FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

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

General comments

Moderators remarked on the high standards of much of the work and particularly on the wide range of topics that were chosen, many of them demonstrating considerable judgements and maturity.

Some of the work for Assignment 3 was well argued, and there were examples of candidates who presented an excellent overview of their chosen text and its writer's attitude towards the topic. However, this is a test of reading and requires a particular type of response. Some of the texts selected were too long and those that were informative did not give the same sort of opportunity as those that were argumentative. The marking of reading was sometimes too high in terms of the depth and breadth of reading the text. It was important to study texts and examine them, rather than as stimuli for candidates' own writing. More detail about this assignment is given later in the report.

The process of drafting gave candidates many opportunities to develop their work and to improve it. Some candidates demonstrated that they had made changes of editing and occasionally, wholesale revision. Unfortunately there were still examples of drafts that were exactly the same as the final version. There was also still a widespread misunderstanding of the rules about indication of error in drafts, and centres are reminded that this is forbidden.

Resit candidates had very little time between the end of summer and the entry date to produce entirely new folders. Where a candidate had an inconsistent folder, a good approach was to take the weakest piece, explain its shortcomings and replace it with a new assignment that would contribute to a slightly higher mark than previously submitted. This was often more successful than attempting to replace all three assignments.

Centres are asked to spend some time reading the advice given in the syllabus and in other documents, including reports for recent sessions. They are also asked to use the mark schemes, especially for reading, bearing in mind that to give a high mark in a mark band, all the strands must be achieved at the stated level.

Good practice was where:

- a wide range of topics was provided for Assignments 1 and 2, and candidates were allowed to choose to respond to what interested them

- some imagination was used in suggesting unusual ideas for writing, and there was a certain amount of risk taking
- there was a strong sense of the candidate as an individual writing with conviction and enthusiasm
- drafts were considered and improved
- teachers gave clear advice about how Assignment 3 was to be attempted, and it was explained that it was a test of reading in depth and with understanding, often of subtle shades of meaning.

Less good practice was where:

- the teacher set the same topic for an assignment to everyone and gave too much guidance as to the content. The result was undue similarity between the work of candidates, and this affected the marks
- there was little imagination in task setting, and candidates wrote on well-established themes without conviction or imagination
- there was a particular problem in Assignment 2 where candidates wrote incredible and often immature stories about unrealistic topics
- in Assignment 3, candidates addressed the topic rather than the text
- the work was significantly too long or too short, which affected the quality. However, centres should remember that the word lengths are given for guidance, and there should be no automatic penalty for ignoring them.

Task setting

Many successful candidates provided evidence of writing in three distinctive registers and three distinctive genres. This indicated careful planning of the course as a whole by teachers who had clearly understood the educational advantages of taking this option. Certainly, it was better to avoid writing two similar pieces and generally better if the topic of each assignment was different. Occasionally a candidate wrote about the same sport in Assignments 1 and 2. This was not necessarily an unwise decision as it was possible to argue for the sport in the first piece and write a description of attending a match in the second.

Setting the same assignment across a whole teaching set sometimes disadvantaged specific candidates either because the challenge was insufficient for a good candidate to demonstrate quality or because it was too difficult for a candidate to manage and understand. Some candidates had no interest in the topic that was set.

A danger of giving candidates free choice was that sometimes a wrong choice was made. This was particularly so where candidates were able to choose their own text for Assignment 3. The Moderators advised that in such cases, monitoring of the process by teachers was essential.

Assessment of coursework

In many cases Moderators were able to agree the marking of writing, which indicated that centres' procedures were sound. Slight changes to centres' marks enabled them to be brought into line with the standards set by Cambridge. Centres often used a wide range of the marks available and avoided bunching on specific marks. Rank orders were generally agreed. There was also evidence of internal moderation which in some cases had changed original marks to a more realistic level. Centres are thanked for their work in assessing and moderating.

Moderators were unable to agree the marks where too much weight had been given to Content and Structure and not enough to shortcomings in Style and Accuracy. Some centres assessed too many of their candidates at a high level. Occasionally, the marking of the weakest candidates was too severe.

In some cases there was no annotation on individual assignments. The Moderator was unable to understand how marks might have been awarded. Some centres did not annotate specific errors on the final versions of assignments. The Moderator was unable to understand how much weight had therefore been given to the accuracy of the work.

Writing

The best candidates structured their work properly in developed paragraphs and avoided repetition. Some of the sequencing of sentences within paragraphs was very convincing and made the work easy to follow. They wrote with a wide range of appropriate vocabulary, that is, the right word in the right place. When candidates tried too hard to use an imposing vocabulary they ended up sounding unconvincing and occasionally unclear. A common error was to use a particular word too many times in the same or adjacent sentences.

Candidates who achieved marks in the top band wrote in a range of sentence shapes and lengths, demonstrating control of longer sentences where appropriate. Elsewhere, there were, however, many problems. The commonest was that of repetitious structures, especially double, coordinated sentences. Some candidates wrote very long, convoluted sentences that could not be understood. The habit of using single words was often too frequent within an assignment and became an irritation.

Better candidates wrote accurately. The commonest errors were those of sentence separation, in particular using pronouns to join sentences instead of conjunctions, and spelling errors including problems concerning homophones. The inability to spell was often demonstrated by a careless approach to using the spell check. Examples were:

The smell of hot motel rock filled the air
…failed on numerous equations
…more chance to live and savvies
How can I be invested in…? (interested)
Your prostration of teenagers (presentation)

Candidates lost marks because they did not proofread their work. In some cases this was very obvious.

Assessment of reading

The best candidates gave an extended overview of the text which summarised the main ideas, the writer's attitude towards what was usually a controversial topic and, briefly, the candidate's own views. They then either quoted a series of ideas and opinions from the text and evaluated them in terms of their integrity as arguments or, gave an extension of their views, assimilating material from the text into a well-structured and convincing response.

Candidates who examined a series of ideas and opinions and evaluated them with varying degrees of quality, without giving clear evidence of a grasp of the text as a whole, were less successful. Some candidates reflected the ideas but did not respond to them, preferring to write their own ideas on the topic. Addressing the topic rather than the text did not respond correctly to this assignment, and the reading mark in these instances was below band 3.

Some centres were too ready to give a mark of between 8 and 10 when the quality of the reading from script to script was markedly different. Some candidates, however, were under-rewarded, usually because their responses to individual ideas were well explained and completely relevant.

Administration by centres

Moderators' chief complaints were that the coursework was contained in plastic folders. These were difficult to handle. Some centres did not attach the sheets in each folder properly and securely. Centres are asked to use paper staples or, if available in their country, treasury tags. Paper clips are not secure and where folders are in a pile, individual sheets can be lost or confusingly out of order.

It was not always immediately clear which version of an Assignment was a draft and which was the final one. One draft per folder was almost always enclosed. It was not necessary for there to be a draft of all three assignments.

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 internal moderation in the folders themselves.

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

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. Where the Internal Moderator finds that the marks of a particular set teacher are bunched on a narrow range, special care should be taken to determine whether the scripts should be reassessed.

Assignment 1

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

Content and Structure were the strong features of this assignment. The best candidates had much to say and conviction in saying it. Careful planning ensured that repetition was avoided and there was some skilful use of a wide range of natural connectives, beyond the rather mechanical use of 'moreover', 'however', 'firstly' and 'secondly'. Less good responses often started well, but later there was a comparative weakness of content and paragraphing which suggested that the choice of topic was in fact not a good one.

Some topics were well worn. When writing about the death penalty or video games for example, the content was very similar, almost as if the ideas had come out of a text book. Topics such as euthanasia, the legalisation of marijuana, social media, abortion and Supersize me generally lacked originality. These topics have been attempted so often and for so many years, that experienced Moderators can almost predict the content before starting to read. Admittedly they are matters of concern to sixteen-year-olds, but then so are other, perhaps more personal topics such as:

Black Friday
Are youth sports too intense?
Risky sports
Arming the police
Matters of mental health
Has feminism gone too far?

A number of candidates wrote intelligent arguments supporting or criticising President Trump.

Assignment 2

There was the usual collection of well-written descriptions and original and interesting personal accounts. It is worthwhile to develop in candidates the techniques involved in turning personal experience into engaging writing. The best of this writing was never too plain in its expression. After all, this assignment was an opportunity to use vocabulary convincingly and to choose detail with some care as to its relevance. There were some good examples written to the generic themes of '*I'll never forget…*' and '*A moment when time stood still…*'. '*My garden*' was a good descriptive title, and there were excellent descriptions of a country park and '*The candy museum shop*' that could only have come from a love of the place and the imprint made on the memory. '*The school, it sings*' was a very clever and attractively written piece of description and '*Grandma's house*' was almost certain to be a moving choice. A final example of a description that touched the writers' imagination rather than recalling a real place was '*The cathedral ruins*'.

Descriptions of beaches and fairgrounds tended to be very similar and because they were stock subjects did not seem to be of real places. Very often these responses were largely in the form of lists of details rather than creations of places to which the reader could relate. Descriptions of places such as Madeira, Cordoba, Dubai and Camden Market in London were presented in better structures and demonstrated the obvious interest of candidates who visited them.

Fiction was more of a problem. There were some excellent stories, unusual in content and having some clever and unexpected endings, and a control of events and language that made the narratives seem real. Candidates who wrote stories that were unbelievable, to the extent of being immature and even silly, were less successful. These stories included accounts of trespassing in a haunted house and various stories

about aliens and zombies. If they were meant to be inspired by Gothic stories, they were almost always very weak imitations. Stories about plane crashes rarely seemed credible, especially where the writer proved to be the only survivor. Such stories should be avoided.

Stories needed titles to whet the reader's appetite. Here are some examples:

The Crimson Petal
A peculiar anomaly
The other side of the mirror
The mystery of the Ouija board
Broken paradise
Lights out
Traumatic teenager
The man you should have never met

Assignment 3

Some of the problems of the assessment of reading have already been noted. The selection of an appropriate text was not easy. It had to be one that could generate some argument on the part of the candidate. Candidates did best either with texts they disagreed with or only partially agreed. The writer's attitude towards the topic needed to be clearly addressed, and the text had to offer sufficient challenge.

In the past this report has listed a number of types of text that have caused candidates some difficulty. On this occasion, there were three main issues. Some texts were so long that it was difficult for candidates to select ideas and opinions for their responses. Texts that were entirely informative gave very little for candidates to discuss other than the topic. Some texts on serious topics were written with a sense of humour or satire; candidates found it very difficult to appreciate the humour and to separate it from what the writer actually believed. They thus missed the point and lost marks. This was particularly true of writers such as Jeremy Clarkson and Giles Coren.

Candidates also had difficulty with articles by Katie Hopkins. These were not humorous, but the strength of her views was such that arguing with them involved making points that were too obvious, and candidates often, mistakenly, attacked the writer instead of evaluating her views.

Centres are advised to avoid the Facebook article by Janet Street Porter, 'I saw a killer die', Katie Hopkins on migrants and 'Educating Essex'. These articles have been incredibly popular, but rarely provide candidates with the opportunity to respond originally, and often prevent candidates from achieving their full potential.

This assignment contributed fully to the writing marks. Good candidates wrote cohesive essays in response. Less good candidates provided an unstructured set of quotations from the text in no particular order.

These are some of the topics covered by the texts:

School has taken control of children's lives
Kneeling for the United States national anthem
Should phones be allowed in class?
Is boredom really that bad?
There should be boxing in every school
Handwriting doesn't matter
The rise of selfie accidents
Cambodian sweatshops

The topic of homosexual marriage was a good example of the increasing breadth of mature concern among teenagers.

Final comments

The general impression of work done for this session was that it was well written and presented. The standard of assessment was generally high. It is worth adding that the weakest writing was sometimes the second assignment for a variety of reasons, sometimes to do with content but chiefly with style and accuracy. In a number of cases the strongest writing was that of the third assignment, possibly because candidates were supported by the text.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/05
Speaking and Listening

Key messages

Administration – General Points

- **The recording of each candidate** should to be sent as part of the package to Cambridge together with the Coursework Assessment Summary Form(s) and a copy of the Mark Sheet(s).
- Please use **digital recording equipment** to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software such as mp3, wav and wma. **Do not use AUP**.
- Please collate recordings onto either **one CD, DVD or USB** drive unless the cohort's size prevents this.
- **Every single test should begin with the rubric outlined in the syllabus, giving the full date, centre name and number, candidate name and number, and the name of the examiner.** It is not acceptable for a centre to create one generic introduction for the whole cohort.
- Where total marks for a candidate have been altered because of internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks has been changed.
- Where candidates have been entered but fail to take the test they should be recorded as 'absent' and not awarded a mark of zero. A mark of zero should only be awarded to a candidate who is present for the test but who does not say anything worth awarding marks for when assessed against the marking grids.

