

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

Paper 0522/01
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **Question 1(g)** candidates should remember that they cannot repeat the same word in their answer to (ii) as they used in (i). They should elaborate on the definition given in (i) and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format for **Question 2** as well as following the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. The vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. There was very little evidence of candidates not working within the paper time limit and fewer examples of No Response answers compared with previous papers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) **The crew of the Fairwind are described as being 'angry and disturbed'. Explain why they felt angry and why they felt disturbed (paragraph 1, 'On the night of...December 20th.'). [2 marks]**

Most candidates gained one mark by correctly identifying that the crew of the Fairwind were angry and disturbed that the lighthouse was not in operation/had a dead light/light was not working. Fewer noted that 'nothing had been done about it'. Only a small number appreciated the more implied point that the crew felt disturbed because the absence of light from the lighthouse could have increased the likelihood of their ship being wrecked on the rocks of the island during the storm.

- (b) Why is it thought that the authorities did not act straightaway (paragraph 1, 'On the night of...December 20th.')**? [1 mark]

Many candidates correctly answered that 'the relief ship ... was due to sail out to the islands on December 20th', by lifting the phrase from the passage. In order to secure the mark, it was important to show understanding that the Hesperus (or the 'relief ship') was a different vessel from the Fairwind and to refer to the short timescale.

- (c) Why was Joseph Moore on the Hesperus and why was he restless (paragraph 2, 'Bad weather delayed...any breakfast.')**? [2 marks]

Most candidates gained at least one mark here by explaining that Moore was 'disturbed ... that the light wasn't working' but many apparently misunderstood his role and stated that he was 'on watch duty' on the Hesperus and not that he was the 'relief lighthouse keeper' – a mark that could have been gained by lifting the relevant phrase directly from the passage. The most frequent misunderstandings were to claim that Moore's restlessness was related to the poor quality of his 'breakfast' or the fact that the three lighthouse keepers had gone missing – something he would not have known until he visited the lighthouse.

- (d) State two unusual things that the crew of the Hesperus noticed when they landed on Flannan Isle and before they entered the lighthouse (paragraph 3, 'Things were mysterious...the island.')** [2 marks]

This straightforward retrieval question about what was strange when the Hesperus crew landed on Flannan Isle was correctly answered by nearly all candidates who identified the absence of a flag, the absence of empty provision boxes awaiting restocking, and the absence of a traditional welcoming committee. Most candidates gained two marks with many responding with all three possibilities.

- (e) Explain why the crew of the Hesperus were so concerned about the missing clothing and the one set of oilskins that they found in the lighthouse (lines 22–24).** [2 marks]

Most candidates noted that 'one of the crew had put himself in danger by not wearing his protective gear', adding that it was 'virtually unheard of'; fewer wrote that the men 'had broken the rules' by leaving the lighthouse unattended and hardly any commented on 'the missing gear indicated that at least two of the keepers...not come back'. More successful responses picked up on the point that the keeper had broken the rules by not wearing his protective clothing. Only the most successful deduced that the concern about the missing clothing arose from the conclusion that two of the keepers had not returned and were, therefore, also at risk.

- (f) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by: 'So much myth and folklore has grown up over the mystery of Flannan Isle' (line 27).** [2 marks]

Few candidates fully explained 'myth/folklore' in their own words, but a significant number suggested that 'rumours'/'made-up'/'exaggerated' stories had 'grown up' over the mystery of Flannan Isle and by doing so gained one of the available marks. Some went on to complete their explanation by pointing out that the effect of the increasingly mythical accounts was that it was very hard for later researchers to work out the truth of the events on the island.

- (g)(i) Re-read paragraphs two, three and six of Passage A. Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words in *italics* in the following phrases:
- a 'filled with *foreboding*, pacing the deck and refusing any breakfast' (line 12)
 - b 'the *eerie* silence that enveloped the island' (line 17)
 - c 'Iron railings were bent *grotesquely* out of shape as if by some unearthly force' (lines 32–33). [3 marks]

Not all candidates appeared to understand the precise requirements of this task. The question asked them to explain in their own words what the writer meant by the **words in italics**. Many candidates produced 'catch all' phrases which were more akin to a (g)(ii) type explanation of the whole phrase. Only the more successful responses showed real understanding of the italicised words and only a small number of candidates gained all three available marks for this question.

- (a) For 'foreboding' many candidates were able to convey the sense of dread or anxiety experienced by Joseph Moore about the problems with the lighthouse. Some, however, misinterpreted the word as signifying 'anger' or 'excitement'. A few responses merely rephrased the words thus producing a circular answer which was not focused on the underlined word.
 - (b) 'Eerie' was usually explained correctly with answers such as 'spooky', 'scary' and 'weird' proving to be very popular. Again, as with (a) some candidates gave explanations which focused on the whole phrase rather than the underlined word, pointing out the suffocating silence which enveloped the island but not satisfactorily explaining the meaning of the underlined word..
 - (c) 'Grotesquely' presented a problem for many candidates but it was usually the absence of intensity which stopped some candidates getting a mark here. Words such as 'ugly', 'bent' or 'misshapen' really do not capture the full force of something being 'grotesque' with its implications of unnatural monstrosity. Again, some candidates managed to comment on 'force' rather than the appearance of the railings. As noted above many candidates struggled particularly with explaining the word, 'grotesquely' for 1(g)(i) but, nevertheless, successfully scored a mark or two in discussing the use of language in that quotation in their answers to 1(g)(ii).
- (g)(ii) Explain how the language in each of the phrases in (g)(i) helps to suggest the atmosphere of mystery on the island. [6 marks]

Many candidates achieved marks on this question by showing some understanding/offering a partial explanation of individual phrases (as a whole). Most commented successfully on Moore's 'apprehension' or 'anxiety' concerning what might greet him on the island; the 'eerie silence' creating an 'unnatural atmosphere', and the 'powerful' force required to bend the railings 'grotesquely out of shape'. Only a small number showed any real appreciation of how the vocabulary/imagery was used to contribute to the writer's purpose.

Less successful responses made general comments about ‘adding to the mystery’, or ‘making things more mysterious’, without demonstrating a clear understanding of the individual phrases. Responses which showed a misunderstanding of ‘foreboding’ explained the whole phrase in terms of excitement or anger. A small number of responses attempted explanations of the phrases by simply re-iterating them or lifting the language from the phrase and simply produced a circular explanation. For example, instead of attempting to find own words for ‘unearthly force’ candidates merely repeated it. It is worth pointing out that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to simple interpretations of the words used. The key focus of explanations here was ‘the atmosphere of mystery on the island’ but many responses did not relate their explanations to the focus of the question.

Question 2

Imagine that you are Joseph Moore from Passage A. You decide to stay on at the lighthouse and investigate what has happened. It is the next morning.

Write your journal entry for the events of the previous day and night.

In your journal you should:

- describe your thoughts and feelings on the way to the island
- describe what you found when you landed and entered the lighthouse
- say what you think might have happened to the previous keepers and why they cannot be found.

Base your journal entry on what you have read in Passage A, but do not copy from it. Be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullets.

