

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

Paper 0522/01
Reading Passage (Core)

Key Messages

- Candidates should take careful note of the line numbers stated in the questions to ensure that their answers are taken from the appropriate section of the passage.
- For **Question 1 (f)(i)** (and equivalent questions in future papers) candidates should note that they should provide a meaning that relates to the underlined word only and not to the whole phrase. When responding to **1 (f)(ii)** they should comment on the whole phrase and not just repeat the answer given to **1 (f)(i)**.
- **Question 2 Reading.** Candidates are expected to develop the third bullet in some detail and not just mention it in one sentence at the end of their account. It is also important to understand the third bullet point is intended to assess how well the inferences of the passage have and that a successful response to this bullet should go beyond the explicit story but remain true to the original's content, genre and register.
- **Question 2 Writing.** When proofreading their responses, candidates should focus on consistency of tenses and sentence separation (comma splicing).

General Comments

In general, candidates were well prepared for this paper and responded well to the subject matter of the reading passages. Overall, the sub-questions that constituted **Question 1** discriminated successfully with those who had focused on close reading of both the passage and the questions scoring high marks.

Question 1(f), as with similar questions in previous sessions, proved the most difficult although there was evidence of a generally improved performance in responses to **(f)(i)**. **(f)(ii)** was less well answered and candidates are reminded that it is important when answering this question to relate their comments specifically to the terms of the rubric – in this instance they were asked to comment on how the language used by the writer conveyed Isaac's feelings.

There were a large number of atmospheric and imaginative narratives in response to **Question 2**. Many of these, however, despite containing convincing and detailed developments of the first two bullet points, ended somewhat anticlimactically as they failed to develop on the reason for the appearance of the woman with the knife and, consequently, denied themselves the chance of gaining a Reading mark that was higher than low Band 2.

Passage B proved to be accessible for nearly all candidates and the standard of responses to both parts of **Question 3** was of a high level with much evidence of confident summary writing techniques.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Give two reasons why Isaac needs to find somewhere to stay for the night.

The most common answer for this question referred to the fact it was getting dark. Some candidates referred to the rain starting, but they omitted reference to wind and therefore did not gain a mark for the response. If a candidate referred to rain against one bullet point in the answer booklet and wind in the second bullet point, however, then the mark was awarded. Responses that referred to Isaac being lost did not gain a mark because, strictly speaking, he was in unfamiliar territory and not lost, and even knew he was about 20 kilometres away from his home.

A number of responses said that Isaac was hungry, thirsty, wet, and had sore feet and this was why he needed to find somewhere to stay for that night. Such comments were not credited as the question specifically directs candidates to reread lines 1 to 3 and these reasons, although in the first paragraph, are not to be found in the lines referred to. Candidates should take care to answer the question set.

(b) State two reasons why Isaac thinks the hotel is a suitable place to stay (paragraph one, ‘Just as it was ...’).

Most candidates answered this question quite well, gaining at least one mark either for referring to the reasonable cost of the room for the night or to the fact that the landlord appeared polite and respectable. A good number of candidates were able to identify both points either in the words of the passage or in their own words using acceptable synonyms. Responses which did not gain marks on this question often failed to identify the focus of the question. Some candidates answered that the hotel was suitable because Isaac was hungry and tired and so on, which may have been true but does not answer this question. Responses which described the landlord as nice, or friendly, were not credited because these words are not acceptable synonyms for polite and respectable.

(c) Re-read paragraphs three and four (‘When the hotel ... Goodnight’).

(i) Explain what Isaac thinks is unusual about the landlord’s behaviour.

To answer this question correctly candidates needed to focus on the landlord’s over concern or obsession with the security of the hotel as is evidenced by the strong bolts, bars and iron shutters on all of the hotel doors and windows. Candidates should be aware that locking up a property in itself is not unusual and such responses did not gain the mark for this question. However, if a response qualified this with a comment on the isolation of the hotel then the mark was awarded. The position of the hotel could be used to cite unusual behaviour in two equally acceptable ways. First, the locking up of the hotel, when it is so isolated, could be deemed unusual behaviour because there is likely to be no one around to break into it. Second, and conversely, the fact that the hotel is so isolated is a very good reason to lock up the hotel because there is no one around to raise the alarm about a break-in. Some candidates made very good use of own words to answer this question, such as ‘the landlord was paranoid about security’.

The second reason given in the mark scheme for the unusual behaviour of the landlord is that he mentions to a guest that he is worried about the hotel being broken into. He also mentions his concern for his wife and daughter’s safety. This admission would be likely to unsettle any guest – especially a new one – who is staying at the hotel. It is perhaps even more unusual given there never has been a break-in at the hotel. This alternative answer, focusing on unusual behaviour, was rarely picked up by candidates.

(ii) What reasons does the landlord give for his actions?

Many candidates successfully answered this question and gained both available marks. The most popular reason given for the landlord’s actions in securely locking the hotel and voicing his fears about burglary and his family’s safety was that it was better to be safe than sorry which was expressed in a variety of ways and duly credited. Some responses picked up on the isolation of the hotel and the fact it was a lonely place; some identified the sparse number of people in the hotel. Again, the latter was expressed in a variety of acceptable ways such as there being only the landlord, his wife, and daughter, or that Isaac was the only guest.

(d) What does the phrase ‘solemn surging moan’ suggest about the wind?

The majority of candidates found this question, with its focus on language and its effect, to be demanding. Quite a number attempted to paraphrase ‘solemn surging moan’ and some merely lifted the phrase with answers such as ‘the wind moaned and was solemn’. Other responses commented on the wind being loud and/or strong which, although probably correct, does not convey the meaning of words such as ‘solemn’, ‘surging’ and ‘moan’, or their effect. Candidates who attempted to describe the word ‘moan’ with words such as ‘howl’, ‘groan’ and ‘whistle’ were awarded a mark. Candidates who commented on the metaphorical effect of the phrase with, for example, its eeriness or its ‘unsettling’, ‘disturbing’ effect on Isaac’s mind gained the second mark.

(e) Why does Isaac keep the candle lit when he goes to bed (paragraph five, ‘Isaac locked ... ’)?

Candidates gained one mark for this question by correctly identifying that Isaac feels depressed about lying awake in the dark. Very few responses went on to explain why this was linked to ‘the ceaseless sound of the wind’. A few mentioned ‘the wind’ but did not explain it fully – lying awake in the dark listening to the wind outside may not be, in itself, depressing.

Some responses gained the second mark by referring to the wind ‘blowing all night’, suggesting its endless nature. Some candidates used their own words for ‘depressing’ such as ‘sad and lonely’.

(f)(i) Re-read paragraphs five and six (‘Isaac locked ... clear and alert’). Explain using your own words, what the writer means by the words underlined in the following phrases:

Nearly all candidates attempted to explain or provide a synonym for the underlined word in the phrase taken from the passage. However, there were some candidates who attempted to explain a word in the quotation which was not underlined. The most common error relating to this was focusing on ‘exhaustion’ as opposed to ‘overcame’ in (a). A few candidates managed to couch their explanation in a circular manner by ‘lifting’ the word to be explained. For example, “‘overcame’ means Isaac was very tired and sleep overcame him”. A large number of responses did not gain the mark for (d) as ‘aware’ or ‘awake’ were not adequate definitions of alert, unless they were qualified by ‘fully’ or ‘wide’.

(a) ‘exhaustion overcame him’ (line 26)

Answer: took control of/overwhelmed

Many responses gained a mark here with the most popular explanations being ‘took over’ and ‘overwhelmed’.

