

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- avoided copying and/or lifting from either text
- focused on the ideas and details in each passage rather than inventing untethered material
- used their own words appropriately and precisely when explaining, using and interpreting ideas
- considered carefully the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each of the three tasks
- addressed tasks in the order set, paying attention to the guidance and instructions for each
- returned to the text when necessary to check understanding of an idea or important detail
- planned the ideas they would use and the route through their answer before writing
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

General comments

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible. The majority were able to finish the paper within the time allowed and generally responses were an appropriate length, although some offered very short responses restricting their opportunity to demonstrate understanding and target higher marks. Occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task – for example, by writing from the wrong perspective in **Question 1**, explaining fewer than eight choices in **Question 2** or writing significantly more than the maximum of 250 words advised for **Question 3**. The most successful answers were able to modify the material in the passages skilfully and use it to show understanding, remaining focused on the specific demands of each task. Less successful responses were often too reliant on the language and structure of the original and/or did not pay sufficient attention to the details of the question. Whilst answers across the cohort covered the range of bands for each question, opportunities were often missed where candidates offered only explicit and/or more generalised points, misread or over-looked details and/or dealt unevenly with each part of the task in hand.

The majority of **Question 1** responses had attempted all parts of the task. Most candidates had paid attention to the instruction to write the journal entry from Sumitra's point of view, though a number wrote from the wrong perspective. Good responses included a range of relevant ideas that were developed effectively and supported by appropriate detail. Less focused answers demonstrated misunderstanding in relation to details of the text – for example, asserting that Stanley was aggressive or challenging in Sumitra's class and/or an officer in the military. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to interpret the material from the passage and often produced uneven responses which sometimes included extraneous content not referenced by or rooted in the text. The least successful responses tended to neglect the accident at break-time and were unable to select relevant information. Copying was sometimes evident, especially in response to the second bullet point: there is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting whole sections of the text or key phrases. Reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

For **Question 2**, candidates needed to make specific, detailed comments about their choices from the two specified paragraphs. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to demonstrate understanding of the writer's purpose and consider the connotations and associations of the language used. Most responses included a sufficient number of appropriate examples from the relevant paragraphs and many contained

accurate explanations of meanings. Fewer answers included the clear explanations of effects and images that are required for marks in the top bands. Some candidates missed opportunities to consider individual words within longer choices and demonstrate understanding at higher levels, repeating instead rather broad and vague comments and/or simply labelling devices without exploration of how the example was working within this particular context.

In **Question 3** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas and some understanding of the requirements of the task. Though all relevant points from the passage were covered over the range of answers seen, opportunities to target higher marks were missed by responses in the mid-range often as a result of repetition of aspects of the same idea from the text. In the most successful responses, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less successful responses copied and/or lifted phrases from the passage to communicate ideas. Reliance on the language of the text dilutes evidence of understanding and is to be avoided. Candidates should aim to use their own words as far as possible in this summary task.

Whilst Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, it is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing and plan their responses to avoid repetition between sections, awkward expression and errors that impede communication. Candidates should be aware that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to check and edit their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are Sumitra, the tutor at Stan’s creative writing class. After the class today, you write a journal entry.

Write the journal entry.

In your journal entry, you should:

- **describe your first impressions of the new students based on the introductions they gave while in the circle**
- **describe your thoughts about what happened in class today**
- **consider your plans for the next lesson and how you will manage the class and the students.**

Base your journal entry on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your journal entry: ‘My first lesson today has given me a lot to think about ...’

Stronger responses to this question utilised the passage efficiently by selecting relevant information and using it to draw conclusions regarding the principal characters to create a suitable style for tutor Sumitra’s, journal entry. More successful responses were able to assume the position of the teacher to suggest her thoughts and feelings about her new students and the incidents that took place in class, and included plans for future lessons linked to and based on her observations. A number of candidates paid insufficient attention to the details of the question and wrote from Stan’s perspective; this was self-penalising (particularly in relation to addressing the third bullet point). A number had also misread the inner thoughts of Stanley as spoken conversation, not recognising the use of flashback. Some continued this confusion into interpretation of Myfanwy Robert’s behaviour; the *‘triumphant smirk’* was seen as hers, and her behaviour towards Stan was described variously as antagonistic and belittling his writing. Others followed up the *‘accident’* by considering the possibility that it was not an accident, and Myfanwy had deserved it, asserting incorrectly that it was Stanley rather than Robin who dropped the teapot. Better responses were able to distinguish between the time shifts and firmly tether any development to details in the passage.