Most centres were conversant with the required procedures and carried them out professionally and effectively.

Where there were issues, the following applies:

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

Conduct of the test

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

In some centres, examiners engaged in an 'off topic' conversation with candidates before asking them to begin their Part 1 task. While this was aimed at putting candidates at ease before the test, it was not a necessary part of the process, led to some very long overall recordings and was distracting for candidates who really only wanted to begin their talks.

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

- **Part 1 should be a minimum of 3 minutes.** Please note this does not include the examiner's introduction. Where a Part 1 response is short, please consider whether the **assessment criteria can be adequately met** and assess accordingly. It is difficult to see how a response can meet higher level criteria such as 'sound' or 'full and well organised use of content' and 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting significantly less than three minutes.
- Equally, a response which is significantly overlong cannot be regarded as fulfilling the criteria for Band 1. It is in the best interests of the candidate that the examiner steps in to halt any Part 1 talk that is in danger of exceeding five minutes.
- Given that both speaking and listening are assessed in Part 2, it is important that the discussions last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. **In Part 2 a minimum of 6 minutes of discussion is expected.** It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation is met.

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

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

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

It is important that the tests are undertaken within the prescribed test window published by Cambridge for each series. Tests taken outside this window are not accepted.

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:

- Part 1 should last for a minimum of 3 minutes and a maximum of 4 minutes. Examiners should not interrupt or halt candidates within this time. Examiners should only interrupt to move the candidates into Part 2 if they show no signs of reaching a natural conclusion after 5 minutes.
- One prominent cause of inaccuracy was generosity in the awarding of marks in Part 2 for short discussions which were not of sufficient length or challenge to secure the higher bands. Six minutes is the minimum length required.
- Articulate, confident candidates tended to be over assessed where the content was factual.
- It is important that the examiners do not dominate the discussions in Part 2. Candidates should be allowed to talk and their contribution should be dominant, particularly for those being awarded marks in the higher bands where detailed responses to questions and prompts are expected.

Approaches to Part 1

The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic, had 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.

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:

- Artificial Intelligence
- The Representation of Diversity
- The Power of Music
- Terraforming
- Super Volcanoes
- Modern Art
- Urban Tribes
- Benefits of Bilingualism
- Being a Teenager in the twenty first century
- Animal Rights
- Hypercars
- Impossible Colours
- Benefits of technology
- Building a Computer (When the knowledge base is very sound)
- Identity
- Added Sugar
- Genetically Manufactured Organisms

There were cases where candidates needed a little more guidance on what would yield an interesting and well organised talk. Tackling issues such as Racism, Terrorism, IS and War, because these were relevant to their experiences, are to be commended and clearly there is scope for appropriate skills to be demonstrated in such profound areas Some students, however, lacked the ability to distil their ideas and as a result the Individual Talks could not be described as 'well organised'. What is more, the Part 2 Discussions in relation to such topics were by definition somewhat conceptual and some students lacked the depth of knowledge and understanding to 'extend subject matter' or deal 'enthusiastically with prompts'. In short, whilst some candidates thrived on choosing a challenging topic, others struggled with such broad areas of 'interest' and this proved detrimental when it came to accessing Band 1.

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

- My Family/Friends/Pets (When generalised and factual and not moving beyond the descriptive)
- Myself (Often chosen by candidates who cannot think of any other topic)
- The Celebrity I Admire (where the talk is purely descriptive and a series of regurgitated facts and rumours)
- Bullying (Too vague when generalised and a possible safeguarding issue where more specific)
- Football (Too generalised and unfocused)
- Footballer's Wages and Social Media (becoming cliché ridden and repetitive)
- Gaming (where there is limited planning and very little beyond the descriptive)
- Future Career Plans (where the talk is generic and unfocussed)
- Favourite Movie/TV Show (Where there is no attempt to move beyond the narrative and descriptive)

Management of Part 2

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 examiners gave many opportunities for candidates to develop their ideas as fully as they could, providing open questions that helped them to explore ideas which demonstrated development of explanation.

The use of closed questions should be avoided because closed questioning limits the candidate's ability to respond at length.

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

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. **It is the Examiner's responsibility to ensure each candidate is given a minimum of six minutes of discussion.**

Advice to centres

- Although candidates should prepare thoroughly, it must be remembered that Part 1 is a demonstration of presentational skills and that the monotonous regurgitation of a memorised topic will not fulfil the criteria for Band 1.
- Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through effective discussion and appropriate timings for both parts of the test. Keeping to the time limits in the syllabus will avoid candidates being adversely limited in the accurate application of the mark scheme.
- Please check both documentation and recordings before sending to Cambridge.
- Encourage candidates to choose topics that they know well through personal experience, and are passionate about. Issues and ideas 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 top end of the mark scheme, Band 1 responses should be the required lengths. This requires the examiner in Part 2 to ask more challenging questions and keep the discussion on task throughout.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages

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

Where there are issues, the following guidelines are relevant:

- It is important for a centre to choose **either** Component 5 or 6 **before** planning the schemes of work through which this examination is to be delivered. Component 5 is a test taken within a specified window, being suitable for centres who wish to assess their candidates on one topic, on one chosen date. Component 6 is more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires centres to fully embrace the concept that the speaking and listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.
- An **Individual Candidate Record Card** is required for each candidate entered. These cards should be treated as 'living' documents that are completed when each task is undertaken. **Specific** information about the choices made for each task is required by the Moderator. 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
    - 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.
- Centres should generate audio files, where possible transferred to a single CD, DVD or USB drive, in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software such as mp3, wav and wma. The file format AUP should **not** be used. The **quality** of the recordings should be **checked** before despatching to Cambridge.
- It is helpful if, for each candidate, **a separate track** is created and its file name is the candidate's name and examination number.
- The teacher/Examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. For paired activities, it would be helpful if **candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing** before beginning the task so the Moderator can clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.
- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the **assessment criteria can be adequately met** if the activity is very short.

General comments

Centres are reminded that there are specific forms provided by Cambridge for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form.

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

Task 1

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

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

- A significant event in my life
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Why I love a particular text/movie/work of art/etc.
- My passion for (e.g.) hypercars.
- My favourite place
- The benefits of artificial intelligence
- My hero – who and why
- The dangers of added sugar

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

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

Task 2

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

Entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or self-generated role plays, often do not allow candidates to demonstrate the skills described in the higher attainment bands.

It is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than four minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed for both candidates, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded.

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

- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as the benefits of modern technology or the use of GM crops
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well
- Planning a special event – either at school or for a more personal function
- The effects of social pressures on teenagers
- Comparing the merits of two famous people where each candidate acts as a champion for one of the celebrities
- Acting as employers discussing who should be given a job from a list of prospective candidates (and variations on the theme)

*Some examples of less successful **Task 2** activities include:*

- Should cannabis be legalised?
- Interviews where one of the candidates acts solely as the interviewer (This is limiting for the candidate)
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort such as 'Room 101' in which no individual choice is allowed (Ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident)

Task 3

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

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

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. 'Of Mice and Men', 'An Inspector Calls, 'A View From The Bridge', 'All My Sons'
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity
- Planning a celebration or community event

General Conclusions

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

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/11
Reading Passage (Core)

Key messages

- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **Question 1(g)** candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same word in their answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format/narrative for **Question 2** as well as following the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates must ensure that selected summary points for **Question 3(a)** indicate clearly their validity to the question being asked.
- Candidates should attempt to order their summary points in **Question 3(b)** through synthesis and textual links.

General comments

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

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. Overall, the standard of performance of most candidates was of a satisfactory to very good level, with only a very small number performing at a less than satisfactory standard.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Which one word (in line 3) tells you that the train is having difficulty moving?

The majority of candidates were able to identify the word ‘faltered’ successfully although a few believed ‘effort’, ‘vibrating’, or ‘grind’ indicated problems for the train. Clearly these three words could be applied to a train which is moving quickly or easily as well as experiencing problems with moving. Candidates who misspelled ‘faltered’ such as ‘flatered’ were not penalised.

(b) Give <u>two</u> reasons from paragraph one for the train having difficulty in moving.

Many candidates were not precise enough when answering this question and answers such as 'snow accumulating' or 'thick snow' were not clear enough to gain marks. Responses were often incomplete, mentioning a gathering of snow but failing to say where the snow was. The key to the train's difficulty in moving was of course the depth of snow in front of it on the tracks and the weight of snow being carried on the roofs of the carriages. Answers which managed to identify these two factors gained both marks. Quite a number of candidates wrote that the train 'entered a dip' which it did, but it was not the dip which prevented the train from moving, it was the deep snow which had fallen into the dip. Other candidates merely referred to 'two banks of snow' giving no explanation as to how high the banks were. Candidates who referred to 'a metre of snow' were awarded a mark because the measurement indicated depth. A few candidates lost focus on this question by describing the difficulty the train was having moving by referring to it 'vibrating' or 'faltering' rather than the reasons for this. It is important that candidates read the question carefully in order to establish what is being asked for.

(c) Explain, <u>using your own words</u>, what the writer means by the phrase: 'a strip of shadow lost in a field of sparkling whiteness' (lines 9–10).

Candidates as a whole found it difficult to answer this question because of its focus on language and explanation. Many answers were merely lifts of the phrase or a paraphrase that the train was lost in a field of snow. A number of candidates believed that the train was camouflaged or completely covered by the falling snow, thereby ignoring the reference to 'a strip of shadow'. The better responses to this question pointed to the contrast between the 'dark' train and the brilliant, snowy background or field. Answers which focused on the difficulty of seeing the small train, or the fact that it seemed to be a long, thin train, were also credited and gained at least one mark. As with **Question 1(g)(ii)**, it is important that candidates try to show understanding of the whole phrase and how its effect is achieved by the writer rather than simply paraphrase it or simply list a figure of speech used by the writer without further comment.

(d) <u>Using your own words</u>, state three things Jack does when the train stops moving (paragraphs 3 and 4).

Candidates generally gained at least one mark on this question with many scoring two or three marks. Quite clearly in the passage Jack, the train driver, 'stays at the controls with his hand on the wheel'; talks to himself and swears; opens every valve; and 'shuts down the accelerator'. Candidates were able to gain marks with different combinations of these actions and those who included more than one point on a single line were not penalised for this. A number of candidates believed that Jack 'pushed' the accelerator, which he may have done, but the word 'pushed' could also mean he was accelerating rather than stopping the train so no mark was awarded for such a response. Some candidates stated that Jack was 'angry' – which he was – but anger does not constitute an action as required by the question. Other candidates believed that Jack 'shouted angrily to himself' when it was quite clear in the passage that he 'muttered angrily to himself'. The question asked candidates to use 'own words' when answering this question but because the material had to be identified within paragraphs three and four, selected lifting was credited.

(e) Re-read paragraph seven:

(i) Why did Jack not reply to the conductor?

Most candidates realised that Jack was so angry that he found it hard to speak or reply to the conductor. A number of candidates, however, thought that Jack was merely angry as opposed to furious, and therefore did not gain a mark on this question. Answers which included an intensifier such as 'so', 'too (to), or 'very' gained a mark.

(ii) What is the reason for this reaction?

A few candidates repeated that 'he was very angry' for this question and therefore failed to distinguish between Jack's reaction and the reason for his. The majority of candidates, however, understood that Jack's anger arose from his never having been prevented from completing a train journey before owing to the weather. Candidates who did not fully explain this and simply maintained that he had never been stopped or affected by the weather before did not gain the mark because this reason could be applied to any circumstance rather than the train journey in question.

(f) Explain why the conductor 'clenched his hands nervously' (line 47).

The majority of candidates realised that the conductor 'clenched his hands nervously' because he was uncertain or worried about whether the train would be able to continue either sooner or later, in spite of his confident reassuring replies to the equally concerned passengers. However, candidates who mistakenly believed that the conductor 'knew' the journey wouldn't continue did not gain the mark because he clearly didn't know one way or the other. Some candidates answered that the conductor was lying to or deceiving the passengers when asked about the train's problems and such answers were credited if there was some explanation about his uncertainty regarding the train. A number of candidates believed that the conductor was frightened by the passengers' reactions to the train stopping but there is no evidence in the passage to support the idea that he is cowed by their questioning. It is, however, reasonable to argue that the conductor is worried about the passengers' reactions if the train cannot continue its journey, based, for example, on the 'elderly gentleman's' threat to complain to the transport manager if the former should miss 'an important meeting' because of the delay. Such answers gained a mark as long as they explained the 'uncertainty' or 'if' of what would happen next. Responses which included the word 'nervously' or 'nervous' did not gain the mark.

