

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/11
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for Reading, although there were 10 marks available for writing in **Question 2**.

- 1 In responding to all questions, candidates are advised to consider carefully the specific implications of key words within the question or within the phrase under analysis.
- 2 **Question 1(h)** is a 6 mark language question assessing an understanding of the meanings of language choices. In this and similar questions in future papers, it is important to note that each component part of the question requires two separate words in the quotation to be explained (1 mark for each explanation) and that marks will not be awarded to responses that attempt to define a word by using a different grammatical form of the same word.
- 3a **Question 1(i)** is a 6 mark language question assessing an understanding of the effects of language choices. In this and similar questions in future papers, responses should attempt to explain *how* the choice of words conveys the aspect identified in the question (in this case, a sense of excitement). This question does not require a paraphrase of the words chosen as this skill is tested elsewhere in the paper.
- 3b When attempting to explain the effects of the writer's use of language for **Question 1 (i)**, candidates should be aware that merely identifying figures of speech and other literary devices, without a further attempt at explanation, is insufficient for the award of a mark. Similarly, it is expected that answers to this task will attempt to give developed explanations of how an effect is achieved. Answers on the lines of 'this phrase suggests the writer's sense of excitement because it is exciting' are insufficient as convincing explanations.
- 4 An informal or colloquial register was appropriate for the Writing task but responses should also show awareness of the need to demonstrate an ability to write accurately, using standard English, in order to have access to the highest bands of the Mark Scheme.

The above points will be considered in greater detail in the following sections of this report.

General Comments

The passage about a visit to the rainforests of Peru proved to be generally accessible and responses gave clear evidence of positive engagement with it. There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most were of adequate length for all questions. The most successful responses were those that paid attention to the precise requirements of specific questions. There was also very little evidence of serious misunderstanding of the reading passage. As in previous sessions, there was a comparatively large number of responses which did not achieve the full total of marks available for some tasks as they either did not respond to a specific detail required by the question or included an irrelevant point in their answer, possibly as a result of misreading the wording of the question rather than from misunderstanding the passage. It is important to note that this comment applies to both **Question 1** and **Question 2**.

Presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard and nearly all responses gave clear evidence that candidates were taking the examination seriously and trying their very best to do well.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) In general, this 2 mark question was answered well and many answers gained the two marks by identifying (i) that the writer was afraid that her high expectations of the experience of visiting the country might lead to her being disappointed and (ii) that in the event, it exceeded her expectations.
- (b) The majority of answers scored the 1 mark available for this question by identifying that that the reason for the writer's visit was to see the nature and/or wild life of the country (or that it was a good destination for nature lovers or for eco tourism).
- (c) A large number of responses gained at least 1 mark out of 2 for this question by showing an understanding that the writer's use of the word 'elusive' meant that it is not easy to see jaguars and a reasonable number gained the full 2 marks by going on to explain that this is because they deliberately avoid human contact. Some responses that did not gain marks on this question may have mistaken the word and read it as 'exclusive'. This led to explanations that jaguars are special or rare, but without the sense that they are secretive creatures who keep themselves hidden.
- (d) The majority of responses to this 2 mark question gained at least 1 mark by saying that the writer wanted to remember the advice given by Elias. Those who went on to gain both marks linked this need to remember the possibility of the writer getting lost and/or needing to survive in the jungle.
- (e) This question also was generally answered correctly with a large number of responses gaining at least 1 of the 2 available marks. Details (about the differences between visiting the jungle in the night time) that might have been referred to were:
- it was dark.
 - the torchlight reflected from animals' eyes /the eyes gleamed.
 - the jungle and/or the wildlife seemed more menacing.
 - the golden flashes of the fireflies could be seen.
 - there were eerie/strange sounds.

Although most responses showed a good, overall understanding of this section of the passage, a number did not gain a mark as they stated that the writer saw animals that only appeared at night (some even used the word 'nocturnal'). However, there is nothing in the passage to support this detail - indeed, caimans were seen both at night and during the day.

- (f) The majority of responses gained the 1 mark available by correctly identifying that the unusual aspect of the painting in the cathedral in Cusco was that the artist had included roast guinea-pig and local drink rather than conventional offerings, or that there was a mixture of European and Peruvian cultures in the picture.
- (g) A large number of responses gained the 1 mark available for this question by correctly explaining that Machu Picchu was unique among Inca sites in being the only one that was not destroyed by the Spanish.
- (h) Overall this 6 mark, three part language question was a good discriminator and it was important for responses to be made on the basis of a very careful reading of the question. As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, in each part it is important to give an explanation of two key words. It is worth noting that in the third part, the majority of responses were focused on the use of the phrase in context, rather than the meaning of the phrase itself and this led to answers that did not gain a mark (in the passage the writer is saying that the area is **not** a tamed environment). Further exemplification of responses is provided below:
- (h)(i) The phrase 'luxuriant foliage' could be explained as 'very lush leafy growth'.
- (ii) The phrase 'the jungle without discomfort' could be explained as 'even though you are in the jungle, you are not suffering any of the usual hardships'.
- (iii) The phrase 'tamed environment' could be explained as 'a habitat which has been subdued by humans'.

- (i) This 6 mark language question (as mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report) required responses to comment on the writer's use of language and led to a wide range of comments. There were a few excellent responses that achieved the full 6 marks and the majority of responses managed to identify some, if not three, appropriate phrases. A fairly high number of these were able to give reasonable explanations relating to excitement for at least one or two of the phrases. There were a relatively small number of responses which attempted to identify phrases that conveyed excitement and quoted words such as 'most exciting for me' without identifying the details that made the experience exciting. These could not be rewarded. Others provided explanations which explained the meaning of the chosen phrase, but not its effect, which limited the marks available. The explanation of writer's effects proved a key discriminator.
- (j) Many responses achieved at least 4 marks for this question, with a large number gaining all seven marks available. The majority successfully focused on details other than those relating to nature/wildlife; the most successful drew their points from the whole of the passage with the result that a good range of points was included. The majority of responses showed a clear awareness of the principles of summary writing and attempted to select appropriate points. The least successful responses tended to give details about nature and wildlife which were specifically excluded by the wording of the task. The points about what the writer did in Peru (apart from looking at nature and wildlife) that were credited in the Mark Scheme were as follows:
1. Stopped at the lodge/in a wooden cabin/at Inkaterra Reserva Amazonia.
 2. Went for a nature walk with/met Elias.
 3. Learnt what was safe to eat/discovered how to make tattoos/how to make mosquito repellent.
 4. Went for a twilight walk.
 5. Flew to Cusco.
 6. Went to the cathedral/looked at the paintings.
 7. Took a bus/travelled through the Sacred Valley.
 8. Took a train.
 9. Went to Aguas Calientes/Machu Picchu.
 10. Stayed in a hotel.

Question 2

This question is assessed for both Reading (using and understanding the material, 10 marks) and Writing (10 marks).

In general, the majority of responses to the Writing task were clearly focused on the task and the detail with which the third bullet was addressed proved to be the main discriminator for the Reading mark. As in previous sessions, candidates performed to a reasonable standard on this task with many responses achieving in the Band 2/3 range for both elements; a considerably higher number of answers gained marks in the Band 2/1 range than fell into Bands 4 and 5. Overall, the average mark for Writing was slightly above that for Reading. The most successful responses adapted material from the passage quite seamlessly and managed to avoid the pitfall of lifting large amounts of the original passage; the less successful responses needed to be less reliant on the source material and avoid a tendency merely to repeat the article. These responses also needed to organise the material more carefully and address the three bullet pointed requirements for the piece of writing more clearly.

There was some evidence of responses successfully adopting an appropriate register for the task and producing lively writing. There were many examples of a very convincing sense of writing to a friend about a personal experience. To achieve high marks for reading, responses needed to include accounts which selected content about Peru, the rainforest or Machu Picchu from the passage and gave a reason why it was worth seeing, rather than repetitive exclamations such as 'What a place!' 'You must go there!' 'You won't regret it!' or 'I cannot describe in words how exciting it was!'

Although nearly all responses were written with sufficient accuracy to communicate their ideas to their readers and there were many examples of very competent writing skills, there was evidence of non-existent punctuation (and the use of commas instead of semi-colons or full stops). There was some misspelling of basic vocabulary and responses needed to discern between acceptable, formal language and slang: *gonna*, *'cause* etc. Contractions such as *aswell*, and the lower case *i* for the first person singular pronoun should all be avoided, especially by responses hoping to achieve marks in the highest bands. Centres are encouraged to emphasise these points to their candidates because, in many cases, it is the making of these avoidable

basic technical errors which prevents responses achieving marks in the grade C range for this paper. There was evidence that responses were structured and vocabulary choices were carefully considered. Proofing work, with concentration on accuracy in spelling and punctuation would bring rewards.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for Reading, although there were 10 marks available for writing in **Question 2**.

1 In responding to all questions, candidates are advised to consider carefully the specific implications of key words within the question or within the phrase under analysis.

2 **Question 1(g)** is a six mark language question assessing an understanding of the meanings of language choices. In this and similar questions in future papers, it is important to note that each component part of the question requires two separate words in the quotation to be explained (1 mark for each explanation). Marks will not be awarded to responses that attempt to define a word by using a different grammatical form of the same word.

3a **Question 1 (h)** is a six mark language question assessing an understanding of the effects of language choices. In this and similar questions in future papers, responses should attempt to explain *how* the choice of words conveys the aspect identified in the question (in this case, a sense of excitement). This question does not require a paraphrase of the words chosen as this skill is tested elsewhere in the paper.

3b When attempting to explain the effects of the writer's use of language for **Question 1(h)**, candidates should be aware that merely identifying figures of speech and other literary devices is insufficient for the award of a mark. Similarly, it is expected that answers to this task will attempt to give developed explanations of how an effect is achieved. Answers on the lines of 'this phrase suggests the writer's sense of excitement because it is exciting' are insufficient as convincing explanations.

4 An informal or colloquial register was appropriate for the Writing task but responses should also show awareness of the need to demonstrate an ability to write accurately, using standard English, in order to have access to the highest bands of the Mark Scheme.

The above points will be considered in greater detail in the following sections of this report.

General Comments

The passage about a visit to Costa Rica proved to be generally accessible and responses gave clear evidence of positive engagement with it. There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most were of adequate length for all questions. The most successful responses were those that paid attention to the precise requirements of specific questions. There was also very little evidence of serious misunderstanding of the reading passage. As in previous sessions, there was a comparatively large number of responses which did not achieve the full total of marks available for some tasks as they either did not respond to a specific detail required by the question or included an irrelevant point in their answer, possibly as a result of misreading the wording of the question rather than from misunderstanding the passage. It is important to note that this comment applies to both **Question 1** and **Question 2**.

Presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard and nearly all responses gave clear evidence that candidates were taking the examination seriously and trying their very best to do well.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) In general, this 1 mark question was answered well and many answers gained the mark by identifying the fact that the writer had visited Costa Rica for a walking holiday. Answers that mentioned 'holiday' alone without reference to its purpose were not rewarded and nor were those which focused (often at length) on the attractions of the area rather than on the specific nature of the holiday.
- (b) The majority of answers scored full marks for this 2 mark question and identified at least two, and often all four, of the points detailed in the Mark Scheme (the lateness of the hour; the heat; the swarms of taxi drivers; the difficulty in finding the guide). Less successful responses merely repeated 'the sense of panic' from the question rubric as a reason for the writer's feeling of panic. There was evidence of some unfamiliarity with the writer's use of idiom in those responses that stated that the writer's plane had been delayed, rather than the hour being late.
- (c) The majority of responses gained at least 1 mark out of 2 for this question by showing a general understanding of the writer's feelings but found it more difficult to give a clear explanation of the word 'creepy'. Some responses correctly identified that the description was based on an oxymoron and the most successful responses gave a clear explanation of why it was so and how it helped to clarify the writer's response to her experience. Interestingly, however, hardly any responses identified the pun in 'creepy' and only a very few answers showed clear awareness that the spider was actually walking over the writer's hand. The phrase 'creeped out' was occasionally used to explain her feelings but was too close to the original phrase to be awarded a mark. Quite a significant minority were either unaware of the force of the adverb 'deliciously' or had been so taken with the writer's description of her enjoyment of the Costa Rican national dish that they assumed that she was looking forward to eating the spider!
- (d) Nearly all responses were correct, gaining 1 mark. They quoted the word 'potholed' or the phrase 'potholed roads'. A few gave the word 'eruptions' as an answer and others were not credited as they quoted at too great a length rather than clearly identifying the specific word 'potholed'.
- (e) This question also was generally answered correctly with a large number of responses referring to at least three of the following points about the Eco Termales Hot Springs resort to gain 3 marks:
- it was not as expensive/overcrowded (as the more famous resort referred to)
 - it had four (large) pools
 - (the travellers could relax/soothe aching muscles in) the warm/steamy water/hot springs
 - the rain had stopped
 - (they could watch the) bats
 - there was good/enjoyable (local/national food)/a good restaurant.

Although most responses showed a good, overall understanding of this section of the passage, precise detail was required in some responses to gain marks; for example, some did not mention the hot springs and so it was not clear where aching muscles could be soothed. Others simply referred to the availability of the national dish without mentioning that it was either a good version of it or that it was eaten in a good restaurant.

- (f) This question asked for details of how the scenery changed on the approach to the Nicaraguan border and was worth a total of 2 marks. To gain 2 marks, candidates were required to identify at least two of the following underlined details: the scenery changed suddenly from fertile, moist (rain)forest to dry/open (grass)land/prairie/savannah. There was some significant misreading of the question behind many responses as many referred to the change in the weather or climate rather than change in the scenery. There were also responses that revealed unfamiliarity with the word 'savannah' and claimed that the writer and her companions were entering a desert landscape.

- (g)(i) A large number of responses gained both available marks for this question by correctly explaining that the writer knew only a small number of words in Spanish. Responses achieving 1 mark tended to correctly define the word 'limited' but needed to provide an explanation for 'vocabulary'.
- (ii) There was a good range of performance on this question. The key point was how well the responses explored the implications of 'literally'. The most successful achieved both marks through giving very precise answers showing clearly that they understood that the writer and her companions were so high up the mountain that they were actually in the clouds. Less successful responses were able to gain one mark if they showed a clear appreciation of the height reached by the writer.
- (iii) This 2 mark question also discriminated well. Responses achieving two marks were able to explain fully the personification in the phrase. Quite a few believed that the actions of hiding were the narrator's and not the volcano's. Although some responses grasped that the writer had personified the mountain, candidates needed to provide their explanation in their own words.
- (h) This 6 mark language question (as mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report) required responses to comment on the writer's use of language and led to a wide range of responses. There were a few excellent responses that achieved the full 6 marks and the majority of responses managed to identify some, if not three, appropriate phrases with a fairly high number being able to give reasonable explanations relating to excitement for at least one or two of these. There were also quite a large number of responses which needed to identify phrases that conveyed excitement but instead quoted phrases such as 'potholed' and 'pura vida' which could not be rewarded. Others provided explanations that did not use their own words and instead used the wording of the question in the response, which limited the marks available. The explanation of writer's effects proved to be a key discriminator.
- (i) Many responses achieved at least 4 marks for this question, with a small number gaining all seven marks available. Most successfully focused on details about volcanoes; the most successful drew their points from the whole of the passage with the result that points 7-10 in those listed below were also included. The majority of responses showed a clear awareness of the principles of summary writing and attempted to select appropriate points. The least successful responses tended to give unrelated details about Costa Rica. The points about volcanoes in Costa Rica that were credited in the Mark Scheme were as follows:
1. There are many of them.
 2. Eruptions have killed people/80 killed (in the last eruption).
 3. They are still active/last eruption was in 1968.
 4. You can see red lava flowing from them.
 5. New mountains are created by (the lava/eruptions).
 6. You can see steam blowing from them.
 7. They are in (the midst of) deep forest.
 8. Hot springs (are often found with volcanoes).
 9. They are often hidden/two thirds covered by clouds.
 10. They are also found in the savannah/near the Nicaraguan border.

Question 2

This question is assessed for both reading (using and understanding the material, 10 marks) and writing (10 marks).

In general, the majority of responses to the Writing task were clearly focused on the task. The detail with which the second bullet was addressed proved to be the main discriminator for the Reading mark. As in previous sessions, candidates performed to a reasonable standard on this task with many candidates achieving in the Band 2/3 range for both elements; a considerably higher number of responses gained marks in the Band 2/1 range than fell into Bands 4 and 5. Overall, the average mark for Writing was slightly above that for Reading. The most successful responses adapted material from the passage quite seamlessly and managed to avoid the pitfall of lifting large amounts of the original passage; the less successful responses needed to be less reliant on the source material but also needed to include content that was relevant to the task – for example, the refreshing drink and spa facilities were irrelevant. These responses would have improved if the material had been organised and if candidates ensured that they had covered the three bullet pointed requirements for the piece of writing. Many of these responses were narrative-based accounts of the walking holiday which did not fulfil the requirements of the task (the challenges and rewards for visitors) and

the format asked for in the question. Reasons why readers should visit Costa Rica were nearly always given, but often as a single sentence 'postscript' rather than in a meaningful section.

There was some evidence of responses successfully adopting an appropriate register for the task and producing lively writing but, in doing so, losing focus on the requirements of the task. To achieve high marks for reading, responses needed to include accounts which selected content about Costa Rica from the passage rather than repetitive exclamations such as 'What a place!', 'You must go there!', 'You would not regret it!'. In more successful responses vocabulary choices were carefully considered and writing was well structured. Although nearly all responses were written with sufficient accuracy to communicate their ideas to their readers, there was evidence of a lot of non-existent punctuation; much misspelling of basic vocabulary and the need for responses to discern between acceptable, formal language and slang: '*gonna*', '*cause*' etc. along with contractions such as '*aswell*'; the use of ampersands instead of the word *and*, and the lower case *i* for the first person singular pronoun should all be avoided, especially by responses hoping to achieve marks in the highest bands. Centres are encouraged to emphasise these points to their candidates because, in many cases, it is the making of these avoidable basic technical errors which prevents responses achieving marks in the grade C range for this paper. Proofing work, with concentration on accuracy in spelling and punctuation would bring rewards.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/13
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for Reading, although there were 10 marks available for writing in **Question 2**.

1 In responding to all questions, candidates are advised to consider carefully the specific implications of key words within the question or within the phrase under analysis.

2 **Question 1(f)** is a 6 mark language question assessing an understanding of the meanings of language choices. In this and similar questions in future papers, it is important to note that each component part of the question requires two separate words in the quotation to be explained (1 mark for each explanation). Marks will not be awarded to responses that attempt to define a word by using a different grammatical form of the same word.

3a **Question 1 (g)** is a 6 mark language question assessing an understanding of the effects of language choices. In this and similar questions in future papers, responses should attempt to explain *how* the choice of words conveys the aspect identified in the question (in this case, a sense of excitement). This question does not require a paraphrase of the words chosen as this skill is tested elsewhere in the paper.

3b When attempting to explain the effects of the writer's use of language for **Question 1(g)**, candidates should be aware that merely identifying figures of speech and other literary devices, is insufficient for the award of a mark. Similarly, it is expected that answers to this task will attempt to give developed explanations of how an effect is achieved. Answers on the lines of 'this phrase suggests the writer's sense of excitement because it is exciting' are insufficient as convincing explanations.

4 An informal or colloquial register was appropriate for the Writing task but responses should also show awareness of the need to demonstrate an ability to write accurately, using standard English, in order to have access to the highest bands of the Mark Scheme.

The above points will be considered in greater detail in the following sections of this report.