In relation to bullet one, most candidates were able to identify the three main characters in the class, finding Miss Roberts the easier to name and develop points about. Some though had misread her ambitions – suggesting her desire to become a publisher rather than a *‘published writer’*. Better answers relayed a suspicion about Miss Robert’s arrogance and/or suggested that she may need careful handling to avoid dominating others in the group. Robin was also identified by most, and his shyness was sometimes linked to

Stanley's own reticence to read. Some sustained development was centred upon Robin and Stanley's reluctance to share their limericks and Sumitra's awareness of group dynamics, though Stanley's character traits were more rarely explored successfully. Some candidates confused Stanley's troubled school days with the present – suggesting the poor test results and demotion were a consequence/feature of Sumitra's programme for the adult writing class. Many candidates also attributed his poor performance to bullying by other students rather than the attitude of his former teacher. Where candidates had grasped the influence of his past, better answers offered more than those suggesting merely that '*something seemed to be bothering him*'. For example, in some journal entries Sumitra considered what might have caused Stan's initial lack of confidence, noting his future promise as implied through his enthusiastic participation in the debate after break. A few potentially stronger answers did not identify individual characters and wrote more generally about the behaviour of unnamed people, missing opportunities to extend impressions and develop associations as evidence of close reading.

The second bullet point invited candidates to describe Sumitra's thoughts and feelings about what had happened in class that day. Most candidates referred to the writing of limericks and reading/not reading them aloud, as well as the accident with the teapot, though did not always clearly describe who was responsible and/or include secure details of events. In responses where candidates convincingly assumed the role of Sumitra and her sensitivity to the events being described, development was more likely to be sustained. Some reading carefully noted an (overly) dramatic reaction of Myfanwy to a relatively minor event and/or expressed Sumitra's concern that things could have been much worse but for Stanley's actions. Other candidates missed the opportunity to describe and then develop the incident at break time with the teapot, passing it over too quickly. Some less secure responses described the accident as intentional, inventing an argument and Robin's need for revenge. Others misread it as Stan, having been bullied by Myfanwy about his writing, throwing the tea over her. Often details were not considered/interpreted carefully – for example, '*teapot*' and '*tea cup*' were used interchangeably suggesting some confusion. Others got carried away – for example, suggesting evidence of a romantic interest between Stanley and Miss Roberts and drifting from the text with invented details. In the least successful answers there was also reliance on lifting, especially in relation to the incident at break-time. Commonly lifted phrases included: '*performed a rebellious leap*', 'all looked on horrified' and he '*poured the remainder of his water bottle over her arm*'.

The final bullet point was often thinly addressed, with many candidates offering just a suggested lesson activity. Often suggested plans for activities appeared to draw on the candidates' own experiences of school; writing haikus or narratives, or detailed studies of Shakespeare and Tennyson. Where these were carefully linked to details in the text, candidates were often able to develop their ideas to suggest how and why these might be effective. A number of candidates successfully extended the idea of Sumitra's concern for her students' welfare. They considered how she could offer support for less confident students – for example, how paired or group work might be effective – as well as how altered arrangements for break times might make future accidents less likely. Those reading closely also noted that Sumitra was expecting to receive further poems by email and were able to further extend the range of ideas they offered in connection to future plans as a result.

Strong responses to the task focused on all three bullet points, selecting and using material relevant to each part of the task. They contained a range of ideas with development closely related to the passage and carefully integrated detail. Where responses were less successful in targeting higher bands, there was often the sense that rather than returning to the text to identify and plan content for their answers in advance of writing, candidates had focused on more generic points, such as how joining a creative writing class might feel to them, with a more limited focus on the details of this passage concerned with this particular set of adult learners. The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response, taking account of how well it used language to respond in the required form of a journal entry, and how successfully it addressed audience and purpose. Occasionally, awkward expression and/or weaknesses in structure detracted from the overall effect. Efficient planning and checking allowed stronger answers to include a wide range of effective language and avoid errors that might impede communication. .

