

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/11
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to take careful note of questions that contain the instruction to 'use own words' and attempt to develop strategies for processing their answers and not rely on wholesale lifting as this does not provide evidence that the passage has been understood.
- Candidates are encouraged to attempt to show awareness of the designated genre for **Question 2** (in this case, a journal entry) and to use some features of it when writing their answers.
- Candidates should plan their response to **Question 2** both carefully and appropriately and focus closely on the specific requirements of the question. Lengthy responses containing unnecessary, extraneous material are likely to contain unforced errors of expression and the time constraints of the examination militate against there being sufficient opportunity for proof-reading such responses.

General Comments

In general, candidates were well prepared for this paper and responded with interest to the subject matter of the reading passage. Overall, the sub-questions that constituted **Question 1** discriminated successfully with those who had focused on close reading of both the passage and the questions scoring high marks. The key discriminator, as in previous series, was whether the candidate had engaged not only with the wording of the question, but also with the connotations of key words within the passage (especially in **Questions 1(b)** and **1(h)**). Centres are encouraged to emphasise to candidates the importance of thinking carefully about a writer's choice of words and of how to explain their appreciation of specific vocabulary as used in the context of the passage. As has been mentioned in previous reports, credit cannot be given to answers which explain the meaning of a particular word by using the root word as a different part of speech (e.g. 'realisation' and 'something that was realised').

There were a large number of enthusiastic responses to **Question 2** and candidates would appear to have welcomed the opportunity to write the reflections of a participant in a mysterious and dramatic incident. As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, it is important to plan and organise responses to this question carefully before starting to write, as many responses could have been improved with more careful concentration on the precise focus of the question and also with closer attention to providing explanations which reflected the setting and circumstances of the original. There were an encouraging number of candidates who did this very well, showing considerable insight into the motivations of both characters.

The great majority of candidates completed the paper confidently within the time allowed - in general, those who did not do so had become so involved in their responses to **Question 2** that they were attempting to write over-complex narratives. It was encouraging to note that there were noticeably fewer no-response answers than in previous series.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) Give two features of the landscape that allow the narrator to hide from the people who are chasing him (paragraph one 'I did not follow the road..') (2)

This proved to be an accessible question, with the majority of candidates securing at least one mark. A good number of candidates identified both features – the ferns and the banks. Less successful candidates tended to be those who copied large amounts of the original text without careful selection of relevant points. Candidates were generally aware that two reasons had to be

offered in response to the question, indicating that they understood that a two-mark question requires two discrete points for the answer. This trend appeared throughout the paper.

(b) Re-read paragraphs two and three ('After that I...watching me.')

The writer uses the following phrases to create an impression of the house and its surroundings.

Choose three of the phrases and then explain how each of them helps you to understand what the atmosphere is like. (6)

As with **Question 1(h)**, which also tested language usage, this was a challenging question with only a small number of responses gaining more than 3 of the 6 marks available. The most successful responses kept firmly in mind how the chosen phrases conveyed an idea of what the area was like. Without this focus, less successful responses merely paraphrased or reworded the selected phrases. Some candidates misled themselves by attempting to read into the phrases the use of metaphor which was not a feature of this question. The four phrases, although ostensibly all of a similar theme, provided ample opportunity for candidates to demonstrate appreciation of how the area may have seemed to the narrator. It is important that candidates attempt to deal with the phrases individually and not merely repeat generalised comments for each or some of them, or even use the wording of one phrase to explain the effect of another.

(i) '...a plantation of wind-blown fir trees...' (line 8)

The more successful responses commented on the significance of the wind and what it implied about the weather, others identified that it was a harsh or bleak environment.

(ii) '...the chimneys of a house smoking ...' (lines 8-9)

There were successful explanations of this phrase identifying that this was a sign of somewhere that is inhabited, somewhere warm (or that it showed that it was cold outside) and that it represented a sign of hope or shelter.

(iv) '...the lawn was a very rough place, cut by hand instead of a mower..' (line 12)

Many responses showed understanding of the use of the word 'rough' to explore the idea that it was untidy and/or uncared for. Others commented on the use of traditional or typically rural methods.

(iv) '...beds of scrubby rhododendron bushes.' (lines 13)

Many found difficulty in explaining the connotations of this phrase. The more successful tended to focus on the use and implications of the word 'scrubby' and the suggestion that plants did not grow well there.

(c) Which one word used to describe the old man has a similar meaning to 'helpful' (paragraph five, line 23)? (1)

The great majority of candidates correctly identified the word as 'kindly'. The candidates who did not gain a mark tended to illustrate the need for careful reading of the question, some of them giving more than one word as an answer, some suggesting 'good-natured' which is in line 24.

(d) Using your own words, explain why the narrator finds it difficult to say what he wants to the old man (paragraph 6). (3)

This question proved quite challenging with many candidates getting one or two marks, but relatively few getting all three. The most successful answers were well focused on the need to provide three clear points. The less successful responses tended to be somewhat wordy and repetitive with some loss of focus. That said, the vast majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the situation. It is also worth noting the point made below about **Question 1(g)**.

(e) What does the word 'straggling' suggest about the way the police were moving across the moor (paragraph eight, line 33)? (2)

While many candidates correctly responded that this word suggested the police were finding it difficult to move across the moor, very few indeed perceived the sense of the line of policemen spreading out.

- (f) **What reason does the old man give for not wanting the police coming to enter his house (paragraph ten, 'A fugitive from...')?** (1)

A large proportion of the candidates correctly identified that he does not want them to interrupt his privacy. Candidates who did not gain the mark tended to speculate as to reasons why that might be rather than to focus the reason given in the passage as noted above.

- (g) **Using your own words, explain why the narrator felt 'puzzled and rather terrified' by the old man (paragraph twelve, lines 43 – 44).** (2)

Many candidates obtained either one or two marks for this question. The less successful candidates were those who did not appreciate the (admittedly subtle) difference between this question and **Question 1(d)**. In **Question 1(d)** the focus was on the narrator's difficulty in expressing himself, but in this question it was the narrator's perception of the old man's reactions that was important in obtaining the marks. A successful answer could be constructed by commenting on the old man's over-readiness in helping and how that suggested that he was prepared for the narrator's arrival. Such an answer does not overlap with the detail required by **Question 1(d)**.