(g) Complete parts (i) and (ii) to answer Question 1(g).

(i) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4. Explain, using your own words, what the writer means by the words in *italics* in each of the following phrases:

The question asked candidates to explain in their own words what the writer meant by the words in italics. Many candidates produced 'catch all' phrases which were more akin to a **(g)(ii)** type explanation of the whole phrase. Only the more successful responses showed real understanding of the italicised words and only a small number of candidates gained all three available marks for this question.

(a) 'He felt the engine shuddering *pathetically* …' (lines 12–13)

Candidates struggled to explain the meaning of 'pathetically' in the context of the 'engine shuddering' and very few gained a mark for this question about phrase '**(a)**'. There were a few responses which correctly identified the idea of 'hopelessly', 'weakly', or feebly' with the most common synonym being 'uselessly'. Some candidates attempted to explain the wrong word, such as 'shuddering'.

(b) '… exhausted, with all its wheels *clogged* with snow' (line 14)

Candidates were more successful with explaining the meaning of 'clogged', usually describing the train wheels as being 'full of' or 'stuffed' with snow. Responses which described the wheels as being 'covered' with snow were also awarded a mark. A few candidates explained the meaning of 'exhausted' instead of 'clogged'.

(c) '…the engine settled and ceased its *straining* efforts' (line 19)

Very few candidates were able to explain 'straining' in terms of 'struggling' but a reasonable number were able to focus on the concept of the train having tried its hardest or having made a 'huge' attempt to continue moving through the snow and in doing so gained a mark.

(ii) Explain **how** the language **in each of the phrases in Question (g)(i)** helps to suggest the difficulty that the train encounters moving in the snow.

(a) ***'He felt the engine shuddering pathetically…'*** **(lines 12–13)**

(b) ***'…exhausted, with all its wheels clogged with snow'*** **(line 14)**

(c) ***'…the engine settled and ceased its straining efforts'*** **(line 19)**

Many candidates achieved marks on this question by showing some understanding/offering a partial explanation of individual phrases as a whole. Most commented successfully on some of the difficulties encountered by the train such as its weakness, loss of strength, and eventual defeat by the snow. Only a small number showed any real appreciation of how the vocabulary was used to contribute to the writer's purpose.

Less successful responses made general comments about 'the wheels being stuck' or 'the train coming to a halt' without demonstrating a clear understanding of the individual phrases. As in previous sessions, the marks gained from this question often totalled fewer than for **g(i)**. Sometimes this was because answers to **g(ii)** did no more than repeat those given for **g(i)** or because a misunderstanding was carried through from **g(i)**. It seems that quite a number of candidates fail to consider other significant words in the phrases and merely focus on the effects of the word selected in **g(i)**.

A small, but significant, number of responses attempted explanations of the phrases by simply re-iterating them or lifting the language from the phrase and therefore produced a circular explanation. For example, instead of attempting to find own words for 'shuddering pathetically' candidates merely repeated it. It is worth pointing out as in previous reports, that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to mere simple interpretations of the words used. The key focus of explanations here was 'the difficulty the train encounters moving in the snow' but many responses did not relate their explanations to the focus of the question, ignoring the implications, for example, of a train which 'shudders' or is 'exhausted'.

Question 2

Imagine that you are the conductor from Passage A. After the train has reached its destination, you write a journal entry recording the events of the day.

Write the words of the journal entry. In your journal you should comment on:

- **what the weather was like that day and how it affected the journey**
- **the problems you faced with the passengers and how you dealt with them**
- **how the train eventually started moving again.**

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

Begin your journal: 'We had a very difficult journey on the express train this morning…'

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Most responses followed the requirement to view the situation in hindsight, i.e. after the journey had ended with very few merely describing the events of the 'actual' journey as it unfolded. Most candidates wrote responses which addressed the three bullet points, although not always in 'journal entry' register. A significant number of candidates wrote the journal from the point of view of Jack, the driver of the train, as opposed to the conductor, and as a result were unable to attain Reading marks for Bands 1 and 2. Quite a number of candidates wrote the journal from the point of view of both the conductor and Jack, often switching from one to the other depending on the series of events being covered. For example, the snowy weather and its effect on the train might be described from Jack's point of view as he angrily responded to the train's grinding halt, followed by the conductor's account about how he tried to placate the worried and frustrated passengers, before a subsequent return to Jack finding a solution to getting the train up and running. Clearly, candidates must determine what the question asks them to do if they are to achieve higher Reading marks on this question.

It is important that candidates attempt to develop ideas related to the three prompts which are grounded in the passage, and such development should be predominantly in their own words as opposed to frequent lifting of phrases and even sentences from the original. Less successful responses either contained almost word for word accounts of what was said, for example, by passengers, or used lifted phrases from the passage to describe the plight of the train, or the anxiety of the conductor with his 'hands … clenched nervously'. Some candidates barely mentioned the awful weather conditions and the train stopping, preferring to go straight to the narrative between the conductor and the passengers. As always, it is important that candidates adopt a balanced approach to the three prompts.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three prompts in a balanced approach but a significant number, having described the awful weather conditions and the subsequent problems for both train and its passengers, barely mentioned **how** the train was restarted, if at all. Comments such as 'the weather improved' or 'the snow melted' tagged onto the first two prompts were far from convincing and showed little thought about or development of events in the passage. Better responses described such actions as collective digging of snow by train staff and passengers; melting of the snow clogging up the wheels through hot coals or hot water from the engine; and rescue parties arriving on another shunting train or even helicopters. Some candidates described open hostility between the passengers and the conductor, sometimes resulting in violence, but generally emotions and feelings evident in the passage were dealt with sensitively and credibly, with a satisfactory ending for all concerned at the successful conclusion of the interrupted journey. Some candidates believed the train had stopped because of the 'snow on the road'.

Most candidates wrote correct, though relatively simple, sentences, with an adequate range of vocabulary and tried to use an appropriate register. The most successful responses – a significant minority – achieved Band 1 marks for both Content and Language. The least successful responses were not well-controlled and lacking structure and organisation, although the chronological nature of events helped candidates develop their accounts.

Question 3

Read carefully Passage B, Swiss Train Travel, in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer Question 3(a) and (b).

Answer the questions in the order set.

(a) Notes

What did the writer enjoy about Swiss railways and the holiday according to Passage B?
Write your answers using short notes. Write one point per line.
You do not need to use your own words.

This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total score by appropriate selection. It was answered relatively well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed, and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a significant number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. The most frequent limitations included the repetition of the 'amazing views' (point 1) observed from the train. This repetition often comprised separate lines for 'lush green valleys' or 'steep cliffs' or 'mountains dusted with snow'. Some candidates successfully differentiated between point 1 with its emphasis on enjoying the ride and point 3 with its emphasis on enjoying watching the scenery. As in previous sessions some candidates lost marks by abbreviating their answers to such an extent that it became unclear as to what point was being made. For example, 'punctuality' could refer to people, buses, trains or all of them. Some candidates identified the writer as having enjoyed the lunch at the Waldhaus Hotel whereas closer reading would indicate he might well have done but the enjoyment in the text is linked to the pianist and his playing of local music. Many candidates stated that the writer enjoyed the 'engineering challenges' which of course is not true because firstly, he wasn't an engineer, secondly, they had already occurred prior to his holiday, and thirdly, more accurately, he appreciated the results of such engineering such as the extraordinary architecture and the comprehensive nature of the train routes. In respect of the train network being 'comprehensive' a number of candidates wrongly interpreted this as the train routes being understood. Most candidates were able to identify features of the buses relating to condition and efficiency, as well as point 6 about honesty and not checking the bus tickets of passengers. A number of candidates believed that the journey from London to Brig was an enjoyable part of the holiday rather than the 'four glorious days in the lovely town of Chur'. Surprisingly perhaps, very few candidates identified the 'hot September sunshine' as being an enjoyable aspect of the holiday.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about what the writer enjoyed about Swiss railways and the holiday.

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

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

On the whole, although some students were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries, the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements about the Swiss railways and the holiday.

Clearly candidates would do well to group similar factors together when planning their summaries. For example, features of the railway and buses; features of the landscape; details about the places visited, and so on. Some candidates wrote the summary in the first or second person, and occasionally, produced a brief persuasive article about Swiss railways and holidays by unnecessarily emphasising through repetition how enjoyable it was or could be.

Concluding Comments

Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and the responses to **Question 2** in particular were of a generally good standard. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach to an accessible and engaging paper.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12
Reading Passage (Core)

Key messages

- Candidates should read all questions carefully to ensure that their answers focus on the questions.
- In the sub-questions in **Question 1**, where candidates are asked to answer in their own words, lifting from the passage will not gain the marks available.
- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates when checking over their work.
- In **Question 1(g)** candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop the ideas in the passage, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point, using the passage to develop a plausible response.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct style for **Question 2** as well as addressing the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and questions. The vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level. Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and Examiners reported seeing a number of high quality responses to **Question 2** in particular. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. The majority of candidates were familiar with the requirements of **Questions 3(a)** and **3(b)**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Which one word suggests that Joe is annoyed about losing his way (paragraph 1)? [1 mark]

Almost all candidates gained the mark available by selecting the word 'frustrated'. Occasionally, candidates offered more than one word and were denied the mark.

(b) Using your own words, explain why Joe is uncertain about what he sees happening in the train carriage (paragraph 2). [2 marks]

A number of candidates gained both marks available for this question where they offered two different explanations. Some candidates only offered one explanation for this two mark question. The majority of candidates offered the explanation that the train passed at high speed for one mark. Fewer were able to gain the second mark which could be earned from explaining that Joe only got a brief glimpse of the incident in the carriage, or that the bright lights of the train affected his vision.

(c) Using your own words, explain what is meant by the phrase: 'Not one feature of the two men in the carriage remained clear' (lines 17–18). [2 marks]

A number of candidates repeated their answer to **Question 1(b)** in response to this question, instead of focusing on the meaning of the given phrase. For those who did try to explain the phrase, most were able to identify that 'feature' referred to the men's appearance, or details about them, but few candidates explained that 'remained clear' referred to Joe's memory or recollection of what he had seen.

(d) How does Joe explain to himself what he thought he saw through the carriage window (paragraph 4)? [2 marks]

Many candidates found this question challenging and simply lifted 'he had witnessed a dramatic image'. Other were able to identify that Joe explained it to himself as a 'dream' or 'that he must have been seeing things' for one mark. To get the full two marks candidates also needed to explain that Joe found the incident 'extraordinary' or surreal.

(e) Using your own words, explain why Joe is confused and exhausted (line 22). [2 marks]

A number of candidates gained both marks for this question identifying the details: that he has been walking for a long time and that he is full of confusing thoughts/emotions, or that he cannot stop thinking about the incident on the train. Less successful responses ignored the instruction to use own words and offered complete lifts of the phrases in the passage.

(f) Using your own words, explain what it is about Joe's behaviour that the railway worker is worried about (lines 28–31). [2 marks]

A large number of candidates gained one mark for this question by citing Joe's immediate and highly emotional reaction to the railway worker's words. Fewer candidates were able to explain that the railway worker's reaction implied that he thought that Joe may have been involved.

(g) (i) Re-read paragraphs 1 and 2. Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words in *italics* in each of the following phrases:

(a) 'The *thunderous* roar of a train emerging from the depths of the earth' (line 5)

(b) '…burst out with the *dazzling* glare of its great big round eye' (line 8)

(c) 'The train flew past at such a *whirling* speed' (line 11). [3 marks]

This question asked candidates to explain, in their own words, what the writer meant by the **words in italics**. Many candidates produced 'catch all' phrases which were more suited to a **(g)(ii)** type explanation of the whole phrase. Only the more successful responses showed real understanding

of the italicised words as they are used in the passage and only a relatively small number of candidates gained all three available marks for this question.

(a) For 'thunderous' a large number of candidates were able to explain that this meant a very loud noise; a mark was also awarded to those who indicated that it was powerful. Less successful responses were those which did not qualify the true strength of the noise – hence 'loud noise' was not sufficient to gain the mark.

(b) 'Dazzling' was explained correctly by a number of candidates who made comments about it meaning 'extremely bright' or 'shining'. Less successful responses were those which did not qualify the true strength of the brightness – hence 'bright' was not sufficient to gain the mark.

(c) 'Whirling' proved, in many ways, the most difficult of the three words as candidates were distracted by the idea of something that was spinning, rather than describing the intensity of the speed.

