

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11
Reading

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

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

General comments

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

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

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

In **Question 2** candidates were required to explain carefully selected words or phrases from 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 successful answers were able to consider meanings in context and as well as the effects of the powerful language identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose in an overview. Middle-range answers tended to focus on the meanings of the language choices showing mostly clear understanding. Less successful responses struggled to develop viable explanations sometimes repeating the language of the text in the comments. These answers did not always choose appropriate language to discuss or only selected three examples in total.

In **Question 3** most responses addressed all three bullets in the question, although many candidates found it challenging to develop ideas for the third one. Most candidates wrote as Hua with the best responses developing a convincing voice and an enthusiastic and friendly tone for her letter to her father demonstrating understanding of the reflective element of the task. More successful responses used the ideas and details in the text selectively to work through the bullets logically. They were able to describe the inn and Hua's experiences with the guests on the first day of opening, developing her thoughts and feelings, as well as expressing her excitement about her future plans and improvements for her business by selecting a range of appropriate ideas and details from the text to develop. Responses in the middle range tended to use the text rather mechanically often writing narratively and paraphrasing closely rather than selecting ideas and details to use in their own writing to demonstrate understanding. Less successful responses tended to lack focus on the text covering only the main ideas and sometimes inventing material that lacked close tethering to the text. Some responses copied unselectively thus providing little evidence of understanding.

Paper 1 is primarily an assessment of Reading, however 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – 5 marks in **Question 1(f)** and 10 marks in **Question 3**. In these questions, candidates need to pay attention to the quality 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 successful 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 successful 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.

Question 1

(a) Who taught the narrator the recipe for making rice, according to the text?

In **Question 1(a)** candidates needed to state who taught the narrator the recipe for cooking rice. Most candidates were able to identify that it was the narrator's (her) father and very few candidates did not gain the mark for this question. Occasionally an answer was worded unclearly as 'the father's narrator' and therefore the mark was not awarded.

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

- (i) 'sure and quick' (line 3):
- (ii) 'tiny imperfections' (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 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 'surely' in their explanation of 'sure' thus not addressing the task or found it difficult to explain the meaning of 'sure' in this context offering vague explanations such as 'confident' or 'correct'. More successful responses were able to explain the

full phrase as used in the context of the text by demonstrating understanding of a precise and fast action or an action taken decisively and rapidly.

In **Question 1(b)(ii)** more candidates successfully explained the meaning of the whole phrase and gained both marks with many using phrases such as 'very little' or 'barely visible' to explain 'tiny' and 'flaws' or 'impurities' to explain 'imperfections'. Some candidates lifted 'pieces of dirt and sand' from line 3 which could not be credited in an own words question.

(c) Re-read paragraph 2 ('He swirled ... more than once.')

Give two reasons why the father's work in preparing the rice could have been time consuming.

To achieve both marks for this question candidates were required to offer two distinct reasons based on the father's actions when preparing the rice: the fact that some of the actions had to be repeated and that he was not reliant on measuring equipment or instructions instead doing everything through touch and feeling.

Most candidates were able to score both marks for selecting appropriate details such as his repeated rinsing or draining of the rice as well as the fact that he used his finger to measure the water level or that he didn't use a measuring jug or instructions. Where candidates failed to gain both marks, it was usually because they repeated the idea of repetition in both strands of their answer.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 ('I still dream ... say to the table.')

- (i) Identify main ways in which the father's appearance made him look out of place in his professional kitchen.**
- (ii) Explain why the speaker was embarrassed by her own attempts at making rice.**

To answer **Question 1(d)(i)** candidates needed to identify and select two pieces of evidence from paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 to demonstrate why the father's appearance made him look out of place in his professional kitchen. Correct responses focused on the old or faded / scruffy appearance of his clothing and the fact that he did not wear shoes when he cooked. A small number of candidates did not read this question carefully and misinterpreted what they were being asked to do. These candidates offered details to support the idea of the kitchen looking professional rather than details about the father's appearance.

In **Question 1(d)(ii)** many candidates were successful in gaining all three marks available by referring to her lack of skill (or messiness) in the motions of making the rice and the resulting texture being gruel-like and lumpy. Some candidates did not get the second or third mark because they referred too vaguely to the incorrect texture of the rice without offering the details needed. Some candidates may have missed the fact that this was a 3-mark question and therefore required three distinct points to be made.

