

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/11
Reading Passages (Core)

Key Messages

- It is important to read both passages and questions carefully and to focus on the key words in the questions.
- The writer's effect question (**Question 1(h)**) requires concentration on defining the *word* in italics in the first part of the question, and explaining the overall effect of the *whole phrase* in the second part.
- Careful reading of introductions to the passages is important. It was necessary to read the information carefully in the introduction to **Question 2** to understand the role of Anil.
- Careful attention to basic punctuation and grammar is important when answering **Questions 2** and **3**.

General Comments

In general, candidates at all levels of achievement were able to engage successfully with the question paper. Nearly all candidates coped successfully with the revised format of the exam although a very small minority made the error of answering the questions in relation to the wrong text. The introduction of a discrete summary task based on a second reading passage meant that summary skills were tested more specifically than in previous examination series, and with added scaffolding for candidates' responses. The most successful responses showed clear awareness of the wording of the question and precisely selected relevant points as their notes to **Question 3(a)** and then turned these into a well organised summary clearly focused on conveying the key points concisely and objectively in **Question 3(b)**. The less successful responses identified relevant details in **Question 3(a)**, but appeared not to have grasped fully the principles of summary writing, resulting in lengthy and unfocused summaries for **Question 3(b)**. The two parts of the summary task are now worth 30 per cent of the total marks for this paper and Centres are advised to ensure that their candidates are well prepared with the techniques to answer this task successfully.

Most responses to **Question 2** indicated that candidates were interested in the subject matter of Passage A and were able to respond at sufficient length. The changes in the paper's format mean that twice as many marks are now available for Reading than are given to Written Expression. It is, therefore, important that candidates understand that this is a response to reading question and that the points that they make in their writing must refer to details in the original passage and any development of these points should derive from these points or other suggestions that can logically be inferred from the original. A significant number of candidates achieved this very successfully and produced convincing and interesting accounts of a day in the life of Anil and his thoughts about the job he was doing. Less successful responses, however, revealed an incomplete understanding of some of the basic details of the passage and question: in particular, the assumption that Bandhavgarh National Park was a zoo. A significant number of responses were written from the point of view of Kuttapan, the mahout, rather than from that of Anil, the guide (a few also wrote as if they were Gautam, without noticing that he was an elephant).

It is important to emphasise that although there is now a maximum of only five marks available for Written Expression for **Question 2**, candidates should, nevertheless, take care in structuring their writing through paragraphs and concentrating on making their writing technically accurate – in particular, ensuring that sentences are demarcated by full stops and not commas, and that elementary vocabulary is spelt correctly and consistently. A significant number of responses showed real quality of sophisticated thought and logic.

Most candidates managed their time well and produced responses of adequate length to all questions; there were, however, a minority who made no response to **Question 3(b)**, the last question in the paper, and others where the **Question 3(b)** responses were brief and rushed.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question for the candidates, with the majority securing at least one mark. Most were able to identify that Kuttapan was the elephant driver or keeper, often in their own words, such as 'rider' or 'owner'. His expertise with tigers was less frequently identified or only expressed in general terms such as mentioning that he was an 'expert' without making it clear where his expertise lay. A question such as this that carries a maximum of two marks requires two distinct points to be identified for a fully correct answer.
- (b) Most candidates were able to gain one mark by focusing on the imprint left by the tiger. Some candidates, however, thought that the passage referred to a dead tiger lying in the road, which indicated a misreading of the source material and could not be rewarded. Many candidates did not address the significance of '*recently*' in the question – those that were successful correctly identified that nothing had used the road/passed over the marks since they had been made.
- (c) There were two possible six-word phrases which could have been chosen to gain the one mark for this question: 'announcing the presence of a predator' and 'the alarm call of the chital'. The second phrase was the more popular but many candidates identified the first phrase successfully. Candidates should be encouraged to read the wording of questions carefully; quite a significant number misread this question as 'six-letter word' and answered 'varoom' as a result. A few also responded with answers consisting of more than six words and therefore did not gain the mark, for example, 'bleep, bleep, the alarm call of the chital'. A few candidates offered a list of six separate words selected from the passage and not a six-word phrase.
- (d) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly by focusing on 'fear', 'anxiety', 'tension' and other acceptable synonyms (such as 'frightened', 'anxious', 'terrified', 'petrified', 'tense', 'on edge'). Some, however, identified 'excitement' only. 'Excitement' on its own was not considered sufficient to convey the feelings of the visitors to the national park because the question clearly is related to the presence of the tiger and the tourists' feelings about it.
- (e) Most candidates successfully gained one mark for this question, commenting confidently on the behaviour of the wolves. Correct comments on the wolves' attitude, however, were less frequent. Many said that the wolves were scared or upset but omitted to say how that fear was demonstrated by their behaviour. This question required candidates to use information from paragraph *four*. Not all followed this instruction fully and attempted to use information from the final paragraph, interpreting the wolves' behaviour as being prompted by an instinct to protect their young (aggressively) rather than suggesting fear. Some candidates described the behaviour of the tiger and not that of the wolves.
- (f) This was the first question on the paper that asked for comment on the writer's use of words. The majority of candidates were able to identify that the people in the jeep were waiting to see the outcome of the meeting between the wolves and the tiger and were variously described as 'anxious', 'concerned', 'excited', and 'eager' to see the anticipated conflict between the animals. The more successful responses showed greater understanding of the 'silent drama' by referring to 'fascination' and 'intrigue' and the most successful showed full appreciation of the metaphor by saying that the experience was 'similar to watching a gladiator fight in Rome' or 'watching what was happening as if it were a TV drama'. Centres are advised to encourage future candidates to work on ways of appreciating the effects of imagery used by a writer.
- (g) Most candidates were aware that this question required comment on specific physical behaviour and the majority gained the one mark available. Most were able to identify the twitching of muscles and/or the turning of the head. Some responses referred to the tiger turning but made no reference to his head. This information was insufficiently precise for a mark to be awarded as such a response could be attributed to the end of paragraph four where the 'the tiger spins around on the road'. It is important that candidates draw their answer from the paragraph or line(s) indicated in the question and by doing so make sure its meaning is specific and unequivocal.
- (h) The format of the 'writer's effect' question has changed from previous examination series. The first part of the question tests a candidate's understanding of the meaning of specific words used in the passage. The words that should be explained are italicised in the phrases quoted at the beginning of the question and the candidate should explain their meaning in the context in which they are

used. The explanation may take the form of a one word synonym, an explanatory sentence or phrase or even an appropriate exemplification of their meaning. The second part of the question requires a comment on how the writer uses language *in the whole phrase* to create a particular effect in the mind of the reader (this is clearly stated in the wording of this part of the question). Centres are strongly encouraged to focus on developing future candidates' working vocabulary and understanding of how different words with similar meanings can carry a range of different associations and implications. The following comments refer to the specific words that candidates were required to explain for part (i):

- *forays* – some answers did identify acceptable connotations such as 'scouting', 'expedition' and 'excursion'.
- *casual* – many candidates identified the 'normality' and the 'unconcerned', 'everyday' routine stroll of the tiger.
- *suspension* – although many candidates correctly identified the 'stopping' or 'withholding' of breath, quite a number misread 'suspension' for 'suspense' and answered accordingly. Answers commonly, quite acceptably, were given as sentences as opposed to single word answers and answers such as 'They took a deep breath because they were scared' were credited with the mark.
- *scampers* – many responses understood the 'hurrying' aspect of scampers with references to speed, running and so on. A significant number, however, thought it meant to 'creep up slowly'.

As mentioned above, a productive area of focus for all Centres is to explore how to respond relevantly to this type of question, by commenting appropriately on the reasons for the writer's choice of language.

Question 2: Reading

Most candidates responded well to the passage and were able to create a convincing voice for Anil. The more successful answers were those that dealt with each bullet point in turn in order to structure their response. Some candidates, however, were so concerned with creating Anil's voice that they focused on this rather than selecting appropriate details from the text. Relatively few candidates omitted to say why they found their job rewarding – working with animals – but quite a number merely said it was rewarding rather than give reasons for their feelings. There were many responses which successfully attempted a clever combination of material from the passage with the candidate's own ideas. Less successful responses addressed all bullet points in such general terms that it was unclear whether they had actually used the original passage in creating their answer. Quite a number of candidates wrote fairly generalised accounts which certainly developed ideas about tourists and visitors but frequently did not relate the assertions to particular examples. The least successful responses merely copied from or summarised the account in the passage. In preparation for future examinations, it would be worth Centres reminding their candidates that, although there is a certain amount of creativity involved in this response, the question is testing the extent of each candidate's understanding of the text. Of the 50 marks available on the paper, 40 (i.e. 80 per cent) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that their responses are firmly grounded in the texts under analysis.

Among the positive points noted in the candidates' performances were the following:

- Good use of idioms and appropriate jargon: 'When that's done I will do a ride through the park, scouting for any sick or injured animals'; 'my patience with them (tourists) runs thin'; (children) 'brimming with questions, thirsting for more knowledge on their favourite species'; 'Being allowed to view nature run its course on a daily basis is a fantastic sight to behold'; 'This job requires both a soft touch and a firm hand. These animals might be endangered, but they are far from domestic house cats.'
- Good use of facts from the text: 'A typical day of mine would consist of meeting the tiger expert, Kuttapan, for information on the possible locations of tigers that morning.'
- Good discussion of the various reactions of the tourists: some were irritating (e.g. more keen to take photos than to observe the wild animals), rude or snobby, whilst others gave more positive impressions (interested in/engaged or blown away by the wildlife/what they were seeing, etc.).
- Appropriate use of form and register.

Question 2: Written Expression

Most candidates wrote enthusiastically, managing to create a convincing voice for Anil. The focus of the descriptors for Written Expression is now on organisation of material, range of appropriate vocabulary, and

appropriate register and this enabled many candidates to score quite highly on this aspect even when there were serious errors in spelling and punctuation, for example. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. Paragraphs, generally, were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide and some candidates wrote eloquently and accurately throughout. The main limitation of candidates' linguistic expression was in sentence structure, largely as a result of comma splicing.

Question 3(a): Summary Points

Most candidates scored reasonably well on this task and successfully identified the reasons why tigers are endangered and what was being done to rectify the situation. The question did not require own words and accordingly many candidates copied sentences and phrases from the passage. Many candidates did not sequence points under the two sections or divide the ten points equally, which again was not asked for in the question but which might have been of help when writing their response to part (b). Some candidates, however, did not write enough in their selected responses so the context of the point was unclear and resulted in the marks not being given. One/two word answers were rewarded if the context was clear such as in 'climate change' but 'save their habitat' and 'body parts' were not credited as they were considered to be too vague. Future candidates should be encouraged to make sure that they have identified the essence of a point when answering in their own words and that the point they have identified is not generic.

Candidates are advised to:

- Make a clear statement of points and not join them together.
- Avoid repetition – the statement of the same point twice, using slightly different words.
- Only make one point per line.
- Make sure that where an answer extends beyond the allocated space for a point, it is clearly identified that it is part of that point.
- Avoid adding extra points to the grid over and above the ten answer rows printed on the answer paper.

Some candidates tended to write as many points as possible on the first line, which was often detrimental to their score on this question.

In all, there were 13 relevant points that could have been made in response to this question:

Why tigers are an endangered species

- only 3,200 left in the world/population fallen by 95% in last hundred years
- they are hunted/killed (by poachers for their skins/body parts)
- ...because there is a demand in some cultures for luxury/medical items from tigers
- the tigers' food supply is reduced/poachers also kill natural prey of tigers
- the tigers' habitat is reduced/destroyed by the need for timber, agriculture, road building etc/tigers are forced into smaller living area
- climate change/rising sea levels

What is being done

- WWF intend to increase pressure
- to classify tigers as one of the (ten) most endangered species
- to increase patrols
- (work with governments) to eradicate poaching/illegal trade in tiger skins etc.
- (work with governments) to enforce better forest management/protect the environment
- (work with governments) to compensate farmers whose livestock are killed by tigers
- (work with governments) to discourage farmers from hunting tigers that kill livestock

Question 3(b): Summary

In general, the majority of candidates showed that they had a sound understanding of the passage, used the scaffolding provided in part (a), and most achieved marks in the Band 3–2 range. It is important when answering this question that summaries are clearly focused on the specific points required by the question and that candidates avoid irrelevance, repetition and subjective comment in their responses. The most successful attempts at this question competently used the points identified in **Question 3(a)** to build a focused response which was concise and showed the ability to achieve synthesis of one point with another.

Although key phrases were often lifted from the passage, there was little evidence of indiscriminate copying from the text. It is hoped that in future examination series as candidates become more at ease with the requirements of this important skill, the number producing focused and concise responses will rapidly increase.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12

Reading Passages (Core)

Key Messages

- It is important to read both passages and questions carefully and to focus on the key words in the questions.
- The writer's effect **Question 1(g)** requires concentration on defining the *word* in italics in the first part of the question, and explaining the overall effect of the *whole phrase* in the second part.
- Careful reading of introductions to the passages is important.
- Careful attention to basic punctuation and grammar is important when answering **Questions 2 and 3**.

General Comments

In general, candidates at all levels of achievement were able to engage successfully with the question paper. Nearly all candidates coped successfully with the revised format of the exam although a very small minority made the error of answering the questions in relation to the wrong text. The introduction of a discrete summary task based on a second reading passage meant that summary skills were tested more specifically than in previous examination series, and with added scaffolding for candidates' responses. The most successful showed clear awareness of the wording of the question and precisely selected relevant points as their notes to **3(a)** and then turned these into a well organised summary clearly focused on conveying the key points concisely and objectively in **3(b)**. There were, however, a number of less successful responses identified relevant details in **3(a)**, but appeared not to have grasped fully the principles of summary writing, resulting in lengthy and frequently unfocused summaries for **3(b)**. The two parts of the summary task are now worth 30 per cent of the total marks for this paper and Centres are advised to ensure that their candidates are well prepared with the techniques to answer this task successfully.

Most responses to **Question 2** indicated that candidates were interested in the subject matter of Passage A and were able to respond at sufficient length. The changes in the paper's format mean that twice as many marks are now available for Reading than are given to Written Expression. It is, therefore, important that candidates understand that this is a response to reading question and that the points that they make in their writing must refer to details in the original passage and any development of these points should derive from these points or other suggestions that can logically be inferred from the original. A significant number of candidates achieved this very successfully and produced convincing and interesting letters to a carefully chosen public figure and put forward realistic suggestions as to the help that the addressee might provide. Less successful responses, however, revealed an incomplete understanding of the task or simply repeated the details much as reported in the original passage. In order to cover all the requirements of this task the candidate had to address their letter to someone who has a degree of public attention and suggest that they do more than make a donation.

It is important to emphasise that although there is now a maximum of only five marks available for Written Expression for **Question 2**, candidates should, nevertheless, take care in structuring their writing through paragraphs and concentrating on making their writing technically accurate – in particular, ensuring that sentences are demarcated by full stops and not commas, and that elementary vocabulary is spelt correctly and consistently. A significant number of responses showed real quality of sophisticated thought and made credible suggestions for supporting their campaign.

Most candidates managed their time well and produced responses of adequate length to all questions; there were, however, a minority who made no response to **3(b)**, the last question in the paper, and others where the **3(b)** responses were brief and obviously rushed.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question for the candidates, with the majority securing at least one mark. Most were able to identify that the writer was wary of the rhino being a dangerous animal (scared or excited were also acceptable). However, significantly fewer candidates identified that the writer was aware (or even surprised) by its vulnerability.
- (b) The majority of candidates got the one mark available for this question by commenting that the writer had been asked by the nature reserve not to reveal its location because this would help the poachers to find it. A number of candidates put just 'because of poachers' which was not credited as it did not clearly explain the reason for reserve's concern.
- (c) Again the majority of candidates gained one mark for this question. In this case it was almost equally split between those who explained 'relics' as something left over and those who explained 'pre-history' as being from a time before human beings existed. It is worth noting in this instance that the full marks required both these points and it is important for candidates to ensure that they have given an explanation that encompasses the full phrase quoted in the task.
- (d) The response to this task was very similar to that mentioned in **Question 1(c)** above. The majority of candidates gained one mark; some for commenting on the writer being pleased to see the rhino in their natural habitat (rather than a zoo) and others by identifying that it was rare to see one (they are relics) and therefore have an iconic status. As mentioned above the full marks for this question required both points and it is important that candidates to provide sufficient detail to gain both.
- (e) There were three possible points for this task and any two would gain the two marks available. Many candidates gained two marks. The two most frequently given points were: the park is securely guarded and the rhino's horns are regularly trimmed. The third possible point, that a reasonable number of candidates made, is that the park provides treats to attract the rhinos in order to check on their wellbeing. There were several candidates who only made the first part of this point (about giving them treats) – this was considered not enough to gain a mark as it was important to explain the purpose intended in giving the treats.
- (f) This was a two mark question for which the majority of candidates gained one mark. Most correctly commented that the writer described the rhinos as ignoring the jeep 'gloriously' because of their arrogance towards and/or contempt for (or lack of interest in) the tourists. Few candidates made any comment on this behaviour allowing the writer to observe the rhinos in their natural state.
- (g) The format of the 'writer's effect' question has changed from previous examination. The first part of the question tests a candidate's understanding of the meaning of specific words used in the passage. The words that should be explained are italicised in the phrases quoted at the beginning of the question and the candidate should explain their meaning in the context in which they are used. The explanation may take the form of a one word synonym, an explanatory sentence or phrase or even an appropriate exemplification of their meaning. The second part of the question requires a comment on how the writer uses language *in the whole phrase* to create a particular effect in the mind of the reader (this is clearly stated in the wording of this part of the question). Centres are strongly encouraged to focus on developing future candidates' working vocabulary and understanding of how different words with similar meanings can carry a range of different associations and implications. The following comments refer to the specific words that candidates were required to explain for part (i):
- *munching* – most candidates understood that this was something to do with eating, but fewer qualified that by commenting that it might be eating 'noisily' or 'with relish'. Candidates had to put more than 'eating' to gain the mark.
 - *husky* – a good number of candidates were able to comment to the effect that this meant that the sound made by the rhinos was 'rasping', 'harsh' or like heavy breathing.

- *intrusion* – many candidates correctly identified that this word implies ‘forced entry’ or an unwelcome visitor.
- *toting* – very few candidates who chose this word were able to explain its use to indicate the carrying of something heavy or awkward to hold.

As mentioned above, a productive area of focus for all Centres is to explore how to respond relevantly to this type of question, by commenting appropriately on the reasons for the writer’s choice of language.

Question 2: Reading

Most candidates responded well to the passage and were able to create a convincing letter to a well-chosen public figure and to find an appropriate register. Some chose world leaders (President Obama was a popular choice) and some chose celebrity figures – sometimes ones that were known for high profile charity work. All of these were acceptable addressees; however some candidates left the name out or started ‘Dear Sir’ which suggests more careful reading of the task was required. The more successful answers were those that dealt with each bullet point in turn in order to structure their response. Some candidates, however, were overly concerned with recounting the trip as described in the source passage and lacked a sense of writing on behalf of a campaign group. Relatively few candidates omitted to say why they were writing to the chosen addressee, but quite a number merely asked for a donation rather than going into detail about how support from a high profile figure could be useful. There were many responses which successfully attempted a clever combination of material from the passage with the candidate’s own ideas. Less successful responses addressed all bullet points, but in such general terms that it was unclear whether they had actually used the original passage in creating their answer. Quite a number of candidates wrote fairly generalised accounts which certainly developed ideas about measures taken to protect the rhinos, but did not develop any ideas about what might be done with extra support. The least successful responses merely copied from or summarised the account in the passage. In preparation for future examinations, it would be worth Centres reminding their candidates that, although there is a certain amount of creativity involved in this response, the question is testing the extent of each candidate’s understanding of the text. Of the 50 marks available on the paper, 40 (i.e. 80 per cent) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that their responses are firmly grounded in the texts under analysis.

Among the positive points noted in the candidates’ performances were the following:

- Good use of facts from the text: many candidates showed a good understanding of the rhinos as being one of a number of endangered creatures and made emotive appeals about a future world without such creatures which showed clear understanding of the impression made by the rhinos on the writer of the original passage.
- Ability to convey convincingly various reactions in the original passage to the tourists’ attitudes to the creatures and to rhinos’ lack of interest in the tourists.
- Appropriate use of form and register.

Question 2: Written Expression

Most candidates wrote enthusiastically, managing to create a convincing voice for someone committed to protecting endangered creatures in the wild. The focus of the descriptors for Written Expression is now on organisation of material, range of appropriate vocabulary, and appropriate register and this enabled many candidates to score quite highly on this aspect even when there were serious errors in spelling and punctuation, for example. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. Paragraphs, generally, were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide and some candidates wrote eloquently and accurately throughout. The main limitation of candidates’ linguistic expression, however, was in sentence structure, largely as a result of comma splicing.

Question 3(a): Summary Points

Most candidates scored reasonably well on this task and successfully identified the reasons why the killing of rhinos is escalating and what was being done to rectify the situation. The question did not require own words and accordingly many candidates copied sentences and phrases from the passage. Many candidates did not sequence points under the two sections or divide the 10 points equally which again was not asked for in the question but which might have been of help when writing their response to part (b). Some candidates, however, did not write enough in their selected responses so the context of the point was unclear and resulted in the marks not being given. For example, it was important to distinguish with several of the points whether it was a point about the park rangers or the poachers. Thus 'use helicopters', 'wear Park's uniform' were not sufficiently clear to gain a mark. One / two word answers were rewarded if the context was clear such as in 'more patrols' – something that would clearly relate to Park rangers. The mark scheme clearly identifies those points which require specific references – the majority of points including the wording either: 'poachers' or 'park'. Future candidates should be encouraged to make sure that they have identified the essence of a point when answering in their own words and that the point they have identified is not generic. It is also worth being clear that while these are described as 'Notes', it is necessary to make each one a sufficiently detailed note. There was a reasonable spread of points identified by the candidates as a whole with no particular one causing problems. However, the a major issue was conflating two or more points: again it is worth, when preparing candidates for this task being clear that there is only one mark to be gained in each line on the answer booklet (to the maximum of 10).