(ii) Explain <u>how</u> the language <u>in each of the phrases in Question (g)(i)</u> helps to suggest experience of watching the train pass. [6 marks]

Many candidates achieved marks on this question by showing some understanding of the language used. Candidates were often able to explain that phrase **(a)** showed the immense power of the train, or that its emergence from the ground was sudden and terrifying. For phrase **(b)** some candidates explained that the whole phrase made the train seem monstrous, or alive, and for phrase **(c)** a few candidates commented that the speed of the train created turbulence or strong winds, or made the speed seem uncontrolled. Examiners accepted any convincing explanations of the effects of the whole phrases.

Less successful responses made general comments about the train passing or repeated the contents of their answers to **(i)** without demonstrating a clear understanding of the whole phrases. As in previous sessions, the marks gained from this question often totalled fewer than for **(g)(i)**. Sometimes this was because answers repeated those given for **(g)(i)** or because a misunderstanding was carried through from **(g)(i)**. A small, but significant, number of responses attempted explanations of the phrases by simply re-iterating them or lifting the language from the phrase and simply produced a circular explanation. It is worth pointing out that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to simple interpretations of the words used.

The key focus of explanations here was how the language suggested the experience of watching the train pass, but many responses, although commenting on loud, bright and fast the train was, did not relate their explanations specifically to the language of the phrase. A very small number of the more successful responses gained more than three marks overall and this was by close attention to the language used.

Question 2

Imagine that you are Joe from Passage A. The morning after these events you write a letter to your sister in which you explain what has happened. Write your letter.

In your letter you should explain:

- **what you were doing and what you saw**
- **your later doubts about whether or not you had imagined what you saw**
- **how you helped the signalman and what you both discovered.**

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

Begin your letter: 'Dear Sister, I am writing to tell you…'.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing. [Total: 15 marks]

For this task the majority of candidates seemed to understand the need to address each of the bullets and to give a credible account of Joe's experiences that evening and his thoughts about them. The most successful responses developed a credible explanation of what the signalman had discovered and their subsequent actions. The vast majority of candidates were comfortable writing an informal letter offering an appropriate register and voice for Joe.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points offering a balanced response. However, the less successful responses tended to be those where candidates (albeit in their own words) simply repeated the details from the passage. This meant that although, generally, there wasn't extensive lifting of material there was often little sense of candidates putting themselves in the position of the character and giving life to his experiences. Other candidates included material that was not relevant at all to the passage to explain why Joe was out walking in the evening, sometimes leaving little time to use the ideas in the passage to develop his voice.

Most candidates showed sound understanding of the sequence of events, but a small number of candidates were muddled, sometimes describing Joe at a railway station, or inside the tunnel, or the train stopping after he witnessed the incident. A small number of candidates wrote a completely new narrative that bore little relation to the passage.

More successful responses were able to explore Joe's feelings and confusion with clarity and conviction while establishing a warm relationship with the sister he had chosen to confide in. These responses focused on the brevity of his sighting and subsequent doubts about the validity of what he thought he had seen.

The majority of candidates made some attempt to address the third bullet point with varying levels of development. Some simply described following the signalman to the side of the track and finding a dead body, whereas others developed the narrative fully, firmly linking the discovery of a dead or injured man with the incident witnessed on the train. Many used it as an opportunity to reaffirm Joe's fragmented memories, adding more firm details about the man's appearance and clothing. Many also developed the man's story of what had happened to him on the train cleverly using the details offered in the passage but expanding and developing them. A significant number of candidates did not make any attempt to address the third bullet point, instead ending their response with Joe's decision to accompany the signalman. This limited these responses significantly in terms of developing the ideas in the passage.

Overall, the responses showed a very good understanding of the passage, Joe's predicament and what he witnessed on the train.

Most candidates wrote correct, though relatively simple, sentences, with an adequate range of vocabulary and tried to use an appropriate register. The most successful responses achieved Band 1 marks for both Content and Language, writing fluently and precisely using their own words.

Question 3

(a) Notes

What can be learned about the Indian Railways and what impressed the writer about travelling on them, according to Passage B?

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

You do not need to use your own words.

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

This question was answered well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed, and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a small number of candidates who included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. Sometimes candidates included more than 10 relevant points, but by putting them more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks overall. Occasionally candidates added numbered points at the end of the response; these extra points were not marked, as they are expected to select 10 only. It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly enough to ensure that they are picking out the appropriate material and equally that some attempt is made to set out the relevant points one on each of the 10 lines. This also contributes to avoidance of repeating similar points. Only a small number of candidates gained full marks, although the majority of candidates achieved seven or above.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about Indian railways and what impressed the writer about travelling on them.

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

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

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

A number of students were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries, however, the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, tended to include lengthy commentary, unnecessary details, repetition or unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be rather wordy with lack of focus on the question. The weakest responses copied unselectively.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/13
Reading Passage (Core)

Key messages

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

General comments

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

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and the majority of candidates responded well to the more straightforward of these questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. Overall, the standard of performance of most candidates was of a satisfactory to very good level, with only a very small number performing at a less than satisfactory standard.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) What does the conductor think he has seen ahead on the railway line (line 2)? [1 mark]

Almost all the candidates gained the mark available either by explaining that the conductor thought he saw a red light or a train ahead (or by explaining that a red light was the sign of another train).

(b) (i) Why is Fred concerned by what the conductor says (line 3)? [1 mark]

(ii) What does Fred think has caused the conductor to say this? [1 mark]

A good number of candidates gained both marks available for this question. Essentially for **(i)** the point is that Fred (the driver) does not see what the conductor claims to have seen and for **(ii)** that Fred thinks the conductor is hallucinating (or imagining that he sees something that isn't really there). However, other responses could have gained the marks; for example that Fred has lost trust in the conductor or is simply afraid of the storm. There is also some ambiguity in the text which might equally be read as stating that the conductor has lost confidence in Fred. Providing that a candidate gave reasonable (and different) responses for each part, there was, therefore, a variety of ways of achieving each mark.

(c) Give <u>two</u> details about the station master's reaction to Fred that show he does not agree with Fred's suggestion (paragraph 2). [2 marks]

A good proportion of the candidates gained both marks available for this question. The key to a successful response was in recognising that the task was focussing on the station master's body language, so the details required were that he frowned and that he shook his head.

(d) <u>Using your own words</u>, explain what you understand by the phrase '…his face lacerated by the gusts…' (line 26). [2 marks]

This was one of the questions that caused candidates the most difficulty as, clearly, the word 'lacerated' was generally unfamiliar. Some candidates gained one mark by attempting to explain that Fred was 'hurt' or 'injured' but did not comment on the whole phrase, while others, understanding that there was reference here to the snow and cold, assumed incorrectly that the word meant frozen or covered with snow.

(e) State <u>two</u> expressions which suggest that Fred finds driving the train painful (paragraph 6). [2 marks]

A number of candidates gained both marks for this question, identifying the details: that his face is 'lacerated' and that he 'suffers terribly'. Less successful responses focussed on the weather conditions that were making it difficult – evidence of the need to read the wording of the question very carefully.

(f) State <u>two</u> reactions of Mr Beeching that suggest he does not want to help Fred (lines 34–39). [2 marks]

A large number of candidates gained both marks for this question. There were various details that were relevant: he says he has done his job/given a warning; says 'Get going!'/tells Fred not to annoy the passengers being the most frequently cited examples. A small number of candidates gained a mark by identifying that Mr Beeching gave the signal to depart himself.

(g) (i) Re-read paragraph five. Explain, <u>using your own words</u>, explain what the writer means by the words in <u>*italics*</u> in the following phrases:

a *'…*the train was struggling in the immense white <u>*whirlwind'*</u> (lines 17-18)

b *'…*in this uncertain light nothing could be <u>*distinguished.'*</u> *(*lines 18)

c '…this <u>*wilderness*</u> of snow.' (lines 37–38) [3 marks]

The question asked candidates to explain, in their own words, what the writer meant by the words in italics. Many candidates produced 'catch all' phrases which were more akin to a **(g)(ii)** type explanation of the whole phrase. More successful responses showed real understanding of the italicised words.

a For 'whirlwind' a large number of candidates were able to explain that this meant a very strong wind or a wind that blew in circles; a mark was also awarded to those who made comparison with tornados and hurricanes. Less successful responses were those which did

not qualify the true strength of these winds – hence 'strong wind' was not sufficient to gain the mark.

b 'Distinguished' was explained correctly by a reasonable number of candidates who made comments about it meaning 'differentiate' or being clearly seen.

c 'Wilderness' proved, in many ways, the most difficult of the three words as candidates were distracted by the idea of something that was 'wild', hence seeing it as wildness or being out of control. A smaller number of candidates gained a mark by suggesting that it referred to something remote and barren.

(g) (ii) Explain <u>how</u> the language <u>in each of the phrases in Question 1 (g)(i)</u> helps to suggest the harshness of the weather conditions. [6 marks]

Many candidates achieved marks on this question by showing some understanding, offering a partial explanation of individual phrases (as a whole). Most commented successfully on the way the weather conditions had made the journey difficult and caused confusion for the train crew.

Less successful responses made general comments about the strength of the storm or repeated the contents of their answers to **(i)** without demonstrating a clear understanding of the individual phrases. A small, but significant, number of responses attempted explanations of the phrases by simply re-iterating them or lifting the language from the phrase and simply produced a circular explanation. It is worth pointing out that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to simple interpretations of the words used.

The key focus of explanations here was how the language suggested the harshness of the storm, but many responses, although commenting on how strong the storm was, did not relate their explanations specifically to the language of the phrase. A number of the more successful responses gained more than three marks overall and this was by close attention to the language used.

Question 2

Imagine that you are the station master, Mr Beeching, from Passage A. It is the day after these events. The train was badly delayed because of the snow and you are being interviewed for local radio about the reasons for the delay. Write the words of your interview.

In your interview you are asked three questions:

- **Can you tell us what the conditions were like yesterday and what effect they were having on the train service?**
- **Why did you not agree with your driver's request for an extra engine?**
- **Can you reassure listeners by telling us what you will be doing to ensure this does not happen the next time that there is a snowstorm?**

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

Write about 200 to 300 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing. [Total: 15 marks]

For this task the majority of candidates seemed to understand quite clearly the need to address each of the bullets and to give a credible account of Mr Beeching's point of view and his reasons for his treatment of Fred. The most successful responses developed a credible explanation of how a similar situation would be dealt with in the future and some gave a realistic apology by Mr Beeching for having made a mistake. Whilst it was not necessary for full marks for there to be any such admission, in many cases it did demonstrate a convincing conclusion to the interview. The majority also understood the interview format and gave answers that directly address the three set questions offering an appropriate register and voice for the station master.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three prompts in a balanced approach. However, the less successful responses tended to be those where candidates (albeit in their own words) simply repeated the details from the passage. This meant that although, generally, there wasn't extensive lifting of material there was, in a number of cases, little sense of candidates putting themselves in the position of the character and giving life to his experiences.

One particular difficulty was that the passage referred to two station masters, both of whom refused to help the train driver. Many candidates combined the two events into the experience of Mr Beeching, but in most cases still managed to demonstrate a good understanding of the situation and the way it was handled, so that it was rarely a cause for any penalty for those candidates. A very small number were a little muddled about the sequence of events.

More successful responses were able to give some explanation for the refusal of a second engine – many relying simply on the lack of authority to make the decision, but some did give fuller explanations. A number of candidates appeared to have been confused by the term 'engine' taking it to mean to 'motor' rather than 'locomotive' and then tried to explain that this involved a complicated installation. Most candidates dealt reasonably successfully with the difficulties of the journey and what happened after the end of the passage. The more successful responses gave some credible details about Mr Beeching's feelings and concerns for the passengers.

The great majority of candidates made some attempt to answer the third question. Some simply insisted that there would be more preparation or that a second engine would be allowed, while others gave convincing explanations of a range of sensible precautions.

Overall, the responses showed a very good understanding of the passage, the predicament of both the train driver and Mr Beeching and their differing concerns.

Most candidates wrote correct, though relatively simple, sentences, with an adequate range of vocabulary and tried to use an appropriate register.

Question 3

(a) ***Notes***

What are the possible problems you might experience when travelling on the Trans-Siberian Railway and advice on dealing with them given by the writer, according to Passage B?

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

You do not need to use your own words.

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

This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total score by appropriate selection. It was answered very well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed, and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a significant number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. Sometimes candidates included more than 10 marks worth of relevant points, but by putting them more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks overall. It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly enough to ensure that they are picking out the appropriate material and equally that some attempt is made to set out the relevant points one on each of the 10 lines. This also contributes to avoidance of repeating points.

(b) **Summary**

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about possible problems you might experience when travelling on the Trans-Siberian Railway and advice on dealing with them given by the writer.

