

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/11
Reading and Writing (Core)

Key messages

In **Exercise 1**, candidates are required to read questions carefully in order to identify the key element(s) required for the response in each question. Responses which include overlong, additional information should be avoided, as this could affect the validity of the answer.

In **Exercise 2**, again, candidates must read the text precisely to identify the key details. Such details may include the writer's opinion and attitude, or possibly information that is not explicitly stated but implied. This exercise was generally well answered with few omissions.

In **Exercise 3**, candidates should focus on writing brief answers and be sure that their answers correspond to the right question.

In **Exercise 4**, candidates should carefully consider whether the information they include is relevant to the summary topic. Long introductions and irrelevant details should be avoided. They should also ensure that responses do not exceed the 90-word limit, as correct Content points which are included after the limit cannot be credited.

In **Exercise 5**, most responses were on topic and showed awareness of the target audience, using an appropriate, informal register. It is important in this exercise and in **Exercise 6** that candidates read the rubric carefully to be aware of what information the response should contain before starting to write their response.

In **Exercise 6**, most candidates wrote in a style different from that used in the previous exercise, adopting a more formal, neutral register, suitable for an article.

General comments

Almost all those who sat this paper were entered at the right level. It was again noteworthy that many of those who appeared to find **Exercises 1 – 4** challenging were able to write full responses in **Exercises 5** and **6**.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

This exercise proved to be challenging to many candidates with **Questions 1, 5** and **8** proving most difficult. Candidates generally found **Questions 2, 3** and **6** more accessible.

Responses which did not gain a mark in **Question 1** featured one of the two distractors: either '12,000 cenotes', which is the total number of cenotes in the whole world, or '7,000', which is the total number of cenotes in Mexico. In **Question 5**, the typical features of fish that live in cenotes are their transparent skin and their very poor eyesight. Although many responded with one of these features, those who had mentioned the poor eyesight as the first feature often added their skin colour as silver. The text explains that silver is the skin colour of sea or lake fish, not of the fish that live in cenotes. For **Question 8** many wrote

'great blue hole' or 'lazy lagoon'. The correct answer was the one cenote in Belize, which is in the sea, which makes it unique.

For **Question 4** some responses featured one of the two distractors – 'cylinder cenote' or 'basin cenote' yet the only one which fitted the description given in the question was 'jug cenote'. The most common incorrect answer to **Question 6** was 'dinosaur'. **Question 7** asked what equipment the divers should have when diving into a cenote. The piece of equipment mentioned in the text was a safety line. A few added 'and make sure they always dive with a partner'. Since the partner is not equipment, this could not be credited.

Exercise 2

This exercise was well completed, and most candidates scored high marks. **Questions 9c, 9f** and **9g** were most challenging. In **9c** it is Jing (B) whose parents, fearing that he will want to use their car when he passes the driving test, said that they would buy him one of his own. In **9f** Serge (C) was confident he knew what he was to do when he got into the instructor's car and in **9g** it was Mohammed (A) who felt that the stress of his college course showed in the way he handled the car during the driving lesson.

Exercise 3

In this exercise many scored high marks, particularly in **Question 11**. The text proved accessible to most. The omission of a key detail, incorrect copying from the text or just simple misunderstanding were the main reasons for loss of marks. For example, the omission of 'reliable' before 'light bulb', 'photograph' instead of 'phonograph', and the assertion that Edison invented the Model T Ford.

Exercise 4

Many candidates scored high marks for Content, effectively selecting the many advantages of drones for making deliveries from the article.

Candidates continue to find it challenging to use their own words and accurately paraphrase language from the text, but responses did feature synonyms such as 'affordable' for 'cheap' and 'quicker' for 'faster'. Responses were credited for the use of expressions such as, 'drones are easy to use' for 'easy to learn how to control'.

Some responses used too many words on overlong introductions, lifting much of the first paragraph in the text. This caused many of them to go beyond the limit of 90 words. Most, however, were able to concentrate on the advantages and keep within the word limit provided.

Exercise 5

Many responses dealt with all three prompts effectively and were credited with a mark in the top band for Content. Some omitted either the first prompt, telling how they had found out about the club, or the third prompt about any improvements they might like to make.

Many responses showed evidence of familiarity with the conventions of writing an email to a friend – opening with a greeting, closing with a farewell, involving the friend throughout, and setting an informal, conversational tone. On the whole, responses featured a good sense of audience.

Exercise 6

Candidates relied less heavily on the prompts than in previous series. Generally, the topic was accessible and many of the more successful responses featured good development and gave suitable opinions. Nearly all candidates understood what was required in the article, and many were able to develop the prompts and to add their own opinion in a final paragraph.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/21
Reading and Writing (Extended)

Key messages

- In **Exercise 1**, it is essential that candidates locate the key requirements of each question and answer with a brief and precise phrase. Candidates should also ensure that no incorrect information is included with a correct response.
- In **Exercise 2**, it is recommended that candidates practise skimming and scanning reading techniques and carefully consider each question, taking into account any distracting information in the texts. It is also helpful for candidates to look in the text for synonyms and paraphrasing of key details that are in the question.
- In **Exercise 3**, notes should be precise and provide key details. These may include verbs or adjectives that relate to the requirements of the headings. Candidates should be guided by the number of bullet points which indicate the number of responses required. There should be only one relevant note per bullet point as if candidates provide more than one, only the first one can be credited.
- In **Exercise 4**, candidates must keep within the 120-word limit, or they may lose marks as any content points made after 120 words cannot be credited. They should focus on the requirements of the summary and include only what is relevant. They should try to avoid lifting whole sentences or phrases containing content points directly from the text with no attempt to express points in their own words.
- In **Exercise 5**, responses must provide relevant information and be written in a suitably informal style. All bullet points have to be addressed and developed in order to have access to marks in the top band for Content.
- In **Exercise 6**, candidates need to respond to the different requirements of this task, and should adopt a suitable style and register. Ideas should be relevant and developed at an appropriate length.

General comments

Most candidates were entered correctly for the Extended paper.

Exercise 1

Precise answers are required for this comprehension exercise. Candidates should ensure they focus on the requirements of the question and locate the relevant section of the text when responding. They should read carefully around what they recognise as the correct response to check there is no further information that negates or changes this.

Question 1

This question was very well answered. The most common incorrect responses were 12000 and 7000, which referred to cenotes worldwide and cenotes in Mexico, not those in Yucatan as required.

Question 2

This question was well answered. Some candidates did not provide a complete response and gave answers such as 'location' or 'location with accessible water', which omitted some of the necessary key details.

