. Where candidates relied too heavily on the structure and/or language of any text/question to communicate their ideas, expression often became awkward and/or lost clarity. Where responses were entirely in the words of the original text, there was often no creditable content for either reading or writing .

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- remember to base your answer on the ideas and details you find in Text C only
- keep the audience and purpose for your response in mind throughout your answer
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- 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
- 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 13

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- worked through the tasks and texts in the order set
- read the introductions to the texts carefully
- attempted all parts of all questions, noting the marks allocated to each question and organising their response time accordingly
- followed task instructions carefully and based their answers on the correct text and/or section of text
- focused on the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for each question
- used their own words where specified in the question
- avoided unselective copying and/or lifting from the text where appropriate
- planned the ideas to be used and the route through extended responses before writing
- avoided repetition, inventing untethered material and/or introducing their own opinion
- checked and edited their responses to correct errors, incomplete ideas, or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated familiarity with the format of the reading paper. There were very few examples of significant misreading. The texts proved to be equally accessible and engaging to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both texts and questions. There were very few instances where whole tasks had not been attempted, though responses to part questions were sometimes incomplete or missing and/or answers were uneven, limiting the possibility of scoring higher marks. This was most common in **Question 2(c)** where several candidates did not select a clear example from the text provided, or in **Question 2(d)** where some candidates offered three choices of language in total rather than three choices from each paragraph as specified in the task, or choices from paragraphs other than 3 and 11.

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 **Question 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 remembered that in a test of comprehension their responses to these initial short answer questions needed to be derived from **Text A** to evidence their Reading skills and are not based on their opinion, imagination or experience. Less effective responses to **Question 1** tended to lack focus on the text. 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 explaining 'ingenious' but using the word 'genius' instead of offering an alternative or in **Question 1(b)(ii)** by explaining 'beautiful' as 'beauty'. Less effective answers attempted to include extra guesses in response to **Questions 1(a)–(e)** taking up valuable examination time by doing so, as well as diluting evidence of understanding. Several candidates offered circular answers in one or more of their responses, repeating some or all the language of the question where own words were specified as required, and/or addressed only part of the question in their answer. In **Question 1(f)** a few candidates relied heavily on the language of **Text B** and/or copied out chunks of text, limiting 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 to offer comment on how language was being used by the writer in **Question 2(c)** and on to more extended explanation in the language task, **Question 2(d)**. 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

attempted to offer a generalised overview instead. In **Question 2(d)** more effective answers were careful to refer to **Text C** to locate specific relevant choices and consider their meaning in context, as well as the effects of the powerful language identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose in an overview. They were able to capture the sense of humour and power the violin had over Seth in the first part and the audience's anticipation, whilst the instruments vied for attention and the demonstrative annoying and distressing sounds that were produced by them as they warmed up. In less effective responses, overlong selections, generalised comment and/or labelling of devices without explanation of how these were working in this instance meant opportunities to target higher levels were missed. A small number of candidates did not address the **Question 2(d)** task effectively, offering little relevant comment and/or few or no clear choices in one or both halves of the question.

In **Question 3** most responses addressed all three bullets in the question, although some candidates found it challenging to develop the ideas from the text. Most candidates wrote as Seth, writing a letter to Sylvia's parents about coming across the violin, with the best responses adopting a convincing tone when describing his thoughts and feelings regarding his discovery and what should happen to the violin now. They established the background to finding the violin in a way that suggested both motivation and professional curiosity that took him to the music shop in the first place, and chance, in seeing the violin, and later, being seen performing with it by Sylvia. They also showed his rapid attachment to the violin, both in the shop and in rehearsal and performance, which was important in forming his subsequent responses to what Sylvia had told him about her parents. Responses in the middle range tended to use the text mechanically, often missing opportunities because of uneven focus on the bullet points or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text. Less effective responses tended to lack focus on the passage or repeated sections from the text without modification. Unselective copying and over reliance on the language of the original should be avoided as it is an indicator of less secure understanding. Responses across the cohort covered the full range of levels of achievement, with top level answers offering responses that used a wide range of ideas, carefully interpreted and extended with detail from the text in support.

Whilst 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 questions, it is important that candidates consider the clarity and register of their writing. It is advisable to plan and leave sufficient time to 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)

In response to **Text A**, candidates were asked to answer a series of short answer questions. Effective responses paid careful attention to the command words in the instructions as well as the number of marks allocated to individual questions. The most effective responses made a careful selection of details from the text and were focused and concise. Less effective responses were often too long or did not follow the instruction to use own words. Candidates should note where use of own words is required. Where a candidate offered multiple possible answers, this indicated a lack of effective examination time use and diluted evidence of understanding.

- (a) **Give the name of the object used by a person to play the violin, according to paragraph 1 ('The violin...f-shaped sound holes.')**

In **Question 1(a)** candidates needed to give the name of the object used by a person to play the violin, according to the text. Most candidates were able to identify that it was a bow. Where candidates did not secure the mark, they offered the generic answer 'musical instrument' or repeated 'violin' from the question.

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

- (i) 'ingenious feat' (line 3)
(ii) 'immensely beautiful' (line 3)

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), several candidates used the word 'feature' in their explanation of 'feat' thus only partially 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 it being a clever achievement. In **Question 1(b)(ii)**, more candidates effectively explained the meaning of the whole phrase and gained both marks with many using phrases such as 'extremely attractive' to explain 'immensely' and 'beautiful'.

(c) Re-read paragraph 2 ('An ingenious feat for customers.').

Give two reasons why violin makers might want to pay close attention when designing the scroll of the violin.

In **Question 1(c)** candidates re-reading paragraph 2 closely were able to identify two clear reasons. Many candidates offered violin makers take pride in their work or that it is decorative or intricate. A few candidates lost marks by offering the same idea twice, such as 'it is decorative' and 'it is beautiful'.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4 ('Just about anyone...something they love.').

- (i) Identify two main things that professional violinists must have knowledge of in order to be successful in an orchestra.**
- (ii) Outline the ways in which a trained violinist can make money.**

To answer **Question 1(d)(i)** effective responses needed to select two pieces of evidence from paragraphs 3 and 4 to identify the two main things that professional violinists must have knowledge of to be successful in an orchestra. Correct responses focused on a superior playing technique, great works, music over time and a variety of genres of music. On occasion, candidates diluted evidence of their understanding through not specifying the superior playing technique or the wide variety of playing skills required, simply offering 'bow, finger and pluck' without a sense of the knowledge of the different ways the professional violinists must have. Others did not show a full enough sense of a time scale to convey an understanding of 'music over time'.

In **Question 1(d)(ii)** candidates tended to be successful in gaining all three marks available by offering three distinct points and referring to playing in an orchestra, giving music lessons or playing at special events. Some candidates were too imprecise to score the mark – for example, referring too vaguely to opening a business, without specifying that it was related to music. A few candidates appeared to have missed the fact that this was a 3-mark question and therefore required three distinct points to be made.

(e) Re-read paragraph 5 ('Violinists usually need...for its own sake.').

Using your own words, explain what the writer believes makes some violinists better than others.

This question required candidates to show both explicit and implicit understanding from their reading of paragraph 5. Candidates who recast the relevant information using their own words as instructed were best able to demonstrate that they had noted and understood the three aspects of what the writer believes makes some violinists better than others. Most candidates were able to achieve one mark, a reasonable number gained two marks, but few gained all three. This was as a result of including extraneous information from the paragraph by either describing teamwork or practising with the orchestra rather than focusing on what makes a violinist better than others. Some candidates made general reference to having a knowledge of a violin, rather than showing an understanding of an emotional connection to the instrument. Others explained the 'deeper sense' with reference to the quality of music produced without mentioning the effect on the audience and very few identified talent or innate skill as being a feature.

(f) **According to Text B, what attracts a person to playing a musical instrument?**

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 to use 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 attracts a person to playing a musical instrument. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea and/or inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question, including personal knowledge about violins, meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks.

The most effective responses were carefully planned and coherent, focusing sharply on the task by referring to a wide range of ideas related to attracting a person to playing a musical instrument according to the text. These responses had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. They grouped ideas together, for example considering the fact of wanting to be like others, whilst having the opportunity of making life-long friends by joining a school orchestra. Responses in the middle range tended to consider a more limited range of ideas, often providing extended explanations about careers and stress levels. Some less effective responses were either too brief, offering only a limited number of ideas, or copied extensively from the text. Length was often an indicator of the level of the response with some responses being too short and others very long and wordy (often also showing a lack of selection due to the inclusion of unnecessary information and comments).

Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal or no rewording or reorganisation of the original. 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 successfully address the selective summary task and are likely to evidence little understanding of either the ideas in the passage or requirements of the task. One common example of this was the reference to 'I rose to that version of me' and 'audiences who pay me the immediate compliment of-sometimes rapturous-applause'. 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 organise points helpfully for their reader. Another feature of less effective responses was a tendency to include information from the other texts or repeat ideas – most commonly in relation to playing a musical instrument being enjoyable or it being a satisfying job.