(b) ‘dreadful sinking pain’ (line 29)

Answer: something terrible or terrifying

This was successfully answered with words such as ‘awful’, ‘horrible’, and ‘unbearable’.

(c) ‘shivering only disturbed his sleep’ (line 30)

Answer: interrupted

Candidates were able to explain in the main how ‘bothered’, ‘restless’ Isaac was because of his interrupted sleep. A few, however, especially in (f)(ii) mistakenly thought that his ‘shivering’ was because he or the room was cold rather than a sense of fear or unsettling atmosphere.

(d) ‘his mind was suddenly clear and alert’ (line 32)

Answer: wide awake/watchful/vigilant/fully aware/ ready for action

This was reasonably well answered although the extent to which he was watchful was often not emphasised with ‘fully’ awake or ‘fully’ aware. Some candidates referred to him as being ‘conscious’ but of course he could be so but far from alert.

(ii) Explain how the writer conveys Isaac's feelings during the night through the use of language in each phrase.

You should refer to the whole phrase in your answer and not just the words in italics.

It is important that candidates do not merely repeat their answer from **(f)(i)** and that they also refer to the whole 'phrase' and relate it to the question focus which in this case is Isaac's feelings during the night. Some candidates merely attempted to paraphrase the selected quotation, which tended to result in partial lifting, rather than comment on the effect of the language employed by the writer.

Question 2

Imagine that you are Isaac in Passage A. The day after these events you write a letter to a friend in which you explain about what happened on that night.

In your letter you should comment on:

- **your feelings about the hotel**
- **your difficulty in getting to sleep**
- **the landlord's explanation of who the woman is.**

Virtually every candidate followed the instruction to write a letter to a friend and managed to establish an appropriate register. Some candidates failed to introduce the topic of the letter to the friend reading it and assumed that the scenario of the poor weather, being away from home, and the isolated hotel were known to the friend. More successful responses gave sufficient, clear detail about why Isaac had arrived at the hotel and gave his reasons for his spending the night there. A few responses spent far too long on his travel to the hotel at the expense of the three bullets in the question. Candidates should think carefully about how they structure their responses to the question so they can fully cover the guidance given.

Most responses clearly expressed the writer's feelings about the hotel, making it known that they were rather troubled about the landlord's obsession with security and hinting that there was something strange about either him or the hotel itself. Some commented wryly on the food given to them and on the character of the landlord who variously appeared in a range of guises from a cheerful mine host to a miserable, unfriendly, begrudging jailer. Only the more successful responses were able to link the thread of the landlord's paranoia about security with the lack of guests and the subsequent appearance of the woman with the knife.

Most clearly covered Isaac's difficulty in falling asleep although there was quite a lot of lifting in accounts especially from the phrases included in **1(f)(ii)** and the depression felt by Isaac as he lay awake in the dark. These events were often brought to a sharp focus with the appearance of the woman with the knife in Isaac's room. Relatively few responses were able to offer a credible account of who the woman was and her motive for standing at Isaac's bedside with a knife in her hand. Explanations ranged from the more convincing 'spirit or ghost' of a woman to either the landlord's wife or daughter sleepwalking or looking to prepare a meal for Isaac. There were also Halloween explanations, April Fool type jokes/pranks, and so on, of varying levels of credibility.

Many responses ended their letters with the woman with the knife appearing in the room but with no further comment or explanation about her. Such responses were lacking in conviction in terms not only what happened, but also for the reason why Isaac chose to write to his friend to describe what happened to him. Few candidates ended their letters with the landlord's explanation about the knife-wielding woman and her reason for appearing in Isaac's room. A significant number of responses simply lifted all the facts from the passage and ended with the woman and knife, and then signed off the letter with an incongruously cheery farewell.

Most candidates gave their accounts in the chronological order of the passage although there were some which merely focused on the third bullet. Equally, there were some responses which wrote about Isaac in the third person. It is worth re-emphasising to candidates that their responses should develop from the original passage but also be rooted firmly in it. Some responses consisted of letters containing details which did not reflect, for example, the nature of the hotel and its occupants, and managed to transform the mysterious woman into a gun carrying assassin. It should be remembered that developing the material which is there is key for the Reading mark for this question, as opposed to writing an imaginative piece which bears little or no relation to the original.

In general candidates engaged well with the passage, but many opted for very abrupt endings or made only limited attempts at the third bullet, which limited their mark for Reading. More successful responses gave a balanced response, ensuring as much attention was paid to the last bullet as the first two.

Question 3

- (a) **What are the effects of cold weather on the human body and how you should protect yourself, according to Passage B?**

This was a successful question for the majority of candidates. However, a small number of candidates did not follow the instruction to write one point per line; some lifted sections from the passage on each line, hoping that within those sections they would gain marks by inclusion. There were many responses that lost marks by repeating the same point two or three times, in particular, point 10 in the mark scheme with 'socks', 'gloves' and 'hat' being separated frequently.

Some responses which stated that extremely cold weather can pose serious health risks (paragraph 1) did not gain a mark because they did not mention specifically that it 'can be fatal/life threatening'. Similarly, responses referring to the effect of cold weather on the brain did not gain a mark unless they explained what that effect was, such as 'confusion' or 'slurred speech' or 'the inability to think clearly'. The attention to specific detail is key in a summary and is evident in the mark scheme in point 8, with its 'exposed skin', point 11, with boots which are properly fitted or insulated, and point 13 with its focus on 'outdoor activity'. A number of responses included the point about boots gripping onto the ice but, indirectly in terms of the question, this constitutes protection from falling and not the direct issues arising from extreme cold weather. In contrast, seeking medical attention might be deemed to be a little late but it does offer some degree of protection even if one has already got frostbite or hypothermia.

- (b) **Summary**

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the effects of cold weather on the human body and how you should protect yourself.

Many candidates were able to answer this question with some degree of conciseness and a few tried hard to use own words although at times, this attempt led to a lack of concision with unnecessary personal commentary or linking phrases. The most successful responses managed to synthesise points related to the same area such as the protective clothes and boots, or the physical and mental suffering caused by extreme cold. Generally candidates adopted three approaches to writing their summaries: firstly, the chronological listing of their points from **3(a)**; secondly, the mixing up of points about effects and their related protective strategies; thirdly, the effects of cold weather followed by the protective measures which can be taken.

Some responses included the candidates' own comments based on personal knowledge or personal opinion about the topic and did not simply summarise the passage related to their points in **3(a)**. Others lost marks by not attempting to organise their points into a coherent outline of what we learn about the effects of extreme cold weather and how we should go about protecting ourselves as a result of this.

Only a small number of responses were of excessive length and a similarly small number were very short. Nearly all were well focused on the topic. The most successful were well organised and fluently written. Most candidates understood the requirements of the writing section but there were a lot of list-like responses, resulting in an average of 3 marks for this question.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

Paper 0522/02
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**. Candidates did well when they:

- read the passages very carefully – avoid skim-reading
- read the questions carefully
- give equal attention to all sections of each question
- spend time thinking about and planning responses, especially in **Questions 1** and **3**
- use your own words in Questions 1 and 3b; do not lift whole phrases or sentences from the passages
- select only the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- only make a point once in a response
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task, different for each question
- make sure that responses to Question 1 are sufficiently developed
- practise note-making, sequencing and concise expression.

General comments

Candidates appeared to find both passages on the paper equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. Most candidates had been entered for the appropriate tier, though some clearly would have benefited from being entered for the core tier. There did not seem to be many significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages.