Question 3

This question was very well answered. A few candidates wrote 'Southern coast', where cenotes were linked as opposed to 'not joined together', which was specified in the question.

Question 4

This question was well answered. Most incorrect responses referred to other types of cenotes (basin, cylinder), which did not match the description given in the question.

Question 5

This question was quite well answered. Some responses featured two correct details, but a significant number only provided one, and in some cases, none. Responses appeared to confuse sea and lake fish (silver) with fish in cenotes (transparent skin, poor eyesight). They also confused the description of the cenotes (dark) with the fish in them. As a result, incorrect responses included 'silver', 'dark', 'excellent vision'. Candidates need to recognise and be guided by discourse markers, relative pronouns and determiners.

Question 6

This question was very well answered. A few responses featured the incorrect response 'dinosaur', which was mentioned in the text as the skeleton divers hoped to find, but not what they found.

Question 7

This question was generally well answered. A few candidates appeared to locate the section of the text that provided the correct response, but gave answers that were not *equipment* as required by the question. Incorrect responses included 'natural light' and 'dive with partner'. Occasionally these were added to the correct response 'safety line', which meant the response could not be credited.

Question 8

This question was well answered. Some responses such as 'made of 3 cenotes', or 'its huge size', which referred to a cenote in the USA, not Belize, could not be credited. Some responses featured the *name* of the unusual cenote, not what was *unusual* about it, which was that it was in the sea. These responses may indicate that candidates did not connect 'the former' and 'the latter' in the relevant section of the text to the two places mentioned.

Question 9

This question was well answered, and a significant number of candidates gained the full four marks available. The most common incorrect details were 'for leisure purposes' (how cenotes are used *now* by *tourists*), or 'played a role in Mayu culture' / 'threw valuable items into the water (which did not explain how the water in cenotes was important). Occasionally responses such as 'life-giving water' and 'a way of communicating' were not specific enough and did not provide the key details required.

Exercise 2

Most candidates responded well to this matching exercise. There were some who provided ten correct responses and most candidates gained at least five of the ten marks available. Generally, items **e**, **g**, **l** and **j** were the most challenging. Candidates should not only skim and scan the text, but also identify the key words in the question and ensure that the text they select fully supports their choice of answer. They should look for synonyms and rephrasing of the ideas, rather than the same words or phrases in the question and text.

- (a) This question was very well answered. Almost all candidates answered the question correctly. They needed to find someone who was unhappy with their driving instructor's vehicle, which was

clearly stated in option A ‘...I still had not got used to the size of her car...’ A few candidates gave B, possibly because the text states, ‘It looked so shiny and expensive’.

- (b) Most candidates answered this question correctly. The correct answer was Francesca, option D, who was competitive and wanted to be the first of her friends to pass her test. Some candidates gave C as the most common incorrect response, possibly because the text states, ‘I was expecting to be able to do everything perfectly within four or five lessons’.
- (c) This question was well answered. Most candidates answered C correctly. B was the most commonly chosen incorrect response. They may have misinterpreted or misread the sentence, ‘Please do not let me damage it’ in option B.
- (d) This question was very well answered. Almost all the candidates answered it correctly. C was the most common incorrect choice. Candidates needed to find someone who was promised a car when they qualified to drive. B was the correct answer since the text said, ‘so they said they would get me one of my own’. Some candidates may have misinterpreted, ‘I’d love to have got a car as soon as I qualified, but my parents have promised ...’ in option C and connected ‘promised’ in the text with the question.
- (e) This question proved more challenging for some candidates. A was the most common incorrect choice. Candidates needed to find the person who almost had an accident during a driving lesson. This was Francesca as she narrowly missed another vehicle, so D was the correct answer. Text A states ‘It was not as if I had an accident’, so it is possible that candidates might have misunderstood this sentence.
- (f) This question was very well answered. The correct answer was B, ‘I should have developed my skills further by doing a few additional sessions with my instructor’. Candidates were successful at connecting the synonyms ‘lessons’ in the question with ‘sessions’ in the text.
- (g) This question proved more challenging for some candidates. The correct answer was A, and D was the most common incorrect response. The question asked for the person who was initially unsure whether they wanted to learn to drive. Text D states ‘After an uncertain start, I soon developed confidence’, so candidates might have not connected the question with A, ‘I could not see the point in being able to drive’.
- (h) This question was quite well answered. C was the correct response as Serge felt like he knew what he was doing, but some candidates selected D, possibly because it says in the text, ‘I soon developed confidence’.
- (i) This question was quite well answered. A significant number of candidates gave either D or C, rather than the correct response A. Words connected to feelings, ‘impatient’ in D or ‘jealous’, and ‘relax’ in C may have misled candidates.
- (j) This question was quite well answered. The correct response was B as Jing ‘seemed to pick up everything ... straight away’. Some candidates selected A, which states, ‘My instructor noticed that one week I’d be full of confidence while I was driving’, This may have been misinterpreted by some candidates.

Exercise 3

Candidates responded very well to this note-taking exercise, with a large number of candidates gaining the full nine marks available. Responses could not be credited when they omitted key information or were placed under the wrong heading. It is important that notes focus clearly on key ideas that relate to the heading and communicate this as succinctly and accurately as possible, without omitting essential information.

Question 11

This question was very well attempted, and many candidates correctly provided four notes from the possible five options. A few candidates gave unconnected responses, for example, ‘Edison’s mum was a schoolteacher’ and ‘Edison’s family moved’. Although the information was included in the text, the responses did not give details about Edison’s education. Some responses omitted key details such as, ‘free from school environment’ and ‘distracted’. These responses should have included ‘learned’ and ‘easily’ in order to be credited. A few candidates provided unconnected responses which focused on Edison’s employment, for

example, 'At the age of 12 Edison convinced his parents to let him sell newspapers at stations' and 'When he was 15, he started working as a telegrapher'. Although these points were mentioned in the text, they do not support what was required by the heading. Occasionally responses were incorrectly expressed as in 'he was difficult' rather than 'described as difficult'.

Question 12

This section was attempted very well, and a significant number of candidates identified five of the correct responses out of a possible six. Sometimes a note was attempted, but key information was omitted such as 'light bulb'. This response needed to be more specific stating that Edison had created a 'reliable light bulb'. Some candidates provided unconnected responses, for example 'The Ford Model T', 'Mass produced car' and 'Motor car' which were mentioned in the text, but were irrelevant as they were not examples of what Edison created but the car he had created a battery for. A few responses contained a spelling error which created another word with a different meaning, for example, 'improved stock ticket', which could not be credited.