There were some extremely effective and well-crafted responses that demonstrated both concision and precise understanding of an impressively wide range of relevant ideas. More effective responses evidenced careful reading of the text and showed candidates successfully identifying both explicit and implicit ideas related to what attracts a person to playing a musical instrument. Candidates who had spent time reviewing their initial selection of ideas were best placed to avoid repetition of ideas or inclusion of generic ideas such as being 'successful' or 'life changing' without linking it to school or grades. Candidates producing effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a wide range of relevant ideas, communicating these accurately and concisely in their own words.

Advice to candidates on Question 1(f):

- after reading the task instructions, re-read **Text B** to identify potentially relevant ideas you can use in your answer
- plan the response using brief notes to ensure a wide range of ideas from the text is selected
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted in your plan – check that they are distinct and complete and address the question
- check whether there are repeated ideas which could be covered by one 'umbrella' point
- discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the specific focus of the question
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the text themselves would understand
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- check back over your plan to ensure you have included the ideas you intended to
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write 'no more than 120 words' and aim for concision.

Question 2

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

- (i) Seth was wandering around the town.
- (ii) Seth was very close to a shop that sold music.
- (iii) The man who'd found the violin had tried to locate its owner but his efforts had been in vain.
- (iv) A woman in the audience appeared to be trying very hard to look at the violin Seth was playing.

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified in each part only the correct word or phrase from **Text C** to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example – simply and efficiently giving just the exact word or phrase as their answer. Other responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out a longer section from the text and then bracketing or underlining their selection. Marks were sometimes missed where answers were unfocused – for example, offering responses that covered only part of the meaning of the underlined phrase such as ‘presence’ or adding in extra words from the text that went beyond the meaning of the underlined words such as ‘stopped’ in **(a)(ii)** or ‘inclined forward’ in **(a)(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. Candidates should be reminded that they are required to select very precisely in **Question 2(a)**.

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

‘I dare you....’ the violin’s eyes teased.

‘How quirky yet attractive,’ thought Seth. ‘I wonder if it plays well.’

- (i) teased
- (ii) quirky
- (iii) attractive

In **Question 2(b)**, effective answers had carefully considered the precise meaning in context of each of the words underlined, recognising for example that ‘teased’ showed how the violin’s eyes flirted or playfully challenged Seth; ‘quirky’ meant unusual or odd and ‘attractive’ meant pretty or aesthetically pleasing. Several candidates misunderstood the meaning of ‘teased’ in this context in the sense of making fun, rather than a flirtation or challenge and attempted to explain ‘quirky’ without giving a sense of the strangeness of the violin. Less effective responses had several attempts or did not explain the choice within the context of the passage. The best answers to **Question 2(b)** 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 Seth’s experiences and feelings when he plays the violin.**

Use your own words in your explanation.

Violin in hand, Seth stopped four strings with his fingers, and drew the bow over them with one rapid sweep. He’d produced a rich chord. He was surprised by how strong the sound was. He raised his bow again and the violin replied enchantingly.

Seth felt excitement shooting through him.

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 Seth’s experiences and feelings when he plays the violin. A significant number of candidates did not follow these instructions but instead offered a very general response with no focus on the writer’s language and no language choice selected. A significant number of candidates repeated the language of the text and used a form of the word ‘excitement’ in their explanation so did not receive credit.

The most effective responses offered a concise quotation then considered how the writer was able to convey Seth’s experiences and feelings when he plays the violin through the language used. The most popular example was ‘Seth felt excitement shooting through him’ and many responses explored the great surge of enthusiasm, coupled with the rush of pleasure and the powerful feelings that Seth

experienced as he plays the violin. Other responses considered the example of 'replied enchantingly' and were able to explore ideas about it being like a conversation, as if the violin is talking back to Seth, and his delight at its magical qualities. These candidates had noted the number of marks available and focused their response to make three distinct points in relation to their one chosen example. Some less effective responses tried to do too much, selecting several examples. 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 3 and 11.

- **Paragraph 3 begins 'Partially concealed ...' and is about the violin that Seth sees in the back of the shop.**
- **Paragraph 11 begins 'The arrival of the audience ...' and is about the activity in the concert hall before the concert begins.**

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. They identified relevant words or phrases that they felt best able to explain, rather than selecting the first three choices in each paragraph they came across, beginning with explanations of meaning in the context of the text and then considered effect. Some of the most effective responses explored how their judiciously selected choices worked both individually and together to influence the reader's impression, building to an overview. Responses at level 5 frequently showed imagination and precision when discussing language use and offered answers that were balanced across both parts of the question.

Many answers for paragraph 3 began with the description of the physical appearance of the violin at the back of the shop when Seth discovers it. Various interpretations of 'absurdly squat' were explored – including it being short and odd-looking and its amusing appearance. Several answers went on to identify 'magnetically charming face' as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the how attractive and alluring it appeared to Seth. Some of the best answers focused on the regal superiority and the magical power cast by the instrument, though also recognising the humorous nature of its influence over Seth.

Some mid-range answers offered more careful selection and explanation in one half of their response than the other – with some indicating less secure understanding through inaccurate interpretation of the description of the oboe's 'great misery' in paragraph 11 by asserting that this referred to the audience as being sad and not enjoying the performance, rather than the sorrowful yet beautiful sound of the instrument. 'Plaintive' was often repeated by way of explanation with a lack of understanding of how the oboe sounded sad and mournful. Less effective responses that limited 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 words 'holding court' and what it suggested about the nature of a king or queen being surrounded by courtiers with connotations of superiority and many less effective answers dealing with this popular choice did little more than repeat /replay the wording of the text.

Where effects were less effectively explained, it tended to be due to repeating the same idea for all three language choices in the paragraph. In paragraph 3 this tended to be through repeating the idea of Seth finding the violin attractive through all choices selected without looking at them individually to consider the nuances, and in paragraph 11, it tended to be repeating the idea of the sounds of the instruments warming up. There were also candidates who used the language of the text repeatedly in their explanations: most commonly 'magnetic', 'captivated', 'scraping', 'loud', 'assert', 'demanding' and 'attention'.

Explanations of paragraph 11 often targeted the 'multitude of subdued murmurs' and 'a loud trombone would assert itself', with the best answers describing the large number of people talking quietly in anticipation of the start of the performance before the dominant and potentially bullying sound of the trombone becoming audible above the other instruments. They had recognised that the orchestra members were warming up their instruments which resulted in a lot of different and sometimes untuneful sounds. Some of the best answers also explored the description of the harsh and

inharmonious sound of the ‘discordant scraping of strings’ which was hard on the ears. They then connected it to the ‘sharply persistent blowing of reeds’ which was a constant high-pitched and annoying sound.

The least effective answers to **2(d)** offered generic empty comments such as ‘This is auditory imagery’ or ‘It is a powerful image’. Comments like these are not helpful to candidates since they do not evidence understanding of how language is working in a particular given section of the text and candidates often move on without saying anything more concrete. Satisfactory responses offered a clear explanation of the literal meaning of each example they had chosen, whilst more effective answers also identified effect. Candidates working at higher levels were often able to visualise images, using explanation of precise meaning/associations of the words used as the starting point for their explanation of effect.

In **Question 2(d)**, it is the quality of the analysis when considering how language is being used which attracts marks. 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. Opportunities were missed in a small number of answers where choices were from one paragraph only, or selections were made from paragraph 7. 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.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- in each part of **2(a)** make sure that your selection is from **Text C** and is clearly identified
- in **2(b)** be careful that your explanation is consistent with how the word is used in context
- in **2(c)** try to say three separate things about your one chosen example
- in **2(d)**, select three precise and accurate language choices from *both* specified paragraphs
- do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- make sure explanations of meanings make sense within the context of the text – avoid literal meanings unless this is the case
- avoid very general explanations such as ‘it creates visual imagery’ or ‘the reader is able to picture the scene’ without further explanation
- start with the contextualised meaning, then move on to the effect created by the language in terms of how it helps the reader’s understanding of the situation, characters, atmosphere, for example
- avoid repeating the same explanations of effects for each language choice: try to be more specific about analysing at word-level.

Question 3

You are Seth. Sylvia has told you that her parents are happy for you to contact them. When you get home that night, you write a letter to Sylvia's parents. In the letter you:

- explain the circumstances under which you came across the violin
- describe your thoughts and feelings about the violin at the time of discovering it and since the time of discovering it
- consider ideas about what should happen to the violin now.

Write the words of the letter.