- (h) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words in italics in the following phrases:** (6)

As in previous series, this proved to be a challenging question with the majority of candidates attempting to explain the vocabulary by providing single word synonyms. This is an acceptable ploy, but candidates should be aware that sometimes single word synonyms might not explain the target word fully and that an explanation which entails a description of the phrase might be more effective in conveying the writer's intended meaning. Again, candidates should be encouraged to look for contextual clues in the passage to help them explain what is meant. Candidates should be wary of merely paraphrasing all or part of the words being explained. It is also important to keep in mind when answering this question that each of the two words italicised should be explained independently.

- (i) **'keen and knowledgeable' (line 29)**

Many candidates explained 'knowledgeable' successfully, rather fewer found acceptable synonyms or alternatives to 'keen' – successful attempts being: 'alert' or 'smart'.

- (ii) **'patiently scrutinized' (line 34 - 35)**

These two words were explained very clearly by a large number of candidates.

- (iii) **'unexpected sanctuary' (line 42)**

There were relatively few candidates who scored two marks on this part of the question. Many candidates successfully explained the word 'unexpected', but there was much greater difficulty with the word 'sanctuary'. Many candidates took the meaning to be a place of religious significance and were perhaps unaware of its use to denote a safe hiding place.

- (i) **Re-read lines 8 to 41 ('From there I saw...high up in a wall.')**

Write a summary of what the narrator observes about both the outside and the inside of the house.

Write a paragraph of about 50-70 words. (7)

As in previous papers, this question presented candidates with an opportunity to gain up to 7 marks by simply reading and selecting from a part of the passage, carefully. There was, however, a need to maintain a focus on the building and its contents. The more successful responses did just that.

The less successful ones demonstrated some loss of focus in places which arose from blanket copying or misreading of the passage. There was also a good deal of repetition which narrowed the range of some answers, resulting in fewer marks being gained. One common misconception was that there was something called 'stood cases' which arose from a misreading of the passage. Another common misinterpretation of the task led to candidates including a great deal of information about the garden of the house. Overall this was a question that produced a good number of candidates who gained 5 or more marks demonstrating a clear understanding of the task.

Centres are reminded that the format of the summary question will change from June 2015 onwards when marks will be awarded for both Reading and Writing. One of the main consequences of this change is that written responses that significantly exceed the required number of words and/or which lift indiscriminately from the original passage, will be penalised.

The relevant points relating to this question are:

The house

- (1) had smoking chimneys
- (2) was an ordinary moorland farm
- (3) had a whitewashed wing (or extension)
- (4) a glass veranda
- (5) a room full of books
- (6) museum cases filled with coins and stone implements
- (7) a knee-hole desk
- (8) a window with a view of the moor
- (9) a small dark room/with tiny windows
- (10) a smell of chemicals
- (11) a study with two doors

Question 2

Imagine that you are the old man and it is the evening following these events.
Write a journal entry for that day.

In your journal entry you should write about:

- The sudden appearance of the stranger and your impression of him.
- What happened when the police arrived.
- Your reasons for hiding the stranger.

You should base your ideas on what you have read in the passage, but do not copy from it. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your journal entry: 'I feel I should write about what happened today...'

Write between 1 and 1½ sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 10 marks for the quality of your writing. (20)

READING

A good number of responses gave a convincing account of the narrator's appearance and behaviour from the old man's point of view. By and large candidates who achieved this did so by using own words and there was relatively minor lifting of text in a very large number of responses. The most successful responses mainly comprised those attempting own words and more often than not these accounts gave a convincing explanation of the old man's preparedness to help the stranger without explanation, a few developing the idea of that the old man is somewhat sinister and might have a more sinister reason for hiding a fugitive.

Most responses seemed to have understood the passage well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task. Bullet points 1 and 2 were covered competently by the majority of

candidates and the less successful tended to focus more on these at the expense of bullet point 2. There were few candidates who did not make some attempt to suggest the old man's reasons.

Centres are advised to emphasise that, from June 2015 of the 50 marks available for the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses for the Directed Writing task are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. As has been observed in previous series, candidates' treatment of bullet point 3 proved a key discriminator and the most successful responses developed this point in some detail.

WRITING

The great majority of candidates' responses were well written and appropriate. Overall, spelling of everyday words and those in the passage was fairly accurate, and the more successful responses employed a range of sentences with some precise vocabulary. The most noticeable area for improvement, however, is with sentence punctuation as many responses used commas for full stops throughout. Such was the frequency of 'comma splicing' that many potentially Band 2 responses were finally placed in Band 3 because of it. There were also some accounts which failed to sustain the use of the past tense, and a few which wrote the account in the third person.

The more successful responses employed a journal format confidently to convey the old man's point of view convincingly and to provide a clear, explanatory narrative. One particularly common error was the use of the word 'desperate' (sometimes 'desesperated') which one assumes may be a mistranslation. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In general, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide. The breadth of vocabulary employed was, at times, quite sophisticated although it was not always correctly spelt. Overall, it would seem that the journal format was sufficiently accessible to allow candidates at all levels to write at length and with interest. It should be noted that while it is very important that candidates write as legibly as possible, those who use upper case entirely, are not able to demonstrate the correct use of capitals and this may affect the assessment of their writing skills.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/21
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 very carefully – taking note of the information at the top of each passage
- read the questions carefully
- spend time planning responses to address the specific focus of each task
- give attention to all sections of each question
- use their own words and not lift whole phrases or sentences from the passages
- select the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- only make a point once in a response to a question
- plan the structure and sequence of each response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task, different for each question

General Comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated familiarity with the rubric and general demands of each task, along with some awareness of the need to use material from the passages to answer the questions. Responses suggested that for the most part, candidates had noted the instructions and guidance offered in the questions. For example, there was evidence of candidates using the bullets in **Question 1** as a framework for their answer, focus on the correct paragraphs for **Question 2** and fewer examples of copying in **Question 3**.

Responses to the tasks suggested that candidates had found both passages equally accessible and had finished within the two hours. Instances where candidates had missed a question were rare across the cohort as a whole. Handwriting was largely of a good standard. Candidates are reminded that clear crossing out of notes and drafts is helpful.

There were few significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages, although at times details had been missed or misinterpreted. For example, in **Question 1**, the 'coach' was thought by some to be another person rather than a vehicle and Elsie wearing boots was taken to be evidence of her being a fashionable lady.

Candidates are reminded that copying is to be avoided in answers to **Questions 1** and **3**. Lifting of key phrases or sections also offers less convincing evidence of understanding than reworking the material in their own words.