(e) Re-read paragraph 6 ('In answer ... and my mother.')

Using your own words, explain how the father's actions while at the table could be seen as kind towards his daughter.

This question required candidates to show both explicit and implicit understanding from their reading of paragraph 6. Most candidates were able to achieve at least one mark, a good number gained two marks, but fewer gained all three. The most common reason for not gaining all three marks available was because of slightly vague answers: for example, referring to him eating the rice, but not specifically stating that he ate all of it or ate it very quickly. Several candidates also failed to stress that he ate the rice pretending that it was as good as his own or without complaining about its shortcomings. Some candidates lost marks in this question due to lifting from the text and ignoring the instruction to use own words in the response.

- (f) **According to Text B, why would a person choose a career in the hospitality industry? You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible. Your summary should not be more than 120 words.**

This question was based on Text B and required candidates to select relevant ideas from the text and organise them into a focused summary which addressed the task. Most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of the text and offer some relevant ideas to demonstrate understanding of why a person would choose a career in the hospitality industry. The most successful responses were carefully planned and coherent, focusing sharply on the task by referring to a wide range of ideas in the text. These responses were often preceded by a bullet-pointed plan in which ideas from the text were noted briefly before being included in a fluent own-words response.

Responses in the middle range tended to consider a more limited range of ideas, the most common being making a difference to someone's day, meeting new people and learning about other cultures, the variety of jobs available and job security. These responses often missed the more subtle points about job satisfaction, working overseas, easy opportunities for job relocation and the lack of a daily routine. Some less successful responses repeated the same ideas or included unnecessary examples such as long list of the different jobs available in the hospitality industry. Other candidates offered their responses to working in the hospitality industry which were not linked to the information in the text. Several candidates misunderstood the meaning of hospitality and wrote about working as a medical professional in a hospital instead. This approach usually demonstrated very superficial understanding of the text at best and inaccurate use of the ideas.

Length was often an indicator of the level of the response with some less successful responses being too short due to a limited number of points being offered and others very long and wordy due to the inclusion of unnecessary information and / or personal comments. The strongest responses tended to adhere to the advised length through adopting a concise and focused approach to the task. In most responses there was an attempt to use own words although some candidates did rely on lifting phrases from the text. This included some responses where there was evidence of selection and a range of ideas but also a failure to use own words which is an important aspect of summary writing. Examples of the most commonly lifted phrases were 'developed a passion for it', 'miserable at a regular desk job', 'you are in a position to make somebody's day', 'almost every country in the world has a hospitality industry', 'you will meet with travellers from all over the world', 'learn new things about different cultures every day' and 'not only in terms of the hours you work, but also the work you do in those hours'. Some very weak responses simply copied indiscriminately without any effort to select relevant ideas. There was also a tendency to include too much introductory information and / or irrelevant or general details about the hospitality industry.

Advice to candidates on Question 1(f)

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

Question 2

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

- (i) Hua would be cooking the rice and the pak choi as late as possible.
- (ii) Hua knew that she was unable to give customers much choice in meal options.
- (iii) Hua hoped that people attending the local theatre would be regular customers.
- (iv) Mr and Mrs Kato were glued firmly to their seats.

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. Other responses copied the whole sentence from the question replacing the underlined phrase with the correct words from the text. This was an acceptable approach but unnecessary as it wasted examination time. Answers that used the text more widely than in the equivalent phrase / sentence could not be rewarded even if the correct word / phrase was included. 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.

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

Yes, this room was definitely on the list for modernisation. While the weather was warm, outdoor dining was preferable.

- (i) **definitely**
- (ii) **modernisation**
- (iii) **preferable**

In **Question 2(b)** the most successful answers considered the meaning of each word as it is used in the text. For example, the word 'modernisation' refers to the need to completely refurbish or renovate the dining room rather than simply decorate or buy new furniture. Most candidates were able to explain 'definitely' and 'preferable', but a significant number found 'modernisation' more challenging. Candidates should also be aware that only explanations in English can be rewarded: a number offered the Spanish word 'actualización' in response to **2(b)(ii)**.

- (c) **Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests the characters and feelings of either or both Mr and Mrs Kato.**

Use your own words in your explanation.