Exercise 4

Question 13

In this question, there was a significant number of candidates who lost both content and language marks because they wrote over the required 120 words. Responses also featured lifted language from the article, with little attempt made to rephrase.

Some responses featured lengthy introductions that did not contain Content points meaning that some points were made after 120 words and could not be credited. Some points did not include key details. The point that biofuels are made from *different plants* was inaccurately given as 'made from different sources' or 'made from plants'. Expressed in this way, the point was not clear enough to be credited. Certain points made were incorrect. For example, candidates wrote that a disadvantage was that biofuels produce greenhouse gasses, when the article states that they actually produce small amounts, which is an advantage. The possibility that they might become cheaper was often presented as an advantage when this was speculation. The actual disadvantage is that they are costly. However, a significant number of candidates included at least four of the ten possible points, with some providing the required eight or more.

Language marks were awarded across the whole range with the majority of candidates gaining three to six marks. In order to achieve seven or eight marks (top band) for language, candidates must attempt to use their own words and organize the content points. As mentioned, some candidates made no attempt to use their own words when giving content points, copying directly from the text and connecting the ideas with linking words. This reliance on language from the text meant they could only be awarded a language mark from the lower bands. There were some candidates who successfully re-phrased and linked the content ideas, writing for example, 'Biofuels decrease a country's reliance on oil. However, on the downside, dangerous chemicals are put into the earth to boost plant growth,' Such language was deserving of the higher bands.

It is important that Content points remain clear when re-expressed as credit cannot be given if the meaning changes. Practice with verb, noun and adjective synonyms, along with practice in forming alternative grammatical structures would be beneficial to enable candidates attain the higher bands.

Exercise 5

In this exercise, candidates complete an email task based on fulfilling the requirements specified in three bullet points. It is also important that candidates relate the email to the context set in the exercise, in this case attending an after-school club. The extent to which the bullet points are addressed and developed within the context will determine the band achieved for Content. If any bullet point is not addressed, this has a significant effect on the Content mark. For a mark in the higher bands, candidates should demonstrate a good or excellent sense of purpose whilst developing and effectively communicating Content. The mark for language will depend on the accuracy, range and organisation of the language used.

Content

Generally, candidates wrote relevant emails in a consistent style and register. Some responses were less than 150 words meaning there was not sufficient development for higher band content marks. Most candidates responded to this task successfully. Some fulfilled the task skilfully and effectively and developed

the email to include a range of information and ideas. Most candidates addressed all three bullet points, however, these were sometimes lacking in development. Candidates generally used an informal register, though this was not always consistent. For example, phrases such as 'I would like to inform you about the after-school club I have been attending' or linking words such as 'in conclusion' and 'furthermore' are considered too formal and may not be appropriate in this kind of email. A few candidates wrote about *why* they joined the club, rather than *how* they found out about it.

A range of reasons was given to explain how they found out about the club, for example, a poster on the corridor wall at school, from a school friend or teacher. Regarding what they usually did in the club, common ideas included discussing personal problems, a homework club, a theatre club, sports club and a book club. Suggested improvements were often about the location, wanting a bigger room or more equipment. Others suggested more frequent meetings, different timings for the start of the club or for more club members to join them.

Effective emails, included a conversational style where the writer connected personally to the recipient, for example, 'I was so intrigued by the topics, such as global warming, I know you love this type of stuff' or 'We suggested to recycle more, what would you have suggested?' 'Remember the kid who knows all about nature stuff? Well, we got along well this semester, in your absence.' Successful emails read effectively through the three bullet points and began with natural openings that contained interest in some aspect of the recipient's life, family or a reference to a shared recent experience, leading into the body of the email. For example, 'I have not heard from you in a while, and I miss you. Here it's all OK and I have a new interest in a chess club.' The ending of the email should provide appropriate concluding comments. For example, 'I love my club and I recommend you to attend one. Please say hello to your parents from me.'

Language

Most candidates attempted a good range of language. Some responses featured generally simple structures which were limited in range and accuracy. Others demonstrated ability in constructing accurate sentences of varying lengths, with more complex structures and a range of appropriately used, less common vocabulary. Most emails included paragraphing, which when used appropriately, helped with organisation.

Language deserving of the higher bands should be grammatically correct. There should be a clear range of appropriate vocabulary. An example of such language is, 'The only real issue I have is that there seems to be some bad blood between cast members, and they really should work on that. It ruins everything!'. Some responses attempted more complex language but did not produce this accurately in terms of grammar, punctuation or spelling as in, 'I think that there are some improvements that the teacher should do if he want that the club become much better. He has to leave people talk and he does not have to interrupt them.' Some responses included very short sentences (subject + verb + object), which were accurate but did not demonstrate a sufficient range of language for the higher bands. Candidates should try to ensure language used is accurate, appropriate and demonstrates a range of structures and vocabulary, along with accurate punctuation and spelling.

Exercise 6

In this exercise, candidates may be required to write an article, a review or a report for a particular target audience. It is important that they read the task carefully and consider the two prompts, which are given to help form ideas on the subject. For a mark in one of the higher bands, candidates might include other points and ideas relevant to the task, along with developing the views in the prompts if they choose to, expressing these in their own words. The style and register should be appropriate for the task type.

Content

Most responses fulfilled the task with a generally good sense of purpose and audience, some referring to the ideas in the prompts and others also introducing ideas of their own. Some candidates wrote in such a way as to really connect with the reader and communicate their views effectively and skilfully. These kinds of responses attempted an article style, rather than just looking at the pros and cons of being an athlete. For example, an introduction like 'It's no secret that athletes are often idolised for both their skill and hard work. But are they working hard or are they hardly working?' effectively connects with the reader and draws them in. Responses generally featured a range of interesting points as evidence for the difficulties facing professional athletes. They considered the pressure of representing your country, having to stick to a strict diet, having limited time for socialising and family, and how an athlete's career can be a short one. Candidates suggested that what made being an athlete easy was the money, fame, the sense of achievement and not having to be successful academically.