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

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

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

On the whole, although some students were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'. The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements about the various problems and the solutions suggested.

Concluding Comments

Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and the responses to **Question 2** in particular were of a generally good standard. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach and, overall, this was an accessible and engaging paper.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

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

General comments

Candidates' responses largely demonstrated familiarity with the general demands of each task and at least some understanding of the need to adapt and use relevant material from the passages in order to answer the questions. Most had paid attention to the guidance regarding word limits and had attempted all parts of all three questions. Answers which focused on the detail of the task as set were best able to target higher marks. Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and better answers avoided the copying and/or over-reliance on the language of the text that featured in less successful responses to all three questions.

In **Question 1,** successful responses included a range of relevant ideas, effectively developed and supported by appropriate detail, and were able to draw conclusions about the mission and the safety features of the suit. The strongest responses were able to adopt and maintain the perspective of the Commander of Satellite Control, as distinct from that of the narrator, to offer convince advice on a range of additional measures that needed to be taken to ensure astronauts' safety. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material, and often produced uneven responses which sometimes included the addition of extraneous material, for example, related to an invasion by aliens.

For **Question 2**, candidates need to make specific and detailed comments in relation to appropriate choices. To gain marks in the higher bands candidates need to consider and explain the effects, connotations and associations of their identified choices, demonstrating an understanding of the writer's purpose. In most responses, there were a sufficient number of appropriate choices selected from the relevant paragraphs to allow for a range of comment and many contained some accurate explanations of meanings. In order to target higher marks, most responses needed to go further in considering and explaining the specifics of the examples they had chosen. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same or similar words as the language choice – 'hubcap of a wheel' was often explained as wheels have hubcaps or 'blue-green glory' as blue and green are glorious, for example. A number of answers repeated similar, often generalised, explanations when attempting to deal with different choices, diluting the evidence of understanding.

In **Question 3,** many candidates managed to achieve a good number of the marks available through identifying a reasonable number of points. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3(a)**, although some did to good effect. In **Question 3(a)** short notes, identifying each separate idea precisely, are required, rather than whole sentences or imprecise selections from the passage. In **Question 3(b)** own words must be used and ideas need to be organised to address the focus of the question and not simply offer a paraphrase or précis of the original text. A significant number of responses missed opportunities to target higher bands by relying on lifted phrases and sections from the passage. Candidates should use their own words as far as possible in this summary task, otherwise it suggests that they do not understand the wording of the original and limits the evidence of their own writing skills. It is not a requirement that every word is altered, though ideas need to be communicated clearly and fluently – the best responses showed an engagement with the task, demonstrating competence in the real-life skill of selective summary. They were able to produce informative, assured writing, helpfully organised for the benefit of their reader. The least effective responses attempted a cut-and-paste approach, working through the passage to lift and then reassemble phrases – an approach indicating little focus on the task.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing, planning their responses to avoid repetition between sections and awkward expression. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should be aware that undeveloped language or inconsistency of style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to check and edit their responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Imagine you are the Commander of Satellite Control. After this incident, you decide to write a letter to all satellite stations about safety issues for astronauts who go on missions.

Write the letter from the Commander of Satellite Control to all satellite stations.

In your letter you should:

- **briefly describe what happened to Astronaut A while out on the mission and why it is a matter of concern**
- **explain the existing safety features of the spacesuits and how they are adapted to perform missions**
- **provide advice on additional measures that need to be taken to ensure astronauts' safety.**

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 Colleagues,

Last week we had a serious incident involving Astronaut A who had been sent out on an important mission …'.

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

The task invited candidates to demonstrate their skills and understanding by using and modifying ideas from Astronaut A's narrative account; then to develop and present them as a convincing and appropriate letter regarding safety issues for astronauts who go on missions following the incident. The question encouraged candidates to show that they could do more than just repeat or retell events from the text, as details of events needed to be interpreted from the viewpoint of someone with an overview of and/or responsibility for what had happened – the Commander of Satellite Control. Good responses were able to reflect on events as narrated and utilise the passage, selecting relevant information and using it to draw conclusions about future missions, whilst maintaining a clear sense of voice. Most candidates started and ended as a letter, though formal letter protocols were sometimes overlooked, and many forgot to sign off as the Commander and used

their own names instead; a few did not sign off at all. There were a pleasing number of outstanding responses from candidates meeting and/or going beyond requirements for Band One. These responses showed evidence of close reading - moving beyond surface meaning and irrelevant material - and homing in on more subtle ideas and useful details in order, for example, to identify precise problems with existing missions and consider how these could be remedied. Where responses were less successful in targeting higher bands, there was often the sense that rather than returning to the text to identify and plan content for their answers in advance of writing, candidates had either attempted to write a more general letter to other satellite stations, with limited focus on the details of the passage, or had undertaken to work back through the passage repeating and replaying events, losing sight of the task in doing so. Some of the weakest responses misinterpreted the incident, for example reporting that the astronaut had died. A few were too basic and/or confused to offer evidence of more than a very general grasp at best.

In response to bullet one, most candidates were able to include some details about what happened to Astronaut A once the target had been identified, though some missed development opportunities, for example, by not mentioning use of the jet control. The sounds that the astronaut heard were often described by using lifted language, such as ‘the gentle hiss of oxygen, the faint whirr of motors, the susurration of your own breathing’, without recognising that the focus needed to be on the actual change in sounds of which the astronaut became aware. Many candidates became embroiled with detailed descriptions, at times lifted, of the failure of the suit. The explanation that ‘the oxygen regulator had run wild and sent the pressure soaring’ was often copied in its entirety. Details needed to be modified to address both parts of the bullet point – the best answers set details of events within the context of why these were a matter for concern, avoiding the simply narrative offering of less secure responses.

The second bullet was sometimes addressed thinly and/or relied heavily on lifting from the text. Most candidates managed to describe the gauges, internal lockers, safety harness and the helmet’s external sunshade. Some less well-focused responses lifted extraneous details, such as ‘two metres long’ and ‘softly chattering’. Development was often limited as candidates concentrated on simply naming the parts of the spacesuit and did not address the second part of the bullet. Others diluted evidence of close reading by misinterpreting details, for example suggesting that the safety harness and/or conveyor attached the astronaut to the station.

When addressing the third bullet of the question, most candidates were able to offer at least one or two recommendations. Stronger responses were able to respond thoughtfully to the problems outlined in bullet one and the information provided in bullet two to make plausible and relevant recommendations for improvement in safety procedures. Less successful responses did not pick up prompts from the text and wrote from their own observations of space travel. Other than offering the idea that the suits should be checked more frequently, these responses did not provide accurate or concrete suggestions. Some drifted too far from the text to offer fanciful suggestions based on television space programmes and did not fully address the requirements of the question concerning safety advice on future missions.

Good responses focused on all three bullet points and displayed the ability to select material relevant to each part of the task. They contained a range of ideas that were developed and closely related to the passage and carefully integrated detail. Responses which relied on a mechanical use of the passage, simply repeating details, demonstrated at best a reasonable level of understanding. Where responses were less successful in targeting higher bands, there was often the sense that, rather than returning to the text to identify and plan content for their answers in advance of writing, candidates had focused on generic points. 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, and often did not move beyond the first bullet.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response. Stronger responses adopted and maintained a suitably formal style, producing clear and often fluent responses. Most candidates had at least some awareness of the need to address an audience, although weaknesses in expression arising from a restricted range of secure vocabulary affected meaning in some responses. Better responses adopted a convincing and consistently appropriate style and were clearly well-planned and structured. Lapses into narrative, often accompanied by copying chunks of the passage, indicated an inconsistency of style in less assured responses; copying directly from the text was often the most frequent feature of the weakest writing.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the passage and task details carefully, more than once, thinking about how you are going to use key ideas before you begin writing your answer
- look for details, hints and clues in the text to help you to work out any implied meanings or suggestions
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points in the question
- plan a route through your answer to ensure that ideas are sequenced logically for your intended audience
- adapt, extend and develop material from the passage to answer the question as set
- make sure that the ideas you include can be traced back to details in the passage
- answer using your own words – do not copy phrases from the passage
- take account of the audience and purpose for your response
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct any errors in your writing which might affect meaning.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

(a) the space station and what Astronaut A saw in paragraph 1, beginning 'When Satellite Control called me…'

(b) the spacesuit in paragraph 4, beginning 'Hastily, I clambered into my spacesuit…'.

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

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

Responses to **Question 2** should take the form of continuous prose to allow candidates to explore their choices fully in the context of the passage. Having selected relevant examples to discuss, the focus needs to be on the quality of the analysis rather than the use of vague expressions, such as 'created a vivid picture', 'showed what it was like in space' or 'made you really see how they were doing their work'. Better responses showed evidence of close reading, and an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning. Choices that were most commonly well explained were 'giant jigsaw-puzzle' and 'performing their slow-motion ballet', which showed a clear understanding of the precision and complexity of the activities taking place in space.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed specific 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. A few candidates picked up on the sense of wonder created by the experience of being in outer space in **part (a)**, and the general effect of reassurance created through images associated with comfort and protection in **part (b)**. The best responses considered meaning and effects throughout the response, without repeating generalised effects. The weakest responses had very few language choices, or offered few explanations beyond the very general, such as referring to the size of the spacesuit without reference to the spaceship. Often the words of the original were repeated, for example 'it was chatting softly' or 'it was like being looked after by a friend', which could not gain any marks. Less successful responses sometimes adopted a 'technique spotting' approach by simply identifying literary techniques. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves. Some candidates offered single word choices only, not always selecting the most appropriate words, for example, offering 'space-ships' instead of 'baby space-ships'. Generally, vocabulary in these passages was understood by candidates, though there were some misinterpretations, particularly with 'accordion sleeves' and 'gentle contours', which were sometimes taken literally rather than considered in the context of the passage.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections; ensure that the choices you select for comment are relevant to the question and not those which happen to come first
- do not write out whole sentences, or offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase

- remember to put quotation marks around your choices – it makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- avoid presenting your choices as a list; treat each choice separately to avoid generalised comments
- avoid general comments such as 'it makes you want to read on', or 'this creates a powerful image in the reader's mind' which will not gain any marks
- avoid repeating the wording of the text in your explanation
- aim to give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices, even if you are unsure of effects
- try to include and explain images from each paragraph.

Question 3

What challenges would a person face if they became a Mars One astronaut, according to Passage B?

To answer the summary task successfully, candidates must first identify fifteen points from Passage B relevant to the specific focus of the question and list them, one per numbered line, in note form on the grid in **part (a)**. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one point per line and similarly that each point needs to evidence their understanding clearly. Any points added after line 15 are not credited unless replacing an answer crossed out earlier on. On the whole, candidates understood that in a question testing their ability to 'select for specific purposes' they should not go beyond line 15, or include groups of ideas on each line. The need to identify and select points carefully meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers both to avoid repetition and to organise their ideas sensibly. The second part of the task requires candidates to use their notes, adapting and organising them to write a summary in their own words.

The question focused on the challenges a person would face if they became a Mars One astronaut and better responses organised their points to clearly address this. Weaker, less-focused responses, did not fully address the task. A number relied on working through the passage – often with limited modification of the original – repeating ideas and/or offering incomplete ideas as a result. Others simply transferred their answers from **3(a)** still in the words of the passage. Better responses were careful to be clear and unambiguous in the ideas they presented, for example recognising shifts in focus from the period of training, the experience on the journey, to life on Mars itself.

Where candidates had not engaged fully with the task and/or adopted a more mechanical approach, paraphrasing the material, repetitions were common. Where candidates had not focused precisely on the text, they often presented incomplete or inexact ideas – for example, 'daily exercise', 'electrical repairs' or 'freeze-dried food'. Where points were imprecise and/or unclear in **part (a)** they could not be credited. For example, one word answers such as 'noise' were insufficient to communicate an understanding that the astronauts had to endure the noise all the time or constantly.

Weaker responses often lifted excessively from the passage, limiting their Writing mark in **part (b)**. Own words needed to be used where appropriate – recasting, reorganising and representing ideas helpfully for the benefit of the reader. It is not necessary to change every word – the idea needs to be clear to the reader and there may not be a suitable replacement for the word in the text. There was no need for example to replace the words 'solar storm' and attempts to do so were often awkward and unclear.

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 error. Candidates should pay particular attention, for example, to correct any slips that might change meaning; for example, some candidates wrote 'health and safety checks' instead of 'no health and safety checks'.