Candidates are advised to:

- Make a clear statement of points and not join them together.
- Avoid repetition – the statement of the same point twice using slightly different words.
- Be clear about whether the point relates to the poachers or the rangers.
- Only make one point per line.
- Make sure that where an answer extends beyond the allocated space for a point, it is clearly identified that it is part of that point.
- Avoid adding extra points to the grid over and above the 10 answer rows printed on the answer paper.

Some candidates tended to write as many points as possible on the first line, which was often detrimental to their score on this question.

In all, there were 14 relevant points that could have been made in response to this question:

Why illegal killing rhinos is increasing:

- Poaching gangs are becoming highly organised
- Park covers a large area/is inaccessible
- Cannot be patrolled by vehicles
- Very few observation posts to watch poachers
- Park has insufficient number of rangers
- Poachers have sophisticated communication equipment
- Poachers wear Park's uniform to prevent recognition
- Poachers use helicopters
- Poachers have (tranquilising) darts/dart guns

What is being done

- Park has to ensure it is one step ahead of the poachers
- Park needs to increase staff numbers/number of patrols
- Park is improving security systems/technology
- Better training for/improve expertise of Park rangers and staff
- More intelligence gathering/pro-active operations/quicker response to emergencies.

Question 3(b): Summary

In general, the majority of candidates showed in their responses that they had a sound understanding of the passage, used the scaffolding provided in part **(a)**, and most achieved marks in the Band 3 – 2 range. It is important when answering this question that summaries are clearly focused on the specific points required by the question and that candidates avoid irrelevance, repetition and subjective comment in their responses. The most successful attempts at this question competently used the points identified in **3(a)** to build a focused response which was concise and showed the ability to achieve synthesis of one point with another.

Although key phrases were often lifted from the passage, there was little evidence of indiscriminate copying from the text and it is hoped that in examination series to come, as candidates become more at ease with the requirements of this important skill, the number producing focused and concise responses will rapidly increase.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/13
Reading Passages (Core)

Key Messages

- It is important to read both passages and questions carefully and to focus on the key words in the questions.
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- Careful reading of introductions to the passages is also important.
- Careful attention to basic punctuation and grammar is important when answering **Questions 2 and 3**.

General Comments

In general, candidates at all levels of achievement were able to engage successfully with the question paper. Nearly all candidates coped successfully with the revised format of the exam although a very small minority made the error of answering the questions in relation to the wrong text. The introduction of a discrete summary task based on a second reading passage meant that summary skills were tested more specifically than in previous examination series, with added scaffolding for candidates' responses. The most successful showed clear awareness of the wording of the question and precisely selected relevant points as their notes to **3(a)** and then turned these into a well organised summary clearly focused on conveying the key points concisely and objectively in **3(b)**. The less successful responses identified relevant details in **3(a)**, but appeared not to have grasped fully the principles of summary writing, resulting in lengthy and frequently unfocused summaries for **3(b)**. The two parts of the summary task are now worth 30 per cent of the total marks for this paper and Centres are advised to ensure that their candidates are well prepared with the techniques to answer this task successfully.

Most responses to **Question 2** indicated that candidates were interested in the subject matter of Passage 1 and were able to respond at sufficient length. The changes in the paper's format mean that twice as many marks are now available for Reading than are given to Written Expression. It is, therefore, important that candidates understand that this is a response to reading question and that the points that they make in their writing must refer to details in the original passage and any development of these points should derive from these points or other suggestions that can logically be inferred from the original. A significant number of candidates achieved this very successfully and produced convincing and interesting articles describing their experiences and going on to give clearly thought out advice about making such a trip. Less successful responses, however, revealed an incomplete understanding of some of the basic details of the passage or tended to simply repeat details from the original passage. A large number of responses showed at least some attempt to write in an appropriate style and register.

It is important to emphasise that although there is now a maximum of only five marks available for Written Expression for **Question 2**, candidates should, nevertheless, take care in structuring their writing through paragraphs and concentrating on making their writing technically accurate – in particular, ensuring that sentences are demarcated by full stops and not commas, and that elementary vocabulary is spelt correctly and consistently. A significant number of responses showed real quality of sophisticated thought and logic.

Most candidates managed their time well and produced responses of adequate length to all questions; there were, however, a minority who made no response to **3(b)**, the last question in the paper, and others where the **3(b)** responses were brief and obviously rushed.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) This proved to be an accessible question for the candidates with the majority securing the one mark available for 'hunter'.
- (b) This was also an accessible question and a large number of candidates gained two marks. The most commonly identified detail was that there are polar bear patrols. The second point was that there are large warning signs. It is worth commenting that a small number of candidates confused the details required for this task and those required for **1(c)**.
- (c) As with **1(b)** a large number of candidates identified the two points (that residents leave their doors unlocked and that they keep a loaded gun handy). However, a small number of candidates confused the details required for this question and for **1(b)**. Candidates should always read the questions carefully.
- (d) (i) Candidates had to offer a sufficiently detailed answer to get both marks. There were three possible points to make – that it is a large truck, it has a raised observation section and that is made from strong metal. Centres are encouraged to stress to future candidates that a question such as this, that carried a maximum of two marks, requires two distinct points to be identified for a fully correct answer.
- (ii) A large number of candidates correctly identified the essential point: that the observation section was high off the ground to prevent bears from jumping up.
- (e) Most candidates were able to gain one mark by focusing on the fact that the bear moved silently. However, very few made the further point that the writer was surprised when what had appeared to be a 'hump of snow turned out to be a bear'.
- (f) Again, a large number of candidates correctly commented on the writer being impressed by the apparent innocence of the bear's eyes. Very few made a further point that the writer found the experience awe inspiring, memorable or 'heart-stopping'. It is worth noting that although this might seem a very obvious point there is often a mark to be gained by stating the obvious (with the additional caveat, as above, that a two mark question does require two clear points).
- (g) The format of the 'writer's effect' question has changed from previous examination series. The first part of the question tests a candidate's understanding of the meaning of specific words used in the passage. The words that should be explained are italicised in the phrases quoted at the beginning of the question and the candidate should explain their meaning in the context in which they are used. The explanation may take the form of a one word synonym, an explanatory sentence or phrase or even an appropriate exemplification of their meaning. The second part of the question requires a comment on how the writer uses language *in the whole phrase* to create a particular effect in the mind of the reader (this is clearly stated in the wording of this part of the question). Centres are strongly encouraged to focus on developing future candidates' working vocabulary and understanding of how different words with similar meanings can carry a range of different associations and implications. The following comments refer to the specific words that candidates were required to explain for part (i):
- *Battered* – acceptable synonyms would be 'beat' or 'break down' or any word/phrase that implies use of force,
 - *Clambered* – for this word a perfectly acceptable synonym would be 'climbed'.
 - *Lounging* – another way of expressing this might be 'reclining in a leisurely manner'. A reasonable number of candidates put something to this effect and gained the mark. However, there were many candidates who did not know what the word meant and were not able to work that out from the context.
 - *Meandered* – this could be explained as 'wandering aimlessly'. As with the previous point a reasonable number of candidates managed to give a clear explanation, but there were many who did not understand the meaning of the word.

As mentioned above, a productive area of focus for all Centres is to explore how to respond relevantly to this type of question, by commenting appropriately on the reasons for the writer's choice of language.

Question 2: Reading

Most candidates responded well to the passage and were able to create a convincing voice. However, as the task required the candidates to write in the same voice as that of the original passage there was a tendency to rely a little too heavily on the original (especially in choice of vocabulary) in a lot of cases. The more successful answers were those that dealt with each bullet point in turn in order to structure their response. Some candidates, however, were too focused on the contents of the original to develop the ideas in response to the second and third bullets. There were, however, a reasonable number of responses that did step back from the content of the original to develop the ideas they had identified into a convincing piece of informative writing with a style suited to a magazine. A small number of less successful responses addressed all bullet points in such general terms that it was unclear whether they had actually used the original passage in creating their answer. The least successful responses merely copied from or summarised the account in the passage. In preparation for future examinations, it would be worth Centres reminding their candidates that, although there is a certain amount of creativity involved in this response, the question is testing the extent of each candidate's understanding of the text. Of the 50 marks available on the paper, 40 (i.e. 80 per cent) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that their responses are firmly grounded in the texts under analysis.

Among the positive points noted in the candidates' performances were the following:

- Good use of facts from the text and use of detail to give a convincingly personal response to the encounters with the bears.
- Good suggestions that might persuade readers to make a similar trip.
- Appropriate use of form and register.

Question 2: Written Expression

Most candidates wrote enthusiastically, managing to create a convincing account of the trip. The focus of the descriptors for Written Expression is now on organisation of material, range of appropriate vocabulary, and appropriate register and this enabled many candidates to score quite highly on this aspect even when there were serious errors in spelling and punctuation, for example. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. Paragraphs, generally, were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide and some candidates wrote eloquently and accurately throughout. The main limitation of candidates' linguistic expression, however, was in sentence structure, largely as a result of comma splicing.

Question 3(a): Summary Points

Most candidates scored reasonably well on this task and successfully identified what they had learned about Polar Bears and why they are endangered. The question did not require own words and many candidates copied sentences and phrases from the passage. Many candidates did not sequence points under the two sections or divide the 10 points equally which again was not asked for in the question but which might have been of help when writing their response to **3(b)**. Some candidates, however, did not write enough in their selected responses so the context of the point was unclear and resulted in the marks not being given. Some divided what was essentially one point over a number of answer spaces, for example, listing the diet as a series of individual points (point 7). One / two word answers were rewarded if the context was clear. Future candidates should be encouraged to make sure that they have identified the essence of a point when answering in their own words and that the point they have identified is not generic. It is also worth being clear that while these are described as 'Notes', it is necessary to make each one a sufficiently detailed note. There was a reasonable spread of points identified by the candidates as a whole with no particular one causing problems.

Candidates are advised to:

- Make a clear statement of points and not join them together.
- Avoid repetition – the statement of the same point twice, using slightly different words.
- Only make one point per line.
- Make sure that where an answer extends beyond the allocated space for a point, it is clearly identified that it is part of that point.

- Avoid adding extra points to the grid over and above the 10 answer rows printed on the answer paper.

Some candidates tended to write as many points as possible on the first line, which was often detrimental to their score on this question.

In all, there were 14 relevant points that could have been made in response to this question:

Information given about Polar Bears in the passage:

- Covered in insulating white fur
- Swift runners/cover great distances
- Expert swimmers
- Live in the Arctic
- Life span of c. 25 years
- Maximum of 25,000 in Arctic wilderness
- Eat a range of foods (e.g. fish, seal, grass, etc.)

Threats to their survival:

- First animal to be categorised as/endangered because of global warming/climate change
- Endangered by habitat loss
- Could become extinct
- Hunted for their hides/hides are very valuable
- Hunted for sport (from aeroplanes)
- Oil extraction in the Arctic Ocean poisons/pollutes seawaters and affects food supply
- Free roaming creatures so difficult to protect

Question 3(b): Summary

In general, the majority of candidates showed that they had a sound understanding of the passage, used the scaffolding provided in part (a), and most achieved marks in the Band 3– 2 range. It is important when answering this question that summaries are clearly focused on the specific points required by the question and that candidates avoid irrelevance, repetition and subjective comment in their responses. The most successful attempts at this question competently used the points identified in 3(a) to build a focused response which was concise and showed the ability to achieve synthesis of one point with another.

Although key phrases were often lifted from the passage, there was little evidence of indiscriminate copying from the text and it is hoped that in future examination series, as candidates become more at ease with the requirements of this important skill, the number producing focused and concise responses will rapidly increase.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading** (40 marks). In addition, there were up to ten marks available for **Writing**: five marks in **Question 1** and five marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read both passages very carefully, including any introduction offered to a passage
- read the questions carefully, paying attention to the guidance offered
- pay attention to each section of a question
- spend time planning responses to address the specific requirements of each of the tasks set
- use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- select only the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- check and edit their responses carefully
- plan the structure and sequence of the material in responses
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- ensure that ideas are developed and fully explained in **Question 1** and **Question 2**.

General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated familiarity with the demands of each task, along with an awareness of the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions. Responses covered the full range of bands for each question. Though there were occasional examples of candidates replaying the text and/or writing at a tangent rather than addressing the detail of tasks specifically, most appeared to have been entered for the appropriate tier and were able to demonstrate understanding of both tasks and texts.

Responses to the tasks suggested that candidates had found the passages accessible and engaging, had planned their use of time and had finished within the two hours. Instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question were extremely rare across the cohort as a whole. Most candidates had paid attention to the guidance offered with respect to the length of their answers and many appeared to find the numbering of the bullet points in the answer grid for **3(a)** a helpful reminder of the need to offer 15 points, one per line.

There were very few significant misunderstandings of the general content of the passages, though there was evidence that some candidates needed to pay closer attention to the detail of texts. For example, in responding to Passage A **Question 1**, a number of candidates muddled speakers, characters and ideas – referring variously to Anuja as a journalist, Dr Misha and/or a man. Careful attention to detail, including revisiting the passage to refine understanding, is essential if candidates are to offer convincing evidence of their reading skills at higher levels.

Copying was rarely an issue in **Question 1**, though on occasion when outlining arguments candidates were over-reliant on quotation from the passage. Replayng over-long sections in lieu of explanation of key ideas in their own words was a feature of a number of the less successful answers. Candidates are reminded that in order to demonstrate the skills necessary for higher bands, they need to use and interpret the evidence in the text – explicit and implicit – standing back from the passage in the light of the question. Details from the text should be used to inform and support their ideas, rather than be repeated mechanically.

Answers to **Question 2** showed an awareness of the need to consider and explain meaning and/or effect rather than simply label devices. Those who had taken note of the instruction to select four choices in each half appeared to have benefitted from that advice – taking time to consider which four choices they could offer most profitably in each half. Consequently, they were able to offer a range of potentially interesting

selections, to discuss each of their choices at some length and even go on to suggest some of the links between the images used. For higher marks, candidates need to ensure that they are making precise and appropriate choices of words and phrases, as well as considering their use in context. These choices each need to be explored and explained in some detail to show understanding of how the writer is using language in the particular instance under consideration.

In **Question 3** responses, it was encouraging to see that many candidates had understood the need to identify 15 distinct points from Passage B in part **3(a)** and then organise these points into a fluent, concise prose response using their own words in **3(b)**, using the additional scaffolding provided in this revised question structure. There was evidence that the instruction that they did not need to use their own words in **3(a)** had been understood – some chose to use their own words when it helped to distil examples into the essence of the idea and selected from the language of the text for other more straightforward points. On occasion, weaker responses offered overlong sections from the passage rather than the short notes suggested in the guidance, meaning points became blurred and/or were repeated. For higher marks, candidates should ensure that they capitalise on the opportunity when planning their prose response in **3(b)** to revisit and refine as required their points in **3(a)**, for example to avoid repetition of ideas in these notes.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression.

Many responses were generally clear and/or showed some sense of audience in **Question 1** and most were aware of the need to adopt a more informative style in **Question 3**. Whilst writing is not assessed in **Question 2**, candidates should ensure that they consider carefully the precision and range of their own vocabulary when attempting to describe the effects and meanings of the selections they are discussing. In some instances, candidates might have been able to demonstrate more convincingly understanding of the language used by the author had they used vocabulary more precisely themselves and/or avoided repetition, including that of the language of the text itself. Likewise, checking and editing all three answers more thoroughly might help some candidates to ensure they are offering secure evidence of their skills to examiners.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Imagine you are a journalist from the local newspaper at the meeting.

Write a newspaper report about the meeting.

In your newspaper report you should:

- **describe the atmosphere and the reactions of the crowd at the meeting**
- **give your impressions of the two speakers and the arguments they made**
- **suggest what will happen next**

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

There were some particularly convincing responses to **Question 1** with detail woven in, sustained development and a clear journalistic approach. The question provided useful prompts, with both the opening line and the reference to a 'local newspaper' allowing candidates to write from an insider's point of view, crafting the material for a definite audience and purpose. The understanding that this was a newspaper article was rarely in doubt, with candidates' answers ranging in style from the homespun local broadsheet, with appropriate bias and use of first person, to a more formal, measured, 'editorial' style offering analysis of events and possibly urging action or ways forward as suggestions of the long term possibilities. At the top end, responses demonstrated a strong sense of purpose and approach, ensuring their readers had both a clear sense of the events and the arguments, and picking up on clues to offer informed speculation as regards future possibilities. Where responses were less successful, the intended audience and purpose had often been forgotten, with information and ideas not fully explained or explored and/or the reader left potentially confused with only a partial overview. Candidates at various levels did recognise the need to interpret rather than simply record events, though sometimes missed what was at the heart of the debate –

the nature of the common land itself – and what it represented to the two speakers. A very small number of responses were completely detached from the specific content of the text, writing creatively around the themes, offering at best evidence of only a very general understanding of the passage.

Stronger responses to the question used ideas from the passage carefully and consistently with their audience in mind – evaluating and modifying the material and often integrating both A1 and A2 whilst tracking the events of the meeting. On occasion, stronger responses began with an overview of events and their implications, then expanded and explored ideas in the body of the piece, before looking towards the future and what might happen next. Some used carefully selected, apt quotation to good effect in keeping with their chosen journalistic style. Where quotation was less selective and involved longer chunks of text, it provided less convincing evidence of careful reading. A number of answers at the lower end showed little awareness of the need to modify the material, being over-reliant on quotation to communicate ideas and replaying at length what Mr Carmichael and Anuja had said in furtherance of their cause. Responses quoting whole sections verbatim from the two speakers were often self-penalising – at best mechanical and tending towards lifting/copying. Even in newspaper reports, candidates need to be reminded to keep actual quoted phrases from the text to a deliberately chosen minimum.

Better answers offered some adroit assessments of Mr Carmichael – finding him calculating, greedy, untrustworthy and quite set apart from the locals. Anuja was often seen as passionate, courageous and sensitive to hearts and minds. Some offered alternative views, criticising Anuja for being naive and living in the past, missing the chance to bring potential prosperity to the lives of malnourished locals and valuing animal welfare over human. Where this interpretation was considered alongside the relative likelihood of Foodfreight making good its promises, there was potential for evidence of close reading – for example, exploring Carmichael’s vagueness as regards jobs as well as Anuja’s acknowledgement that the land had been neglected and evaluating the arguments effectively. Those who criticised Anuja and took Carmichael simply at face value, believing him to be purely philanthropic in his motivation missed a number of hints as well as something of the tone of the passage. There were some interesting observations on the economic conditions in which the local people existed and the resulting dilemmas that the proposal threw up for them as a rural community reliant on hunting to supplement their nutrition. It was noted by a number that many were not well-fed and that the refreshments provided were a tempting taste of the possibilities of things to come. Some though made assumptions outside the text, drifting too far from the evidence in the passage – for example some asserted that those present at the meeting worked for Carmichael and whilst he was well fed, he had not fed his workers, showing him to be uncaring and cruel. There was no suggestion in the passage that Carmichael and/or Foodfreight employed anyone locally. Development of ideas has to be rooted in the passage.

Generally, whilst there was no shortage of detail in answers, not all of it was relevant and/or helpful. Often carefully selected details did support key ideas and were found throughout answers, not just as scene-setting at the beginning. However, a small number of candidates relied on repeated detail and paraphrase as the basis of their response, failing to tease out the main ideas during planning stages and often then struggling to offer suggestions in A3. Where candidates simply worked chronologically through the passage revisiting/paraphrasing sections of detail, they often missed opportunities to offer evidence of competence as readers.

Better answers understood the need to read through the passage and select, then identify and organise their ideas to address the specifics of the task. They spent time recognising which aspects of the text the question was inviting them to consider and how best to evidence their skills and understanding.

Some of the best answers interpreted events and details from the local journalist’s standpoint rather than simply recording them, noting the twists and turns in the audience’s reactions as well as deriving some satisfaction from noting Carmichael’s (foiled) attempt to win over his audience. Even some relatively modest answers were able, for example, to recognise Carmichael dropping his façade and revealing his true intentions once things were no longer going his way.

Strong answers had decided on the style of their article in advance and maintained this throughout. Where candidates had considered their audience and purpose less carefully and followed a more formulaic response, the overall effect at times suffered. Spaces drawn for pictures, even artist impressions of Rufus and/or text written in columns are unlikely to be a good use of time when writing a newspaper report in timed conditions and often detract from concentration on the structure and style of the piece itself.

Some candidates used the bullets in the question to shape their response, occasionally to good effect. Often better answers had used the bullets as a means of planning content to ensure coverage and then gone on to think about how best to present the material. Where answers worked through each bullet in turn rather than use them for planning, A3 was often incomplete and/or absent once ‘word count’ had been reached.

Candidates are reminded that the word count of 250–350 words is there for guidance, suggesting the length of response it is expected a candidate might need to address the requirements of the task within the time scale of the examination. Over-long and/or very brief responses are likely to be self-penalising but time spent counting the exact number of words is neither productive and/or useful. Overall quality, range and depth of the answer are far more important than the quantity of words used.