Mr and Mrs Kato, new arrivals, looked into the dining room. Both wore gentle smiles. Mrs Kato waved a delicate hand in the direction of the garden and a waft of expensive perfume floated towards Hua. Mr Kato lowered his eyes before informing Hua 'The colour of those bushes is divine. We saw them as we were parking. May we dine out there?'

In **Question 2(c)** candidates were required to select one example of language from the specified section of the text and explain how it suggested the characters and feeling of either both or one of Mr and Mrs Kato. Several candidates did not follow these instructions but instead offered a very general response with no clear language example selected. These responses tended to offer a general paraphrase of the whole section of text and could therefore not be rewarded as the question was not addressed. The most successful responses offered a concise quotation then considered what the writer suggested about either or both of the Katos through the language used. The most popular example was 'both had gentle smiles' and many responses explored the suggestion that they were kind and respectful to Hua as well as the idea that they were pleased to be at the inn and positive or happy about what they could see in the garden.

Other responses considered the example of 'a waft of expensive perfume floated towards Hua' and were able to explore ideas about Mrs Kato's sophistication, wealth, elegance and familiarity with luxuries. Many candidates were able to offer convincing explanations of 'waved a delicate hand' and show full understanding of the writer's suggestion that Mrs Kato is someone used to having what she desires, her assumption that her husband will understand her wishes and her elegance. Some less successful responses tried to do too much, selecting several examples, or selected an

inappropriate example which used plain language such as ‘We saw them as we were parking’. 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 required to target higher marks.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 5.

- **Paragraph 3 begins ‘The garden, enhanced ... ’ and is about the pleasure Hua takes in the inn’s Japanese garden.**
- **Paragraph 5 begins ‘Just before 7.30 ... ’ and is about the dining room at the inn.**
- **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 indication 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 the effect in terms of connotations and the atmosphere or attitudes created by the writer’s language choices. These responses often offered a clear overview of the writer’s intentions in each paragraph. Less successful responses were sometimes written in note form and offered less developed analysis or repeated the same general ideas about effects, often making rather vague assertions rather than considering specific words more closely. Middle range responses were usually more successful when explaining meanings but struggled to explore the effects, and the weakest responses tended to offer quotations (sometimes rather unselectively) but often did not 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 (although this was less common than in previous examination sessions). This led to some under-developed responses to this question.

The strongest 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 3 many were able to explore their individual choices within the context of the elegantly designed, idyllic and tranquil Japanese style garden that Hua takes great pride in. They considered phrases such as enhanced by gentle sunlight playing’, ‘resplendent’, and ‘comfortable contours of crimson for the eye to follow’ as representing the delicate beauty of the garden, the richness of the colours in the foliage, and the attractiveness of the careful designs to the human eye, as well as the calming and peaceful nature of the environment created. They could successfully develop these ideas through other phrases such as ‘jaunty maple trees’ and also ‘fat squatting rhododendron bushes’ as the inclusion of different styles and shapes to offer variety, or the ‘tempting maze of stone paths’, ‘delicately limbed arched bridge’ and ‘curled like a half moon’ to show the fragile and exquisite nature of the designs and the perfect shapes used to attract and enchant guests and offer a scene that is magical or like something from a fairytale. These choices could all be linked successfully yet considered independently.

In paragraph 5 many responses were able to draw an obvious contrast citing the dull and hostile presentation of the dining room. The word ‘problematic’ was often used as a good opening choice to this part of the response as indicating that the dining room poses an issue for Hua and is something that needs to be carefully worked out and addressed. Phrases such as ‘imposing dark oak tables’ and ‘narrow tunnels’ enabled candidates to consider the unappealing and impractical furniture in the room leading to an oppressive and heavy atmosphere. Phrases such as ‘heavily embossed ancient red wallpaper’ and ‘sneered cruelly’ also contributed to the sense of hostility caused by the austere and old-fashioned decorations as if the room itself is unwelcoming to the guests. Some candidates were also able to analyse the effect of the clock ‘ticking in ponderous reminder of its venerable status’ by alluding to its sound as persistent, annoying and dominating the space or acting as a reminder to Hua of the amount of work needing to be done.