Question 3(b) responses that did well had used their points from **3(a)** carefully, by organising them purposefully into a concise, fluent prose response rather than relying on repeating points in the order or language of the passage. They had avoided redundant introductory statements and unnecessarily long explanation. Candidates who had edited and refined points in **3(a)** with their audience in mind were best able to offer efficient and well-focused summary responses in **3(b)**.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 complete and distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line
- do not include illustrative examples of the same point or unnecessary detail
- plan your response in **3(b)** to organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- avoid repetition of points
- check that you understand the point you are trying to communicate
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3(a)**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage
- do not leave lines in the grid without answers
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** in addition to the 15 required as they will not be marked
- leave sufficient time to check back through your **3(b)** answer – for example, to correct errors which affect meaning.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

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

General comments

Candidates' responses generally indicated familiarity with the format of the paper and the demands of each task. Most showed at least some awareness of the need to use, not simply repeat, the material from the relevant passage in order to answer the questions. The most successful responses demonstrated that candidates had paid close attention to the specifics of the task and considered how to adapt and modify the material in the original text to offer the evidence of skills and understanding required for higher bands. A number of less successful responses were over-reliant on the wording of the passage(s) and/or paid limited attention to the details of both the text and the question as set, providing less-convincing evidence as a consequence.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and engaging. Not all had used time efficiently, with some candidates counting words and ending their responses abruptly once each of the totals given for guidance had been reached, rather than ensuring that all aspects of each task had been covered. Stronger answers showed signs of candidates having capitalised on their planning, for example by referring back to check that all the relevant ideas had been included and editing where required to add in any key details missed.

There were some excellent responses where candidates had clearly addressed the different requirements of each task and demonstrated skills and understanding at an impressively high level. Very occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task – for example, by not providing 15 answers in **Question 3(a)**, selecting examples from only one paragraph in **Question 2** and/or offering an incomplete response to **Question 3(b)**.

There did not appear to be any significant misunderstandings of either passage. More successful answers were able to demonstrate careful, purposeful reading, interpreting and using details effectively in **Question 1**, and ensuring that selections from the text in **Question 2** and **Question 3(a)** addressed the question.

Most **Question 1** responses showed some familiarity with the form of the task – a speech from a character involved in the text. The majority of candidates were able to respond appropriately with many providing convincing replies. Responses across the cohort covered the full range of achievement, with stronger answers able to maintain the perspective of Damian the experienced guide and hunter, and interpret the events as recounted by novice Leo to offer advice to a group of people interested in participating in a bear hunt themselves. Good answers identified and used a range of detail, drawing inferences which helped to anchor responses in a close reading of the passage and demonstrate a strong sense of purpose. Less successful responses often included insufficient reference to ideas from the passage, drifted from the text and/or repeated ideas from Leo's perspective – at times in the language of the original. Along with unselective copying, lifting phrases from the text is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

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For **Question 2** candidates need to consider appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs and make specific, detailed comments about these choices. Many candidates showed they were able to explore and explain in some detail the basic effects of relevant choices, with the best able to offer more precise explanations and offer some high quality comments. Some were less well focused and discussed choices not relevant to the question and/or repeated the language of the choices in their explanations, diluting evidence of understanding as a result. Some answers discussed fewer than four choices in each half and/or only dealt with examples from one of the two paragraphs, missing the opportunity to target higher bands as a result.

In **Question 3** many candidates were able to find a good number of points in **part (a)**. Candidates do not need to use their own words in **Question 3(a)** and most understood that they should use short notes rather than whole sections taken from the passage. Where responses were most successful in **part (b)**, candidates had used their own words consistently and organised their ideas helpfully. A few of the least successful responses copied from the text with minimal/no rewording of the original. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in **part (b)** and do not need to replace every word of the original, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and/or sentences from the passage to communicate ideas. Indiscriminate copying, repetition and comment should all be avoided. A number of potentially stronger answers missed opportunities through repetition of ideas – often the result of an over-reliance on the organisation of the original text.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to be aware that 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and reviewing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meaning and awkward expression. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, candidates should remember that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. On occasion, misreading/inaccurate copying of individual words was evident. Candidates need to be mindful that errors which alter meaning can blur evidence of their skills and understanding in any of the three tasks. Leaving sufficient time to read back through and edit responses is advisable. The best responses considered their intended audience, for example by ensuring that their writing was sufficiently well-organised and controlled for ideas to be clearly understood by a reader who had not read the original passage.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Imagine you are Damian, the experienced guide and hunter in the story. When you return from your expedition with Leo, another group of people express an interest in going with you on a bear hunt in the same area.

Write the words of your speech in which you advise this group of people.

In your speech you should:
- **tell the people about the habits of bears and how they should be hunted**
- **explain what the people are likely to experience on the hunt**
- **describe what happened after you and Leo set up camp that night.**

Base your advice 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 advice with, 'Let me give you all some advice as bears are very crafty. Take the one I tracked recently …'.

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

The task invited candidates to demonstrate their skills and understanding by using and modifying ideas from a narrative account to develop and present them as suitable advice for a group of people considering a bear hunting trip. The question encouraged candidates to show that they could do more than just repeat or retell events from the text. The most successful answers kept in mind that the original passage was written from the perspective of the less experienced Leo, who narrates the whole episode of looking for the bear from his point of view. Candidates producing answers in higher bands often showed evidence that they had planned beforehand how they might reinterpret details and hints in the text in order to write a convincing speech from the alternative perspective of Damian, the expert guide and bear hunter.

Most candidates were able to offer at least some advice regarding the habits of bears and how they should be hunted, picking up on the tone and cue of the given starter to warn their audience that bears were tricky and hunting them would require some care and skill. Many were able to recognise something of the challenges of cold weather and/or difficult terrain and had noticed that Damian had prepared to stay on watch that night whilst Leo slept. More successful answers were able to offer convincing speeches sustaining a sense of audience and purpose until the end. Mid-range responses often missed opportunities to go further than representing ideas made explicit in the text, and offered uneven answers as a result.

Where responses leaned too heavily on the text initially – for example by simply narrating mechanically the actions of the bear in the passage, rather than considering what was suggested of such bears in general, candidates were likely to find difficulty in maintaining Damian's perspective and typically offered fewer relevant ideas in relation to bullets two and/or three. Better answers demonstrated close reading and some sense of purpose, indicating they had taken account of the whole passage and key details in the question before beginning their response. They considered hints and implications in the text and used those in their answers – for example by offering a relevant interpretation of the big, black 'something' Leo sees at the end of the passage and/or recognising that the trip involved sleeping out under the stars. Strong answers developed and interpreted details from the text as advice and did not just report explicit 'facts' – for example offering a reasonable rationale for participants on a bear hunt eating bread and salt, rather than simply recording that bread and salt was eaten. The best answers had differentiated carefully between the reactions and actions of the two characters involved in the passage and sustained the role of Damian to the end of their speech.

When addressing the first bullet of the question less successful answers rarely ventured beyond a lengthy recreation of the trip with Leo. Often this led to significant repetition of ideas, with answers becoming stuck in less helpful details related to the various directions of travel of the particular bear the pair had been tracking. Occasionally, candidates lost focus on the question (for example by dealing with the 'habitats' of bears rather than their 'habits') or lost focus on the passage (for example, by including unrelated information about bears taken from their own knowledge which could not be rewarded as evidence of reading).The best answers dealt with both the habits of bears and advice for how to hunt them, avoiding simply recycling explicit detail

from the account of the trip in the passage. They were able to identify key ideas about how bears might behave (supported by apt detail) and then direct this is a way which would inform and hold the interest of the intended audience. They understood that such an audience would be less interested in a simple account of the trip with Leo and most interested in the lessons, advice and/or reassurance that might be drawn from it.

The least successful answers showed limited understanding of even explicit points related to the original bear hunt and found it difficult to organise their responses in a cohesive or coherent way. Some potentially stronger answers were on task initially, and then lost focus when tackling bullet two. Responses in the mid-range tended to rely on repeating details of Leo's experience rather than re-directing them towards their specified audience. Better responses were able to sift the passage for relevant information about what the new group of hunters might be likely to experience during a bear hunt and offer a range of ideas in relation to bullet two, for example warning of the harsh terrain of deep snow, thickets and marshes, and/or intriguing their audience with promises of spectacularly beautiful snow-covered scenes and advice to wrap up warm against the cold.

In the third bullet, many candidates had used clues in the text to make decisions about what might have happened immediately after the passage ended. Where predictions were firmly rooted in the text they could be usefully included, and many candidates chose to capitalise on the opportunity to reassure any potential hunter they would be safe with Damian as a guide. Others made explicit, and extended, ideas within the scope of narrative itself, adding to the sense of drama and daring they had created in Damian's speech as he shared with his eager audience a tempting glimpse of what might lie ahead should they go on such a bear hunt with him. Many decided that the bear had tracked them down – that the hunter had become the hunted, necessitating the use of the gun – though there was a wide variety of equally valid alternative interpretations. Some judged that a bear which typically did not venture as far as the village might come no nearer to the men than 50 paces, or that a bear so sensitive as to be alerted by a cough might be easily discouraged by the sound of a shot in the air, and described the sense of satisfaction someone on such a trip might feel at having seen the bear in real life, before it melted away back into the thicket. Where candidates missed opportunities to extend ideas rooted in the text, this third bullet was either covered very briefly or the ideas offered diverged greatly from the evidence in the passage and could not be credited as evidence of Reading skills. For example, whilst the suggestion that on waking Leo had mistaken Damian in his fur cloak looking for bear tracks as the bear itself was a relevant possible interpretation, suggestions such as the figure being that of an elderly man who had been dressing as a bear since childhood were not. Weaker answers, reliant on reproducing the text, often failed to tease out Damian's actions and reactions from those of Leo in this third bullet, suggesting he too fell asleep immediately and woke up unaware of his surroundings, thinking he was somewhere else. Strong responses did not lose focus in this way and recognised that regardless of how any bear would react, it would be unlikely that Damian as an experienced guide and hunter would react in exactly the same way as hunt novice, Leo.

Targeting higher bands for Writing, strong responses were able to maintain a consistent and authoritative voice for Damian, using their own words throughout and often appropriate rhetorical devices to appeal to their audience. Mid-range responses tended to recycle the language of the text. At times, these responses were clear in their expression but notably plain in execution, rarely extending explanations and leaning heavily on the order and structure of the original passage. Some answers missed opportunities to profit fully from the awareness they did have of the need to consider an audience and leant too heavily on the text as their answer progressed – for example, including lifted phrases such as 'back propped against the rigid form of a fir tree, in preparation for a vigil' and 'saw, some fifty paces away, something big and black'. Others included some awkward expression and/or blurred evidence of understanding through careless error – for example writing 'haunted' rather than 'hunted', referring to 'crumbled legs' and a the rifle being 'cooked' rather than 'cocked'. A few responses struggled to communicate ideas or presented answers which were entirely copied. Comparatively few answers showed signs of having been edited or corrected and most responses would have benefitted from further review once completed.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the passage and task details carefully, more than once, thinking about how you are going to use key ideas before you begin writing your answer
- look for details, hints and clues in the text to help you to work out any implied meanings or suggestions
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points in the question
- plan a route through your answer to ensure that ideas are sequenced logically for your intended audience
- adapt, extend and develop material from the passage to answer the question as set
- make sure that the ideas you include can be traced back to details in the passage

- answer using your own words – do not copy phrases from the passage
- take account of the audience and purpose for your response
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct any errors in your writing which might affect meaning

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

(a) The inside of the fir thicket in paragraph 10, beginning 'We began to make our way …'

(b) What Leo thought he was looking at when he woke up in paragraph 13, beginning 'I slept so soundly …'.

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

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

Responses to **Question 2** need to identify relevant examples of language for discussion and provide sufficiently focused and clear analysis of these to evidence understanding of how the writer was using language in each case.

Where the precise meaning of words was considered in context, candidates were often able to suggest something of the effect. Better answers remembered to consider all key words within choices, arriving at a more complete understanding of the overall impact. For example, high quality comments in relation to 'treacherous (ice) patches' and 'remorseless wedges' in **part (a)**, were often the result of having considered the effect of both words within the choice before suggesting their combined effect. There were plenty of potentially useful choices relating directly to the inside of the fir thicket as described in paragraph 10 and many answers offered convincing explanations of both meaning and effect in relation to such examples as 'stern-looking thicket' and 'inhospitably barbed arms'. Some candidates were less careful when selecting and as a result missed opportunities – for example, explanations of a 'sulking' rather than 'skulking' juniper shrub, or 'pillows' rather than 'pillars', could not provide evidence of understanding of how this writer was using language. Similarly, explanations which repeated the language of the original choice – for example, explaining 'mighty invisible depths' as 'showing how deep the shrub was, as the depth could not be seen' – were likely to be partially effective at best. Suggestions such as 'legs crumpled', 'gliding helplessly' or 'drenched with perspiration' demonstrated a loss of focus on the task as none of these examples described the inside of thicket. Similarly in **part (b)**, whilst most were able to identify at least some relevant choices for discussion, there were answers which lost focus for example suggesting as choices 'wet snow' and 'hoar frost' – details of what was actually there, not what Leo thought he saw when he woke up.