General Comments

The passage about a visit to the Chhattisgarh region of India proved to be generally accessible and responses gave clear evidence of positive engagement with it. There was very little indication that responses suffered from timing problems and most were of adequate length for all questions. The most successful responses were those that paid attention to the precise requirements of specific questions. There was also very little evidence of serious misunderstanding of the reading passage. As in previous sessions, there was a comparatively large number of responses which did not achieve the full total of marks available for some tasks as they either did not respond to a specific detail required by the question or included an irrelevant point in their answer. This may have been as a result of misreading the wording of the question rather than from misunderstanding the passage. It is important to note that this comment applies to both **Question 1** and **Question 2**.

Presentation and handwriting were generally of a good standard and nearly all responses gave clear evidence that candidates were taking the examination seriously and trying their very best to do well. This was indicated in no small way by the fact that by far the majority of responses made no errors in spelling the word 'Chhattisgarh'!

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) (i) In general, this 2 mark question was answered well and many responses gained both available marks by referring to at least two of the following details about the appearance of the Bastar Hill Myna birds: glossy black coats; rose-and-orange beaks; bright yellow feet; swirly gold neck markings. In general, most incorrect answers seem to have been the result of an insufficiently close reading of the question as responses gave details about the *behaviour* of the birds instead of about their *appearance*.
- (ii) This 1 mark question required one fact about the behaviour of the birds and nearly all responses successfully identified one of the following details: they mimic/imitate sounds they hear; they make loud noises; they are very talkative (at particular times of the day).
- (b) The majority of responses scored the full 2 marks for this question, clearly identifying the two details that as it is remote/wilder/hillier and is less inhabited, the Eastern half of the Kanger Valley National Park is the best place to spot wildlife. Most incorrect answers were the result of giving details taken from the first half of paragraph 4 which refers to the park as a whole and not specifically to the Eastern half.
- (c) The majority of responses gained at least 1 of the 2 marks available for this question and a large number succeeded in gaining both. The two pieces of advice contained in the passage were that visitors to the park need to be (fairly) fit and that they should wear strong, non-slip shoes. The former point was identified by responses a little more frequently than the latter. References just to the 'steep ascents' to be found in the park were not credited as they did not highlight the actual *advice* given by the writer.
- (d) (i) Nearly all responses answered this 1 mark question correctly by stating that the Chitrakot Falls have a similar (horseshoe) shape to those at Niagara. The few incorrect responses either made a general reference to the Falls being remarkable or introduced details which were required for the answer to d ii.
- (ii) Again, a large number of responses answered this 1 mark question correctly by stating that the Chitrakot Falls differed from Niagara as they were less crowded with visitors; another acceptable answer for this question (although only mentioned by a few of the responses) was that the Chitrakot Falls are in India, unlike Niagara Falls which are in Canada.
- (e) This 2 mark question also was answered correctly by a large number of responses which referred to at least two of the following points which make a visit to Tiratgarh Waterfall a 'relaxing experience':
- beautiful views (waterfall/temple).
 - you can walk under the waterfall/cool off on a steamy day.
 - opportunity to have a quiet picnic.
 - background noise of the Falls.
- (f) (i) There was a good range of performance on the three parts of this question. A small number of responses gained 4 or more marks out of 6. Many responses showed that they had a generally secure understanding of what was meant by the phrase 'ideal habitat' but fewer succeeded in defining clearly both aspects of the phrase and making it clear that the area was a perfect place to live. Answers needed to show an awareness of the superlative used in this example in order for the mark to be awarded.
- (ii) This proved to be the most challenging of the vocabulary questions. A small number of responses gave a correct definition for 'pock-marked' (those who referred to holes in cheese or the after-effects of small pox were rewarded). Responses needed to define the second half of the phrase to show that they understood the words 'hundreds of caves'.

- (iii) This question was answered more successfully than (ii). 'Bizarre' was successfully explained as 'strange' or 'odd' but many responses that achieved one mark here did not gain the second mark available as they neglected to show their understanding of the word 'formations' and to explain its meaning. The responses to the three parts of this question illustrated fully the point made in Key Message 2 at the beginning of this report.
- (g) This 6 mark question (as mentioned in Key Message 3) required comment on the writer's use of language and led to a wide range of responses. There were some excellent answers that achieved the full 6 marks. The majority of responses managed to identify some appropriate phrases with a fairly high number being able to give reasonable explanations relating to the writer's sense of excitement for at least one or two of these. There were also quite a large number of responses which had difficulty in identifying any phrases that conveyed excitement and quoted words such as 'jaguar' and 'flying snake'. Although these may be the *cause* of excitement, they could not be rewarded as examples of language usage which *conveyed* that sense of excitement to a reader. Others provided explanations which merely paraphrased the selected phrase rather than trying to explain it or used the wording of the question in the response, which limited the marks available. The explanation of writer's effects proved a key discriminator.
- (h) Most responses achieved at least 4 or 5 marks for this question, and some gained all seven marks available. A small number did not gain any marks as they wrote about the features of the Chhattisgarh region in general, not focusing specifically on the ancient cities of Raipur. Details of the brick-built temple at Laxman proved the most difficult to explain clearly. Responses needed to make clear which temple was being described and should have included the detail that earlier temples were made of stone and wood rather than brick. The majority of responses showed a clear awareness of the principles of summary writing and attempted to select appropriate points. The points about the ancient temples of Raipur that were credited in the Mark Scheme were as follows:
1. Important archaeological sites.
 2. Sirpur discovered in 1950s.
 3. (Temple at) Laxman 1,600-years-old/the oldest of its kind.
 4. Built of brick.
 5. Temples used to be made of stone and wood.
 6. Temple contains statue of female Buddhist monk.
 7. Towns are in ruins.
 8. Further discovery of 2,000-year-old remains.
 9. The Danteshwari Temple is a jewel of India/important part of the Dassera festival.
 10. It has four distinct parts/an 800-year-old inner sanctum/two significant stone sections.

Question 2

This question is assessed for both reading (using and understanding the material, 10 marks) and writing (10 marks).

In general, the majority of responses to the Writing task were clearly focused on the task. The detail with which the third bullet was addressed proved to be the main discriminator for the Reading mark. As in previous sessions, candidates performed to a reasonable standard on this task with many achieving in the Band 2/3 range for both elements; a considerably higher number of responses gained marks in the Band 2/1 range than Bands 4 and 5. Overall, the average mark for Writing was slightly above that for Reading. The most successful responses adapted material from the passage quite seamlessly and did not lift large amounts of the original passage; the less successful responses needed to be less reliant on the source material but also needed to include content that was relevant and appropriate to the task - for example, a generalised guide to the tourist highlights of the region was not appropriate. These answers would have been more successful if the material had been organised and if responses covered the three bullet pointed requirements for the piece of writing. The most successful responses gave thoughtful and more sustained explanations, developed from details contained in the passage, of what would and would not appeal about the Chhattisgarh area to a cousin of university candidate age. Less successful responses acknowledged this point but often as a single sentence 'postscript' rather than in a meaningful section. The least successful responses needed to use more details from the passage in their writing.

There was some evidence of responses successfully adopting an appropriate register for the task and producing lively writing but, in doing so, losing focus on the requirements of the task. To achieve high marks for reading, responses needed to include accounts which selected content about the Chhattisgarh region from the passage rather than repetitive exclamations such as 'You really should visit!' or 'You would not

regret coming here!' Although nearly all responses were written with sufficient accuracy to communicate their ideas to their readers, there was evidence of a lot of non-existent punctuation. There was much misspelling of basic vocabulary and the need for responses to discern between acceptable, formal language and slang: 'gonna', 'cause' etc. along with contractions such as 'aswell'; the use of ampersands instead of the word *and*, and the lower case *i* for the first person singular pronoun should all be avoided, especially by responses hoping to achieve marks in the highest bands. Centres are encouraged to emphasise these points to their candidates. In many cases, it is the making of these avoidable basic technical errors which prevents responses achieving marks in the grade C range for this paper. There was evidence that responses were structured and vocabulary choices were carefully considered. Proofing work, with concentration on accuracy in spelling and punctuation would bring rewards.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. The requirements for doing well were to:

- give equal attention to all sections of the question
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to show their significance in the context
- use your own words where appropriate; do not copy whole phrases from the original
- be careful to give only information that is focused on the question
- only make the point once
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task
- pay attention to length.

Key messages about how candidates can improve their performance for each of the three types of questions will be considered in greater detail below.

General comments

This paper was similar in difficulty level to last year's paper and produced a similar standard of response to all three questions, which covered a wide range. Candidates found both passages accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, to achieve marks in the top band candidates were required to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages.

In **Question 3** some candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points, but occasionally responses contained examples of lifting phrases and sentences from the passages rather than the use of own words. Other less secure answers included repeated information, but phrased differently. It is important that candidates use their own words since to do otherwise suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. On the other hand, when they rephrase a fact, the meaning should not change. It is vital that responses are not overlong: the mark scheme for Quality of Writing indicates the marks awarded where the response exceeds the permitted length.

There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of the passages. To achieve higher mark bands, responses were required to develop and assimilate the material in Passage A for **Question 1**, to understand what the couple in the passage had intended to do, what actually happened and what advice the writer would give to others going on such a trip.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. There was some evidence that Centres now expect their candidates to plan first, with a corresponding improvement in the structure of responses and the coverage of **Question 3**, where the two halves of the question were generally better balanced this session.

Most answers were in appropriate English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some responses were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passages.

The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and without repetition, which can come with excessive length.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: Imagine that you are Rosemarie Alecio, the writer of the article. You have just returned home from your trip to the Andes and have agreed to be interviewed by your local radio station. The interviewer asks the following three questions only: What did you hope to experience in the Andes? Was the trip everything you expected? What advice would you give to anyone intending to go on such a trip? Write the words of the interview, beginning with the first question.

(20 marks)

Most responses took the form of interviews between a presenter of a radio programme and Rosemarie Alecio, restricting the questions to the three listed in the instructions. A few contained additional reactions by the interviewer to what Rosemarie had just said before asking the next given question, and a few did ask supplementary questions, usually clearly linked to the task. Better responses captured and synthesised Rosemarie's ambivalent attitude to the trip, aware that many of its features made it one of the most stimulating of her life, yet she had found it arduous for various reasons. Only a few responses captured the notion that a gruelling walk in a remote landscape in testing climatic conditions can induce a tremendous sense of achievement.

Less confident responses either made little attempt to adapt the material, or used the passage as a springboard into creative writing, with digressions on the charm and generosity of the Andean people, the range of wildlife and the need for Rosemarie and Alfred to spend quality time together. The first section of the answer required two key facts to be retrieved from the passage: the couple's first objective was to take a cable car to the top of the Venezuelan Andes, and their second was to undertake a trek across a mountain pass. Responses which did not initially identify these tended to expand on the views and beautiful landscapes without stressing the nature of these views or what made this landscape so special. A common misunderstanding was that the couple wished to 'exercise' rather than trek, because the passage stated that the first 'object of the exercise' was to take the cable car. This first section did yield some reasonable developments, for example that the couple wanted to challenge themselves and/or escape from the pollution and noise of city life. However, too often a response which did not clearly identify the two basic objectives in the first section of the answer re-told some of the couple's experiences in terms of the extremity of the climate and altitude or the difficulty of the walk, not having focused on the specifics of the interviewer's first question. Such an answer then repeated the information in tackling the second question. There was a common misunderstanding that the couple had to walk over ice or snow. Less assured responses were usually more secure when answering the third of the interviewer's questions, but tended to rely heavily on lists of items to be taken, e.g. windproofs, sun hats, bottles of water, often lifted straight from the text.

Most of the marks for this question were given for showing understanding of the passage and for using ideas within the framework of the response. It was not possible to use all the details from the passage in the space available, but good responses managed to include all the main ones, involving the two distinct aspects of the trip, the anticipated uniqueness of the location, the reality of the physical demands of the terrain and the impact the elements had on them. The best responses clearly differentiated between the problems experienced at the top of Pico Espejo and those on the trek. Many responses contained comment on the huge scale of the vistas and the relative insignificance of human beings. Better responses to the third question developed points and details, in some cases in quite small ways, but nevertheless showing inferential understanding. Thus the need to have the correct equipment in the form of stout walking boots was necessary in order to make scrambling over boulders easier. Effective planning ensured that there was no repetition between sections and that they were all given equal attention and coverage. The use of ideas demonstrates explicit understanding, whereas the use of detail is necessary to show close reading, and development proves implicit understanding. Responses need to convey all three levels of reading comprehension to attain higher band marks.

Better responses captured a convincing voice for Rosemarie, conveying an enthusiasm for what had been seen and experienced as well as reflecting on the rashness of the couple's insufficient preparation. Some of these answers made it clear that the couple were experienced walkers (14.5 km was 'normally well within a day's walking distance') yet they had encountered problems and suffered afterwards. Advice to others and reflection of how the couple might have done things better included the advisability of taking a guide (human or in the form of a book or map), the need to train before going to the Andes and the sense in going with more than one other person in case of an emergency, with sprained ankles and worse being a possibility in such terrain. Tech-savvy candidates noted that a GPS device would have helped.

In less assured answers there were examples of copying whole phrases and sentences from the passage, and sometimes several lines were lifted with virtually no changes in the wording. The more the content of the passage was adapted to the genre and focus of the question, the more likely it was that the mark for Reading would be high. Responses were most prone to lifting in sections two and three. In section two such lifts included a narration of the stages of the cable car, the heights gained and the names of the peaks reached and seen. Another popular section was the description of the route with its 'slippery gravel, fine sand' and so on. In section three as well as the list of items in the backpack, popular lifts were the various protections against UV light. There is a difference between details from the text and wholesale copying of long phrases or complete sentences.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the interview, and how well it used vivid language to capture the sense of awe Rosemarie felt. The better written responses had a lively, engaging and convincing style, and Rosemarie's personality and views did not overwhelm the informative content or detract from the central focus. Such responses were well structured and avoided repetition.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- Answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three sections;
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the form and viewpoint of the response;
- Be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas;
- Develop and extend some of the ideas relevantly;
- Create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona(e) in the response.

Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the scenery in paragraph 4, beginning 'What wonderful views...' and (b) the challenges of the walk in paragraph 6, beginning 'The journey ahead...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

Responses that achieve the top mark bands require precise focus at word level. The two parts of the question were mostly answered equally well, and responses provided relevant choices, including imagery, in both paragraphs. There was some evidence that candidates stopped when they thought they had written enough, without considering the balance of their response. Nearly all responses said something about 'majestic, ancient and wise' in paragraph 4 (although sometimes as three separate choices) and 'stretch to infinity' in paragraph 6. Comparatively few showed understanding of what 'meandering' means, and many thought that the couple literally walked across ice because of the reference to an 'ice rink'.

A wide vocabulary is essential for scoring highly on this question in particular. Close reading is necessary in order for misunderstanding to be avoided. Weaker responses gave a commentary with quotations incorporated in it, and needed to examine the writer's use of vocabulary and imagery. Repeating language of the passage can gain no credit, as understanding is not demonstrated. Naming literary or linguistic devices, even when accurately identified, attracts credit only when accompanied by an explanation of how it is working in this particular context. Explaining an image in the form of another image is not helpful.

The first level of approach is to identify words that have an extra layer of meaning, and the second level is to be able to explain why the writer used them. An example from paragraph 4 was the 'silver thread': strong responses introduced the notion of the material in which the mountain is clothed having been decorated by precious and sparkling stitch work; weaker responses simply quoted the phrase or noted it showed the river was narrow from that height.

Some responses were approximately three-quarters of a side long. Other candidates chose to use page 6 of the answer booklet for (a) and page 7 for (b). Length of itself is no guarantee of a quality answer. However, less than a full page of writing is unlikely to produce a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. One or two choices from each paragraph are not sufficient; the response would be considered to be 'thin' and therefore given a mark in Band 5 or below. Many responses were limited to only three choices for each section, though there were many possible appropriate choices from each paragraph.

Most responses selected individual words and short phrases and treated them separately, but some gave choices which were restricted to only one word when the effectiveness depended on two or three words

being used in combination, e.g. 'an obstacle course' has a different and more subtle connotation than just 'obstacle'. Overviews were given that showed an understanding of the huge height of the mountains in paragraph 4 and the arduous and seemingly endless walk in paragraph 6, but these needed to be supported by a range of individual examples and comments for the full dramatic effect to be conveyed. Many responses contained, in both sections, lists of choices or overlong quotations containing several choices, followed by general comments. Large chunks of quotation from one short paragraph do not demonstrate the skill of selection, and they can only be credited as one choice regardless of how many they contain.

There was a dependence on the idea of the vulnerability of the walkers, their insignificance in this vast landscape. Both words were from the text, one from each paragraph. Whilst they were not part of a listed choice in the mark scheme, responses which relied on these words were not demonstrating clear understanding of the choices to which they were attributing these qualities.

The key to paragraph 4 (section **(a)**) is the idea of an omnipotent figure which is clothed in a dark, intricately ornamented fabric, wearing a white cloak across its shoulders. The best explanations tended to focus on the qualities of the mountain. Very few responses focused on the extended imagery. Weaker responses offered the quotation 'we could almost touch the snow-clad Pico Bolivar' and dealt with the couple's closeness to it rather than the image.

In section **(b)**, based on paragraph 6, 'stretch to infinity' and 'no bigger than ants' were often quoted, but not explained as exaggerations. The choices 'stern sky' and 'whims' of the elements were rarely selected. However, many candidates were able to explain the effect of the image 'luxury of a grassy cushion' was to accentuate the hardness of the rest of the path. Successful **(b)** responses should focus on evocative or unusual words that carry connotations additional to general meaning. The list of items the couple carried and the distance being 14.5 km were not appropriate choices.

The following specimen response includes the selected quotations in the mark scheme, and fewer choices than this would be more than sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent enough. This sample answer is given so that Centres and candidates can appreciate what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

(a) The appearance of the scenery in paragraph 4

The writer creates an awesome grandeur for the mountain, contrasting it with tiny landscape features far below. The central image is of a 'majestic, ancient and wise' being. These adjectives could be applied to priests or monarchs, people who are looked up to and revered. The mountain is clothed in a priest-like white cloak, hence it is 'snow-clad'. Initially its presence is seen as gracious as it 'greeted' the visitors, but soon the couple appreciate a more ominous side to the mountain as it is a 'giant lording it'. In legends giants are generally feared creatures, and this one is able to exercise considerable power and authority over the lesser peaks, and no doubt over humans, too. Their attention is then taken by the 'meandering' river, a curvaceous water course, a term usually associated with mature rivers – like the mountain itself, this river has been in existence for a long time. It is a slow word with long vowel sounds, a paradox given that earlier the verb 'rushed' was used. For it to both 'rush' and 'meander' it must be a very powerful river indeed, from a powerful source. The dominance of the mountain is enhanced by the images of the 'silver thread' and the 'dark fabric'. Once again, the mountain is clothed, but a contrast to the snowy cape on its shoulders. As with the clothing of any great being, this one is ornamented with precious threads of silver which have been stitched on, so the line of water appears and disappears from view as rocks and indentations are skirted. Finally, the writer feels that 'no superlative' is capable of describing the scene, that no words can describe its captivating magnificence with the implication that readers must visit for themselves to appreciate it.