There was generally little evidence of misreading in the two paragraphs specified in the question, but some candidates found it challenging to move beyond the general beauty of the garden in paragraph 3 and/or explored the mistaken idea that the dining room was messy or chaotic in paragraph 5. They tended to repeat these general ideas for every language choice selected

sometimes using the wording of the text in their explanations. Some less successful responses also included very long quotations with general explanations rather than engaging closely with specific words. Very rarely no quotations were included, with a brief description of the paragraphs offered instead. Such responses did not address the question at all.

Candidates are reminded that it is the quality of their language analysis which attracts marks. Listing of literary devices or the selection of plain language from the text is unlikely to lead to a successful response. Many candidates simply identified literary devices offering vague explanations such as 'it creates a strong image' with no attempt to look at the words themselves. In this question candidates should focus carefully on words used in an interesting or unusual way: for example, rather than simply focusing on 'gentle sunlight' to explain that it emitted a soft warmth, adding the word 'playing' to the language choice allows a much more developed exploration of the language through considering the innocence, charm and idyllic nature of the scene. Candidates need to exercise care when selecting their language choices to include carefully chosen words to maximise their opportunities for developed discussion.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- select precise and accurate language choices from the specified paragraphs
- 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 creates a strong visual image', 'this makes us want to read on' or 'this makes the reader feel part of the story'
- try to engage with the language at word level by considering connotations/associations of words and why the writer has selected them
- for each choice start with the contextualized meaning then move on to the effect created by the language in terms of how it helps our understanding of the events, characters, atmosphere, etc.

Question 3

You are Hua, the owner of the inn. The next day you write a letter to your father back home telling him about your new business venture. In your letter you should:

- **describe the inn and what you think will appeal to guests**
- **describe the guests that you met on the first day and what you felt about them**
- **explain what plans you have for developing the business in the future and how you hope to accomplish these plans?**

This question required candidates to write a letter from Hua to her father telling him all about the opening of her new business, the inn. 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 develop the ideas to express Hua's thoughts and feelings about the inn and the guests' experiences on its opening day; the third bullet required candidates to infer what plans Hua may have to improve and develop the inn in the future using ideas and clues in the text to inspire and support the inferences.

Most candidates were able to show general understanding of the text addressing the task by using some of the main ideas in the text to support the response. Many of the responses were also able to develop the ideas by creating a convincing voice for Hua and interpreting the events from her perspective, evaluating the ideas and adapting them accordingly. Where candidates had followed the bullets carefully, they were often able to develop explicit and implicit ideas effectively to include convincing articulation of Hua's feelings about her new business venture and her experiences with the first guests on the opening day as well as her plans for the future of the inn. Many dealt with the confusion over the Dreyfuss' overheard conversation very successfully linking it to plans to increase security in the third bullet point. Less successful responses tended to track the text often paraphrasing it closely and therefore lacking development of Hua's perspective on the events. The least successful responses used the ideas in the text thinly, sometimes misreading some of the details such as the Katos' shock on hearing the Dreyfuss couple discussing stealing an expensive car. These responses often assumed the Katos were literally stuck in their seats but offered no explanation of how that may have happened.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to describe Hua's feelings about the new inn and explain what she felt would appeal most to her guests. This offered opportunities to look at the inn's Japanese theme including the carefully designed and exquisite gardens, the traditional and freshly cooked food on offer, the option to book rooms overnight, the option of eating in the garden, and the setting of the inn near the river

and newly opened theatre. The most successful approach to this bullet was one where candidates extracted the relevant details and developed them by expressing Hua's own feelings and hopes for her guests' enjoyment of the facilities provided. These responses tended to adopt a positive and enthusiastic tone suitable for a daughter excitedly sharing her achievements with her father. Many cited the desire to share their Japanese culture through the food her father had taught her to cook. In responses where candidates just repeated ideas from the text without communicating Hua's enthusiasm they tended to be rather mechanical (or even thin and general) hence the more subtle developments were often missed. There was little evidence of misreading in response to the first bullet, but some responses didn't consider many aspects of the inn focusing almost solely on the garden and food. Sometimes there was confusion about Hua's attitude to the dining room with some responses mistakenly indicating that she had chosen the red wallpaper and oak tables herself and liked the design.