Begin your journal entry: ‘This was the most disturbing experience...’.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

Only a few responses followed the requirement to view the situation in hindsight and most merely described the events of the ‘actual’ day as it unfolded. Often candidates wrote responses which addressed the three bullet points, although not always in ‘journal entry’ register.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three prompts in a balanced approach but a significant number, having described Joseph Moore’s feelings and thoughts in some detail, as well as describing the scene at the lighthouse, then rather abruptly concluded the journal entry with the final sentence of Passage A about the damage, and, indeed, the loss of the lighthouse keepers, arising from the ‘terrible storm’. Such accounts often did not speculate on how the storm had led to their demise. In contrast to these responses, others enthusiastically speculated about the lighthouse keepers’ disappearance with some claiming the men had been eaten by a Kraken, had been whisked away to outer space by aliens or simply got washed into the sea while coming back from the local pub. It is important that candidates attempt to develop ideas related to the three prompts which are grounded in the passage, and such development should be predominantly in their own words as opposed to frequent lifting of phrases and even sentences from the original. Less successful responses either contained almost word for word accounts of what was found in the lighthouse together with a brief reference to Joseph Moore’s apprehension and a passing reference to the fate of the missing men or they focused on Joseph Moore’s worries with virtually no indication as to what was found in the lighthouse. A very small number of candidates answered this question in the third person, and a similar number wrote responses which had no relevance to the passage whatsoever.

A significant number of responses confused the events involving the Fairwind and the Hesperus when writing in response to bullet point 1. Only a very small number picked up on the passage’s hints of supernatural possibilities (the ‘grotesquely’ bent railings and the mysterious three birds) in their responses to bullet 3.

Most candidates wrote correct, though relatively simple, sentences, with an adequate range of vocabulary and tried to use an appropriate register. The most successful responses – a significant minority – achieved Band 1 marks for both Content and Language.

Question 3

- (a) What do you learn about the appearance and behaviour of the kraken and the explanations given for what it was, according to **Passage B**?

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

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

This question was answered well with many candidates focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a significant number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. The most frequent limitations included the repetition of the 'size' of the Kraken (Point 1) as separate points; confusion between Points 10 and 11 – with many responses incorrectly referring to a 'whirlpool' being created when the Kraken 'surfaced' – and the inclusion of 'historical' (and irrelevant) references to the Kraken. The key was avoiding repetition and answering the question by selecting points relating to the Kraken's appearance and its behaviour, as stated in the question.

- (b) Now use your notes to write a summary of what **Passage B** tells you about the appearance and behaviour of the kraken and the explanations given for what it was.

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

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in **Question 3(a)** and must be 100 to 150 words.

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

Although some candidates were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements about the Kraken's behaviour and appearance.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0522/02
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key Messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read the text carefully before considering the task
- read each task carefully, paying attention to key words and instructions
- considered the evidence of the skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate in each response
- planned and organised their ideas before beginning their answer
- gave equal attention to all sections of each question
- selected only the material appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- used their own words carefully, appropriately and precisely
- avoided copying and/or lifting whole sentences or sections from either text
- edited their response to amend any careless slips, incomplete or unclear ideas
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose.

General comments

Candidates appeared to find both passages on the paper equally accessible and there did not seem to be many significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages, though copying was sometimes evident, especially in response to the first bullet in **Question 1**. There is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting whole sections of the text or key phrases such as ‘Old Mrs F passed away last month ...’ and ‘it didn’t look like Beryl was coming back’ which were often copied in their entirety. There were also responses that included descriptions of the changes in the pet shop which were not modified to focus on the bullet point, leading to overly narrative responses.

For **Question 2**, in order to target higher marks, candidates must make appropriate choices of words and phrases and go on to make specific and appropriate comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer’s purpose. Less effective responses tried to explain the selected language in the same or similar words as the language choice – ‘marketing magicians’ was often explained as ‘the marketing department working their magic’, for example.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to find a reasonable number of points in part **(a)**. Candidates do not need to use their own words in this first part of the question but should use short, precisely focused notes rather than whole sentences. They should also however avoid writing just single words, as in doing so they may miss the crucial detail of a point and/or fail to address the focus of the question. Similarly, where candidates copy chunks of the passage, this cannot be rewarded as secure evidence of selection. The majority of candidates were aware of the need to use their own words in **Question 3(b)**, and attempted to summarise the ideas. However, candidates must be careful that when rewording ideas they do not alter the meaning to make the summary factually inaccurate. Candidates are not expected to change key words and terms in **Question 3(b)**, but should not lift whole phrase and sentences from the passage. There were some examples of responses that were entirely copied from the passage, providing insufficient evidence of skills for Band 5. Most lengthy responses were due to inclusion of unnecessary material (including ideas from outside the passage), indiscriminate copying of the text, and/or repetition.

On this Reading paper 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 and avoid using lifted material from the passages. Most responses were written in an appropriate register, but some Writing marks were affected by awkward expression or limited style, over-reliance on the language of the passages, or structural weakness and incoherence. Candidates needed to ensure that they paid attention to the length guidelines for their response to **Question 3(b)** where very lengthy answers lacking concision cannot score highly for Writing.

In a paper testing skills of selection and modification candidates should aim to plan their responses before writing; effective planning ensures that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage, and that there is a coherent and logical structure to each response. There needs to be a sharp focus on the wording of the questions and a commitment to read back through responses to edit and correct those errors which affect meaning.

Question 1

Following his successful presentation, Harrold is offered a specialist sales and managerial position as 'Birdbrain' in the Birdland section of the company's brand new megastore. The megastore will replace all three existing local stores which will close next month. Staff not leaving the company will remain on full pay until the new store opens in six months' time.

Unsure if he should accept, Harrold writes a letter to a friend.

Write Harrold's letter to his friend.

In your letter you should:

- **describe your feelings about the various events at home over the past few months**
- **explain recent changes at work and the factors you are weighing up regarding the proposed position**
- **discuss the options you are now considering**

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.

**Begin your letter, 'Dear friend,
I have had quite a bit to think about recently...'**

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing.

Stronger responses to this question selected and condensed the events in the passage, modifying the ideas to create a suitable style for a letter to a friend, and a highly convincing voice for Harrold. They expressed his frustration with the modernisation of his beloved pet shop, his concern about Beryl's disappearance and eventual relief at her return and his thoughts about the difficult decision of whether to accept the new job in the megastore. They were able to sustain the use of supporting detail throughout the response, firmly tethering any development to details in the passage.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to retrieve and use relevant material from the passage about Harrold's rather sad and empty home-life, his feelings about Beryl's disappearance and her eventual return. The second bullet allowed candidates to modify ideas from the passage to turn Harrold's observations about changes to the pet shop and the presentations for new roles into an exploration of his feelings and attitudes about what he is being forced to endure. The best responses firmly linked their ideas for the third bullet to details in the passage, but developed them by exploring Harrold's views about whether he may be able to find some happiness and job satisfaction in his new role. They looked at his love of birds and the expertise shown in his presentation, which was appreciated by those watching. They also discussed whether Harrold might be better focusing on improving his home life by seeking another job or taking some time off work to focus on Beryl. Here they considered the youth and exuberance of the other staff and whether he would fit in, as well as his awareness that his life may need to change.

A feature of better responses was even attention paid to the three bullet points with clear modification and development of the ideas remaining firmly tethered to the passage. As this was an informal letter to a friend, stronger responses tended to be warm and honest, developing Harrold's rather wry sense of humour and exploring his genuine love of animals which he feels is threatened by the corporate approach of the new company. Middle-range responses made reasonable use of the passage, with some attempt at own words, but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas in the passage, and to present them in the same order as in the passage, often using some of the same words. A noticeable feature of such responses was in the approach to the first bullet point where the early part of the letter would focus on Beryl's disappearance then mention her return right at the end, rather than dealing with his experiences with Beryl in hindsight. This sometimes led to a rather limited response as the letter became a narrative account of Harrold's observations in the passage.