When answering **Question 2**, candidates must select appropriate choices of words and phrases and then go on to offer specific and detailed comments in relation to each choice. To gain marks in the higher bands, candidates need to ensure that they are giving precise explanations of the effects of those choices. They need to demonstrate understanding of the writer's purpose and unpick the images they have selected in some detail.

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 and awkward expression.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Imagine you are Elsie Clinch. Write a letter of complaint to the tour company. In your letter, you should describe the tour bus and the route; give your impressions of the driver and the office staff; and recommend some actions the company should take to improve the experience.

Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words.

(20 marks)

In response to **Question 1**, many candidates were able to write from a viewpoint they attributed to Elsie, showing some recognition of purpose and including straightforward points for all three bullets, rather than simply offering a recount of the story. The best answers took on the character of Elsie and focused on a range of points, offering some development for each of them. In response to the third bullet, the most successful final recommendations made good use of information and details in the passage. For example, some assured they would not be using the company again any time soon, unless buses with seat belts were provided, going on to explain that this was necessary to keep passengers safe even when the road was poor. Some were able to imagine the experience from Elsie's perspective and create a suitable indignant voice to match. Various complaints such as 'banging around from side to side in the minibus as if we were in a washing machine' and forthright observations such as the 'need to choose a smoother road, or tell the authority to repair it' were in keeping with the character. Complaints along the line of, 'I didn't get the time to photograph even a single bird because your man Starsky went rushing on ahead and all the passengers made so much noise there were no birds to photograph anyway' had some character and were rooted in the ideas and sense of the text.

Middle range responses were able to use the passage reasonably well, showing similar features, but might have benefited from more sustained development. They tended to rely more heavily on the order and often the wording of the passage. Here, the first two sections often predominated, with fewer ideas presented for the third bullet point.

Candidates in the less successful responses might have improved by trying to think like Elsie, trying to report events through her eyes as if role playing. For example, some stronger answers used details and interpreted them from her point of view: 'Those three girls were whining about being hungry but they hadn't brought a big sandwich and a flask of tea like mine. Your people should tell the clients what they ought to do.'

Using the listed sections or bullet points as a focus, candidates could select details from the passage to use as a basis for Elsie's thoughts on each point. It was insufficient to 'retell' the events. Each problem with the tour needed explaining or developing. For example, there were many references to the unsuitability of the driver. Better answers used details in the text within their answer. For example, 'That disrespectful driver just ignored me when I had a problem with the seat belts. He's not even a proper driver, he's a law student doing a vacation job. He had stupid plastic flip-flops on and dropped crumbs on the floor. You should get decent drivers who have a dress code and listen to clients. Get people who enjoy their job and are kinder to the passengers.'

The frequency and quality of explanation determines the success of an answer. Suggestions for improvements in the service for the tour operator needed to be more than just a list of proposals. Each point needed a development based on a fact from the passage. For example: 'In my opinion you should make your passengers feel welcome. That dingy, nasty office where we all had to wait with that rude clerk and no room to sit with all our big bags was a disgrace!' and 'Make some proper stops. We couldn't even go to the toilet. There weren't any cafes or petrol stations and some of us were hungry.'

Attempts to take on the persona of Elsie Clinch could attract a higher mark providing the expression was not overly colloquial or inappropriate. Candidates should be encouraged to realise that their work should be lively and interesting for someone to read, and to think how someone like Elsie might write if they felt aggrieved and disappointed. That being said, developing a theatrical performance by Elsie is not the same as using the given bullet points to frame a logical, developed complaint. Drifting too far from the evidence in the text, for example using the task as a platform for a personal viewpoint not suggested by the passage, should be avoided. Methodical use of events from the passage during the planning stages of answers, together with careful attention to the key words and bullets, will help candidates to offer a full response firmly rooted in the text.

The least successful answers retold some of the events unselectively, repeated the given information, or covered very little of the passage. Any recommendations, briefly mentioned at the end, would be one or two

ideas without any detail and the signature was frequently not that of Elsie Clinch. Occasionally candidates did not make a strong complaint, failing to appreciate Elsie's forceful nature. As this is a test of reading, ideas that strayed too far from the text were often less successful. Ideas related to extended description of Elsie and her friend's previous bird-watching tours or the mishap of the original bus were beyond both the focus of the question and the evidence of the passage.

Candidates needed to remember that this was a formal letter of complaint from someone who would consider herself to be respectable. Clarity of expression, appropriateness, and fluency are required in the higher bands along with convincing character and sound structure. There needed to be continuity in the letter of complaint with the final section of recommendations bringing together the problems of the tour and how they might be solved. Candidates need to plan the organisation of their responses as well as the content. Awkward expression and structural problems were the main reasons for a lower Writing Mark.

Candidates are reminded that careful reading of the instructions and the helpful information preceding the passage will help them to focus their responses correctly.

Some responses paraphrased sections of the passage or copied whole phrases, sentences or even paragraphs, which could lower both marks. Certain phrases were particularly attractive, 'battered, rusting minibus,' 'There was not much to see...landscape of stunted shrubs.' 'Using the microphone to be disc jockey...bouncing rhythmically.' It is important that details from the passage are interpreted rather than lifted word for word.

The passage tested understanding of narrative, vocabulary and inferences of Elsie's personality. It follows that the greater the quantity and variety of texts familiar to readers, the more understanding they can bring to bear on the question. Some candidates found difficulty with individual words for example 'tarmac', 'deteriorated', 'obstinate' and 'sturdy'. 'Destination' was also confused with destiny. Some events and situations were misread. For example, some suggested that Elsie's feet were hurt by stones as she was only wearing sandals.

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, adapting material from the passage to suit the response you are writing
- re-read the passage to ensure that you have selected enough relevant detail for each bullet point
- 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) Elsie Clinch in paragraph 3, beginning with, 'Elsie Clinch stomped...' and (b) the road in paragraph 8, beginning with, 'Eventually, the plains gave way...'

Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

For many candidates, this proved to be the most challenging of the three questions. The response needed to be written in continuous prose, enabling candidates to have sufficient room to express their ideas about the words and phrases. 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 these particular words on the reader can score up to the highest mark of ten.

Precision and close analysis of the words is the key to success in **Question 2**. Candidates should avoid using such generalisations as 'it creates an effect on the reader,' without leading in to explaining exactly what that effect might be and how it is created. Comments about Elsie's behaviour would not be credit-worthy unless resulting from consideration of selected examples of the language used in connection with her. For example: 'Elsie stomped down the steps, shows she is very angry,' needs more careful explanation of what 'stomped' means and how it relates to a bad mood. Better responses mentioned that stomping suggests a heavy walk, indicating some force and even reminiscent of large animals.