This question required candidates to write a letter to Sylvia's parents from Seth explaining the circumstances under which he came across the violin. The three bullet points in the question offered guidance to candidates to help them identify relevant ideas for their letter. The first and second bullets required candidates to retrieve relevant information from the text and adapt it to fit Seth's perspective on finding the violin and his thoughts and feelings about his discovery. The third bullet required candidates to consider what Seth thought should happen to the violin now using ideas and clues in the text to support their inferences.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood both the narrative and task in at least general terms, and many were able to make effective use of relevant ideas and details from the text to write a formal letter. The best responses remembered this was a test of reading skills as well as writing, responding carefully to details of Seth's experience as suggested by the passage, often adopting a friendly and lively tone. The least effective responses repeated material from **Text C** without modification and/or did not use ideas from **Text C** in their letter at all.

Bullet one was generally addressed effectively, with most candidates able to identify some of the explicit circumstances under which Seth came across the violin. Most referenced that he was looking around the locality prior to the performance when he came across the small music shop and found the violin. Better responses often developed the suggestion in the text that he was naturally drawn to such places and would not have known the violin was there if he had not gone into the shop. Details about the locality, such as Seth roaming the streets and learning about the people who might attend were often included, but in less effective answers explicit ideas about how he occupied time prior to the performance were more rarely evaluated or developed. Effective answers noticed Seth was part of a travelling orchestra and used the development to highlight how he visited different places.

Ideas for bullet two were mostly referenced through detail, though more effective answers offered interpretation – for example, recognising and making explicit the powerful presence or the aura the violin exuded rather than copying words from the text, such as it had 'cheerful eyes' or 'a magnetically charming face' to describe its appearance. They then described how he tried it out, using details of its 'rich chord' to highlight the quality of its sound and provided development outlining how he knew he had to buy it. The best answers often did notice the mystery of the story behind the violin and how it came to be in the music shop. A number described how Seth played it in the concert hall and developed ideas about it living up to his expectations and that it was better than his old violin. A few candidates lost sight of the text – for example, writing creatively about playing musical instruments or the camaraderie of playing in an orchestra – ideas not suggested or rooted in the text. Others spent considerable time overstating the merits of the violin or Seth's love for it, which in turn meant they limited their range of points offered for this bullet. Whilst many candidates referenced Sylvia, fewer went on to explain that she was in the audience and therefore limited opportunities to develop and extend points about how she stood out from others or that Seth was surprised at her reaction.

When responding to the third bullet, the most effective responses demonstrated an understanding of Seth's dilemma and tempered his need to do the right thing and return the violin to its original owners with his desire to hold onto the violin and bring its voice to the world. These responses then went on to suggest finding a compromise with offers to meet Sylvia's parents to discuss what should happen to the violin. They picked out a range of clues from throughout the text to develop appropriate ideas, citing not only that it must have huge sentimental value, but also that the family could come to see it played if it was donated to the local orchestra. Mid-range responses tended to centre around either Seth keeping the violin or returning it to Sylvia's parents. The least effective responses did not address this bullet at all or copied sections of text with minimal modification. As a result, there were some thin responses to this bullet. Some responses took their ideas offered in response to the third bullet from the other texts in the reading insert, focusing on what attracts a person to playing a musical instrument, or the satisfaction of it as a career choice. Candidates should be reminded that even where there is a common theme across different texts, in Question 3 they are being assessed on their

reading understanding of **Text C** only so should focus on using only ideas from the correct text. Using ideas from other texts leads to a loss of reading focus.

Overall, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of letter writing. Many were able to use an appropriate register, drawing on a range of suitable vocabulary to express their ideas and kept their audience and purpose in mind, although some candidates signed off using their own name rather than Seth. Some candidates misread the question and wrote from Sylvia's perspective or to Sylvia, rather than her parents. Generally, accuracy was good with some skilfully written responses. Others struggled to maintain fluency resulting in some awkward expression caused by errors in grammar and punctuation. Candidates are advised to check through their work carefully to correct errors where possible. There were few instances of wholesale lifting from the passage, but some less effective responses were over-reliant on lifted phrases and sentences throughout the response.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read **Text C** carefully, more than once, to ensure clear understanding
- briefly plan your response to ensure that you are selecting ideas relevant to all three bullets: you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and/or link ideas from each
- pay careful attention to the written style adopted – for example, the register required for the purpose and audience of the task
- 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 you can use in your answer so make sure you have covered all aspects of each bullet
- 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 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 21

Key messages

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

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 from the passages in the question paper materials was common, but where this lifting of material was more extensive it was difficult to award high marks. 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.

Most responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of preserving or replacing old buildings in the reading texts in **Question 1**; most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a speech to the local community. The register required here was generally well understood, with a friendly and persuasive tone and the use of direct address. Most 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 or employing the ideas in the texts in a coherent response. Some opinion or recommendation was usually given about the fate of the old building, based on ideas in the texts, though not always probing or offering judgements about them, with only a minority simply reporting the views and ideas in the texts with no comment on them. More effective evaluation tended to challenge some ideas in the texts rather than reproduce them and to suggest an understanding of the need for the interests of the school and local community to be better balanced.

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 quite addressed, such as the fact of the old building being on a school site, or why decisions regarding it might be of importance to local people: a significant minority of responses were presented as speeches to their peers, missing opportunities for evaluation that were offered by the task.

Most candidates made effective 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. The opposing challenges of demolition or re-use of the building in question were often thoughtfully considered, although some responses based their arguments on the building being dangerously dilapidated and unhealthy, and students being put at risk by being required to continue their studies in it, although this was not an option proposed in the question. The most effective responses selected from and elaborated upon the material as part of an ongoing meditation on the ethics of dealing with old buildings and the ramifications of any decision for the school and the local community. Less effective responses were sometimes little more than a summary paraphrasing the question paper passages. The structure and organisation of ideas required in a speech to the local community were well understood by many candidates although there were also responses which were flat and discursive in style after brief initial pleasantries, or overly formal and impersonal without the features of spoken language.

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. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were effective, organised and sustained. The first question was much more popular, and indeed was the most chosen composition option overall, producing responses across the mark range. In responses to this option there were some convincing and evocative descriptions of a theme park or attraction when it was open and when it was closed, the more effective ones conveying some sense of the writer's feelings about the place, sometimes reflective or nostalgic. Although equal treatment of both states was not required, many candidates penalised themselves by describing the attraction when closed in a very cursory manner, occasionally in only a single sentence, thus missing the opportunities for evocative contrast offered by the task. Less effective responses were inventory-like, prosaic or very simply structured. The second question produced a substantial number of high-level responses which were engaging, evocative and often very successfully structured. The least effective responses to this question were sometimes almost entirely narrative or described the location and surroundings of the rehearsal and not the people involved as required by the task.

Both narrative writing questions proved popular across the range of abilities. In **Question 4** narratives which were constructed around the use of the phrase, and which included credible characters and scenarios were generally more effective than those which used the phrase more coincidentally in the story. **Question 5** allowed for a very wide range of scenarios and elicited some highly engaging and well-constructed narratives in various genres: museum or gallery heists, romance and family saga, or quite gothic and well-executed tales of possession or capture by the portrait. Some less effective responses were based on a misunderstanding of the word 'portrait' or were over-packed with incident succeeded by an ambiguous or poorly managed ending. Highly effective responses often 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

Imagine that you are a student of a school which is considering whether or not to demolish an old building on its site.

Write the speech you give to a meeting of local people, expressing your views.

In your speech you should:

- **evaluate the ideas, attitudes and opinions about buildings given in both texts**
- **based on what you have read, justify your views on whether the school's old building should be replaced or reused.**

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 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 level of candidates' achievement.

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 whether the conflicting attitudes towards the preservation or replacement of old buildings could be reconciled in the case of an old building on the school site, taking the interests of local people into consideration.

Most responses included the two main ideas about demolition or 'adaptive reuse' as they applied to a school building although many were quite limited or superficial discussions. These often failed to imagine an audience of local people in their selection for inclusion of mostly explicit points. While most made more use of the material from Text A than that of Text B, their clearly heightened awareness of global warming caused many to focus on the environmental benefits of recycling the building based on the ideas of the second text. These responses, sometimes strongly argued, were however often weakened by their dismissal or ignoring of counter arguments in Text A.

Those responses which managed to synthesise ideas from both texts to craft a fully developed speech offering a range of evaluative points could be awarded marks for Reading in Level 6 or high in Level 5. These showed a thorough grasp of the subtleties of the issues involved, often developed anecdotally but never losing sight of the task and its proposed audience: 'Could you easily accept the destruction of a building so prominent in your memories and in those indeed of your ancestors in this town?'; 'Of course both tradition and continuity are important to the school and the area, but this old building too was once new and innovative, and we must now make our own history to be valued by the generations to come!'

Some very effective responses imagined a particular building –perhaps a school library or Science block – to provide a point of entry to some most effective evaluative comments: 'If you vote to demolish this building where most of my ideas were formed, there'll be an empty space in my heart much worse than any illness the old place could possibly cause.' Occasionally this approach developed a scenario not rooted in the task or texts, and which would serve to negate much of the debate: 'Everyone knows that this building is of

outstanding historical and architectural importance to the whole country; it must be preserved at all costs!' Elsewhere it was wryly pointed out that very few tourists would be attracted to the town to see an old building on a school campus.