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the whole passage carefully, more than once, including any information given in the introduction
- identify the key ideas and details you can adapt for use in your answer
- consider how the response to reading task is asking you to adopt a different perspective to that of the text – for example, by writing from the point of view of a character other than the narrator
- think carefully about audience and purpose before you begin writing
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- answer all parts of the question, covering each of the three bullet points in reasonable detail
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response written in the required style
- use relevant details from the passage to demonstrate close reading and make judgements – do not invent claims that cannot be supported by the text
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- you do not need to count the exact number of words in your response – the number of words suggested by the question is a guide and not a word limit.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a)** Stan's memories of his school classroom in paragraph 4, beginning 'A stern face ...'
- (b)** what happened at break-time in paragraph 16, beginning 'Suddenly a teapot ...'

Select **four** powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Responses to **Question 2** are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how language examples are working in context. In **part (a)**, those candidates who had clearly understood the flashback and its impact on Stanley were able to tackle the imagery with some precision and imagination. The militaristic nature of the imagery was rarely explored in any detail and in some cases misunderstood. Candidates generally grasped the sense of Stan's feelings of disgrace, but then missed opportunities for showing close language analysis by repeating it as an explanation for other choices. Many candidates thought that Stan had been bullied by his classmates or more specifically, the '*larger child in front of him*'. Candidates who had muddled the characters of the teacher and the '*larger boy*' often continued this misunderstanding in relation to their explanations of the '*triumphant smirk*' and the '*voice poured over him like hot coals*'. Stan was variously seen as the one with the '*stern face*' or contorting his face '*into a triumphant smirk*', whilst others misinterpreted Stan as being proud of his results. This misreading of the flashback meant that some candidates reverted to offering denotations that were out of context and did not show an understanding of the notion of Stanley's feelings of shame.

In **part (b)**, some stronger responses had appreciated the overly dramatic, exaggerated nature of the incident. In less successful responses, exploration of precise meaning or effect was often replaced with a narration of events or generalised commentary on the scene, for example, '*it shows it was an accident*' or '*it shows how they reacted*'. There were often unrelated and unsupported comments about the teapot, though discussion of the other characters' reactions was usually more fruitful. There were a number of powerful examples that could have been chosen for analysis, and planning of relevant ideas ahead of writing would have helped some candidates to be more selective in their choices and effective in their explanations. Candidates who did not make precise selections, often were only able to then provide generalised and vague comments, sometimes repeating the language of the original – for example, '*this shows that Stan was ashamed*'.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured, unpicking words and phrases to consider meaning and effects throughout their response. Additionally, they had selected a range of examples carefully, including imagery, reflected on the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able to link some choices to arrive at an overview – for example, exploring how the '*stern face presiding over ranks of desks*' and '*an army cadet's besmirched tunic buttons*' might create an extended military metaphor and create sympathy for Stan through suggestion of the authoritarian regime of his earlier schooling. The weakest responses offered few explanations beyond the very general. They sometimes adopted a 'technique spotting' approach, reliant on simply identifying literary techniques. This often led to generic, empty comments about the effects of such

techniques rather than comments related to the words themselves and limited the response. A feature of weaker responses was a list of choices at the beginning of the answer, followed by a general comment. Candidates relying on this approach were rarely able to show understanding of how language was working. Some candidates offered single word choices only, not always selecting the most appropriate words – for example, offering ‘*paper towels*’ instead of ‘*proffering paper towels*’ or ‘*asked*’ instead of ‘*asked calmly*’ – and did not consider their choice in the context of the passage. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice – for example, suggesting that ‘*crash-landed*’ means that the teapot crashed, or that ‘*abject apologies*’ means that Robin apologised.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- identify a range of relevant words and phrases that seem powerful to explain in your answer to **part (a)** and **part (b)**
- do not write out whole sentences, or only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase – focus your selection
- treat each of your choices separately – do not present them as a list or give a general comment to try to cover all of them
- avoid repeating the wording of the choice as an explanation of effect
- avoid generalised comments
- if you are unsure of effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) you have identified
- to explain effects, consider the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- do not just label the literary devices you notice, consider exactly how each example is working in context
- allow time to edit your answer – for example, to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

Question 3

What is the key advice for writing online, according to Passage B?

You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.

Candidates appeared to find this task accessible with many scoring more than half marks. Successful responses often showed evidence of having planned beforehand both the content and route through their answer. They had identified those points that were potentially relevant to the focus of the question (the key advice for online writing) and reflected on their potential answers to refine their ideas, avoid excess and organise their ideas sensibly. They carefully considered the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for the selective summary task. Less effective responses tried to paraphrase the original, by substituting (sometimes inappropriate) vocabulary for individual words and often included repetition of points such as ‘*readers scan internet articles*’ and ‘*repeat ideas*’. A feature of the weakest responses was inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question, such as comments about ‘*a mental flow*’ of writing. These answers had often adopted a cut-and-paste approach, copying sections from the original and/or were almost entirely reliant on the language of the text further diluting evidence of understanding.