In mid-range answers, uneven treatment of the bullets might often have been addressed at the planning stage – in part by paying attention to the instruction in the question to consider in A2 both the speakers **and** the arguments they made. Often A2 offered only part of the picture – prosperity and bribes were usually touched on but less often were the arguments concerning the relative and conflicting views of the wildlife/ value of the land considered. For a number of ideas both sides of the argument were presented in the text – stronger responses recognised and made use of this. In some of the best answers, promised prosperity and potential jobs were balanced by concerns about local hunters no longer having access to deer, whilst overgrown, unproductive land was defended as ancient woodland to be protected as a reserve for wildlife rather than destroyed by developers. Comparing the details of what was said on both sides during the planning stage of an answer would have helped to establish key points of focus and offered opportunities to develop those in terms of impressions of both arguments and speakers.

Offering a quite limited range of points was a feature of some less successful answers. Even in mid-range answers, reference to prosperity as if that were the only argument offered by Carmichael was not unusual. Similarly, Anuja's argument was sometimes reduced to a vague sense of history and/or culture, perhaps with a reference to wildlife. At lower levels, some responses ignored altogether one aspect of A2 – either offering loose impressions not supported by reference to any of the arguments or only touching on a little of what was said without comment. As a result, useful opportunities to offer evidence of close reading and/or develop ideas were missed.

The third bullet was often the least well-covered of the three. A significant minority of candidates addressed it only in their final sentence. There was a tendency to generalise and/or say 'I don't know what will happen in the future' especially where responses up to that point had been reliant on the order and/or language of the original. Stronger candidates were able to make a number of points and develop them convincingly in this section. Some used Rufus's threat 'We will get our way!' along with the reaction of the crowd to him at the end as a starting point for suggestions.

Advice to candidates on Question 1

- read the passage carefully and return to check key details as you plan your answer
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- take account of the given persona, audience and purpose for your response
- leave sufficient time to edit your response
- extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include – do not just repeat them

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the common land in paragraph 6, beginning 'The meeting resumed...';
- (b) Rufus Carmichael in paragraph 13, beginning 'Rufus' face tightened...'

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.

Rather than offering a series of notes for each example selected, more successful responses to **Question 2** often took the form of continuous prose, allowing candidates to explore their choices fully and connect their ideas where appropriate. Though candidates should analyse and explore each of their selections, responses that simply list possible ideas miss opportunities to extend the discussion and offer evidence of understanding at a higher level. Partially effective explanations are a feature of mid to low range answers and are often the result of a failure to explain fully the precise meaning of words selected and/or how exactly each specific example is working within context. Marks are given for the relevance of the words and phrases chosen to answer the question, and for the quality of the analysis. Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select a range of interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the

question in each section. Responses that go on to explore and explain meanings of the words are awarded further marks. Responses that also explore the effects of the use of particular words and phrases on the reader can score up to the highest mark of ten.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level, dealing with individual words within key phrases, having purposefully selected a number of the strongest examples in each half, including images. These responses answered both parts of the question equally well, unpicking choices in each half to consider exactly how these were working in the context both of Rufus's speech to his audience and the writer's intentions. Stronger answers were able, for example, to recognise the bias in the language used to describe the common land and explain the sense of threat Carmichael was trying to create. In part **(b)**, recognition of the humour and/or cartoon-like representation of the thwarted Carmichael was often a feature of stronger answers.

Less secure understanding led some candidates to suggest more factual language choices such 'banged his fist' and 'tall trees', along with choices not linked to the focus of that part of the question – for example 'rose to speak' in part **(a)** was not a relevant choice in relation to the land. Others offered incomplete choices where only one word from the whole image had been selected – for example some responses offered 'undesirables without lair and/or vermin without haven'. Where candidates opted for less well-focused choices, they limited what was achievable in terms of the overall quality of their analysis and diluted the evidence of their understanding.

Some candidates showed a good awareness of the rhetorical intention of some of their choices, a few noting the irony in Mr Carmichael's intention to remove an 'eyesore' and get rid of 'undesirables', but some tended to generalise this rhetorical purpose, without carefully unpicking the language in support of their claim. Few candidates struggled to identify potentially relevant examples in each half, though many candidates only offered literal meaning for choices selected. Whilst this can be a useful starting point, to target marks in the higher bands responses need to consider the suggestions, connotations and associations of the language used, analysing how the words work together to create the overall image. Candidates who fared best in part **(a)** often suggested something of the gothic/fairy-tale nature of the language. Those who saw the repeated sense of suppression of rage, fit to burst, had the nub of effects in part **(b)** and did well if they showed how this suppression was manifest in each choice. Often, however, in mid to low range answers, general comment along with repetition of the idea that anger was being shown was as far as the discussion went.

The very best answers were often equally careful in both halves to unpick the layers of meaning in relation to choices. Strong responses to part **(b)** for example considered how 'compressed' suggested almost industrial levels of force applied, linking it to 'tightened' and the 'thin line' to suggest an imminent and inevitable outburst. Some considered the 'thin line of anger' as indication of the fragility of Rufus's control – it could break at any minute. Answers at this level often considered the uncontrolled nature of the word 'sprang' – a release of pressure as the dots of perspiration betrayed Rufus's inner rage. Good answers in part **(a)** often did more than explain that the negative image of the common land – whilst they noted for example that it was dark and lacked sunlight as indicated by heavy shade, they went on to examine the words used in more detail, considering the implications of heavy as suggesting weight and consequently something of its oppressive nature as if it were burdening the land and locals.

There was some evidence that a small number of candidates had spent time counting the exact number of words in their response. This is not necessary and is unlikely to be a good use of their time. Guidance on the length of the response is offered to indicate the likely length required to address a task successfully. Responses that offer significantly less or attempt to write substantially more may well be self-penalising, either leaving insufficient opportunity to explore choices in detail or putting themselves under unnecessary time pressure and resulting in less precise and carefully focused explanation. Similarly, answers that chose to ignore the advice to offer four choices in each half were in danger of either offering insufficient evidence of understanding and or less targeted responses containing a number of less effective or even inappropriate choices, diluting the evidence that they understood how language was being used.

Less successful responses tended to offer superficial, half-formed ideas, frequently heavily-reliant on repeating the language of the original. In attempting to spot devices rather than respond to the specific examples in context, some answers missed opportunities to move beyond Band 4. For example, the assertion that 'an impenetrable thicket, a haven for vermin, a lair for undesirables' was an example of 'the power of three' was far less profitable than consideration of each of those choices in turn and then an examination of how they combined specifically to create the overall build-up of effect.

For the most part, candidates were able to show that they at least recognised potentially interesting examples of language use and offered at least some sense of the meanings and/or effects of their

selections, even if only in a generalised way at times. Imprecise use and understanding of vocabulary limited a number of explanations in this question though, as did errors with individual words: rooks was at times misread as rocks, haven often misread as heaven and lair on occasion as layer. For marks in the top bands, candidates need to be careful to select and interpret choices accurately, consider them carefully in context and demonstrate that they are thinking about and exploring how the language is working. Quality of analysis rather than feature spotting needs to be the emphasis.

The following example, taken from a candidate's response in this examination series, is given as an indication of a suitable approach to this type of question. It is not intended to be a model answer and might well have been improved further:

(a) the common land in paragraph 6, beginning 'The meeting resumed...';

The overall impression of the common ground is one of disgust and horror. The area bordering the river is described as an 'eyesore' connoting the idea that it is so immensely ugly that it causes physical pain on those who perceive it, emphasising its grotesque nature. In addition, the shadows made by the trees are portrayed as 'heavy shade'. The use of the adjective heavy implies that the absence of light acts as a painful burden to those underneath the trees, evoking a sense of discomfort. Moreover, the weeds metaphorically 'choke the ground'. The use of such a violent verb, normally associated with strangulation and murder, connotes the weeds to have a conscious level of malevolence, as though their instinct is to cause suffering, evoking fear in the reader. Furthermore, the thicket is described as a 'haven for vermin', the juxtaposition of haven usually depicting a scene of paradise and vermin a word used to describe disgusting unhygienic creatures reflects the contrast between the apparent beauty of the land and the reality of its vile nature. The thicket is then described as a 'lair for undesirables', the word 'undesirables' is deliberately unspecific in order to allow the reader's imagination to conjure a fearful image, evoking terror. Lastly, the sounds emerging from the canopy are described as 'raucous, unending cries' the use of a non-finite adjective emphasizes the eternal nature of the pain experienced by the creatures of the canopy and the word cries portrays the sounds as perhaps human-like evoking pathos in the reader. Such vivid description helps to effectively illustrate the barbarity and vile nature of the scene.

(b) Rufus Carmichael in paragraph 13, beginning 'Rufus' face tightened...'

The general depiction of Rufus Carmichael in paragraph 13 portrays him as a man filled with anger and impatience. His face 'tightened into a grimace' – the word tightened has connotations of pain and torture, emphasizing Mr Carmichael's discomfort and lack of control over the situation as if someone else were forcing his face to contort in pain. His lips are then described as 'thin line of anger', the simplicity of this description emphasises his lack of temper and the figurative portrayal of his lips being anger itself show the magnitude of his rage. The sweat on his forehead 'sprang out', the verb sprang evoking the inevitable nature of the action as a result of Carmichael's stress and lack of control over his appearance is therefore illustrated providing reason for his discomfort. In addition, it is described that a dark cloud passed across his face. This figurative reference to nature shows the magnitude of his emotional instability as though his range equates to that of a god able to manipulate nature. Finally Mr Carmichael is described as 'panting', such dehumanisation illustrates his thought processes to be as simplistic as a dog's as though his anger is merely the result of instinct. Such use of language and imagery portrays Carmichael to be both irrational and even savage at times.

Advice to candidates on Question 2

- ensure that all your choices are relevant and identified precisely using quotation marks
- take time to choose the best examples within each paragraph rather than listing possibilities
- when offering a phrase as a choice, discuss how each of the words within it is working
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- avoid generalised, 'empty' comments, such as 'the words help us to imagine it more clearly'
- if you are unsure about effects, start by offering a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label choices, discuss them in some detail

Question 3

(a) Notes

How is the osprey adapted to ensure its survival and what threatens its continued existence?

Write your answer using short notes. Write one point per line. You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells us about how the osprey is adapted to ensure its survival and what threatens its continued existence.

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

Your summary should include all 15 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 200 to 250 words.

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your writing.

Pleasingly, the majority of candidates had understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purpose' they needed to identify just 15 points in **3(a)** and that further answers added on after the 15 would not be credited unless replacing a crossed out answer earlier on. Some candidates, however, carried on beyond 15, sometimes as far as 30 or more 'points'. Where candidates think they have potentially identified more than 15 points, they should reflect on their final choices to offer a list of just 15 clearly focused ideas. Selecting and identifying distinct points meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. There was more than one way in which points could be logically grouped and these options were reflected in the mark scheme. There were a total of 20 potential points available from this one passage allowing generous leeway for candidates looking for 15. Most were able to identify a good number of these points from the passage. Better, more focused, answers typically scored two thirds or more of the available content marks. Those offering extended lists often showed signs of having worked through the passage chronologically rather than organised their answers with the focus of the question in mind and missed opportunities to score well. Candidates are reminded that the question instructions ask for short notes – long copied sections of text are unlikely to demonstrate the focus required to identify clearly the point to be credited.

Question 3(b) responses that did well had used their points from **3(a)** carefully – organising them purposefully into a concise, fluent prose response rather than relying on repeating points in the order or language of the passage. There was some suggestion that answers at the top end had revisited points in **3(a)** during the planning stages of **3(b)** in order to edit and refine points in this part of the question – leading to clearer more distinct points in **3(a)** and an efficient and well-focused response in **3(b)**. The two parts of this question are designed to work together, to provide candidates with a clear structure for their response in **3(a)** and an opportunity to revisit points selected when working on **3(b)**.

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to first identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question, listing them clearly – one per numbered line, in note form. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one mark per line. Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question, though better answers had often chosen to do so for clarity, for example where points were implied and/or exemplified more than once in the original text. Those who relied on identifying points from the text by working through chronologically often repeated points – typically in relation to guns and shooting and/or destruction of habitat. Reflecting on potential answers during planning stage would have helped a number of these candidates to group examples usefully together under one umbrella point and/or avoid repetition of ideas.

There are no marks to be scored for writing in **3(a)**; however, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless slips. Candidates should pay particular attention for example to correct any spelling errors that might change or cloud meaning – navel rather than nasal passages was a surprisingly common error.

The majority of candidates demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary, with very few examples of copying, though occasionally some attempted to simply reword sections of the passage or even added further speculation and detail, resulting in less well-organised and concise answers. The most successful responses re-ordered and re-grouped the relevant information from the passage, with a clear focus on both aspects of the question (adaptations and threats). The best answers had considered carefully both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using their own words as far as possible. They avoided writing long introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary with ideas linked logically and presented clearly.

Advice to candidates on Question 3

- read the question carefully and underline the key words which identify the focus of the task
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points required
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 distinct points
- list your points – one per numbered line – clearly and precisely, using as few words as possible
- plan the structure of your response in **3(b)** – for example organising and sequencing content logically
- write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage.
- be careful to give only information that answers the question
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** past the 15 required
- pay attention to the guidance for length in **3(b)**
- do not add detail or examples to the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/22
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read the passages carefully and purposefully more than once
- remember to consider both explicit and implicit meaning within a passage
- take note of any extra information offered, e.g. in an introduction to a passage
- read questions carefully, paying attention to the specific guidance offered
- plan the content, structure and sequence of answers ahead of writing the response
- give equal attention to each section of each question
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- use the facts, ideas and details in the passage to inform answers
- use own words as far as possible and not copy whole phrases or sections of the passages
- avoid repetition of points but ensure ideas are complete
- check and edit their responses carefully.

General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper generally indicated familiarity with the demands of each task and the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions. Responses covered a wide range and candidates mostly appeared to have been entered for the appropriate tier. Most candidates completed all parts of the three questions and most responses were an appropriate length.

Candidates found both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** to achieve marks in the top band, candidates were expected to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and for **Question 2**, offer a closely-focused discussion of the language used in each of the specified paragraphs. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express their ideas and to understand the use of language in the reading passages.

In **Question 3** most candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures for **Question 3(a)**, finding a reasonable number of points, using the additional scaffolding provided in this revised question structure. Some responses to part **(b)**, however, contained examples of lifted phrases and sentences from the passages rather than the use of own words. It is important that candidates use their own words in part **(b)** which is only assessed for Writing. If a response relied on the language of the passage, the candidate would not score highly. When altering wording and rephrasing facts, however, the meaning should not change.

While the emphasis is on quality rather than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to a question to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of that question to be covered. Candidates are reminded that there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. Questions are worded to help candidates to direct their attention to key ideas and demonstrate their understanding. Where candidates do not give equal attention to all parts of a question, they may well be missing opportunities to demonstrate their skills at the higher levels. In **Question 1**, it was important that candidates addressed all three parts of the task. Responses that did not include Bob's feelings in the second part of the question and did not fully address the third part of the task missed the opportunity to display a good level of understanding of the passage. The importance of effective planning to target the specific demands of the question as set cannot be over-emphasised and there was evidence that many Centres do now expect their candidates to plan ahead of writing their response. Candidates need to be willing to interrogate the text, re-reading both for explicit information and for clues which suggest more subtle or implicit ideas.

Most candidates answered the questions in appropriate English. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that unclear or inconsistent style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines, were more focused as a result and avoided the repetition that can come with excessive length.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Imagine you are Zelda's husband, Bob.

Write a letter to your brother who lives abroad, telling him about your holiday.

In your letter you should comment on:

- **your expectations of the trip**
- **your feelings about Zelda's behaviour on the first two days of the holiday**
- **what happened during the rest of the trip.**

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

Most responses were written in an appropriate style for the task, with an informal and conversational tone appropriate for a letter written to a family member. There were some excellent, well-crafted letters that displayed a sound understanding of the passage and the requirements of the task. Good responses contained well integrated detail, a range of ideas with relevant development, and displayed a strong sense of purpose and audience. All of the letters were written from Bob's viewpoint and in better responses Zelda's perspective of the holiday was skilfully translated into Bob's very different interpretation of the circumstances and events. In good responses, a convincing voice was created that reflected Bob's character and which conveyed his initial enthusiasm for the trip along with his varying thoughts and reactions to Zelda's behaviour and comments. Less good responses used the passage quite mechanically; there was little modification or development of the material and Bob's thoughts and feelings were not expressed in an effective and convincing way. Not all responses addressed all three bullet points in the question. In many responses, the final part of the letter contained only brief references to the rest of the canal trip and in some responses there were no references at all to events beyond the first two days.

For the first part of the task, candidates were required to translate Zelda's account of events and to make inferences from this to write about Bob's expectations of the holiday. Most responses included references to the opportunity for peace and quiet and to enjoy nature and wildlife. In most responses, these points were developed; it was explained that they both needed time to relax away from their work and to escape the stresses of city life. Bob believed that they needed a change from their more opulent holiday destinations and that the countryside would provide a better alternative and the calming atmosphere that they both needed. In good responses, development was strongly linked to the passage, for example, references were made to 5-star hotels, shopping, and Zelda's need to feel pampered. Less good responses included overlong discussions about their work, Zelda's stress levels and the problems of their marriage. There was a drift towards suppositions about Bob's motives that were not firmly rooted in the text.

Better responses used the detail from the passage to infer why Bob had planned this holiday, and why he was looking forward to certain activities. For example, his questioning of the boatyard owner indicated that he was interested in the history of the area and was keen to learn how to handle the narrowboat. His enthusiasm about the church spire and rare species of bird suggested his interest in history and wildlife. His greetings to the anglers were evidence that he was sociable and wanted to meet new people. His planning of the trip, hiring a luxurious boat and researching a good restaurant, reflected his desire to please Zelda and ensure the holiday was a success. Good responses conveyed Bob's level of enthusiasm and optimism very clearly and also provided an effective contrast between his expectations and Zelda's reactions to the trip later in the letter.

In most responses, the second part of the task was the most detailed and often contained a good range of ideas. Good responses avoided repetition of points already included in the first part of the letter and made a clear distinction between Bob's hopes before the trip and the events of the first two days. There were opportunities to include a number of occurrences and to comment on Zelda's responses to them. References

were made to her initial disappointment at the choice of holiday, the conditions of the boat and boatyard, her dissatisfaction with the village, her fear of the storm and her disinterest in her surroundings. Less good responses did not develop these ideas and they were often presented in a straightforward narrative form that did not include Bob's thoughts and feelings. In some responses there was little modification of the text and there was some reliance on the wording of the passage. There was some lifting of sentences and phrases, for example, 'cacophony of sounds' and 'machine gun fire' which did not display a sound level of understanding of Bob's interpretation of events.

Good responses modified and developed the material and focused on Bob's reactions to Zelda's behaviour. The best responses created a convincing personality for Bob, giving a clear insight into his character and conveying his thoughts effectively. There was a range of responses: some expressed annoyance at Zelda's ingratitude, exasperation at her failure to see the positive points of the holiday, bafflement at her lack of enthusiasm, and disappointment and guilt at her negative response to his 'treat'. There were some excellent responses that displayed a nuanced and perceptive reading of the passage. Some presented Bob as a character oblivious to any negative aspects of the holiday and to Zelda's discomfort. He did not notice the blank stares of the fishermen, enjoyed the cold breeze, didn't fully understand the dangers of the storm, or Zelda's fears, thought the dogs were lovely and indulged the rowdy teenagers. There were some clues in the passage that he might be insensitive and/or over-enthusiastic to the point of being excitable. Equally good responses presented Bob as a character sympathetic to his wife's discomfort, upset by her negative reactions and anxious to please her. Comments about Bob's thoughts and feelings were rewarded as development and responses that failed to include these missed the opportunity to display a clear understanding of the passage and to develop a convincing and appropriate voice for the character.

In many responses, the third part of the letter was not fully addressed. Some letters only focused on the first two days of the holiday and did not include any comments about the rest of the week. In some responses, there was confusion about when events took place. For example, some included the sighting of the church spire as an event of the last few days and the sighting of the rare bird as an earlier event. It is important that candidates tackle all three parts of the task, as incomplete responses are unlikely to provide evidence of a competent reading of the passage. Many responses that were detailed and thorough in the first two parts of the letter failed to secure high marks because they did not include ideas about the final parts of the holiday.

There were a lot of details in the passage that could have been used to make inferences about future occurrences and activities. The best responses used the clues in the passage and wrote that Bob and Zelda visited the artists' studios, attended the music festival or met the celebrity couple. Some wrote that Zelda had the opportunity to enjoy shopping and high class restaurants in some of the villages near to the canal. It is possible that Zelda did embrace the country way of life and took up fishing, birdwatching and also helped Bob to manoeuvre the narrowboat and locks. Negative outcomes were rewarded too and some responses detailed the disasters that occurred later: poor weather, boat accidents and Zelda's unhappiness that may have led to them returning home early or booking into a 5-star hotel. Ideas for this final section needed to be credible and related to the passage. Less good responses included activities that were not derived from, or related to, events in the passage and therefore did not display a good level of reading and understanding. Some responses included quite general comments, for example, they stopped at more villages, met more people and saw more wildlife. The best responses developed ideas and weaved in reference to textual detail. Whilst not expected or required to be familiar with the technicalities of canal travel, many realised that the terms 'thrusting the tiller' and 'watering up' were new and exciting terms for Bob, referring to narrow boating skills, and they used them effectively in their letters.

Very good responses also reflected on any changes that had occurred in Bob and Zelda's outlook during the holiday. Some commented that Bob had made a mistake in his choice of holiday by taking Zelda out of her comfort zone, or that Zelda did eventually appreciate life in the countryside and could survive without a phone signal and glitzy hotels. Most responses recognised the disparity between the couple's view of an ideal holiday; better responses displayed a measured approach to the style and language used to express their differences.