Some answers offered a list of phrases or a long quotation, then a vague explanation such as 'The impression that the road was very bad.' For higher marks, candidates needed to examine each word in the phrase selected, considering meaning and inference. Similarly, 'The road snaked skyward,' shows the road was like a snake,' just repeats the words from the text, showing no understanding. Explanations of how and why the impression is given are needed to succeed. Better answers considered how 'Snaked skyward' refers to the road slithering and curving as the bus goes up at an extreme angle' and suggested it hinted that the road 'is dangerous and creates fear like a snake does.'

The best answers selected their examples with care, making sure they fitted the question. It is necessary for candidates to produce an answer which is balanced between the two parts and to discriminate between a good choice and a poorer one. Here, part (a) was generally answered more fully than part (b).

In part (a), some understanding of language in Elsie's description was shown by the explanation of 'wildly gesticulating,' and 'as if in some puppet show,' suggesting that she was like a puppet because 'she was over-dramatic with her body movements and going over the top.' More careful analysis might have considered how 'framed by the office window,' created the sense of a picture with Elsie's performance presented as if on screen or stage as well as looked more precisely at the individual words.

Similarly, in part (b), such explanations as 'Clinging makes it seem that it's about to fall' and 'Dizzying sides makes an effect of nausea, height and curves,' could be amplified by explaining how and why. The bus has to cling to the road like a person afraid of falling and holding on tightly, and is up so high that the passengers feel sick and dizzy when they look down into the deep valley.

Mid-range responses gave a mainly suitable selection with a mixed range of explanations, possibly touching on effects at times. Overlong phrases were often included which made the comments less precise. Part choices, where only one word from an image was chosen, also limited the comments that followed.

The least successful answers had either a sparse selection often mixed with unsuitable phrases, many phrases without explanation or very long quotations. This was sometimes caused by lack of focus on the question; in part (b), it is selection of words describing the road, not the bus or the journey that gain credit. Explanations could be slight, sometimes repeating the words of the text, or devices identified without showing how their use is beneficial.

Candidates can offer an overview of each section, bringing together their ideas as a whole but this will only be relevant if a selection of phrases has been explained in detail.

Though not intended as a model answer, the example that follows gives an indication of how candidates were able to respond appropriately to the question:

(a) Elsie Clinch in paragraph 3

'Wildly gesticulating': 'Wildly' implies her actions were comparable to a wild animal that acts before thinking. It could lead someone to think her eyes were full of fiery rage or craziness. 'Gesticulating' leads the reader to imagine a large reaction displaying the character's feelings.

'As if in some puppet show,' 'Puppet show' refers to the character waving her arms around like she was moved by strings. The comparison also hints that she is over-reacting much like those in shows. Puppets are connected to strings so it could symbolise that anger is pulling her strings.

'Deflated', the effect of being demotivated, defeated. Deflated refers to a balloon, the character having once been filled with air or rage, then all that air having escaped or all of her momentum gone. It also sounds similar to 'defeated' allowing readers to make the connection.

'Launched', a subtle verb comparing her to a rocket or plane taking off filled with gas. 'Launch' also insinuates the raw power or force at which she began her 'second attack.' The comparison is additionally explaining the amount of gusto she had. 'Jabbing' refers to spearing. It is a violent word setting the mood of the action.

(b) The road in paragraph 8

'Labouring up' is a personification of a mother giving birth or someone working extremely hard. I can picture the steep incline and the small bus having to work overtime to get the passengers up the mountain.

The 'weeds' on the road were 'vigorous' and 'thrust' their way. This makes nature seem like a predator, alive and vicious.

'Decayed tarmac' creates thoughts of the road wasting away. Matter often decays, leading to it being infested, in this case with weeds. Once something has decayed it is rarely useable or safe thus referring to the state of the road. The word has many negative connotations.

'Protruding rocks' gives the idea that the rocks are sticking out into the road so the bus has to go from side to side to avoid hitting them. They are also sticking out from the road surface making it very dangerous and bumpy.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- avoid general comments such as 'this is a very descriptive phrase'
- choose those 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
- 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 of effects, try thinking of the 'dictionary definition' for each of your choices and explain how that meaning might fit in the context of the paragraph
- to explain effects, think of all that the word might suggest to a reader – the particular feelings, connotations and associations of the language
- if you think you have spotted a literary device, do more than just label it. Think how the language is adding to the effect in the context of the text
- learn to recognise images and explain 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

Summarise (a) the uses and appeal of Greyhound-type buses, as described in Passage B; (b) the considerations Elsie had taken into account when packing and preparing for the tour, as described in Passage A.

Your summary must be in continuous writing (full sentences; not note form). Use your own words as far as possible.

Aim to write no more than one side in total, allowing for the size of your handwriting. Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

(20 marks)

Answering this question successfully requires candidates to identify fifteen points that are relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in continuous prose using their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were twenty-three possible answers in the Mark Scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. The whole answer should only be one page in length (depending on the size of handwriting).

Focused selection is required again in this question. Passage B contained plenty of information not required for the answer and less familiar to the candidate, as it has not been used in previous questions. This means that candidates must read or reread the text carefully and pay attention to the precise requirements for each part of the question. Using underlining to highlight key words in the question and the corresponding ideas in the text is a good way for candidates to focus on what is needed.

Candidates appeared to be mostly well prepared for this question. Answers were usually the correct length and written in continuous prose, notes or bullet points seldom being seen. Points made in partial note form would have been fully credited, although the writing mark would have been lower. If the response had been wholly in note form, both the Content and Writing marks would have been reduced. Length can present a

problem when writing is unnaturally squeezed into the space allowed; it would be better to shorten explanations and try to pinpoint focus instead.

There were few examples of the response written in the wrong form such as a narrative or commentary. Pleasingly, there was little overt copying. Repetition of points was not uncommon though, for example in relation to the points concerning transportation of workers and international coverage. Candidates are advised that where examples of the same point and supporting data such as statistics are given in a text, identifying the central idea being illustrated will help them to improve their answer and avoid repetition. Careful reviewing of 'points' at planning stage ahead of writing the prose answer would help to address this.

The best answers were well focused on the required points and reproduced them clearly and concisely in the candidates' own words. Many answers found more than fifteen points.

Middle range responses occasionally lost focus and were repetitive, sometimes making the answer too long and limiting their writing mark.