Copying was sometimes evident in **Question 1**, especially in response to the second bullet and third bullet points: there is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting whole sections of the text or key phrases. The recommendations to get a 'nippy boat with a large engine...' were often copied in their entirety, in particular. There were also responses that included extremely long quotations of Jack's information and advice. This was sometimes not modified to focus on the bullet point – Nick's impressions of Jack – which led to rather narrative responses. Candidates must change the language of the passages in response to **Question 1** and **Question 3(b)** in order to achieve a higher Reading and Writing mark.

For **Question 2**, in order to achieve higher marks, candidates must make specific and detailed comments in relation to appropriate choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to consider the effects of their identified choices, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same or similar words as the language choice – 'monstrous aggressor' was often explained as an aggressive monster, for example. Pleasingly very few candidates used a grid or table format to respond to this question – using a grid or table format is likely to limit opportunity to explore and explain the choices candidates have selected and often leads to repetition.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to find a reasonable number of points in **part (a)**. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3(a)** but should use short notes rather than whole sentences. They should also avoid writing single words, as they may miss the crucial language of the point or fail to address the focus of the question. They should not copy chunks of the passage, as this will not be rewarded. The majority of candidates used their own words in **Question 3(b)**, and attempted to summarise the ideas, however, candidates must be aware that the meaning must not change so that the summary is factually inaccurate. Candidates are not expected to change key words and terms in **part (b)**, but should not lift whole phrases and sentences from the passage. Inclusion of material outside the passages is also not rewarded and is distracting. There were some examples of responses that were entirely copied from the passage, providing insufficient evidence of skills for Band 5. Most lengthy responses were due to inclusion of unnecessary material, indiscriminate copying of the passages, or repetition.

On this Reading paper 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing and avoid using lifted material from the passages. Most responses were written in an appropriate register, but some Writing marks were affected by awkward expression or limited style, over-reliance on the language of the passages, or structural weakness and incoherence. Candidates should ensure that they pay attention to the length guidelines for their response to these questions, particularly **Question 3(b)** where very lengthy answers cannot score highly on the Writing mark.

In all three questions on this paper, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. Candidates should aim to plan their responses; effective planning ensures that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage, and that there is a coherent and logical structure to the response.

Question 1

You are Nick. Following your night-time expedition to spot crocodiles you decide to write a letter of complaint to Jack's boss about your experiences. Write your letter of complaint.

In your letter you should:

- **explain your feelings now about the safety of the expedition**
- **describe your impressions of Jack and how he treated you on the trip**
- **suggest how you think the company might make such expeditions a better experience for the customer in the future.**

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

Begin your letter, 'Dear Sir/Madam, I would like to raise some concerns about my recent trip to spot crocodiles...'

Stronger responses to this question selected and condensed the events in the passage, modifying and adapting the ideas to create a suitable style for a letter of complaint, and a highly convincing voice for Nick, expressing his frustration, disappointment and/or outrage about his trip to spot crocodiles. They were able to sustain the use of supporting detail throughout the response, firmly tethering any development to details in the passage. The first bullet allowed them to retrieve relevant material from the passage to express their concerns about the general lack of regard for Health and Safety. The second bullet allowed candidates to modify ideas from the passage to turn Nick's descriptions of Jack's behaviour into credible causes for complaint about his lack of professional judgement and concern for the customer. The best responses firmly linked their ideas for the third bullet to details in the passage, but developed them by explaining how they may make customers feel safer, therefore making the trip more enjoyable or exciting, in the future.

A feature of better responses was even attention paid to the three bullet points with clear modification of the ideas, but always remaining firmly tethered to the passage. As this was a formal letter of complaint, better responses tended to be concise and focused, selecting and separating from Nick's fear and wild imaginings the justifiable causes for complaint, supported with evidence from the passage. Mid-range responses made reasonable use of the passage, with some attempt at own words, but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas in the passage, and to present them in the same order as in the passage, often using some of the

same words. A noticeable feature of such responses was describing the conversations Nick had with Jack in a narrative style, quoting whole conversations, rather than adapting that experience into a considered complaint about the impression given of a member of staff responsible for the customer's safety and enjoyment of the trip. This sometimes led to a rather limited response to the second bullet as the purpose of the letter became less clear. The first bullet posed fewer problems, and most candidates were able to select a number of ideas from the passage to voice their concerns about the safety of the trip. Most cited the lack of life jackets, or a weapon for protection. Many referred to the instability of the canoe making an accident likely, although some mistakenly thought the canoe was in poor condition, which was not tethered to the passage. Fewer candidates focused on the more subtle points about safety: the darkness, or the overgrown and remote nature of the swamp making rescue or escape impossible, for example. In the third bullet most candidates tethered their suggestions to clues in the passage, but some listed them quite briefly rather than using opportunities for development. Many simply listed the equipment that they thought should be provided, sometimes repeating the words of the passage. The vast majority of candidates addressed all three bullets, although some struggled to find a range of ideas for the second bullet point, or established a clear viewpoint about Jack – whether he was just thoughtless and poor at communication, or whether he was entertained by deliberately scaring customers.

Most candidates seemed familiar and comfortable with the style of a letter of complaint, but others simply took the form of giving an unselective narrative retelling Nick's experiences on the trip. Such responses lacked a sense of purpose. Some responses were so outraged that they became a rant, at times lapsing into language more appropriate for spoken English. Some careless reading was evident in confusion about the condition of the canoe, whether they were walking through a forest, or whether they were trying to catch crocodiles, but generally there were few misreadings of the passage.

The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short. They offered a very general view of the situation but few ideas and details in response to the bullet points. Some did not move beyond the first bullet point.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to write an effective, measured letter of complaint. The better written responses adopted a formal but assertive tone, focusing on specific concerns and making it clear that Nick considered the trip to be both dangerous and disappointing. More mixed responses included inappropriately insulting language used about Jack or threats against the company. Less successful responses were rather narrative or disorganised and failed to adopt an appropriate voice.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

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

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) Nick's fear of crocodiles in paragraph 3, beginning 'It sounded distinctly possible...'
- (b) The swamp in paragraph 5, beginning 'We glided along for some time...'

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Responses to **Question 2** should take the form of continuous prose to allow candidates to explore their choices fully. Having selected relevant examples to discuss, the focus needs to be on the quality of the analysis. 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. It was noticeable in this session that few candidates approached **Question 2** using a grid or table format. This benefitted candidates greatly, as when using a grid often the same material is duplicated in two of the three columns. This approach also often forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form and does not allow for varying development of comments according to the complexity of the language choice being discussed. The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They selected carefully, including images, put the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able, for example, to explain the sheer terror indicated in 'blood ran cold' and the suggestion of feeling trapped within a 'nightmarish scene'. A few candidates picked up on the humour of 'using the boats splinters as giant toothpicks' and the sense that the size of the crocodile was deliberately exaggerated. Many candidates were very secure on meanings and could explain words such as 'aggressive', 'toothpicks', 'gobble' and 'tangled'. Some effects were explained very well; many candidates could comment on the annoyance of the 'pneumatic buzzing' or the sense of the unknown/helplessness implied in 'swept off into the darkness'. The best responses considered meaning and effects throughout the response. The weakest responses had very few language choices, or offered few explanations beyond the very general.

The following response was written by a candidate in this examination session and is given as an indication of what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question. It is not intended to be a model answer.

- (a) Nick's fear of crocodiles in paragraph 3, beginning 'It sounded distinctly possible...'