(b) The challenges of the walk in paragraph 6

The challenges of the walk are extreme. The path is of 'steep, snaking climbs', the alliteration stressing the double difficulty of this precipitous, winding route. It seems to 'stretch to infinity', an exaggeration which corresponds to the lowering of spirits as the trekkers cannot see the top of the climb. Although they are crossing a pass and not climbing a peak, the heights gained are phenomenal: they feel 'no bigger than ants', tiny insects. Such insects are easily squashed and are defenceless against humans; this couple are similarly tiny in this huge landscape and also at risk of being damaged. The 'stern sky' is lowering down at them, appraising them and possibly finding them wanting. They are subject to the 'whims of the elements'. Just like the giant which lorded it over time and space in paragraph 4, so the elements of wind, sun and temperature can play with the pair as they choose. Underfoot the route is virtually impossible – it is an 'obstacle course'. Nature has deliberately designed the layout of boulders, gravel and stone to test the walkers. Slips and falls are inevitable. Moreover, the couple feel as though the trek is 'across an ice rink'. It is impossible to maintain one's footing on the smooth ice in a rink unless on skates; many obstacles in the way make it impossible. The occasional 'luxury of a grassy cushion' emphasises the hardness of the rest of the route as a cushion is soft and aids comfortable sitting. Normally over-looked grass has become a rare treat.

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks.
- Re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first. Remember that you are not being asked to write about the whole paragraph but only about the language which relates to the particular question.
- Your first task is to choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- Try to remember to put quotation marks around your choices. This makes it easier for the Examiner to identify them and 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.
- If you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices. That can give you some marks for the question if the meaning is accurate. Explain in your own words what the word or phrase means in the context of the passage.
- When you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.
- Learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

Question 3: Summarise (a) what makes the eastern Himalayas special and why measures are needed to protect them, according to Passage B; and (b) what made the trek difficult and uncomfortable, according to Passage A.

(20 marks)

To answer this question successfully candidates needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 23 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest scoring question for many of the responses. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

Section **(b)** was generally better done in terms of giving relevant points and adopting an appropriate writing style. Weaker responses concentrated on Passage B and were dominated by statistics with some answers to this part of the question being nearly a full page in length. Good responses were the result of a methodical reading of both the passages. Better summaries avoided repetition and listing explanatory information. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able responses changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage B the need to monitor threatened species would follow logically from the range of species to be found and that new ones are discovered every year. Candidates generally found it easy to identify relevant material in both passages and picked up a reasonable number of Reading marks in both sections, although

points 6, 11 and 12 from the mark scheme were less commonly offered. Point 16 had to be an 'obstacle' as a boulder rather than an impediment to progress and point 14 needed to be about the length of the walk not the apparent infinity of the climb. Candidates who said the walkers might slip on the ice did not gain credit for point 18.

Good responses used complex sentences with different beginnings and avoided presenting points in lists or long explanations. In Passage B, much of paragraph three is a list of the fauna and flora to be found in the Himalayas. Likewise, later reference to the comparison of the Namcha Barwa Canyon to the Grand Canyon was unnecessary, as were the discoveries made in it. Detailed explanations tended to not only reduce the amount of space available for dealing with other points, but also to make the summary as a whole longer than the permitted length.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Even where responses paid no attention to the length requirement, they rarely gained all 15 reading points, yet lost Writing marks. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed.

Attention should be paid to the amount of copying from the passages. From Passage B the information about the dimensions of the Himalayas, that 'some of Asia's greatest rivers spring to life in the Himalayas' and the descriptions of the latest discoveries of the frog, scorpion and deer were often lifted word for word or were very closely paraphrased; there was also some copying from Passage A of the 'steep, snaking climbs' and of the way 'strewn with slippery gravel, fine sand and boulders'. These are all examples of wording that needed to be changed to show understanding. On the other hand, it would prove difficult to find an economical substitute in Passage A for 'blisters' and 'cold' and a paraphrase was not expected.

Section (b) asked what made the trek difficult and uncomfortable, but some responses included the occasional grassy cushion and that the couple was carrying a pack, inferring that the latter would make the trek uncomfortable. It could be argued that having the pack with these items probably made the trek easier, and, in any case, the grass provided a welcome break from the boulders and gravel. The inclusion of extra points like these reduced the likelihood of scoring full marks not only for Reading but also for Writing.

Higher marks for Writing are awarded where there are varied and fluent sentence structures, and just enough information is given about the points to convey each one clearly. Summaries which were written clearly, concisely and fluently, without long explanations or repetition, and in own words, scored the whole five marks for aspects of Writing.

When reading the following specimen answer, candidates should note that the points are explained simply, and are also paraphrased into the writer's own words. The response includes all available points, but if handwritten it would fit onto a side of paper with space to spare.

Section (a)

The Himalayas are the highest mountains in the world, spanning five countries and containing a deep canyon. They are the source of many great rivers and home to an amazing range of rare animals and plants, many new varieties of which are discovered every year. Understandably, they are regarded as sacred by many of the peoples who inhabit the region, and for whose lives the natural resources they offer are essential. Protective measures are essential due to climate change which, along with persistent trade in wildlife and deforestation, is threatening the survival of several species.

Section (b)

The Andean trek was difficult owing to its sheer length and the fatigue it produced. This was partly due to the cold brought on by the high altitude and the ensuing difficulty in breathing. The strong sunlight was also problematic. The route was often steep with slippery gravel or enormous boulders to be negotiated, and blisters were experienced. It was a barren landscape virtually devoid of human habitation.

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- Make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean.
- Use your own words as far as possible. Do not copy whole phrases from the original.
- Write no more than one side of average handwriting; small handwriting will not deceive the Examiner.
- Write informatively and never comment on or add to the content of the passage.
- Be careful to give only information that answers the question.
- Make a point only once.
- Be specific; do not generalise.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22

Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages for improving performance on this paper:

- Balance all parts of the question.
- Plan each question; cross out material which is not intended to form part of the final answer.
- Explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to convey clear meaning.
- Use your own words; do not lift whole phrases or sentences from the passages.
- Modify both the style and structure of the passages in all three responses.
- Select only the material that is focused on the question.
- Do not repeat points or ideas.
- Give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response.
- Adopt a suitable voice and register for the task.
- Pay attention to length; practice in note-taking and concise expression are recommended.

General comments

The candidature for this syllabus has increased world-wide and specifically in the UK. It was important that new Centres taught their candidates the demands of the questions and how to approach them. Centres are recommended to take advantage of the guidance material available on the Teacher Support Site and specifically in the Principal Examiner Reports for Teachers. Centres need to make sure that candidates realise the need to convey all three levels of reading comprehension for higher band marks: explicit understanding of facts and ideas; implicit understanding of connotations and feelings; cognitive understanding of the effect of individual words. Candidates are also to be advised of careful reading of the requirements of the questions.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed, with only few of them offering a part answer to a question. Most candidates had been entered for the appropriate tier. There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of the content of the passages. It is important that responses use own words throughout the paper and development of ideas in **Questions 1 and 2**. There is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting material from the text: the former is evidence of understanding.

For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary in order both to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the passages. Their responses are expected to be in their own words, with a development of ideas and choices, and specific commentary. Responses were sometimes less strong because of the misreading or misunderstanding of an important individual word, such as humanity for humidity, sneered for snared, or for mistaken beliefs, such as that there were snakes in the jungle and that they attacked Julia, or that Julia was taken to hospital.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points. Again to achieve a high mark for quality of writing, using own words, where appropriate is recommended. Copying suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. On the other hand, when rephrasing a fact from the passage, the meaning should not change; hearing a lion and seeing it is not the same thing, for example. Also, it is important that responses are of the specified length as overlong responses will receive a lower Writing mark as indicated in the mark scheme. It is expected that the response is in paragraphs: one for each section is sufficient. More detail on these aspects is provided below.

On this Reading paper 20% of the available marks are for Writing. Candidates therefore need to consider the quality of their writing and avoid a cut and paste approach which returns a high degree of lifted material from the passages. Candidates are expected to attempt syntactical and lexical modification of the language of the

original passage. Most responses were written in an appropriate register, though there was some awkward English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some Writing marks were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passages. Many responses needed to follow the length guidelines to ensure their answer remained focused and without repetition. The common and unnecessary use of more than one answer booklet meant that candidates often lost sight of the recommended length of answer for each question. The use of grids for the actual response to the questions is not recommended.

It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions on this paper. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be overemphasised. Effective planning ensures that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage and that the response includes the three necessary components. These are: the use of ideas to demonstrate explicit understanding, the use of detail to show close reading, and the development of ideas to prove implicit understanding. Checking is also advisable, as marks can be lost through slips of the pen which suggest basic misunderstanding.

Question 1: A reporter for a newspaper interviews Julia's parents and asks the following *three* questions only: What made you choose to visit the rainforest with your daughter, Julia; How did Julia's accident happen, and what did she do to survive; What are your thoughts and feelings towards the Achuar people and their way of life?

(20 marks)

Most candidates wrote recognisable interviews and showed that they understood the need to adopt the viewpoint of the parents, though a number gave Julia a speaking role or gave their response in a third person narrative or report format. It was acceptable for either parent to answer the reporter, or for the response to include contributions from both parents. A significant number of responses gave more questions to the reporter than those specified in the task which requested that the reported asked only the three given questions. It is expected that candidates will follow the requirements of the question as the aim is to guide candidates into providing a structured response with a specific content focus in order to assess the reading aspect. The reporter was not a character and did not have a viewpoint to convey; they existed solely to trigger the three areas of response from Julia's parents. It was also not required or desirable that responses should include stage directions; the task asked for the words of an interview not the writing of a drama script. Responses which took this form tended to focus less on the content of the speeches, which was the basis of the assessment of this question.

It was important, for high marks, to develop the content of the passage in the response to this question. Key phrases were lifted rather than re-phrased in order to show understanding, most notably 'biodiversity', 'rainforest in all its glory', 'slight trickle of rain', and 'encyclopaedic knowledge'. As there are many possible paraphrases for these quotations, and given that the question rubric asks for the use of own words, the unmodified use of such phrases indicates a lack of understanding or vocabulary.

The coverage of the three bullets should ideally be equal; either the first or the third section was often sparse. Some inference was required in the first and third sections, whereas the second question allowed candidates to show explicit understanding of the events of the story from a selective and different perspective. The first question related to the parents' reasons for choosing to go to Ecuador before they went, but some responses included information that could only have been known after the event. Although most answers noted that the parents were biologists, few developed this idea into an explanation of why this would make them particularly interested in visiting a rainforest. The last section required an evaluation of the local people from the viewpoint of parents whose child had been found and cured. Some candidates thought that the Achuar were to be pitied rather than admired, because of the bad weather in the rainforest or their social isolation without access to technology.

Stronger responses modified the ideas and events in the passage to create convincing characterisation of biologists keen to expand their professional interests and share their enthusiasms with their daughter through the inspirational trip. They were carefully selective in their use of material for the second bullet, ensuring that it came from the parents' viewpoint. They were able to contextualise the decision to make the trip, the sudden storm, and the treatment of Julia, expressing excitement and anticipation, followed by fear and shock, then by gratitude and admiration. Stronger responses dealt with the third bullet by separating the three ideas of 'harmonious lifestyle, community spirit and generosity', commenting on how each of these had played a role in the treatment of the family as a whole. These answers used their own words to give a lively and thoughtful interview.

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, and to present them in the same order as in the passage. Some selection of material for the middle section was evident. They could have improved their marks by development of ideas and conveying of feelings. For example, they tended to list the qualities of the Achuar people without modifying them to focus on the parents' personal circumstances and their feelings about Julia's recovery.

Weaker responses copied out parts of the passage without recognition of the need to select, develop and modify the content, structure and language of the original. They generally took the form of giving an unselective narrative retelling in the second section, despite the fact that the question asks only about the cause of the accident and what Julia did in response, not about the role of the parents or the tribe. In the other two sections, weaker responses needed to modify phrases from the passage to the question or the viewpoint, rather than simply lifting or listing them. Such responses were unable to demonstrate significant understanding of the passage. Weak answers were often sparse, simple or short. Some invented their own material, describing attacks by monkeys or snakes. Other weaknesses were the use of Julia as an interviewee, thereby distorting the required perspective, or ignoring the interview format completely. This demonstrated the need for candidates to read the questions carefully and follow the instructions given. Where the entire response consisted of unmodified material from the passage, the highest mark available was the top of band 5; where two sections consisted entirely of reproduced chunks from the passage, a top mark of 5 was awarded.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the response and how well it used vivid language to capture the sense of the drama of the storm and the strength of character of Julia. The better written responses had a lively and engaging voice, a convincing style, and a mixture of informative and reflective content.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- Answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three sections;
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the form and viewpoint of the response;
- Use all the main ideas in the passage and use detail to support them;
- Develop and extend some of the ideas relevantly;
- Create a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona(e) in the response.

Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the rainforest and its wildlife in paragraph 1; and (b) Julia's walk through the rainforest in search of her parents in paragraph 4. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

It was expected that the response would take the form of continuous prose. Marks were given for the quality of the words and phrases chosen to answer the question, and for the quality of their explanations. Three marks were available for a range of appropriate choices in each section. Responses that also gave the meanings of the words were awarded up to a further three marks, depending on how specific and contextual the meanings were. Responses that also explored the effects that the use of particular words had on the reader could score up to the highest mark of ten. As usual, 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. Generally **section (a)** was done better than **section (b)**.

It is recommended to respond to this question in paragraphs rather than in the form of a three-column grid under the headings of point, explanation and effect as this often resulted in the same material being duplicated in two of the three columns, the choices tending to be overlong, and the explanations mechanical, incomplete or undeveloped.

Candidates need to be aware that the criteria for the top two bands of the mark scheme for **Question 2** require a demonstration of an understanding of how language works. Long chunks of text or lists of single words, followed by a general statement do not fulfil this descriptor, even if the choices are all relevant ones. They also need to be aware that the identification of literary devices alone does not gain any credit, and that choices need to be accompanied by thoughtful and full exploration of the specific language used in the specific context.

Most responses were able to identify 4 or 5 appropriate choices, but many of these candidates would have improved by discrimination in their selections. The ability to select relevantly is an assessment objective on

this syllabus. Several choices should not be grouped together as one choice; for instance, 'steaming', 'hissing', and 'stole their air' counted as three choices in the mark scheme if offered separately, as their meanings are distinct and something different could be said about each of them. A distinction needed to be made between meaning and effects: for example, the meaning of 'tangles' is that the roots are twisted together in a confused mass; the effect of 'tangles' is that the undergrowth of the jungle is strong and intermingled in a way that asserts its dominance over the pathways and makes it likely that people will trip over it. The screaming of monkeys means that they were making a loud noise; the effect, however, is that they resented the intrusion of the humans into their jungle territory.

It was a feature of some of the responses to this question that they were longer than the **Question 1** responses, which should not be the case, given the relative weighting of marks. Writing at length does not improve the quality of the response if much of it is repetitive, and there is a danger of there not being enough time left to do justice to **Question 3**. On the other hand, less than a full page of writing is unlikely to produce a range of choices, with their explanatory meanings and effects, for each half of the question. One or two choices from each paragraph are not sufficient; the response would be considered to be 'thin' and therefore be given a mark in band 5. Many candidates seemed to have deliberately limited themselves to only three choices for each section, though there were more than twice as many possible appropriate selections available in each paragraph.

Scripts awarded marks in the higher bands for **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate selections. They selected carefully, included images, put the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able, for example, to explain 'deep darkness' as meaning total blackness and being suggestive of a corresponding sense of loneliness and isolation because of the complete absence of light and the difficulty of orientation. A link was made between the 'hissing' sound in the first paragraph, suggesting heat and humidity about to boil over, and the use of 'snake' in the second paragraph as a metaphorical description of the shape of the tree roots and tendrils. Better responses were able to recognise the double artistic image of the birds 'splashed' and 'flecked' against the background of the jungle canopy and the sky.

Middle-range responses attempted effects by making generalised comments, such as that the jungle is alive or threatening, or hostile to Julia, or that the reader feels sorry for her, but these perceptions needed to be directly related to specific choices or an exploration of imagery, and should not have been repeated after every choice. Responses often went straight to attempting an effect without first establishing the precise meaning of the choice; e.g. they commented that 'trudging' meant that the ground was uneven or difficult to walk on without explaining what the word means. Middling responses often took the form of a commentary on the entire paragraph for each half of the question, containing relevant choices but needing to give a proper explanation of them. Imagery was sometimes explained by the use of another image, and the attempts to explain birds being like splashed paint on a canvas were only partially successful. There was a dependence on the idea of personification, in both sections, which did not contribute helpfully to the explanation of specific effects. Some examples offered were not actually personifications, as in the case of 'steaming and hissing' and 'snaked'. The sound effect of 'screaming jungle' was identified, though very few commented on the evocative sound conveyed by the word 'whirr', linking to the idea of plane engines in 'as large as model aircraft', and to the idea of diving and attacking like bomber planes in a later phrase. In this range of scripts the words 'orbited' and 'gravitated' were usually explained clearly as having connotations of planets and magnets.

Weaker responses offered phrases selected in the order in which they appeared in the paragraphs and often did not get as far as the later, higher quality choices. They included quotations not relevant to the rainforest and its wildlife, although this is the requirement of the question, referring to the 'effortlessly agile' guide or to Julia lying down by the stream rather than to her walk. Often purely factual information, such as 'dense undergrowth' or 'bright colours' in **section (a)** or Julia 'waded through knee-high water' in **section (b)** were selected at the expense of phrases with richer language. Weaker responses concentrated on what happened rather than how it was described; they retold the narrative with a few quotations and comments interspersed. Many made a relevant selection but then focused on the wrong part of it: for instance, having selected 'trudging' as an evocative word, they did not explain the way of walking this implied and reasons for it, or focused instead on 'single file', despite this being purely factual language that does not lend itself to exploration; in the phrase 'angry whirr of swarms of insects' the key word 'whirr' was often ignored. Many gave choices of only one word when its effectiveness depended on being used in combination with adjacent words, e.g. 'outraged' is not in itself evocative without the noises to accompany it. Imagery was avoided or not understood in weaker responses, 'Deep darkness' was sometimes correctly identified as an evocative phrase, but the language of the explanation repeated one or both of the original words. Repeating the language of the choice can gain no credit, as understanding is not thereby demonstrated. There was occasional misunderstanding about the literal existence of snakes, and the word 'snared' was read as

'snarled' and 'sneered' by some candidates. There was frequent misunderstanding of 'stole their air', as meaning that the jungle was breathtaking.

The following specimen response includes all of the selected quotations in the mark scheme, and fewer choices than this would be more than sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent enough. This sample answer is given so that Centres and candidates can appreciate what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

(a) The rainforest and its wildlife in paragraph 1

The writer conveys the slow speed and effort required by the family in walking through the forest by the word 'trudging', which gives the idea of the difficulty of the terrain, described as consisting of 'thick knots and tangles of roots'. This luxuriant growth and confused mass of interlocked vegetation makes it seem as though the forest does not want visitors to pass through it and is asserting its dominance. The word 'steaming' describes the vapour being given off with a 'hissing sound' reminiscent of a boiling kettle or angry snakes. The jungle seems hostile to the extent that it 'stole their air', as if deliberately trying to suffocate the visitors by depriving them of oxygen. The 'outraged hoops and screams' of the monkeys suggest that their loud angry noise is an attempt to show their displeasure and warn off the intruders into their territory. The birds which 'splashed the canvas' are like randomly thrown, vividly-coloured paint blotches on the dark background of the trees, or dots of green highlighted against the bits of sky seen in the gaps of the canopy; both of these images are artistic and make the jungle scene picturesque and reminiscent of a large painting consisting of contrasting colours. The rainforest is as beautiful as it is inhospitable.