The second bullet offered many opportunities to explore Hua's impressions of and feelings about the first guests to visit the inn. The best responses picked up on the more subtle details such as other guests already exploring the garden before the Katos' arrival and Hua's pleasure when seeing them through the kitchen window. These responses also looked at the two named couples in detail noticing the subtle differences between them and exploring Hua's impressions in detail. These responses were often more positive towards Mr and Mrs Kato admiring their elegance and understated appreciation of the finer things in life as well as pondering about their relative wealth and expressing initial hope they would become regular customers in the future. Mr and Mrs Dreyfuss were often perceived to be rather brash in comparison although some candidates thought that Mrs Dreyfuss redeemed herself when she booked the table for dinner so politely. The confusion over the play rehearsal and the Katos' mistaken assumption that their car was about to be stolen were often handled very well with expressions of Hua's regret at the confusion and their untimely departure evident.

Other successful responses decided that the Mr and Mrs Dreyfuss did in fact steal the car with her appearance in reception acting as a double-bluff and were able to support this sufficiently for it to be an acceptable development of the events and ideas in the text. Less successful responses focused only on describing the couples using the language of the text or very close paraphrasing and avoided offering any interpretation of the events leading to the misunderstanding. Some less successful responses didn't name the couples or attempt to differentiate much between them. A few responses misinterpreted the events and thought that Mr and Mrs Dreyfuss had glued Mr and Mrs Kato to their seats in the garden despite there being no evidence in the text to suggest this was a possibility. Other responses claimed that Hua had built a theatre in the ground of the inn for the guests or confused the stream and the river. Close reading of the text is required to provide evidence of more than reasonable or general understanding.

When responding to bullet 3 the most successful responses focused on the evidence in the text such as the need for a wider menu than Hua could currently offer, and the requirement for more staff to manage the food, guests and accommodation to take the pressure off Hua and Tania. The best responses also considered the problems caused by the outdated dining room in terms of practicality due to the large furniture causing lack of space for the waitress service, but also the aesthetic considerations in terms of the dark and oppressive atmosphere. Many candidates linked this to the perfection of the garden and indicated that the dining room needed to be lighter to offer a pleasing alternative in less warm weather when dining in the garden may not be practical.

Other developments included ideas about increasing security around the carpark and possibly using advertising to attract more guests, particularly related to the theatre performances. Less successful responses often added new material without any tethering to the ideas in the text. These included plans for spas and swimming pools or children's play areas. Many suggested opening inns in other parts of the country or around the world.

Candidates seemed comfortable and familiar with the format of a letter to a relative with most adopting an appropriate tone and style. The less successful responses tended to be too narrative as they relied too heavily on the sequencing of the original text and did not offer reflections and interpretations to adapt the material to indicate what Hua would be likely to share with her father. The language used was mostly appropriate and some more successful responses created a wholly convincing voice as Hua confiding in her father and wanting him to be proud of her achievements as well as offer her advice and support for the future. In less successful responses the language and voice were rather plain but rarely inappropriate for the character.

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 candidates were over-reliant on lifted phrases and sentences. Some of the most commonly lifted phrases were the descriptions of the cooked food, 'enhanced by gentle sunlight', 'jaunty maple trees and fat squatting rhododendron bushes', 'comfortable contours of crimson', 'problematic dining room,' 'newly built theatre', 'both wore gentle smiles', 'waft of expensive perfume', the direct speech in various parts of the text, 'dramatic introduction of his wife', 'stuck rigidly to their chairs', and 'an expensive car that was departing quickly from the inn car park'. Candidates should be aware that use of own words is necessary both to show reading understanding and to access writing marks in the higher levels.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read Text C carefully, more than once, to ensure sound understanding
- pay careful attention to the perspective required for the task – for example, the voice being created and whether you are looking back at the events
- keep the audience and purpose firmly in mind
- do not invent information and material that is not clearly linked to the details and events in the text
- give equal attention to all three bullet points
- briefly plan your response to ensure that you are selecting ideas relevant to all three bullets
- avoid copying from the text: use your own words as far as possible
- 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 (US)

<p>Paper 0524/03 Coursework Portfolio</p>

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:

- indicated 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
- 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. In future sessions centres will be required to complete a checklist and include it with the sample.

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 significant 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 several 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.
- 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 draft, 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 will also be a checklist for future 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 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, the growth of online learning during the Covid pandemic, feminism, 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 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 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 or disturbing 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.

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
- 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 trip 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 was a common reason for moderators adjusting marks.

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 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 for create specific effect.