Where even a single evaluative point was firmly made, however, 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. However, Examiners noted an increase in this 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. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 discussed salient points, such as the relevant costs of the task's proposed alternatives, that progress could be impaired by holding on to the past, that what is homely and familiar is as important to students as flashy new builds, or that recycled buildings can facilitate the learning of history. Responses that covered several points but failed to imagine the audience effectively in their selection, and thus the need to persuade, were awarded 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 benefit to the school and its students of one or other of the proposed options with limited consideration of alternatives or of the involvement of the local community. Where the beginnings of evaluation of explicit points were evident marks at the top of the Level 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 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. In these responses opportunities for evaluation were lost because of the misreading of the task itself: in a significant number of responses, old buildings in general were discussed without any reference to a school, or the site of this particular building was acknowledged but there was obvious difficulty in transposing ideas in the texts into a school context.

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 a speech to local people, whose specific concerns and point of view could be understood, although few responses at any level of achievement mentioned or addressed this group directly. Most responses showed a clear understanding of the required register, even where technical writing skills were weak, and this allowed Examiners to consider marks in Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Although not always sustained, some attempted to establish a relationship with the intended audience by reminders of shared educational or geographical history, or anecdotes recalling past events in the school or its surrounding community. Some responses used a friendly but slightly more authoritative and rhetorical style, as if the intended audience of the speech needed to be made aware of the importance of the school in general or of the designated old building, in particular. In some, sophisticated language use allowed subtle and nuanced ideas to be conveyed. Here arguments were presented in an engaging way but made their case clearly and effectively. At the highest level, responses revealed an understanding of the significance of the built landscape of an area to different groups of people, past and present. At all levels of achievement having a distinct point of view supported the effectiveness of the writing because it could become impassioned or rhetorical.

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 engage the audience often worked well, with brief references to local traditions, and the local economy, maintaining an effective register without resorting to the overly colloquial slang 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 was to be demonstrated.

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. At the lower level, awkward paraphrasing was seen with syntactically incorrect insertion of phrases from the text. In this examination session fewer 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 managed 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 the necessary pleasantries and salutations, 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 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.

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 arguments 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 listener.

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 plain, the language used was generally accurate. Sometimes the friendly and conversational style of the opening was followed in the body of the speech with an impersonal, discursive style close to the language of the texts and lacking convincing, direct address. 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 'development', 'recycling', 'environment/environmental', 'demolition' and 'destruction'. Problematic 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 quite 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 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 both the content and the style of the response was not 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
- 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
- do not lose marks by using capital letters randomly, or by employing them exclusively throughout your response.

Descriptive writing

Describe a theme park or attraction when it is open and when it is closed.

Describe a group of people meeting to rehearse or practise.

Descriptive Writing was a popular choice for candidates and Examiners could award a wide range of marks for these responses. Both questions were interpreted in a wide variety of ways which Examiners could reward appropriately. In the first task, there were many detailed, organised and effective descriptions of theme parks and funfairs but frequently description of the attraction when closed was neglected, yet in many of the most effective responses the description of the attraction when closed was the more evocative and subtle. The second question elicited a range of different types of rehearsal, although at all levels of achievement the most common were those preceding a musical or dance stage performance. Less effective responses to this question were sometimes accounts of football practices, detailing the different moves and strategies in mainly narrative detail, neglecting description of the people involved except perhaps for value judgements such as 'fabulous' or 'great'.

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 the first question, a substantial majority depicted Disney-style, technicolour places peopled with whining or over-excited children, exhausted parents and long queues for fast-food stations, cotton candy and rollercoasters. These often lacked the close focus and detailed description that creates the 'convincing picture' of Level 5, such as: 'The dark-haired toddler gasped in disbelief as the ice-cream fell from its cone to splatter on her pink sneakers. Her mouth rounded into an 'O' as she prepared to wail ...'. Less effective responses failed to evoke specific children or adults or to describe any of the rides or attractions in detail. Lower in the mark range, responses to both questions were prone to narrative although Examiners rewarded description wherever it appeared.

More effective responses to **Question 2** often employed the same familiar tropes but created evocative and convincing pictures with 'varieties of focus' using the aforesaid detailed description but also having it narrated, or observed by, a member of staff, often tired, cynical and underpaid: one response awarded marks in Level 6 homed in on, 'a lone janitor sweeping up the copious amounts of waste. A sour, exasperated expression pulls at his features as an overhanging light stretches and warps his own and the surrounding shadows.' Elsewhere a writer eschewed the omnipresent rollercoasters and spent much of both parts of the description on the sinister mirror-house: 'Some mirrors curved outwards making noses look like elongated slugs ... others had a zig-zag structure that made gravity seem a mere delusion of Newton ...'. Emptied of visitors at closing time, the mirrors 'curved downwards, as if looking at the floor in anguish, crestfallen ...'.

The second descriptive writing question produced a high proportion of effective responses. These created atmosphere from the very beginning, perhaps describing the hopeful young rock band members entering the musty garage which was the only rehearsal space available to them, or the nervous new recruit to a chamber orchestra making the strings of her violin screech with the perspiration on her fingers. In the middle range, there was sometimes insufficient attention given to the 'group of people' indicated in the task, and greater focus on surroundings, or the individual members of the group were depicted in more mundane detail of their

hair colour and clothing. It sometimes seemed difficult to portray people meeting for any type of sports practice without the response lapsing at least partly into narrative or projections of the future, although one very effective response focused attention on the doom-laden teachers and coaches rather than the underperforming players as an important match neared.

In both descriptive writing questions, unusual, closely observed details created convincing, 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 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.

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. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve less-striking images and more stereotypical ideas. In the first question, in the attempt to create contrast, writers struggled to employ effective structures, often using a laboured point-by-point system. Where straightforward open and closed descriptions were employed consecutively, they were sometimes linked by narrative sections about getting home from the fair or returning to it – sometimes in search of lost children or belongings. In the second question, there were sometimes lengthy preambles about getting to the rehearsal.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become more narrative in intent. Here description was often entirely objective and inventory-like, and here too there was often some structural imbalance, with, in **Question 2**, almost the whole response given over to the 'open' state of the attraction, or, more rarely, to the 'closed'. Some lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in responses at Level 3, although some were accurately written. These were sometimes entirely narrative, or the details included were mundane and stereotypical.

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.

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. Lapses in grammar, 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 quite 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 which includes the words, ‘... I realised that it was my responsibility ...’.

Write a story with the title, ‘The Portrait’.

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. Examiners occasionally saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title and which, on occasion, seemed more suited to titles set in previous examinations or were pre-prepared: this was much more apparent in **Question 4**. Although less prevalent than in the recent past, 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 essential elements of more effective responses to both questions. In **Question 4**, more effective responses often based the narrative on the idea of the narrator’s guilt or pride, as implied by the phrase in the question, and the story unfolded around this idea.

Several effective responses portrayed rites of passage for young people, as they were forced or allowed to take important decisions for their personal growth. In one, a girl was surprised and intrigued by her mother’s unexpected but significant gift of a pair of high-heeled shoes: ‘Teenage years are like those shoes—steep, hard, difficult to balance on. ... They’ve acquired some scrapes and scratches, marked by my path, but carrying my story.’ There were also convincing reflections on the frightening nature of sudden responsibility, often involving quite mundane matters such as buying groceries or keeping the house secure.

Most narratives in the middle range were reasonably developed and credible for the reader, although the relevant quotation was often ‘tacked on’ as an afterthought. Here there was less subtlety in the creation of characters or plot development than in higher-scoring responses

Most narratives addressing this question were chronological accounts with varying degrees of development, characterisation and shaping although some candidates chose more ambitious structures, perhaps telling the story from the vantage point of hindsight. 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 straightforward accounts in which events tended to dominate and there was more limited attention paid to characterisation and setting. Plotlines involving drunken car-crashes or trips with friends to various locations or getting lost in forests were often organised and reasonably cohesive but did not really engage the reader.

There were only a few responses where candidates forgot to include the required phrase or where it seemed completely immaterial to the plot.

For **Question 5**, there were many different plotlines, characters and events which allowed candidates to show their narrative writing ability. There were many ‘heist’ stories – several featuring the theft of the Mona Lisa – which were fast moving and entertaining and generally well-managed. Elsewhere there were revelations of intergenerational family secrets. There were also some intriguing plots reminiscent of horror movies which were well written and developed in a way not often seen in attempting this challenging genre. Here, a common trope was the capture and absorption of the observer into a mysterious mirror, to be imprisoned alive there. In many of these, at all levels of achievement, the plot was quite credibly managed, but the effectiveness of the response depended upon the care taken with characterisation and scene-setting. Examiners noted several responses whose plot and theme referenced *The Picture of Dorian Gray* or its contemporary filmic derivatives; some of these were most accomplished and chilling in their effect.