The overall impression of Nick's fear of crocodiles is heavily exaggerated, expressed through the use of intense imagery to reinforce the horrendous situation. Firstly, the writer uses the image of the 'monstrous aggressor would gobble them up', meaning that the crocodile will brutally eat them, to suggest Nick's exaggerated and profound fear of crocodiles. The word 'monstrous' has connotations of a horrendous beast – rather like that in action films – to suggest the powerful behaviour of crocodiles through hyperbolic descriptions. Furthermore, the use of the word 'gobble' further exaggerates this for comedic impact, as it seems as if the crocodile will casually eat them in one gulp, suggesting Nick's horror-stricken state. The writer uses the image of the 'sudden snap of its gigantic jaws' to further suggest the powerful, aggressive appearance of the crocodile as it attacks. The word 'gigantic' implies that the crocodile's jaws are considered to be huge; connoting an image of a monster, which further exaggerates Nick's fear. Also the phrase 'sudden snap' highlights the dangerous presence of a crocodile, as though it is about to strike at any time. The writer uses the image of a 'nightmarish scene' to suggest the unreal quality of what is happening. The adjective 'nightmarish' has connotations of horror which suggests a sense of torture to intensify the pain the crocodile will inflict on them. Finally, the writer uses the image of the 'giant wooden toothpicks' to describe the splinters of the boat, highlighting the contrast between the helpless humans and the powerful crocodile. It suggests that the crocodile will use the toothpicks after his meal, suggesting a confident quality to reinforce the power and might of the crocodile. The metaphor diminishes the quality of the boat, reducing it to a tool for the crocodile.

(b) The swamp in paragraph 5, beginning ‘We glided along for some time...’

The overall impression of the swamp is a repulsive mess that has been conquered by nature, which emphasises the power of nature over man. Firstly, the writer uses ‘resonated like castanets’ to suggest the profound, overbearing noise of the frogs. The simile ‘castanets’ suggests the swamp is rather like an exotic, tropical area, and the word ‘resonated’ suggests it’s an endless noise which seems to go on for ever and an overbearing quality to the noise of nature in the swamp. The ‘pneumatic buzzing of mosquitos’ further conveys the overwhelming noise in the swamp, showing how powerful nature can be. The onomatopoeia of ‘buzzing’ highlights the intense and unpleasant noise that the mosquitos make, suggesting a tortuous atmosphere in the swamp. The image of ‘being eaten alive’ by the insects suggests the danger they are in. The hyperbolic description of being ‘eaten alive’ exaggerates the impact of the bites and connotes a sense of aggravation and terror, as if the insects are brutally and deliberately attacking Nick. Finally, the image of ‘small shrubs sprouting’ suggests that elements of nature have taken over the area, highlighting the chaotic and messy impression of the swamp. The word ‘sprouting’ suggests a lack of control as the plants seem to appear and grow in every direction. The sibilance in ‘small shrubs’ suggests the fluid-like, slimy nature of the swamp suggesting repulsiveness and an unpleasant atmosphere.

Less successful responses sometimes adopted a ‘technique spotting’ approach by identifying literary techniques. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response. Other candidates repeated the same explanation after each choice, for example, that Nick was fearful in (a). Some candidates simply repeated the words of the original choice in the explanation – “‘nightmarish scene’ means that it was like a nightmare”, for example. Less successful responses often took the form of a commentary on the entire paragraph for each half of the question, containing some relevant choices and some brief explanation of them. Some candidates offered single word choices only, not always selecting the most appropriate words, for example, offering ‘dark’ instead of ‘dark expanse of open water’. Occasionally candidates offered an extremely sparse number of choices or simply lifted whole sections of the paragraph and offered a general comment. These responses sometimes offered insufficient evidence of understanding for Band 5.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- Focus on the question carefully to ensure that the choices you select for comment are relevant.
- Re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; choose the best and not those which happen to come first.
- Choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful. Do not write out whole sentences, but also do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase.
- Do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle.
- Remember to put quotation marks around your choices. 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.
- Avoid general comments such as ‘this creates a strong visual image’, or ‘this draws the reader in and makes them want to read on’. Such comments will not earn any marks at all.
- Avoid repeating the wording of the question as an explanation of effect – ‘this shows Nick’s fear’, for example.
- If you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices.
- To explain effects, think of how the reader’s understanding is enhanced by the use of language when reading the word or phrase, because of its connotations and associations.
- Include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them.

Question 3

(a) Notes

According to Passage B, what physical and behavioural characteristics have enabled crocodiles to survive?

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

(b) Summary

Now use your notes from Question 3(a) to write a summary of what physical and behavioural characteristics have enabled crocodiles to survive, according to Passage B.

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

Pleasingly, almost all candidates had understood the need to identify just 15 points in **3(a)** and that points added after the 15 would not be credited unless replacing a crossed out answer earlier on. Selecting and identifying points meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. There was more than one way in which points could be logically grouped and these options were reflected in the mark scheme. Most candidates were able to identify at least seven points from the passage. Better, more focused, answers typically scored two thirds or more of the available content marks.

Question 3(b)

Responses that did well had used their points from **3(a)** carefully – organising them purposefully into a concise, fluent prose response rather than relying on repeating points in the order or language of the passage. There was some suggestion that answers at the top end had revisited points in **3(a)** during the planning stages of **3(b)** in order to edit and refine points in this part of the question – leading to clearer more distinct points in **3(a)** and an efficient and well-focused response in **3(b)**.

To answer this question successfully, candidates needed to first identify 15 points that were relevant to the question, listing them clearly – one per numbered line, in note form. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one mark per line. Candidates are not required to use their own words in this part of the question, but copying out chunks of the passage is not recommended and can deny the mark. Answers, though in note form, needed to be sufficiently clear and focused to make the point clearly. For example, ‘sound perception’ alone did not capture the superior quality of their hearing to get the point. The question had two strands: the physical and behavioural characteristics that have enabled crocodiles to survive, and the best responses organised their points to clearly acknowledge the different strands. In **3(a)** there was some repetition of similar points – ‘cold-blooded’ and the various ways in which crocodiles control their body temperature, for example. There are no marks to be scored for Writing in **3(a)**; however, checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is clearly essential if candidates are to avoid the potential danger of negating points through careless slips.

The majority of candidates demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary in **Question 3(b)**, with very few examples of wholesale copying though occasionally some added in further speculation and detail, resulting in less concise answers. Candidates are not expected to find their own words for each phrase (‘bony plates’ or ‘cold-blooded’, for example), but should write their response in their own sentences to avoid wholesale copying of the passage. The most successful responses used the notes from **3(a)**, re-ordering and regrouping the relevant information with a clear focus on the question. The best answers had considered carefully both the content and organisation of their answer, writing in fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using their own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary. In a number of answers, the inclusion of irrelevant and/or repeated material diminished the focus and depressed the Writing mark.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- Read the question carefully and underline the key words
- Re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify precisely the content points required
- List relevant points clearly in as few words as possible
- Read through your list of points in **3(a)** checking each is distinct and accurate and that there are no repetitions or very similar points
- Plan the structure of your response in **3(b)** – for example organising and sequencing content logically
- Write informatively and never comment on the content of the passage.
- Be careful to give only information from the passage that answers the question
- You can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own written expression in **3(b)** although you do not need to change key words
- Do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** in addition to the 15 required as they will not be marked
- If using a word-processor, number your points for **Question 3(a)**
- Pay attention to the guidance for length in **3(b)**.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

Paper 0522/03
Directed Writing and Composition

Key Messages

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

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

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

General Comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both Directed Writing, and in Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were relatively few very brief scripts.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the ideas addressed in the passage and usually some attention paid to the style and format of a letter. The majority of candidates approached the topic in their own language rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage. Better answers also tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument of their own. Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material or there was only a tenuous grasp of the task itself. The implied informality of expression between cousins was sometimes missed and the second bullet point occasionally ignored so that the role of the writer as a tour guide was not addressed. In weaker responses there was often some general commentary on holidays, with one or two points from the passage addressed but opportunities to discuss, weigh up and evaluate the ideas in the passage were missed.