The second bullet posed few challenges, and most candidates were able to select a number of ideas from the passage to convey Harrold's views about the changes being made to the pet shop. Most cited the new approach to marketing with childish stickers and posters, as well as the speakers playing animal songs and promotions on loop. Fewer candidates focused on the presentations as part of the reapplication procedure, though some did mention Harrold's new role through lifting the phrasing from the question. Weaker responses often did not show awareness that Harrold had already re-applied for his job and instead asked the friend's advice over whether he should do so.

In the third bullet most candidates tethered their suggestions to clues in the passage, but some listed them quite briefly rather than using opportunities for development. Many simply asked the friend whether they should accept or re-apply for the job, without considering Harrold's thoughts or views at all.

The vast majority of candidates addressed all three bullets, although some struggled to find a range of ideas for the first bullet point, or even mention Beryl at all. There was some evidence of misreading in the first bullet: for example suggesting that Beryl was a colleague in the shop. Most answers demonstrated some familiarity with the style of an informal letter, but other responses simply took the form of an unselective narrative retelling of Harrold's experiences. Such responses lacked a sense of purpose. Some careless reading was evident in confusion about who Beryl was, interpreting Harrold's 'newly empty flat' as a new property he had recently moved to, or uncertainty about the 'animated' presentations, but generally there were few significant misreadings of the passage.

The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short. They offered a very general view of the situation but few ideas and details in response to the bullet points. Some only addressed the second bullet point. A few responses made very slight references to the passage, instead inventing details about Harrold's life, for example speculating at length about a failed marriage, or noisy and violent neighbours disturbing his home-life.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to write an effective letter to a friend. The better written responses adopted a warm and confiding tone, focusing on specific concerns and making clear Harrold feelings of frustration with the changes at work, and his concerns about his future. Many captured the idea that Harrold feels at a turning point in his life and stressed his determination to make things better for himself. More mixed responses didn't focus enough on Harrold's feelings. Less successful responses were rather narrative, or disorganised, and often lifted from the passage.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- ensure that you adopt the correct voice by reading the question carefully
- think carefully about audience and purpose
- answer all parts of the question, covering each of the three bullet points in reasonable detail
- answer in your **own words** and adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response written in the **required style**
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- select the most appropriate ideas from the passage
- develop and modify some of the ideas relevantly
- use relevant details from the passage to demonstrate close reading.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the pet shop and Harrold in paragraph 2, beginning ‘Pet shops had changed...’
- (b) people and presentations in paragraph 8, beginning ‘Increasingly animated presentations...’.

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.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

Responses in **Question 2** need to identify relevant examples of language for discussion and provide sufficiently focused and clear analysis of these to evidence understanding of how the writer was using language in each case. The majority of candidates found this question the most demanding of the three, as it requires a wide vocabulary, close reading, and an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They selected carefully, including images, put the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able, for example, to explain the speed of change and the complete transformation of the pet shop in ‘morphed’ and the suggestion of casting a spell within a ‘marketing magicians’. A few candidates picked up on the humour of ‘Lisa-the LIZARD-lady’ and ‘scaling great heights’ and the sense that Lisa’s childish exuberance is rather irritating for Harrold. Many candidates were very secure on meanings and could explain words such as ‘expertly’, ‘reminiscent’, ‘animated’ ‘adorned’ and ‘loud’, and were able to gain marks in Band 3 for these if offered throughout the response. Some effects were explained very well; many candidates could comment on the Harrold’s pain in ‘excruciating batch’ or the sense of feeling trapped implied in ‘still captive’. There was some very good analysis of ‘stickers splatter-gunned’ conveying the messy and disorganised approach to the arrangements of the marketing materials. The best responses considered meaning and effects throughout the response. The weakest responses had very few language choices, or offered few explanations beyond the very general.

Less successful responses sometimes adopted a ‘technique spotting’ approach by identifying literary techniques. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response. Some candidates simply repeated the words of the original choice in the explanation – “mild surprise” means that he was surprised’, for example. These less successful responses often took the form of a commentary on the entire paragraph for each half of the question, containing some relevant choices and some brief explanation of them. Some candidates offered single word choices only, not always selecting the most appropriate words, for example, offering ‘expertly’ instead of ‘expertly stroking and soothing’. Occasionally candidates offered an extremely sparse number of choices or simply lifted whole sections of the paragraph and offered a general comment. These responses sometimes offered insufficient evidence of understanding for Band 5.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- focus on the question carefully to ensure that all your choices are relevant
- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first
- do not write out whole sentences, but also do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices – it makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- 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 empty comments such as comments praising the writer for good use of language or using lots of similes and metaphors
- if you are unsure about effects, try to begin by giving a meaning, in context, for each of your choices

- to explain effects, think of how the reader's understanding is enhanced by the use of language when reading the word or phrase, because of its connotations and associations.
- include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them.

Question 3

According to Passage B, what are the arguments some people offer for not keeping parrots as pets and how do responsible owners of pet parrots ensure the well-being of their birds?

To address the task successfully, candidates needed to first identify points that were potentially relevant to the question, then select 15 distinct clear ideas and list them in part a – one per numbered line. 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, but copying out chunks of the passage is to be avoided as it can blur evidence of understanding and deny the mark.

Answers, though in note form, needed to be sufficiently clear and focused to make the point clearly. For example, ‘parrots need cleaning’ alone did not capture the idea that it is their cage that needs to be kept clean, or ‘committed owners’ did not capture the idea of long-term commitment needed. The question had two strands: the reasons offered for not keeping parrots as pets AND what responsible owners do to ensure their birds’ well-being, and the best responses organised their points to cover both strands efficiently. In 3(a) there was some repetition of similar points – learning through observing birds *and* learning through talking to other owners, for example, or offering dietary supplements *and* ensuring that they have a diet close to the one they would get in the wild. 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.

In **Question 3 (a)** almost all candidates had understood the need to identify just 15 answers and that points added after the 15 could 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. Most candidates were able to identify at least seven points from the passage. Better, more focused, answers typically scored two thirds or more of the available content marks.

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 majority of candidates demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary in **Question 3b**, with very few examples of wholesale copying though occasionally some added in further speculation and detail, resulting in less concise answers. Candidates are not expected to find their own words for each phrase (‘malnutrition’ or ‘microchips’, for example), but should write their response in their own sentences to avoid wholesale copying of the passage. The most successful responses used the notes from 3a, re-ordering and regrouping the relevant information with a clear focus on the question. 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 introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated 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 and that there are no repetitions or very similar points
- 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 from the passage that answers the question
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own written expression in **3(b)** although you do not need to change key words
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** in addition to the 15 required as they will not be marked
- if using a word-processor, number your points for **Question 3(a)** to ensure you offer 15
- pay attention to the guidance for length in **3(b)**.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

Paper 0522/03
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 most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were relatively few very brief scripts.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the ideas addressed in the passage and usually some attention paid to the style and format of a letter. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words 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. Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response. Sometimes, insufficient use was made of the reading material and occasionally there was only a tenuous grasp of the task itself. The implied formality of expression between the writer and the headteacher was sometimes missed and some candidates misread the task and wrote as a teacher or as the presenter which adversely affected their ability to demonstrate audience awareness. In weaker responses, there was often some general commentary on school uniform, with one or two points from the passage addressed but opportunities to discuss, weigh up and evaluate the ideas in the passage were missed.