(b) Julia's walk through the rainforest in paragraph 4

Julia's experience of the rainforest is that it is a frightening and painful place to be alone and in 'deep darkness', where the total lack of light creates an effect of being submerged and disorientated. The 'staggered' nature of her unstable walking shows how much pain she is in and how much effort she is having to make to keep moving. The 'screaming jungle', like the screams of the monkeys earlier, makes the place seem alive and threatening, as if trying to drown out any noise she could make. The foliage which 'snaked, twisted and snared' is sinister language showing that the jungle plants seem to be trying to catch hold of Julia and entwine around her to prevent her from escaping its clutches. The swarms of insects 'whirr', suggesting how close they are to her ears and that they sound like an engine rather than something natural. This image is repeated in the reference to their being 'as large as model aircraft'. This makes them seem unnaturally, impossibly huge and therefore frightening, able to inflict damage when they 'dive, attack and bite', once more using the language of fighter aircraft and pain. The fact that they 'orbited her constantly' means that they surrounded her like satellites and focused on her as their target in a way she could not escape. The leeches also 'gravitated' towards her as if their movement was the effect of being pulled by a magnetic or cosmic force. All these aspects of her walk made it a 'torturous journey', pain and suffering deliberately inflicted to a nightmarish degree by an animated rainforest.

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences, but also do not give 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.
- Try to remember to put quotation marks around your choices. This makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording.
- Re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first. Remember that you are not being asked to write about the whole paragraph but only about the language which relates to the particular question.
- 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 general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks.
- If you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning for each of your choices. That can give you half marks for the question. Explain in your own words what the word or phrase means in the context of the passage.
- To explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase, because of the connotations and associations of the language. Often there is more than one possible effect.
- Include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names); think about sounds as well as visual effects.

Question 3: Summarise (a) what the Kalahari expedition offers a traveller, as described in Passage B; and (b) the challenges *and* potential problems faced by visitors to the rainforest, as described in Passage A.

(20 marks)

To answer this question successfully responses needed to identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly and in their own words. Centres are reminded that this is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point, and in a different register and genre from those of the passages. There were twenty-three possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the candidates. Most responses showed awareness of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. **Section (a)** often contained more points than **section (b)**, which tended to revert to the story of Julia's experience rather than answer the question. Points 2, 8 and 13 were rarely made in **section (a)**; in **section (b)** the most commonly made points were 14, 16, 19, and 20. There was occasional confusion between the two sections and passages, with dense undergrowth in both, bad weather in the desert and lions roaring in the rainforest.

A large number of candidates this session gave their summary response partially in note form. Candidates were credited in the Reading mark for writing a split summary half in notes and half in sentences, but the Writing mark was limited when assessed against the criteria for quality of writing. It is not appropriate to use notes in the summary as this is a way of avoiding having to write in concise and fluent sentences, as is required in the Writing assessment for this question. Listed notes tended to repeat the same point, for example that of the mud/flash floods/mini-torrents several times and were therefore deemed to be repetitive. Candidates who used notes as all or part of their answer also often used phrases copied from the passages rather than their own words, and again this affected the mark awarded for quality of writing. It is important that candidates understand the nature of the task, including the requirements for concision and own words. Answers longer than two sides were not unusual, along with note form, narrative, and the style of the original texts.

Candidates need to be aware that it is not expected for responses to exceed the stipulated length of one page of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which were 'excessively long' (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) scored 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page; small handwriting and word-processing can fit more than 15 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account. Even where responses were over the length requirement, they rarely gained all 15 reading points, and lost the 5 writing marks. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed. Higher marks for writing are awarded where responses consist of varied and fluent sentence structures and give just enough information about the points to convey each one clearly. Long explanations or repetition and importantly, copying from the passages, should be avoided. From Passage B the second paragraph was often copied word for word, as was paragraph four from Passage A. The wording of the response needed to be changed from the text to show understanding.

Weaker responses were muddled and adopted the wrong focus for this question, presenting the first part of the summary as an advertisement to visit the Kalahari and recounting as narrative Julia's experience in the rainforest in the second part. In section (a), which was generally done somewhat better, the focus was often on where one would go and what one would see – for example the rocky escarpments and San bushmen performing various activities – rather than on what visitors would do themselves and on the positive experiences on offer, as required by the question.

Better responses selected and re-ordered the relevant information from the passages, with a clear focus on the actual questions, within the prescribed length, and using own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary, more or less equally balanced. While it was acceptable to give the points in the order in which they appeared in the passage, more able candidates changed the sequence so that related points could be grouped together. For example, in Passage A the insects and the leeches belong together, and in Passage B the hunting expedition goes logically with being taught how to track and how to make weapons.

Awkward syntax was prevalent where a cut and paste approach had been adopted. Weak responses used lifted phrases, such as 'protocols for wildlife encounters', in a way that suggested they did not understand their meaning, and there was repetition of the points used more than once in the passage, such as tracking and survival skills. Many responses continued for up to two pages, and used quotations or wrote in lists or in a commentary style. A few tried to compare the Kalahari desert to the Ecuadorian rainforest. Long introductory statements, intrusive comments, or unnecessary details were often given, such as the kind of

animal spoor to be looked out for. These long explanations tended either to reduce the amount of space available for dealing with other points or to make the summary as a whole longer than the permitted length.

The following specimen answer gives points simply and clearly, paraphrased into the writer's own words. It includes all 23 points, but if handwritten would easily fit onto one page.

Section (a)

A trip to the Kalahari offers stunning panoramic landscapes worthy of photographs and the rare privilege of visiting the artistic decorated rock sites. The traveller learns how to survive in the bush and gets to know and share the lives of the San Bush people, thanks to the guide who is known and trusted by the tribe. There is a huge range of wild animals to be seen, and the thrill of hearing the lions roar. The San teach visitors how to track animals and how to make hunting weapons in preparation for going on a hunt. They also relax by enjoying the music, dancing and crafts of the bush people. Other exciting experiences are sleeping and cooking in the open air in the bush. The San community benefits from the support provided by visitors.

Section (b)

The thick foliage and roots of the rainforest makes it hard for walkers to keep their balance, and it is easy to get lost in such dense and unfamiliar terrain. Limited visibility and excessive noise make the atmosphere uncomfortable, and in addition there is the problem of the heat and humidity which make breathing difficult. At times there are tropical rainstorms which cause thick mud and dangerous flash floods. Large flying insects and leeches in the water attack visitors and inflict wounds. Injury and sickness are not easily treated when the nearest hospital is so far away.

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- Make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to make it clear what they mean.
- Do not copy whole phrases from the passages.
- Write no more than one side of average handwriting.
- Write in an informative style and never comment on or add to the content of the passage.
- Be careful to include only the information that answers the question.
- Make each point only once.
- Do not generalise the content of the passage.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/23
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for reading (40 marks), although there were 10 marks available for writing: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. The requirements for doing well were to:

- give equal attention to all sections of the question
- explain points concisely, but in sufficient detail to show their significance in the context
- use your own words where appropriate; do not copy whole phrases from the original
- be careful to give only information that is focused on the question
- only make the point once
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task
- pay attention to length.

Key messages about how candidates can improve their performance for each of the three types of questions will be considered in greater detail below.

General comments

This paper was similar in difficulty level to last year's paper and produced a similar standard of response to all three questions, which covered a wide range. Candidates found both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. For **Question 1** and **Question 2**, to achieve marks in the top band, candidates were expected to demonstrate thorough use of the passage and a wide range of discussion on language. Candidates wishing to score high marks should have a wide, appropriate vocabulary, both in order to express themselves and to understand the use of language in the reading passages. Responses were sometimes less strong because of the misunderstanding of an individual important word.

In **Question 3** most candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points, but some responses contained examples of lifting phrases and sentences from the passages rather than the use of own words. It is important that they use their own words as it otherwise suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original. On the other hand, when they rephrase a fact the meaning should not change. It is vital that responses are not significantly longer than the one page of normal handwriting required. The mark scheme for Quality of Writing indicates the marks awarded where the response exceeds the permitted length. If a response copied the passage the candidate would not score highly.

There did not seem to be any common misunderstandings of the passages. To achieve marks in the higher bands candidates were required to develop and assimilate the material in Passage A for **Question 1**, to understand the time scheme of the passage and Potter's passion for his sport, and the careful preparation needed to undertake the challenges of slack-lining.

While quality is more important than quantity on this paper, there needs to be enough of a response to meet the top band descriptors and for all parts of the question to be covered. It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated in all three questions. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. The importance of planning cannot therefore be overemphasised. Checking is also advisable, as marks may be lost through simple errors; for example, confusing the rope with the spire. There was evidence that many Centres now expect their candidates to plan first, with a corresponding improvement in the structure of responses and the coverage of all of the questions.

Most candidates answered their questions in appropriate English. There were no marks given for accuracy in this paper, although some responses were affected by unclear or limited style, or over-reliance on the language of the passages. The majority of responses were within the recommended length guidelines and thus were focused and without repetition, which can come with excessive length.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: You are Dean Potter being interviewed for an extreme sports magazine. You answer the following three questions only: Explain why and how you practise in preparation for the Lost Arrow Spire challenge. Describe your feelings as you walk the slack-line. What advice would you give people wanting to take-up this daring and exciting sport? Write the words of the interview, beginning with the first question.

(20 marks)

For the first part of the interview, good responses addressed both parts of the question; why and how Dean Potter practised. They were focused less on why he undertook such an extreme sport and more on why he needed to practise the particular skill of slack-lining. They also explained that due to the height and nature of the slack-line he could lose his life if he did not engage in rigorous training. Good responses also gave clear explanations of how he practised. The passage contained a good amount of detail about his earlier attempts; the height and nature of the rope, the use of a safety harness and the need to focus on his orange T-shirt. In better responses these details were well integrated into Potter's explanation of the need for meticulous and intense preparation, and the need to overcome his fear and tame the nylon rope. They combined the mechanics of how he practised with explanations of why it was vital to feel fully prepared before attempting the legendary Lost Arrow Spire. In less good responses the detail from the passage was not modified or developed and in weaker responses the wording was similar to the original or included lifted phrases, for example, 'demonic unpredictability and curved bounces', and 'still felt like a novice'. The effective use of detail displays a close reading of the passage, whereas the mechanical use of detail does not show a good level of reading or understanding.

For the second interview question, good responses were well focused on Potter's thoughts and feelings as he walked the lost Arrow spire in the autumn. There were opportunities to make references to his training sessions in the spring and summer, and the lessons learned from them, though responses needed to avoid repeating points included in the first section. They were expected to select ideas and details most relevant to each part of the interview without duplicating them. Some responses confused the chronology of events and did not distinguish between the practice sessions, where he wore a harness, and his first walk without it and in front of an audience across the Yosemite valley. A misunderstanding of the events in the passage led to some repetition and inaccurate points in Potter's account. Some responses also misunderstood that due to his exhilaration and confidence, he walked the Lost Arrow spire three times in all. Good responses displayed a judicious selection of relevant material that was modified and effectively organised and focused on each interview question. They wrote appropriately about Potter's feelings and conveyed his initial anxiety and also his elation at completing the challenge. Less good responses contained copied phrases from the passage or the over-use of words such as 'terror' or 'pounding' without explanations of the reasons for these feelings.

In most responses the third part of the interview was the least developed, containing quite general ideas, or a summary of previous points. This final section provided an opportunity for candidates to display an implicit understanding of ideas in the passage by developing them and integrating them into their own ideas. Good responses included relevant advice that was inferred from the passage and was well focused on the specific sport of slack-lining. Some made reference to the physical and mental requirements of such a dangerous sport, the need to spend long hours practising outside in the sun, the precision and patience required to control the rope and the determination to continue even after falling. They also included relevant practical advice for beginners to the sport. The advice to use sun cream, the benefits of being barefoot and the advantages of using a nylon rope displayed a close reading of the passage. Less good responses included ideas that were not linked to the passage or specific to the demands of slack-lining. Some contained detailed advice about diet, fitness and exercise regimes, personal trainers and agents that could have been applicable to any sport. Some also included philosophical and potentially relevant advice about the need to overcome fear, to persevere and not accept failure. Without specific references to the particular demands of slack-lining or to Potter's own experiences, they were rather general and clichéd comments.

Good responses were focused on the three interview questions, as instructed. Less good responses included additional questions that led to a loss of focus. Some included a series of short questions that elicited only brief responses which did not allow Potter's thoughts and feelings to be fully explained or

developed, or his character to be fully conveyed to the audience. Some responses contained extended and quite intrusive contributions from the interviewer; they contained information and comments that should have been articulated through Potter. Good responses created a convincing voice and personality; Potter was shown to be a determined professional with a passion and talent for his sport. The interview gave the audience an insight into the character of the man and also the dangers and rewards of his chosen sport.

The writing mark reflected the clarity and fluency of the report, and how well it used language to explain Potter's thoughts and feelings about slack-lining. Higher writing marks were awarded for a range of effective and interesting vocabulary. Good responses were well structured and used an appropriate register and language. Less good responses relied on the wording of the passage or used colloquial expressions and a limited range of appropriate vocabulary.

Here are some ways in which this type of response could be improved:

- Answer all parts of the question.
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to the type of response you are writing.
- Be aware of the main issues and themes in the passage and use plenty of detail to support your ideas.
- Create a suitable voice and tone to show your understanding of what you have read.

Question 2: Re-read the descriptions of (a) the valley below and the Lost Arrow Spire above, as described in paragraph 5, beginning, 'As autumn casts....' and (b) Dean Potter and his actions, as described in paragraph 6, beginning, 'His face adorned...'. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

Candidates are required to select examples of appropriate language from both paragraphs. Most responses were balanced and many candidates identified a sufficient number of words and phrases. Paragraphs 5 and 6 contained a range of interesting language and images from which appropriate examples could be selected. Less good responses only included one or two examples in each section; this is not sufficient to display an understanding of the writer's use of language and to secure marks in the higher bands. The responses were not always focused on the task. In **section (a)** candidates were asked to select language used to describe the valley and the Lost Arrow Spire. The choices, 'Potter steels himself' and 'fearful fascination' refer to people and therefore could not be rewarded.

Credit is given for the ability to select evocative or unusual words that have an extra layer of meaning, or which have certain connotations, and for displaying an understanding of their effects in the context of the passage. Good answers contained a range of appropriate examples with clear explanations of why the writer used specific words and phrases. In **section (b)** less good responses contained examples of quite ordinary language, for example, 'breathes long and deep' or 'leaps barefoot'. These do not allow deeper meanings, associations or effects to be explored; they were often accompanied by simple or literal meanings. The phrase, 'reddened by endless days in the sun' led candidates to explain why Potter was sunburned and not why the language was effective. Explanations of reasons cannot be rewarded.

Good responses in **section (a)** included comments about the general atmosphere in the valley or the contrast between the valley floor and the spire. Responses can be rewarded for giving an overview of effects if they are supported by specific examples and precise explanations of how individual words contribute to these effects. Good responses contained clear explanations of how the words 'cloak', 'black' and 'mottled' created a sinister atmosphere or conveyed the idea of death and decay, and why the words 'sharp' and 'piercing' might suggest pain or danger. Less good responses contained general comments without explanations of specific words and phrases, for example 'black oaks creates a creepy atmosphere'. An overview needs to be supported by analysis at word level in order to secure marks in the top bands. Better responses examined the effects of language in the context of the dangers faced by Potter and the threats posed by the valley and the tower of rock.

In **section (b)** good responses showed an understanding that Potter was under pressure but determined to master the rope, and relevant examples were selected. There were opportunities to link words and phrases that conveyed similar meanings and effects. For example 'etched with concentration' and 'anxiety is drawn' both suggest that Potter's feelings are evident from the expressions on his face. The words 'taut' and 'strain' both indicate stress or tightness. There were opportunities in both sections to group similar words and phrases together and to explain how they contributed to the overall effects.

The naming of a linguistic or literary device, even when accurately identified, can only be rewarded when accompanied by an explanation of how it is working within context. In some responses the explanation of the

simile, 'like a snake' included the words of the original 'squirms and wriggles'. The elusive nature of snakes, their potential danger and their similarities to the slack-line were not always fully explored. Repetition of the original wording to explain meanings, for example 'awe inspiring' means that it creates the feeling of awe, does not display a full understanding of the writer's use of language and cannot be credited.

Good responses contained short quotations with precise and clear explanations of the meanings and effects of specific words. Less good responses included long quotations and general comments that did not refer to individual words. These do not demonstrate the skill of selection and count as one choice. Even in shorter examples, not all of the selected words were explored. In the phrase, 'adorned with a pointed beard' the use of 'adorned' was often ignored and in the phrase, 'tuning it like a loose cello string', the word 'tuning' was not always explained.

Some responses were written in a grid format with word-meaning-effect, and not in continuous prose. The responses were usually undeveloped and mechanical and were awarded marks in the lower bands. They often contained literal meanings that were not explained in context, and repetition of meanings and effects. A grid format reduces choices to single words, and there is no opportunity to group examples or provide an overview.

The following specimen response includes the selected quotations in the mark scheme, and fewer choices than this would be more than sufficient for the award of the top mark, provided that the quality of the explanation was high and consistent enough. This sample answer is given so that Centres and candidates can appreciate what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question.

(a) the valley below and Lost Arrow spire above, in paragraph 5,

The word 'mottled' suggests that the leaves are turning brown and decaying after they have fallen from the trees. 'Black oaks' gives a feeling of darkness to the valley and the word 'black' is often associated with death. The word 'chill' suggests the coldness or unwelcoming atmosphere of the valley; it can also be associated with feelings of fear. The phrase 'cloaks the valley floor' implies that that something is being hidden or concealed. A sinister scene is created; the valley may be holding secrets from Potter and we are also reminded that he could fall to his death, like the leaves. The word 'needle' to describe the tower indicates that it is pointed and it could be associated with pain. The word 'piercing' suggests that it is tall and sharp enough to puncture or damage the sky. 'Steely spire' suggests the height and also the harshness of the rock, metal can be a hard and potentially dangerous element, as in its use for knives. This description reinforces the sharpness of the rock, which is also described as 'awe inspiring', suggesting that it looks impressive or evokes feelings of fear and wonder. The descriptions also suggest that Potter faces a daunting task that is fraught with danger.

(b) Dean Potter and his actions in paragraph 6

The writer's use of language shows us that Potter is tense and under extreme pressure after months of practice. The word 'strained' indicates that he tired and stretched to the limit, while the word 'taut' indicates the tension and tightness in his body. 'Anxiety is drawn on his face' suggests that his feelings are plain for all to see, as though dark lines have been deliberately put onto his face. The word 'drawn' also suggests tiredness and anxiety. The reader can imagine the focus that Potter displays by the use of 'etched with concentration'. Again it suggests that an intense expression has been carved permanently and deeply into his face so that his feelings are evident. The word 'pinning his eyes' also indicates his extreme focus, as though his eyes are attached to a precise spot and he will not allow his concentration to wander. The writer conveys the idea of Potter as a master of his sport. The phrase 'tuning it like a loose cello string' shows the rope as a precision instrument which requires careful preparation and skill for it to perform well. The rope needs to be perfect and only he can determine when it is ready for use. He 'struggles to tame the line' suggests the wildness of the rope; it is like a dangerous animal that must be brought under control. The word 'struggles' implies that this is not an easy task and we can understand Potter's anxiety and tension. In the simile 'squirms and wriggles like a snake' we can imagine the rope trying to escape from Potter's grasp as it writhes and moves from side to side like a long thin reptile. Snakes can be associated with cunning and danger, reminding us again of the threats that Potter faces.

Here are some ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Avoid general comments such as 'the writer makes you feel that you are really there' or 'this is a very descriptive phrase'. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.

- Your first task is to choose some words and phrases that seem powerful to you. Do not write out whole sentences but use single words or phrases of two or three words. Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- Treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them.
- If you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in the context, for each of your choices. This may give you up to half marks for the question if the meaning is accurate.
- When you explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase. It may suggest more than one thing.
- Learn to recognise images and explain them (but you do not need to know or give their technical names). Say what they convey within the paragraph, and how they reinforce each other, if this is the case.