In the Composition, better responses were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle. Although there was some narrative content in the middle range, most responses gave a range of descriptive detail. Most responses to the first descriptive question about a once beautiful area which is now spoilt were well-organised and paragraphed and made use of the implied structure in the question, with a section about the area's beauty first and then a description of it after some event which marred its beauty. As is usually the case, these were better when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere specific to the particular place described. There were some engaging descriptions of character in responses to the second question, again using the structure suggested in the question to organise observations into 'first impressions' and ways in which these impressions changed. Weaker responses here tended to be more discursive than descriptive, or fell into narrative with limited descriptive detail.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Weaker narrative writing was often characterised by inconclusive or unsatisfying endings, sometimes with simple storylines which were largely a series of events with limited awareness of the reader. In some cases there was limited narrative progression, even where the characterisation was

quite effective. Stories involving characters who did not fit in were often moving, personal and effective. The task was interpreted both literally and metaphorically to create interesting narratives. The second narrative question elicited a wide range of responses with varying content and Examiners awarded marks across the range here. Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. Descriptive writing was usually focused on detail and evoking atmosphere and it could have been improved by the use of less clichéd ideas and expressions. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of characters to stimulate the reader's sympathy were features understood by effective writers here.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1 - Directed Writing

A cousin of yours, Vincent, who travels a lot, is thinking of signing up for Home-from-Home Holidays. He has asked for your opinion of the scheme and whether you'll agree to be a guide for any visitors staying in his home. Write a letter to Vincent.

In your letter you should:

- **evaluate the claims made by Home-from-Home Holidays about the benefits of this kind of holiday**
- **explain whether or not you think joining the scheme would be a good idea for Vincent and for you**

Begin your letter, 'Dear Vincent, I've heard about Home-from-Home Holidays...'

High marks were awarded where there was some challenge and discussion of the points made in the passage, rather than a straightforward listing of the points made in the passage. Where the letter was also both accurate and appropriate in style, often with a consistent sense of audience and a polished style, higher marks were awarded. Better responses tended to pick up the implied criticisms made by the sceptical author of the article of the Home-from-Home scheme and developed a detailed evaluation of it.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some listing of the claims made by the holiday company in the article and an acceptance of these claims at face value. These details were an accurate reflection of the ideas in the passage but there was limited comment on or examination of them.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the main features of the scheme although there was also some misreading of some points. A thin use of the detail or weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic at this level.

Marks for reading

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage to provide a subtle critique of the Home-from-Home Holiday scheme. At this level, for example, the dependence of the whole notion on being able to trust complete strangers with your most treasured possessions and your home was addressed, often with some expression of incredulity or ridicule. Traditional travel agents' safeguards against disappointment, also mentioned in the passage, were used to undermine the basic premise of the company that these holidays were fail-safe as well as inexpensive. Some of the details in the passage were probed and challenged effectively: for example, the claim that some simple details entered online by people across the globe would be sufficient to match an individual's interests and outlook was highlighted as doubtful. The claims made that these holidays were cheaper and more eco-friendly were also examined with some insight. While most agreed that the scheme obviated the need to use up the earth's resources by building hotels, some questioned the quality of experience offered by the company compared with the guaranteed cleanliness, orderliness and care of most resort hotels.

The best responses also examined the idea of risk and the potential for uninsured and upsetting losses in terms of both property and holiday experience. At this level, there were also some thoughtful reactions to the role of guide for Vincent's visitors. Responses showed some insight into the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of an unpaid, inexperienced and unqualified family member and some made use of the forum-

users' comments which were included in the article to highlight the dangers implicit in this idea. In this way, better responses used thoughtful inferences drawn from the passage rather than making straightforward expressions of opinion or preference.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above. Responses at this level showed a sensible understanding of the specific claims made in the passage about Home-from-Home Holidays and some of the drawbacks as described by the forum-users. Responses tended to list the reasons why the scheme was good, usually in the sequence in which they appeared in the passage. Where there was some commentary on these issues, these remarks were not really evaluative at this level and could not be credited as such by Examiners. For example, Band 3 responses often explained briefly that the writer of the letter could not be a guide because he or she didn't know any local attractions or needed to be at work or college when visitors were staying in Vincent's house. While such arguments were a valid response to the task, they did not make use of the implications and inferences that better responses could tease out of the passage.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some were hampered by a misreading of the task and the voice required here, often not addressing Vincent or not understanding their potential role as a guide. Some weak responses misunderstood the idea of swapping homes and thought that both Vincent and the writer of the letter would be exploring the world in other people's homes. Marks below 3 were rarely given but in these cases the response was often a general commentary on foreign holidays with very little connection with the passage.

Marks for writing

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

Style and audience

An informal but apt tone was required for a letter of this kind and most responses were written in an appropriate register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some high scoring responses combined a familiar, informal tone with some effective rhetorical devices.

In the middle range, the style was often appropriate although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience. Letters sometimes started informally but ended with 'Yours sincerely' or 'Yours faithfully', showing some insecure understanding of the appropriate style for the task.

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

Structure

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

Responses given 7, 8 or 9 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the passage but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed to meet the demands of the task. Responses opened with a considered introduction and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of the purpose of the letter. At the lower end of Band 3, responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passage whereas higher Band 3 responses usually organised and re-sequenced ideas more selectively.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This often led to some basic reiteration of the points in the passage but without the re-ordering of them which was needed to give the letter a sense of purpose and audience. These responses showed a lack of awareness of the conventional structure of a letter.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. While these responses were friendly and informal in tone, the range and precision of vocabulary used allowed for some quite complex arguments about trust and safety to be made with clarity and style.

Responses given 7, 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate, a range of quite basic errors was made which marred the overall impression given. The nature and focus of the task exposed many simple grammatical errors, such as the very frequent use of 'could of' and 'would of' and the confusion of 'your' with 'you're'. The use of capital letters where they were not needed, even where there was otherwise general accuracy in the writing, was also noted by Examiners. Apostrophes were often not used appropriately and sentence demarcation by commas rather than full stops began to creep in at the lower end of Band 3.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures often kept writing marks for **Question 1** in Band 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Persistent 'comma-splicing' was perhaps the most common reason Examiners were unable to award clear, coherent responses marks in Band 3. Some whole paragraphs were actually strings of simple sentences with commas rather than full stops to separate them.

Section 2 – Composition

Descriptive Writing

2 Describe an area that was once beautiful but is now spoilt.

OR

3 Impressions of people can change over time. Describe your first impressions of someone you now know well.

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range although the first question was more often chosen. In the first task, there were some strongly evocative descriptions of places of all types. In the second question, some candidates found the description of character quite difficult although some recreated their first impressions of a friend or family member with real effectiveness. Generally, the best responses included some combination of physical description alongside some description of the narrator's thoughts and feelings. Responses to the second question were sometimes discursive rather than descriptive in focus, where some general commentary about the nature of friendship or the dangers of pre-judging people were offered rather than detailed observation.