Good responses were focused on all three bullet points and created a strong and convincing character for Bob. They contained a range of ideas that were well developed and closely related to the passage. They avoided repetition and displayed the ability to select material relevant to each part of the task. Most candidates appeared to engage with the passage and many letters displayed a strong sense of empathy with both characters and a good understanding of their different expectations.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the response and how well it used language to convey Bob's personality. Higher Writing marks were awarded for a range of effective and interesting vocabulary. Good responses were well structured, displaying some sense of audience and using an appropriate register

and language. Weaker responses relied on the wording of the passage and displayed a limited range of appropriate vocabulary and an inconsistency of style.

Advice to candidates on Question 1

- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each of the bullet points
- develop and extend your ideas – consider the perspective of the character speaking or writing
- create a suitable voice and tone for the persona in the response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of :

- (a) the storm and its effects in paragraph 6
- (b) what Zelda enjoyed about the morning in paragraph 7.

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.

Candidates were advised to include four appropriate examples for each part of the question and most responses were balanced and included a sufficient number of choices from both paragraphs. Less good responses only included one or two choices in each half; this is not sufficient to display an understanding of the writer's use of language and to secure marks in the higher bands. Selecting too many choices often resulted in superficial explanations that did not fully explore the effects intended by the writer.

Credit is given for the ability to select evocative or unusual words that have an extra layer of meaning, or which have certain connotations, and for displaying an understanding of their effects in the context of the passage. Good answers contained a range of appropriate examples with clear explanations of why the writer used specific words and phrases. In part (a) less good responses included examples of quite ordinary language, for example, 'I feared the ropes would not hold'. In some responses the phrase 'the wind rose shrieking through the trees' was followed by an explanation of the word 'rose' and not by the meanings and effects of 'shrieking' which has more interesting connotations. In part (b) some included the phrase 'I was aroused early by a crowing cockerel' and the word 'transformation'. These choices were not rewarded as they do not allow deeper meanings, associations or effects to be explored, and were often accompanied by simple or literal meanings. Some responses included the phrase 'feathery clouds dabbed across a pale blue sky' and only explained the words 'pale blue'. By focusing on less interesting words, candidates lost the opportunity to display understanding of how the language was being used for effect.

Some responses included long phrases with several effective words that were not addressed. For example, in the phrase 'their leaves snatched from them and tossed into the air as if by a manic juggler' the words 'tossed' and 'snatched' were often ignored. An explanation of their meanings, for example, that they were taken by force and thrown carelessly into the air, would have been rewarded. An explanation of how they contributed to the overall effects of the power and spiteful nature of the wind would have been rewarded further. Better responses included short examples with precise and clear examples of specific words. Less good responses made general comments about the overall impressions created by the writer, for example, that the storm was fierce and evoked feelings of fear. Overall effects can only be rewarded if they are supported or achieved by clear analysis of specific words and phrases.

There were some clear explanations of the image of the trees 'bent double', either in pain or in submission to the strong force of the wind, and many candidates explained the image of the water droplets and their resemblance to precious and beautiful items of jewellery. Less successful were attempts to explain the use of 'religious solemnity' as many candidates referred to a quiet and peaceful atmosphere and not to the spiritual or meditative appearance of the heron. Several responses displayed a good understanding of the use of 'machine gun fire' and 'hammering', explaining their meanings and the feelings of fear and destruction that they conveyed.

The naming of a literary device, even when accurately identified, can only be rewarded when accompanied by an explanation of how it works within the context of the passage. In several responses, the use of simile

and metaphor were identified but their effectiveness was not fully explored. Repetition of the original wording, for example, 'feathery clouds means that the clouds looked feathery' does not display a satisfactory level of understanding and cannot be rewarded. Good responses explained the meanings of specific words within the context of the passage. The best responses made judicious selections, identified images and analysed the writer's use of language with precision and clarity.

The following response from a candidate in this series offers just one example of the ways in which candidates approached this question. It is not intended as a model answer, though it shows understanding and includes a sufficient number of appropriate choices.

(a) The storm and its effects in paragraph 6

The storm is described as extremely violent. The writer uses the word 'hammering' to suggest a deliberate and loud noise. The rain seems eager to destroy the boat by continually banging on the roof. This creates a feeling of fear. The rain's comparison to artillery fire in 'like machine gun fire' shows how unrelenting, fast and loud the rain is falling. It gives it an element of aggression as though it is waging war against the boat.

The word 'shrieking' suggests a high pitched sound that is harsh and painful to hear. It also has connotations of agony and fear as though someone is being tormented, creating a sense of danger. The wind is likened to 'a manic juggler'. This depicts the ease and speed with which it hurls the leaves around. A juggler is an entertainer suggesting that the wind is sadistic and laying waste to the surroundings just for fun. The word manic suggest its uncontrollable and crazy nature.

(b) What Zelda enjoyed about the morning in paragraph 7

A picture of an idyllic and natural scene is created. 'Wearing their spring foliage like new coats' highlights how thick and lush the leaves are. The trees are wearing them with pride, like a person showing off their new clothes. The word 'feathery' suggests the lightness and softness of the clouds. The word 'dabbed' implies that the clouds were lightly painted on to the sky in a pleasing position like in a precious work of art. 'Tiny translucent pearls' shows that the drops of water are spherical and shiny. They seem precious and beautiful and are worn like valuable jewellery.

Advice to candidates on Question 2

- avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn you any marks
- choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or only give a general comment which applies to all of them
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices.
- to explain effects, think of all that word might suggest to a reader – the feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- remember you do not get any marks for identifying literary techniques or devices unless you focus on the meaning and effects of the words themselves
- learn to recognise images and explain them. Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case
- use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeat the words from the choice itself.

Question 3

(a) Notes

What were the challenges faced during the entire construction of the Panama Canal, according to Passage B?

Write your answer using short notes. Write one point per line. You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what challenges were faced during the construction of the Panama Canal.

You must use continuous writing, not note form, and use your own words as far as possible. Your summary should include all 15 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 200 to 250 words.

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your answer.

To answer part **3(a)** of this question successfully candidates needed to first identify 15 points from Passage B that were relevant to the question and to list them clearly, one per numbered line, in note form. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one point per line. Any points added after line 15 are not credited unless replacing an answer crossed out earlier on. Most responses did not go beyond line 15. There were 20 possible answers in the Mark Scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway and many responses were able to identify 10 or more points. Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question though in better responses there was some evidence of own words which was then useful when writing the summary in **3(b)**. Selecting and identifying relevant points in this first section meant that candidates were able to plan their summaries carefully to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas effectively into a concise and focused prose response. The two parts of this question are designed to work together, to provide candidates with a clear structure for their response in **3(a)** and an opportunity to revisit points selected when working on **3(b)**.

Most candidates were aware of the appropriate style and form for a summary and many part **(b)** responses were factual, informative and focused on the challenges faced in building the canal. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary. Not all were focused on the challenges; some included points from the first two paragraphs and introduction to the passage that were concerned with the background to building the canal and not the problems. Writing marks are awarded for concision as well as focus. Some responses included commentary about the importance of the canal and long explanations about what locks were and how they worked. There was also some repetition of ideas. The passage refers several times to the high costs involved; candidates should only have included this once. Some responses included several measures taken to combat malaria and several included references to both landslides and mudslides.

Candidates are rewarded for writing in their own words. In less good responses, words and phrases were copied from the passage which often led to loss of concision and focus. In some answers, complete sentences were lifted and this often led to repetition, in particular, about the locks, diseases and the amount of money spent. Good responses attempted to use own words, for example, using 'hot, wet weather' instead of 'rain soaked tropics', and substituting 'extreme tidal variation' for 'large differences in tides'. It was not always possible to use alternatives for some of the technical terms in the passage but responses where there were attempts to use own words displayed a better level of understanding and a wider range of vocabulary than those reliant on the original wording.

Not all of the summaries were written with fluency. Higher marks are awarded where candidates use varied and fluent sentence structures. Responses were sometimes list-like or rather stilted with points expressed in short sentences. Better responses linked similar points together and wrote more complex sentences.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low Writing marks for this question. The inclusion of comments, introductions and the copying of phrases often led to wordy and overlong summaries.

Advice to candidates on Question 3

- read the question carefully and underline key words
- re-read the passage after reading the question in order to identify precisely the point required
- list relevant points clearly in as few words as possible
- read through your points in **3(a)** checking each is distinct and accurate
- plan the structure of your response for **3(b)**, organise and sequence the content logically
- write informatively and do not comment on the content of the passage
- be careful to give only information that answers the question
- use your own words as far as possible in **3(b)**
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** beyond the 15 required
- pay attention to guidance for length in **3(b)**

Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education
0500 First Language English (Oral Endorsement) June 2015
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

- avoid repetition of points
- leave time to check and edit your response.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/23
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading** (40 marks). In addition, there were up to ten marks available for **Writing**: five marks in **Question 1** and five marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read both passages very carefully, including any introduction offered to a passage
- read the questions carefully, including any specific guidance offered
- pay attention to each section of a question
- spend time planning responses to address the specific requirements of each of the tasks set
- use a range of appropriate vocabulary – avoid copying from the passage
- select only the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- check and edit their responses carefully
- plan the structure and sequence of the material in responses, e.g. to avoid repetition
- adapt writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- ensure that ideas are developed and fully explained in **Question 1** and **Question 2**.

General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated at least some familiarity with the basic demands of each task, along with an awareness of the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions. Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passages, some with real engagement. Responses covered a range of levels of achievement, often varying over the three tasks.

Responses to the tasks suggested that candidates had found the passages equally accessible, had planned their use of time helpfully and had finished within the two hours. Instances where candidates had missed all or part of a question were rare across the cohort as a whole. Most candidates had paid attention to the guidance offered with respect to the length of their answers and many appeared to find the numbering of the bullet points in the answer grid for **3(a)** a helpful reminder of the need to offer 15 points, one per line.

There were very few significant misunderstandings of the general content of the passages, though there was evidence that some candidates needed to read and interpret the detail of both texts and tasks more carefully. Careful attention to detail, including revisiting the passage to refine understanding, is essential if candidates are to offer convincing evidence of their reading skills at higher levels.

In **Question 1**, most responses were appropriate in the form of a letter to the father's parents and used the three bullets as a framework. Candidates are reminded that in order to demonstrate the skills necessary for higher levels, they need to use and interpret the evidence in the text – explicit and implicit – standing back from the passage in the light of the question. Details from the text should be used to inform and support their ideas, rather than being lifted word for word or repeated mechanically.

Answers to **Question 2** showed at least some awareness of the need to identify relevant choices and consider and explain meaning and/or effect. Those who had taken careful note of the instruction to select four choices in each half appeared to have benefitted from that advice – taking time to consider which four choices they would offer in each half. Consequently, they were able both to offer a range of potentially interesting selections and to discuss each of their choices at some length. For higher marks, candidates need to ensure that they are making precise and appropriate choices of words and phrases. These choices

each need to be explored and explained in some detail to show understanding of how the writer is using language in the particular instance under consideration.

In **Question 3** responses, it was encouraging to see that many candidates had understood the need to identify 15 distinct points from Passage B in part **3(a)** and then organise these points into a fluent, concise prose response using their own words in **3(b)**, using the additional scaffolding provided in this revised question structure. There was evidence that the instruction that they did not need to use their own words in **3(a)** had been understood. Candidates may choose to use their own words when it helps to clarify a point and select ideas in the language of the text for any other points. For higher marks, candidates should ensure that they capitalise on the opportunity when planning their prose response in **3(b)** to revisit and refine as required their points in **3(a)**, for example to avoid repetition of ideas in these notes.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and editing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression.

Most responses had some sense of audience in **Question 1** and were aware of the need to adopt a more impersonal, informative style in **Question 3**. Whilst writing is not assessed in **Question 2**, candidates should ensure that they consider carefully their own choices of vocabulary when attempting to describe the effects and meanings of the selections they are discussing. In some instances, candidates might have been able to demonstrate more convincingly understanding of the language used by the author had they used vocabulary more precisely themselves. Likewise, checking and editing all three answers more thoroughly might help some candidates to ensure they are offering more secure evidence of their skills.

A clear focus on the specific instruction and wording of a question during the planning of an answer will allow candidates to work to identify relevant detail in the text, cover all aspects of the task and target marks at the higher levels.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

'You are Sunitra's father. Write a letter to your own parents – Sunitra's grandparents – asking them for financial help with the project to buy land and materials for your new home.'

In your letter:

- **describe the place you have found and why it is perfect for you**
- **persuade your parents that there are benefits for Sunitra, despite her objections**
- **suggest what the other attractions are of this plan to move and how you imagine life will be.**

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

The best answers balanced the three sections of the question.

For bullet one, it was necessary to consider the place and why it is so perfect through discussion of ideas relating to the area, the immediate environment of the trailer/caravan, weather, and wild life – all prompted by detail in the passage. Remembering the audience and specific purpose for the task, candidates needed to plan their responses to present a positive and persuasive view of the place itself. It is likely that the father would enthuse about its attributes to his parents. Often this first bullet was covered with some success.

In bullet two, candidates needed to both identify Sunitra's likely objections and defend the benefits to her as her father sees them. Ideas here which were rooted in the text related to Sunitra's friends and social life, the location, new school, even new language or accent, and how she sees her parents. Responses generally showed a good level of success for this bullet too; the father was either sympathetic to Sunitra's concerns, or was sure that the 'natural world' would soon compensate for Sunitra's losses.

The third bullet was most often the least well-addressed. In this section of the response, candidates needed to plan to cover ideas and suggestions connected to how the father imagines life will be and how/why that is attractive to him. This bullet point required candidates to 'think around' the clues in the text, for example

suggesting ideas connected to the father working on the house, mother's new job, fulfilling the dream of living far from the city, closer family bonding, a healthier life-style and Sunitra's parents rekindling their relationship.

It cannot be emphasised enough that careful reading of the instructions and helpful information preceding the passage will help candidates to focus their responses correctly. Having read through the passage, candidates needed to understand that they must manipulate the viewpoint, becoming Sunitra's father, who is enthusiastic about building the family home in an isolated location.

The question required a 'shift of viewpoint,' testing the skill of candidates in using what they have read. Those who did not 'become' her father, but rather recounted Sunitra's situation from the passage with little modification, lost sight of the purpose and audience for their task, as well as missing opportunities to evidence reading skills at a higher level by using ideas. Simple repetition of the material did not make sense in the context of the request for financial help. Taking on the father's persona allowed each idea to be developed through his eyes.

As this is a test of reading, rather than creative writing, drifting too far from the text to offer new ideas did not attract marks: ideas related to the family starting a farm, building a 'granny flat', or having more children are beyond the focus of the question and were not rooted in textual detail.

Candidates are reminded that the word count of 250–350 words is there for guidance, suggesting the length of response it is expected a candidate might need to address the requirements of the task within the time scale of the examination. Over-long and/or very brief responses are likely to be self-penalising but time spent counting the exact number of words is neither productive and/or useful. Overall quality, range and depth of the answer is far more important than the quantity of words used.

Reliance on the wording of the passage was a feature of some weaker answers. Some responses paraphrased whole sections or copied phrases, sentences or even paragraphs, which could lower both the mark for reading, and that for writing too. Certain phrases were especially attractive: 'empty vastness,' 'middle of nowhere,' we 'honeymooned in this area, trekking a long distance path, sleeping in a tent and cooking under the stars,' or 'a luxury house with stunning views.'

It is important that these are rephrased rather than lifted 'word for word'. For example, 'We feel so free and safe after the pressure of life in the city,' 'We explored the trails and camped nights with only the stars for company,' and 'We can build a much better home with room to invite you to stay and gee, what an outlook!' all show a good level of understanding by using the material and reworking it, rather than simply lifting sections from the text with little modification.

The question tested understanding of ideas, both explicit and implicit – for example as regards previous events. It made demands upon candidates' understanding of vocabulary and required some careful inference regarding the personality of Sunitra as well as that of her father. Responses needed to adopt a suitable register for asking parents for help. It therefore follows that the wider the variety of texts familiar to the candidates, the more understanding they can bring to bear on the question.

There was occasional difficulty with individual words, for example, slab, swollen, consuming, funnel, flimsy and swirling. Similarly, details of the question, situations and events were sometimes misread. These included Sunitra as the writer, her father moving to go to a job and Sunitra leaving home alone. Despite these occasional misunderstandings, answers were generally clear and showed at least some focus on the given bullet points. Many represented a mature son's letter to his parents with some skill, adopting a suitably informal tone for a letter to a close relative.

Mid-range responses were able to use the passage reasonably well but missed opportunities for relevant and sustained development. They relied more on the order and often the wording of the passage. Keeping the focus on addressing the bullet points during planning stages will help candidates to make a full response firmly based on the text.

The least successful answers retold some of the ideas unselectively, simply repeating the given information for the second bullet and/or were thin in content. Sometimes one or more sections hardly had a mention. Some invented 'back' stories, or even events and different characters outside the text – none of these provided evidence of close reading.

The mark for writing took account of overall style, including structure and order of the writing.

Typically, clarity of expression, appropriateness, and fluency would be evident at higher levels, along with convincing character and sound structure. Candidates who made an attempt to take on the persona of a son writing to his parents were often able to create some sense of a voice and could attract a higher mark as a result. Awkward expression, sequential or structural problems were the main reasons for a lower Writing mark.

Advice to candidates on Question 1

- ensure that you adopt the correct voice and persona by reading the question carefully
- read the passage carefully and return to check key details as you plan your answer
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response to the specific task set
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- leave sufficient time to edit your response
- extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include – do not just repeat them.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of

- (a) the view from the caravan/trailer in paragraph 2, beginning ‘She glanced out of the caravan/trailer window’;
- (b) the weather and the stream in paragraph 7, beginning ‘Last night the wind...’

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.

Rather than offering a series of notes for each choice, more successful responses to **Question 2** often take the form of continuous prose, allowing candidates to explore their choices fully and connect their ideas where appropriate. Though candidates should analyse and explore each of the examples they select, responses that simply list possible ideas miss opportunities to extend the discussion and offer evidence of understanding at a higher level. Partially effective explanations are a feature of mid to low range answers and are often the result of a failure to explain fully the precise meaning of words selected and/or how exactly each specific example is working within context. Marks are given for the relevance of the words and phrases chosen to answer the question, and for the quality of the analysis. Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select a range of interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question in each section. Responses that go on to explore and explain meanings of the words are awarded further marks. Responses that also explore the effects that the use of particular words have on the reader can score up to the highest mark of ten.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level, selected a number of key examples in each half – making sure they fitted the question – and were aware of the need to balance both parts of the question. In some cases, candidates were able to bring together their ideas to offer an overview of each section, though needed to remember to provide plenty of text-based evidence in support. Candidates would generally have benefitted from more careful discrimination between strong choices and those less likely to provide evidence of interesting use of language.

Mid-range responses offered mainly suitable selections and attempted at least some explanation of related ideas and associations. Where incomplete or overlong phrases were included, comments tended to be equally imprecise, offering little evidence of understanding at word level. On occasion, several phrases were given at once with a general comment on them all, rather than the individual unpicking necessary to target higher marks.

Some candidates avoided over-generalised comments by starting with ‘dictionary definitions’ and moving to connotations. Those who considered words precisely might well have begun to discuss the more sinister motives suggested by the description of the mist as ‘creeping’. Those who picked up on the general idea, needed to go further and explain exactly how this was achieved. “‘Mist creeping up the valley’ gives the impression of fear’ is at best a partial explanation.

The least successful answers offered a sparse selection of examples, often mixed with unsuitable phrases. This was sometimes caused by a failure to consider carefully the specific focus of the question. Candidates

who had lost sight of the task, selected unsuitable phrases from the paragraphs, for example, 'Idly fiddling with the mouse' or 'huddled inside.'

The following example, drawn from responses this series, indicates one of the ways in which candidates approached this question. It is not intended as a model answer, and might well be improved, though it shows understanding and includes a sufficient number of appropriate choices.

- (a) **'wove through'** This phrase describes the track's movement through the brush. Weaving is a motion where a thread is led through a loop. Describing the path as 'weaving' gives it a twisted feeling.
- 'swollen'** This word is used to describe the stream. Something swollen is unnaturally full, almost to the point of bursting. By describing the stream as swollen, it makes the stream seem overfull of water to emphasise where it might be spilling over its banks.
- 'creeping'** describes the mists movement along the valley. Creeping is usually a slow, hunched-over movement like some sort of stalker or bug, slow and careful. It gives the feeling that the mist is sliding over the valley almost like a snail across a board. This gives the mist a lethargic feel.
- 'blanking out'** this phrase is used to describe the mist covering the trees so that they disappear. It is a phrase used sometimes when something slips your mind, leaving you with a large expanse of nothing. Empty things or things that have been erased are generally white; the trees have been erased away into whiteness.
- (b) **'smacked'** this word describes the force of the wind on Sunitra's eyes. Smacking is a harsh, sudden movement that usually results in a stinging behind or a sore hand. By describing the wind as smacking Sunitra's eyes, it gives a feeling of stinging eyeballs and tears collecting due to the pain, giving the wind a violent characteristic.
- 'pounded'** this word is used to describe the wind in Sunitra's ears. Pounding makes a loud noise because of hitting the object. Here, Sunitra's ears are not only being battered by the wind, Sunitra is likely hearing the loud sound too. The wind has an almost tribal, powerful and unrestricted force; it beats her up easily, drumming in her ears at the same time.
- 'scoured out'** is used to describe the effect of the stream on its banks. Scouring or cleaning roughly takes great strength and power. As it scours, the water can completely strip something of dirt and filth.
- 'like the remains of a skeleton'** is the phrase used to describe the pebbles left bleached by the fierce action of the water. A skeleton is the remains of something dead left long after the flesh has peeled away. By saying that the stream only leaves 'dead' pebbles, scattered and mis-shapen, the great force of it is shown.