Question 3: Summarise (a) why daredevils risk their lives as described in Passage A; and (b) what the onlookers see above and Potter sees below, as described in Passage B. Use your own words as far as possible.

(20 marks)

To answer this question successfully responses needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly in the candidate's own words. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point. There were 23 possible answers in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. This was the highest-scoring question for many of the responses. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate form, style and tone for a summary. Better responses avoided introductory statements and commentary and concentrated on factual summary, more or less equally balanced across the two sections.

Most responses answered both parts of question equally well and included a number of relevant points from both passages. Many secured high marks for content, some achieving the maximum of 15 points. To achieve marks in Bands 1 and 2, the material should be re-organised effectively in a concise, non-repetitive response. While it is acceptable to give points in the same order that they appear in the passage, good responses displayed a more effective organisation of the information; similar points were grouped together which enhanced the concision and also the fluency of the writing.

Some of the writing marks are awarded for focus. In **section (a)** good responses were focused on why daredevils risk their lives; they contained relevant information about the reasons for performing daring stunts; less good responses included descriptions of the exploits. **Section (b)** was generally more focused with fewer unnecessary details and comments, resulting in more concise responses. Some responses included descriptions of Potter's facial features and his signs of stress that were unlikely to be seen by onlookers on the ground, and some included the shouts from the onlookers and sounds of the Yosemite Falls. These points were not relevant to the task and could not be rewarded.

Writing marks were also awarded for concision. Good responses included factual information, expressed clearly without comments, examples or repetition. Less good responses contained details of the daredevils, from Passage B, and overlong explanations of their stunts, instead of summarising their reasons for performing them. It was not necessary to include names (e.g. Locklear or Farini) or to describe specific feats and where they took place. These detailed accounts of daredevil stunts were often written in the same order, and sometimes using the same wording as the original and this led to the repetition of several points. Good responses displayed the ability to select relevant information and they included brief explanations of the daredevils' motivations, without detailed explanations and examples. In most responses **section (b)** was briefer and more concise and in some cases this prevented the summary from exceeding the required length. Some included statistics about the size of valley when it would have been sufficient only to mention its great height and width, and some included descriptions of Potter's actions with the rope when it was only necessary to state that both could be seen from below.

Candidates are rewarded for writing in their own words. In less good responses, words and phrases were copied from both passages even though there were opportunities to use suitable alternatives. In **section (a)** some contained the phrase, 'with little publicity and no such thing as television', which was not relevant to the task, or the phrase 'fame and fortune' which led to repetition. Using the words of the original often led to unnecessary commentary and loss of concision. In better responses own words were used for 'one up-manship', 'seek thrills' and 'showmanship'. In part **(b)** some responses contained phrases lifted from paragraph 7 that were not relevant, for example, 'on a tiny island in the sky', and some used the description from the passage of the buses, roads and maintenance lodge that seemed 'no larger than his fingernail'.

Good responses used the words ‘tiny’ or ‘miniature’ and used paraphrases when describing the expanse and greenery of the valley.

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

In some scripts there was little evidence of note taking or planning of responses. Taking brief notes of the salient points from the passage helps to avoid the copying of phrases and the inclusion of unnecessary detail or explanations. It also indicates where points have been repeated. Relevant information can be re-organised and similar points can be combined into longer sentences, enhancing the fluency and also the concision of the writing.

Candidates should be advised that responses should follow the guidance for length as responses longer than the permitted length will achieve low writing marks for this question. The expectation is a side of A4 of average handwriting (8/9 words per line). Responses which are ‘excessively long’ (i.e. more than a page and a half of average handwriting) score 0 marks for writing. Some candidates with very small handwriting clearly wrote at too great a length, even though their answers fitted onto a page; small handwriting and word-processing can fit up to 18 words onto a line, and this must obviously be taken into account. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the amount of material included in a summary, as well as to the language in which it is expressed.

When reading the following specimen answer, candidates should note that the points are explained simply, and are also paraphrased into the writer’s own words. The response includes all available points, but if handwritten it would fit onto a side of paper with space to spare.

Section (a) Why daredevils risk their lives (Passage B)

Daredevils risk their lives for the adrenaline rush and excitement of showing off their skills to amazed audiences and fans. Their acts not only entertain; they can improve the morale of participants and spectators. Daredevils enjoy earning money and competing with, or trying to outdo, each other’s skills. Some enjoy a brief moment of fame while others want world-wide recognition for their super-hero acts and to become part of the history of stunt performers.

Section (b) What the spectators see above and what Potter sees below (Passage A)

As the spectators look up and see the tower of rock against the blue sky, they become aware of the height of the valley, and when Potter appears on the slack-line they see how far he has to walk across the width of the valley. When Potter looks down he sees the vast expanse of the valley covered in leaves and trees with a few winding roads. He sees the onlookers below and the Yosemite Falls while in the distance he can observe miniature buses and a building.

Here are some ways in which summaries could be improved:

- Make points briefly, but in sufficient detail to show what they mean.
- Use your own words as far as possible. Do not copy whole phrases from the original.
- Write no more than one side of average handwriting.
- Write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage.
- Be careful to give only information that answers the question.
- Make a point only once.
- Be specific; do not generalise.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/31

Directed Writing and Composition

Key Messages

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

In order to achieve high marks, responses needed to show:

- use of appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- ideas structured logically and sentences sequenced in well-formed individual paragraphs
- credible and effective arguments and realistic, original and engaging content in descriptions and stories
- use of a variety of well-formed sentence types, including complex sentences
- use of a wide variety of effective and appropriate vocabulary.

General Comments

Many of the scripts were well written in an assured and fluent style. Ideas and arguments were presented in paragraphs that were often well sequenced and of an appropriate length. There was consistent evidence of varied sentence structures and a wide range of vocabulary in the best scripts, and only minor and infrequent error was encountered in this range.

At middle and lower levels, punctuation needed more care. It was quite common to encounter sentence separation errors in responses that used commas instead of full stops. Commas were sometimes not used in important places or were used indiscriminately. Apostrophes were also inconsistently used. Many letters did well in attempting to use effective argumentative expression and vocabulary, although spelling was often inconsistent in both parts of the exam. In many responses, in spite of the fact that sentence construction was quite well handled, there were inaccuracies when it came to the use of prepositions, tenses, article agreement, plurals and verb formations. Time put aside for proofreading or editing, at the end of each writing section, would have certainly been a good opportunity to correct some, if not many, of these often careless errors and help improve the quality of the writing overall.

Responses to **Question 1** were generally lively, often challenging, and rarely reiterated the language of the original article. Most answers understood the importance of identifying the writer's opinions before engaging with these in order to develop original ideas and create strong rebuttal points. It was important that the responses had strong, individual voices and the vast majority of these did well to realistically challenge the writer and adopt a mature style which still had the liveliness of teenage argument. Weaker answers should attempt to argue with the views of the writer rather than agreeing with many of his ideas as the latter approach can cause responses to 'dip into' the language of the original. However, there were fewer instances of this type of response this session.

The content of some of the compositions varied widely. The most popular discursive question was **Question 2a** as, quite often, the spark of argument from a teenager's perspective in **Question 1**, ignited a similar and rather passionate response in this argumentative essay that asked whether 'too much pressure' was placed on teenagers by adults and teachers. This topic also provoked a strong reaction so that the answers here, in many ways, adopted the same voice and style as that used in responding to the writer in **Question 1**.

Considering the teenage angle and perspective of the first discursive essay, **Question 2b**, on the topic 'Charity begins at Home' was generally less popular. However, there were still some mature and engaging responses that revealed inquisitive and reflective thinking, regarding the role individual countries should play in helping those others afflicted by the perils of nature, war and other major disasters.

The best compositions, according to Examiners, were responses to the descriptive titles. Although there were fewer responses to **Question 3a**, on the major cycling race coming through one's town, those encountered by Examiners were energetic, colourful and wonderfully broken down into separate stages: **(a)** an indistinguishable blur approaching, **(b)** the physicality and sensory detail of smell, sounds and touch as the race comes through the crowd and finally, **(c)** another blur of dust and shadow as the onlooker reflects and considers emotions and sensations.

Question 3b was by far the most popular choice as a School is a known environment; the circumstances leading up to being 'locked in' often seemed drawn from personal experience and the contrast of the familiar versus the frightening unknown of a place at night, empty and dark, all worked extremely well to give free rein to imagination and inventiveness with good effect. The creation of an atmosphere and the building up of tension were usually very well done, achieved by clever metaphorical and figurative language.

The second most popular choice was narrative writing, and a wide variety of situations were contrived to justify the title, of **Question 4a**, 'Caught in the Act'. A few situations were humorous, but most were serious and dramatic. The 'lost' objects of **Question 4b**, ranged from codes for military weapons to necklaces and diaries; these narratives sometimes tended to be less realistic than those for **Question 4a**. The ability to notice and record sensitive details of the setting at dramatic moments, so that they encapsulated the emotion, was clearly well dealt with in story-writing techniques.

Examiners commented on the maturity of thinking in many of the letters for **Question 1**. In response to the rather covert 'anti-technology' views put forward by the journalist, there was a much wider variety of approaches and views than initially expected. There was certainly evidence that individual thinking is encouraged and that planning plays a large part in writing logical, developed and engaging answers. However, accuracy was often sacrificed to ideas and the flow of writing; proofreading could have eradicated some errors in tenses and misuse of prepositions.

Examiners also highlighted the fact that they periodically marked some highly original descriptive and narrative pieces that entertained and engaged the reader.

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1: Write a letter to the journalist in which you comment on his views and argue for your own views about teenagers and digital communication. In your letter you should: give the advantages of digital communication for teenagers, address the writer's concerns and argue your own views. Begin your letter: 'Dear Sir, I have read your letter and would like to comment on your point of view....'

(25 marks)

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

The article often provoked strong and detailed responses. As the article itself implied, this topic is regarded by the age-range for this paper as their area of knowledge, their familiarity with it being very much a matter of teenage pride, self-esteem and status among their peers. In answer to the first bullet point, the response was simply asked to give a factual account of the advantages stated in the first half of the passage and implied in the second half. Such was the complexity of some arguments and responses that it was important to deal with this one aspect before interrogating other aspects, or indeed challenging his associated negative ideas about the effect this digital communication has on relationships, families and friends.

Responses to texts usually follow a certain trend, or even a predictable approach in dealing with the arguments, but Examiners commented that because there was a strong belief system already about digital communication, responses were often unpredictable and engaging in their complexity and attitudes.

The marks for reading

No extra credit was given for expressing views on one side rather than the other, but it became obvious that most responses had sufficient views on both sides of the argument to, in general, achieve fairly good reading marks by identifying what was requested in the first bullet, and providing some reaction to these in the rest of the letter.

The 'advantages' of digital communication, as outlined by the journalist, provided argument from the outset as each 'positive' aspect was wrapped in rather sarcastic and 'know it all' type of thinking that reflected his fears about society and members within it. Responses that purely dealt with 'how digital communication helps teenagers' ended up with a long list that sifted out the plus points that journalist had to concede to in his article. Unfortunately, without planning or forethought, many responses divided into advantages and disadvantages, followed by any additional ideas that emerged after dealing with these two. Fortunately, few responses were not tempted down this rather blinkered route as the provocative writing of the journalist meant that one could not just accept the taunting views, as in the opening sentence, 'text, text, text, that's all teenagers think about', without considering whether this was indeed true or false. So, in many ways, the text elicited many views, thoughts and evaluation, but it became clear that the writing needed to be clear enough to express and develop these views without becoming convoluted or indeed forgetting to deal with some of the advantages in the process.

The strongest responses realised that there were different layers to what the journalist was saying and, after digesting the article as a whole, they approached the writer with a good overview that showed they *were* aware of the many advantages of digital communication. As an introduction, they gave a few examples of the positive aspects, but they turned the tables on the journalist by adopting the role of the expert on this topic. As a result, he became 'old' or 'out of touch' and, from this point, it became easier to deal with his attitude and the issues he raises. There were many sophisticated responses that dealt with all or most of the reading material by putting the onus of any 'problems' to do with digital communication, firmly on the shoulders of adults. This cleverly dealt with points made about 'spending too much time immersed in technology' or the example of teenagers not wanting to go away with parents, if no broadband is available, by making the parents responsible for their teenagers' 'addiction' or dependence. Many argued that it was parents who put them in front of televisions to silence them and bought computers and mobile phones to know what they were doing. This 'blame' aspect was a reasonable rebuttal point, but many over-relied on this instead of picking up on other aspects of the digital age.

The prevalence of 'cyber-bullying' was dealt with by saying that 'parents at least know that their children are physically safe, at home in front of a screen' and 'the only thing that has changed down the years is the medium'. Some also blamed parents for not equipping their offspring with sufficient 'survival skills' as 'cyber-bullying only happens to some children'. Similarly, the mobile phone was seen as a reassuring device to help parent and child, as well as the bonus fact that children can be reached in cases of emergency. Few responses were fazed by the vast amount of facts and statistics cited by the writer, regarding the amount of time spent by teenagers swapping videos, taking pictures, accessing social networking sites and speaking on mobile phones. The rationalisation for this was that teenagers accept that this is just another stage in development that our society is going through, much of it very useful and beneficial, and the main problem lies with the writer himself and 'the fact that he cannot adjust to modern society'. Many responses even dismissed the problem raised by the writer regarding 'on-line predators'. Mature responses cited the fact that before this technological age children were always told 'stranger danger' and to beware. Instead of reacting with fright or conceding that this has emerged as a serious problem, rebuttal points once again laid the blame squarely at the feet of parents and teachers or retorted that they already 'know the dangers of online communication'.

There were some responses that tended to rely on summarising and simple rebuttal points without development or evaluation. However, the majority of responses understood some of the complexity of the text and did well to challenge some issues where the writer had used spin tactics.

Whilst the text was challenging and dealt with many fairly complex issues, what emerged was a sense of a 'mantle of the expert' in which teenagers, or adults, with what they feel is extensive understanding of a subject, feel empowered and able to argue convincingly. Many of the responses had that sense of confidence and were convincing in their arguments.

The marks for writing

Good answers were structured. The strongest responses had a distinctive voice that was consistent throughout. This style and voice worked much better than those that tended to become too impassioned as the aim was to appear level-headed and adult when dealing with someone out to shock, blame and frighten. These measured letters had a quiet yet assured style that, occasionally, made use of some sophisticated vocabulary or quoted Freud in order to establish a sense of 'one up man ship'. They understood the motive of the journalist and, at times, borrowed from his style to sound more authoritative.

Many answers understood the importance of a well-pitched introduction to the letters. The best responses, from the outset, displayed a respectful if slightly guarded tone before gradually introducing some illuminating views of their own and, on occasion, a hint of indignation as it became clear that this was an even 'fight'. Although some answers over-stepped the mark, at times, by becoming frustrated or annoyed, most of the good responses maintained a generally dignified stance.

Good answers were written in a clear, authoritative and fluent style. These candidates used a variety of sentence lengths and types, and their language was precise enough to express shades of meaning and recommendations that were sometimes sophisticated, engaging and enthusiastic. A satisfactory writing style, attracting average marks, used simpler language and format less capable of expressing individual, precise thought, but nevertheless competent, without undue error or awkward style. Some candidates needed to improve their writing. They made frequent errors, some of which were serious, and used limited language with many errors in syntax, tense, punctuation and prepositions.

The most common errors were those of punctuation. There were some errors of sentence separation and the same candidates were likely to use commas instead of full stops, although Examiners commented on not seeing as many responses that generally fall into this category. The engagement with the reading material, desire to express own ideas more clearly in order to be 'heard', and the clear understanding of the vocabulary used in the text (and used correctly in the answers), often made some **Question 1s** stand out as better pieces of writing than the essays.

Some candidates had major problems with syntax and article agreement. For the most part, they could be followed, but it was difficult to understand some of the views that were attempted at times.

Many candidates wrongly used 'Also', 'But' and 'And' to start sentences, some repeatedly so. The same candidates used these words to start paragraphs, an aspect that showed that, in many cases, paragraphing was not understood.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Be aware that even though the text is something familiar, you read it at least twice in order to assess the viewpoint, perspective and motives of the writer you will be addressing in your answer.
- For each bullet point requested, make a plan of the points you want to consider in your letter/writing.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully of how you would address a journalist or the style you would adopt to successfully get across your point of view.
- Write with a voice. Think of your persona in the task, think of your audience and express your point of view firmly and, if appropriately, with conviction.
- As always, end sentences with full stops, put commas in the right places and remember apostrophes.

Section 2: Composition

Candidates are reminded that half of the marks are given for the content of the writing and the way in which it is structured. The criteria vary according to which of the three genres is chosen. The other half of the marks are given for style and accuracy.

Question 2: Argumentative/discursive writing

- (a) **'Parents and teachers place too much pressure on teenagers and expect them to work too hard at School and at home.'** What are your views on this statement? (25 marks)

OR

- (b) **'Charity begins at home; therefore each country should help itself rather than helping others.'** (25 marks)

There were many cases where all or most candidates in a Centre chose the argumentative/discursive option regardless of whether they were good at writing essays. While some Centres' standards of answering **Question 2** continued to improve, it was important that candidates were confident that they not only had the ideas, but also the *technique* necessary to tackle this type of question.

The most popular question was **Question 2a**. Here, the candidates' current educational experience was an accessible subject-matter, and for the most part, the compositions were well constructed and paragraphed. The responses were able to consider a number of aspects of the topic, and the individual's own views were usually a plea for a balance of tasks set for them by School and home. There was always a clear ability to discuss why too much or too little pressure was exerted on them by School or home, and only a few were purely content with just a catalogue of examples. Some of the best answers made subtle distinctions between ambitions, hopes, expectations and wishes for candidates by teachers and parents.

There were a few very mature essays that poignantly highlighted the predicament they were in: the sacrifices parents were making in order for them to attend a prestigious School, the disappointments of parents who had no education and who were now resting all their hopes and dreams on the shoulders of their offspring and the fact that they, as candidates and children with no real voice, had no right to complain and yet wished that some sort of intervention would take place. In many responses, this last aspect manifested itself as anger and aggression in the hands of those who could not communicate frustration.

Very few candidates scored very low marks for content and structure since they had enough to write on the topic. However, only a few candidates scored high marks for style and accuracy since there was little sense of argument, voice, rhetorical devices or discursive style. Too often, without a more mature perspective, and ability to see the predicament from a distance, paragraphs could have been presented in almost any order which did not reflect well on what should have been an argument or discussion, with a premise, reasons, development and resolution.

The second option was done well by some very mature and well informed individuals who not only had instances and situations that they could discuss in some detail or with some authority. Mostly, responses discussed knee-jerk reactions by countries that helped others in times of distress; tsunamis and hurricanes featured due to the events within the last ten years or so. However, no one really got to grips with what 'charity' really involved world wide. It would have been better to have considered what it meant in a village, town or city in order to understand why it is not the huge, dramatic canvas of worldwide events that should tear at our heart strings. The 'sensationalism' of many campaigns to alleviate hunger and poverty tended to take centre stage, hence the irony of the title 'Charity begins at home'.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Make sure you have a variety of ideas at your disposal (but not too many to deal with).
- Build them into a linked structure.
- Develop each idea at sufficient length and sequence your sentences.
- Try to avoid writing in an abstract way and use specific examples to engage your reader's attention.
- Use clear and precise English.

Question 3: Descriptive Writing

(a) A major cycling race is coming through your town centre. Imagine you are at the front of the crowd waiting for the cyclists to appear. Describe the sense of expectation and the arrival of the competitors.