The places described in the first descriptive task were, in the best responses, areas which had some personal meaning for the writer, often infusing the writing with a deep sense of nostalgia and regret for its loss. There were many parks, schools, playing fields, beaches and woodlands across the mark range but at the highest level the description often focused on the power of these objects to provoke deep feelings in the narrator. Candidates avoided too much narration of the reason the place became spoiled and focused instead on the details which created a vivid picture of the place transformed and destroyed.

Middle range responses to this question were characterised by more straightforward, often more physical descriptions of places. There was some clear descriptive detail although the way in which it was organised was less varied and the approach more repetitive. Each detail was described with some attempt to show its significance for the narrator although with less subtlety and effectiveness overall.

Weaker responses were often characterised by over-long narrative preambles explaining the significance of the place without really describing it. Narrative accounts of how the place came to be spoiled tended to overwhelm the description or the focus of the piece was a criticism of the local council or other authorities who had allowed such destruction.

For the second question, the best responses often included particular moments where the impressions of an individual changed but the piece as a whole was sustained and focused on the qualities of the person

described and their impact on the narrator. The reasons for the change in impressions was usually not dwelt on but often in better responses was brought about by closer friendship or in some cases by falling in love with the character or falling out of love with him or her. The structure implied by the wording of the question was adopted sensibly in higher level responses, so that there was a clear picture of the narrator's impressions at different points in time.

Responses given marks in the middle range were more straightforward in their approach to the task, including some rather more general qualities and attributes for the person described. The quality and effectiveness of the writing varied but the structure of many average pieces relied on this straightforward approach. Examiners were often able to reward some description even where the overall structure and focus was more discursive or narrative.

The story of the development of a relationship between the narrator and a friend was a common approach in the lower mark range. Some general impression of the character was given but with limited detail or elements which brought the character to life for the reader.

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

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

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

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story in which the main character feels they do not fit in.

OR

5 Write a story that begins, 'She watched them leave and realized she could be there for a long time.'

Both narrative questions proved popular choices and marks were awarded across the range for both. The first question elicited some engaging stories, often written in the first person, which included some careful characterisation and setting. Many responses involved school settings where the narrator was singled out or ill-treated in some way but the best of these were rooted in a clear and often moving depiction of the narrator's state of mind in which the sense of isolation and loneliness was palpable. In better responses there was a clear resolution to the narrative as well as some control of tension and suspense to shape the reader's reactions.

Middle range stories were characteristically straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases, although the characterisation was effective and credible, the piece overall lacked narrative progression and drive. One feature noticed by Examiners was the tendency to evoke quite convincingly the state of mind of the character but without a real story. These responses were effective descriptions but little happened to the characters and there was no real plot of narrative cohesion.

Weaker responses tended to involve less well drawn characters as well as some simple ideas, usually about friendship groups and how these were affected by new people or new influences on old friends. These responses often relied too heavily on dialogue without narration and the plotlines were simple, linear accounts with less awareness of the needs of the reader shown.

For the second narrative question, the variety of topics covered was very wide with varying success and credibility in the inclusion of the title phrase. The best narratives were those which had a ring of authenticity

about them and the build-up or preparation was crucial in creating a believable and effective narrative. These responses focused attention on characterisation, setting and a control of chronology.

Average and weaker responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived endings or by less control over the chronology. Responses given marks in Band 4 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while Band 5 marks usually reflected very brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. Some stories became a series of events which did not really cohere and some scenarios lacked credibility and in a few cases there was little sequencing or clarity overall.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Punctuation within sentences, in dialogue and for effect was characteristic of responses in the higher Bands and where coupled with a sophisticated palette of vocabulary, the highest marks were given.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Plan how to resolve your story in an interesting way before you start writing.
- Think about how to create tension and a climax in your story.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.
- Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0522/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

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

General comments

There was a wide range of varied task setting, some of it carefully linked to candidates' interests and enthusiasms. There was also a wide range of ability in English, from those who used language to think and imagine at a high level to those who were still imperfect in English grammar and aspects of style. Much of the work was typical of good practice in coursework.

For some re-sit candidates the process of completing new tasks ahead of the entry deadline was a hurried one and it was difficult for them to demonstrate a higher standard of achievement from that of the summer session in such a short time. Some of the marks were too generous, both for reading and writing, and the range of marks too narrow. However, teachers worked hard to assess the work, in many cases annotating it effectively, and to complete the necessary forms. There was adequate evidence of internal moderation.

Good practice:

In task setting, good practice was demonstrated when centres set a wide range of tasks for Assignments 1 and 2 in an attempt to meet the interests of as many candidates as possible. It was even better to encourage candidates to choose their own topics and titles in conjunction with their teachers' advice.

It was also good practice to encourage candidates to write from their own experience and to express their own views.

Finally, some candidates were taught how to set out a first draft and to edit and revise (as well as to correct) it. More detail about this is given later in this report.

However, in some cases, where candidates were set a narrow range of tasks, there were those who did not respond well. In addition, some tasks were accompanied by too much teaching, where candidates were advised what to write or how to structure their work. Some stimulus material offered them a pattern to follow in their writing instead of suggesting ways in which they could think imaginatively for themselves to create original and exciting pieces of work.

Too many drafts showed that teachers had corrected specific inaccuracies or made specific suggestions for improvement, instead of giving general advice at the foot of the work. The indicating of errors in the margin or in the body of the work was not allowed because it gave the candidate an unfair opportunity to increase the mark.

Task setting

The setting of this assignment by 0522 teachers was much improved. There was more variety, and fewer candidates lost marks by attempting tasks that gave insufficient challenge.

For Assignment 2, there was a tendency to write stories that contained so much violence that they lost their effectiveness and, ultimately, credibility. This was also true of the large number of haunted house stories. There were some good descriptions of towns and holiday haunts as well as accounts of experiences that stood out in the minds of the candidates.

Assignment 3 was often problematical, and a full account of the work is given below.

Assessment of coursework

Writing

The balance between content/structure on the one hand and style/register/accuracy on the other was not observed. Candidates assessed in Band 1 are expected to demonstrate almost perfect accuracy, and there should only be rare errors in work assessed at the marks of 34 and 35.

Coursework offers excellent opportunities for candidates to draft and to check their work for errors. They have time to proof read their responses and are allowed to use electronic devices to help them with spelling and to identify stylistic shortcomings. Therefore, the expectation is that there should be fewer errors in Coursework.

The aspects of writing that were not always given their proper weighting were:

- **Punctuation, especially sentence separation:**
candidates tended to link sentences with commas rather than with conjunctions, for example: '*The next day the mist had vanished, I had breakfast and set off for the bus station.*' Some candidates used far too many semi colons, many of them inappropriately, and also confused colons with semi colons. In some pieces of work exclamation marks were used where there were no exclamations and this was sometimes true of question marks.
- **Sentence structure:**
this was connected with incorrect sentence separation. Some candidates wrote simple sentences throughout an assignment and punctuated them correctly. Others did the same but used very little punctuation. At a higher level there was sometimes little variety in sentence types and lengths. Some candidates wrote excessively long and poorly organised sentences that convoluted meaning and failed to communicate ideas clearly.
- **The range of vocabulary:**
some candidates had a limited range of language, which resulted in the repetition of key words and difficulties in expressing exact or subtle thoughts and ideas. Where language was very limited, even where it was correctly used, the mark was typically in Band 4. Some candidates used over-elaborate language so that meaning was sometimes difficult to follow, or where words were used inaccurately.