The least successful answers may have been written at least partially in the wrong form, for example retelling the story of Passage A. In scripts at this level, there was some copying and inclusion of parts of the passages that were nothing to do with the focus of the question. Candidates attempting to paraphrase rather than select relevant material were often unable to identify relevant points.

Better answers considered the specific focus of each part of the question and planned their answer in each section accordingly. Rather than simply listing items Elsie took with her, the strongest answers identified her considerations when packing. For example, those who mentioned the heat of the sun as a consideration were often also able to identify that the difficult terrain would be something to consider and were less likely to offer incomplete ideas. Suggestions such as 'Elsie brought shoes for a walk,' were insufficiently precise. The idea of strong/sturdy and leather was needed here as the difficult terrain was the consideration and the boots had been chosen specifically to take account of that. Likewise, 'breathable clothing,' 'a large-scale map' and 'earplugs' are examples copied from the text and although mentioning them could gain a little credit, they suggest limited focus on the task.

In order to improve their marks, candidates need to ensure they are making a point precisely and answering the question. Those who had identified that Elsie wanted to shut out noise were less likely to mistake her earplugs for earphones as some candidates did.

Though not intended as a model answer, the example that follows gives an indication of how candidates were able to respond appropriately to the question:

Part (a), the uses and appeal of Greyhound-type buses

The Greyhound-type buses have been around since 1914 and since then quickly evolved to servicing most of the world, spreading to Mexico, Canada and Europe and Australia. You can expect to be in a different place every day extremely cheaply. A typical pass lasts 60 days and is based on the number of kilometres travelled. In WWII the Greyhounds carried many soldiers to the east or west coasts. They also carried workers to and from the mines and tourists. Routes to prisons are also popular. The buses are quick and comfortable.

Part (b), the considerations Elsie had taken into account when packing and preparing for the tour

Elsie, a bird photographer, packed everything needed for an adventure. She had strong leather boots in case of uneven ground; all her food and drink was waterproofed inside her rucksack and earplugs were brought along in case of bad noises. She had a guide to make sure the shrubs she touched were safe and a huge map to prevent getting lost. To be safe from diseases and problems caused by insects, she brought repellent as well as a large woven hat to stop sunburn. Finally, a camera and a tripod were taken in order to be able to properly photograph birds.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read the passage after reading each part of the question, in order to find the precise information to answer it
- plan your answer carefully by listing relevant points in as few words as possible

- read through your list of points and link any that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences
- do not write an introduction
- do not use quotes in your answer to **Question 3**
- do not write a narrative, or in the first person
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- write in an informative style and never add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- reflect in their writing their 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 are deducted for typing errors.

General comments

Although the number of Centres entering for this component was significantly lower than in the summer, there were many entries. Some Centres entered complete cohorts, some a small group of candidates, and there were candidates who repeated the examination from the summer session.

This report explains some of the problems that were apparent to Moderators, but there was general praise for the efforts by candidates in presenting their work which was neat and well processed. Although there were some shortcomings, Moderators also praised Centres for taking on the amount of planning and administration that was involved in completing the work for this component.

The assignments were generally in keeping with the requirements of the syllabus and most offered a sufficient challenge to candidates marked in Bands 1 to 3. However, some assignments, for the purpose of this component, did not challenge all candidates appropriately.

While the rank orders of most Centres were sound, the mark range was sometimes narrow, typically from 44 to 34. Marking, particularly of writing, did not always recognise the standard at the bottom of Band 3, and Band 4 was rarely used. Marking was often lenient and it appeared that the four main objectives, content, structure, style and accuracy, were not always applied in equal proportions, even allowing for very limited commutation. The annotation of error was haphazard and often entirely missing, and some very inaccurate scripts were endorsed with a general comment that they were mainly accurate.

Successful Centres demonstrated the following

Good Practice:

- There was an understanding that coursework provided an opportunity for candidates to learn to be better writers over a period of time, by expressing their own ideas and experiences of the world about them.
- After initial, brief guidance by teachers as to the nature of tasks, candidates were left to write as individuals and to think with originality for themselves.
- Teachers monitored their efforts, checking for authenticity and offering general suggestions on early drafts, but remembering that their advice should not constitute correction.
- Written assessments of assignments not only recognised achievement but identified areas where candidates could make improvements.
- Candidates were encouraged to proof-read their work, looking particularly for errors of punctuation. Successful candidates were correct in their use of full stops at the ends of sentences and were sparing in their use of semi-colons, showing understanding of where they were appropriate.

Candidates aiming for marks in Bands 1 and 2 demonstrated their independence as writers, forming their own versions of tasks and thinking inventively and at a high level of maturity. The best Centres used only a small amount of stimulus material for the first assignment, briefly introduced tasks capable of flexible responses, allowed a short time for candidates to discuss possible approaches and then set candidates to work on their own. Some Centres prepared for coursework by teaching skills, such as how to structure an effective speech and the type of language that was appropriate, or how a short story works, studying the presentation of characters, the build-up of tension and the provision of an effective climax. They were careful to ensure that tasks were appropriate in maturity for a sixteen-year-old and that they required a suitable level of thought and the opportunities to demonstrate skills. They understood that coursework was provided for educational reasons so that by practice, each candidate could improve as a writer and thinker.

Many Centres clearly understood the rationale behind coursework and approached it with enthusiasm and energy.

Bad Practice

Unfortunately, a number of Centres regarded coursework as a way of awarding their candidates a mark no lower than Band 3. It sometimes appeared that coursework had been undertaken without a full understanding of the rationale behind it. Some of the points listed below are detailed further in later sections of the report.

- Candidates were frequently not left to work independently of published material or undue guidance by teachers. This resulted in similar responses that showed little or no originality of thought. While the style and accuracy may have been satisfactory, the overall mark was affected by too much adherence to what should only have been a stimulus and not a template for content or structure.
- In Assignment 3, where all candidates had responded to the same text, it sometimes appeared that they had been guided to select certain ideas and opinions. Since the selection was part of the reading mark, this was an inappropriate practice.
- For reading, it was clear in some cases that the mark scheme in the syllabus had either not been used or not fully understood.
- A large number of candidates were unaware of the need to place a full stop at the end of a sentence or to use an appropriate conjunction to join sentences into a fluent pattern of thought. As a result they wrote groups of short sentences with commas (and sometimes nothing) between. In addition, some candidates used virtually no commas at all. There were many examples of the wrong use of semi-colons, sometimes splitting a simple sentence into two halves for no reason. Often there were far too many semi-colons in a piece of work. There was frequently no indication that these errors had been noticed, or if they were, had not been taken into consideration when awarding marks. Given the excellent opportunities for drafting and redrafting and for discussing work in general terms with the teacher, advantages not available in the alternative Component 3, it was expected that candidates would have identified and corrected these errors.