Precision and close analysis of the words is the key to success in this question. Candidates should avoid generalisations such as 'it creates an effect on the reader,' or 'this caused the reader to read on.' Comments about the depressing nature of the scenery as perceived by Sunitra did not attract marks unless accompanied by selected phrases and explanations to support them. Ideas beginning, 'This gives the impression that...' have to include how and why the impression is given or they will not progress the answer further.

There was some evidence that a small number of candidates had spent time counting the exact number of words in their response – this is not necessary and is unlikely to be a good use of their time. Guidance on the length of the response is offered to indicate the likely length required to address a task successfully. Responses that offer significantly less or attempt to write substantially more may well be self-penalising – either leaving insufficient opportunity to explore choices in detail or putting themselves under unnecessary time pressure and resulting in less precise and carefully focused explanation. Similarly, answers that chose to ignore the advice to offer four choices in each half were in danger of offering insufficient evidence of understanding and/or less targeted responses containing a number of less effective or even inappropriate choices, diluting the evidence that they understood how language was being used.

Images such as 'swollen stream' and 'each hailstone a tiny bullet' were often explained simply as: 'There was a lot of water in the stream,' and 'the hard bits of hail hurt her'. These ideas were on occasion successfully expanded, for example 'The stream was far bigger than usual, like when your leg is injured and swells up. This is an unpleasant image,' and 'She means it's like a war-zone with bullets flying and it's as if the weather is trying to kill her.' Care needs to be taken when making connections between choices however – there was some misunderstanding allied to the last example as: 'Blown up the funnel of the valley,' was thought by some candidates to be part of the battle.

In attempting to spot general techniques and name devices rather than respond to the specific examples in context, some answers missed opportunities to move beyond Band 4. Quality of analysis rather than feature spotting needs to be the emphasis.

Advice to candidates on Question 2

- ensure that all your choices are relevant to the focus of the question and identified precisely using quotation marks
- take time to choose the best examples within each paragraph rather than listing possibilities
- when offering a phrase as a choice, discuss how each of the words within it is working
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- try to explain both how and why a particular word or image might have been used
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- avoid generalised, 'empty' comments, such as 'the writer uses lots of adjectives to describe...'
- if you are not sure about effects, offer a literal meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- do not just label choices, discuss them in some detail
- to explain effects, think of the connotations and associations of the word(s) being used
- leave time to re-read and add to your answer.

Question 3

(a) Notes

Summarise the advantages and disadvantages of building a home for yourself according to Passage B.

Write your answer using short notes. Write one point per line.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer. [15]

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the advantages and disadvantages of building a home for yourself.

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

Your summary should include all 15 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 200 to 250 words.

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your answer.

Many candidates had understood the need to identify just 15 points in **3(a)** and that points added after the 15 would not be credited unless replacing a crossed out answer earlier on. Selecting and identifying points meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. There was more than one way in which points could be logically grouped and these options were reflected in the mark scheme. There were a total of 19 potential points available from this one passage allowing generous leeway for candidates looking for 15.

Question 3(b) responses that did well had used their points from **3(a)** carefully – organising them purposefully and aiming for a concise, fluent prose response rather than relying on repeating points in the order or language of the passage. For some candidates, revisiting points in **3(a)** during the planning stages of **3(b)** in order to edit and refine ideas in this part of the question might well have resulted in clearer, more distinct points in **3(a)** and a more efficient and well-focused response in **3(b)**. The two parts of this question are designed to work together, to provide candidates with a clear structure for their response in **3(a)** and an opportunity to revisit points selected when working on **3(b)**.

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to first identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question, listing them clearly – one per numbered line, in note form. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one mark per line. Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question, though better answers occasionally chose to do so for clarity.

There are no marks to be scored for writing in **3(a)**; however, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless slips. Candidates should pay particular attention, for example, to correct any spelling errors that might change meaning. Care needs to be taken too when selecting from the text to ensure that the idea remains accurate and clear out of context.

The majority of candidates offered answers to **Question 3(b)** within the guidelines for length and had written in continuous prose. There were fewer examples of the response written as a narrative or commentary. Precise selection of each point was the most difficult skill as passage B contains examples of the same point, requiring the candidates to focus on the central meaning without repeating it in a slightly different form. Each idea should be expressed concisely with limited explanation

Most demonstrated at least some awareness of the appropriate style for a summary, though typically those who relied on working through the text chronologically often repeated the same idea more than once as they encountered examples of the same point. Reflecting on potential answers more carefully in **3(a)** would have helped a number of these candidates to group examples usefully together under one umbrella point and/or avoid such repetition of ideas.

The most successful summary responses re-order and re-group the relevant information from the passage, with a clear focus on the question. The best answers consider carefully both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using their own words as far as possible. They avoid writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrate on giving a factual objective summary.

In a number of answers, the inclusion of irrelevant and/or repeated material diminished the focus and depressed the Writing mark.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify precisely the content points required
- list relevant points clearly in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points in **3(a)** checking each is distinct and accurate
- plan the structure of your response in **3(b)** – for example organising and sequencing content logically
- write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage.
- be careful to give only information that answers the question
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** past the 15 required
- pay attention to the guidance for length in **3(b)**
- do not add detail or examples to the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/31

Directed Writing and Composition

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for Writing, although there were ten marks available for Reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- create thoughtful and well-structured arguments, produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision.

General Comments

Most scripts showed a good grasp of what was expected in both the Directed Writing and the Composition. Responses were substantial and purposeful, on the whole, with relatively few brief or undeveloped answers. There was evidence in many scripts of a clear awareness of how marks were awarded in the different questions and writing genres, and most followed the rubric.

Most responses showed an understanding of the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passage in their responses. Better answers engaged with the writer's arguments, demonstrated understanding of the older generation and recognised that the older generation were not deliberately awkward but simply people who had grown up in different times and had not experienced the growth of technology during their working lives and formative years. Most responses in the middle mark range tended to reproduce the points made in the passage. Weaker answers drifted away from the material or listed some points simply.

In the compositions, better responses showed a clear understanding of the features of descriptive or narrative writing and in both genres there was developed and structured writing. Some weaker descriptive writing tended to slide into narrative or in some cases was entirely narrative in character; these responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good descriptive style, such as a focus on detail and a more limited time span. As stated in the current syllabus, the two discursive/argumentative tasks have been removed from Section 2, reducing the choice available to candidates in this part of the examination.

The best responses were characterised by the careful selection of precise vocabulary and sentence structures to create specific effects. The reader was often intrigued in the early stages of compositions and the writing was consciously shaped in both genres in order to engage and sustain the reader's interest. In weaker responses, an appropriate register and effective style was more difficult to achieve. In **Question 1**, for example, the required formal tone was sometimes forgotten. In this question and in the compositions, there was insufficient attention paid to basic punctuation in weaker answers. Capital letters were sometimes used rather indiscriminately, appearing frequently where not required but not used for proper nouns, in speech or at the beginnings of sentences. Semi-colons were much in evidence but used accurately infrequently.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1

Imagine that you are interested in becoming a volunteer for Age Campaign's project, as described in the article.

**Write a letter to Age Campaign, applying for a place as a volunteer in the project.
In your letter, you should:**

- **identify and evaluate the skills and qualities needed as a volunteer**
- **explain why you want to volunteer and why you consider yourself to be a suitable applicant.**

Base your letter on what you have read in the passage, but be careful to use your own words.

Address each of the two bullet points.

Begin your letter, 'Dear Age Campaign...'

Write about 250 to 350 words.

(25 marks)

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

Most responses adhered to the letter writing structure using a clear introduction and were able to bring their letters to a logical conclusion. They showed understanding of the basic requirements of a letter of application for employment, even though the work was of a voluntary nature and in better responses the writer's arguments were scrutinised and commented on purposefully. Good answers evaluated ideas successfully and explored the skills and qualities needed for this particular task of working with the elderly as identified in the passage. They also wrote fluently and used vocabulary to good effect. Many, however, simply listed and agreed with the writer's views on the different points and did not adopt the critical stance which is required for marks in the higher bands. Weaker responses focused on only a few points and often produced a response about the problems of the elderly in general, rather than covering the range of points made in the article.

The marks for Reading

Good responses followed the bullet points but also adopted the evaluative stance required for marks above Band 3. Better responses identified and explored the subtleties of the passage, such as the need to treat the elderly as individuals and not to take a stereotypical and patronising approach. They were also able to appreciate that they too would learn from the experience and from working with the elderly. These better responses recognised that older people were not senile and might want to develop a diverse range of technical skills. These higher band responses used the detail of the passage well: this was a local campaign, arriving next month, local businesses had lent support, a professional trainer would be teaching the course and acknowledged the previous contributions of course participants to society. However, very few attempted to challenge the basic ideas contained within the passage. Most accepted the stated need for respectful tuition and a calm approach, for example. Some did argue that too formal an atmosphere could be counter-productive and inhibit the relaxed and friendly approach in which people of all ages might learn best. This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 2 and above. A mark of 7 was given where there were glimpses of evaluation of some of the points but a more consistently critical stance was required for higher marks. Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage, often with straightforward agreement, Examiners could not award marks above Band 3.

Mid-range responses often recognised the pitfalls of over-simplified generalisations about older people while not presenting a range of, or using, supporting detail from the passage to achieve the top mark bands. The majority of these responses claimed to have either lived with their grandparents or recently helped their grandparents engage with modern technology such as an iPad or smartphone, or learning how to use Skype or Facebook; they did not always explain or further develop why this was important for Age Campaign's project. These answers often seemed to explain the meaning or give examples of, for example 'patience and perseverance', rather than seeking to move beyond the text in evaluating why these qualities would be

important for working on this project with the elderly. There were quite a few responses that seemed unsure of the difference between skills and qualities; there was a tendency to use the two interchangeably.

Weaker responses identified few qualities and skills; they were not always able to consider why these qualities and skills were valuable in relation to the Age Campaign's scheme. Some responses veered away from the text and explored skills and qualities that they believed to be important for a volunteer, for example team work. Details explored were therefore not rooted in the text, were often very generalised and not closely referenced to the elderly. Weaker responses also tended to take a simplistic approach about what the elderly would need to learn, or were capable of learning.

At this level, there were occasional examples of misunderstanding or literal interpretation. For example, many candidates misunderstood the need for creativity and assumed that a volunteer needed to be artistic rather than adopting a flexible approach for working with the elderly; one response argued that, 'my ability to draw, act or write, would make me more suited to the task than someone who prefers science'. Some of these responses wrote at great length about the volunteers' IT capabilities, often quoting that they had advanced qualifications in this area. This was in contradiction to the desired skills requested. Some responses further strayed from the brief and forgot they were to write as 'young volunteers...local teenagers'.

The marks for Writing

15 marks were available for style and audience, the structure of the answer and technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Style and audience

Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of their letter. Responses made an attempt at a persuasive style, with varying degrees of success. Better answers sustained the sense of audience throughout, with regular allusions to the article and Age Campaign. Phrases such as 'As you mentioned...' or 'As mentioned in the article...' worked well here. Weaker answers suggested a sense of audience in the opening paragraph only, if at all. Generally, even in weaker answers, the responses were aware of the need for a formal and respectful tone in addressing the intended audience. Very occasionally this led to writing which was too formal, and rather over ambitious in vocabulary and expression. Some responses criticised the charity about how their criteria did not go far enough, or had asked for the wrong qualities, which is inappropriate for a letter of application. There was some inappropriate word choice when referring to the elderly, such as 'olds', 'elderlies' and 'these people'. This had a detrimental effect on the tone of the letter.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for Writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive application which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. Some stronger responses did not base their structure around the bullet points. For example, some considered what had driven them to volunteer as a strong persuasive tactic at the start of the letter. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given rather than a list of desirable attributes. Some fluent responses with effective sentences did not give full attention to sequencing, so ideas within and between paragraphs were not linked as smoothly as they could be. Moreover, there was some tendency, even among stronger responses, to neglect the use of paragraphs. Many middle band responses used discursive markers which provided effective structure. Some responses were structured according to the bullet points, occasionally devoting one long paragraph to each. Weaker responses lacked a clear introduction and conclusion to the letter and ideas were presented in a jumbled way, often without paragraphs. Responses given marks below Band 3 were characterised by brief or no introductions and a simple list of some of the writer's points in sequence.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Responses given 7, 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Responses given marks in Band 4 sometimes showed some clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which precluded Examiners from awarding Band 3 marks and, in addition, there was sometimes a simplicity

of language and style. Sentence separation errors also appeared at this level and the frequency of errors became self-penalising, as did insecure grammar and awkward phrasing.

There was some overuse of informality for example 'like' instead of 'as if', or 'such as' and also 'that' or 'which' instead of 'who'. The joining of separate words, for example 'aswell', 'infront', 'atall' and particularly 'alot' was prevalent.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Use the details in the passage but think about the attitude of the writer to the topic as a whole as well.
- Try to develop ideas from the passage concisely, using inferences that are suggested in it, but without drifting beyond it.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for a letter, an article or a speech for example.
- Use paragraphs to structure responses.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors.

Section 2: Composition

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions.

Up to 13 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 12 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.

Descriptive Writing

Question 2

Imagine you have moved house. Describe your new home and your thoughts and feelings as you enter it for the first time.

(25 marks)

OR

Question 3

Describe a town or city centre in the early hours of the morning.

(25 marks)

Question 3 was the most popular of the two options.

Question 2 provided a great variety of responses across the range. The best responses not only demonstrated linguistic and stylistic skills but used a variety of devices to create atmosphere. Complex atmospheres relating to thoughts and feelings experienced were developed. Good responses were often shaped by the movement through the house. This gave a structure which suited even less confident candidates. Some responses felt as if they had the validity of lived experience and these remained focused on the description. Another successful approach was the use of extended metaphor to give a house an underlying feeling.

Weaker responses drifted into narrative as the need to move house and the journey there was explained. At this level, the thoughts and feelings described contained a narrative background. Some responses made the house the scene of a crime or a ghost story. Weaker responses tended to list expensive and ostensibly impressive features of a dream home, rather than more realistic details.

Question 3 also produced responses across the range of marks and encouraged close observation of detail, even though the definition of 'morning' ranged from just after midnight until noon. A common feature was personification of the sun and the majesty of the sun rising over a sleeping city. Other common features included the smell of bread baking through the early morning hours and of birdsong. More accomplished responses personified the city waking up and used interesting imagery linked to cars, sound, smog and the sound of footsteps. Some responses focused on a journey through the city but without straying into narrative or allowing character or events to overcome description. Others created links which united the structure and anchored their ending firmly to the rest of their writing. Responses which took a specific vantage point, or explored one or two specific locales, were more successful than those which tried to include many different areas in the locality, such as a park, beach or shops. The use of specific detail to evoke particular scenes

was more effective than general images, such as sunrises, although these were successful if used as part of a range of details.

Some responses which included formulaic use of detail from each of the five senses could lead to the details and images being presented in a disjointed way. This approach can weaken the structure and overall picture formed in even the strongest of responses. For example, one response focused fairly effectively on the scene observed from a bedroom window, before veering off to write about the texture of the morning attire that the narrator happened to be wearing.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were often lower than those for Content and Structure. Better responses chose precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences. In weaker responses, tenses were used insecurely, and incomplete or poorly separated sentences adversely affected candidates' marks. Although there were fewer examples than previously of strings of incomplete, verbless sentences, this was often because there was more narrative than descriptive content in the weaker responses.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Avoid too much narrative preamble and remember to provide descriptive detail.
- Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.

Narrative Writing

Question 4

Write a story entitled 'The Lesson'. (25 marks)

OR

Question 5

Write a story which ends with the words, 'I knew things would be different from now on.' (25 marks)

Both questions were equally popular.

There was quite a range of subjects in response to **Question 4**.

Those who chose the metaphorical approach offered a variety of 'life lessons'. Very often, these responses created rather dramatic scenarios in which the protagonist was taught some kind of lesson, often involving the need to listen to the advice of parents or not to get involved in the wrong crowd. These higher band responses were sophisticated and convincing in their portrayal of the lesson learned. Some adventurous ones chose to interpret 'the Lesson' as revenge, which led to more elaborate and dark tales which were more than often successful.

Generally the morality tale approach provided a sound structure for middle band responses, often presenting a character and hinting at their fall from grace, then going on to explore this 'fall'.

The responses to this question were sometimes straightforward accounts of school lessons. These were effective on some occasions through attention to character and setting, both of which were familiar territory. Others relied on over-use of dialogue and were less successful. Weaker responses which focused on a straightforward story were often able to control this approach effectively. Such responses often tended to record a long sequence of biographical details about what had gone wrong in the life of the main character, leading to rather a poor structure.

The scope of the second narrative question was wide and responses offered a huge variety of plots not always linked to the final line 'I knew things would be different from now on'. The best were those which were rooted in personal experience and which painted convincing pictures of those involved, building towards a climax, often of personal enlightenment. The question required an indication of change as demanded by the final sentence. Stronger responses recognised this requirement and incorporated it seamlessly into the story.

These higher band responses often provided a detailed setting and short time-span. One successful response detailed reflections of the narrator on his family following the death of his father and the impact on those left behind after the reading of the will; another explored a traumatic betrayal between friends.

Middle and lower band responses did not convey the sense of some kind of important, life changing event in their narrative, or the potentially life changing event. For example the discovery of being adopted was conveyed by the recording and reporting of events with lack of focus on the human impact. The endings of lower band responses were often contrived in an attempt to include the final line.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. Speech was over-used only in weaker responses but there were many scripts where the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Again, basic punctuation errors with capital letters, the spelling of simple words and misused homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Remember that stories need more than events to interest the reader.
- Plan the ending before you begin so that you can shape your story appropriately.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.
- Originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic, but keep the details credible.
- Check your writing for errors, especially missing full stops.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/32

Directed Writing and Composition

Key Messages

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

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style in both questions, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively, keeping the reader in mind
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create specific effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and use language with precision.

General Comments

Examiners found that in the great majority of scripts a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were developed and there were relatively few very brief scripts. There were also rubric infringements where more than one composition question had been attempted, although there were some in which one question from each composition genre was attempted. When this did happen, each response was marked by Examiners with the highest mark taken forward, but there was inevitably an effect on marks awarded if insufficient time had been given to any task.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the issues addressed in the passage and usually some attention paid to the style and format of a letter. The great majority of candidates approached the topic in their own language rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage. Better answers here also tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument of their own. Weaker candidates tended to reiterate the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence rather than selecting and regrouping points. Some made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material, and responses drifted into a general discussion of the qualities needed to be considered optimistic or pessimistic. These responses tended to focus less on the proposed course of lessons on optimism than on their own personal thoughts, missing opportunities to evaluate the ideas in the passage.

Better responses paid attention to the register, audience and style required for a letter to the headteacher. These were persuasive in purpose, using the passage with subtlety to show an understanding of the argument rather than listing the points. Some in the middle range of marks showed an insecure register, sometimes lapsing into a more colloquial style less appropriate for the audience of the headteacher. Valedictions were frequently forgotten or were inappropriate in weaker responses, a feature characteristic of an insecure grasp of audience and purpose.

In the compositions, the descriptive and narrative genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers in this series. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged. Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and although there was some narrative content in the middle range, most responses gave a range of descriptive detail. The best narrative writing engaged the

reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were engaging and credible. Weaker narrative writing was often characterised by inconclusive or unsatisfying endings, sometimes with simple storylines which were largely a series of events with limited awareness of the reader. Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader, and the creation of characters to stimulate the reader's sympathy, were features understood by effective writers in this series. Many descriptions would have been improved by the inclusion of well-chosen detail and the narrator's reactions in order to recreate the scene in the reader's imagination. As stated in the current syllabus, the two discursive/argumentative tasks have been removed from Section 2, reducing the choice available to candidates in this part of the examination.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1

Imagine that your school is considering the introduction of a course of lessons in optimism.

Write a letter to the headteacher of your school in response to the ideas about optimism that are discussed in the article.

In your letter you should:

- **identify and evaluate the arguments given in the article**
- **give your views on whether or not you think optimism can or should be taught in your school.**

**Base your letter on the magazine article, but be careful to use your own words.
Address each of the two bullet points.**

Begin your letter: 'Dear Headteacher...'

[25 marks]

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

High marks were awarded where a perceptive and persuasive case for or against the course of lessons in optimism was developed, and where the letter was both accurate and appropriate in style. Better responses assimilated and integrated the material into their own focused argument in a convincing manner. These responses had a clear understanding of the range of points, both for and against, and developed these points and evaluated the overall argument. Most responses reproduced the material effectively and demonstrated an understanding of the different suggestions made by the teachers who were quoted in the passage. Examiners awarded the highest marks where a clear line of argument was developed, using the material to support a view, and leading to a consistent and convincing conclusion.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more focused on the definition of an optimist or a pessimist. The benefits, or otherwise, of optimism and pessimism were understood and written about, but the development of the course in optimism was less clearly the main focus. Some development of the material was offered, and a conclusion was usually reached.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the more obvious qualities of optimism and pessimism as expressed in the passage. At this level, the range of ideas was narrower and candidates often relied more on the wording of the passage, often offering repeated direct quotation from the two teachers.