Better responses paid attention to the audience and style required for a letter to a Headteacher. These were persuasive in purpose, using the passage to create and structure arguments with some sense of audience and rhetoric. Some in the middle range of marks showed an insecure register or were overly colloquial in style and vocabulary. In other weaker responses, valedictions were frequently forgotten - a feature symptomatic of an insecure grasp of audience and purpose, and at this level the points made about the radio programme followed the sequence of the passage with less selection and reordering to create an argument.

In the compositions, the descriptive and narrative genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers, although descriptive questions were generally more popular at all levels of achievement. 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. Most responses to the first descriptive question about standing at the top of the highest building for many miles were well-organised and paragraphed and made use of the implied structure in the question, with a section about what was seen and heard below and then a description of the scene around. As is usually the case, these were better when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere specific to the particular place described. There were some engaging descriptions of scenery in responses to the second question, and the position on the river bank was often used as a prompt to describe a wider scene. Weaker responses here tended to be more narrative than descriptive with limited descriptive detail.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were 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. In some instances, there was limited narrative progression, even where the characterisation was quite effective. Stories involving an argument were often moving, personal and effective. The second narrative question elicited a wide range of responses with varying content and Examiners awarded marks across the range here. Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. Descriptive writing was usually but not always focused on detail and evoking atmosphere. 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 here.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1. Directed Writing

Question 1

Imagine you are a pupil in a school where a decision has been made either to abolish or to introduce compulsory school uniform.

You have been invited by the headteacher to write a letter to him/her, giving your views and advice on the topic.

In your letter you should:

- **select the relevant arguments in the transcript to support your views**
- **develop and evaluate those arguments to make a convincing case about whether school uniform should be abolished or introduced in your school.**

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

Begin your letter, 'Dear Headteacher... '.

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.

Higher marks were awarded where there was some challenge and discussion of the points made in the passage, rather than a straightforward listing of the points made in the passage. Where the letter was also both accurate and appropriate in style, often with a consistent sense of audience and a polished style, Examiners could award very high marks indeed. Better responses here read between the lines and pointed out the flaws in the presenter's arguments.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some listing the advantages and disadvantages of adopting school uniform. These details were an accurate reflection of the ideas in the passage but there was limited comment on or examination of them.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the ideas presented about compulsory school uniform although many at this level did not adopt a consistent stance, as required by the task to write to the headteacher of a school where a decision had been made **either** to abolish **or** to introduce compulsory school uniform. A thin use of detail, or weaknesses in organising ideas coherently, was characteristic at this level.

Marks for reading

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage, drawing inferences and making judgements about whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages in this particular case. Responses placed in higher Bands had read the question carefully and realised a decision had already been made about abolishing or introducing school uniform. Perceptive responses sometimes compared the different points of view which affected their decision and some explored the contradictions in the presenter's argument and picked out ideas about the meaning of individualism and identity, exploring how it extends beyond school uniforms. Other responses at this level argued convincingly that other priorities, such as the quality of the education in the school, were more pressing and relevant than uniform; some were able to see that the wearing of uniform would not end bullying and provided reasons why; some also connected this with the rich/poor divide and illustrated how this could not be fully negated simply by the wearing of uniform. Responses frequently voiced balanced opinions on how people should be judged as a development of this idea.

Examiners awarded marks in the middle Band where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above. Some responses used the bullet points as a structure which meant that there wasn't a consistently evaluative approach. At this level, there was little direct lifting and the most common example being 'clean, comfortable and covered up' which seemed to strike a chord with a wide range of candidates. Mostly, when this was used it was seen in context but there were some candidates who lifted it and used it to justify arguments with very little connection with the source. There were many instances where responses simply transferred points from the passage, rather than evaluating why abolishing or adopting a uniform policy would be a good idea.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. A number of responses at this level wrote anecdotally about their own experiences of wearing uniform which affected their mark as there was little use of the reading material. Some were hampered by a misreading of the task and did not adopt an **either/or** position of whether school uniform was going to be made compulsory or not.

Where a mark of 4 was awarded, some firmer links with the passage were needed, whereas 3 was generally given for very thin or brief responses in which such misreadings appeared. Marks below 3 were rarely given but in these cases the response was often a general commentary on the confines of school with little connection to the passage.

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 formal but apt tone was required for a letter of this kind and most responses were written in an appropriate register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some high scoring responses combined a respectful but challenging tone.

In the middle range, the style was often appropriate although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience showing some insecure understanding of the appropriate style for the task.

Weaker responses sometimes did not address the right recipient or there was little adaptation of the style and tone of the passage for a different audience and purpose. Valedictions were often missed at this level.

Structure

Responses awarded high marks for writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument 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 the advantages and disadvantages of school uniform.

Responses given Band 2 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the passage but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed to meet the demands of the task. 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 provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passage whereas higher Band 3 responses usually organised and re-sequenced ideas more selectively.

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 points in the passage but without the re-ordering of them which was needed to give the letter a sense of purpose and audience. These responses showed a lack of awareness of the conventional structure of a letter.

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 were also fluent and virtually free of error.

Responses given Band 2 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, a range of quite basic errors was made which marred the overall impression given. The nature and focus of the task exposed many simple grammatical errors, such as the very frequent use of 'could of' and 'would of' and the confusion of 'your' with 'you're'. The use of capital letters where they were not needed, even where there was otherwise general accuracy in the writing, was also noted by Examiners. 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 and there were frequent errors with homophones and grammar errors such as 'you was' and 'we was'. These errors, particularly in grammatical agreement, created a jarring note sometimes in responses which were otherwise accurate and appropriate in style.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by a 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 and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Persistent 'comma-splicing' was perhaps the most common reason Examiners were unable to award clear, coherent responses marks in Band 3. Some whole paragraphs were actually strings of simple sentences with commas rather than full stops to separate them.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- **Be prepared to criticise or question the ideas in the passage.**
- **Do not drift from using the material in the passage.**
- **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 would expect.**
- **Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, missing or wrongly used capital letters, weaknesses in grammar or key words mis-spelt.**

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

2 Imagine you are standing at the top of the highest building for many miles around. Describe what you see and hear below you, and the scene around you at the top.

OR

3 Describe the scene from your position on the bank of a river.

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range although the first question was chosen more often. In the first task, there were some strongly evocative descriptions of scenes and setting of all types, along with some exploration of thoughts and feelings about life in general. In the second question, some candidates found the location of a river bank quite difficult. Some responses became narratives or contained limited descriptive detail or only rather mundane details.

The nature of the first descriptive task meant that most responses were clearly structured as the different scenes from the top of the building were described.

Some successful responses contrasted the city with the surrounding countryside or mountains. A number of descriptions at this level focused on the sky and the shifting light of day and night and often these more successful responses were characterised by the ability to evoke a sense of the persona's thoughts and feelings as they witnessed the scene below them. One successful response began with a vision of distant panoramic beauty juxtaposed with a battle-scarred city. Risks were sometimes taken in the landscape described; a view over mountains and volcanoes, for example, was successful despite not being particularly likely.

Middle Band responses were characterised by a lack of variety in terms of what could be seen or heard; there was a significant number of references to people looking like 'ants' and the sound of traffic. Occasional imagery was used but it was often clichéd rather than exploratory.