Whilst candidates had attempted to address the task in hand, comments were not always sufficiently precise, relevant or clear to offer evidence of understanding, with the least successful responses falling below band five. It was not unusual for responses to be more successful in one half of the question than the other and there were answers which limited the evidence of understanding they could offer by only discussing four choices in total, rather than eight (four from each paragraph). Candidates are reminded that interpretations of meaning and effect do need to be relevant in context. For example suggesting that 'banked snow' related to money, that 'depth' referred to the thickness of the snow and/or that 'raven-black' described the colour of the bear's fur provided no evidence of understanding. Similarly, potentially stronger answers missed opportunities to consider the precise implications of the words as used in context – for example they offered more general interpretations of 'delicate' as 'soft' rather than recognising that in context it suggested the fragile/temporary nature of the ice on the trees. Others selected 'studded with coloured lights' offering generally relevant interpretations linked to early sunlight and/or late night starlight through the branches of the trees, but missed opportunities to consider the word studded itself.

The best answers unpicked individual images in turn and arrived at an understanding of the overall picture, often going on to draw comments together at the end of their answer to suggest how images combined in each part to create an over-arching effect. For example in **part (b)**, convincing suggestions included an extended image of an impressive wintry cathedral, with the gothic 'vault' of the night sky viewed through it and in **part (a)** often concentrated on the hostility and inherent dangers of the inside of the thicket.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- focus on the question carefully to ensure that all your choices are relevant
- base your answer on four choices from each of the two identified paragraphs (eight choices in all)
- ensure you copy choices accurately – avoid careless errors with spelling which change meaning
- once you have identified the potentially relevant choices from each paragraph , select your strongest four from each to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise and complete – do not copy out whole lines of text or part choices
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices – it makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- if you are unsure about effects, try to begin by giving a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- when suggesting an effect try to make it clear how exactly that is created
- show your understanding in full – consider all the key words within your identified choice.

Question 3

What are the reasons for the popularity of the teddy bear now and in the past, according to Passage B?

To address the task successfully, candidates needed to first identify points from the whole passage that were potentially relevant to the question, then select 15 distinct, clear ideas to list in **part (a)** – one per numbered line. Candidates are reminded that they are only credited with a maximum of one mark per line and should spend time identifying their strongest points rather than simply offering ideas as they occur in the passage. Candidates are not required to use their own words in **part (a)** of the question, though better answers had often chosen to do so for clarity, for example where points were implied and/or exemplified more than once in the original text.

Almost all candidates had understood the need to identify just 15 points in **3(a)** and pleasingly it was rare to find additional points added after the grid – additional answers cannot be credited unless replacing a crossed out answer earlier on. The need to select and identify points to answer the question meant that candidates had to read and plan their answers carefully, both to avoid repetition and to communicate ideas accurately. Weaker responses indicated some difficulty in making explicit ideas which were implied in the text. For example, careful selection from the text allowed candidates to offer a relevant explanation for teddy bears' popularity as the fact they are 'fluffy, huggable and adorable'. Less careful selections such as 'real bears are anything but fluffy, huggable and adorable' and 'real bears are fluffy, huggable and adorable' did not make the point clearly. Similarly, less focused responses spilt up examples of the same idea into separate answers – for example offering these attractive physical qualities on separate lines in their answer grid and missing opportunities to include other clearly distinct ideas from elsewhere in the text. Successful answers recognised that examples of the same idea in the original text need to be organised under one umbrella point and longer episodes such as the story related to President Roosevelt distilled down to its essence.

When approaching **Question 3(a)**, candidates who focused on what the question was asking were best placed to offer relevant, distinct ideas for their answers. For example, the fact that some teddy bears were expensive was not in itself an explanation for their popularity, whereas their potential investment value and/or the attraction of owning a designer bear was such an explanation. Occasionally incomplete or imprecise communication in **part (a)** blurred the point in hand – a few candidates offered note form without considering that those notes needed to make the point clearly. For example 'remind us of loved ones' did not make the point clearly – the value is attached to the bear as we are reminded of those loved ones who gave them to us, not because we recognise any resemblance between the bear and those we love. The best answers had been written as if to communicate each idea clearly and precisely to someone who had not read the passage – taking account of advice offered in previous examiner reports. Unforced errors such as suggesting that teddy bears were 'used to traumatise children', or 'used to research traumatised children', offered little evidence of understanding.

In **Question 3(b)**, many candidates demonstrated an awareness of an appropriate style for a summary, though a number of mid-range answers relied on the order and/or structure of the original passage resulting in list-like answers and/or repetition of ideas. The most successful responses re-ordered and re-grouped the relevant information from the text, making good use of their notes in **3(a)** and were careful to use their own words where practicable. Strong answers avoided inclusion of unnecessary detail and showed signs of having been planned and edited with the need for clarity and concision in mind.

The least successful responses copied wholesale from the text with minimal or no modification, or offered a response which communicated very few relevant ideas. Some candidates in attempting to use their own words altered meaning and communicated less accurately as a result – for example the assertion that 'the president denied to shoot a bear when out on a hunting trip' is not the same as the explanation in the text of him refusing to shoot the bear. Candidates producing the best answers often showed signs that they had revisited points in **3(a)** when planning **3(b)**, in order to edit and further refine points in this first part of the question and plan their route through their prose answer. This approach often resulted in clearer, more distinct points in **3(a)** and a more efficient and well-focused response in **3(b)**. Top band answers were able to craft summaries which focused on key ideas and expressed them fluently with concision, using their own words and organisation.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 complete and distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line
- do not include illustrative examples of the same point or unnecessary detail
- plan your response in **3(b)** to organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- avoid repetition of points
- check that you understand the point you are trying to communicate
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3(a)**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage
- do not leave lines in the grid without answers
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** in addition to the 15 required as they will not be marked
- leave sufficient time to check back through your **3(b)** answer – for example, to correct errors which affect meaning.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/23
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

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

General comments

Candidates' responses to this paper indicated a familiarity with the general demands of each task and the need to select and use appropriate material from the reading passages to answer each question. The majority of candidates attempted all parts of the three questions and most answers were an appropriate length.

For **Question 1**, there were some engaging and enthusiastic magazine articles written in a lively and convincing style. The best responses focused on all aspects of the three bullet points and contained a range of relevant ideas that had been modified and developed effectively. Less good responses did not support their ideas fully with specific details from the passage and did not offer even coverage of the bullet points.

For **Question 2**, candidates needed to make specific, detailed comments in relation to appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two paragraphs. Whilst, most selected a sufficient number of examples for discussion in each part of the question, not all answers offered precise choices and some explanations were quite general as a result. Good responses offered extended analysis of key words and phrases rather than general comments and vague impressions.

For **Question 3**, many responses were focused on the task and able to score well. For **3(b)**, there were attempts to use own words and reorganise the points from **part (a)**. Good responses communicated ideas clearly, succinctly and fluently. Less good responses relied heavily on the wording of the passage and/or included commentary and over-long explanations. The least successful responses copied from the text with minimal, or no, rewording of the original. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in **part (b)** and do not need to replace every word of the original, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and/or sentences from the passage to communicate ideas. Indiscriminate copying, repetition and comment should all be avoided.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, 20% of the marks are awarded for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. Whilst writing is not specifically assessed for accuracy in this paper, unclear or limited style will limit the achievement of high writing marks, as will over-reliance on the language of the passage. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing to avoid inconsistencies of style, imprecise meanings and awkward expression. Candidates are advised to allow sufficient time to plan, check and edit their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are a journalist writing an article about Mia, one year after she appeared on the TV show, 'The Talent'. You have interviewed Mia.

Write your article.

In your article you should:
- **describe Mia's behaviour and attitude at the time of the show**
- **explain how other people were affected by Mia's behaviour**
- **explore the part played by the media and the public in Mia's downfall and how it has changed Mia's behaviour one year on.**

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

Begin the magazine article: 'Let's catch up with the disgraced finalist, Mia, from 'The Talent' – the diva we all loved to hate last year …'

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

Candidates were required to modify Mia's personal account of her experiences on 'The Talent' to write a magazine article reflecting back and commenting on events in the light of Mia's new perspective one year later. Many candidates wrote convincingly, included some effective comments and opinions from the journalist and some perceptive thoughts from Mia. There were some particularly engaging articles that maintained a good sense of audience and purpose to display a sound level of understanding of both Passage A and the task. Some responses were written in an interview style, an acceptable approach as the instructions indicated that Mia had been interviewed for the purposes of the article. Where the voice and perspective of the journalist was clearly evident, interview-style responses were able to offer relevant development and detail. Where the interview presented followed only a basic question and answer format, Mia's account of her experiences was often too similar to the writing of the passage and opportunities were missed to target higher marks. In some cases there was minimal modification of the original text and the questions were copies of the bullet points, which gave the candidate little opportunity to convey the journalist's opinions.

Most candidates appeared to engage well with the task, displaying a general understanding and a familiarity with the scenario presented in the passage. This resulted in some convincing comments and development, though occasionally some offered ideas in responses that were not fully tethered to events in the passage. The invention of background details about Mia's past singing experiences were not relevant and could not be credited. Some responses were more focused on aspects of celebrity and the power of the media and less focused on the evidence of Mia's behaviour and the effects on those around her. Some accounts were quite generalised, commenting that Mia's behaviour was disgraceful, that she treated everyone badly and was far too self-absorbed and confident. These observations, although accurate, were not always supported by examples and details that would have demonstrated a close reading of the text.

For the first part of the task good responses included a range of developed ideas with specific details of how Mia behaved and what this told readers about her attitude and personality. The idea that she was confident about her appearance was supported by the detail of her preening and admiring herself in the mirror, certain that she would dazzle the audience, suggesting that she is narcissistic, vain and conceited. References were made to her rude behaviour and in good responses there were the examples of her shouting at the hairdresser, being late and ignoring the technicians' instructions, which indicated her lack of concern for

people who she considered to be beneath her. Most responses stated that she was rude to other contestants, though examples of this rudeness and her criticisms of them were not always included. In less effective responses Mia's behaviour was discussed in more general terms and comments about her demeanour were not always strongly linked to the passage.

In most responses, the second part of the task was the least focused and developed. Most referred to the audience's reaction to Mia, though few commented on the reasons for the derision and contempt displayed. Less effective responses failed to recognise the different requirements of the first and second bullet points; this led to some repetition of Mia's behaviour and little focus on how it might have affected others. Better responses did make the distinction and used the detail from the passage to describe the scowls and murmurs of the back stage staff, the complaints from other contestants and the band stepping away from her. There was some development of these points, for example, the suggestion that the band no longer wished to be associated with Mia because of her bad behaviour and the anger of the audience. Some included reference to her treatment of the little boy, and the suggestion that he would be disillusioned and disappointed by the encounter was credited as development. Good responses also made reasonable inferences, for example, that people were frustrated and inconvenienced by Mia's lateness and her refusal to listen, or that the other contestants were demoralised and hurt by her criticisms of them.

The third part of the task required candidates to reflect on the part played by the media and the public, and also to consider how Mia had changed during the past year. Few of the articles commented on the role of the public, even though were opportunities to suggest that people may have enjoyed her humiliation and downfall, and may have been partly responsible for her treatment by the press. Most responses considered the role of the media, with reference to the newspaper article 'Diva Mia,' and commented that Mia had been manipulated and made a 'puppet'. Some also suggested that she was now more cautious of the press and more aware of how her behaviour might be reported. In the strongest responses the voices of Mia and the interviewer interacted and the lessons learned from her experiences a year ago were articulated clearly. Less good responses did not write with hindsight and were focused only on the time of the contest, so apart from a brief reference to the news article this part of the question was not fully addressed. Most articles included Mia's changes in attitude and her assertion that she had become a better person, felt guilty about her poor behaviour and wanted to apologise for her poor treatment of others. In more convincing responses, these ideas were linked to details from the text with references to her now signing autographs, listening to advice and eschewing stardom to focus on her singing. Not all ideas about her new lifestyle and career were fully rooted in the passage. The suggestions that she now played local venues to hone her talents and secure a sound fan base, or spent time helping other young people were plausible ideas and were rewarded.