Marks for reading

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage to show a sophisticated understanding of what the possible course in optimism might offer. These responses had an authoritative grasp of the material, and used it to support their own effectively developed viewpoint. Opinions both for and against the course in lessons were awarded Band 1. The range of benefits, and also the disadvantages, of both optimists and pessimists was explored. The possible development of the

course in the school was central to the argument. It was also important to consider how these qualities would assist life after school and in the wider business context.

Marks in Band 2 were given where the ideas were evaluated to some degree. A mark of 7 was awarded for many responses where some thoughtful inferences were made from the passage. At this level, responses tended to include a range of the qualities and attributes possessed by optimists and pessimists with some developed comments about them to show a grasp of the passage's subtler points. For example, some made mention of the positivity of optimists being one of the factors responsible for their good health record at work. These inferred ideas, even where other, more surface qualities were reproduced, were often enough for Examiners to award a mark of 7, but a more sustained understanding of the attitudes which underpinned the passage was needed for a higher mark.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sensible understanding of the specific points made in the passage concerning the proposed course in optimism. Responses tended to list the qualities of the optimist or the pessimist, and did not always reach a definite conclusion concerning the value of the course. The range of points and clarity of understanding were the discriminating factors in this band.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some at this level went through the material with little reference to the proposed course, or offered literal definitions of optimism and pessimism without offering an appropriate register or personal viewpoint. Where a mark of 4 was awarded, some firmer links with the passage and a wider range of points were needed, whereas 3 was generally given for very thin or brief responses. Marks below 3 were rarely given and usually applied when the task was not understood or only a few lines were written.

Marks for writing

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Style and audience

A formal tone was required for a letter to a Headteacher and most responses were written in an appropriate register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some weaker responses were written in a much more colloquial style, and these were not always credible as letters addressed to a professional concerning the proposed course. There was also a tendency to make assertions about personal qualities possessed without arguing for their usefulness for the project.

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience and although most started in an appropriate way valedictions were frequently forgotten.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive letter which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given rather than a list of desirable attributes.

Responses given 7, 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. Responses opened with a considered introduction and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of the purpose of the letter. At the lower end of Band 3, responses sometimes struggled to tackle the second bullet point productively which led to some repetition.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This often led to some basic reiteration of the passage with less careful selection of ideas about the course.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Precision in the control of a subtle and ambitious vocabulary resulted in some very high marks in this component.

Responses given 7, 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. The failure to use a capital letter for the personal pronoun 'I' was a very frequent error, as was the use of capital letters where they were not needed, even where there was otherwise general accuracy in the writing. Apostrophes were very often not used appropriately and sentence demarcation by commas rather than full stops began to creep in at the lower end of Band 3. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in many responses. These included words used frequently in the passage or words essential for letter-writing such as 'sincerely', 'faithfully', 'optimism' and 'pessimism'.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures often kept writing marks for **Question 1** in Band 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which meant that Examiners could not award in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Think about the underlying attitudes in the passage as well as the specific points being made.
- Look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writer.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the kind of style the recipient of your letter (or reader of your article) would expect.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, missing or wrongly used capital letters or key words mis-spelt.

Section 2: Composition

Descriptive Writing

Question 2

Imagine you return home after a long period away. Describe your surroundings and your thoughts and feelings as you return.

(25 marks)

OR

Question 3

Describe the atmosphere and your thoughts and feelings when you and your team win an important competition.

(25 marks)

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range. In the first question, the journey and the feelings of the narrator on arriving home often featured, as well as some descriptive detail about the home environment. In the second question, there were some vivid descriptions of competitions, not only sporting but also performance-based or intellectual. As in previous series, some inexperience in tackling descriptive writing tasks was apparent in responses which became narratives or which contained limited descriptive detail or only rather mundane details.

For Question 2, the best responses often included the feelings of the narrator as a cohesive device for the piece as a whole, starting with a range of emotions and feelings concerning their return home. Some effective personification of home, either positive or negative, was sometimes used and sustained in quite

sophisticated images throughout the piece. The idea of 'home' was conceived of in different ways, such as a country, city, or house.

Responses given marks in the middle range were more straightforward in their approach to the task, often moving from room to room at 'home', describing what each room had to offer. The quality and effectiveness of the writing varied but the structure of many average pieces relied on this approach. The thoughts and feelings of the narrator were often included, often suggesting nostalgia or sometimes anxiety. There was sometimes a tendency to use the senses in a rather formulaic way to help structure the response, with comments on what was seen and heard, touched and smelt being somewhat mechanically covered. Some responses included details where 'home' had been transformed into something totally different to the narrator's expectations. Huge cities had developed in some responses, where there had previously been small rural communities. Some homes had been abandoned, and there was a tendency for some less credible gothic description of ruin and decay in these responses.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus. Here, responses turned into haunted house stories or other narratives quite quickly, or the preamble about the journey home became too long and involved for descriptive content of 'home' itself to be given prominence. Some responses were mostly based on the reasons why the return was necessary rather than a description. While a narrative frame is often useful to give descriptions cohesion, there was at this level some insecurity about what constitutes effective descriptive writing.

Question 3 also elicited responses across the mark range. Sporting competition was the favourite subject, with the occasional chess match, speaking competition and even a knitting competition. There were some very vivid descriptions of changing room atmospheres, and some very lively motivational language. More successful candidates detailed the final moments of the competition followed by the thoughts and feelings after the victory. A variety of focus was offered, zooming between the crowd and the competing teams. A wide range of feeling was described from the perspectives of glory and also the defeated opposition. In the middle range, some rather formulaic use of the senses tended to feature, very often with the smell of sweat and other changing room odours. While there was some descriptive detail, it was often a little predictable, whereas responses given marks below Band 3 were usually narrative in intent and with limited descriptive focus. Band 4 responses were often simple tales of games described pass by pass. Perhaps candidates' marks could have been improved at this level by a better understanding of the differences between narrative and descriptive writing, as well as the need to paint a convincing picture without recourse to clichés.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were sometimes lower than those for Content and Structure, even in some original and interesting responses. In the best responses, precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences were used. Images, words and phrases, as well as varied sentence lengths, were employed to create specific effects. In weaker responses, as is often the case in descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences, and incomplete or verbless sentences were common, even in scripts where responses to **Question 1** showed a secure grasp of sentence structure.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.
- Remember the key features of descriptive writing and keep the timespan of your writing short.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.
- Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Narrative Writing

Question 4

Write a story which begins with a bitter disappointment. (25 marks)

OR

Question 5

'Where on earth have you been?' Write a story which includes these words. (25 marks)

The second option was more often selected by candidates than the first although marks across the range were awarded to responses to both questions. Question 4 was usually well-structured, although some responses focused on the cause of the bitter disappointment and had little material to continue with in the narrative. Examinations were a popular topic, as well as friends hurting the feelings of the narrator, and unfortunate medical results. As in most narrative writing, the success of the story depended as much on the degree to which the characters were well-realised, believable portrayals as on the sequence of events in the plot. Middle range stories offered a clear account of a disappointment, with some effective detail and range of subsequent events. One feature in this series was the lack of satisfactory endings after reasonably effective beginnings and the creation of quite credible characters. This often kept marks in Band 3 where there were some features of Band 2 at the start and highlights the need for candidates to have the ending in mind from the beginning. Some narratives were also too reliant on speech in places. Dialogue was used to tell the story more than to highlight aspects of characters and relationships, weakening the overall impact and often also revealing insecurities in speech punctuation.

Weaker responses tended to be series of events rather than shaped narratives which showed due regard for the needs of the reader. Even where the plot itself was credible and had some shape and sense of purpose, a mark of 6 was often given where there was insufficient preparation and characterisation was weak.

For Question 5, the variety of topics covered was very wide, although storylines were not always linked in significant ways to the key line of the title. The best were those which were based on moments or events which would convincingly feature the line 'Where on earth have you been?' The build-up or preparation for this element was crucial in creating a believable and effective denouement and better responses focused attention on characterisation and setting before this moment was revealed. Fairly straightforward scenarios such as a delayed return home or lost children were often lifted by careful scene-setting and characterisation into effective stories which could be given marks in Band 1. Indeed, these kinds of narratives were generally more effective than stories with a wider scope or more extreme storylines.

Average and weaker responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived endings or stories which seemed to have the key line tacked on in an unconvincing way. Responses given marks in Band 4 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while Band 5 marks usually reflected rather brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. An unexpected interpretation of the title led to a few responses which listed where they had travelled to around the world. This was not an appropriate narrative approach to this title.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. In many scripts, the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Again, basic punctuation errors with misused or omitted capital letters, the spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks below Band 3. A few responses were very brief and faulty in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Plan how to resolve your story in an interesting way before you start writing.
- Consider more creative interpretations of titles.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.
- Check your writing for errors, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/33

Directed Writing and Composition

Key Messages

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

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary and use language with precision.

General Comments

The great majority of candidates showed confident awareness of what was expected of them in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the paper. There were very few responses which were unacceptably brief or undeveloped, and rubric infringements where candidates answered more than the required number of questions were rare.

At all levels of achievement, candidates showed clear understanding of the reading material and the task in **Question 1**, and usually demonstrated strong engagement with the topic, while paying appropriate attention to the style and format of a letter. The great majority of candidates approached the topic in their own words, with very little evidence of simple paraphrase or indiscriminate copying of material in the passage. Although the reproduction of some key words and phrases was widespread, this was usually where synonyms were not readily available. Many excellent answers which interrogated the views expressed by both parties in the 'Parents' Forum' showed a sophisticated knowledge and awareness of the requirements of higher-level education in an increasingly globalised economy. Some strong responses enthusiastically supported the studio guest's views, but were still able to develop them in a suitably evaluative manner. At all levels of achievement, the views of the presenter were far more frequently challenged than those of Mr Joubert, the studio guest. The final part of the discussion, spoken by the presenter, was very often ignored: more attention to this might have resulted in more fruitfully critical evaluation of the studio guest's views. The best responses combined an assured grasp of the content and attitudes of the material with an independence of thought reflected in the structure of their writing: rather than a methodical consideration of the points in the same sequence as the original, they were evaluative of the whole thrust of the discussion from the outset, selecting and commenting on its details to support their views. In the middle bands, candidates often simply agreed with the views of one or other of the speakers, developing them with personal anecdote which recounted their own experience of home and school life. Here, the writing was often of a fluency and accuracy typical of higher bands, and these candidates sometimes demonstrated in their **Section 2** compositions an originality of thought and invention absent in their handling of the reading material. A small but not insignificant number of candidates reproduced and agreed with the views of both speakers without challenge or evaluation.

In **Section 2**, there was usually a clear awareness of the differing requirements of the two genres, which were attempted in fairly equal numbers, and there was much writing of a high standard across the different types. As always, the best responses were typified by careful planning and structuring, a wide-ranging and precisely employed vocabulary, and a high level of technical accuracy: **Question 2** evoked many excellent descriptive pieces with much evidence of conscious crafting for effect, which did not drift into narrative; some narrative framework for cohesion was more often apparent in responses to **Question 3**, but was usually

appropriate and did not detract from the essentially descriptive nature of better responses. Weaker responses to both questions in the descriptive genre were typically dominated by simple, sequential narrative and limited vocabulary. Strong responses to **Questions 4** and **5** frequently engaged the reader's interest from the beginning, and also provided a satisfactory and believable resolution to the story. Too many responses to **Question 4**, however, did not utilise effectively the closing sentence supplied in the task, 'tacking it on' to their stories in an unbelievable or inappropriate manner. In the middle bands of narrative responses, often engaging and well-written stories were let down by unconvincing endings: candidates need to be more aware of the distinctive requirements of the genre in this respect.

Weaker responses in both **Section 1** and **Section 2** sometimes struggled to find the correct register and tone for their intended audience, and basic errors in punctuation and syntax were frequent. Comma splicing and uncertain control of tense were evident at varying levels of achievement, and a number of compositions were unparagraphed, even in the setting out of dialogue. As stated in the current syllabus, the two discursive/argumentative tasks have been removed from Section 2, reducing the choice available to candidates in this part of the examination.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

Imagine you have heard the programme 'Parents' Forum', and want to respond.

Write a letter to the presenter, in response to the programme.

In your letter, you should

- **identify and evaluate the views given in the programme**
- **give your own views as a teenager, based on what you have read in the transcript.**

Base your letter on what you have read in the transcript, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the two bullet points.

Begin your letter, 'Dear Presenter...'

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing.

(25 marks)

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of the writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

High marks were awarded where the views expressed in the transcript were subjected to rigorous examination and there was an overview of the speakers' positions on the subject of teenagers contributing to the work of the home; the style of the response was both appropriate and displayed a high level of accuracy; points from the discussion were selected to support the candidate's views in a cohesive and balanced argument. In high scoring responses, the letter format was followed at the beginning and end of the response and the mode of address was consistently appropriate; the underlying assumptions and implications of the speakers' positions were recognised, and more contentious claims scrutinised and challenged. Marks in Band 3 were awarded when candidates showed reasonable understanding of the discussion, and subjected some points to more extended discussion and development. Responses here were typified by often enthusiastic support for the studio guest's views, and claims of existences heavily burdened by academic pressure. More thoughtful responses made some attempt to differentiate between types and frequency of household chores, and the varying needs of families in difficult economic circumstances. Weaker responses tended to work through the studio conversation, agreeing and disagreeing, often resulting in contradictory assertions which reduced cohesion in the overall argument. The weakest responses focused on one or two points only, showing limited understanding of others, or gave lengthy anecdotes of limited relevance to the material.

Marks for reading

The best responses were evaluative throughout, demonstrating the ability to assess objectively the views expressed in the transcript and adopt a wider view, rather than focusing upon those which apparently offered more immediate benefits for teenagers. These respondents referenced both parties' views without laboured reiteration, having assimilated them into a cogent argument of their own. While most responses awarded marks in Band 1 demonstrated effective reading between the lines to produce a clearly evaluative and balanced argument which recognised merit on both sides, one candidate's response was an elaborately courteous but nonetheless scathing attack on the views of the presenter which were dissected from the title onwards. While few candidates at any level of achievement challenged Mr Joubert's apparent business-model approach to family life, this candidate not only recognised this model but found it more tellingly present in the presenter's comments which seemed to suggest that 'manual labour was a just recompense for the provision of a family home.' In top-band responses this candidate was not alone in recognising weaknesses in the presenter's arguments such as the assertion of a causal relationship between the failure to do household chores and the production of 'spoilt, lazy kids'; however, even able candidates missed the opportunities for rigorous interrogation offered by Mr Joubert's description of the basic work of running a family home as 'menial', or the assumption that the habits of his obviously very affluent family provided a universal model.

Marks in Band 2 were awarded when there was more than simple agreement or disagreement with the views in the transcript, however well developed or supported; here, at least some were held up to scrutiny. Candidates often began by reproducing and agreeing with the studio guest's claims of a world 'changed beyond recognition' and the ever-rising requirements of elite universities and the global job market, but went on to offer a more balanced evaluation of the needs of the family too, especially where both parents worked outside the home. In this range candidates sometimes made valuable and appropriate distinctions between different chores and demands. Elsewhere, candidates frequently did not note the incongruity of their claims that education left no time at all for doing household chores while saying that chores would be acceptable if payment was made for them. A limited number of candidates recognised the implied injustice of a parent – and specifically a mother – being expected to do everything for the family and home when she had a demanding career herself which provided for them financially.

Marks in Band 3 were awarded where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the reading material but less recognition of implicit meanings or faulty or illogical reasoning. A mark of 6 could be given where the candidate reproduced key points with some appropriate – often anecdotal – development. At this level candidates often asserted their rights to free time and socialising with friends after the rigours of the school day and homework, but also recognised the value of being able to look after themselves when they left home. Some also developed the idea in the transcript about extraordinary circumstances in the family in a limited way by claiming that they would 'step up' if there was parental illness. Where there was clear understanding of the main thrust of the debate but only a limited selection of points discussed a mark of 5 was given. The typical pattern of the many responses awarded a mark of 5 or 6 was to agree with Mr Joubert, say the presenter's views were old-fashioned, then supply a personal, often anecdotal conclusion.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where there was some misunderstanding – although this was quite rare – or a lack of focus on the reading material, or anecdotes which did not express a clear view on the topic. Firmer links with the transcript and a wider range of points could be awarded a mark of 4, but where coverage of the material was very flimsy a mark of 3 was more appropriate. A few lengthy responses did not mention chores at all but largely discussed the evils of excessive academic pressure. Only a very few responses were given marks below 3, which were applied when very little had been written and connection with the text and task was only peripheral.

Marks for writing

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Style and audience

An appropriately formal tone and style of address was required for a letter in response to such a debate, and most candidates achieved that except for the widespread use of the colloquial 'kids': although this was used once by the presenter, candidates should have appreciated that there it was an acceptable representation of

the spoken medium and should be avoided in the written form. Almost all candidates began with the provided salutation. It was not necessary to write an address.

The best responses demonstrated authority and confidence. The great majority wrote in their own voice: a very small number adopted the persona of a parent, although this did not necessarily detract from the value or quality of the evaluation within. The most accomplished, evaluative responses demonstrated their stance from the start, the candidates immediately signalling the direction their argument would take.

In the middle to lower mark range, responses were usually appropriate in tone and form, but they often followed and reproduced the wording of the passage quite closely; while there was very little wholesale 'lifting' of clauses or sentences from the material, some words and phrases appeared repeatedly in candidates' responses, sometimes unadapted to their own style and syntax. Weaker candidates sometimes forgot the relationship with the addressee, concluding with 'Love from...', or forgetting the valediction altogether.

Structure

The most successful candidates framed their arguments in a coherent, cohesive response, prioritising their points in a fluent and authoritative manner independent of the order and structure of the passage. They supported their ideas with cogent detail, often showing a sophisticated, wide-ranging awareness of the educational and economic implications of the debate. Responses in Band 2 were clear in their stance, and supported their argument with carefully selected points leading to a lucid conclusion.

In the middle range, candidates, especially those who had clearly planned their response, often did attempt to order their response to support their thesis, but a majority followed the structure of the transcript in a predictable manner, sometimes at the expense of their argument. Marks at the lower end of Band 3 were awarded when candidates simply reproduced the points either in the order of the passage, or in consecutive summaries of the two opposing views followed by a brief paragraph or concluding sentence which stated their own view in a simple manner, or asked for consideration and a reply. At this level too responses sometimes showed a clear relationship to the passage but consisted only of complaints about their home and school lives. Responses given marks below Band 3 were sometimes only partly relevant to the task or were comprised of confused or contradictory remarks or of largely lifted material.

Accuracy

Responses in Band 1 combined a fluent and authoritative style, typified by sophisticated, precisely employed vocabulary and a wide range of sentence structures, with a very high level of technical accuracy. An impressive number of candidates gained high marks for this element. Responses given 8 or 9 were often clearly and competently written, but their vocabulary lacked ambition. What was evident was the frequent and widespread incidence of errors of sentence separation, comma splicing being the major fault at the lower end in this band. This, and a lack of paragraphing, often restricted the writing mark to a band below that awarded for reading. Two types of writing typified responses awarded marks in Band 4 and below: the first lacked evidence of controlled shaping, and simply followed the patterns of speech. Here phrases such as, 'Well I think...' were seen. Words essential to letter-writing such as 'sincerely' and 'faithfully' were often misspelt. There were very frequent basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar; however, it was not only the weakest responses that used capital letters randomly and inaccurately. The second was often characterised by secure spelling and quite ambitious vocabulary, but marred by serious structural faults in sentences and syntax, errors of agreement and tense, and an uncertain use of prepositions. Here, articles were sometimes omitted or 'the' was used rather than 'a' or 'an'. Meaning was sometimes blurred by the levels of error. Only a small, if still significant, proportion of the responses fell into this lowest level.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Consider the underlying attitudes of the speaker/s in the passage as well as those explicitly expressed, and how those affect their opinions.
- Try to identify the key arguments in the passage.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well as some depth in evaluating them.
- Be prepared to challenge the views expressed in the passage.
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully for example about the correct style for a letter, an article or a speech.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops and capital letters.
- Check your spelling, especially of key words from the passage.

Section 2: Composition

Descriptive Writing

Question 2

Imagine you enter a crowded train or bus for a short journey. Describe your surroundings and your fellow-travellers during the journey.

(25 marks)

OR

Question 3

Describe the end of a tiring climb with a companion, and your thoughts and feelings as you get to the top.

(25 marks)

This was a popular genre across the mark range, with many more candidates choosing the first option. At all levels of achievement many candidates felt it necessary to provide some context for the required scene, weaker responses, especially to **Question 3**, sometimes developing their writing too far along the path of narrative, thus forgetting the requirements and intent of this type of writing. Stronger responses framed their descriptions in a much more controlled manner, providing just enough context to introduce their writing and to provide cohesion, but the most successful responses to both questions involved the reader immediately in the designated situation. In the middle range some responses were more narrative in manner than is usually desirable for this genre, but included such vivid detail that the engaging atmosphere which is its first requirement for success was satisfactorily created. Here, the Examiners were able to reward marks in the middle band and not over-penalise the story-telling manner.

The best responses to both questions produced writing of a very high order, earning marks at the top of Band 1. These were highly evocative, often creating overall pictures of considerable clarity and employing a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary. Although there was still some evidence of the over-use of elaborate and multi-syllabic words in sentences including proliferating adjectives, this seemed less apparent than in previous series.