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 (US)

<p>Paper 0524/04 Speaking and Listening Test</p>
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Key messages

Centre administration was of a high standard and most centres coped well with their application of Submit for Assessment (SfA).

Correct timing in the test is vital to successful performance. Generally, 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 more problematic for some centres. Examiners must ensure a minimum of 7 minutes is allowed each candidate. Other centres ignored the maximum 8 minute ceiling and allowed candidates to converse for much longer. This is unnecessary and often counter-productive.

Moderators reported relatively few issues with the general level of accuracy of the assessment. Where moderators made recommendations of scaling 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.

Where lenient assessment had taken place at the top end of the mark scheme for responses to **Part 1**, it was often because the candidates had chosen topics that were not sufficiently challenging which resulted in mainly narrative presentations. These were often lacking sufficient development or a defined structure.

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.

Where centres had been severe in the lower levels of the mark scheme it was often because the centre did not have a range of abilities represented in the cohort. Sometimes centres were reluctant to 'bunch' marks even though performance suggested they should.

There were few reported instances of the rank order of merit being problematic within centres.

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.

General comments

Administration

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 well-chosen and reflected the full range of marks awarded within the centre.

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

- Uploading the recordings for all the entered cohort remains the preferred option for moderators. This allows a moderator to carefully choose recordings to moderate that accurately reflect the performance of the centre across the whole range of its marking.
- Where instructions to centres regarding uploading samples to SfA differ, it is important that the centre chooses wisely which recordings to upload. Always the top and bottom marks in the centre's range must be included. A centre should consider which candidates' recordings best reflect the marks that have been awarded so that a fair representation of the centre's performance can be made by the moderator.
- Every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date. For Component 04 it is the examiner who should complete the introduction. There were few instances of centres using generic introductions to their cohorts: these remain unacceptable.
- In a few cases the sound quality of the recordings was poor. Mostly, this was because the candidates were placed too far from the microphones being used.
- Internal moderation is actively encouraged, particularly where multiple examiners are involved within a centre. Where only one examiner is involved, it may be possible to pair with another centre to discuss standards and to share good practice.
- When internal moderation has taken place and adjustments to marks have been made, it is helpful to the moderator if changes are indicated on the summary forms uploaded to SfA, where this is possible.

Conduct of the test

Once again, the standard of examining was generally 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:

- The First Language Test is very different to the one prescribed for Second Language English. It is the centre's responsibility to apply the rubric of the test correctly. The current syllabus for First Language English is very clear on how to proceed.
- 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.
- The examiner's role in **Part 1** is to be a passive listener who does not comment or interrupt during the presentation. Candidates should be discouraged from asking direct questions to the examiner in Part 1. Examiners should only intercede if a candidate is incapable of continuing the presentation without prompting but this should be reflected in the mark awarded as content cannot be considered more than 'adequate' in such instances.
- 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 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 is limited in terms of the marks that can be awarded.
- Examiners who rely on a pre-determined set of questions disadvantage their candidates, in particular with regard to the mark for Speaking in **Part 2**. A question from the examiner should lead to an answer from the candidate which then may lead to a comment or prompt from the examiner that is connected to the same content matter.
- Examiners who dominate conversations or who frequently interrupt candidates during the conversation do so to the disadvantage of those candidates.

Comments on specific sections of the test

Part 1 – Individual Talk

Many responses to **Part 1** were traditional presentations seeking to inform, explain and analyse. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this approach as it is the safest way to deliver a good mark for the candidate if organised, prepared and delivered successfully. Where the format varied there were some interesting monologues, often presented in character or based on the candidate's own fictional prose or poetry.

There was a wide range of varied and interesting subjects delivered with enthusiasm and good knowledge of the chosen subject matter. Most candidates prepared well, researched their chosen topics and kept within the prescribed time limit. Some candidates had 'over-prepared' to a point where they were concentrating so much on delivering a memorised response verbatim that they forgot that, in essence, **Part 1** is a performance piece that requires engagement with an imaginary audience. This led to issues with delivery and a somewhat stilted performance not commensurate with Level 5.

Very strong performances in **Part 1** successfully combined excellent knowledge and development of a topic, a tightly defined structure timed accordingly and a lively delivery style. 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 one with which the candidate has little empathy, knowledge or experience, will almost certainly lead to a lower mark than one chosen because the candidate has a real enthusiasm for it. Similarly, 'Wikipedia' style talks where there is linear content based on numerous facts but little developed opinion or analysis do not tend to be very successful because they lack sufficient depth to engage the audience fully. It should also be remembered that half the marks for the test are accrued in **Part 2** so candidates have to be prepared to discuss their chosen topic in some depth.