There was some tendency towards narrative; a number of candidates wrote about accident or crime scenes that they witnessed from their position. Some candidates employed a narrative opening in terms of climbing to the top of the tower but then moved on to write about the scene, which meant they were still able to satisfactorily address the requirements of the task.

Weaker responses were characterised by a tendency to list details rather than effectively develop them which produced brief and limited responses.

The second question was the least popular of the composition tasks.

Responses to this task included a focus on the trees, the water and the animals, as well as holiday makers. Most of these compositions consisted of a gentle, lazy day at the river. Some successful responses showed effective contrasts, such as the movement of the water hitting rocks and wildlife suddenly disturbing the tranquillity. Sometimes successful responses used the water as a central metaphor that spread out beyond the river. One memorable response had the writer swept away into river but still focused on describing the river bank from this perspective with some success.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus, and where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were listed rather than described. At this level, responses mostly focused on the actions of the characters in the scene and many weaker responses were characterised by ordinary details, for example ducks swimming, boats passing and these were not effectively developed.

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 were employed to create specific effects and to bring the scene or character alive or the reader. 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 your focus on details.**
- **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

4 Write a story entitled, ‘The Argument’.

OR

5 Write a story which involves breaking a rule.

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range although the first question was more often chosen.

Better responses often appeared to be rooted in personal experience of arguments overheard within the home. These responses incorporated a moral lesson showing subtlety and sensitivity. There were some moving accounts of arguments culminating in the divorce of the narrator’s parents which were evidently based on personal experience. Responses at this level were often characterised by a less literal interpretation of the task. There were some thought provoking and convincing narratives in this range, often with a strong sense of audience. In these better responses, there was evidence of careful crafting; use of flashback and the development of events were convincing.

Middle range narratives were characteristically straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases, although the characterisation and setting were effective and credible, these responses overall lacked narrative progression and drive. Responses in this range, whilst often more predictable, were shaped with a sense of a conciliation and/or a lesson learned.

Weaker responses were often recounts of personal experience which meant that candidates failed to use a range of narrative features such as scene setting or characterisation. Some responses at this level were based on marital disagreements which were very ordinary in terms of narrative development. Other weaker responses started realistically but then became an unconvincing account of physical fighting or killings; these responses often relied too heavily on dialogue without narration and the plotlines were simple, linear accounts with less awareness of the needs of the reader shown.

For the second narrative question, many responses focused on breaking school rules, some transposing the theme of **Question 1** and writing about contravening school uniform rules. Another common theme was breaking the law; some responses used a fantasy or adventure genre as the back drop to their story although some sort of crime or misdemeanour was central to the plot.

The best responses were typified by a more complex structure with some more mixed consequences from the particular brand of rule breaking dealt with. The few higher Band responses were convincing in terms of their interpretation of what ‘breaking a rule’ might be. Taking a more abstract approach enabled candidates to write with originality and sustain the interest of the reader. Occasionally better responses were characterised by acknowledging the positive outcome of breaking a rule.

Middle Band and weaker responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived endings or by less control over the chronology. Middle Band responses typically had a moral lesson to be learned and a more predictable shape as a result.

Responses given marks in Band 4 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while Band 5 marks usually reflected very brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. Lower Band responses typically struggled to articulate the rule breaking clearly; some narratives became a series of events which did not really cohere and some scenarios lacked credibility and in a few cases there was little sequencing or clarity overall. A few lower Band responses focused on the idea of breaking the rule about visiting an abandoned building – clearly using ideas from a composition task on a past paper. These often became unconvincing accounts involving haunted houses and the death or lucky escape of those who had entered the establishment.

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. Punctuation within sentences, in dialogue and for effect was characteristic of responses in the higher Bands and where coupled with a sophisticated palette of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. For 10 and above, a degree of fluency was needed as well as a clarity and accuracy of style, although for 10 there was not the range and sophistication of style and vocabulary.

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 or grammar. 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 mis-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. Where there were still errors but the style had more ambition and variety, a mark of 9 was awarded. 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.**
- **Think about how to create tension and a climax in your story.**
- **Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.**
- **Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.**

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0522/04
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 original 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;
- proofread their work carefully, avoiding typing errors and errors caused by the inaccurate use of the spell check.

General comments

Candidates for 0522 were allowed to enter for the final time only as re-sit candidates. Most of these candidates had a whole year to improve their standard and, from some Centres, there was a noticeable step forward in the maturity of the content of the writing. There were some very large entries from Sixth form colleges and further education establishments, and much of the marking was accurate with sound rank orders. There were some good examples of careful internal moderation and standardisation during the course. The mark ranges were often realistic, covering the low forties to the middle twenties. Forms were generally fully completed and marks were carefully transferred to the submitted mark forms.

There were few major issues in the completion of coursework. However, there were a number of difficulties in the setting of texts for Assignment 3 and in the understanding of how candidates should respond to what was intended as a test of reading.

Good practice:

In general the requirements of the syllabus were carefully carried out.

The best coursework involved the setting of assignments that were original and which involved candidates in the desire to argue at some length and with personal conviction. Tasks set for Assignment 2 were those that elicited imaginative responses that never lost sight of being written for a reader who needed to be engaged in both content and expression.

In most cases it was better that candidates invented their own topics and titles rather than being given a set of what sometimes resembled examination questions.

An increasing number of drafts bore evidence of the candidates' own revisions, editing and corrections. This illustrated a concerned involvement in the process of writing and was of high educational value.

Many teachers annotated final versions of assignments in detail and also noted errors in the writing. They correctly gave general advice at the ends of the drafts.

Less good practice:

The same tasks were sometimes set to large numbers of candidates who responded with similar content and little personal engagement. It was likely that some candidates would have been at a disadvantage by being set a task that did not concern them greatly. In Assignment 1, writing on social media was rarely original and in Assignment 2 the frequent setting of 'scary stories' produced too many simple and barely credible narratives that followed similar lines.

Some folders bore little evidence of teacher assessment and in some cases there were no obvious differences between the drafts and the final versions of assignments. Moderators need to understand how marks have been awarded. The drafting process is intended to support the process of preparing the best possible version of a piece of writing.

Task setting

Some Centres gave their candidates as much choice as possible in their assignments. This was most apparent in Assignment 1 where candidates were at an advantage if they tackled issues that really concerned them or about which they were enthusiastic. Where the Centre set one or a limited number of topics, the result was often competent but not a great deal more. The same was true of Assignment 2 where several Centres told their candidates to write 'scary stories', which resulted in large numbers of similar tales of haunted houses and fairgrounds, leading to unconvincing endings. For Assignment 3 it was sometimes acceptable for all candidates in a set or a Centre to tackle the same text for reading because teachers could ensure an appropriate standard of difficulty.

A number of candidates attempted tasks that were not challenging enough for the award of high marks. An example of such a task was a rant against people who eat with their mouths open. While the writing was stylistically witty, the quality and standard of the argument was significantly lower than that of a well-argued examination of, for example, home schooling.

Most candidates wrote three contrasting assignments which were different in genre and register. However, there were rare cases where the first assignment was closely related to a reading text and there was no real difference between it and the response to Assignment 3. Similarly, some candidates addressed the issue raised by the text in Assignment 3, so that their responses resembled those of Assignment 1 too closely. Assignment 3 is meant to be primarily an exercise in evaluation and analysis. Where the contrasts in the three assignments were marked, this contributed to the final, overall mark for writing.