Many responses to both narrative questions began quite strongly but could not be awarded marks in the Level first considered by Examiners because of the weakness of their endings or faults in the plot’s resolution. This particularly affected some otherwise engaging and convincing responses to **Question 5**.

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 and choices.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless cohesive and credible. 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 weaknesses in 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 most 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 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 weak 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 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.

In responses to **Question 4** the misspelling of the word 'responsibility' was ubiquitous, even in some otherwise high-scoring responses. A common reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was weak 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 focus only upon 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 will help to lift your mark**
- **use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create effects.**

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22
Directed Writing and Composition 22

Key messages

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

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 very brief scripts, incomplete scripts or scripts in which the instructions regarding which questions to answer were not followed. A few scripts contained no **Question 1** but 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 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 common but where this lifting of material was more extensive it was difficult to award high marks. 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 a more discursive than narrative style, again making it difficult to award high marks for Content and Structure because the mark scheme directs Examiners to look for characteristically narrative writing skills.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of podcasts in the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a letter to a figure of authority in the workplace. The formal register required here was generally well understood, with most responses structured clearly with appropriate valedictions. Most 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 of using podcasts at work, based on ideas in the texts, with only a minority simply reporting the facts 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 podcasts and their popularity and uses in modern life. Sometimes, responses reflected the ideas in the texts in a way without a specific focus on the use of podcasts in the workplace and how they might affect workers. More effective evaluation tended to probe some ideas in the texts rather than reproduce them and to suggest that raising the overall morale of workers would benefit both the individuals and the business.

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 quite addressed, such as the potential drawbacks of podcast use in the workplace or, occasionally, the drawbacks became so dominant in the response as to weaken the argument in favour of podcasts. There was some assertion rather than argument, often where candidates simply denied that podcasts would distract workers. Sometimes, curbs were suggested on the use of podcasts in the workplace which tended to avoid the need to consider the ideas in the texts where credit could be given. For example, some argued that podcasts should only be used at break times, an approach which meant that several ideas in the texts were redundant.

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. The balance between the staff's needs and those of the business were often seen as co-dependent rather than competing in more effective responses while less well considered scripts sometimes gave a summary of the ideas in the texts but without the focus on how the boss could be persuaded to allow podcasts in the workplace. The structure and organisation of ideas required in a formal, but persuasive letter, such as an appeal to the boss's need for more productive workers or some rhetorical devices such as questioning or exclamation. Less effective responses were often written in a 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 old toys found in long abandoned boxes, farm machinery rusting in fields or old cars left in garages for many years. Although not all were successful, there were also descriptions of broken hearts. Less effective responses to this question were too broad in scope, describing old buildings, for example, or an object which had little meaning for the narrator. For the second question, a wide range of descriptions of buildings of different kinds was described, some iconic and some with specific significance to the narrator, with the most effective often evoking a clear impression of why the building was 'special' to the writer. Weaker responses here described quite ordinary buildings, such as shops or cafes, 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. The required phrase in **Question 4** was used in a variety of ways, often to help structure a story in which the narrator realised that they had already been where they found themselves at some point in the story. Narratives which were constructed around the use of the phrase and which included credible characters and scenarios were generally more effective than those which used the phrase more co-incidentally in the story. **Question 5** elicited some highly engaging and well-constructed narratives. Narratives often featured a physical ball, often a football but sometimes a more mysterious ball with special properties but there were also many balls at the end of a school year or occasionally a ball set in more opulent surroundings in the past. Less effective responses to both narrative questions lacked a clear sense of narrative purpose. In **Question 4**, rather ordinary holiday destinations featured which the narrator realised they had already seen in the past while in **Question 5** there was more of a tendency to write discursively about the different sports which involve balls.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Imagine you are an employee of a business in which listening to podcasts is not allowed.

Write a letter to persuade your boss that staff should be allowed to listen to podcasts in their workplace.

In your letter you should:

- **evaluate the ideas, attitudes and opinions about podcasts given in both texts**
- **consider the concerns your boss might have**
- **suggest some of the benefits of staff listening to podcasts, based on what you have read, for both the staff and the business.**

Base your letter on what you have read in both texts but be careful to use your own words. Address all 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 letter 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 podcast use 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 benefits of podcast listening could be harnessed in the workplace to convince the boss of their efficacy.

Many responses made reference to the renewed energy and better mood which podcast listeners had reported and applied this to the effect an improvement in staff morale might have on the business's productivity. Similarly, the misgivings addressed in Text B that podcasts may prove damaging to relationships within teams were sometimes countered by reference to the wealth of topics covered in podcasts that would help to create more creative, engaged workers with ideas to contribute to the business. Inferences which could be drawn from some ideas in the texts were also used in more effective responses. One less common but valid inference was the idea that while the boss may be concerned about podcasts distracting workers, those workers were often distracted by office gossip or the sounds of machinery which would be blocked by headphones. Some sifting of ideas was also noted in more effective responses so that persuasive arguments were focused on the advantage to the boss in introducing podcasts, rather than on the benefit to individuals.

In less effective responses, assertions that workers would not be distracted by podcasts or that podcast use would not interfere with customer service were more common than reasoned arguments based on ideas in the texts. Some suggested trial periods or time limits for podcast use but did not directly address the concerns the boss might have. More evaluative responses tended to deal with concerns such as the idea that it would be rude to have staff wearing headphones in thoughtful ways, rather than advocating limits. These often involved counterarguments rather than assertions, such as the benefit to the business of staff with improved listening skills who could better cater for customers or understand complex instructions.

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 effects of podcast listening on individuals, the effects on staff focus, creativity and morale made a compelling case for their use in a modern business.

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 podcast listening might benefit the recipient of the letter, the boss.

Most responses included reference to various ways in which podcasts were believed to benefit the individual listener. The increased energy and focus outlined in Text A, alongside the range of topics covered in podcasts were commonly outlined though less use was sometimes made of Text B. The unhealthy obsession with podcast listening on the part of the writer was sometimes noticed but for the most part the second text was used to highlight the concerns the boss might have about their use in the workplace. The extent to which these ideas were countered by thoughtful arguments, usually developed from ideas in Text A, 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 subtle ideas were developed and explored. For example, allowing podcasts to be used in the workplace was considered by some to suggest a level of trust between employees and the boss which would not only engender better morale but would result in better educated, more independent workers who had more to offer an employer. Similarly, improved listening skills were sometimes thought to foster more respect between colleagues and thereby create more effective teams, rather than the worry expressed in Text B that workers engrossed in podcasts would prove to be weak team members. As one candidate put it, 'Rather than encountering bored workers completing menial tasks with no enthusiasm, surely customers would be more impressed by staff who listened to them attentively and responded creatively to meet their needs.'

A common approach in Level 5 and low Level 6 responses was that some tedious tasks in the workplace were unavoidable and often caused productivity to fall but the effects of listening to podcasts were more widespread than simply speeding up people's work rate. Improved morale was the most used argument based on the texts with which to convince the boss but 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 more evaluative ideas but sometimes with less development or focus on the workplace and the ideas which would persuade the boss.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to 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 podcasts worked or the benefits of listening to podcasts while doing domestic chores. More general, if valid, ideas were also typical at this level with many responses including suggestions about how to limit the use of podcasts at work which were not quite the purpose of the task.

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 and not strongly anchored in the specific ideas in the texts. There was some misunderstanding at this level with some reference to podcasts as having visual content or in some cases the second bullet was not addressed. The anecdotal style of Text B was sometimes replicated but the point being made about obsessive podcast use was missed.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words. Less successful 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 polite and formal but persuasive letter to a figure in authority in the workplace. Most responses showed a clear understanding of the required formal register, even where technical writing skills were weak, and this allowed for Examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Some attempted to acknowledge the

right of the boss to set the rules for the workforce but respectfully asked for some reconsideration of the podcast rule. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in a respectful way but making their case effectively and with some impact. At the highest level, responses were pitched at quite a subtle level, challenging the boss's assumptions without overstepping the mark in terms of Where a less nuanced approach was adopted and the tone was more obsequious, responses could be a little more limited and less use made of the reading material.

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 engage the boss by appealing to his commercial interests worked well. Conversely, some responses were generally accurate but were largely summaries of the reading material rather adopting the style for a formal letter or the register appropriate for the audience. Sometimes, in reaching for a formal register, the style could be rather strained.

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 'Podcasts are generally perceived as a more intellectual form of entertainment' and 'research suggests that silence is beneficial to cell development in the region of the brain central to memory and emotion and relieves tension.' 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 was 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. 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, such as the notion that podcasts reduced stress as mentioned in Text A, but that silence was necessary to relieve tension, stated in Text B. 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 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 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 disagreement, often between plurals and verb forms. 'Podcast' was very often used instead of 'podcasts' and some disagreement occurred as a

result. Common spelling errors in this mark range included some frequently used words in the texts such as 'colleagues', 'entertainment' and 'benefits'.