Centres are particularly warned about providing candidates with too much support, especially about the content and structure of assignments and about making specific corrections on early drafts.

Details regarding the educational aims and objectives are set out in the Syllabus, in all published reports to Centres and in the Coursework Training Manual. It is vital that all Centres offering the coursework entry read these documents and understand and follow the advice.

Task setting

Tasks in all cases followed the requirements of the syllabus and were generally appropriate in the degree of challenge offered to the best candidates. However, many of the tasks appeared to come from a common source and were not always suited to the particular interests and abilities of candidates or the specific demands of this component.

There were some exceptions to the suitability of tasks.

In Assignment 1, the tasks 'Don't get me started...', 'Three things I would like to be rid of in the twenty first century', and 'Room 101' were rarely done well for reasons that are detailed later in this report. These tasks have been set over a number of years and are not ones that are recommended by CIE.

In Assignment 2 the increasing use of monologues gave many candidates problems that they did not encounter when writing stories, descriptions and accounts from their own experience.

In Assignment 3, some candidates were disadvantaged by the choice of texts which contained few ideas or opinions with which they could engage or which argued strongly for an issue that was undeniable. The continued use of the weak 'Educating Essex' text disadvantaged candidates, and this should not be used again.

Assessment of coursework

Writing

In most cases, the rank order of candidates within the Centre was satisfactory, but the marking was frequently lenient. In most cases this involved a slight adjustment of the original marks, but in some cases the over-marking was significant. In one case, a Centre used a mark scheme that was not the one set by CIE. There was reluctance among Centres to use Bands 4 and 5 and some Centres' distribution graphs were too heavily skewed to Bands 2 and 3.

Some Centres did not fully understand the application of the mark scheme. The assessment consists of content, structure, style (including a sense of audience) and accuracy. These are assessed in broadly equal proportions. There is some room for commutation, but this is limited.

In many cases it appeared that due account had not been taken of accuracy and of some stylistic features. For example, one candidate awarded a mark on Band 1 made a total of 89 errors, and it was quite common to find candidates in Band 1 who had made over 50 errors. One single story, given a mark at the top of Band 3, contained 57 mistakes, and another folder, high in Band 3 totalled 103. It is clear from the mark scheme that work where error was so evident could not be in Band 1, or anywhere near it.

The chief reasons for reducing Centres' writing marks were as follows:

- 1: Punctuation errors, particularly of full stops, commas, semi-colons, semi colons and apostrophes.** There was frequently a misunderstanding of where to use semi-colons and they were often made to divide what ought to have been longer sentences into short ones. The functions of colons and semi-colons were sometimes confused. Colons were often inappropriately used to introduce lists of words rather than phrases and sentences. Some pieces of work had far too many semi-colons: they should be used sparingly. There was an odd error of confusing dashes with hyphens, and dashes were also used too often where a well-constructed sentence was preferable.
- 2: Straightforward, sometimes limited range of language.** This is a strong discriminator when marking writing. Candidates in Bands 1 and 2 should use a wide range of vocabulary with some assurance. Candidates who use a limited range of mostly simple words are often placed in Band 4.
- 3: Insecure structuring of sentences and lack of fluency.** This is another strong discriminator. Candidates often wrote either simple sentences or sentences which were at best only two clauses joined together. Good candidates managed complex sentences with assurance. Some candidates wrote very long, convoluted sentences that confused the reader. One such sentence lasted over 150 words and another 125.
- 4: Simplistic responses to undemanding tasks,** particularly in Assignments 1 and 3.
- 5: Failure to proof read.** Some errors were so simple that they did not indicate the candidate's lack of knowledge. There was no excuse for their not being correct.
- 6: Poor use of the spell check leading to the use of wrong words and wrong spellings.** This included candidates who discussed 'notational service', and referred to 'a gust of wing', 'venerable children' and 'prophetic legs'. 'Definitely' became 'defiantly', 'assess' became 'asses' and there was a '5 start hotel'.

Assessment of reading

This assessment was generally satisfactory, but again there was a tendency to be lenient, and some Centres gave marks in Band 1 without there being sufficient quality in the responses to warrant it. Some Centres presented a good range of marks typically from 9 to 4.

There were, however, some excellent answers. These showed that candidates had grasped the text and the attitudes of its writer as a whole, and their responses consisted of a cohesive set of ideas, integrating the detail of the passage. There was a secure understanding of the text and responses elucidated what the writer was saying. They were clearly worth a mark in Band 1.

Many answers were worth Band 2. These made a selection of ideas and opinions, often in a random order, and evaluated each one in turn. They separated fact from opinion and identified bias and inconsistencies, developing arguments for and against what was written. This constituted evaluation and it did not need to be consistent for a mark of 7.

Candidates in Band 3 made a satisfactory selection of ideas and opinions, but either did little more than to summarise them or provided some very straightforward comments, such as expressing agreement or disagreement with the writer (typical of a mark of 5). Sometimes the comments were so weak or the work so incomplete that a mark in Band 4 was appropriate.

Centres should use the published mark scheme, which is found in the syllabus under 6: *Appendix*.

Administration by Centres

The work of the Moderators was not merely to scrutinise the quality of the work but also to make a number of clerical checks on the marks submitted by Centres.

The first document that was needed was the **Coursework Assessment Summary Form**, or CASF (otherwise known as WMS). This form was the record of the actual marks agreed on after Internal Moderation and was required for all candidates and not just those in the moderation sample. The Moderator noted all the changes that had been made at Internal Moderation and also used the document to check the range of marks awarded for reading. The document gave the Moderator some guidance as to the marking of different teachers in the Centre.

The Moderator then checked the marks on the CASF against those on the copy of the **MS1** (or electronic equivalent). Where there was a discrepancy, this was recorded on the CIE marks system. A check was also carried out against the marks on the folders in the sample. There were frequent discrepancies that were discovered during these checks.

Most Centres supplied a copy of this essential form, but some did not. It was not sufficient to record moderated marks on the folders alone. Sometimes the only form that was submitted was for the candidates in the sample. A frequent comment by Moderators was that there was no evidence of Internal Moderation.

Copies of all articles used for Assignment 3 were required by the Moderator who had to read them before addressing the work. These were almost always supplied.