There were a number of cases where it was apparent that candidates had been given unfair guidance as to what to write. This was evident in Assignment 3 where sometimes the selection of points from the texts and the order in which they were presented was the same or very similar. In rarer cases the responses to the points were also similar and had apparently come from the candidates' teacher. This limited the marks that could be awarded for reading. The best candidates were those who thought for themselves and reacted personally and originally to the text.

Assessment of coursework

The Moderators were encouraged by the number of assessors who noticed the change in the numbering of the mark bands, and there was ample proof that the mark scheme was carefully and fully used. On many occasions teachers gave a summary list, showing outcomes in relation to the writing objectives, at the end of each assignment. Fewer assessments were made on the less reliable evidence of marginal comments. This was less common in the award of the reading mark where the mark scheme was often referred to in less detail.

Writing

The main problem in the assessment of writing was that there was too much trading of strands in each mark band: there was too much emphasis on content, structure and register and not enough on style and accuracy. Candidates whose range of vocabulary was comparatively limited were sometimes over rewarded. The most frequent problem was of sentence construction. There were candidates who wrote almost entirely in brief, simple sentences. Some hid the fact by using commas instead of full stops between sentences while others used no punctuation at all. Others used slightly more complex forms, but most of their sentences were of similar length and were generally pairs of joined sentences. The best candidates were those who used vocabulary with assurance and who joined their sentences in a variety of patterns, so that the effect was of fluency in conveying meaning.

It was of some concern when comments at the ends of assignments stated that SPAG was generally correct even when several errors were made. There were many occasions where sentence separation errors were not annotated and had apparently not been taken into consideration.

A number of candidates wrote very long sentences, with little control over the structure. Where this happened, the sense of the sentence was often lost and meaning became confused.

The use of the spell check was often inaccurate and underlined the importance of proofreading. This was often not carried out, although some candidates clearly took care in checking their first proofs. The following are given as examples of avoidable errors:

Your faulty, floored and fictitious article...
It was a rainy day due to the condescension...
You must not let self-coincidence get in the way...

The most common reason for adjusting the writing marks concerned style and accuracy. An addition was made to a Centre's marks where teachers had been very exacting about candidates' use of language and the presence of errors, but usually the adjustment was lower. In the award of a mark band it was essential that all strands met the description. Where there was a discrepancy the mark awarded should have been significantly lower in the band.

Assessment of reading

Too many candidates were mistakenly awarded marks in the top band. At this high level it is important that the text set is of a significant reading standard and that candidates are able to demonstrate an understanding of the text and the writer's attitude as a whole. Some overview is needed as well as the evaluation of a number of ideas and opinions of some depth selected from the text. A number of marks given in the top band were more appropriate as a mark of eight.

Conversely, there were some excellent responses where candidates gave an overview and developed a structured argument in which ideas and opinions from the text were effectively assimilated.

Some of the marks given as seven were also too lenient. This was due to the quality of the responses given to the selected ideas and opinions from the texts. There was no justification for a mark above six for candidates who did little more than to express agreement or disagreement with the writer.

Candidates who attacked the writer instead of evaluating ideas and opinions from the text received little credit.

Writing parallel arguments that bore only general relation to the text, or addressing the issue rather than the text, received little credit for reading although they might be marked highly for writing.

It is important to remember that this is a test of reading as well as of writing, and that candidates are required to demonstrate understanding at some depth and to respond to what the writer has put forward.

Administration by Centres

Moderators complimented Centres on their filling in of forms and presentation of the folders. Most Centres enclosed the CASF(WMS) form and indicated which of their candidates were included in the sample. The CASF was required for all entered candidates, and all changes to the marks at internal moderation should

have been shown in the right hand column. This was not always the case and sometimes Moderators had to search for evidence of internal moderation in the folders themselves.

There were few examples where the text(s) used for Assignment 3 was missing from the folders. It was useful for each candidate to have a copy which showed which parts had been selected for evaluation in the response.

One draft per folder was almost always enclosed. It was not necessary for there to be a draft of all three assignments.

Generally, the standard of annotation on final drafts was high except that it was rare for all errors to be indicated; some scripts bore no such indication at all. There were some Centres that did not annotate their work, so that it was impossible for the Moderator to understand how marks had been awarded.

Folders were normally very well presented, but Centres are asked to ensure that the work is firmly fixed together, using treasury tags or equivalent. Folders are frequently moderated more than once and are handled by several people, so that loose papers may easily go missing. Centres are asked not to enclose folders in plastic covers because of the extra time required to handle the work.

Drafts

The draft/redraft process gives the candidate an opportunity to improve work through editing (eg words and phrases), revising (eg sections) and correcting. Teachers should offer general advice about how to improve written at the end of the draft.

Some candidates used drafting process well, revising sections, making corrections and editing language. There were still some cases where teachers made specific corrections on drafts. It was in order to make general comments to the candidates about searching for errors and correcting them, but it is strictly forbidden to do the work for them.

Internal moderation

Centres are reminded that the purpose of internal moderation is to bring the work of different sets into line with each other. Enough folders from each set need to be scrutinised to ensure that it has as a whole, or in part, not been leniently or severely marked. The marks of the set should be scaled accordingly so that the rank order of all candidates in the Centre is sound. All changes should appear in the right hand column of the CASF form.

Comments on specific tasks

Assignment 1

This assignment was generally well done. There was a very wide range of topics and many of these were well argued with a good deal of personal conviction, whether as speeches or as formal arguments.

Some of the work was extremely long and Centres are advised against this unless the candidates are able to sustain their arguments effectively over the length. Sometimes the argument was less strong near the end, paragraphs became noticeably shorter, and there was a tendency to repetition. Sometimes the quality of the style was better near the beginning and less fluent and accurate nearer the end.

Some of the research essays lacked personal conviction. Candidates using a number of sources appeared to have effectively gathered their material and reconstructed it into a new form. There were some cases where whole sections of a text were copied, and this was a malpractice.

Some Centres still offered writing under the generic title 'Don't get me started'. While some topics worked well because they were properly structured and the content was appropriate, others offered little challenge, the ranting style was ineffective, and there was a tendency to repetition. Topics such as 'Buses', 'Dog walkers', 'People who suddenly stop walking', and 'Spots' were unlikely to offer suitable challenge.

One Centre offered some excellent book reviews of *The Great Gatsby*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Ethan Frome*, which examined themes in some depth as well as characters. These were much more effective than film reviews which were often quite superficial and not very well structured.

Some of the topics were school based, and no less effective for that. Others explored a good range of important issues. Some of the topics were as follows:

Human rights
Using CCTV
University Fees
The Santa Claus myth
The dark side of selfies
Is sugar the new cocaine?
Single sex or coeducational schools?
Safety in Formula 1
No homework for post-16
Are spirits real?

Assignment 2

There were some good accounts of personal experiences which blended original and engaging detail with credible and appropriate emotional responses. The best of these avoided the ordinary and shed new light on the type of experiences that are common to all. Topics even included readable accounts of football matches.

Stories of visits to exciting and unusual places all over the world were also done well. Candidates were careful in their selection of details and events that would interest the reader. They were often well structured.