(25 marks)

OR

(b) You are accidentally locked in your School after everyone has left. Describe the atmosphere and how this makes you feel.

(25 marks)

Option **(b)** was the more popular choice. There were some wonderfully atmospheric pieces in which the ordinary moved to the extra-ordinary in a place that should be secure and safe. There was often strong links in the chain of emotions and events; little movements that would not be noticed during the day, the smell of disinfectant that is now menacing or a small draft of air that touches a cheek, menacingly, but is only from the opening of a door.

The most successful pieces were those that dealt with the abstract. Responses that tried to add more detail by, for instance, breaking into the head teacher's office or having some specific event occur, more often became narrative by the very nature of telling an account. The most engaging or frightening places were often the most usual places that are normally ignored, such as the gym – strange shapes of ropes and apparatus turning it into a giant sailing ship and the wind whistling outside creating that of the sound of sea,

and so on. Art rooms were other places where the ordinary easels and shapes of papier maché became underground caverns with monsters and strange smells of alien creatures.

There were very few, only a handful, of cycle races described. This was a shame as Examiners mentioned the sheer physicality of muscles, sweat and hearts almost emerging out of strained chests. The outline earlier, regarding using a basic three stage approach to something like a race, forms the basis of good advice when approaching something that occurs so fast it is over in a second. One of the excellent essays went further by freeze-framing certain photo finish snatches of movement. In one, the emphasis was on the colour of jerseys as they appeared bright like flags in the wind or the split second a competitor grabbed a cup of water, lifted and crushed the plastic as the water fell over his grimaced face. There was a great deal of potential in this description, but the idea of 'stage' or 'freeze frame' can be applied to any description in which the reader needs the speed of action slow enough to react and be enthralled or appalled.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Do not write a static description. Allow for a little movement and a short time span.
- However, do not confuse a description with a story.
- Try to make your description as real as possible. You should be able to see and hear what you write.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, although do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.
- Be especially careful to use full stops at the ends of sentences.

Question 4: Narrative writing

(a) Write a story entitled 'Caught in the Act'.

(25 marks)

OR

(b) Begin a story with a character who has lost something important.

(25 marks)

There were many responses to both titles in this genre. For **Question 4a** there were some very original stories. One particular one involved an old angler, alone and mourning his recently dead companion. The tale of landing the fish is an effective play on 'caught in the act' but it is so dramatic, set in a storm and with just the old man against the elements as if a metaphor for life or for trying to regain the life of the dead friend. Instead, after hours a huge, ugly monster of a fish is finally overthrown and, instead of selling the fish for riches, the old man buries it next to the grave of the dearly departed. This was one of the many surreal and unusual tales that this title elicited.

A few candidates used an excessive amount of dialogue, which was dull and bland, and which added little or nothing to the narrative. Many stories emerged, predictably, about a bank robbery, most of which failed due to a serious lack of knowledge in this type of activity! The strongest pieces were those that began small, from something familiar and gradually built up character and narrative at different ratios, but incrementally so that there was sufficient description and preparation for the climax.

Many candidates responded to **Question 4b**. They wrote a good narrative if they built up their story layer by layer, leading to the climax with a clever twist or a definitive resolution. Examples of 'lost' items varied from the ordinary: pens, rings, car keys and a passport. A really clever and inspiring narrative involved a lost pocket watch. All the way through the response, poetic references were sentimentally described. Finally, the climax poignantly revealed the watch to be a metaphor for the man's dead wife. Another, a war story entitled 'Fade to Black' was extremely engaging and sophisticated. A band of soldiers, their friendships drawn carefully in humour and in despair, slowly emerged against the backdrop of a barren ghost city. The place was also so well painted; 'scalding sunlight burned the entire town' and the pace was slowed down by the repetition of 'too quiet', 'too empty' 'too afraid'. The event is set in flashback and it becomes clear that the enemy, a group identical to their party, deliberately just kill one of them; the most likeable, most optimistic and strongest character in this 'Band of Brothers'. The deliberate slow motion death and slow motion reactions to the soldier's death leaves the reader feeling a sense of loss, mourning with the men who are now 'not soldiers, not men, my brothers'. War, violence and loss here is more than the 'games' boys play on the Internet, as the appeal is the humanity and the loss is loss of love, with little about violence except one brief mention of a shooting. Sometimes responses like these, under the pressure of the exam room and time limit, produce almost publishable type narratives.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Remember that stories do not consist of events alone.
- Include realistic details, description and the thoughts and feelings of characters in the story.
- Do not try to write a story with too long a time span.
- You can improve a story by using devices such as time lapses, flashbacks and two narrators.
- Make sure you use a wide range of appropriate language.
- Originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic.
- If you write more than you expected, make sure you do not get careless at the end of the story.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/32

Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

In order to achieve high marks, responses needed to show:

- use of an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- ideas structured logically and organised in effective paragraphs
- use of thoughtful and well-structured arguments, with detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- sentences constructed accurately and sentence types varied to create effects
- appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary selected with precision.

General comments

Candidates generally tackled the paper purposefully and produced interesting, well-considered responses. Responses showed an awareness of how marks were awarded and the requirements of the mark scheme. Some weaker scripts would have been improved by better time-management and a sounder grasp of the layout of the paper as more than one composition question was attempted more frequently than in previous years. Weaker responses to **Question 1** needed to use candidates' own words rather than the words and phrases of the passage.

Most responses showed real engagement with the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passage in their letters. Better responses assimilated the material and provided evaluative, persuasive letters. Weaker responses tended to reproduce the details in the passage in a more straightforward manner. These aspects are discussed in more detail later in this report.

Most responses showed a clear attempt to involve the reader in developed arguments, descriptions and narratives, with paragraphs used to guide the reader and shape the response. Some weaker responses needed to show more development of ideas and clearer paragraphing. More successful responses discussed ideas rather than stating or asserting them, especially in the discursive/argumentative writing.

The conventions and focus of each genre were well understood by many, especially those who planned their writing carefully. Most letters in **Question 1** were set out appropriately and the style was suitably persuasive. In **Question 2b**, ideas were structured appropriately by using the phrasing of the question and there was some thoughtful debate in **Question 2a**. Some weaker descriptive responses could be improved by a more consistently descriptive focus rather than a narrative one. In both narrative questions responses needed to shape stories with a clear ending in mind.

The best responses were characterised by the control of style and effect. Sentence types were varied and were consciously selected to shape the reader's expectations and response. Vocabulary was complex and ambitious in range but always selected carefully. Some weaker responses needed more care in the accurate construction and punctuation of sentences. Spelling errors had less of an effect on candidates' overall achievement but more care with basic punctuation was needed in the middle range of marks. Errors in the use of capital letters for names or for first person pronouns were common in some otherwise quite competent scripts, as were lapses in style where colloquial usages sometimes crept in, such as 'gonna'. Descriptions which began in the present tense lapsed into the past and often fluctuated between the two; narratives

slipped into the present tense, often where candidates wrote in the same style as they might recount a story orally. Responses should demonstrate appropriate use of written style throughout in order to be successful.

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1:

Read the magazine article opposite about a street child called Emmanuel who has achieved educational success.

You are Sister Jean. Write a letter to persuade local businesses to donate money to expand the work of the Archway Children's Centre.

In your letter you should:

- **explain the work of the Centre and why it is necessary**
- **use Emmanuel's story to support your appeal**
- **give reasons why local businesses should support the Centre'**

(25 marks)

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

Most responses showed a good understanding that a persuasive appeal, based on the details in the passage, was required here. They were written in a style which promoted the Archway Children's Centre in an emotive way, often using Emmanuel's story effectively. It was important to remember that Sister Jean, the founder of the Centre, was the writer of the letter. There was some misreading here with references to Emmanuel as 'my brother'. The term 'fostered' was also sometimes misread as if Sister Jean had adopted Emmanuel. A clearer understanding of the instructions for the task would also have produced stronger responses, as some referred directly to the magazine article, making for a clumsy style in which Sister Jean appeared to have read about, rather than founded, the Centre.

The marks for reading

Good responses followed the bullet points but showed awareness of the evaluative stance required for marks above Band 3. For example, the work of the Centre was sometimes characterised as 'giving children their childhood back', 'giving street children everything your own children have' or, in a clever reflection of the passage's imagery, 'holding the torch which lights their path to a happy adulthood.' These responses assimilated, rather than listed, the details of what the Centre provided and often prioritised education as the key component of their support for children. This thoughtful use of the passage was often accompanied by some probing ideas about Emmanuel's story. The Centre's help was seen as instrumental in his moral education as well as his academic progress by some able candidates, who used his eagerness to help other street children as an example of his unselfish character. Good responses also focused on his determination to succeed and how tenacious Sister Jean was in her support of him. These strongly evaluative responses were given marks in Band 1 for reading.

Many responses awarded marks in Band 2 were adequate, if fairly straightforward, in their handling of the Centre's provision and Emmanuel's story, though they were lifted by an appeal which showed a keen awareness of the interests of local business. Ideas which could be inferred from the passage included the waste of potential employee talent if street children were not helped and the danger that desperate street children would turn to crime which would adversely affect local businesses. Others suggested that educated and successful consumers would help local businesses to thrive or that the business' profile in the community would be enhanced by philanthropic donations. These points were rewarded for reading because they were more rooted in a thoughtful reading of the passage than a generally emotive appeal to business people to donate to the Centre. Responses which tended towards exhortation based on evoking sympathy for street children in a general sense were often rewarded in the writing mark. Their reading mark might have improved if their comments had been anchored in the passage more fully.

Marks of 5 and 6 were given for responses which reproduced a range of detail from the passage. 7 marks could be given where there was a little development of the ideas from it or sensible inferences were drawn. It is worth noting that where there was a tendency to copy selected phrases which summarised the Centre's work, especially the details given in the fourth paragraph of the passage, a mark of 5 was more common. Emmanuel's story was also presented in a straightforward, chronological way at this level, although many remembered to show how this 'success story' could be multiplied with more donations or made reference to

the Centre's transformative influence on his life. 6 marks were given where such comments showed an explicit understanding of the passage and the task.

Weaker responses, awarded marks below 5 for reading needed to use their own expression in their writing, rather than the language of the passage. The fourth paragraph of the passage was sometimes copied in its entirety, leaving little which addressed the first bullet point in the candidate's own language. Emmanuel's story was sometimes not referred to at all or was represented by selected phrases and sentences taken from the passage almost verbatim. The scale and frequency of simple copying from the passage was more marked this year than in previous years. Familiarity with the layout and expectations of the paper might have improved responses to this question in particular.

The marks for writing

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

Style and audience

The majority of responses were appropriately set out in letter form and made use of the persuasive style often used in charity appeals. Direct, empathetic appeals were common, and often effective, at all levels, many imploring the recipient to imagine his/her own children on the streets alone, or developing Emmanuel's story to include more emotive details such as 'ragged clothes' or 'a pitiful look in his eyes'. Most included an introductory paragraph which introduced Sister Jean and her Centre in a straightforward way. Some began with an effective, hard-hitting 'hook' which was more arresting and engaging. One response given a mark in Band 2 opened with 'On your way to your plush office tomorrow morning, please try to meet the gaze of the little street children lying in our prosperous city's draughty doorways.' Weaker responses used some persuasive devices a little more mechanically, such as 'Would you like to be cold and living on the streets?' or the tone of the letter became rather hectoring: 'Why would you not want to save little children's lives...?' Many responses showed a clear sense of audience. The style adopted in weaker responses, usually given marks in Band 3, was less sophisticated and therefore less capable of persuading the audience.

Structure

The structure suggested by the sequence of bullet points was used in many responses to help sequence and paragraph the writing. Better responses tended to use the persuasive purpose of the letter to provide some overall cohesion, presenting Emmanuel's story as evidence of the Centre's useful work, for example, then inviting the recipient to 'make a difference' in other street children's lives in the closing section. Letters given marks in Band 2 were sequenced effectively and paragraphed. The different sections of the letter needed to be better linked in Band 3 responses.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative and persuasive in style but fluent and virtually free of error. Some otherwise quite effective letters were affected by persistent 'comma-splicing' or, in the middle range of marks in Band 3, were written in a factual, plain style which was close to the sequence and wording of the passage and had not been adapted to reflect the purpose and audience of the task. Responses where much was copied from the reading passage were difficult to reward for writing, since so much of the style and accuracy could not be attributed to the candidate. In quite a few reasonably expressed responses, the writing mark was reduced because of the frequency of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors. First person pronouns and proper nouns were not capitalised (including Sister Jean, Emmanuel and Archway Children's Centre) and apostrophes of omission were missed throughout some responses. Useful words such as 'achievement', 'sincerely' and 'successful' were often spelled incorrectly. Candidates should proofread their work carefully as doing this may correct basic errors; they were sometimes frequent and serious enough to reduce the writing mark as far as Band 4.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Use the details in the passage but never copy whole phrases and sentences. Use your own words.
- Try to develop ideas from the passage, using ideas that are suggested in it as well as the surface details.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for an article or a letter, for example.
- Check your writing for basic spelling and punctuation errors; these will be likely to reduce your mark.

Section 2: Composition

Candidates are reminded that half of the marks are given for the content of the writing and the way in which it is structured. The criteria vary according to which of the three genres is chosen. The other half of the marks are given for style and accuracy.

Question 2: Argumentative/discursive writing

(a) **'Having lots of rules is better than having lots of freedom.'** (25)

OR

(b) **Do you think the existence of zoos can be justified nowadays, when it is possible to visit animals in their habitat or to see them on television?** (25)

Better responses here made use of a wide range of different ideas, often exploring both sides of the argument in a cohesive, well-argued way. Each idea was developed and paragraphed more or less equally and the conclusion arrived at was convincing and grew out of the discussion which preceded it.

Average responses contained some good ideas which were relevant and gave opinions about the topic which were valid. The discussion was not as developed and some points were rather 'tacked on' in a less organised way. It is important to have enough material to support an argument. Weaker responses did not have enough substance in their ideas or tended to repeat one or two basic points rather than develop a range.

The first question was generally less well done than the second. In the most effective responses, the idea of 'freedom' was discussed thoughtfully. One candidate wrote that, in his view, 'freedom was not worth very much unless it was tempered by responsibility and a respect for others' 'freedoms' and many good responses argued that rules needed to have general consent to be respected. Illustrations of rules in another sophisticated response extrapolated from apparently 'petty' school rules about not running in corridors to the 'rules of the highway' and showed how these small rules preserved the greater freedoms of society's individuals.

Average responses offered some sensible comment and relevant discussion. A more narrow view of rules and freedoms was evident at this level, such as those in the lives of teenagers, their schools and their parents.

Weaker responses equated 'rules' with 'laws', and sometimes gave widely disparate examples (murder and hairstyles in school, in one response) which did not give rise to a coherent argument. Other weak responses remained almost entirely general and assertive. Not having rules, for example, was quite frequently deemed to result in 'chaos and destruction' but no explanation was given. Weaker responses could have been improved by developing an argument rather than making simple assertions: 'Who wants rules? I do not! Why would anybody want a load of rules telling them what to do? Well, I do not and I do not know why anybody would.'

The second choice, about whether zoos can be justified, was often very well done. Good responses offered a range of informed and interesting ideas about the function of modern zoos, such as conserving rare species and scientific research. Convincing arguments were made both in favour of and in opposition to zoos. Many candidates made sensible use of the question and compared the experience of visiting a zoo with going on safari or watching animals on TV. The immediacy and excitement of real animals was balanced with the risk of disturbing them in their habitats and the prohibitive cost of travel abroad was also considered by many candidates who were obviously engaged by the task.

Responses given Content and Structure marks in Bands 2 and 3 usually offered less complex ideas or their treatment of different ideas was patchy and uneven. Weaker responses were characterised by a similar approach to that mentioned above in the other question, in that there was actually little argument and the opinions voiced were not justified and instead relied on assertion: 'How would you feel locked in a cage freezing cold all day when your meant to be roaming your own country? It's not fair', for example. Brevity also affected achievement here, especially where more than one composition question was attempted.

For Style and Accuracy, the highest marks were given for clear, accurate writing and a strong 'voice' which helped to convince the reader. The same weaknesses seen in **Question 1** affected marks in the middle and lower mark range, such as 'comma-splicing' and errors in punctuation and the spelling of common words.

Ways in which the writing of arguments and discussions can be improved

- Make sure you have a variety of ideas at your disposal.
- Justify your opinions with apt examples – avoid simple assertions.
- Develop each idea in a paragraph, sequencing sentences within paragraphs.
- Use clear and precise English.

Question 3: Descriptive writing

- (a) **Describe the best meal you have ever had with a group of friends, including details of the place and the atmosphere.**

(25)

OR

- (b) **You arrive at an airport or railway station to discover that there is a long delay. Describe what you see and hear, and your thoughts and feelings while you are waiting.**

(25)

The first question elicited a great variety of responses; from superbly evocative descriptions which had Examiners' mouths watering at the culinary delicacies on offer, to weak, narrative pieces with little real descriptive focus. A number of well-prepared candidates used the restricted time frame implied in the task to focus their attention on describing the setting, the food and the company in an integrated way. These high scoring responses were full of rich sensory details which helped to build a clear overall picture, often of a family meal in a restaurant or at a relatives' house. One lovely description described the moment his grandmother's Christmas pudding was brought to the table as 'a pause in the Christmas chaos as remembered Christmas puddings were savoured in the anticipation of the next', and there were many that brought to life the warmth and comfort of family gatherings of one sort or another.

Average responses tended to give a lengthier preamble about the setting, often in a factual way, and the description of the food was a little more predictable: 'mouth-watering', 'tasty' and 'delicious' were sometimes repeated, for example. Different courses were listed in some and the question was handled a little mechanically with references to the atmosphere as 'wonderful' with limited description of the features which made it so.

Weaker responses needed to be more specific in their descriptions and to choose more fitting settings. These were often vague, such as a 'posh restaurant' with 'lots of mates'. Some responses were narratively framed, from the decision to go out for a meal, the journey there and what happened in the restaurant (who ordered what, commonly) followed by the journey home. These were usually given marks in Band 4 for Content and Structure.

The second option also produced responses across the range of marks. The best were again focused clearly on evoking the narrator's disappointment, or sometimes panic, at the prospect of a long delay, but also scanned the airport or station for interesting individuals or groups to describe. Boredom is quite a difficult emotion to evoke but one masterful response tracked the narrator's rising irritation at the prickly texture of the airport seat and the constant sighing of the passenger next to her as she endured the long hours of waiting. Some descriptions of frustrated passengers berating airport staff were also often well-observed and, in some polished responses, the internal monologue of the narrator was intriguing and sustained the interest of the reader very well.

As in the first option, there was the same over-reliance on a narrative approach, evident in some average responses in this question. Details about the holiday destination, the journey to the airport, often with a list of fellow travellers and some of the activities engaged in during the delay, predominated in these kinds of approaches. There needed to be a greater sense of atmosphere or description of detail here. Responses given marks for Content and Accuracy lower than Band 4 were usually brief and undeveloped, factual accounts. There needed to be more descriptive development here for a higher mark.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were often lower than those for Content and Structure. Better responses chose precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences. In weaker responses, tenses were used insecurely, and incomplete or poorly separated

sentences adversely affected candidates' marks. These are both a common area to be aware of in descriptive writing. Even in responses with quite engaging content, tenses sometimes switched back and forth from present to past tense, sometimes within the same sentence, and marred the fluency of the style. Strings of incomplete sentences with no finite verb were also fairly common in the middle range: 'Little children running around like headless chickens. Dads dozing under open newspapers and mums stressing about keeping the kids occupied', for example.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Avoid too much narrative preamble and remember to provide descriptive detail.
- Try to make your description as real as possible. You should be able to see and hear what you write.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.