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 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 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

Describe an object that has been broken for a long time.

Write a description with the title, A special building – inside and outside'.

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates and Examiners awarded a wide range of marks for these responses. Both questions elicited responses about a wide variety of objects and buildings which Examiners could reward appropriately. In the first task, there were many detailed, organised and effective descriptions of different kinds of neglected and broken objects. Often, candidates made use of the implied sense of nostalgic memory in the task, 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 different kinds of buildings, from iconic structures such as tourist landmarks to buildings that were personally 'special' to the writer. In both questions, the choice of object or building to be described was important to the success of the piece: objects and buildings 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 buildings which didn't 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 object described was incongruous or difficult to picture and in the second question buildings such as shops or cafes seemed rather ordinary rather than special. Lower in the mark range, responses to both questions were rather prone to narrative though Examiners rewarded description wherever it appeared. In the first question particularly, a sizeable minority of responses included narrative sections about how the object came to be broken or were entirely narrative in intent.

Some effective responses to the first question included interesting and evocative details about an object found in an abandoned room or attic. Grandfather clocks featured quite often, with some engaging play on the concept of time having been stopped in some responses. These included a level of detailed observation that gave the description credibility and interest rather than relying on cliché and often incorporated memories of a time the object was not broken. One response recorded the slow decay of an abandoned car in a secluded area which became an object for children to play in as they grew up before being engulfed over time by nature: 'Now, many years later, the car is still there but only really visible in the undergrowth to those of us who had played in it every summer as it gradually sank into the landscape.' In another response, a doll which had belonged to the writer's sister as a child was described, hinting at the guilt evoked in the mind of the writer who had deliberately broken it: 'Its grotesque, badly aligned eyes hung out of the sockets, as if looking balefully at the warped and twisted limbs lying in a heap in the box.' Some less domestic settings also elicited successful responses, such as various kinds of agricultural machinery on abandoned farms. In some highly

effective responses, the decaying object was shown to symbolise an old way of life now superseded by modernisation.

In the second descriptive writing question, some responses focused on a building which was remembered as 'special' but was now neglected or abandoned, an approach which sometimes allowed for some engaging contrast between past and present: 'My childhood home with its comfortably old-fashioned, crumbling brickwork porch now sported a chic, glimmering glass atrium which displayed the wealth and status of the new owners for all to see.' Some buildings were special in other ways, such as old schools or otherwise unassuming shops remembered from the past. Buildings with iconic status also featured, such as well-known tourist sites, cathedrals or civic landmarks, and where these were recreated with convincing detail, Examiners could award high marks.

In both descriptive writing questions, unusual, closely observed details created engaging, evocative scenes in the best responses. Where such scenes 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. In the first question, the object described was not always easy to visualise from the description or lacked salience or significance. In the second question, the building described, often shops or homes, had less sense of being special and were simply pleasant or comfortable.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become more narrative in intent, especially in the first question, with accounts of how an object was broken rather than a description of it. 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.

Some lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in responses at Level 3, although they were sometimes accurately written. These were sometimes entirely narrative or the object or building described was not readily identifiable.

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 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 quite 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

Write a story which includes the words, ‘... I realised I had been here before ...’.

Write a story with the title, ‘The ball’.

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. Examiners occasionally saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title and which, on occasion, 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.

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**, better responses usually included the quotation in the question as a pivotal point in the narrative rather than some simple realisation that a place had been visited in the past. Some made productive use of a more metaphorical interpretation of the title, suggesting that some turning point or state of mind had been experienced before. Other interpretations involved a moment of recognition that some pattern of behaviour, such as self-destructive habits or a failure to strive for desired goals, was about to be repeated, often with quite optimistic conclusions where the expected chain of events was broken.

Most responses to this question were more literal but, in some cases, equally effective. Being taken, often reluctantly, to a barely remembered location such as a childhood home or a grandparent’s house was a common scenario, with more effective narratives focusing on the strange feelings of familiarity and confusion evoked: ‘There was a red swing gently tilting in the breeze in the tiny front garden. My whole body seemed to feel the surge of the swing, the coldness of the chains as I held on and as I stood transfixed the sounds of tinkly voices drifted on the wind from some faraway place.’ Dreams in which places or people featured which were then seen in real life were also common. While in some cases the link between dream and reality was made by some supernatural sense of prescience, others ended in less likely, unexplained violent events as the nightmare came true. Some such nightmares turned out to be simple repeated dreams with limited context and characterisation to bring them alive. 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.

Question 5 also allowed for a wide range of interpretations. There were many ball games of different kinds which had varying degrees of tense moments and while these were usually middle range responses, there were some which had enough characterisation and context to create interest beyond the outcome of the match itself. Some very effective responses used the title to create a convincing scene of a social event, a ball, of some significance to the narrator. There were some end-of-year balls in which school friends stole each other’s partners in small scale but convincing narratives, while other responses were set in stately mansions in the past in which some drama would occur. There were also literal balls which were lost and followed into dangerous territory or balls with magical properties which led protagonists to various locations and dilemmas. 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 straightforward accounts in which events tended to dominate and there was more limited attention paid to characterisation and setting. Plotlines involving football matches or balls lost in forests tended to lack some credibility although most were organised and paragraphed.

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 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 the first question, this often included the use of the quotation in the question to create some sense of déjà vu which was resolved but not always in engaging 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 weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. In the first question, these sometimes involved simple accounts, such as one response in which a recurring dream was revealed to be yet another version of the same dream. 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 most 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 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 weak 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 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 not awarding Level 5 marks to otherwise clearly written stories was weak 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 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 0500/23
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

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 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 common, but where this lifting of material was more extensive, it was difficult to award high marks. 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 of giving views and offering advice concerning the ambitious plans that their friend had for the future in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a letter to a friend. The less formal but still appropriate register suggested in the question was generally well understood, with most responses structured clearly with appropriate valedictions. Most 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 being an ambitious person, 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 ambition and what it might mean to different people. Sometimes, responses reflected the ideas about ambition in the texts without any clear focus on the advice being given to the friend with a specific plan for their future. 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 quite addressed, such as the range of potential drawbacks of excessive ambition on health and on relationships, or, occasionally, the drawbacks became so dominant in the response as to weaken any argument in favour of having any ambition at all. There was some assertion rather than argument, where candidates simply stated that ambition was a good

or a bad thing for their friend, 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 advice being offered at all.

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. The balance between the positive need for ambition to drive a person forward and the effect this might have on the friend and their particular 'ambitious plan' 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 friend could be advised to approach developing and adapting their understanding of ambition to help them in the future. The structure and organisation of ideas required in a relatively informal, but clearly focused and directed letter, such as offering a range of developed ideas for a friend, based on a clear and specific request for advice, allowed for some rhetorical devices such as questioning or 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 effective 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 an important visitor could be expected to appear, setting a clear scene and developed a sense of excitement and anticipation. Less effective responses to this question were too concerned with reaching the location, detailing events from breakfast onwards and not focusing sufficiently on the location or the feeling of waiting for an important visitor. For the second question, there were many vividly described and well managed, evocative descriptions of the contents of a particular drawer or cupboard, describing personal feelings as the objects were observed, often with some sense of looking back and nostalgia. Less effective responses simply listed several objects that were found 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 effects of being placed 'in charge' were both positively and negatively developed, and being offered a position of responsibility in a school context was a popular choice. Less effective responses retold intergalactic adventures or war stories where a description of a series of events took over from a clearly developed narrative thread. The required phrase in **Question 5** was used in a variety of ways, often with being 'Out of reach' being applied to emotions and feelings as well as in the physical sense. Narratives which were constructed around the use of the phrase, and which included credible characters and scenarios were generally more effective than those which used the phrase more co-incidentally in the story. Less effective responses to both narrative questions lacked a clear sense of narrative purpose.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Imagine that your friend has an ambitious plan for their future and has asked for your views.

Write a letter to your friend offering your advice.

In your letter you should:

- **evaluate the ideas, attitudes and opinions about ambition given in both texts**
- **based on what you have read, discuss the factors your friend needs to consider to decide if they should follow their ambition.**

**Base your letter 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 letter 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 ambition 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 ambition could be used, considered, or avoided by the friend being addressed to help with the development of the 'ambitious plan for their future'. Many responses, for example, referred to the origin of the ambition and whether it was indeed the friend's own choice or one they were less comfortable with, and which had been imposed upon the friend by others. Similarly, the misgivings addressed in Text A that ambition is often unrealistic and depends on a misguided belief that 'To get "big" you absolutely must get "bigger"', being influenced by social media and celebrity culture, and that this belief may prove damaging to both personal relationships and the friend's mental and physical health, were also developed and evaluated in several 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 the friend might be able to manage failure could lead to effective evaluation. One less common but valid approach was a development of the personality of the friend, remaining closely focused on the text and then examining how this character could cope with the pressures and demands of developing a stated ambitious idea, often praising the friend by using the positive aspects of ambition and how the friend would be able to manage their ambitious ideas. Evaluating the nature of ambition and considering whether the friend seeking wealth and fame represented greed or vanity, and that ambition also needed to be positive for the friend's health and character, was another appropriate approach.