Fiction varied in its effectiveness. Simply instructing candidate to write a story did not usually work. Where candidates had experience of reading and studying short stories and understanding how they are structured, results were often excellent and in one or two cases, outstanding. There were many good endings and devices such as drip feeding of information, double narrators, and time lapses were often used. The best stories were the products of candidates' own imagination, but sometimes a Centre would offer guidance that was effective. One outstanding example was simply to write a story that was based on a conversation between two people. Candidates responded imaginatively in their choice of who were conversing and the reason for the encounter, and the result was entertaining and intriguing fiction.

There were very few good examples of what was variously set as a spooky story or a haunted house. These, and the common story of the fairground at night that suddenly came to life, were stereotypical, following the same inevitable course with similar details. They often degenerated into incredible narratives about dead bodies, people dressed as clowns, and zombies. This genre originated a few years ago as a gothic story and was often related to the study of real examples. However, it has become watered down and most of the examples were unconvincing and on the immature side.

There were a large number of First World War stories and accounts of 9/11, some of which were done quite well. However, it was difficult for many candidates to write convincingly on topics that were part of history and thankfully clearly outside their own direct experience.

There were a large number of descriptions, commonly of parks, forest clearings, beaches, waiting rooms and storms. While these were often competent and usually quite well structured (for example, covering morning, noon and night), they were sometimes a little unoriginal in their presentation of detail and indeed in the topic itself. The best were those that used language appropriately and effectively. Some candidates attempted to use language that was too complex and poetic, so that the picture in the reader's mind was often crowded out by the display of words.

Whatever the nature of the task or the genre, this assignment succeeded insofar as the reader felt that what was being described or recounted was real.

Some excellent work was written in response to:

A fresh start
What was that noise?
Climbing Devil's Tower
I don't want to see you...
A teen pregnancy diary
Station clock (the clock 'writes' the description)
Scuba diver
The cartographer
The beloved harmonica
My grandmother's silk dress

Assignment 3

Some of the problems of the assessment of reading have already been described. The selection of an appropriate text is not easy. It needs to be one that can be argued with at least partially. Candidates did best either with texts they disagreed with or partially agreed. The writer's attitude towards the topic needed to be clearly argued and the text need to be of the right difficulty.

For 0522 there was still the legacy of some texts that were not very testing. The ideas and opinions in these texts were straightforward and it was difficult for candidates to make a great deal out of it. Consequently, candidates were driven back to address the topic and this makes it difficult for them to access the higher mark bands. Where articles were blatant and extreme, candidates were only able to make obvious evaluations and tended to attack the writer rather than evaluate the text. Many of the articles that were used were ones that appear time and time again, and there was not enough originality in selecting what was appropriate or stimulating.

Appropriate topics dealt with by the texts included:

Climate change deniers

Your favourite drink can ruin your body (about a well-known drink said to be able to melt a dead mouse!)

Produce waste

Are students lazy?

Two days without a smart phone

Fracking

Gender equality

Self-driving cars

Wearing a poppy (Fifa rules)

The Calais crisis

A word of warning: articles like the favourite drink above are attractive because they are very funny, but candidates commonly do not see the humour, so such texts should be set with care.

Final comments

As usual, on many occasions the standard of work was very high and Moderators enjoyed the originality of thought and the interest of the work. The standard of assessment varied at times, but Centres interpreted the syllabus well and much of the work was refreshing and interesting.

It is important to consider how coursework can be of great educational value and not just to be a pathway to an examination result. Much of the work seen by Moderators demonstrated this educational value.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0522/05
Speaking and Listening

Key messages

Administration – General Points

- Cambridge requires a centre to provide **three different items** in the package sent to the Moderator: a **recorded sample** on CD, DVD or USB drive, the **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered and a **copy of the marks** that have already been sent to Cambridge. Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a Centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all 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, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.
- Centres are asked to use **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, such as mp3, wav and wma. The AUP file type is not universal, and should not be used. Please collate recordings onto either one CD, DVD or USB drive, unless the cohort's size prevents this.
- Where total marks for a candidate have been altered because of internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks has been changed.
- Where candidates have been entered but fail to take the test they should be recorded as 'absent' and not awarded a mark of zero. A mark of zero should only be awarded to a candidate who is present for the test but whose contribution does not meet the required standard to be awarded a mark when assessed against the marking grids.

Most Centres were conversant with the required procedures and most tests were carried out professionally and effectively.

Where there were issues, the following applies:

- Centres should recognise at the planning stage which of Components 5 or 6 the cohort is to be entered for. These two distinct paths are not interchangeable later in the process. Code errors, where candidates undertake one component but are entered for the other, remain a serious issue for a small but significant number of Centres. In such cases, the moderation process is problematic and inevitably leads to delays.
- The Centre does not choose which recordings to send. Recordings **for every candidate in the entered cohort** should be sent as part of the sample.
- The examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. This must include the date on which the recording is made to confirm the test has been carried out within the specified window. **Each candidate's test must begin with this introduction.** It is not acceptable for one generic introduction covering the whole of the centre's cohort to be included with the sample recordings.
- Please check the recordings at regular intervals during the testing process to ensure their quality. Please also check the CD, DVD or USB before despatching to Cambridge. Faulty recordings continue to delay the process of moderating a small minority of Centres.

Conduct of the test

Generally, there are now far fewer problems with how the tests are conducted but there remain some issues that do affect candidates' performance.

When considering candidates' marks, the importance of **timings** must be appreciated.

- **Part 1 should be a minimum of three minutes.** Please note this does not include the examiner's introduction. Where a **Part 1** response is short, please consider whether the **assessment criteria can be adequately met** and assess accordingly. It is difficult to see how a response can meet higher level criteria such as 'sound' or 'full and well organised use of content' and 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting significantly less than three minutes.
- Equally, a response which is significantly overlong cannot be regarded as fulfilling the criteria for Band 1. It is in the best interests of the candidate that the examiner steps in to halt any **Part 1** talk that is in danger of exceeding five minutes.
- Given that both speaking and listening are assessed in **Part 2**, it is important that the discussions last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. **In Part 2 a minimum of six minutes of discussion is expected.** It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation is met.

Candidates can take into the test one cue card containing prompt notes. These notes should not be written in full sentences or be read verbatim. A reliance on written material in **Part 1** is counter-productive and only leads to a lack of natural fluency which affects performance.

The use of pre-prepared responses to known questions in **Part 2** is not permitted. When they plan and prepare their responses, candidates are encouraged to consider what questions they may be asked during the discussion but there should be no collusion between the examiner and candidate. Candidates who prepare long and unnatural monologues in response to anticipated questions penalise themselves. The discussions should evolve and to do this an element of spontaneity must be apparent.

The test must only be attempted once in any examination series. Once the test has begun it should not be re-started or interrupted.

It is important that the tests are undertaken within the prescribed test window published by Cambridge for each series. Tests taken outside this window are problematic. Centres are reminded that as part of the examiner's introduction to every individual test undertaken the full date should be quoted.

Accuracy of assessment

In most cases, Centres applied the criteria accurately, appropriately and fairly whilst underpinning this through successful internal moderation procedures. Where there were issues the following applies:

- **Part 1** should last for a minimum of three minutes and a maximum of four minutes. Examiners should not interrupt or halt candidates within this time. Examiners should only interrupt to move the candidates into **Part 2** if they show no signs of reaching a natural conclusion after five minutes.
- One prominent cause of inaccuracy was generosity in the awarding of marks in **Part 2** for short discussions which did not demonstrate the qualities of the higher bands. Where a candidate does not meet the stipulated minimum length of 6 minutes, they are unlikely to have responded fully to questions, and details may be lacking.
- Articulate, confident candidates are best served with topics which lead towards higher level thinking including analysis and reflection rather than those where the content is predominantly factual.
- It is important that the examiners do not dominate the discussions in **Part 2**. Candidates should be allowed to talk and their contribution should be dominant, particularly for those being awarded marks in the higher bands where detailed responses to questions and prompts are expected.