Question 2's very popular scenario of a crowded bus or train was interpreted with variety and ingenuity, although the majority of candidates described rush-hour scenes in heavily populated urban areas. The best of these responses conveyed stifling commuter misery. One awarded marks at the top of Band 1 was a bravura demonstration of asyndetic listing which evoked a rush-hour tube train entirely successfully: 'blond, brunette, ginger, black; pushed, pulled, fumbling, tumbling, assaulted, molested, protesting; we were knives in a box, rattling, banging: released, unsheathed, we cut through the tide like paper.' There were some wonderfully original and effective interpretations; in one it subtly became clear that the bus was part of an increasingly dilapidated inter-stellar system, the purpose of which was to ferry travellers away from a dying planet: the candidate created a completely convincing and realistic scene which stayed long in the imagination. Another, without ever mentioning the destination, evoked a most haunting picture of a box-car journey to a concentration camp.

Responses given marks in the middle band approached the task more straightforwardly, with varying degrees of accomplishment: these more usually had a narrative framework, and a tendency to over-exaggeration. Noxious smells, sights and unwanted bodily contact abounded, as did screaming babies, and suited businessmen clutching briefcases and coffee containers. Mobile phones and other electronic devices featured. There were at this level many effective pieces which demonstrated a grasp of the intent and requirements of the genre; some, if lacking the assurance of the top band responses, were interesting and original. In some of these, there were evocations of the landscapes passing the windows to contrast with the interior scene. One awarded marks at the top of Band 3 created some telling images of the poor local people outside a carriage filled with brightly-clad tourists. At the lower end of the band and below it, the writing often became driven by narrative, even though some relevant descriptive details were included. Examiners must see some attempt to create atmosphere to consider awarding a mark in Band 3. Sometimes, pieces were too formulaic to engage the reader and overfamiliar phrases predominated. Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where responses were almost entirely narrative in focus rather than descriptive, or where details were scarce or ineffective. There were very few responses awarded marks below Band 4: these usually lacked coherence or awareness of what constitutes descriptive writing.

Question 3 was far less frequently chosen, but elicited responses across the mark range, including some of the strongest responses in the descriptive genre. The nature of the task invited or at least allowed some degree of linearity but responses which depended mostly or entirely on narrative proved no more likely than in the first option. A narrative framework was more frequently apparent, but this was sometimes richly descriptive and so did not detract from the overall effect. The wording of the question did not actually demand description of external reality in terms of scenery, etc., although of course the mountain or hill environment was usually described, and almost always the view from the summit: some very assured responses, however, focused entirely on the felt experience of the narrator. In one response given marks at the top of Band 1 the external world was only referenced in the bitter cold, and in blurred glimpses through iced-over goggles. In the middle range, descriptions were often interesting and created a feeling of reality. The exultant reaction of narrator and companion to the view from the summit was frequently effectively conveyed, although sometimes the experience was belied by inadequate vocabulary, with too much dependence on non-specific adjectives such as 'fantastic', 'amazing', 'unbelievable' and 'unreal'. At the lower end of the range narrative passages sometimes intruded, giving accounts of disagreements with the narrator's companion or skirmishes with ill-defined wild animals, and these were often typified by inappropriate vocabulary. Common also in this range was a lack of satisfactory conclusion: while some wisely left the reader with the exultation of success, or some reflection on the lessons of the experience, others tailed away with plans to get home, or simply stopped. Responses given marks below Band 3 were often simple accounts, narrative in intent, with little descriptive detail or evocation of feeling or atmosphere.

Marks in the top band for style and accuracy were awarded to those candidates whose writing not only employed a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary in the creation of images and effects but was also controlled and crafted to produce a harmonious whole virtually free of error. In the middle ranges, vocabulary was plainer or less precisely applied, and images less striking. Weaker candidates seemed limited to unelaborated accounts of supposedly personal experience. Consecutive sentences beginning with 'I' (often lower case) typified these responses.

The most frequent issue in awarding style and accuracy marks for descriptive writing is the very large number of candidates who produce consecutive sentences without a main or finite verb. Examiners find it very difficult to award a mark higher than Band 4 where this error persists. Thus, candidates who were awarded writing marks in Band 2 or 3 for **Question 1** often earned much lower marks for their compositions. Uncertain control of tense was apparent in many responses, especially to **Question 3** where candidates provided initial context or explanation for their climb, and referred to earlier stages of it in the body of the composition. A lack of effective paragraphing, and comma splicing, also reduced the marks of many candidates. Sometimes responses given marks in Band 4 or below for style and accuracy demonstrated an extensive range of vocabulary, and accurate spelling, but had poor control of syntax and sentence structure, sometimes to the point where communication was impaired.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:

- Remember the key requirements of descriptive writing: you are not writing a story.
- Try to be original, in both the scenarios and the images you create.
- Make deliberate choices in your vocabulary to create atmosphere.
- Write complete sentences with proper verbs: the same rules of grammar apply to all types of writing.
- Remember that the majority of available marks – 15 – are awarded for style and accuracy.

Narrative writing

Question 4

'The truth was bound to come out in the end.' Write a story which ends with these words. (25 marks)

OR

Question 5

Write a story which involves a rediscovery of something lost. (25 marks)

Narrative writing was the choice of a high proportion of the candidature, and both options were popular, **Question 5** marginally more so. Marks across the range were awarded to responses to both questions, although those given marks in the top band were more likely to have chosen **Question 5**. Examiners were able to award marks at the top of Band 1 in a number of cases, but at all levels of achievement engagement with the tasks was evident, with both titles eliciting some lively and often intriguing narratives. Both titles also seemed to invite and encourage the inclusion of narrative and descriptive detail, so that atmosphere was created which enhanced the narratives. The difficulty that many candidates have in creating satisfactory conclusions to their stories was, however, often apparent, especially in response to **Question 4**, underlining the need for candidates to have the end of their stories in mind while writing.

Responses to the first of the narrative options displayed a very wide variety of subject matter, although criminals being eventually unmasked or romantic betrayals featured often, especially in the middle and lower ranges: the crime stories were inclined to be over-packed with event and lacking in effective characterisation, and sometimes the two topics were combined in a surprising number of crimes of passion. In these ranges also many candidates struggled to employ the given conclusion effectively; it was often tacked on in an unconvincing manner, and occasionally appeared to have no connection at all with the preceding narrative. A not insignificant number of candidates responding to this question decided to attach a 'moral' at the end, which was rarely apposite and usually further reduced the efficacy of the conclusion.

A number of responses were awarded marks at the top of Band 1: these narratives were closely focused in time and space, employing a few, well-drawn characters and spare but telling setting detail. One wonderfully effective example had a simple plot involving the secret rearing of a previously abused dog: the deceptively unadorned vocabulary was characterised by well-chosen verbs which moved the action along at a cracking pace. Here, the final, given, sentence proved heartbreaking and narratively entirely convincing. Also at this level was a story told entirely through a betrayed wife's thoughts as she listens to her husband's telephone conversation through a closed bathroom door. Here, the final sentence was dramatically shattering.

In the middle ranges were many clear and competently told stories. These often had original concepts and engaging characters which might have qualified their narratives for inclusion in the top band of marks, but these were frequently let down by precipitate or ill-planned and unconvincing endings. One very involving example was a first person memoir of a 'career liar' who oversteps himself by appearing at a national book-launch. After successfully creating high tension, however, the candidate suddenly 'tacked on' the given conclusion leaving the character's nemesis unidentified. In this range, too, candidates often spent too long on preambles to the main story and then finished hurriedly. Some of these responses gave word counts in the margin; the guidance about length is intended to be helpful to the candidate, and should not result in prematurely concluded responses. Responses given marks below Band 3 tended to be undistinguished 'series of events' without any effective characterisation or convincing detail, weaker writers sometimes limiting their settings to the identification of a location, e.g. 'It was a warm day in New York,' when neither the city nor the temperature had any further bearing on the story.

The second narrative question was marginally more popular, and elicited a very wide range of subject material. The 'something lost' was very frequently not a material object, but a friendship, an ambition, a talent, a faculty. Pet animals, and even a sheep, featured across the range of achievement, as did stories of family bereavement. One response given marks at the top of Band 1 was a beautifully controlled and concise account, barely six paragraphs, of the aftermath of the death in a farm accident of the narrator's younger sister. The controlled prose included just a few descriptive details – the registration plate of the tractor hanging awry, a pink sticker on a calendar – used to devastating effect. Another of equal merit was told entirely through the senses of hearing and touch of a long-blind elderly man whose daughter and granddaughter accompany him as he has bandages removed from his eyes after a restorative operation.

In the middle ranges there were some stories of similarly close focus and effective narrative drive which could have achieved marks in the top band but for misjudgements in technique: one very promising story involving the theft of some Science textbooks by a poor domestic worker who wished to better herself was marred by dressing her in a swirling black cloak to remove the books from a locker; in another, a well-told story of a talented young baseball player who recovers his confidence with great success was marred by a failure to identify him either by name or personal characteristics – he remained ‘this boy’ to the end. At various points in this range were many action tales and police chases, variously convincing. These were often fast-paced and exciting, sometimes using flashback to contextualise the events, but usually had too many events, twists and turns packed in to the narrative. Sometimes the narrative drifted over lengthy periods of time then ended abruptly – again sometimes accompanied by a marginal word-count calculation.

Responses below Band 3 were usually simple series of events undifferentiated in importance and were often packed with unlikely combinations of events and characters. The weakest responses were usually very brief or aimless, offering little to engage the reader.

Examiners were able to award high marks for style and accuracy to many candidates whose vocabulary and sentence structures were varied and effective, and whose writing was free of repeated error. In the top bands syntax and sentence structure were often effectively manipulated for effect, especially in the creation of narrative tension. In this genre, any inability to punctuate and paragraph dialogue properly was exposed, and sometimes proved a pitfall for otherwise fluent and accurate writers. In the middle band, where there were a few basic errors of spelling and punctuation and plain, unvaried, vocabulary, the Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8: conversely, clear and accurate sentence structure and straightforward paragraphing could compensate for a lower mark for content and structure. Marks in Band 4 were given when writing was marred by comma splicing, weak punctuation, and faults in tense control and agreement. The frequent misuse or omission of capital letters inevitably reduced the marks given for otherwise sound writing. Occasionally only a mark in Band 5 could be awarded because serious errors in sentence structure and syntax impeded communication.

Ways in which the writing of narratives could be improved:

- Plan your story so that you do not run out of ideas for the plot, and you can bring it to an interesting conclusion.
- Remember that you can use your own interpretation of the titles.
- Make your story believable by creating realistic characters and settings.
- Leave some time to check through your work for errors, such as basic errors in spelling, capital letters and punctuation.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- reflect in their writing their original, personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write independently of undue guidance from published materials or from teachers;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and other punctuation;
- revise, edit and correct first drafts in their own handwriting;
- proof-read their work carefully, as marks may be deducted for typing errors.

General comments

There was a significant increase in candidate entries for this component. Many Centres followed the advice given in the key messages, and teachers understood that coursework was an educational experience and an opportunity for candidates to develop their writing skills and to learn to express their own thoughts.

Many Centres provided excellent samples and their marks were accepted or in some cases increased. This general report identifies a number of weaknesses in other samples and suggests ways in which marks may be improved.

The best results were obtained when teachers provided assignments that were suited to their candidates and where the candidates were given some say in deciding what they wished to write about. It is not necessarily a good idea for all candidates in a set or even a Centre to attempt the same assignments, simply because they do not fit the abilities and interests of everyone who undertook them.

The best folders were from those who wrote with originality. Some stimulus material was, however, followed too closely, so that at least parts of the content and even the structure were provided for the candidates, so that it was very difficult to apply the marking criteria.

While it was often clear that candidates understood how to respond to the reading texts exactly as intended by the syllabus, there was also a frequent misunderstanding of how the reading assessment worked. Candidates were expected to select ideas and opinions from the reading text and to evaluate them. Guidance is given below as to what constitutes evaluation. Too often, the selection of ideas and opinions did not give enough opportunity to candidates to carry out an evaluation of the writer's views and attitudes, and there was a tendency to address the topic rather than the arguments.

The quality of the assessment varied, but many Centres over-marked candidates both for reading and for writing. Centres which used the whole range of the marks were generally more realistic than those who assessed in the narrow range in Bands 2 and 3, there being too few candidates placed in Band 4. The assessment of writing was often made according to content and structure and not enough account was taken of accuracy (SPAG) which had to be given equal weighting with content, structure and style.

Nevertheless, a good deal of hard work went into the completion of the folders which were well presented. Most of the administration by Centres was satisfactory and, in some cases, very usefully presented for the Moderator's use. Some Centres presented work of an exceptionally high standard and the effort put into the work by the candidates often resulted in high marks. It was noted that candidates working in the top bands

were given challenging tasks, while some candidates were prevented from achieving their best through lack of challenge.

There were some examples of collusion and plagiarism which were identified by Moderators. These were sent to the Regulations team in Cambridge for further action. Centres are reminded that they must set up and monitor the work so that it is not possible for this to occur.

Good Practice

Some of the good practice has been outlined above, but the following list illustrates the features of the best of the work:

- The writing illustrated the candidate's own views and feelings.
- It demonstrated originality of thought and was not dependent on information and ideas from websites.
- Argument was progressively structured with well-sequenced sentences within paragraphs.
- The folders illustrated the ability to write in three different styles to fit three different genres.
- There was an enthusiasm in the writing that was communicated to the reader.
- Care was taken to eliminate errors, including accidental ones, when word-processing.
- Candidates understood punctuation, particularly the use of full stops and semi colons.

Areas for improvement

- Tasks that offer sufficient challenge to achieve the targeted mark bands.
- Use of secure structure with appropriate paragraph order that does not rely on lists or repetition.
- Awareness of the range and choice of language.
- Appropriate use of drafts to develop work by editing, revising and correcting.
- Assignments that are suited to this component, and avoid long, controlled conditions assessments.

Task setting

In general, task setting was appropriate and there were few examples where the task did not meet the requirements of the syllabus. Some Centres set assignments where the genre of Assignment 1 was too similar to that of Assignment 2. This was usually where two accounts of different events were offered in a similar style. There were also Assignment 1 tasks which were responses to a text, very similar to the requirements of the third assignment.

Many tasks offered a satisfactory level of challenge, but there were some that were only suitable for candidates at Bands 3 and 4. The best tasks were those that appealed to candidates' senses of imagination and adventure. Some of these are listed later in this report.

Assessment of coursework

Writing

Most Centres provided a reliable rank order and many marked accurately. Centres should take care to reward assurance in style and a high degree of accuracy. Moderators saw a number of Centres where the standard of literacy was so high that accuracy was complete or almost so across all three assignments.

On the other hand a significant number of Centres marked leniently as insufficient weighting was given to accuracy, particularly punctuation, or where the range of language and sentence structure was not sufficiently wide.

Centres are asked to be sure to annotate errors in writing in the final draft. It was not always clear whether missing full stops, apostrophes and the wrong use of semi colons had been noticed when assessing the writing. Some comments made at the end of an inaccurate piece of work suggested that there were very few errors. Some pieces of writing had been assessed on the basis of their content and little or no weighting had been given to accuracy or to style.

The commonest error was that of the missing full stop. Simple sentences were wrongly punctuated with commas. Commas were often not used in more complex sentences to show the division between clauses. One of the most serious errors was the inappropriate use of the semi colon and colon. Some candidates placed semi colons in the middle of sentences where there should be no break at all. Colons were commonly used to preface short lists of single words where commas were more appropriate. There was no reason why candidates who did not use semi colons or colons at all should not be placed in Band 1. Moderators recommend that candidates should firstly be made secure in their use of full stops and commas.

Many candidates who scored high marks for writing were immediately recognisable for the assurance with which they used language and sentence structures. Candidates in Band 2 typically wrote complex sentences to communicate meaning and to vary their construction and length for effect. Those working at Band 2 and particularly at Band 1 used a wide range of appropriate language to communicate detail and shades of meaning. However, there were many examples where the range of language was quite limited or where language was used awkwardly. This was particularly so with imagery, where it was very common to find simple images relating to animals that did not give any additional meaning or interest. Where the language was repetitive and straightforward it was typical of a low Band 3 or of Band 4.

The mark for writing was sometimes affected where an assignment had been set that did not give sufficient challenge to candidates.

Assessment of reading

Most candidates understood how to respond to their text correctly. They made a sensible selection of ideas and opinions from the text. These ideas and opinions illustrated the writer's message and attitudes and were ones that could be explored and evaluated. Differentiation was achieved by the quality of the comments made in responding to these ideas and opinions. In order to access Band 2, candidates had to evaluate the items they had chosen. To evaluate they identified fact from opinion, explored the writer's inconsistencies and explained bias. The best candidates provided a convincing overview of the text and integrated their selected ideas and opinions in a structured response. This was worth a mark in Band 1. Candidates who summarised the text did not score above 6 marks.

Some candidates made a satisfactory selection of ideas and opinions but provided very limited responses, for example doing little more than to agree or disagree with the writer. They did not apply their reasoning to the writer's attitudes. Some texts were also quite weak and did not give enough for candidates to engage with fully. This is also dealt with below.

An increasing number of candidates responded by writing about the topic rather than the views expressed in the text. This often provided a decent writing mark, since the response was frequently well structured, but was not sufficient for a reading mark above Band 3.

Administration by Centres

Summary of the contents of the folder

1. The folders required from each Centre by CIE
2. In addition, the top and bottom folder in the Centre's mark range
3. The CASFs (WMS) for all the candidates in the Centre with changes to marks made at internal moderation.
4. The Moderator's copy of the MS1 or electronically submitted mark list.
5. An early draft (see below) of one of the assignments
6. A copy of the article used for Assignment 3, preferably with the candidate's annotations.

Most of the administration was excellent, although not all Centres provided the top and bottom folder in their range.

Some Centres only provided the CASF (WMS) for the sample. This was required for all candidates as it had to be checked against the MS1. A number of errors in transferring the marks were discovered. The CASF showed the definitive mark awarded by the Centre and give the breakdown of the marks and any changes made at internal moderation.

Internal Moderation was often carried out very thoroughly and effectively by Centres. Some, however, appeared only to have internally moderated a small number of their candidates, and this was apparent when the sample was moderated. Moderators often had to look at the folders to find the results of internal moderation because the new marks had not been entered on the CASF.

There were a few cases where the article used for Assignment 3 was not supplied.

Annotation

Some Centres clearly annotated errors on the final assignments but many did not. Centres are asked to annotate errors because they have to be assessed along with the content, structure and style.

Annotation in the margin where objectives had been achieved was sometimes unreliable because such achievements were not necessarily sustained. It was much better to assess the different objectives at the end of the work to show which were typical of the whole assignment.

Some work was carefully assessed on forms invented by the Centre, but some pieces of work bore no indication that they had been read or assessed.

Drafts

Only one early draft was required and it was generally understood that it was not allowed for a teacher to indicate individual errors on the draft. Teachers were asked to write their comments of a general nature at the end of the work and not in the margin or in the body of the work. There were few Centres where the habit of correcting was general throughout the department, but there were individual teachers who did not understand the rule. Heads of Department are asked to make this clear to all staff and to check the work.

There were few Centres where candidates had worked on their drafts, often with excellent results. Those who did edited by adding, deleting and changing words and phrases, revised by re-ordering sections, especially endings and beginnings (or adding extra detail) and, of course, corrected their errors. They did this by using their own handwriting and different colours where appropriate. This was excellent practice and one of the reasons why a draft is included in the folder.

Some first drafts were short forms of what would become the final response and usefully showed teachers the beginning of the work and the course of the argument. The teacher was able to advise which areas were worth exploring and extending. This was a proper use of drafting.

Many first drafts were the same word-for-word as the final version and no work had been done to improve them by the candidates.

Authenticity

The work of most candidates was clearly original, often clearly so because of the inclusion of personal views and feelings. However, some of the assignments were written in such a different style from the rest of the work that it prompted Moderators to trace the material to the internet. This was a serious matter and Centres are reminded that candidates cannot copy work from a source that is not their own.

Work is not considered authentic where too much help had been given to candidates. This included giving writing frames, telling candidates what to write and providing a stimulus and asking candidates to write their own version. It is very difficult to carry out a realistic assessment of content (which was not strictly original) and structure (which followed someone else's pattern). Teachers are again reminded that coursework demands that all work should be original. It is in order to use a stimulus, but the stimulus must not become a template.

Assignment 1

The best, and most common, responses were made to single issues and were clearly personal to the candidate. Sometimes, this quality of being personal was best achieved by presenting the issue as the words of a speech, but there were many successful forms, for example a letter to a head teacher advocating a shorter school day.

The three standard topics of the death penalty, euthanasia and abortion were occasionally done well, but generally lacked energy and originality. Here are six topics that were done well by individual candidates, all of whom wrote with conviction and some imagination:

Political correctness

Banksy – jerk or just a clever marketeer?

Are parents too controlling?

Women in the media

Valentine's Day

The band that I helped to form (on the occasion of its first gig)

Several Centres continued to rely on *Do not get me started on...*. This was not generally a challenging assignment, although one candidate wrote a connected and persuasive piece on the National Health Service. The problem with it lay in its nature as a rant. Topics were rarely sufficient to produce a convincing argument and some of them were familiar internet themes such as slow walkers, chavs and creepy crawlies. Candidates rarely had much to say and their work was sometimes repetitive. They also frequently confused formal and informal language. Hence in terms of content, structure and style there were often weaknesses, and as a task it was generally suitable for candidates expected to score Band 3 or Band 4.

There were also a number of reviews both of restaurants and of films. The film reviews were sometimes very similar to ones on the internet and also tended to devote too much space to retelling the story. Stylistically, there was a tendency to copy the style used by film reviewers. The restaurant reviews were better when they were based on what was clearly an actual visit to a restaurant rather than a piece of objective writing in media style.