In less effective responses, there were straightforward assertions taken from the texts about the definitions of ambition, with little consideration of the friend or any clear sense of giving advice to the friend. On the other hand, some responses focused so much on developing the character of the friend that they used few 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 effects of ambition and what this might mean for the friend, their individual creativity and drive made a compelling case for proceeding with their specific ambitious plan for the future.

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 levels of ambition would affect a friend, and offering advice to this friend in the form of a letter.

Most responses included reference to various ways in which levels of ambition might have advantages or disadvantages for the friend. The definitions of ambition and the people in society who were judged to be successful were outlined in Text A with the issues concerning 'excessive ambition' being the main idea drawn from Text B. The information in Text A that relatives, coaches and friends might have advised the friend to 'go for it' was often developed. Many candidates tried to explain the difference between expectations and ambitions, which was a point made in Text A. The need for slow and steady progress rather than rushing forward and the approach to failure was covered in Text B and was usually referred to in responses. The risk of losing sight of other objectives while pursuing the main ambition was information given in Text B and was regularly drawn upon. 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 subtle ideas were developed and explored. For example, that the friend's relationships could well be affected and that there was a risk that those most able to give valuable advice were the most likely to be alienated by an excessively ambitious individual. The origin of the ambition was thoughtfully explored at

times with an evaluative judgement being made concerning if it was all really worth it in the end, 'Isn't it enough to make a stable living and have sufficient time for yourself, your friends and family?'

A common approach in Level 5 and low Level 6 responses was that there could be some effect on the general wellbeing of the friend if they pushed too hard, but this point was not often significantly developed. The ideas about whether this was really the ambition of the friend was a regularly made point and 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 more evaluative ideas but sometimes with less development or focus on the friend and their ambitious plan.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, often without specific reference to 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 ambition has worked for a celebrity or developing the idea that ambitious people 'tend to be more materialistically successful' without evaluating this point.

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 balance but not strongly anchored in the specific ideas in the texts. A few responses had limited use of the Texts and wrote quite a general letter to their friend.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words. Less successful 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 friendly but focused letter offering advice to a known individual. Most responses showed a clear understanding of the required register, even where technical writing skills were weak, 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 a friend but making their case effectively and with some impact. At the highest level, responses were pitched at quite a subtle level, questioning the friend and seeking 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 friend 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 letter or the register appropriate for the audience. Sometimes, in reaching for the register, the style could be rather strained and over casual in expression.

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, 'Your ambitions shape your life and your sense of who you are,' and 'a failure is seen as devastating.' 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 was 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. 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. 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 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 plain, the language used was generally accurate. A range of 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 disagreement, often between plurals and verb forms. Common spelling errors in this mark range included some frequently used words in the texts such as 'entrepreneur', 'business', 'successful' 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 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, 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

Describe the people waiting for an important visitor to arrive.

OR Describe the contents of a drawer or cupboard.

Both descriptive writing questions were chosen by a range of candidates and Examiners awarded a wide range of marks for these responses. Both questions elicited responses about a wide variety of locations, people and contents which Examiners could reward appropriately. In the first task, there were many detailed, organised and effective descriptions of different places where people might wait for an important visitor to arrive. Often, candidates made use of the implied sense of excitement and anticipation in the task, 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 objects found and settings for the drawer or cupboard, including the writer's own study and nostalgic discoveries while clearing a relative's house. In both questions, the choices made were important to the success of the piece: locations, people and objects 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 didn't 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 and in the second question there were lists of contents which seemed ordinary rather than special. Lower in the mark range, responses to both questions were rather prone to narrative, though Examiners rewarded description wherever it appeared. In the first question particularly, a minority of responses included narrative sections about how the narrator got to the location or gave overlong biographical details of the important visitor.

Some effective responses to the first question included interesting and evocative details about the setting itself, the feelings of anticipation and a description of the important visitor. Airports, sports and music venues were popular locations, with footballers, actors and rock stars being popular choices for the important individual. 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 why the important visitor was special to the narrator. Some less commonly used settings also elicited very successful responses, such as waiting nervously in an office for the president of the company to address the staff of a failing company, or at a news conference where the press were waiting for an important statement from a politician. One response used a hospital as a location, where a newborn child was the important individual, although it was hoped that they would be more than a 'visitor'.

In the second descriptive writing question, effective responses were more dependent on the kind of contents chosen and where they were found. Several responses focused on a location which was remembered as 'special', such as a grandparent's house, where the drawer or cupboard contained objects that stirred a variety of memories, thoughts and feelings, an approach which sometimes allowed for some engaging personal details. A popular choice was the narrator's own room, with the exploration of a range of documents and toys evoking a range of feelings and nostalgia. One successful response offered a detailed description of an ill woman searching for her medication and scrambling through objects that stirred memories that had to be pushed aside in the manic search: 'the wristband was coated in dust, probably lying here for years forgotten and fading, just like her ...'.

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 fewer striking images and more stereotypical ideas. In the first question, the setting and feelings were not

effectively developed or detailed. In the second question, the contents described were more of a list of things with no sense of engagement.

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.

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 personification, 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. 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 quite 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

Write a story about a time when you were in charge.

Write a story with the title, 'Out of reach'.

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. Examiners occasionally saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title; 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 successful responses to both questions. **Question 4** allowed for a wide range of interpretations. There were many teachers placing a student in charge for a short while, teenagers being forced to babysit several difficult toddlers, shopworkers and office workers being put in a position of responsibility that seriously tested their competence. There were several battlefield narratives and some interstellar conflicts as well. 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.

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. More commonly in the middle range, narratives were 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 being 'in charge' was an incidental detail to the events that were being developed. Narrating from the position of a Fire Chief was relevant, but when the events surrounding the fire itself were the major concern, leaving being 'in charge' behind, then the content was less effectively managed.

In **Question 5**, better responses usually included the quotation in the question as a pivotal point in the narrative rather than some simple realisation that a place had been visited in the past. Some made productive use of a more metaphorical interpretation of the title, suggesting that some emotion or state of mind had been 'out of reach'. Such examples included relationships that succeeded or failed, an ambition of the narrator or their parents' ambition for them, that proved elusive. In one narrative, for example, the narrator experienced a moment of awakening as they recognised their own aims differed from their parents' and a conflict had to be resolved, 'looking back, my past hopes were a silent testament, poignant reminders of past dreams now out of reach'.

Some responses to this question were more literal but equally effective. Examples of more literal interpretations included treks and adventures with a fallen friend with a reaching hand looking up for help from a rocky ledge, friends being separated trying to reach out for one last contact, and a failed baton exchange in a relay race. 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 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 the first question, this often included the issues and worries about being in charge which were usually resolved but not always in engaging 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 weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. In the first question, these sometimes involved simple accounts of a series of events such as an officer tackling enemy forces. 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 most less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative; 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 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 weak 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 misagreements, 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 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.

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; don't 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 effects.**

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/03
Coursework Portfolio 03

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 arguments, 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
- a wide range of appropriate texts were used for **Assignment 1**, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond, and were relevant to their interests
- 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

- A small number of centres did not collate the individual assignments into complete coursework portfolios but instead placed loose pages of work into the grey plastic envelopes and despatched them to Cambridge; this caused moderators some difficulties when assembling the coursework folders and delayed the moderation process. Centres should secure each individual coursework folder using tags or staples with the ICRC securely fastened as a cover sheet.
- 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 many 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, social media, the pros and cons of having tattoos, national issues in the candidates' own countries, and environmental issues. Less successful texts were those which were old and outdated, long informative texts on a given topic, or 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 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 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 of 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 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 such as punctuation, use of prepositions and articles, tenses, and construction of sentences.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Speaking and Listening Test 04

Key messages

Centre administration was generally of a high standard with Submit for Assessment (SfA) working well and being used efficiently by centres.

It has always been a requirement that centres provide summary forms (OESF) for all the candidates entered for a particular series and that these forms contain a breakdown of the marks for **Part 1** and **Part 2** of the test together with the total scores for each candidate. Sending only the summary form for the candidates whose recordings have been uploaded to SfA as the sample is not acceptable.

Each candidate's test requires a full formal introduction to be made 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 on their diligence.

There were relatively few issues reported with the general rank order of candidates within centres though the level of accuracy of the assessment was not always appropriate. Where recommendations of scaling were made it was usually because centres had not differentiated appropriately between different levels of attainment, particularly in **Part 2** and specifically between Level 4 and Level 5, or where tests did not follow the stipulated timings yet were still awarded very high marks.