Approaches to Part 1

The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic, had good knowledge of the subject and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses are generally more successful but candidates should avoid an over-reliance on notes or over-rehearsal. Seemingly 'artificial' performances, where natural fluency is missing, do not benefit the candidates. For weaker candidates, as with any other examination, more tuition from Centres in terms of general preparation, technique and confidence is required, prior to the candidates planning their talks independently.

The focus for many candidates was just to get the material delivered, with fewer candidates also thinking about tone and rhetorical devices to support their talks. Often, this involved candidates memorising and over-rehearsing their talks to the detriment of the actual delivery. A sense of audience was lost leading to less engaging performances. The best candidates often had a passion for their topic so the use of tone came more naturally.

Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the tasks generally took the form of an individual presentation. More successful Centres allowed candidates to choose their own topics as opposed to dictating a generic theme. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. To achieve the higher bands it is suggested candidates move from the descriptive to include elements of reflection and analysis.

Some examples of productive **Part 1** topics include:

- A significant moment in my life
- My passion for a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Being a teenager in the twenty-first century
- Cultural change and the issues it raises
- Gaming (where it was well constructed)
- Trap shooting
- Discrimination focusing on a social issue – i.e. disability, gender inequality
- My hero
- Topical events – e.g. afforestation, global currency, feminism, space travel
- Experience of other cultures – moving countries/other education systems compared
- Overcoming challenge
- Extreme sports

Some examples of less successful **Part 1** topics include:

- My Family/Friends/Pets (where there is little substance and no attempt to move beyond the descriptive)
- The Celebrity I Admire (where the talk is purely descriptive and a series of regurgitated facts and rumours)
- Footballer's Wages and Social Media (becoming cliché ridden and repetitive)
- Gaming (where there is limited planning and very little beyond the descriptive)
- Future Plans (where the talk is generic and unfocussed)

Management of Part 2

Most examiners were supportive in their questioning to encourage and to settle nervousness. This helped students to achieve their best. Most examiners conducted the discussions effectively and when faced with reticent candidates they asked pertinent questions which enabled candidates to extend and develop their presentations.

Many examiners showed genuine interest and enthusiasm in the candidates' topics and provided appropriate encouragement. This helped to put candidates at ease and subsequently a more natural, relaxed discussion ensued.

Good discussions gave many opportunities to allow candidates to develop their ideas as fully as they could, providing questions that helped them to explore ideas which demonstrated development of explanation. Some appropriate evidence of sensitivity by the listener was also noted when the topic was personal and potentially upsetting. (It should be noted that candidates should be dissuaded from choosing topics which could cause an intense emotional reaction under test conditions.)

Some candidates were hindered by the listener cutting into a discussion when it may have been more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue. Detailed and developed responses are required if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded for Listening.

One example of a weaker discussion was where both candidate and examiner asked each other a series of questions, with the examiner's answers somewhat dominating the discussion.

Some discussions fell into 'limited' or just 'adequate' because the examiner ran out of questions to push the candidate to develop their ideas, thus denying the candidate further opportunities to demonstrate their ability. **It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure each candidate is given the opportunity to extend their discussion to the advised time of 6 minutes.**

Advice to Centres

- Prepare for this examination as any other – i.e. techniques/research/thought about appropriate topics. Practise methods of presentation and discussion in other situations before preparing for this exam.
- Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through effective discussion and considering the advised timings for both parts of the test. Keep to the time limits in the syllabus to avoid candidates being adversely limited in the accurate application of the mark scheme.
- Follow the instructions on how to present the recordings and documentation efficiently and concisely.
- Please check both documentation and recordings before sending to Cambridge.
- Encourage candidates to choose topics that they know well through personal experience, and are passionate about. Issues and ideas normally work better than factual.
- When conducting the discussions in **Part 2**, examiners should have plenty of questions to ask to push candidates to fill the time for the discussion. Examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and show off what they can do. Examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early, which can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.
- At the top end of the mark scheme, Band 1 responses should be the required lengths and include evidence of higher level thinking skills being applied by the candidates. This requires the examiner in **Part 2** to ask more challenging questions and keep the discussion on task throughout.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0522/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages

Generally, the standard of administration and accuracy of assessment continue to be of a high standard.

Where there are issues, the following guidelines are relevant:

- It is important for a centre to choose **either** Component 5 or 6 **before** planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered. Component 5 is a test taken within a specified window, being suitable for Centres who wish to assess their candidates on one topic, on one chosen date. Component 6 is 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.
- An **Individual Candidate Record Card** is required for each candidate entered. These cards should be treated as 'living' documents that are completed when each task is undertaken. It is permissible for candidates to fill out the title sections themselves but please check the accuracy and amount of detail given. **Specific** information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful. For Task 1 a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful for the Moderator.
- Cambridge requires a centre to provide **four different items** in the 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** that have already been sent to Cambridge and the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** for the candidates included in the sample. Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. 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, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.
- Centres are asked to use **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, such as mp3, wav and wma. The AUP file type is not universal, and should not be used. The **quality** of the recordings should be **checked** before despatching to Cambridge.
- It is helpful if for each candidate, a **separate track** is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.
- The teacher/examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. For paired activities, it would be helpful if **candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing** before beginning the task so the Moderator can clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.
- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the **assessment criteria can be adequately met** if the activity is very short.

General comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge 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 but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is often a useful source for tasks.

Comments on specific tasks

The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful but responses do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing.

Task 1

A wide range of topics were undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. Centres allowing candidates to choose their own topics as opposed to dictating a generic theme is viewed positively. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when these choices are made. More able candidates should be encouraged to choose more exacting and mature topics that extend their abilities to construct a compelling argument within a time frame of approximately 3–4 minutes that includes an element of introspection and reflection.

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

- A significant event in my life
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Why I love a particular text/movie/work of art/etc.
- My passion for
- My favourite place
- Feminism in the twenty-first century
- My hero – who and why

*Some examples of less successful **Task 1** activities include:*

- Should cannabis be legalised?
- Football (Too generic and unfocussed)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (Ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)

Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about or engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. 'Football' remains a popular topic amongst boys but where there is no sense of audience or specific focus there will be little evidence of the skills expected for those wishing to attain a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates rely heavily on description or recitation of facts.

Generally, entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands.

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 four minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed for both candidates, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded.

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

- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as the benefits of modern technology or the use of GM crops
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well
- Planning a special event – either at school or for a more personal function
- The effects of social pressures on teenagers

- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion for one of the celebrities
- Acting as employers discussing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme)

Some examples of less successful Task 2 activities include:

- Should cannabis be legalised?
- Interviews where one of the candidates acts solely as the interviewer (This is limiting for the candidate)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (Ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)

Task 3

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

Some examples of productive Task 3 activities include:

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity
- Planning a celebration or community event

General conclusions

The general standard of assessment by Centres is at or near the correct level. Generally, Centres have become very efficient in the administration of the component and in the choice of topics. Candidates undertaking speaking and listening activities continue to be enthusiastic about the experience and clearly benefit from careful planning and practise.