Candidates needed to pay particular attention to the wording of the passage to demonstrate understanding of negatively phrased points. There was a tendency to use these incorrectly in the summary to offer advice such as ‘*do not repeat ideas*’ and ‘*do not use a topic sentence*’. Where candidates had not engaged fully with the task and/or attempted a more mechanical approach paraphrasing the material, repetitions were common, such as ‘*readers (only) scan internet articles*’ and ‘*readers only read 20 per cent of a text*’, not noticing that these points were repeated in the original. Some candidates’ points lacked precision – for example, stating that the ‘*first paragraph is important*’ rather than identifying the need to ‘*outline all the points in the first paragraph*’. Reliance on the words of the passage was self-limiting and often suggested misreading – for example, where incomplete or incorrect copying changed the meaning of an idea.

Some candidates relied on recycling phrases from the original, even though there were straightforward alternatives. Commonly lifted examples included: '*advert, pop-ups and zany animations*', '*a too tight and a too loose line height*', '*will receive the most attention*', and '*visible a good distance*'. Whilst it is not a requirement that every word is altered – more technical terms or names for example are unlikely to have suitably precise synonyms, and words such as '*subheadings*' and '*paragraphs*' did not need to be replaced or explained – candidates recasting information in their own voice were best able to demonstrate understanding. Weaker responses tended to copy chunks from the passage, with little realisation that they had to use their own words where appropriate. Excess material, including unnecessary discussion, extra advice and comment, featured in a number of less successful responses which appeared to have misunderstood the purpose for the response. These answers attempted to extend points to try to offer a developed persuasive or instructional text, rather than offer a focused and concise selective summary based on the text alone. Significantly exceeding the word count was common in weaker responses; this lack of concision was self-penalising.

Reading back through their answer afterwards to make sure that it would both make sense to a reader who had not read the original passage and summarised the essential information that reader would need to know in relation to advice for online writing would have helped a number of candidates target higher marks. The best answers had carefully considered both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in clear, fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using their own words as far as possible. They gave a factual objective summary, demonstrating close reading by grouping relevant ideas, and avoided writing introductory statements and making elaborate comments.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully to identify the focus of the selective summary task – underline key words
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potentially relevant content points
- you can use spare pages in your answer booklet to plan your ideas ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- identify and discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the focus of the question
- be careful to give only information from the passage that answers the question
- check you understand each idea you use and aim to explain it in your own words
- carefully organise and logically sequence your ideas for your reader, avoiding repetition of similar points
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment on the content of the passage
- pay attention to the maximum guidance for length.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/04
Coursework Portfolio

General comments

Many candidates produced coursework portfolios to be proud of which contained varied work across a range of contexts. Candidates demonstrated flexibility and the facility to adapt their writing for a range of audiences and purposes. Much of the work related to the candidates' personal interests and experiences and genuinely reflected matters that are important to young people today. The best work provided mature, sophisticated and engaging reading.

Many centres set a good range of appropriate and varied tasks which allowed candidates to respond in writing of three different genres. The most successful writing was related to the personal interests and experiences of the candidates. Writing was less successful when candidates responded to a limited range of tasks which lacked flexibility and opportunities for the candidates to respond in an original or personal way.

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them in a mature and sensible way
- structured the content of their writing in order to clearly guide the reader from one section of writing to the next
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of arguments or events
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and contexts for each of the three assignments
- revised, edited, proof-read and corrected the first drafts of each assignment
- wrote accurately and made very few errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Comments on specific assignments

Assignment 1:

Moderators reported that there appeared to be a much greater personal selection of topics by the candidates for this assignment. Many candidates were allowed to follow particular interests which resulted in mature, thoughtful and interesting work. Climate change, environmental issues and gender equality seemed particularly popular, with much of the writing reflecting the concerns that young people have about the world today. Most tasks set for this assignment were of an appropriate level of challenge for the candidates and allowed candidates to produce work that reflected their abilities. Although moderators reported that they saw fewer polemics, such as 'Room 101' and 'Do not get me started', some centres continued to set these tasks. Previous Examiner reports have commented on the limitations of this sort of task for helping candidates to produce writing which contains thoughtful, mature and considered arguments. Some centres also set very broad or frequently debated topics, such as the death penalty, legalising cannabis and school uniforms. Task such as these do not engage the candidates in the same way as tasks related to their personal interests might. This lack of engagement is often reflected in the quality and effectiveness of their writing and can make it difficult for candidates to meet the higher level assessment criteria.