Assignment 2

Some of the writing for this assignment was particularly good. An appealing title was essential and it was surprising that some candidates did not give a name to their work. The fiction was probably the best, especially where there was a convincing twist at the end, a turning point, or devices such as two narrators or time lapses. This added interest to the narrative and indicated that the writer was in control.

It was not necessary for a narrative to consist of gratuitous violence. The narratives based on *Saving Private Ryan* were not particularly original and made unpleasant, unengaging reading.

Another assignment set was based on *Out of the Blue*. This has now been used for a number of years and although some candidates recreated the horror well, others wrote unconvincing narratives.

There were many First World War stories, diaries and letters, some of which were very moving, including a set of letters culminating in the last before the death of the writer. Others were too concerned with blood and war wounds to be very appropriate.

Some care should be taken in deciding on the content of stories. The following titles were in themselves engaging to the reader and suggested some imaginative responses:

It's elementary, Mr Detective

Point of no return

Whistles of the wind

Land of the lost

Red does not go with blue

The yellow palm

The launching

The house of eyes

Many responses were in the form of monologues which are difficult to sustain. Many started well but ran out of content because they only covered a state of mind that was often too static. They needed a structure, and the fact that they were spoken sometimes inhibited the use of a wide range of language. Those that included at least some short-lived events were the most successful, but they were rarely as effective as fiction.

There were few examples of personal writing apart from travels to other countries (which were done well) and versions of *The worst/best day of my life*. Those who wrote autobiographical fragments generally did so with conviction and honesty and their accounts were original.

There were also a large number of descriptions, particularly of *The beach*, *The theme park*, and *A walk through the woods*. Better descriptions used a change of viewpoint or time passing and avoided repetitive lists. So a piece described at morning, noon and night, or the approach and passing of a cycle race, or an eclipse would produce some interesting work. Where descriptions were not static but progressive, the writing worked well.

Good topics were:

Underwater

On the moon

Afternoon in the favela

The little giant (a tornado)

Making my teacher cry

Assignment 3

Texts where candidates could disagree with the writer's attitude, where the writer was writing from one viewpoint without thinking of other people's opinions, worked well. So, in the following topics, it was easy to find arguments that were inconsistent and biased:

Katie Hopkins' views on how to control who plays with her children

Children ruin Christmas

Re-introduction of National Service

Voting for sixteen-year-olds

Teenagers are the dumbest generation

Should girls play with Barbie?

The ban on Saudi women driving

Some texts did not give candidates opportunities to select appropriate ideas and opinions. Centres should avoid texts where the issue was one that no one could disagree with, texts where most of the writing was reportage and narrative and repetitive texts taken from the internet, badly ordered with a shortage of argument. Texts had to contain sufficient ideas and opinions with which candidates could engage.

Some of the best choices were from articles written by Jeremy Clarkson. Most of these articles started with some opinions intended to shock, but later on, contained some ideas that were worth considering even if the reader did not agree. The articles differentiated well because better candidates understood the different layers of argument while less able candidates could only appreciate what was literally on the page.

There were several texts that were used by many Centres. These were not necessarily successful, and candidates who used them sometimes scored fewer marks. They included the following:

Educating Essex: this text has been used for several examination series and has very weak arguments.

'I see a killer die': this is not a pleasant piece to give candidates, and it is mostly reportage so there are very few ideas or opinions to be selected and very little to evaluate.

The death penalty article by 'Flamehorse': this was not a bad piece of argument, although not many candidates took issue with it successfully. The fact that it had headings that worked as a writing frame did not help candidates who tended to use the headings in lieu of ideas and opinions they had found for themselves.

It was frustrating for Moderators to see the same texts used so frequently when with some imagination and ingenuity a wider range of original writing could have been discovered.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/05
Speaking and Listening

Key Messages

The main messages:

- **Compliance.** Read carefully and thoroughly the instructions in the syllabus relating to how this component should be carried out. For example, in the syllabus, the required timings of both parts of the test are clearly stipulated. There is also detailed guidance and support in the *Speaking & Listening Handbook* which should be consulted. We recommend that Centres using more than one Examiner utilise this as an aid to train and standardise the examining team. There were instances of Centres not being fully conversant with the instructions, for example recording **Part 1** and **Part 2** of the exam as two separate recordings and using an audience to pose questions for **Part 2**, neither of which is allowed.
- **Using scripts.** Please ensure that candidates do not rely on scripts or extended notes. Centres should discourage this at the planning stage and insist on candidates using a variety of prompt material instead. The syllabus suggests a postcard size prompt card, but other aids could be used, for example, a brief PowerPoint slide, or a flip chart. Candidates will not be able to score high marks if they simply read from a script; awareness of audience and an attempt to use a range of devices to engage the audience are key skills being tested in **Part 1**.
- **Speaking not reading.** The test is an assessment of speaking skills in **Part 1**. Over-reliance on scripted material and the use of extended notes promotes reading and writing skills over speaking skills.

Other messages:

- Moderators suggest that some candidates need to prepare more thoroughly for the examination. Success in **Part 1** is clearly linked to researching the chosen topic and also practising for an assured and natural delivery which avoids 'over-performance'.
- Some candidates should try to make their **Part 1** presentations more lively, perhaps by incorporating more creative presentational styles, but certainly by relying less on reciting factual information. There is scope for further creativity in **Part 1** – e.g. taking up a 'voice' or presenting a dramatic monologue. Presenting empathic work using literary texts often leads to quality work.
- In **Part 2**, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware of their expected role in the discussion. The candidate's role should not be that of a passive interviewee, but should be one which is more proactive and seeks to engage with the listener in a collaborative manner.
- It is permissible for teachers to work with their students (once the student has decided upon a topic) to help enhance the content and to advise upon the approach taken for the delivery. Differentiation by task setting is therefore encouraged for this component. A more capable student is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content – and such a student should be encouraged to do this. Moderators recommend more teaching of general speaking and listening skills in the context of a topic-based presentation and subsequent discussion. Over-rehearsal with students is not encouraged, but broad-based coverage of useful methodologies is encouraged.
- Please restrict **Part 1** to four minutes, and **Part 2** to between six and seven minutes – as specified in the syllabus. It is difficult to justify the awarding of high marks to **Part 1s** which are short (under three minutes) and it is counter-productive to allow **Part 2** to run over seven minutes. This examination series again saw problems at some Centres with timings, and problems here often lead to problems elsewhere. The timings for the two parts of the test are distinct – i.e. short **Part 1s** cannot be compensated for with longer **Part 2s** (or vice versa).
- Please would all Centres use digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). A list of the candidates in the sample, their numbers, and the mark given to each, either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself please) or on a

separate sheet is appreciated. Please re-name the individual audio tracks to the candidate number and name only (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.).

Messages relating to assessment:

- In **Part 1**, Moderators advise Examiners to be sure that a candidate has met the criteria for Band 1 fully before awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual presentation is of the standard, factually-based, reportage style, even if well done, then a low Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available, and a Band 3 mark perhaps more appropriate.
- More mundane and pedestrian presentations should be placed in Band 3.
- Candidates who present very short **Part 1s** or those who rely too much on notes are not likely to achieve higher than Band 4, where 'delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest' is the most likely and appropriate descriptor.
- Extremely short **Part 1s** (under one minute) are likely to satisfy only the Band 5 criteria: 'Content is mostly undeveloped....and the audience is generally lost'.
- Very long **Part 1s** do not satisfy Band 1 requirements, as they lack the required control, structure and poignancy. An over-long **Part 1** is one that runs for beyond five minutes.
- Examiners are reminded not to award marks for content *per se* – it is the *development* of the content which is being assessed; in both **Parts 1** and **2** of the test. For example, 'What work experience did for me...' could achieve a Band 1, or indeed, a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.
- We recommend that Centres with more than 30 candidates conduct internal moderation – i.e. a systematic revision of a sample of candidates, covering a good spread of marks. This is often successful when completed as a team effort, and should achieve consistency among assessors and highlight any outlying marks for specific candidates.

An important message relating to protocol:

- The test should be conducted only once. It is a formal examination and, as such, candidates must not be given a second attempt. If a test has been conducted twice, the Centre should inform Cambridge directly of the rationale and reasons for this.

A message relating to preparation by the Teachers/Examiners

- It would be a good idea for examiners to obtain a list of the topics that candidates are planning to talk about in advance of the examination, perhaps the day before. This would allow the Examiner to 'think ahead' and consider areas which might be productive in **Part 2**. However, these must not be shared with the candidates prior to the examination. The aim in **Part 2** is for both parties to be involved in an organic discussion – if scripted or practised material is found to be present in this part of the examination, this is likely to result in maladministration of the test.

General Comments

The more interesting and successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from brief notes rather than scripts, and about a topic they felt passionately about and which they had researched thoroughly. Some successful tasks included some kind of visual presentation to the Examiner, such as sharing a PowerPoint slide or some photographs. The most successful standard presentations were given by candidates fired by a passion who also utilised a variety of devices to maintain their listener's interest. In all the best examples there was a real sense of engagement with the topic. Where candidates chose well, prepared thoroughly and were fully committed to the task the results were usually good.

Less successful tasks were usually read from notes and this tended to detract from the overall effect – appearing to be rather lifeless and certainly monotonous. Some less able candidates relied heavily on a script and talked in a monotone about a subject they had not researched sufficiently or which they did not feel particularly strongly about. In some cases there was certainly too much reliance on factual or step-by-step information (even where the topic promised to be interesting). Every candidate is encouraged to choose a topic of personal interest and to talk as freely as possible about this. Some candidates will perform better by taking this approach rather than relying too much on notes.

Please note that this is a formal examination and as such an appropriate examination room is required. Candidates should not be examined in the presence of other candidates. A quiet, secure room is crucial for the success of the examination. Some Centres are reminded that the test should be conducted by a single

Examiner. While a second person may be present, the test itself must be conducted entirely by one Examiner – i.e. it is not permissible for two or more people to be asking questions or discussing matters with the candidate.

Materials required by the Moderator

As a reminder to Centres, Cambridge requires three different items in the package sent to the Moderator: **1** all of the candidates' recordings on as few CDs/DVDs as possible (or preferably, on a single USB drive) and using separate re-named tracks for each candidate, **2** the Summary Forms for the entire entry, and **3** a copy of the Mark Sheet that has already been sent to Cambridge confirming the final marks. In addition, any letters relating to the work undertaken by the students or regarding issues experienced by the Centre should also be placed in the package for the attention of the external Moderator.

- 1** Please note that without the recordings, Cambridge is unable to moderate the work from a Centre and this will affect the results issued to candidates.
- 2** The Summary Form is the form that records the separate marks awarded to the two parts of the test, in addition to the total mark. The Examiner who conducts the examination is responsible for filling out the summary form. He or she should sign the form and date it – in effect this is the form which is the working record of the examining undertaken, and is therefore of most use to the external Moderator. It would be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the summary forms as they appear on the mark sheets.
- 3** The Moderator needs a copy of the mark sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the summary forms.

Comments on Specific Questions

Part 1 – The Individual Task

The dominant task in **Part 1** remains the informative presentation. Candidates select a topic and provide historical and/or contemporary information about it. A small number of these presentations remain purely factual, but many engage with an issue or controversy relating to the topic. Where the chosen topic relates directly to the candidate's personal situation or their country or location, there is usually scope for more engaging content.

Personal experiences and interests are a common focus – for example, recent trips abroad, reading, sport, music. These kinds of presentations vary in their degree of success, with less successful tasks simply describing likes, dislikes and experiences without further exploration, depth or insight.

Candidates sometimes attempt to use techniques such as addressing the listener and using rhetorical devices, but care needs to be taken so that these approaches are effective and not just a gesture.

Centres and candidates are of course free to focus on topics which lend themselves to standard presentations. However, Moderators encourage topics with a specific focus, along with a greater range of presentational styles.

Some examples of productive Part 1 tasks from this session:

- My favourite book series
- Why video games are a good thing
- Arranged marriages
- What is talent?
- The importance of time
- Book v films – which are best?
- Role models in the media
- My ambition
- My violin
- Depression and the spoon theory
- My country – Ukraine
- Cooking

- Rap
- Terraforming
- Super volcanos
- Modern art

Part 2 – Discussions

Moderators are happy that in many cases, Examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion, and that the conversations were generally productive extensions of the individual tasks. This is clearly a strength of this examination.

It was clear in many cases that candidates had planned for further discussion. The best way to do this is to imagine being the Examiner and to draw up a list of probable questions, or areas of interest that might be appropriate for further discussion given the scope of the topic.

However, where this had not occurred, Moderators felt the discussions were lacking. It is not the sole responsibility of the Examiner to work hard to sustain discussion – the candidate needs to plan for this and this element of **Part 2** has indeed been built into the assessment criteria for both listening and speaking. It is, however, the responsibility of the Examiner to move the discussion along and to ensure that a six to seven minute conversation occurs. Ideally, this would be a scaffolded discussion, and more challenging ideas and content would be introduced as the discussion develops.

The most effective Examiners clearly took notes as the candidates completed their presentations, and then based the discussions very closely on what the candidates had actually spoken about. This usually led to conversations which arose naturally from the individual task. More work is needed, however, for candidates to take a greater part in developing the discussions. Some candidates, and some Examiners, seemed to be unaware that this is expected. In a number of Centres, there seemed to be an understanding that the candidate would deliver his or her talk and then wait to be formally questioned by the Examiner. This clearly led to a more stilted and less effective discussion. In the stronger **Part 2** performances the candidates were encouraged to take control of the discussion and there was a genuine feeling that it was a two-way conversation based on an equal footing between the candidate and the Examiner.

Examiners should therefore avoid adopting a very formal ‘interview’ approach in **Part 2**. The aim is to be supportive of the candidate; to share an interest in his/her topic, and to share views, ideas and to work with the candidate to develop the conversation. It is important that the spontaneity of discussion is maintained.

In general, however, candidates and Examiners stayed on task, though there were a few instances of Examiners using the allotted time to involve candidates in discussions about other matters – for example, their future plans – when this was not part of the candidate’s talk. Such transgressions are likely to result in lower marks as the assessment criteria assume that content in **Part 2** relates directly to content in **Part 1**.

Some Examiners had a tendency to ask too many closed questions, which unsurprisingly elicited short and weaker responses which do not encourage development. Open questions are much more effective. Some Examiners asked very protracted questions and often provided answers themselves before handing over to the candidate whose response was invariably short as a result. Others had set questions to ask each candidate, such as ‘Why did you choose this topic?’ which did not develop the discussion naturally from points that had arisen in the Individual Task.

Concluding Comments

It is clear that some Centres need to offer further training to their Teachers/Examiners to conduct these task-oriented tests as the syllabus and other Cambridge supporting documentation (e.g. the *Handbook for Speaking & Listening*) stipulate. Where Centres do not comply with the rubrics, the result is often disappointing and the effect is usually felt by the candidates whose achievement and performance is clearly affected. This is unacceptable and such Centres should seek direct guidance from Cambridge when they receive feedback on the work undertaken for the examination series.

However, Cambridge wishes to commend Centres who have responded well to what might be a new examination for them – Cambridge does appreciate that a different culture is required for what is a new assessment methodology and that this takes time to establish itself. There were many cases where Moderators reported refreshing and lively work, where it was clear that the students had enjoyed taking

Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education
0500 First Language English (Oral Endorsement) June 2015
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

control of their own learning and had responded well to being allowed to be active in the skills of research, oral presentation and subsequent discussion.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key Messages

Choosing the correct pathway

- Centres should decide whether to choose Component 5 or Component 6 at the beginning of the planning stage. It is very difficult to change from one component to the other and this is certainly not recommended as the components are distinct in their approaches to the Speaking and Listening section of the syllabus.
- Uncertainty as to which pathway to follow can lead to Centres entering for the wrong component. This always causes problems for the Centre and the moderator.
- Component 6 consists of three distinct tasks: **Task 1** is an individual presentation; **Task 2** is a paired activity; **Task 3** is a group activity.
- The three separate tasks can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires Centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.

Recommended support material

- Centres are urged to use both the current syllabus and Speaking and Listening Handbook to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.
- Official Cambridge training sessions are run throughout the year.
- Enhanced online support materials will be available shortly.

What to send in the sample packet

- Please be aware that four different items must be included in the sample package sent to the Moderator: All the Centre's recordings; all the Summary Forms; all the individual Candidate Record Cards and a copy of the mark sheets showing the total marks awarded for each candidate entered.

Recordings

- Centres are required to record all the **Task 1** and **2** responses for the entire entered cohort. All these must be sent in the Centre's sample for the purpose of moderation.
- We strongly encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software.
- Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and ensure that the CD, DVD or USB is securely packaged to avoid damage in transit. A jiffy bag is recommended.
- Ideally the recordings should be arranged in the same order as the mark sheets – i.e. in candidate number order
- Each track should be labelled with the candidate's name and number. For **Task 2** both candidates' names and numbers should be included in the title of the track.
- Each track should be introduced formally using the rubric prescribed in the current syllabus.
- Wherever possible, recordings should be made in a quiet, undisturbed environment.

Summary Forms

- Moderators require Summary Forms detailing a breakdown of the marks awarded for the whole cohort entered.
- Please note the Component 6 Summary Form is different to the Component 5 version. The two are not interchangeable.
- Ideally the Summary Forms should be arranged in the same order as the mark sheets – i.e. in candidate number order.
- The accuracy of the Summary Forms should be checked thoroughly before submitting to Cambridge.

Candidate Record Cards

- A requirement for this component is that an individual Candidate Record Card should be completed for each candidate.
- All the Record Cards should be included in the sample sent to Cambridge.
- The individual Record Cards should include specific information about the choices made for each task and not just generic statements.

A copy of the mark sheets

- a copy of the marks (the MS1) already sent to Cambridge should be included in the sample sent for moderation
- Centres should ensure that the copies can be read clearly.

General Comments

- Any candidate who is absent should be recorded as such on the relevant documentation and only those who attempted the activity but who failed to contribute should be given a mark of 0.
- Through the syllabus, Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form.
- For Component 6, Centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed.

Comments on Specific Tasks

Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, **Tasks 1** and **2** do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. Candidates aspiring to the higher band criteria need to be able to react positively to changes in the direction of the discussion in **Task 2**.

In response to Tasks 1 and 2, it is very difficult to achieve the higher bands if the performances are heavily scripted.

Task 1

Responses generally took the form of an individual presentation. This component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when topics are chosen. This component allows the candidate and teacher to work together through rehearsal and development of the task to ensure the topic choice is suitable.

*Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:*

- 'My holiday in...' that is developed beyond a narrative account
- a personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- the effects of social media/technology on teenagers
- a review of a film, book, concert or sporting event where the candidate is thoroughly engaged and able to develop the presentation beyond a literal re-telling of the events
- an engaged reflection on a hobby or sport in which the candidate is thoroughly engaged. (Generally sports other than football work best.)

Task 2

There should be only two participants in **Task 2**. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a pupil who has been assessed may make up the pair. It is unacceptable and an infringement of the rubric for this task to be performed by three candidates. In effect, any **Task 2** activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a **Task 3** Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes non-compliance and will be treated accordingly.

For paired activities it is essential that the Moderator is able to distinguish between the candidates in the activity so that successful moderation can take place. The simplest way of achieving this is for the candidates to introduce themselves and their roles in the activity at the beginning of the recording.

Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 6 tasks but it is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned, rehearsed and developed performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

The Pair-Based Activity is more successful when two candidates of similar ability work as a pair. With regard to role-plays, it should be borne in mind that this is an assessment of language skills rather than drama skills so the language requirements should always drive the assessment criteria.

Responses to **Task 2** that are teacher-led, either with a teacher interviewing a candidate or with two candidates being led by a teacher, are less successful than a developed discussion between two candidates. It is recommended that this approach is only considered where it is deemed the candidates are too weak to initiate the discussion without external assistance.

A popular **Task 2** vehicle is the 'interview' where one candidate acts as the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. This can work well but there is an inherent weakness in the activity if the interviewer does little more than ask a set of pre-prepared questions. This restricts the level of performance, particularly for the Listening element. One way to counteract this problem is for candidates to swap roles halfway through so each has the opportunity to demonstrate a wider range of relevant skills.

*Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:*

- Does the media put too much pressure on teenagers?
- Should teenagers play 18 rated video games?
- Topical social issues such as sexism in sport
- Feminism/Gender inequality
- The influence of reality television on the teenage audience
- Planning a school prom
- Analysis of set texts such as poems and novels
- The benefits and pitfalls of social media
- Desert island survival techniques
- Are politics irrelevant to teenagers?

Task 3

Task 3 may take various forms but 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. A group made up of candidates of similar ability levels is often more successful. In more diverse groupings the weaker candidates are disadvantaged and do not have the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered, as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:

- characters from a literary text participating in a televised debate
- performing an extra scene from a play that has been written by the candidates
- any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- what to include in a time capsule/school newspaper, etc.
- championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite
- balloon debates.

General Conclusions

- The general level of assessment by Centres is in line with the expected standard.
- There are many Centres where internal moderation has been successful.
- Successful Centres continue to implement the component efficiently and imaginatively. Samples are generally well-prepared and aid the moderation process considerably.
- Component code errors are unnecessary and disruptive. Centres are urged to check that the correct pathway has been chosen and that the documentation accurately supports this.
- Where problems have arisen, Centres have not followed the instructions regarding sampling and documentation. It is an expectation that Centres provide the requisite documentation and that it is accurate.
- All the documentation asked for in samples is used to check and cross-check as part of the rigour that underpins the moderation process. In the end this is of benefit to Centres and their candidates. It is important to remember that every Centre is moderated in every examination series and that this process is conducted rigorously to protect the reputation of the component and to maintain the standard so that Centres may have continued confidence in the product they have chosen.