An early draft of **one** piece of work was also required. This was usually included and in some cases there was a draft for all three pieces of work. The Moderator needed the draft to make two separate checks, although this did not normally affect the marking of the folder.

Many Centres did not include the top and bottom folder from their mark range in addition to the sample that was requested.

Finally the regulations stipulated that each folder in the sample should be securely fixed and that it should not be in plastic folders, which only added to the complicated handling job that the Moderator had to undertake. For example, where a large number of folders were submitted, the Moderator had to make an initial sub-sample across the mark range and then a subsequent choice of folders to examine certain points in the range. It was not always safe to use paperclips, and a few folders were not fixed together at all. The most convenient method was by stapling.

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.
- 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.

Annotation

It was only by reading the comments by teachers that Moderators were able to understand how the marks had been awarded. They looked for a summative comment on the cover of each folder, comments at the bottom of each individual assignment, and the annotation of errors on final drafts.

Some Centres were meticulous in their annotation. However, many final drafts carried no comment or annotation whatsoever and in one case, the Centre had not even made comments on the front covers.

It was important that errors should be annotated on final drafts, yet it was common practice not to do this or only to make some token annotations. This resulted in comments such as 'mainly competent use of spelling, punctuation and grammar' when a quick check showed that this was patently untrue. The reason why such annotation is essential has already been given in this report.

Much comment was made in the margin and consisted of identifying when a particular objective had been achieved at a certain level. While this system was helpful, it was misleading, since the final assessment of any piece of work consisted of those objectives that had been achieved in the assignment as a whole and not at one particular moment. Hence, the rationale for placing work in a mark band came at the end of the assignment and was not placed at various points in the margin.

Many assessments were too positive and made no indication to candidates where improvements in their work might be made. This meant that some assessments gave the impression that the work was better than in fact it was,

Drafts

Some Centres were meticulous in commenting on drafts at the end of the assignment.

The point of a draft is that candidates should be prepared to make amendments by

- Revising and making improvements to whole sections, for example changing an ending or altering the length of a particular section;
- Editing, by changing words and phrases to improve the effectiveness of their communication;
- Correcting punctuation, grammar, proof-reading errors and so on.

These changes should be made in the candidate's handwriting and in a different colour from that of the teacher's notes.

Best practice was that the teacher's notes were set out at the end of the work, not in the margin or in the body of the text. There were still examples of teachers who circled individual errors in the text or who corrected them. This is specifically not allowed because it is the candidate's responsibility to make alterations and corrections to a draft, not the teacher's.

It was disappointing that some first drafts were merely copies of the final draft, thus missing the educational point of drafting.

Internal moderation

Where there was more than one set it was essential that Internal Moderation should take place in order to provide a reliable rank order. On the whole, this was done well, although some Centres made very few changes to candidates' marks. This may have been because the marking was standardised throughout the course.

Where there was some disagreement it was usually due to problems in the assessment, for example by not assessing the quality of candidates' responses for reading correctly or by not paying due regard to the important discriminators for writing.

It was very helpful to Moderators that some Centres included a brief account of how Internal Moderation had been carried out.

Authenticity

Centres should be aware that Moderators take care to spot pieces of work that may not be the candidate's own. It is important to plan the work so that it is monitored and the possibility of copying elsewhere is diminished. The easiest way to do this is to set tasks that reflect the candidates' personal experiences and thoughts and to create the first draft in class. This can be checked. The next stage, presumably the second draft, can be done at home and can then be checked against the first draft. The final draft can be done in class, (or the second and third stages can be reversed). In any case, monitoring should ensure that teachers feel confident that the work is original. If the work is suspicious, it is wise to check by using an internet search engine. Where cases of copying are discovered, the offending work must be removed before the folder is assessed.

While there was no doubt that the work was largely that of the candidates, there were unfortunately a number of examples of copying that were easily detected by Moderators.

All suspected cases were forwarded to the Regulations Team at Cambridge for investigation and further action where appropriate.

Assignment 1

The best tasks were those that set the words of a speech or presentation on a particular topic. Even if some of the content was not original, it was nearly always adapted to the genre and to the audience, and was accompanied by a good deal of the candidate's own thoughts and arguments. The fact that it was meant to be spoken, albeit formally, gave the candidate freedom to explore the topic from a personal standpoint. The work was frequently more entertaining, sounded more convincing and was more passionate than traditional essays. Nearly all of the presentations were well structured and candidates did not fall into the trap of becoming too informal. However, a common distraction was the frequency of rhetorical questions. Used sparingly, these were effective, but used too often, they interrupted the flow.

While writing that argued a case tended to attract the higher marks, there was also a place, particularly for the average candidate, for writing informative accounts of school, sporting and family events and particularly of spare time activities that were unusual or that had been taken to a high level. One candidate wrote engagingly about his participation in a band that had some success. Writing an account of work experience was a valid option. Family histories were also successful, although candidates had to be careful not to stray into the territory of Assignment 2 and write narratives. Visits abroad and to museums and art galleries were done well and there were some excellent accounts of towns and cities round the world written by people who no longer lived there.

Essays were often uninteresting to read because they were too formal and there was rarely any sense of audience or of involvement by the candidate. There was also the concern as to where the content came from and Moderators were more likely to be suspicious about the origin of these pieces. Because the ethos of this coursework is built round the thoughts, feelings and experiences of candidates, this type of writing was somehow out of place.

Centres also needed to check film reviews and restaurant reviews for originality. One review had been cobbled together from two websites. The Moderator's suspicions were aroused because the quality of writing for the review was markedly different from that of the other two pieces.

Rants such as 'Don't get me started' very rarely gave candidates any advantages and were often the weakest pieces in the folders. Unfortunately, many Centres set them. There were examples of attacks on challenging topics that were cohesive and sustained and which used appropriate language, but these were few and far between. The problems were as follows:

- 1: Content: This was often unchallenging. Candidates who wrote about TV commercials, coughing without putting your hand over your mouth, Year 7, and bus drivers were not likely to reach Bands 1 or 2. Sometimes their arguments against these topics were only to express disgust or annoyance, so that their arguments were weak.
- 2: Structure: the topics were so unchallenging that candidates had difficulty in sustaining their arguments which were typically repetitive or weak.
- 3: Style: Many of these responses confused formal and informal language, sometimes to a serious degree. Expressions included 'how the hell?', 'gob', 'drive me bananas', 'bugs you', 'or summin', and 'shoot me now'.

It was too easy for candidates to fall into these very obvious traps, and while some of the diatribes were amusing, they did not properly match the demands of the mark scheme. It is recommended that no marks should be set.