Some candidates had problems with spelling. There were many examples in 0522 of United States spelling. Moderators have always been instructed to allow either UK or US spelling but to demand that it should be consistent. There were also many examples of candidates misusing the spell check. Not only was the spelling of some words not known, but when given alternatives, some candidates made the wrong choices.

Examples were:

Components for opponents; par annoyer for paranoia; revelling and reviling for 'revealing clothing'; *Students feel self-contours; heading towards familiar tertiary; Friday 8th December 2010 hornets me till this day.*

These are examples of words that should have been proof read. Proof reading was not always carried out and accounted for many errors.

Some centres did not indicate or annotate every error within a portfolio, and this can lead to an overestimation of the level of competency in written accuracy.

The marking of content and structure was much more accurate except where the content of Assignment 1 was not demanding enough. The assessment of register was also good. Many candidates were able to write in three distinct registers.

Assessment of reading

This tended to be lenient and will be dealt with later in the report. Candidates were given high marks even when they had not selected relevant ideas and opinions from the text or had not evaluated them in any depth.

Administration by Centres

Moderators complimented Centres on their filling in of forms and presentation of the folders. Most Centres enclosed the CASF (WMS) form and indicated which of their candidates were included in the sample. The CASF was required for all entered candidates, and all changes to the marks at internal moderation should have been shown in the right hand column. This was not always the case and Moderators had to search for evidence of moderation in the folders themselves.

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

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

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

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

Drafts

Some candidates used their drafts well, revising sections and editing language. The following procedure was looked for by Moderators:

- The draft is produced. This may be partially completed, a set of ideas that may be changed radically at the next draft, or a completed version.
- The teacher reads the draft and writes general advice about editing, revising, and correcting at the foot of the work. There should be no marks in the margin or the body of the work.
- The candidate uses a different colour to indicate what changes are needed, either altering wording or stating what is intended in the final version that is different from the draft.

It was not acceptable that first final versions were exact copies of the first draft with no indication of advice or changes to be made.

Internal moderation

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

There were some cases of disagreement with rank order, but these were not too great for moderation to take place without changing the Centre rank order.

Assignment 1

This assignment was well done. There was a general understanding that there needed to be evidence of a personal viewpoint or experience. Most responses were argumentative and were well structured. Where they were not, paragraphs appeared to be placed randomly with little thought for how a reader would progress through the assignment.

Tasks that were not successful included rants on topics such as cyclists in lycra and public buses. These lacked challenge and there were structural problems and some inconsistent register. There were a number of film reviews that contained too much retelling of plot and which followed an unstructured template. There were a very large number of tasks set on video games, mobile phones, Facebook, and technology in general. These essays were remarkably similar in their argument and mostly lacked any personal input. The topics were not bad, but they needed a lot more thought about how to present content in an interesting way. Leaflets were rarely successful as examples of writing, although attractive to look at.

The great variety of interesting tasks included the following:

My ideal education
How to apply makeup
Scouting
Should students grade teachers?
Corruption, mother of all crime
Yorkshire terriers
Misconceptions of Islam
A guide to surviving Hogwarts
Prison reform (a fine piece, worthy of a prime minister's attention)
A speech about freedom

Assignment 2

These assignments were either descriptive (particularly of places that were home or which had been visited), narrative, or accounts of personal experience. Topics for personal experience were nearly all engaging either because they were unusual or because they were so vivid in the writer's memory. The descriptions were also realistic and nearly always worked well for the candidates who chose them.

Narratives varied. Many of them were so-called 'Gothic' stories, and some were 'dystopian'. The latter varied from the imaginative and clever to the frankly silly, with hordes of zombies wreaking vengeance on lonely survivors. The secret of this type of narrative is to make it credible, and the only way to do this is to proceed with caution, carefully building up atmosphere until the reader believes in what is being related. The problem was that the events of the haunted house stories, the 9/11 tragedy and the plane crashes were outside the experience of the writers. Most of the stories were not credible and it took a really good writer to make them work. It was a pleasure to find those that were based on knowledge of what happens in a good short story, and there certainly were some examples.

For the same reason, the stories that contained gruesome violence did not work because the violence took over from the story as a whole. The story became an excuse for describing flowing blood whereas the description of the blood should have served the needs of the story. Whether it was safe to encourage young writers to create such violent stories is another matter.

Monologues rarely worked because they tended to be expressions of emotion that repeated itself, so that the content was limited and there was no clear structure. As usual, those that did work were very good.

The following is a selection of topics that elicited good writing:

The bell boy
The monster under my bed
The jump
Voluntary work in Cambodia
Before the big game starts
Elephant ride
My first tattoo
City at night
Arrival in Manila.

The descriptive topics, *the beach*, *the fairground*, *the storm* and *the park*, have now been popular for a very long time and centres may find candidates produce better work with alternative titles.

Despite these problems, the writing of the second assignment was often good. Candidates attempted to demonstrate a range of vocabulary and there was often a strong sense of relevant detail.

Assignment 3

There were several problems with this assignment. The choice of text was not always successful because there were not enough ideas and opinions with which candidates could engage. It was quite common for candidates to mistake the text for a stimulus instead of a text set for reading study. As a result, many responses were to the topic rather than to the text. This did not affect the writing mark which was separate from the reading, but it did affect the reading mark where marks of 8, 9, and 10 were given too readily. There was a lack of selection of ideas and opinions from the text and some of the comments were very straightforward and not true evaluations. Those Centres that understood the nature of the task did noticeably well, as follows:

- The text (about one to one and a half sides long) consisted of a writer putting a case for a controversial topic, with which the candidates could agree (partly or completely) or disagree.
- The response started with an overview. This could include elements of summary, particularly making clear the writer's attitude and stating the reasons for agreeing or disagreeing. This overview could be extended perhaps to half a side.
- The response then picked out a series of ideas and opinions from the text that supported points made in the overview. Each of these was evaluated as an argument. The candidates might define fact from opinion, explore the consistency of the argument, or give reasons why the writer was being biased. It was not enough to agree or disagree without reasons. It was wrong to attack the writer instead of examining and destroying the arguments.

Very good candidates were able to write an overview and then produce a coherent response which assimilated quotations both short and long from the text to create a strong argument. In these responses the evaluation often came first and was supported by the quotation.

Some Centres used texts by Katie Hopkins. While these were appropriate, the arguments used in the articles were often rather unchallenging and they tempted candidates to respond with personal attacks instead of patiently demolishing the attitudes that were expressed. Articles by Jeremy Clarkson were more difficult because he tempted the reader to disagree violently. However, his comments were not as superficial as they first appeared and needed taking apart with considerable care.

The best topics were those that were within the sphere of candidates' experience and included:

Should school start earlier in the day?
A world without work
Syrian refugees
A teenager writing in favour of school uniform
An attack on teenagers' behaviour and attitudes
Teenage sleep patterns
An article proposing to ban the hijab
Using ex-army soldiers as teachers
Left to die on Everest
Article about closing a local youth centre.