Language

The full range of marks was awarded for Language. A number of candidates clearly attempted to employ more complex structures and more sophisticated vocabulary. Some responses demonstrated a range of advanced structures, with very few errors, enabling them to achieve the precision required for marks in the higher bands. Responses included accurate, varied sentence structures, good punctuation and paragraphing, along with ambitious vocabulary. This quality of language is exemplified in 'However, most athletes do not live this dreamed reality. Behind the mask of an amazing competitor is a person with problems and difficulties like you and me', and 'Secondly, the amount of pressure that someone should be able to handle in order to work in that sector is so high that often the help of a professional psychologist is needed'. Some candidates attempted more complex language as in 'As well as, turning your childhood hobby into your dream career is something to be astonished of.' and 'But in my opinion we should praise this people, because to find balance in passion and work is not as simple as it seames.', though accuracy was sometimes an issue. A minority of responses which gained marks in the lower bands produced generally simple structures with frequent errors which often impeded communication. Examples include: 'At the second, this job is very strong since every day you are pressure in the international competision if you do not win' and 'When you began a professional athlete when you are young your lifestile are totaly different because spent your time in your gym althrough to going in a cinema or shopping center with your friend.'

In general, however, responses featured language that was either satisfactory or competent. In order to access the higher bands candidates should write in a suitable style, demonstrating grammatical accuracy and good organisation.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/31
Listening (Core)

Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to provide clear and legible responses. The formation of individual letters should be clear. Where responses are illegible, marks may not be awarded.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read the rubric carefully for each question on the paper. This is particularly important where a word limit must be adhered to. This applies to **Exercises 1** and **2**.
- Candidates should be made aware of distracting information in listening texts and practise listening for specific detail which is required as the intended answer.
- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should establish what a question is asking for, by highlighting the question words, e.g. *how*, *why*, *when*, and the key words in the question. In most cases, short, direct responses are most successful. Responses must also stay within the word limits as stated in the main rubric for each applicable section.
- In the gap-filling exercise (i.e. **Exercise 2**), candidates should be encouraged to predict the answers in the gaps. At the end of each section, candidates should also check their responses carefully to make sure they fit grammatically and are within the word limit.
- In **Exercise 2**, candidates should be reminded not to include words that are printed in the statements on the question paper before or after each gap as part of their answer.
- In **Exercise 2**, it is advisable for candidates to practise using the framework provided by the gapped statements, to guide themselves through the audio text. This technique will help candidates locate the required missing detail and ensure that this detail is inserted in the appropriate gap.
- In the matching speakers question (**Exercise 3**) and the multiple-choice questions (**Exercise 4**), candidates should be encouraged to make it absolutely clear which answer they wish to be taken as their final selection by Examiners.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates need to be reminded to use each letter only once.
- Candidates' awareness should be raised of the importance of using the correct singular/plural form of nouns and prepositions as these can alter the key meaning.
- When making phonetic attempts, it is recommended that candidates try to mimic the number of syllables in the word that has been heard and also to try to re-create the vowel and consonant sounds accurately. However, phonetic attempts that create a homophone are not accepted (e.g. sea/see, weak/week).
- More pronunciation awareness activities, particularly of connected speech (e.g. assimilation of sounds, omission of sounds), would be beneficial to candidates. Candidates should also be made aware of the importance of transcribing voiced and unvoiced consonants accurately as these may change meaning (e.g. s/z as in 'prices' and 'prizes').
- Some questions involve transcribing numbers and these should therefore be practised. For example, it is useful to help candidates to distinguish between the pronunciation of eighty and eighteen. Candidates would benefit from more practice in writing larger numbers correctly and the standard form of abbreviations of common units (e.g. 'min' for minutes, 'km' for kilometres).

- Candidates should practise a range of listening skills (e.g. listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for grammatical/lexical detail) in various formats (e.g. announcements, informal dialogues, formal talks).

General comments

- Candidates were required to use a set number of words for **Exercises 1** and **2**. A large number of candidates, although with correct responses, could not be credited as they exceeded the required number of words.
- Successful responses were those which provided short, clear answers and which adhered to the word limit required.
- Candidates should be reminded that the answer will be heard; they must not make up an answer.
- Candidates should be reminded that no two questions will have the same answer.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Overall this section was well answered. There were few omissions but responses could not be credited when more than the required words were written. Most marks were lost where candidates selected the distracting detail or the spelling attempts put the intended meaning in doubt.

Question 1

- (a) Majority of the candidates identified the correct response 'playground'. Some weaker candidates usually wrote the distractor 'car park' and lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were 'playgrand', 'next Wednesday' and 'lake'.
- (b) The vast majority of the candidates were able to score this mark. The plural 'rulers' was also accepted. Some candidates included 'paper and pencils' with the correct answer which could not be credited. Some other responses that could not be accepted were 'rule', 'rular' and 'roolar'.

Question 2

- (a) This question was very well attempted, and the vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark. The following answers could not be credited: 'occasion', 'vocation' and 'more responsibility'.
- (b) This question was really well attempted but 'passport photo' and 'passport ID' could not be credited. Some candidates lost the mark by writing 'passaport', 'pastport' or 'passboard'.

Question 3

- (a) The expected answer was 'projects' and the vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark. However, the singular 'project' could not be credited. Some candidates went for the distractors 'no uniform' and 'learning outside' and lost the mark. Other incorrect answers were 'twin projects' and 'team projects'.
- (b) This question was exceptionally well answered but some of the weaker candidates wrote 'science'. Some candidates correctly identified 'history' but included the distractor 'science' with their answer. Others wrote 'maths' or 'chemistry' and lost the mark.

Question 4

- (a) This question was fairly well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. However, some candidates wrote 'travel guide', 'Ireland journey' or 'novel' which could not be accepted.
- (b) This question was quite well answered. Many spelling issues lost candidates the mark, e.g. 'Argenten', 'Argintina' and 'Agetina'. A large number of candidates went for the distractor 'Scotland'.

Exercise 2

Question 5

Large parts of this question were answered well by a lot of candidates. Responses containing repetition of words, either preceding or following the gap, were not credited as they lead to an incorrect grammatical fit. In some cases, wrong singular and plural nouns meant that candidates could not be credited. Some parts of the question were left blank by a few candidates.

- (i) This question was generally well attempted but quite a few candidates lost the mark by writing 'camping' or 'raincoats'. Some spelling attempts that could not be credited were 'fastival', 'vestival' and 'festvial'.
- (ii) On the whole, this question was well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates lost the mark by writing 'field of fashion' while some wrote 'fasion' or 'fashin' that could not be credited.
- (iii) This question elicited a variety of answers and there was a mixed level of success. Many candidates gave the correct response 'working overtime'. The responses that could not be accepted were 'overtime', 'saving' and 'eating out'.
- (iv) This question was quite poorly attempted. Some candidates lost the mark by writing the singular 'value'. Other responses that could not be accepted were 'design', 'materials' and 'costs'.
- (v) This was generally well attempted by the majority of candidates who gave the correct answer 'energy' although some candidates left it blank. Quite a few candidates wrote 'carbon dioxide', 'recycle' or 'plastic' which could not be accepted.
- (vi) There was a mixed level of success here. Some candidates lost the mark by writing the singular 'chemical' while some candidates made spelling errors, e.g. 'chemcals' and 'chimicals'. Others went for distractors like 'special tape' and 'zip'.
- (vii) This was quite well attempted, and a large number of candidates gave the correct answer 'bold'. The most popular wrong answer was 'midnight ocean'. Quite a few candidates wrote 'bould', 'bolt' or 'bald' that could not be credited.
- (viii) This was quite poorly attempted. 'Amount' and 'number' were also credited. The distractor 'cost' was selected as much as the expected response. Some spelling attempts that could not be accepted were 'quantate', 'quanty' and 'quantite'.