Where lenient assessment had taken place at the top end of the mark scheme for responses to **Part 2**, it was often because the candidates were given credit for responses that were not 'consistently' developed or where the examiner was in control of the conversation and the candidate was too passive. It is for this reason that a **Part 2 Conversation** based heavily on a question and answer model is discouraged.

Changes in the direction of the conversation in **Part 2** do not necessitate the examiner to introduce material that is not related to the topic chosen for the **Part 1** talk. It is rather a broadening out of the original ideas introduced by the candidate in **Part 1** and is included to test the candidate's understanding of a wider perspective pertaining to the chosen topic and to test the candidate's ability to further expand a conversation effectively.

Correct timing in the test is vital to successful performance. Generally, the timing of the tests across most centres was good with few instances of short **Part 1** talks or shortened **Part 2** conversations. As always, the candidates who observed the 3–4 minutes allowed for **Part 1**, through careful preparation and practice, were more successful. The timing of **Part 2** was generally accurate but it should be remembered that examiners must ensure a minimum of 7 minutes is allowed each candidate to enable a full **Part 2** to take place. Some candidates may well struggle to converse for a minimum of 7 minutes but in such cases the marks awarded should reflect the limited quality of the performance.

There was a tendency with some examiners to vocalise their agreement or interest during **Part 1**. Often this was well-intentioned but served to interrupt and cause the candidate to falter. Examiners should have the confidence to allow a candidate's rhetorical questions to remain unanswered and resist the urge to demonstrate audible agreements or surprise. The role of the examiner in **Part 1** remains that of a passive observer.

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. From a moderating perspective, the introduction of SfA has been a very positive step forward and this seems to be reflected in the way centres have adapted to the system very professionally. It is hoped centres share moderators' enthusiasm for SfA as it does seem to make the whole process much more efficient.

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

- Every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date on which the candidate is being examined. Think in the same terms as for a written examination where each candidate would be expected to complete their own information at the beginning of the answer booklet. For Component 04 it is the examiner who should complete the introduction but the same principle of identifying key information on an individual basis is still relevant. Thankfully, there were few instances of centres using generic introductions to their cohorts as these remain unacceptable.
- Summary Forms (the OESF), including breakdowns of the marks for both parts of the test and the totals for the whole cohort entered, should be uploaded together with the sample recordings to SfA. There were some instances of only MS1 mark sheets being uploaded which are not helpful in the moderating process as they do not contain a breakdown of the marks for each part of the test.
- There were some instances where the total marks on the summary forms did not match the total marks for candidates whose recordings had been uploaded to SfA. It is important that the correct marks are uploaded and that the marks on SfA do match those on the summary forms.
- On a few occasions the recording uploaded under a specific candidate's name did not match that candidate but was a recording of an entirely different candidate within the cohort. This clearly leads to a disruption of the moderating process and subsequent delays whilst the correct recordings are traced and uploaded. It is important that centres check that the recordings are labelled correctly so this disruption does not occur.
- 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.

Conduct of the test - General comments

Overall, 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.

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered:

- 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.
- 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 should 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.

Comments on specific sections of the test

Part 1 – Individual Talk

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

Topics were usually personal and varied, with more able candidates choosing more challenging topics which allowed them to access marks in the higher bands. Where centres had overmarked at the top end, it was usually because presentations were mainly narrative in nature and showed insufficient thought-provoking material.

Higher level candidates used rhetorical questions, metaphors and other effective language techniques. There were some exceptionally interesting talks. 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 to follow.

Learning a presentation word for word and then trying to deliver it exactly as remembered does not always help candidates to achieve better marks in Part 1. Once the emphasis shifts from the performance to solely the content the more likely it is for the candidate to forget to use a range of language devices naturally and effectively.

Apart from a small number of more creative talks involving candidates performing pieces of poetry or prose they had themselves written, all 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**, especially when well-timed and clearly structured. Less successful responses to **Part 1** tended to meander somewhat because a strong structure had not been created and time constraints had not been factored in. 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.

Several centres allowed their candidates to use supportive material such as short PowerPoint presentations, photographs, graphs or charts. A limited use of such resources is permissible within the rubric but it was noted by moderators that sometimes the effect of using visual prompts was to impede the candidates' oral presentation rather than to enhance performance. Examiners are not allowed to respond to candidates during **Part 1** and the temptation to do so when prompted with, for instance, a holiday photograph, can lead to infringements of the rubric or awkward silences. Neither benefit the candidates in **Part 1**. It should be noted also that some centres need to explain clearly to their candidates that the examiner's role in **Part 1** is to be a passive listener. Directly asking a question to the examiner in **Part 1** and expecting an answer is not a successful strategy to employ and is considered poor conduct of the test by the centre. On the contrary, employing rhetorical questions is considered to be an effective use of a language device when the use is judicious.

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.

As always, it should be remembered that half the marks for the test are accrued in **Part 2** so candidates have to be prepared to discuss in some depth the topics they have chosen. Any lack of knowledge is quickly exposed as the conversation develops. When choosing appropriate topics candidates should seriously consider whether they can easily discuss and develop subject content for the allotted 7–8 minute conversation. Choosing a topic that can be explored and developed within the 3–4 minute time limit remains the first step to success. A topic chosen merely to impress a moderator with its supposed maturity or complexity but with which the candidate has little empathy, knowledge or experience will almost certainly lead to a lesser mark than one chosen because the candidate has a real enthusiasm for it.

It is accurate to say that almost any topic can be successful if used appropriately but some do seem to lend themselves more successfully than others.

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

Positive discrimination
Significance of a name
Dealing with autism
Perfectionism
My tiger experience
Gentle parenting
My perfect life
Music as a universal language
Chemicals in food
Astrology
Thai culture
Bilingualism
Life on a farm
Vietnamese legends
Bird watching

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

Whale hunting (when chosen for its topical value only)
Social media (when lacking specific focus on direction)
Football (when lacking a specific focus such as the problem with VAR)
Gaming (when too generalised and unstructured)
My favourite footballer/celebrity/pop star (when based heavily on Wikipedia style facts)
My trip to Brazil (when linear and unimaginative)
My future (unless very focussed, **Part 2** can be difficult to sustain for 7–8 minutes)

Often these talks were poorly focused and lacked structure thus resulting in loss of interest for the audience and timing issues. Some less successful topics were chosen because of their perceived 'serious' nature by candidates who had limited interest in the actual issues involved. The resulting lack of knowledge was exposed in the **Part 2** conversation.

Part 2 – Conversation

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

Most examiners conducted the conversations effectively and encouraged candidates to extend and develop the topics through their responses.

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

*It was evident that the examiner can influence the quality of the conversation in **Part 2**. The most skilful examiners asked open questions that fed directly from responses given by the candidates. The examiner's input is only important as a stimulus for bringing out full responses from the candidate.*

The best examiners engaged fully with the topic and corresponding conversation and increased the complexity and subtlety of the questions in order to allow candidates to appropriately demonstrate their ability to deal with 'changes in the direction of the conversation'.

Consistently responding fully to questions and prompts in Level 5 for Listening cannot be achieved if the examiner does not allow the candidate to complete the response before interjecting.

Generally, the **Part 2** conversations were well conducted and examiners asked appropriate and interesting questions which enabled the candidates to extend and develop their ideas. After initial questioning to stimulate the conversation, the use of prompts, instead of a steady stream of further questioning, was often 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**. 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**.

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 often due to a lack of detailed response, caused sometimes 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.

The skill of other examiners in conducting fluent conversations within **Part 2** was commendable. There were many excellent examples of examiners prompting very developed, interesting conversations about complex topics that fully extended the candidates and allowed them to demonstrate their full range of oral abilities. Key to this success was the examiners listening to the candidates' responses and structuring follow up questions or prompts based on those responses rather than resorting to asking somewhat unrelated pre-planned questions.

In the most successful conversations the examiners were mindful of timing ensuring candidates were given the full 7–8 minutes without falling short of this requirement, or indeed exceeding it.

Advice to centres

- Adhering to the correct timings for each part of the test will allow candidates the best opportunity to be successful.
- Make sure candidates know the timings of the test. Ensure that their Individual Talk is 3–4 minutes long. You can help them in the test by interceding before 5 minutes and initiating the conversation.
- 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.
- 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.
- Do not interrupt too keenly; another prompt given before the previous response is finished, or when the candidate pauses for thought, can affect the candidate adversely by limiting them from developing their ideas fully.

Advice to candidates

- Choose a topic you are passionate about and one you can talk about for 3–4 minutes then discuss in even more detail for 7–8 minutes.
- Practise your presentation but do not learn it word for word.
- Have bullet point notes 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.
- Watch good examples of speeches/presentations/talks to learn how good speakers make their speeches engaging and interesting. 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.