Moderators also reported that when candidates had engaged in research of a particular topic, there was a tendency to rely too heavily on the ideas, words and phrases they had seen in their research. Candidates should present original ideas and thoughts using their own words. The overuse of words, phrases and ideas from research documents tends to result in loss of originality of thought and fluency in writing, and could result in unintentional plagiarism.

The majority of Assignment 1 pieces had a good sense of audience and the genre and form selected was clear to the reader. When the genre, form or intended audience was not clear writing tended to be less successful.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:

- write about a subject that is of importance and/or of interest to you
- be aware of the audience and purpose of your response and adapt your style accordingly
- try to develop your points to create a detailed and clear line of argument or discussion
- try to use your own words instead of quoting chunks of text from your sources
- acknowledge your use of quotes.

Assignment 2:

Many candidates produced original and engaging descriptions or narratives which reflected their personal experiences of the world or of people or events that were important to them. Less successful writing was produced when generic tasks were set and candidates were asked to describe places or people they did not know well, or to create stories in a genre that they did not fully understand.

Description:

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those in which the candidates had created a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place, or person and which were well sequenced and cohesive. Moderators saw descriptions of much-loved family members and places or events that were important to the candidates. Many candidates understood the need to be thoughtful and controlled with their use of vocabulary and to make sure that the vocabulary they used accurately reflected the content of their writing. Less successful descriptive writing was seen when candidates were overambitious with their vocabulary, over used complex words, or included images that did not match the content of their writing. There was a tendency with some centres to over reward use of complex language, even when the overall effect of the writing was not entirely successful.

Other tasks which resulted in less successful writing were those which required candidates to describe scenes from a film. Tasks such as these limit the opportunities for candidates to fully demonstrate the skills needed to meet some of the assessment criteria because the structure and content is provided for them by the film clips. This issue has been highlighted in previous Examiner reports.

Narratives:

With narrative writing, moderators reported that they noted a continued reduction in candidates producing unrealistic and incredible zombie, gothic and dystopian-style stories. Candidates tend to struggle with these genres of writing because the imagined situation is beyond their personal experience, so writing becomes clichéd and unconvincing. Previous Examiner reports have commented on the limitations of this sort of task.

Some of the most successful narrative writing was seen when candidates responded to personal experiences such as memorable events, journeys or people. There were moving accounts of how some candidates overcame challenging personal situations or wrote about important journeys they had undertaken with their families or close friends. Other successful writing was seen when the candidates fully understood their chosen genre for writing. It was clear in the work provided by many centres that candidates had been effectively taught how to create and write short stories in which setting, character and plot were developed in order to produce cohesive and entertaining writing.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

- when writing to describe, try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of ideas and images

- when writing to describe make sure that you do not slip into writing a narrative, try to stay focused on description and create a clear sense of time, place and atmosphere
- when writing to describe try to avoid writing in list-like paragraphs which are unconnected
- write about something that you are familiar with, or something or someone you know well
- when writing narratives remember to structure your writing carefully and to follow the writing conventions for a short story
- choose vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects
- make sure that the images you create match the context and content of your writing.

Assignment 3:

Many candidates responded to appropriate texts and provided responses which demonstrated their ability to analyse and evaluate ideas and to present their own lines of thought in response to the content of their reading. As with Assignment 1 and Assignment 2, the best responses tended to be written by candidates responding to texts about subjects or matters that interested them; for example, free college tuition in America, the effects of computer games on children's brains and speeches by activists such as Greta Thunberg. Less successful texts were those that were outdated, or which contained limited ideas and opinions with which the candidates could respond. Despite highlighting the limitations of certain types of texts in previous Examiner reports, moderators still saw a significant number of candidates responding to texts by Katie Hopkins (children's names), Jeremy Clarkson ('Stuff the Tiger') and Educating Essex. These texts are now old and unoriginal and public opinion may have changed since they were written. In addition, when candidates responded to text such as these, they tend to personally attack the author instead of evaluating the ideas and opinions contained within the texts. Other less successful responses were those written in response to mainly factual texts containing limited ideas or opinions with which candidates could engage. To achieve Band 5 marks, candidates need to evaluate and analyse a good range of ideas from the text to provide an extended overview, or write an overall, structured response that assimilates many of the ideas and opinions presented within the text. Some of the issues highlighted above can limit the opportunity for candidates to fully engage with this process and therefore limit their ability to meet the higher-level assessment criteria. Guidance on how to select appropriate texts for this assignment is given in the syllabus.

