FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11
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.

Cambridge Assessment
International Education

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)   <u>Using your own words</u>, 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 <u>two</u> 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 <u>two</u> 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 <u>use continuous writing</u> (not note form) and <u>use your own words</u> 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) <u>**Identify a word or phrase from the text**</u> **which suggests the same idea as the words <u>underlined</u>:**

(i) Edgar <u>took big, confident steps</u> while escorting Jeswin to the place they would be working together today.
(ii) Jeswin <u>realised at once</u> that the members of the family approaching could be in need of help.
(iii) Jeswin <u>felt happy</u> that his job was mostly going well.
(iv) Jeswin believed that the older man was <u>not guilty</u> 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) <u>**Using your own words,**</u> **explain what the writer means by each of the <u>words underlined</u>:**

(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 <u>one</u> example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests Edgar's thoughts and feelings at that time.**

<u>**Use your own words in your explanation.**</u>

'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 <u>and</u> passengers**
- **suggest how the experiences of both passengers <u>and</u> '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 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 (US)

```
Paper 0524/03
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

Cambridge Assessment
International Education

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.
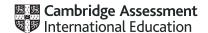
Assignment 2 (description)

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 (US)

> **Paper 0524/04**
> **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.

Cambridge Assessment
International Education

© 2023

- 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.