Exercise 3

Question 6

Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the task and obtained full marks.

A few candidates used the same letter more than once. In this case, no marks were awarded even if one of those letters was the correct response in the intended box. Candidates need to ensure that they cross out inaccurate responses clearly to avoid the duplication of letters for each response.

Exercise 4

Question 7

Generally, candidates responded very well to this question.

A few candidates failed to clarify their final response, thus giving two answers. It should be noted that if a candidate changes their mind about their original intended response, they should clearly cross out their first answer. There should be absolutely no ambiguity regarding which answer is intended as the candidate's definitive response.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/41
Listening (Extended)

Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to provide clear and legible responses. The formation of individual letters must be clear. Where responses are illegible, marks may not be awarded.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read the rubric carefully for each question on the paper. This is particularly important where a word limit must be adhered to. This applies to **Exercises 1, 2 and 5**.
- Candidates should be made aware of distracting information in listening texts and practise listening for specific detail which is required as the intended answer.
- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should establish what a question is asking for, by highlighting the question words, e.g. *how, why, when*, and the key words in the question. In most cases, short, direct responses are most successful. Responses must also stay within the word limits as stated in the main rubric for each applicable section.
- In the gap-filling exercises (i.e. **Exercises 2 and 5**), candidates should be encouraged to predict the answers in the gaps. At the end of each section, candidates should also check their responses carefully to make sure they fit grammatically and are within the word limit.
- In **Exercises 2 and 5**, candidates should be reminded not to include words that are printed in the statements on the question paper before or after each gap as part of their answer.
- In **Exercises 2 and 5**, it is advisable for candidates to practise using the framework provided by the gapped statements, to guide themselves through the audio text. This technique will help candidates locate the required missing detail and ensure that this detail is inserted in the appropriate gap.
- In the matching speakers question (**Exercise 3**) and the multiple-choice questions (**Exercise 4**), candidates should be encouraged to make it absolutely clear which answer they wish to be taken as their final selection by Examiners.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates need to be reminded to use each letter only once.
- Candidates' awareness should be raised of the importance of using the correct singular/plural form of nouns and prepositions as these can alter the key meaning.
- When making phonetic attempts, it is recommended that candidates try to mimic the number of syllables in the word that has been heard and also to try to re-create the vowel and consonant sounds accurately. However, phonetic attempts that create a homophone are not accepted (e.g. *sea/see, weak/week*).
- More pronunciation awareness activities, particularly of connected speech (e.g. assimilation of sounds, omission of sounds), would be beneficial to learners. Candidates should also be made aware of the importance of transcribing voiced and unvoiced consonants accurately as these may change meaning (e.g. *s/z* as in 'prices' and 'prizes').
- Some questions involve transcribing numbers and these should therefore be practised. For example, it is useful to help candidates to distinguish between the pronunciation of eighty and eighteen. Candidates would benefit from more practice in writing larger numbers correctly and the standard form of abbreviations of common units (e.g. 'min' for minutes, 'km' for kilometres).

- Candidates should practise a range of listening skills (e.g. listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for grammatical/lexical detail) in various formats (e.g. announcements, informal dialogues, formal talks).

General comments

- Candidates were required to use a set number of words for **Exercises 1, 2 and 5**. A large number of candidates, although with correct responses, could not be credited as they exceeded the required number of words.
- Successful responses were those which provided short, clear answers and which adhered to the word limit required.
- Candidates should be reminded that the answer will be heard; they must not make up an answer.
- Candidates should be reminded that no two questions will have the same answer.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Overall, this section was well answered. There were few omissions, but responses could not be credited when more than the required words were written. Most marks were lost where candidates selected the distracting detail, or the spelling attempts put the intended meaning in doubt.

Question 1

- (a) Majority of the candidates identified the correct response 'playground'. Some weaker candidates usually wrote the distractor 'car park' and lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were 'playgrand', 'next Wednesday' and 'lake'.
- (b) The vast majority of the candidates were able to score this mark. The plural 'rulers' was also accepted. Some candidates included 'paper and pencils' with the correct answer which could not be credited. Some other responses that could not be accepted were 'rule', 'rular' and 'roolar'.

Question 2

- (a) This question was very well attempted, and the vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark. The following answers could not be credited: 'occasion', 'vocation' and 'more responsibility'.
- (b) This question was really well attempted but 'passport photo' and 'passport ID' could not be credited. Some candidates lost the mark by writing 'passaport', 'pastport' or 'passboard'.

Question 3

- (a) The expected answer was 'projects' and the vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark. However, the singular 'project' could not be credited. Some candidates went for the distractors 'no uniform' and 'learning outside' and lost the mark. Other incorrect answers were 'twin projects' and 'team projects'.
- (b) This question was exceptionally well answered but some of the weaker candidates wrote 'science'. Some candidates correctly identified 'history' but included the distractor 'science' with their answer. Others wrote 'maths' or 'chemistry' and lost the mark.

Question 4

- (a) This question was fairly well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. However, some candidates wrote 'travel guide', 'Ireland journey' or 'novel' which could not be accepted.
- (b) This question was quite well answered. Many spelling issues lost candidates the mark, e.g. 'Argenten', 'Argintina' and 'Agetina'. A large number of candidates went for the distractor 'Scotland'.

Exercise 2

Question 5

Large parts of this question were answered well by a lot of candidates. Responses containing repetition of words, either preceding or following the gap, were not credited as they lead to an incorrect grammatical fit. In some cases, wrong singular and plural nouns meant that candidates could not be credited. Some parts of the question were left blank by a few candidates.