The most common form for responses to texts tended to be letters or speeches. On the whole it was clear that candidates understood, and could use, the writing conventions of the chosen form. However, it was noted that even some of the very best letters lacked an appropriate closing salutation such as 'Yours sincerely' or 'Yours faithfully'. This sort of error could easily be avoided if candidates carefully proof-read their work.

Administration:

All centres are thanked for ensuring that the samples were sent to Cambridge for despatch to the Moderation team in good time. Moderators commented that they noted a significant improvement in the accurate completion of the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms (CASFs) and MS1s and that there were fewer samples sent in plastic wallets. However, a small but significant number of centres are still submitting portfolios of work in which the individual sheets of paper are not attached to the Individual candidate Record Card (ICRC). Paperclips and plastic wallets are not secure method of securing folders of work. As highlighted in the June 2019 Examiner report, in order to avoid loss or misplacement of candidates' work, it is essential that centres submit the individual portfolios of work in accordance with the instructions set out in the syllabus and Coursework Handbook. These documents can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge Assessment website.

Drafts:

The overwhelming majority of centres provided a copy of a first draft of one of the assignments. It was evident from these drafts that many candidates had engaged in a process of editing and redrafting. However, moderators noticed that there was a significant increase in the number of drafts that showed no evidence of a process of revision, redrafting or editing by the candidate. On many occasions the drafts were almost identical to the final versions of pieces of work. There were also some instances where teachers had offered specific advice and guidance on how a candidate might improve their work. Teachers are required to make general comments at the end of drafts as to how a candidate might improve their work, but they are not allowed to make specific suggestions for improvement in the body or the margin of the drafts. Guidance on the drafting process can be found in the syllabus.

Assessment:

Moderators reported that assessment of Writing and Reading by the centres was generally accurate. It was clear from the provision of informative summative comments related to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment that many centres understood, and were able to apply, the mark scheme accurately. The accuracy of the application of the mark scheme may have been because many centres provided clear evidence that a process of effective internal moderation had taken place. With centres that provided little or no evidence of internal moderation, there was a general tendency to be either lenient or slightly severe with the application of the mark scheme. It is important that internal moderation is undertaken at the end of the course by the centre and recorded on both the CASF and the folder itself.

When moderators did not agree with a centre's marks it was often because structural insecurities or inaccuracies with the candidates' work did not seem to have been taken into account by the markers. As highlighted in the June 2019 Examiner report, it is essential that teachers indicate all errors in the final versions of the candidates' work. If this is not done, it becomes difficult for teachers to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and award an appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. It is important for teachers to understand that all errors, especially those made with typing, the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck, the incorrect use of commas and the confusion of tenses should be taken into account when awarding marks. Errors such as these can affect the overall meaning and quality of a piece of work and make it difficult for a candidate to meet some of the higher level assessment criteria.

Good practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was where:

- 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
- a wide range of appropriate texts were used for Assignment 3, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond, and were relevant to their interests
- centres set tasks which allowed candidates to respond in three different genres of writing
- candidates' responses were within the recommended 500 to 800-word limit
- teachers gave general advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- candidates revised, edited and carefully proof read their first drafts in order to improve their writing, including checking for errors with:
 - basic punctuation such as missing full stops, the incorrect use of commas and semi colons and the correct use of capital letters
 - typing errors
 - spelling, especially any words selected from spellcheck
- teachers provided informative summative comments relating to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment
- coursework portfolios were securely attached and presented as indicated in the syllabus,
- the CASF included all the candidates in the cohort and candidates were listed on the form in numerical order, with the candidates in the sample being clearly indicated by an asterisk.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0524/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

The standard of administration and accuracy of assessment continue to be of a high standard.

Key messages

Administration

- When completing an Individual Candidate Record Card for each candidate, please provide specific information about the choices made for each task as this is important information for the Moderator. For **Task 1**, a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful for the Moderator.
- All the recordings for **Task 1** and **Task 2** for the whole cohort should be sent in the sample packet.
- For **Task 1** it is helpful if for each candidate the file name is the candidate's name and examination number. For **Task 2** it is helpful if the file name contains at least the candidate numbers of both candidates involved.
- The teacher/examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. For paired activities, once this introduction has been made, it would be helpful if candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing before beginning the task. This will allow the moderator to clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.