There were several tasks involving leaflets, but these were not always successful because they did not give opportunities for sustained, cohesive writing and because the content was often too straightforwardly informative.

It was not good practice to set the same topic to a large number of candidates.

The good news was that there was a real variety of topics, many of which were clearly of personal concern to the candidates. Many candidates wrote about social media, video games and issues concerning animals. These were done well, but the less usual topics included:

War today, graveyard tomorrow
An argument against going to university
The media and body images
An application to be head boy
Celebrities
Women's soccer
Irish dancing
Syria
'My Mum'

Assignment 2

This assignment was the opportunity for candidates to think imaginatively rather than to create arguments, and to demonstrate their command of vocabulary. The best candidates used language appropriately and with assurance, so that meaning was never in doubt and the reader was supplied with realistic images that engaged attention.

Some candidates tried too hard, and their use of decorative language obscured meaning. There were examples of images that did not connect well with the object that they described and it was clear that there was a lack of understanding of the function of imagery. Many candidates used a disappointing range of vocabulary, and the writing was sometimes flat or even simple.

The range of tasks consisted of narratives, descriptions, monologues and writing from personal experience. One Centre successfully set the theme of homelessness and another asked candidates to imagine they were at the top of a high building so see whether they could fly. Despite the potential dangers of putting such ideas into their heads, the writing was gripping.

Many of the narratives were sadly, violent, giving a negative view of life. Where the violence and the blood became gratuitous, this spoiled the effect of the story because the events were no longer convincing. Many Centres opted for a gothic story, although there was not much evidence that candidates knew much about the genre. Too often it reverted to the common denominator of entering a stereotypical house with a big wooden door and occasionally the protagonists were surrounded by a horde of zombies.

On the other hand, there were some good aspects of story writing, particularly where the ending was well thought out. There were examples of time lapses, alternate narrators, and drip-feeding, all devices that created interest.

There were many descriptions. Most of these were well written, but some of them were lists of images that were loosely connected rather than creating a cohesive picture overall. It is important for a description to have some shape. This can be achieved by describing what happens over a limited period of time or by describing a scene from different angles or through different eyes. Static descriptions proved difficult to sustain.

Some of the monologues were well written, but they tended to become outpourings of emotions that had limited variety, and there was less content in them than in narratives. Like the descriptions they were best when they were not static such as happened when the narrator was reacting to a single event.

Comparatively few candidates wrote about their own experiences. For some who have had even a little experience, this is a source of some excellent writing and there is a case for ensuring that every folder has one or two pieces of writing from experience. It is of course possible to write partly from experience, but to change even a little to make a good story.

Some titles included:

Narrative

Hate behind a white veil
Skylines and turnstiles
The lighthouse
Breaking point
Sound in the dark
The boy who never sleeps
Lost in the forest
Mist at sea

Descriptive

Tsunami
A day in the life of a pub
A perfect fall day
The end of the School day
A theme park

Own experience

My first flying experience

Assignment 3

Many of the articles chosen for this assignment were appropriate. However there were some exceptions, as follow:

- Newspaper stories that just recorded events and did not discuss them
- Internet articles written in short, unstructured paragraphs, with much repetition and little argument
- Multiple articles, usually in twos or threes, that gave candidates too much to deal with
- Overlong articles of more than two sides of A4.

Most articles were controversial, contained at least some identifiable arguments, ideas and opinions, and were about themes that candidates could easily relate to. However, several reports on individual Centres mentioned that the chosen article only had a small number of ideas and opinions and that this was not beneficial to the candidates. This included a particularly graphic account of the death penalty applied to a criminal in the United States, which described the event and did not debate the issue.

Some texts argued a case with which no normal person could disagree. Where the stages in the argument were logical it proved very difficult for candidates to respond. They were open to develop ideas, but in good texts this development had often been done already and there was little else that could be said.

A number of articles, such as the article on 'Educating Essex' had been in circulation for several sessions and some were common to several Centres. It is recommended that Centres find some fresh articles of their own.

This assignment generally followed the guidelines in the syllabus and was often well written. Most candidates made a satisfactory selection of ideas and opinions and many of them gave evidence of at least some evaluation and development.

Texts used for this assignment included:

Voting for 16-year-olds
Sunbeds

Hosting the world cup
Free range childhood
Parents know best
Gun crime chaos
Mid-pregnancy abortion (chosen for US candidates)
Child soldiers
Compulsory sport in Schools
A teenager in favour of School uniform

Final comments

This report has underlined some of the issues that urgently needed addressing. However, a good deal of the work was well planned and carried out with an understanding of the educational advantages of the component. Where there were discrepancies, it proved that coursework was not something that could be lightly undertaken and that there was a good deal of commitment and hard work that was necessary to achieve the results that Centres obviously wanted.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/06
Speaking and Listening

Key Messages

Centres should decide whether to choose Component 05 or Component 06 at the beginning of the planning stage. The components are distinct in their approaches to the Speaking and Listening section of the syllabus. Uncertainty and confusion 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 is much more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that 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.

Centres are recommended to use both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Training Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.

Please be aware that four different items need to be included in the sample package sent to the Moderator. These are: a recorded sample on CD, DVD or USB drive; the Summary Forms for the whole cohort entered; a copy of the marks (the MS1) already sent to Cambridge and the Individual Candidate Record Cards for the candidates included in the sample. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process.

The Individual Candidate Record Cards should include specific information about the choices made for each task and not just generic statements.

In some cases clerical and mathematical errors continue to undermine the moderation process although it must be noted that there were far fewer instances this session.

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.

A sample representing the full range of the Centre's marks is expected with both the highest and lowest performing candidates included.

We 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.

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.

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.

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.

General Comments

Through the syllabus, Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please note that the Component 5 Summary Form is different and it is not interchangeable with the Component 6 equivalent.

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 **Task 1**, it is very difficult to achieve band 1 if the performance is 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...
- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- Teenagers and technology
- Social media – good or bad?
- 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.

Task 2

There should be only two participants in **Task 2**. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a candidate 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.

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?
- Are video games too violent?
- Topical social issues such as sexism in sport
- Feminism/Gender inequality
- The influence of reality television on the teenage audience
- Planning a holiday
- Role play situations that are developed beyond superficial arguments
- The benefits and pitfalls of social media?
- A moral dilemma such as what to do with a wallet that has been found
- 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.

General Conclusions

- It is gratifying to report that 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. Thank you.
- 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 session 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.