Question 4: Narrative writing

- (a) **You see someone in a crowd whom you recognise but you cannot think why. On noticing you, the person moves away, and you instinctively follow. Write the story.**

(25)

OR

- (b) **Write a story which begins with someone hearing an eerie and unidentifiable noise.**

(25)

The first question was addressed very well in many responses. These sustained the reader's interest by careful shaping of the narratives. Much depended on who the person followed turned out to be and how credible this plot line was. Better responses used familiar settings effectively to help them build the opening; football matches and similar crowded places worked well. The sense of compulsion to follow the person was also described intriguingly in good responses, often followed by quite cinematic accounts of keeping their target in view as they plunged through crowds, catching only fleeting glimpses amongst the many other people. The revelation of the identity of the pursued person was often skilfully handled: some were long-lost siblings or childhood friends and, in one engaging story, the narrator was looking at someone who seemed to be identical to him, with the hinted implication that one or the other was a clone.

There were some stories in which the identity of the familiar person was not revealed or where the climax was ineffective or not credible. These narratives often needed better planning, as did weaker ones in which there were too many events that were unconnected or far-fetched.

The second option was generally less well done, although there were some very good exceptions. A few candidates handled a deliberately comical ending very well, in which a 'frightening' noise was revealed to be a kitten locked in the cupboard or a sibling prankster. Some ambitious scenarios were created, such as a crew of Spitfire pilots who heard the chilling sound of a German fighter plane behind them or the click of a gun being cocked in a detective story.

Again, there was a need for candidates to plan the climax of their story and how the narrative would be shaped in order to sustain the interest of the reader to that point. It is important to remember that well-conceived characters are needed as well as events. Weaker responses were less engaging and the climax was often disappointing. Dialogue sometimes predominated over narration, making the story quite difficult to follow. The origin of some noises, like the identity of the person in the narrative above, was sometimes not revealed or, more often, the noise simply disappeared, resulting usually in an unsatisfying story.

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. There was a tendency in some weaker responses for narratives to slip into present tense, in the style that stories are sometimes recounted colloquially: 'Suddenly he looks at me and I realise he's not joking.' Errors in sentence control and separation, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4. This was also the case when frequent errors in basic punctuation were made, such as mistakes in the use of capital letters or in the spelling of many simple words such as 'are' for 'our'.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

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

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/33

Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

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

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

General comments

This paper was mostly well answered in writing that was sometimes lively, original and structurally sound.

There were few examples of poor time management, although some of the responses were very long and it appeared that the endings of the compositions suffered as a result. There were a few rubric errors where more than one composition was attempted. Where this was so, Examiners were instructed to mark all that was submitted and to award the best mark.

Question 1 differentiated well. There was frequent evidence of careful reading of the passage, and most responses made relevant comments on four or five arguments. The best of the responses took the overview that the writer, whatever his intentions, had argued too negatively, and they demonstrated the weaknesses in his case. Less good responses did not make strong or relevant evaluations of the writer's arguments, and they tended to copy whole phrases and sentences from the original.

In **Section 2** there was some good and occasionally, fine writing. Answers were well planned, and this was particularly true of the responses to **Question 2(a)** where it was rare to find writing that was not organised into varied ideas, explained in well-sequenced paragraphs. Where paragraphs were not used, this was a disadvantage. Both the descriptive topics elicited some excellent contrasts, and it was easy to write in a convincing structure. This was also true of **Question 4(b)** where there were some very convincing stories within stories. This section showed the importance of well-structured writing. It was through structure that the best of the compositions not only communicated clearly with readers, but in the case of some of these topics, entertained them.

The conventions of the different genres tested in this paper were generally understood. While an address for the letter was not required, there had to be an appropriate tone and voice, and the best of the responses started with an introduction that explained the purpose of the letter, preferably in more than three lines. It was too easy for some descriptions to stray into narrative because they were written over too long a period. The best descriptions happened in rather less than an hour, or in the case of **Question 3(a)**, there were two descriptions, each fairly static but taking place at different times. Some of the narratives read more like documentaries or newspaper reports. It was important to remember that the writer of a narrative is a part of the proceedings, so that it was necessary to add elements of description and character to what otherwise would be a dull chronicle of events with little tension and sometimes no sense of climax.

The fact that there were errors in the use of English, or untidy punctuation, particularly sentence separation, meant that the mark given for content and structure in **Section 2** was often different from that given for style and accuracy. In some cases there was grammatical inaccuracy, particularly singular/plural confusion and verb endings, though these were generally sufficiently minor, although frequent, not to affect the meaning. Spelling varied, but most of the inaccuracies lay in punctuation, where sentences were 'joined' with commas, and commas within complex sentences were non-existent. In the descriptions, responses frequently alternated inappropriately between present and past tenses.

Section 1: Directed Writing

Question 1: Read the article on cars by Winston Graham. Write a letter to Winston Graham saying whether or not you agree that motor cars are a curse. In your letter you should identify and evaluate the writer's views and use your own ideas to support your comments on the writer's views. Base your letter on what you have read in the article. Be careful to use your own words. (25 marks)

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

This question was answered well. Where nationality and upbringing demanded a polite approach, it was readily understood that this was to be an argumentative letter. It was important to read the instructions carefully. The task to 'evaluate' required the letters to weigh the quality of the arguments and seek out inconsistencies. It was also important to follow the instruction about using own words. This instruction applied to the copying of whole phrases and sentences, which could lower both the marks for reading and writing.

The marks for reading

Winston Graham made four main arguments against cars in his article and proposed a number of solutions, mostly to do with public transport. Good answers considered all five points and demonstrated thorough reading by incorporating other details from the passage. The easiest arguments were that cars were dangerous and that they polluted the atmosphere. The first of these was held to be illogical because the fault lay with drivers and not cars, which were increasingly safe. The second was invalid since there were many other causes of pollution and technology was working to decrease the emission of pollutants. The other two arguments were strong discriminators. The argument about congestion in cities and how it spoils one's appreciation of beautiful buildings was frequently only partially fully understood because it required unpacking. The final argument about greed and corruption produced some interesting and varied responses, the best of which was an overview of the whole passage about the effects of the motor car on the differences between rich and poor. It also prompted some economic arguments and, most frequently, the assertion that if you worked hard or if the car was your hobby, you could do what you liked with your money.

Answers which tended to score high reading marks identified the words 'curse' and 'corruption' as examples of Winston Graham's extreme views. Many agreed that while he had a good point, he had overstated his case. This was made clear in the frequent dislike of public transport, for a variety of reasons. These were often interestingly connected with one's country of origin and ranged from personal considerations, the time it took to travel and the remoteness of country areas.

The weakest answers for reading were when there was total agreement with the views in the article, because there was no real evaluation, but at the best, only a paraphrase of what had been read. Some answers only used some of the arguments and may not have read through to the end of the article. Others provided very little evaluation of the arguments or gave irrelevant information, such as an account of what was meant by global warming.

The marks for writing

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

Style and audience

The style of this letter was that of a well-sequenced, logical argument, suitable for convincing Mr Graham that his views were at least partially to be challenged. The tone needed to be confident but polite and as often in this type of exercise, it was in the introductory paragraph that a rapport with the writer could be established. This opportunity was not always taken so that some of the introductions were along the

following lines: 'I have read your article about the curse of the motor car. I agree with most of what you say but I would like to add my own views'. Good introductions were more specific about grounds for any disagreement and the best tried to establish an overview of the whole article. A similar rapport with the writer was also a feature of some of the closing lines of the letter, including, in some cases, an apology for venturing to disagree with him.

Structure

The structure was strongly suggested by the passage itself. Many of the letters consisted of an introduction, four paragraphs, each dealing with one of Winston Graham's objections to cars, a paragraph on public transport and a closing section. This provided a very clear and often concise framework. Some answers quite cleverly combined the arguments about congestion and pollution and equally cleverly, used references to public transport as and when appropriate. It was comparatively rare for a letter to muddle the different ideas or to repeat them in the course of the letter. Some letters spent too much space arguing a particular case and some letters required paragraphs.

Accuracy

While due consideration was given to aspects of audience and structure, it was expected that the writing should be assured, fluent and accurate for a writing mark in Band 1. Grammatical error or poor punctuation adversely affected the response. Many of the grammatical errors were not persistent, but in some scripts their frequency obscured the clarity of meaning for the reader. The use of commas to separate sentences and the omission of commas to indicate the divisions in complex sentences were common. Apart from the fact that these were serious errors, the misuse of the comma as a sentence separator meant that there were no connectives to establish links in the meaning, and that both fluency and shades of meaning were lost.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved

- Use the details in the passage but never copy whole phrases and sentences. Use your own words.
- Try to develop and evaluate ideas from the passage, using inferences that are suggested in it as well as the surface details.
- Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for an article or a letter, for example.
- Check your writing for basic spelling and punctuation errors that will be likely to reduce your mark.

Section 2: Composition

Half of the marks were given for the content of the writing and the way in which it was structured. The criteria varied, according to which of the three genres was chosen. The other half of the marks were given for style and accuracy.

Question 2: Argumentative/discursive writing

(a) 'Dreams are important in our lives.' Discuss this view. (25)

OR

(b) 'The small things that we own are the most precious.' Do you agree? (25)

The best responses were well planned and proposed a series of varied ideas that were developed into well-sequenced paragraphs. There was a sense of order in the writing so that one idea led convincingly on to the next.

In the middle of the range there were some valid ideas, some of which were developed, but not consistently well. Here the order was not so convincing.

Weaker responses often ran out of content and ideas were repetitious and not well organised. More thought was needed to ensure that the choice of composition was one that could be carried through.

The first topic about dreams was answered well. Few referred to the sort of dreams one has when one is asleep, but there were some good ideas about why we dream, and the significance of dreams, and in one case a humorous section about teenagers when they daydream. It was probably less easy to tackle the topic from this angle, but the results were good enough. Most responses were about dreams as goals in life,

how they gave motivation and helped achieve success, and how people without dreams became less single minded. There were one or two useful examples of people whose success was closely related to their dreams, and some thought about what happened when dreams were not realised. Few attempts at this topic ran out of material, although there was occasional repetition, probably owing to the need for improved planning. The arguments were usually well sequenced and the writing often entertaining.

The second topic took careful planning to produce a satisfactory train of thought. Some answers simply listed a number of objects that were associated with childhood or relatives. Where they expanded their thoughts to write about the value of memory and the past, this approach was effective. Some set out to prove that to be happy you did not need to own the most expensive items, and one answer wrote about one's fingers, heart and brain. Those answers that tried to argue abstractedly found it was difficult to find fresh things to say as the response progressed. The practical, everyday approach proved to be the best.

As far as style and accuracy were concerned, answers were more successful when they did not try to use too complex a vocabulary. In these essays, it was the thought that was complex, and the use of striking vocabulary was often inappropriate because it impinged on communication. To write relatively simply was a virtue, reserving the more advanced words for difficult and specific concepts. The other common stylistic error was to repeat key words (for example 'dreams' and 'important') too frequently. It is a good idea to read over what has been written to try and avoid this.

Ways in which the writing of arguments and discussions can be improved

- Make sure you have a variety of ideas at your disposal.
- Justify your opinions with apt examples – avoid simple assertions.
- Develop each idea in a paragraph, sequencing sentences within paragraphs.
- Use clear and precise English.

Question 3: Descriptive writing

- (a) **Imagine that after some years you revisit a place that you used to know well, only to find that everything has changed. Write a description of the place now and how the changes make you feel.** (25)

OR

- (b) **Describe the atmosphere of a quiet street or neighbourhood, which is then suddenly disturbed.** (25)

Both these descriptions were well answered and frequently so realistically that they were likely to have been based on real places. Good descriptive writing can combine reality with the imagination and remembers that there is a reader at the receiving end. Many of these compositions gave great pleasure, not least because of the controlled use of an appropriate and effective vocabulary.

Most answers to the first option wrote about the same place at two different times or incorporated the past into their present feelings. This provided some excellent contrasts and also a sound structure to the writing. The scenarios were varied, for example, a little village that had grown into a huge, brash town, leaving only the family home in the middle, or a revisit to a grandparent's house years after the death of the last inhabitant. There was a return to a place blighted by a nuclear disaster. Feelings varied from happy memories to grief and disappointment, sometimes because of lost childhood. There was a careful attention to detail, and a reality that was the opposite of the tales of haunted houses that are so popular and so stereotypical.

The second option was equally well done. What was required was another contrast, between a quiet area hopefully selected from one's own experience and then, from the imagination, a really disturbing occurrence. Some of the descriptions of peace and quiet were very convincing, for example, the writer lying in bed aware of everything in the house and outside, only for the peace to be shattered by a terrible squealing of brakes and getting up only to see the mayhem outside. A similar description of peace was interrupted by a large party of young revellers spilling out of a house on to a road. One of the best was a splendid description of a row of houses. Only half way through was the reader aware that this was a burglar about to break in and rob an old lady. As he did so, lights flashed, sirens blared, the road was full of police and he was led away. This type of response to a topic was bound to lead to good writing with a high quality of entertainment for the reader.

The marks for content and structure were often quite high. Where they were lower, the description was more of a narrative. The reason for this was that the events began to impinge on the descriptive quality of the writing as required in the specific criteria in the mark scheme.

In these compositions, the marks for content and structure were sometimes higher than marks for style and accuracy because of the amount of error of both grammar and punctuation. There was also a need to maintain consistency of tense. Frequently a response would start in the present tense and then waver into the past and perhaps back again several times. The use of 'descriptive' sentences without finite verbs was also an error confined to descriptions. However, language played a strong part in the award of these marks. Where there was a wide range of appropriate language the mark might well be higher. Some of the writing used language that made detail quite clear to the reader, although in some cases the use of too imposing a language style merely confused.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Avoid too much narrative preamble and remember to provide descriptive detail.
- Try to make your description as real as possible. You should be able to see and hear what you write.
- It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.
- Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.

Question 4: Narrative writing

- (a) **Write the story of what happens after a place, which has been locked for many years, is finally opened.** (25)

OR

- (b) **Write a story entitled 'The Return of the Voyager'.** (25)

In writing a narrative it is useful to remember that a writer must play a part in the events and not appear a mere reporter and secondly, that there needs to be more than a succession of events. The reader wishes to be drawn into the story with descriptive detail, character, personality, emotion, and a feeling of tension and climax where appropriate. Some of the stories were made very straightforward by the second-hand reporting of events that was more suitable to a newspaper or a documentary commentary. Some responses may have been improved by planning for an effective climax and ending to the story.

On the whole, both of these options were well answered. Some of the stories about places that had been locked for some years, could have been improved by making the reader believe that they were real. There were some houses belonging to grandparents or houses where one had been brought up. There were a large number of houses with secrets, which would have been better presented without the horror that awaited those who ventured inside. If one was to write a ghost story it was wise to do it with some sensitivity and not so much that was graphic as to destroy the reader's imagination. A successful narrative was of a revolting looking house that proved home to a lively young 'recluse' who invited the intruders to a party. There were of course, several old funfairs, which had surprisingly ordinary endings. Documentary accounts of the opening of a second-world-war museum were less successful, except for one, where the exhibits were electronic and scared the explorers out of their senses.

Some of the stories for the second option were very well done. The best created stories within stories. One voyager was described as a little wizened man who always sat in his own corner of the alehouse and was persuaded to tell the story of his last voyage home. Another tale was of the anxious relatives awaiting the return of the ship as it appeared on the horizon only to see that it carried a black flag to denote the death of the captain. The grief of the widow was movingly displayed, but there was more to the story. The first mate claimed that he had died of a fever, but a sailor described how the first mate had murdered him. It was a fine story and realistically described. It was important that the stories did not contain too many events for such short pieces. Two or three main events are always enough. With more, the reader is overloaded and there is little time for the elements of description and character to be included.

For both these stories, it was important to provide a range of language to interest and engage the reader. It was also helpful to vary sentence lengths and where there were many events, to avoid writing in simple sentences. Where this happened it was easy to slip into bad punctuation habits.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

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

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In order to aim for high marks in this component, candidates should:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write to the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops;
- proof read their work carefully, as marks may be affected for typing errors.

General comments

The entries for this component represented a considerable increase from last year's November session, with many new UK Centres successfully taking the coursework option for the first time. In a good folder, all three assignments showed the same qualities of writing. This consistency should have been taken into consideration when the final mark was awarded.

The choices of the assignments were generally appropriate. The work for Assignment 1 was varied and often lively. There were fewer examples of research essays, owing more to finding content from the Internet than to expressing arguments and ideas based on personal thoughts and convictions. The first of the key messages makes this clear; one should use coursework to express one's individuality rather than to copying what has been read or heard elsewhere.

The work for Assignment 2 was also satisfactory, particularly where it had some basis in personal experience. There were a number of examples of unreal fiction, often unnecessarily violent, or accounts of tampering with the spirit world in haunted houses. Good writers were sometimes convincing in this.

The choice of articles for Assignment 3 proved to be challenging for candidates to respond to effectively, especially where there were not many arguments in the passage or where they were not sustained at any length. This could be seen when passages from the Internet were used, with short paragraphs and little development of argument or clear structure in the text. These may have made it difficult to provide satisfactory responses to the task.

A word of caution: it was obvious that in some Centres, teachers had over-prepared the work. The content of the responses should be individual and not suggested by the teacher. In some cases it was difficult to differentiate between one response and another because the content and the structure were too similar. It is not recommended to set the same topics for the first two assignments. In Assignment 1 there was sometimes evidence of similarity of content. For Assignment 2, where the response is narrative, the suggestion is to study a short story and then encourage a response in the same genre, leaving the title open. Because of the difficulties of choosing passages for Assignment 3, it is acceptable to use one or two articles across the whole entry. All responses were more lively when the writers had some involvement in their choice.

The assessment of the folders was generally good. The most common reason for reducing the marks given by Centres was the amount of punctuation and grammar mistakes seen. This was especially true where there were sentence separation errors. The marking of reading was also sometimes a mark or two generous, although most Centres awarded a realistic range of marks, typically from 9 or 10 to 4 or 5, with most of the marks lying between 5 and 7. Where the mark was lowered, it was generally because of the quality of the language or the nature of the work over the three assignments was not sufficiently consistent.

On the whole, there was frequent liveliness of work and it was clear that Centres had prepared with great care.

Administration by Centres

There was a certain amount of administration that was needed from Centres in order for Moderation to take place. Centres should check the details of the format of the portfolio in Appendix A of the syllabus in order to ensure that coursework is submitted in the correct manner.

The most important form for centres to complete is the Candidate Assessment Summary Form (CASF). This tells the Moderator the marks given for reading and writing and whether these marks have been changed during internal moderation. The Moderator can tell if one particular set has been subject to change more than the others, and this can then be checked.

In addition there is the form that is attached to each folder, and this tells the Moderator what is in the folder and gives the teacher's general comment on the quality of the work.

Finally there is the mark sheet (MS1) or electronic mark sheet that is sent to Cambridge with a copy to the Moderator.

It is **essential** that the final internally moderated mark on the CASF is the same as that which appears on the MS1 and on the folder. Moderators carried out a check and on occasions discovered that the marks did not tally. As a result, a Coursework Amendment Form had to be sent to the Centre. The work of the Moderator was made more difficult when either the CASF form or the MS1 were missing from the sample.

Most Centres were careful to fix the work of each candidate securely with a staple or a paper clip. It was not necessary to send each folder in any kind of wallet, which nearly always caused the Moderator extra work for various reasons.

It was also important to include in the sample at least one copy of all the articles used for Assignment 3.