- (i) This question was generally well attempted but quite a few candidates lost the mark by writing 'camping' or 'raincoats'. Some spelling attempts that could not be credited were 'festival', 'vestival' and 'festvial'.
- (ii) On the whole, this question was well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates lost the mark by writing 'field of fashion' while some wrote 'fasion' or 'fashin' that could not be credited.
- (iii) This question elicited a variety of answers and there was a mixed level of success. Many candidates gave the correct response 'working overtime'. The responses that could not be accepted were 'overtime', 'saving' and 'eating out'.
- (iv) This question was quite poorly attempted. Some candidates lost the mark by writing the singular 'value'. Other responses that could not be accepted were 'design', 'materials' and 'costs'.
- (v) This was generally well attempted by the majority of candidates who gave the correct answer 'energy' although some candidates left it blank. Quite a few candidates wrote 'carbon dioxide', 'recycle' or 'plastic' which could not be accepted.
- (vi) There was a mixed level of success here. Some candidates lost the mark by writing the singular 'chemical' while some candidates had spelling issues, e.g. 'chemcals' and 'chiminals'. Others went for distractors like 'special tape' and 'zip'.
- (vii) This was quite well attempted, and a large number of candidates gave the correct answer 'bold'. The most popular wrong answer was 'midnight ocean'. Quite a few candidates wrote 'bould', 'bolt' or 'bald' that could not be credited.
- (viii) This was quite poorly attempted. 'Amount' and 'number' were also credited. The distractor 'cost' was selected as much as the expected response. Some spelling attempts that could not be accepted were 'quantate', 'quanty' and 'quantite'.

Exercise 3

Question 6

Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the task and obtained full marks.

A few candidates used the same letter more than once. In this case, no marks were awarded even if one of those letters was the correct response in the intended box. Candidates need to ensure that they cross out inaccurate responses clearly to avoid the duplication of letters for each response.

Exercise 4

Question 7

Generally, candidates responded very well to this question.

A few candidates failed to clarify their final response, thus giving two answers. It should be noted that if a candidate changes their mind about their original intended response, they should clearly cross out their first answer. There should be absolutely no ambiguity regarding which answer is intended as the candidate's definitive response.

Exercise 5

Question 8

There was a mixed response to this question. Some responses provided were not always a grammatical fit and incorrect singular and plural nouns meant that some candidates could not be credited. There were a few questions that were not attempted by some candidates.

- (a) (i) This was fairly well attempted by the candidates. In many cases, the mark was lost because 'bare' was spelt as 'bear'. Quite a few candidates went for the distractors 'large body' and 'sharp beak'.
- (ii) This was generally well answered by most candidates. Spelling attempts which could not be credited were 'clives', 'clefs' and 'clifts'. Other incorrect responses were the distractors 'forests' and 'mountain ranges'.
- (iii) This question was extremely well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates wrote 'acids' or 'dead animals' and lost the mark while some candidates made spelling errors and wrote 'boons' or 'bowns'.
- (iv) There was a mixed level of success here and many candidates struggled with this question. All sorts of answers appeared here, e.g. 'shortage' and 'demand'. Some spelling attempts that could not be credited were 'competion' and 'competatiun'.
- (v) This was quite well attempted. 'Cleaners' was also accepted. Many candidates lost the mark by giving the singular form. Some wrote 'rubbish' or 'collectors' on their own and lost the mark. Some candidates had problems with spelling 'rubbish' and wrote 'rabbish' or 'robbish'.
- (b) (i) This was generally well attempted with many candidates giving the correct response 'attitude'. The following spelling attempts could not be credited: 'additude', 'atiude' and 'actitude'.
- (ii) This was fairly well answered although some candidates lost the mark by giving the singular form 'conflict'. Some incorrect responses were 'confidence' and 'attacks'. Some spelling attempts that could not be credited were 'conflix' and 'confilts'.
- (iii) There was a mixed level of success here. There were a lot of alternative answers given, e.g. 'plastic bottles', 'bulbs' and 'plastic walls'. A large number of candidates went for the distractors. Other responses that could not be accepted were 'paralines' and 'paranels'.
- (iv) This question proved to be difficult for many candidates and some candidates left it blank. The distractor 'symbol' was often written. Other responses that could not be credited were 'shades', 'passing' and 'shallow'.
- (v) This was the best attempted question in this part of the test. Majority of the candidates gave the correct response 'human development'. Many candidates wrote 'poison' or 'lack of habitat' and lost the mark. Some misspelt the word 'human'.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/51
Speaking

Key messages

- Administration and conduct of most of the tests were of a high standard.
- It is recommended that examiners use a timer to help ensure the timings for all parts of the test are followed.
- Recordings were generally of good quality. All audio files should be checked for quality before they are uploaded to Submit for Assessment.
- In **Part D**, the assessed part of the test, the best outcomes are achieved when examiners engage in a conversation with candidates. They should encourage candidates to expand their responses to individual prompts, linking open questions to what candidates have said in order for them to demonstrate their abilities.
- Internal moderation is required only when two or more examiners conduct the tests at the centre.

General comments

Part A

Most examiners introduced the centre, the candidate and test details appropriately. Most examiners also read out the instructions at the beginning of each test. When examiners tried to summarise the points or reword them, this sometimes meant that key information was omitted.

Part B

In general, examiners used the warm-ups effectively to help candidates feel at ease. They asked appropriate questions, which focused on hobbies and interests. The best examiners chose a topic card related to the interests expressed by the candidates during the warm-up. However, it appeared that some examiners had chosen the topic card before **Part B**, which should be avoided.

Part C

Most examiners announced the cards and ensured that candidates were given enough time to prepare. In a few cases, examiners said that they were giving out the card, but did not state the title of the card. In some tests, candidates were allowed to start **Part D** too soon, but the majority of examiners insisted on candidates using the full time at their disposal. When a candidate asked for clarification, the examiner often repeated the prompt without providing sufficient explanation.

Part D

In the majority of tests, **Part D** was conducted competently, and timing was within the guidelines. Most examiners attempted to engage with the candidates and to include the prompts in a natural way. The main issues occurred when examiners did not encourage candidates to develop the ideas of each individual prompt or did not ask open questions. A few examiners ran through the prompts and then were aware that they still needed to continue the discussion for a few more minutes. They then filled this time with questions of their own. Some examiners began the test with 'Would you like to start?' rather than addressing the topic card themselves, which can encourage monologues. In some tests, the introductory sentence was used as an extra prompt, which sometimes confused candidates.

Application of the marking criteria

Structure – This criterion was not always applied accurately. The main difficulty seemed to arise when deciding on a mark for candidates who spoke accurately, but without much ambition or for candidates who had a lot of ambition but made a lot of errors. There was a tendency to be quite severe when assessing candidates who otherwise scored high marks overall, perhaps suggesting that examiners focused too much attention on errors.