Final comments

The Moderators thank Centres for the efforts they made to complete what were often very worthwhile and readable folders.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0522/05
Speaking and Listening

Key messages

Administration

Most centres were conversant with the required procedures and carried them out professionally and effectively. Where there were issues the following applies:

- It is important for a centre to choose **either** Component 5 or 6 **before** planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered. Component 5 is a test taken within a specified window, being suitable for centres who wish to assess their candidates on one topic, on one chosen date. For Component 6, three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. A small minority of centres continue to misunderstand this difference. It is not, for example, possible for centres to use what were originally intended as Component 6 tasks for an entry for Component 5.
- Having chosen Component 5, centres should refer closely to both the current syllabus and Speaking and Listening Handbook to ensure the requirements for the administration and conduct of the component are met in full.
- Cambridge requires a centre to provide **three different items** in the package sent to the Moderator. These are a **recorded sample** on CD, DVD or USB drive, the **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered and a **copy of the marks** that have already been sent to Cambridge. Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.
- It would be appreciated if centres would use **digital recording equipment** to generate audio files, which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format. This allows for easier access for moderators when playing the recordings back. Appropriate file types are mp3, wav and wma but not AUP as moderators struggle to open these using standard computer software. Please **check the quality** of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge. Please collate recordings onto either one CD or USB drive unless the cohort's size prevents this.
- Please check the recordings at regular intervals during the testing process to ensure their quality. Please also check the CD or USB before despatching to Cambridge. Faulty recordings continue to delay the process of moderating a small minority of centres.
- It would be very helpful if, for each candidate, a **separate track** is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.
- Where total marks for a candidate have been altered because of internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks have been changed.
- The examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. A separate introduction is required for each candidate's test.
- Almost exclusively, the tests were conducted within the specified time window. Centres should note that it is not possible to re-submit the same work from a previous series for Component 5, as the test for each series must take place within the specified test window. Instead, marks should be carried-forward from a previous series.

Conduct of the test

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

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

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

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

The use of pre-prepared responses to known questions in Part 2 is not permitted. When they plan and prepare their responses, candidates are encouraged to consider what questions they may be asked during the discussion, but there should be no collusion between the examiner and candidate. Candidates who prepare long and unnatural monologues in response to anticipated questions penalise themselves. The discussions should evolve naturally, with room for spontaneity and responses which have not been preconceived.

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

Accuracy of assessment

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

- Examiners sometimes ignored the reliance on notes in Part 1 and compared candidates who relied on notes/memorisation favourably with candidates who were more spontaneous but still gave a good performance.
- The main cause of inaccuracy in assessment was a lack of consideration of the length a candidate's response. Those that were too short or overly-long were unlikely to meet all of the criteria necessary to secure the higher bands.
- Articulate, confident candidates tended to be over assessed where the content was factual rather than demonstrating higher level thinking.
- Some assessors seemed reluctant to give full marks, or even Band 1, where the candidate obviously merited such an assessment.
- Under marking was also more evident at the bottom of the mark scheme where candidates needed to be credited for what they did do, despite some areas of obvious weaknesses.

Approaches to Part 1

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

The focus for many candidates was just to get the material delivered, with fewer candidates also thinking about tone and rhetorical devices to support their talks. The best candidates often had a passion for their topic, and therefore the use of language devices came more naturally.

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

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

- A significant moment in my life
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Being a teenager in the 21st Century
- Body shaming and the role of social media
- Gaming – where it was well constructed
- Travel
- Driving and mobile phones
- Discrimination focusing on a social issue, i.e. disability
- Bermuda Triangle
- Topical world events
- Experience of other cultures- moving countries/other education systems compared/anime/Korean pop music
- Overcoming challenge
- Technology

Management of Part 2

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

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

Good discussions gave ample opportunity to allow candidates to develop their ideas as fully as they could, providing questions that helped them to explore ideas which demonstrated development of explanation and thinking. Some appropriate evidence of sensitivity by the listener was also noted when the topic was personal and potentially upsetting.

Some candidates were hindered through the listener cutting into a discussion when it may have been more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue. Where both candidate and examiner ask each other a series of questions, with the examiner's answers dominating the discussion, a mark in the higher bands is unlikely.

Some discussions fell into 'limited' or just 'adequate' because the examiner ran out of questions to push the discussion to the required minimum length, thus the candidates were disadvantaged. In a similar vein, where the examiner did not extend the discussion, candidates were not given the opportunity to really show what they could do.

Advice to centres

- Prepare for this examination as any other, i.e. techniques/research/thought about appropriate topics. Practise methods of presentation and discussion in other situations before preparing for this exam.
- Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through effective discussion and appropriate timings for both parts of the test. Keep to the time limits in the syllabus to avoid candidates being adversely limited in the mark scheme.
- Follow the instructions on how to present the recordings and documentation efficiently and concisely. Please check everything before sending it to Cambridge.

- Encourage candidates to choose topics that they know well through personal experience, and are passionate about. Issues and ideas work better than factual topics unless the candidate has an individual flair or interest.
- When conducting the discussions in Part 2, examiners should have plenty of questions to ask to push candidates to fill the time for the discussion. Examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and show off what they can do. Examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early, which can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.
- At the lower end of the mark scheme especially, focus on crediting what is there and do not penalise what is missing.
- At the top end, Band 1 responses should be the required lengths and include evidence of higher level thinking skills being applied by the candidates.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0522/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages

- It is important for a centre to choose **either** Component 5 or 6 **before** planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered. Component 5 is a test taken within a specified window, being suitable for centres who wish to assess their candidates on one topic, on one chosen date. Component 6 is more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires centres to fully embrace the concept that the speaking and listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- Having chosen Component 6, centres should pay close attention to both the current syllabus and Speaking and Listening Handbook to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. In particular, the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** should be treated as 'living' documents that are completed when each task is undertaken. It is permissible for candidates to fill out these sections themselves but please check the accuracy and amount of detail given. **Specific** information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator and not just generic statements that are unhelpful. For Task 1 a comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful for the Moderator.
- Cambridge requires a centre to provide **four different items** in the package sent to the Moderator. These are a **recorded sample** on CD, DVD or USB drive, the **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered, a **copy of the marks** that have already been sent to Cambridge and the **Individual Candidate Record Cards** for the candidates included in the sample. Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.
- It would be appreciated if centres would use **digital recording equipment** to generate audio files, which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format. This allows for easier access for moderators when playing the recordings back. Appropriate file types are mp3, wav and wma but not AUP as moderators struggle to open these using standard computer software. Please **check the quality** of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge.
- It would be very helpful if for each candidate a **separate track** is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.
- The teacher/Examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. For paired activities, it would be helpful if **candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing** before beginning the task so the Moderator can clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.
- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the **assessment criteria can be adequately met** if the activity is very short. It is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums.

General comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please use these documents. It is worth noting that the Component 5 Summary Form is different and it is not interchangeable with the Component 6 equivalent.

For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is encouraged.

Comments on specific tasks

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

Task 1

Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. More successful centres allowed candidates to choose their own topics as opposed to dictating a generic theme. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made.

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

- A significant moment in my life
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Why I love anime
- My participation in ...
- My favourite band
- Being a teenager in the twenty-first century

Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about or engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. 'Football' remains a popular topic amongst boys but where there is no sense of audience or specific focus there will be little evidence of the higher order thinking skills expected for those wishing to attain a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions. Generally, entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands.

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

- Planning a school celebration
- Arguing for and against the use of social media
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well
- The effects of Body Image
- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion
- Acting as employers choosing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme)

Task 3

Task 3 may take the form of a group discussion debating an issue which is topical and or a role-play where each candidate plays the part of a character. Both can be successful as long as the assessment criteria for the group work are met. It is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. To this end, it is advisable to create groups of similar ability levels so that weaker candidates are not disadvantaged and to consider the group dynamic so that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability.

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

- A trial scene based on a literary text, e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- A Jeremy Kyle style role play possibly with literary figures as the central characters
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity

General conclusions

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