A strong element of presentations achieving Level 5 in **Part 1** remains the structure underpinning the talks and a clear focus on timing. A clearly defined persuasive argument or a cyclical arrangement that brings the concluding statement back to the initial point often helps candidates to fulfil 'the full and well-organised' descriptor for Level 5. Less successful structures tend to meander from point to point without such a strong sense of purpose. While structure itself does not confirm a mark in Level 5, it does provide a strong basis for candidates to exhibit their linguistic and presentational skills. Self-reflection and analysis remain strong elements in moving a talk beyond 'adequate'. Stronger candidates integrated a good range of language devices into their presentations adapting register, tone and pace to suit. Rhetorical questioning, the use of figurative language and other linguistic techniques were also used purposefully.

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

Controlling the narrative
My hobby – crocheting
Coffee addict
Colonising Mars
Benefits of having a pet
Redefining beauty
Is E-sport a sport?
A message to my childhood bully (a fictional monologue)
Moving from Hong Kong
My love of music
Behind the scenes (stage crew)
The value of travel
Mindfulness
Hard work

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

Hanging out with friends (unstructured and lacking any depth)
Pollution (too generalised with no specific focus or point of view)
Technology (too generalised with no specific focus or point of view)

Part 2 – Conversation

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**. The most skilful examiners asked open questions that fed directly from responses given by the candidate. Good examiners engaged fully with the topic and corresponding discussion 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'. It should be noted that this 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.

Generally it was the case that examiners were supportive of candidates by remaining focused on the topic matter introduced in **Part 1** and showing an appropriate level of interest. Occasionally examiners spoke in too much detail and took too long to ask their questions. On rare occasions the examiner interrupted a candidate's response when there was clearly more to be heard.

The examiner needs to engage with the candidate but needs also to ensure sufficient challenge in **Part 2** to stretch the candidate to perform at the highest level possible. In successful responses to **Part 2**, examiners managed the conversation with an awareness of providing openings for candidates to respond and develop points – they took part in the conversation but were mindful of moving on and asking questions or using prompts as a priority.

Where there were issues and improvement can be made in examining **Part 2** the following advice is offered:

- The timing of **Part 2** is controlled by the examiner. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure **Part 2** lasts for at least 7 minutes.
- **Part 2** conversations solely conducted on a question and answer basis, where the series of questions is only loosely connected and responses from the candidate are then ignored in favour of the next question on the list, do not fulfil the descriptors in the higher levels.
- It is important that questions are open and not closed. Closed questions do not allow candidates to consistently answer in the necessary detail and depth to move beyond 'adequate'.
- Examiners must ensure the conversation is connected to the ideas presented in **Part 1** for the whole of **Part 2**. Veering into more generalised conversation does not help the candidate's performance.

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.
- Do not interrupt candidates in **Part 1** unless they have exceeded the allowed time. Only if they really do have nothing to add should you progress the test by intervening with prompts or words of encouragement. Your intercession should be reflected in the mark awarded for **Part 1**.
- Do not ask questions in **Part 1** as this signals the end of this part of the test and the beginning of **Part 2**, the conversation.
- Ensure a full 7–8 minutes is allowed for the conversation in **Part 2**.
- Administering the conversation in **Part 2** can be quite challenging for examiners so it may be necessary to prepare some relevant back-up questions but they should not be restrictive.
- Helping a candidate choose the most appropriate topic is key to them being successful in the test.
- Try to dissuade candidates from delivering a memorised talk in **Part 1**. It is much better to prepare using a cue card so that what is said has some level of spontaneity.
- Scaffold questions strategically to encourage higher level responses from more able candidates. This will help them to access the higher mark ranges.

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 by heart.
- Have bullet point notes to help prompt you in **Part 1** but not the 'full speech'. 'Talk through' each bullet point in a lively 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!
- Respond to the prompts and questions from the examiner in **Part 2** as fully as possible by developing your ideas, giving examples and discussing other aspects of the topic if you can.
- Watch good examples of speeches/presentations/talks to learn how good speakers make their speeches lively 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.