Vocabulary – On the whole, examiners understood the level of vocabulary expected at this level and applied the marking criteria well. There was a tendency to be slightly generous when assessing performance in the higher mark range, with examiners not appearing to notice that shades of meaning and sophisticated ideas were not being communicated. There were some instances with stronger candidates where examiners did not award marks for the appropriate use of idioms, phrasal verbs and collocations.

Development and Fluency – This was the most accurately marked criterion. There was a tendency for centres to be severe towards less able candidates and generous towards the more able candidates. Candidates who spoke with deliberation and took their time to choose more sophisticated vocabulary and include a range of structures, were often marked down, which might suggest that ‘fluent’ was perhaps understood to mean ‘fast’.

Administration

There were few clerical errors or issues with initial submission on Submit for Assessment. Some centres submitted all their recordings rather than selecting a sample of appropriate size. Sometimes the opposite was the case: deficient or unrepresentative samples were uploaded. Most recordings were of good quality. Centres should ensure that all marks entered are transferred correctly and follow guidelines for uploading documents and audio tracks.

Internal moderation

Where applicable, most centres conducted internal moderation to ensure a correct rank order for all candidates. Centres need to indicate that internal moderation has occurred and record all changes made to the marks for individual assessment criteria following it. Some centres with only one examiner conducted internal moderation when this was not necessary.

Comments on specific topic cards

Card A – Writing by hand

This topic was not very popular. The few candidates sampled were able to offer examples of different situations when they wrote something by hand in the past, often referring to special occasions such as writing a birthday card or a letter when on holiday. Prompt 2 allowed candidates to use emphatic language, e.g. *‘Texting and chatting is definitely faster’* and a range of descriptive adjectives, e.g. *‘convenient and user-friendly’*. Stronger candidates used the second conditional with control when addressing prompt 3. Prompt 4 encouraged candidates to express opinions and explore ideas around personality, age and background education. In response to prompt 5, many candidates offered some well-argued ideas about accessibility and convenience of using electronic devices for writing.

Card B – Staying at home

In response to prompt 1, candidates talked about special occasions using specific time frames as sentence starters, e.g. *‘last year’*, *‘about a month ago’*. When addressing the second part of the prompt, candidates were able to provide developed narrative points. Responses to prompt 2 were often confident and included comparatives such as *‘more convenient’*, *‘greater choice’*. For prompt 3 candidates were able to argue for and against, providing detailed reasons for their choices. Prompt 4 elicited measured responses, e.g. *‘it depends’*. Conditional clauses were often employed to consider different circumstances. Responses to prompt 5 included details of the experience of the pandemic as evidence of societal change but also commented on the human need for interaction with real people.

Card C – New beginnings

This was a popular topic. When addressing prompt 1, many candidates talked about feelings of anxiety about leaving friends, but others expressed excitement about discovering a new environment. Opinion was divided for prompt 2; on one hand new people give you another point of view but on the other hand it is more comfortable to stick with people you know who have similar interests. Advantages of moving to a new home (prompt 3) included learning how to adapt and a willingness to try new things and overcome fears. Some candidates said that they did not like change and worried about not being made welcome. In response to prompt 4, candidates agreed that there should be opportunities to return to education, whether it was to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills, to gain knowledge of a new field or skill such as learning a new language or to broaden your knowledge and improve job opportunities. Prompt 5 allowed candidates to explain that it was important to experience new things and learn to eat different food, but most candidates found it hard to imagine living on a different planet. It was felt that despite scientific and technological advances, it was an impossibility.

Card D – Mealtimes

This card was frequently selected. When responding to prompt 1, stronger candidates gave many reasons why they enjoyed a particular meal. Prompt 2 allowed candidates to give a simple description of a family celebration meal, which was developed by stronger candidates to include detailed memories. Many used a range of past tenses as well as linking words, e.g. '*... we were eating ... and therefore we could not*'. Prompt 3 split candidates' opinion, and allowed them to express their feelings, with stronger candidates using comparative expressions to support their views, e.g. '*you feel more relaxed*', '*you taste the food more*'. In response to prompt 4, most candidates agreed that children should not be allowed to eat what they want. Many candidates made references to their own childhood experiences. A good range of modals and linking words was used, together with conditionals to express what would happen, as well as comparatives and superlatives. Prompt 5 elicited more conditionals and comparisons, as well as future tenses.

Card E – Scientists

All candidates were able to recall a science lesson in some detail. This first prompt elicited some great scientific vocabulary and passive structures. In response to prompt 2, candidates justified wanting to be a scientist by giving examples of scientists in the past and commenting on possible future developments in science. For prompt 3 candidates thought that science could make people's lives better, but that more could be done in the future, and they often discussed climate change and the role that scientists played in ending the Covid-19 pandemic. It encouraged the use of conditionals, superlatives and modal verbs. Prompt 4 divided opinion and encouraged the use of comparative structures, with most candidates feeling that art and science are equally important subjects. Prompt 5 elicited the use of comparatives and modal verbs. There was a more radical response in favour of scientists, pointing out the '*huge disparity between the professions*', '*All that a sports person does is training – not as tough as mental labour*'. Many candidates felt that scientists '*were born for it, whereas sports stars train for it*'. This card produced some excellent topic-related vocabulary and collocations, e.g. '*substance*', '*evolved*', '*gravity*', '*astronomy*', '*modified*'.

Card F – Friends

This card was frequently used. Candidates were able to talk in great detail for the first two prompts, using present and past structures to tell anecdotes from their lives. Prompt 3 elicited vocabulary such as '*honesty*', '*loyalty*', '*respect*', '*trustworthy*', '*supportive*' '*relying*'. Responses to prompt 4 included a range of modals and conditionals, and comments about dangers associated with talking to people online. Candidates gave opinions and anecdotes about things that had happened to them or to their friends. Prompt 5 elicited lively and strong responses to the notion of whether friends should argue with each other. The general opinion was that it is human nature to have different opinions and argue with friends. Most candidates agreed that true friends '*figure out*' solutions together.