Key messages

Approach to coursework

- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short.
- For **Task 1** a good comparison is the **Part 1** presentation within the 05 speaking and listening test. For this a candidate is required to speak for 3–4 minutes on a chosen topic. A similar length would be appropriate for **Task 1**.
- In **Task 2**, the Paired Task, it is important to offer both candidates an equal and sufficient amount of time to contribute for both speaking and listening. Short tasks of less than four minutes really do not give both candidates enough time to convincingly fulfil the criteria in the mark scheme for the middle and higher bands.

General comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record Card and the Summary Form.

For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is encouraged and continues to yield some excellent results in both **Task 1** and **Task 2**.

Comments on specific tasks

Responses to any of the three tasks do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful but a degree of spontaneity is

still required for marks to be awarded in the higher bands. Generally, responses to **Task 1** and **Task 2** where the candidates were interested in the topics and could demonstrate a personal involvement in the content were more successful than those where a topic had been imposed by the teacher. It is recommended that for **Task 1** the candidate chooses the topic with guidance from the teacher. For **Task 2** it may be that candidates are offered alternatives from which a choice can be made. For **Task 3** it is recognised that the teacher may choose the topic for logistical reasons.

Task 1

Pleasingly, once again, a wide range of topics were undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when the choice of topic is made. More able candidates should be encouraged to choose more exacting and sophisticated topics that extend their abilities to construct a compelling argument within a period of approximately 3–4 minutes. The inclusion of an element of introspection and reflection is positively encouraged. Dramatic monologues in the voice of a chosen character have resulted in some very successful talks which stand out for their creativity and ingenuity.

Some examples of productive Task 1 activities also include:

- A significant event in my life and its effect on me
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- A critique of a favourite book, work of art or movie
- My passion for (e.g.) dance/playing a musical instrument
- My ideal holiday destination
- Are we ready for 5G (or any specific technological advance)?
- What we eat is who we are
- Why youth should be given a louder voice.

Some examples of less successful Task 1 activities include:

- Should cannabis be legalised (this has potential safeguarding issues)?
- Football (too generic and unfocused)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)
- Social media (unless a specific viewpoint is being argued)
- Gaming (generally too unfocused).

Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about. Alternatively, engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths also works well. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. 'Football' and 'Social Media' remain popular topics but where there is no sense of audience or specific focus there will be little evidence to support a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions. To this end, sufficient research and development should be built into the preparation time leading up to performance of the task.

Generally, entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or self-generated role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands because they do not fulfil the relevant criteria.

Some examples of productive Task 2 activities include:

- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as the benefits of artificial intelligence or responses to climate change
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well but may have differing views about
- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion for one of the celebrities

- Acting as employers discussing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme)
- *Marvel v DC.*

Some examples of less successful Task 2 activities include:

- Should cannabis be legalised (this has potential safeguarding issues)
- Interviews generally but specifically where one of the candidates acts solely as the interviewer (this is limiting for the candidate)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort such as 'Room 101' in which no individual choice is allowed (ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)
- Role plays such as two neighbours arguing or a customer complaining to a sales assistant. The evidence of the present and previous series suggests these often rely too heavily on scripts, generally become vacuous arguments and limit the candidates' ability to demonstrate the required range of speaking and listening skills.

Task 3

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful so long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. It is, therefore, advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. A group should consist of no fewer than three members and it is advised that it does not exceed five candidates. A group consisting of three or four candidates is preferable for the logistical purpose of being able to assess each candidate's performance more accurately.

Some examples of productive Task 3 activities include:

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. 'Of Mice and Men', 'An Inspector Calls', 'A View From The Bridge', 'All My Sons'
- A radio discussion of a significant event from a work of literature involving the key characters
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity
- A meeting in which the candidates discuss their roles and possible contributions to a named community event
- A review of a named event from the perspective of those involved in its planning

General conclusions

The general standard of assessment by centres is at the correct level. It is to their credit that centres have become very efficient in the administration of the component and in the choice of topics. It is very pleasing to observe that candidates undertaking speaking and listening activities continue to be enthusiastic about the experience and clearly benefit from careful planning and practice.