Assessment by Centres

There were very few cases where the assessment of either writing or reading was generous or severe by more than two marks. Some Centres found it more difficult to mark accurately at the lower end of the range and there was some generosity at the top of the range, nearly always because of the amount of error.

Assessment of writing

The Band descriptions for writing were found in the Appendix to the syllabus.

Because of the special circumstances under which coursework takes place, with time allowed for drafting and redrafting and the advantage of spell checks, it was expected that accuracy would be faultless at the top of the range. Accordingly, Moderators kept a record of punctuation and grammatical errors as they read the work. The chief weakness was with sentence separation. This often affected the quality of the sentence construction, since commas rather than connectives were used to join sentences. A common omission in word processed work was that of the comma to denote a division within a complex sentence. A third error was that of the apostrophe, often omitted or wrongly used. Finally, semi colons were sometimes used in the middle of sentences where there should have been a comma; there was overuse of the semi colon in some responses, and there was confusion between colons and semi colons. Since Band 1 for writing has five marks it was reasonable to expect marks of 39 and 40 to be awarded to folders that had no mistakes and 38 to those with very minor or very infrequent mistakes.

There were some responses that had examples of the incorrect use of the spell check, which resulted in words that made no sense in their context. Candidates are advised to proof read their work, including typed scripts.

Apart from a lack of error, there were two features characteristic of the very best work. One was an assured use of a wide range of vocabulary, where the choice of the word always conveyed precise meaning and, where necessary, engaged and entertained the reader. The range was immediately apparent and would be different in say, informative, expressive and argumentative writing. The other feature was the use of fluent,

well-constructed sentences that used connectives to show the relationship of one idea or argument to another.

Less successful responses used relatively simple vocabulary and would have benefitted from using a more varied sentence structure, designed to have an effect on the reader. The least successful responses should have used a wider range of more complex vocabulary with more developed and varied sentence structures.

Some marks for writing were too low because the strength of the vocabulary and the fluency of the language were underestimated.

Assessment of reading

The Band descriptions for reading were found in the syllabus in the Appendix. The award of 9 and 10 marks was for 'analysing and evaluating several ideas and details from the article and developing lines of thought'. 'Analyse' suggested a detailed interpretation of what the writer says, and 'evaluate' suggested the identification of inconsistencies and bias. In Band 3, most of the response was taken up with summary conveying simple views. There was a considerable scale of difficulty between Band 3 and Band 1 that suggested that many marks should have been between 6 and 7. Responses at Band 1 often gave an overview of the article as a whole and assimilated their individual comments into a well-structured answer. There was sometimes a tendency to give 9 or 10 marks to responses that did not do this.

It was important that comments were relevant to the points raised in the article. Responses that took a series of points from the article and provided brief comments on each were rarely worth more than 6 because of the quality of the comments. These responses needed a more fluent structure in order to gain more marks,

Annotation

It was important that each piece of work bore the evidence of the teacher's pen. A comment at the end of the piece, drawing attention to features of the relevant Band description was extremely useful to the Moderator in allowing them to understand why a mark had been awarded.

Errors should have been carefully noted, and there were many cases where they had been missed. This was especially true of sentence separation and other punctuation errors.

Drafts

There were many examples of good practice, where comments at the end of a draft made positive suggestions for editing, revising and correcting. As a result, some of the drafts were improved from the final version. The most frequently made comments were those that suggested ways of developing a short draft. Such suggestions were entirely appropriate and showed how drafting and redrafting should work. It was also useful to put a comment at the end such as, 'There are several punctuation errors here. Please read through the work and make the corrections'.

Centres should not correct a draft, ringing errors where they were made or writing in the correction, for example. For the concept of coursework to remain intact, it is essential that everyone works together to ensure that the whole process is a reflection of the achievement of candidates as individuals.

Assignment 1

The selection of tasks for this assignment provided some lively writing. Advice has been given to avoid abstract essays, stock titles (such as Euthanasia and Abortion) and research essays that involve paraphrasing content from the Internet. Much of the best writing was where there was an audience involved or where the topic was of close interest to the writer, so that some personal enthusiasm and originality was apparent. Some of the topics were transformed into speeches, providing interest in the language used and rhetoric, whilst maintaining sensible content.

Some of the responses were in the form of guidebooks, film reviews and restaurant reviews, and the best were always those that adapted the conventions of the genre, producing more personal writing. In fact the conventions of the genre often restricted the effectiveness of the response, if followed too closely. The least effective of the genres was writing in the form of a leaflet, where there was often too much attention paid to the layout and the pictures and less focus on quantity of writing.

The personal nature of the more successful responses was often apparent in the title; the following titles were all well argued:

Against racism
Is self-defence justifiable?
Why I love Facebook
Is being overweight a crime?
The harm of computer games
Celebrity cultures
What makes a good teacher?

There was plenty of writing about football teams and particular interests such as horse riding and being an air cadet. Speeches included one to a group of US tourists and there were several examples of '*Do not get me started*'. These were successful, provided that they maintained their focus and used a reasoned tone. A *letter to the Mayor of Prague* offered some interesting possibilities. As usual, '*A day in the life of*' was an appropriate choice for those who were expected to provide simpler and more straightforward responses.

Assignment 2

Most of these tasks were set as narratives or descriptions. The more successful of these were those based on situations to which the candidates could relate. *Letters from the trenches* sometimes sounded very similar and were too far from the experience of a sixteen-year-old to be convincing.

Keeping narratives realistic was another characteristic of more successful responses. There were several titles like *My nightmare world*, *Noises in the night*, *Touching the void*, *The empty house*, and *A local ghost story*. Some of these stories were intended to be entertaining in their frightening psychology or their out-of-this-world content, and some of them were well done. The more unreal the events, the harder it was to make them sound convincing.

There were some newer task responses, such as those to *Last day on earth* (about an astronaut) and *A point to prove* (a story about performing a solo in a great cathedral).

On the whole, the descriptions worked better because they were recreations of real things and personal experiences. In descriptive writing, advanced vocabulary should only be used when appropriate, to avoid meaning becoming overloaded or blurred.

Some of the titles for descriptions included:

5th Avenue at dawn
A waterfall
A horse race
The old chip shop
A moment at the test match
The lunch hall

There were some good responses to the generic title, *An autobiographical fragment*. A greater amount of personal writing in responses to this assignment would be a positive development.

Assignment 3

Centres worked hard to find an appropriate article and new Centres wisely decided to use just one or perhaps two articles for all their responses.

It has already been said that the Internet was not the best place to look for an article. Many, particularly from online newspapers, were strangely edited and lacked structure or developed arguments. More successful responses selected arguments and analysed them in detail.

It was best to find a maximum of two articles on the same topic, each with a length of no more than two sides. Longer articles made it difficult to use the detail of what was said in the argument.

The best articles were controversial because they were extreme in their views. Where the article was controversial it was important that the response maintained a balanced tone. This was necessary in order to expose the extremity of what was said and responses should have shown evidence of this. Other articles

were intended to be entertaining, and their views should have been taken less seriously sometimes. For the award of Band 1 marks for reading it was expected that these aspects of the articles should have been identified.

Some articles did not have a sufficient range of arguments and ideas to provide content for an extended response. Articles needed to have at least six points that may have formed the basis of an argument in order for them to be successful.

Some successful articles were:

A USA today article about giving candidates free laptops
Lengthening the school day
The London riots (by Max Hastings)
Swearing
An article on the proposed St Helena airport
The future of public libraries

Much of this writing was good and sometimes the best in the folder. It seemed that with the guidance of the original article, it was easier to write in an effective and involved way as an individual.

Most of the answers were in the form of a letter, but there was no reason why the writing of another article in response was not appropriate, provided that there was a sense of audience, offered perhaps by the title of the magazine or the school publication. A speech was also appropriate, as long as it had not been used for Assignment 1.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/05
Speaking and Listening

Key messages

The main message to Centres is to ensure that candidates do not rely too heavily on their scripts or prompt material. Reading entirely from a script is not permitted and it is contrary to the ethos of this Test. Centres should discourage this at the planning stage and insist on candidates using a variety of prompt material instead. The syllabus suggests a postcard size prompt card, but other aids could be used, for example, brief PowerPoint slides, flip charts or smart phone applications. Candidates will not be able to score high marks if they simply read from a script; awareness of audience and an attempt to engage the audience is a key skill being tested in **Part 1**.

The aim is to deliver a natural, fluent, original piece of around 4 minutes which an audience would find engaging, and which the candidate conveys a personal interest or connection with, and an enthusiasm for.

Other messages:

- Some candidates would benefit from **preparing** more thoroughly for the examination. Success in **Part 1** is clearly linked to researching the chosen topic, planning for a confident and assured delivery, practising the delivery, but also preparing for a strong contribution in **Part 2**.
- Generally, candidates should try to make their **Part 1** presentations more lively, by perhaps incorporating more creative presentational styles, but certainly by relying less on reciting factual information. There is scope for further creativity in **Part 1** – e.g. taking up a ‘voice’ or presenting a dramatic monologue. This session saw several Centres presenting empathic work using *of Mice and Men* and this led to some interesting work.
- In **Part 2**, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware **of their role** in the discussion. The candidate’s role should not be that of a passive interviewee, but should be one which is more proactive and seeks to engage with the listener in a collaborative manner.
- It is permissible for teachers to work with their candidates (once the candidate has decided upon a topic) in advance of the test to help enhance the content and to advise upon the approach taken for the delivery.
- **Differentiation by task setting** is encouraged for this component. A more capable candidate is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content - and such a candidate should be encouraged to do this.
- Please restrict **Part 1** to **about 4 minutes**, and **Part 2** to between **6 and 7 minutes** – as specified in the syllabus. It is difficult to justify the awarding of high marks to **Part 1s** which are short (under 3 minutes) and it is counter-productive to allow **Part 2** to run over 7 minutes.
- Please would all Centres **use digital recording equipment** to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). There is no need to use the blue ‘cassette inserts’ – a list of the candidates in the sample, their numbers, and the mark given to each, either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself please) or on a separate sheet is fine. Please re-name the individual tracks on the CD to the candidate number and name (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.). Please, **avoid** using analogue recording and tapes/cassettes where possible.

Messages relating to assessment:

- In **Part 1**, Moderators advise Examiners to be sure that a candidate has met the criteria for Band 1 fully before awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual presentation is of the standard factually-based, reportage style, even if well done, then a Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available.

- Candidates who present short **Part 1s** or those which rely heavily on a script are not likely to achieve higher than Band 4, where “delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest” is the most likely and appropriate descriptor.
- Very short **Part 1s** are likely to satisfy only the Band 5 criteria as content is mostly undeveloped...and the audience have difficulty following the content.
- Examiners are reminded not to award marks for content per se – it is the development of the content which is being assessed; in both **Parts 1** and **2** of the Test. For example, “My life as a 16 year old” could achieve a Band 1, or indeed, a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.

General comments

This component saw a large rise in entries from UK Centres.

Many candidates who successfully complete this component clearly prepare very well in advance, conduct appropriate research, and are very adept at making presentations.

Centres are reminded that for **Part 1**, the candidates can and perhaps should be involved in the choice of topics. While Moderators understand that at large Centres, it is easier to manage the tests if common themes are followed, the same theme for all candidates is not recommended. It may well be that in larger Centres it makes sense for each classroom teacher to propose a range of themes so that candidates can work in groups and practise presenting their topics to each other. Peer assessment and formative feedback is encouraged.

As a reminder to Centres, Cambridge requires three different items in the package sent to the Moderator: (1) the recorded sample on as few CDs as possible and using separate tracks for each candidate, (2) the Summary Forms for the entire entry, and (3) a copy of the Mark Sheet that has already been sent to Cambridge. In addition, any letters relating to the work being moderated can also be placed in the package for the external Moderator.

- (1) Please note that without the recordings, Cambridge is unable to moderate the work from a Centre.
- (2) The Summary Form is the form that records the separate marks awarded to the two Parts of the test, in addition to the total mark. The Examiner who conducts the examination is responsible for filling out the Summary Form. He or she should sign the form and date it. This is the form which is the working record of the examining undertaken, and is therefore of most use to the external Moderator. Please identify the candidates in the sample by using asterisks on the Summary Form. It would also be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the Summary Form as they appear on the Mark Sheet.
- (3) The Moderator needs a copy of the Mark Sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the Summary Forms.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1 - The Individual Task

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

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

Candidates sometimes attempt to use techniques such as addressing the listener and rhetorical devices, but these approaches should be handled consistently and maintained to achieve higher band marks.

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

Some examples of productive Part 1 tasks from this session:

- Work experience and what I gained from it
- How **do** you live under a dictatorship?
- What art means to me
- In defence of chewing gum...
- Spiders
- Human migration
- What it feels like to be George (in *Of Mice and Men*)
- Hillsborough – justice for the 96
- Artisans
- The advantages and disadvantages of being popular
- What it would be like to be a drifter
- Addicted to my Blackberry

Part 2 – Discussion

In almost all cases, Examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion. The conversations were generally productive extensions of the Individual Tasks. This is clearly a strength of this examination.

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

It is not the responsibility of the Examiner to work hard to sustain discussion – the candidate needs to plan for this, and this element of **Part 2** has indeed been built into the assessment criteria for both listening and speaking. It is, however, the responsibility of the Examiner to move the discussion along and to try to ensure that a 6 to 7 minute conversation occurs.

It is recommended that Examiners avoid adopting a very formal approach in **Part 2**. The aim is to be supportive of the candidate; to share an interest in his/her topic, and to share views, ideas and to work with the candidate to develop the conversation. It was noted during this session that some Examiners had prepared a series of questions for **Part 2**, and while this is acceptable, it is important that the spontaneity of discussion is also maintained – it is a conversation which is sought and not an interview.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/06

Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages

- Please remember to send in the **Candidate Record Cards** – these are the only means by which the Moderator is made aware of all of the tasks and activities which have been undertaken at the Centre. It is very useful if full details relating to each activity are provided (rather than just ‘role play’ or ‘discussion’, for example) – indeed, it is permissible for the candidates to fill out these sections. Please note that Centres need only send in the Record Cards relating to the candidates in the sample (so not for all of the cohort).
- It is requested that Centres submit recordings of **Tasks 1 and 2** – i.e. the Task 2 activity as required by the sample, but in addition the Task 1 activities for the same candidates in the sample.
- It is not necessary to conduct the same activities for every candidate. For example, different pairs can engage in different role-playing activities. Different small groups can take part in group-based debates on different topics to satisfy **Task 3**.
- **Differentiation by task setting** is encouraged for this component. A more capable candidate is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation in Task 1, for example, and to engage with more sophisticated content – and such a candidate should be encouraged to do this. Candidates would ideally be paired in Task 2 with other candidates of a similar ability level.
- As Component 6 is **Coursework**, it can be completed at a time which is suitable for the Centre and its candidates. This will usually mean that the three tasks are spread out over a reasonable period of time and that ideally they will be integrated into regular teaching schemes. Centres are encouraged to attend to absenteeism by re-arranging activities where possible, rather than awarding zero to absent candidates. This is unlike Component 5, for example, which is based on a timetabled examination. In Component 6, there is a greater amount of flexibility.
- Please would all Centres **use digital recording equipment** to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). There is no need to use the blue ‘cassette inserts’ – a list of the candidates in the sample, their numbers, and the mark given to each, either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself please) or on a separate sheet is fine. It would be even better if the individual tracks on the CD could be re-named to the candidate number and name (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.). Please, **avoid** using analogue recording and tapes/cassettes where possible.

General comments

This session saw a significant rise in entries from UK Centres.

Centres are reminded that three specific tasks are required: an individual presentation, a paired activity and group work. A wide variety of activities is encouraged – from role playing of real life situations to activities drawn from literary texts and group debates based on areas of contemporary interest. Teachers and candidates are encouraged to be as creative as possible in designing the activities undertaken for each task, ensuring of course that speaking **and** listening skills are demonstrated, and are able to be assessed using the given criteria.

As a reminder to Centres, Cambridge requires four different items in the package sent to the Moderator: 1) the recorded sample on CD, DVD or a USB drive, 2) the Summary Forms for the **entire entry**, 3) a copy of the marks that have already been sent to Cambridge, and 4) the Candidate Record Cards. In addition, any letters relating to the work being moderated can also be placed in the package for the attention of the external Moderator.

- (1) Please note that without the recordings, Cambridge is unable to moderate the work from a Centre.
- (2) The Summary Form records the marks given to the three Tasks, in addition to the total mark out of 30 for the Component. The Examiner who collates the activities is responsible for filling out the Summary Form(s). He or she should sign the form and date it. Please identify the candidates in the sample by using asterisks on the Summary Form(s). It would also be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the Summary Form(s) in the same order as on the Mark Sheet.
- (3) The Moderator needs a copy of the marks already sent to Cambridge in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of those marks from the Summary Form(s).
- (4) Centres should offer full annotation on the Candidate Record Cards, detailing and explaining each task and activity undertaken by each candidate. This helps to make the process of external moderation swift and efficient, and enables the Moderator to offer feedback on the range of activities undertaken.

Comments on specific tasks

Moderators reported a very wide range of activities undertaken this session.

More successful **Task 1s** tended to allow candidates to express strongly-held views on areas of personal interest.

Some examples of productive Task 1 activities:

- Room 101 - the three things I would discard from daily life
- Business plan – my presentation to Dragon’s Den
- A speech beginning with “Do not get me started on...”
- Why you should join me this weekend (when I pursue my hobby)
- Why you should give your money and your time to my cause
- *Film Review* – a weekly review of films to see and films to avoid.

Stronger **Task 2s** were those in which a theme was present. For **Task 2**, it is preferable that two candidates work together (rather than the Examiner and a candidate) and spend about 5 minutes engaging with each other in either a role play or a discussion based on a topic which has some depth. **Task 2s** where the two candidates just have a general conversation do not work very well and often do not satisfy the assessment criteria fully. The same applies for **Task 2s** which are rather short – i.e. under 3 minutes.

Some examples of productive Task 2 activities:

- A chance meeting – 15 years after leaving school
- Role playing a customer service adviser dealing with someone with a complaint
- A parent and teenager discussing domestic and other issues
- Two friends find out a third friend has done something wrong - what should they do?
- Two friends discuss which period of history they would have preferred to have lived in
- Add a new dialogue that two of the main characters of a novel might have had.

Task 3 is almost always a debate by a small group. This works well when each group member plays a role (e.g. a parole board) but can also be successful when the candidates are being themselves and discussing a topical issue. As in the paired activity, it is advisable to form groups of candidates with similar ability levels, to avoid the situation where a weaker candidate becomes dominated by stronger candidates. It is usually a good idea to appoint a team leader to manage the flow of discussion though. It is also sensible for the Teacher/Examiner to ensure at the planning stage that the group work assessment criteria (Table C in the syllabus) are able to be met.

Some examples of productive Task 3 activities:

- Is anyone, now or from any period of history, purely good or purely evil?
- Balloon debate – which 3 people should be sacrificed (from a given list of well-known people)
- A group discussion on a topical and controversial issue
- We’re stranded on this desert island. How are we going to survive?
- Taking it in turns to ‘Hot Seat’ characters from a novel

- Create a 'deleted' scene from a play and perform it.

There were Centres who integrated literature into some of the activities – in many cases in an active and dramatic manner, with candidates role-playing characters from novels and plays.

It was also apparent that candidates were being involved in choosing their own activities; particularly with **Tasks 1** and **2** where individual and paired work is required. Candidate-centred tasks can be very rewarding but it is advised that Teachers/Examiners monitor these as sometimes they can lack focus, lack control and result in very short presentations or exchanges which appear to have any real purpose.