Card G – Sounds

Candidates used some sophisticated vocabulary in response to prompt 1, e.g. '*rustling*', '*crunching*', '*chirping*', '*whistling*'. Stronger candidates were able to add detail, often referring to their emotions; '*because they have a very deep and aggressive tone that makes me feel...*' Most candidates said that sounds help them to concentrate, relax and '*restore our inner peace*'. Prompt 3 divided opinion – background music in shops was thought to be '*persuasive*' if it is not intrusive. Comparative expressions and modal verbs were used to describe various effects of music on shoppers. Almost all candidates agreed with prompt 4 and used a range of modals to express what should be done to reduce noise pollution. Prompt 4 also enabled strong

candidates to use passive structures. For prompt 5 candidates used a range of comparative structures and modals to differentiate between the sounds of nature and music, pointing out that it depended on what was being heard. Many candidates used a range of sophisticated vocabulary, e.g. *'assimilate', 'meditation', 'detox', 'evolving', 'overwhelming', 'crucial'*,

Card H – Do it again

When discussing prompt 1, candidates were able to use narrative tenses to share a personal experience. Prompt 2 and prompt 3 elicited the use of comparatives, adverbs of frequency and linking phrases, such as *'on the other hand'* and *'every now and then'*. Prompt 3 gave candidates the opportunity to describe their own experiences of learning new skills using phrases such as *'to reach a goal', 'master something'* and *'a skill you want to perfect'*. Candidates spoke about dancing, skateboarding and playing an instrument, and most agreed that *'practice makes perfect'*. All candidates could give an opinion for prompt 4 with some discussing different ways of reading and viewing and giving personal examples. Responses to prompt 5 were often philosophical, with most candidates preferring to discover new places. This prompt elicited the use of vocabulary linked to places and travel, e.g. *'environment', 'safe place', 'adventure'* and *'explore'*.

Card I – A space of your own

This was a popular card. For prompt 1 most candidates named their bedroom as their favourite place and were able to give reasons for choosing it. Present tense, modals verbs and a range of relevant adjectives, such as *'cosy', 'welcoming', 'comfortable', 'relaxing'* were used to describe the favourite room. In response to prompt 2, candidates discussed how the school environment can aid concentration (*'interactive', 'informal way to learn', 'dynamic', 'online lessons'*). For prompt 3 candidates felt that it is not the place that affects someone, rather the people surrounding you in that place. When responding to prompt 4, candidates talked about existing places like parks or friends' houses as the best places for young people to meet. There was a strong consensus opposing the view in prompt 5 that fans should be allowed visit celebrities. Candidates seemed to think that privacy was important: *'they are public figures, but they are also normal people'*. The last prompt elicited a range of appropriate vocabulary, e.g. *'privacy', 'security', 'stalking'*.

Card J – Travelling

This card was often selected by examiners. All candidates were able to describe a journey, with stronger candidates employing a range of narrative tenses and complex sentences (e.g. *'while we were waiting ... had already left'*) and adjectives (e.g. *'crowded', 'noisy', 'exciting', 'polluting'*). Candidates used modal verbs to talk about the advantages and disadvantages of tourism, saying that it can be annoying for locals, but it provides job opportunities and brings business to the area. For prompt 4 most candidates felt that despite learning a lot through the internet and social media, it was better to encounter cultures by actually experiencing them. In response to prompt 5, some candidate said that returning home was the best part of a holiday (e.g., *'You will not be comfortable anywhere but your house'*), with many expressing strong emotions (e.g., *'I hate that part', 'I used to cry'*). Strong candidates were able to compare and contrast ideas of familiarity and adventure.

Card K – Social skills

For prompt 1 candidates named their parents and friends as people whose company they enjoyed most. Prompt 2 elicited examples of students working well in a school project (e.g. *'coming together', 'connect with other candidates'*) and giving group presentations. Stronger candidates developed ideas about social skills for prompt 3 and prompt 4, using a range of appropriate vocabulary, with some shades of meaning expressed when talking about patience, emotional intelligence and networking skills. Prompt 3 elicited modal verbs and conditionals to talk about different jobs including retail workers, teachers, actors, journalists and those working in marketing and tourism. Some candidates said that almost all jobs require good social skills. For prompt 5 many candidates drew on personal experience, especially since the pandemic, and used it to speculate about future possibilities using a range of modals and conditionals; ideas included humans being *'social creatures'* and needing to *'connect with others'*.

Card L – Life online

This card was frequently chosen. Candidates generally found it easy to describe what they did when they last went online in response to prompt 1. Prompts 2 and 3 allowed them to talk about the past and to compare and contrast, sometimes using complex structures and a range of tenses (*'when I was younger, I used to have a limit, but now I spend all day online', 'My younger self would be shocked at how much time I spend online.'*). Prompt 4 allowed candidates to speculate about the future when saying that people are

already doing all of their shopping online. They talked about the things which are better bought in person (mainly clothes and shoes) and why, and the difficulty of returns. Several candidates mentioned being scammed when shopping online. In response to prompt 5, some candidates talked about the impact of spending a lot of time online in lockdown, while others took this an opportunity to summarise some of the ideas already discussed.

Card M – A special gift

In response to prompt 1, candidates spoke specifically of gifts they would like to receive but, more generally, said that it is the thought that counts and any gift is appreciated. Prompts 2 and 3 allowed candidates to use modal verbs to talk about possibilities and the right thing to do. There were heart-warming discussions on the desire to treat friends and family for prompt 2, and in a few cases, candidates discussed how items they made themselves were the most meaningful gifts. Prompt 3 often elicited stories about gifts which reminded candidates of the person who had given it, so it should always be kept. For prompt 4 the idea that money would be well-received divided opinion, with some learners saying that a gift shows more feeling, whereas others stated that with money you can save for a bigger item. Ideas such as shipping costs and the possibility of fraud were discussed as possible drawbacks for prompt 5.

Card N – Choosing

When responding to prompt 1, candidates talked about past difficulties in choosing between schools, different courses of study, and even different sports or hobbies. The role of parents or family in influencing such choices was often included in the discussion. Prompt 2 allowed candidates to speculate not only about who they would go on a long trip with, but where and what they would do there. In response to prompt 3, candidates often talked about the way in which social media can present an idealised version of people's lives. Prompts 4 and 5 allowed candidates to compare and contrast, and to talk about what is the right thing to do, and why.

Card O – Relaxing

This was a topic of immediate relevance to many candidates, who talked about the importance of relaxing between or after the exams. The importance of sleep was often mentioned, as was spending time with friends or being with family members. Prompt 2 was often answered with an anecdote about a holiday or trip. When responding to prompt 3, many candidates expressed concerns about the impact of the excessive use of electronic devices on sleep, and talked about what they had done to reduce this, while others spoke in favour of such devices allowing them to distract themselves by watching movies or playing games. Prompt 4 usually elicited responses that aimed at a compromise: some degree of freedom of individual choice for themselves, while acknowledging the continuing importance of parental input. Prompt 5 led to candidates expressing views about what changes should be made and why (using conditionals and modal verbs), sometimes with comparisons being made with other schools.