The quality of writing in many responses was good. These articles were fluent with a convincing journalistic style and appropriate language. The best responses had a strong sense of audience and a range of vocabulary. Less good responses relied heavily on the wording of the passage and there was some inconsistency of style.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- read the passage and task details carefully, more than once, thinking about how you are going to use key ideas before you begin writing your answer
- look for details, hints and clues in the text to help you to work out any implied meanings or suggestions
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each of the three bullet points in the question
- plan a route through your answer to ensure that ideas are sequenced logically for your intended audience
- adapt, extend and develop material from the passage to answer the question as set
- make sure that the ideas you include can be traced back to details in the passage
- answer using your own words – do not copy phrases from the passage
- take account of the audience and purpose for your response
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct any errors in your writing which might affect meaning.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

(a) Mia's appearance and attitude in paragraph 3, beginning 'An hour before the final …'

(b) The audience reaction and its effect on Mia in paragraph 5, beginning 'I stepped into a cauldron of noise …'

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

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

Candidates were advised to include explanation of four appropriate examples for each part of the question and most responses contained a sufficient number of choices. Less effective responses only included one or two examples in each part which did not allow candidates to display a full understanding of the writer's use of language. Good responses contained precise and short examples with explanations focused on the key words and an exploration of images.

In most responses **part (a)** contained a range of appropriate choices relating to Mia's appearance and attitude, and most included comments about her self-admiration and over confidence. In less good responses some explanations lacked precision and did not always refer to specific words. Similar comments were often made about words and phrases that had distinct meanings and different connotations. For example, the explanations of 'sprinkled glitter', 'iridescent shimmers', 'sparkling jewels' and 'luminous form' often included the words 'shiny', 'bright', 'brilliant' and 'sparkly'. The opportunities to discuss the different ways in which Mia shone and felt special were not always taken. Good responses referred to the inner glow that made her seem other-worldly or angelic, the precious and valuable nature of jewels, and the magical nature of the changing colours of the glitter. Several responses referred to Mia's vanity, suggested by the word 'preened', and to her confidence, suggested by 'sheer ambition'. Many referred to her over confidence and arrogance, though it was not always made clear how these impressions were created. Good responses went some way to explain images – for example, suggesting how 'like a comet blazing a trail' communicated Mia's belief that her performance would be memorable and stunning.

In **part (b)** responses often also contained a range of relevant choices. Most included an overview of Mia's feelings about the reaction of the audience, and some made the comparison between her previous confident attitude and her desperation on stage. These overviews were only credited if supported by relevant choices and explanations of how they contributed to the overall effects of the paragraph. In some responses not all of the comments were precise or focused on the key words. For 'blinked away my scalding tears' some explanations were focused on the word 'blinking', and for 'waves of anger' there were straightforward explanations of the word 'anger'. Good responses explored the effects of 'scalding' and the pain caused by the burning tears that could result in emotional scarring, and also the powerful and engulfing nature of waves, giving Mia a feeling of being constantly attacked. Some linked this to Mia's voice being 'drowned' as though in a huge sea. There were some effective explanations of 'hissing and booing' that displayed an understanding of the contempt and disapproval of the audience. In some responses the explanations repeated the words of the original and some long and inexact examples were given followed by a comment about Mia's state of mind. Without analysis and focus on individual words the comments were very general. Candidates are advised not to use long examples. Choices should be brief and exact, with explanations that are focused on the meanings and effects of the most interesting and relevant words.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- base your answer on four choices from each of the two identified paragraphs (eight choices in all)
- once you have identified the potentially relevant choices from each paragraph , select your strongest four from each to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise and complete – do not copy out whole lines of text or part choices
- do not repeat the same explanation for different choices
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices – it makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- if you are unsure about effects, try to begin by giving a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- when suggesting an effect try to make it clear how exactly that is created
- show your understanding in full – consider all the key words within your identified choice.

Question 3

According to Passage B, how can a musician get a record deal?

To answer **Question 3(a)** successfully, candidates needed to identify fifteen points from Passage B that were relevant to the question and to list them, one numbered point per line in note form. Candidates can only be credited with a maximum of one point each line and any points added after line 15 cannot be considered unless they replace an answer crossed out earlier. Responses were largely focused on the general demands of the question and did not go beyond 15 lines, though some did include more than one point on the same line and there was some repetition of information.

In some responses the personal viewpoint and experiences of the writer had not been modified and presented as positive advice about how to secure a record deal. Some contained negatives simply lifted from the passage, for example, 'we didn't have a video', 'we didn't have rich investors' and the copied phrase, 'we got criticised for not having an image' rather than showing evidence that they had understood the implications of each of these details. Better responses selected statements about why the musician had been unsuccessful and modified them to give positive advice to other bands, for example, suggesting the need to make a video, have sponsorship and an image. In good responses, information about what the band had been advised to do, what they attempted to do and also failed to do were carefully untangled, demonstrating a sound understanding of the passage and a clear focus on the question.

Some responses included general points that were copied from the passage and not focused on the question, for example, 'it's about the music', 'record companies exploit bands' and 'won't sign you unless they think you will make them money'. These phrases are too vague to be credited as useful advice. Some points that were similar in meaning were listed as separate answers missing opportunities to offer other, clearly distinct ideas and target higher marks. Most candidates were aware of the appropriate style and form for a summary and many **part (b)** responses were suitably objective and informative with only a few written from the personal viewpoint of the passage. In strong answers there was very little copying, most were of an appropriate length and few included overlong introductions or a redundant conclusion. Many were written clearly with attempts to use own words and candidates engaged well with the task, writing with some confidence and authority. Good summaries grouped similar ideas together which resulted in more fluent and succinct writing, and an avoidance of repeated information. Less good responses were list-like and included copied phrases from the passage.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potential content points
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 complete and distinct points
- list your points – one complete idea per numbered line
- do not include illustrative examples of the same point or unnecessary detail
- plan your response in **3(b)** to organise and sequence content helpfully for your reader
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and must use your own words in **3(b)**
- avoid repetition of points
- check that you understand the point you are trying to communicate
- when checking and editing your answers to **Question 3(a)**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage
- do not leave lines in the grid without answers
- do not add further numbered points in **3(a)** in addition to the 15 required as they will not be marked
- leave sufficient time to check back through your **3(b)** answer – for example, to correct errors which affect meaning.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/31
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

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

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

General comments

The great majority of responses showed confident awareness of what was expected in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the paper. There were very few responses which were very brief or undeveloped, and rubric infringements - where more than the required numbers of questions were attempted - were rare. On occasions, where such infringements did occur, marks were affected by there not being sufficient time allowed to write considered and substantial responses.

At all levels of achievement, clear understanding was shown of the reading material and the task in **Question 1,** and responses usually demonstrated strong engagement with the topic, while paying appropriate attention to the style and format of a letter. The great majority of responses showed very little evidence of simple paraphrasing or indiscriminate copying of material in the passage. Although the reproduction of some key words and phrases was widespread, this was usually where synonyms were not readily available.

Some excellent answers, which interrogated the views expressed by the writer of the passage, showed a mature awareness of environmental concerns arising from the unlimited production of paper books and of the speed of technological development. Some strong responses enthusiastically supported the attitudes of the writer towards ‘real’ books but were still able to develop their views in a suitably evaluative manner. Others recognised the strength of the writer’s feelings but with thoughtful reservations. Some refuted the writer’s beliefs about the shortcomings of e-readers without recognising the deeper concerns behind their expression. Those responses which offered some challenge to the writer’s assertions and attitudes more readily achieved evaluation of the material when they justified their objections.

The best responses combined an assured grasp of the content and attitudes of the material with an independence of thought reflected in the structure of their writing: rather than a methodical consideration of the points in the same sequence as the original, they were evaluative of the whole thrust of the article from the outset, selecting and commenting on its details to support their views and sensitively aware of the attitudes of the speaker in the text. In the middle Bands, responses often simply reproduced the points made by the writer with some, often anecdotal, development, then gave their conclusion in a final paragraph the tone of which was sometimes at variance with what had gone before.

While it was proper to give due consideration to the writer's beliefs and concerns about the damage wrought upon the act of reading itself by the proliferation of e-readers, the question also required the candidate's own views to be given, and frequently these responses did not develop a clear stance on the topic. Although even at the lower levels of achievement there was very little completely undeveloped reproduction of the material, many responses made one or two valid points but showed such limited coverage of the material that Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 for Reading. Here, the writing was sometimes of a fluency and accuracy more typical of higher Bands, and in these scripts originality of thought and invention was sometimes demonstrated in Section 2 compositions that was absent in the handling of the reading material.

Most responses paid attention to the audience and style required for a formal letter and they were evaluative in purpose to some extent, using the passage to create and structure arguments with some sense of audience. Some weaker responses however struggled to find the appropriate tone and style of address for writing to a stranger, rather than, for example, a headteacher or one of their peers. Not infrequently the given salutation was misunderstood, with responses beginning, 'Dear Sir William' or 'Dear Madam Anna'.

In **Section 2,** there was usually a clear awareness of the differing requirements of the two genres; in this examination series the narrative options were far more popular, being chosen by more than 70 per cent of the candidature, and there was writing of a high standard seen across the different types. As always, the best responses were typified by careful structuring, a wide-ranging and precisely employed vocabulary, and a high level of technical accuracy. **Question 2** evoked some excellent descriptive pieces, where conscious crafting for effect which did not drift into narrative was often seen, but some narrative framework for the purposes of cohesion was more often apparent in responses to **Question 3**. Weaker responses to both questions in the descriptive genre were typically dominated by simple, sequential narrative, the listing of ordinary details, and limited vocabulary. Strong responses to **Questions 4** and to **Question 5** frequently engaged the reader's interest from the beginning, and also provided a satisfactory and believable resolution to the story. The topic of **Question 4**, 'A Missed Opportunity', produced some excellent narratives encompassing a wide range of scenarios, although a majority chose to write about failed sporting, usually football, opportunities, and often simply recounted events in the style of a match commentary without the desired elements of fiction being produced. Some responses to **Question 5** did not effectively utilise the opening sentence supplied in the task, adding it on to their stories in an unbelievable or inappropriate manner, and sometimes forgetting it completely after the first paragraph. In the middle Bands of narrative responses, often well-written stories were let down by weak and unconvincing endings: there needs to be more awareness of the distinctive requirements of the genre in this respect. A small number of engaging and promising narratives stopped very abruptly without any meaningful conclusion.

Weaker responses in both **Section 1** and **Section 2** sometimes struggled to find the correct register and tone for their intended audience, and were marred by the frequency of basic errors in punctuation and syntax. The use of commas where full stops or semi-colons were required and uncertain control of tense were evident at varying levels of achievement, and there appeared to be a considerable number of compositions which were unparagraphed, even in the setting out of dialogue. A significant number of responses were written inappropriately in capital letters throughout.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1. Directed Writing

Question 1

Write a letter to the writer in response to their article, 'E-readers vs. Books'.

In your letter you should:

- **identify and evaluate the writer's views on e-readers**
- **explain how far you agree with the writer that people should buy books rather than e-readers.**

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

Begin your letter, 'Dear Sir/Madam…',

Write about 250 to 350 words.

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

Marks in the top Bands were awarded where the views in the passage were subjected to rigorous examination and there was an overview of the issues. Here, there was more than a straightforward listing of the points made in the text; the style of the response was both appropriate and displayed a high level of accuracy, and points were selected to support views in a cohesive and balanced argument. Where a letter format and style were maintained throughout the response and the mode of address was consistently appropriate, the underlying assumptions and implications of the speaker in the text were recognised, and explicit assertions were scrutinised and challenged, Examiners could award very high marks indeed.

Marks in Band 3 were awarded when reasonable understanding of the issues was shown, albeit while accepting claims at face value, and some points were subjected to more extended discussion and development. Responses here were typified by often enthusiastic support for the unique value of paper books despite knowledge of the advantages of e-readers being apparent.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the main ideas although demonstrating no clear point of view. Very thin use of the detail and weakness in organising ideas coherently were characteristic at this level.

The marks for reading

The passage proved accessible at all levels of ability, with little evidence of misunderstanding except where language competence prevented clear expression. The best responses were evaluative throughout, commanding the subject from the beginning, and demonstrating the ability to assess objectively the views expressed in the article and to adopt a wider view.

There was an implicit understanding of the subtleties and nuances of the passage and a realisation that the impracticalities of e-readers, in terms of their fragility or charging requirements, were not really the writer's main concern; these also probed the admission that the writer felt the 'lure' of these devices and was resistant to the notion of change itself. Responses awarded marks at the top of Band 1 challenged the assertion that the value of a text was compromised by the medium in which it was presented, and questioned the over-romanticised significance of an author's signature in determining the reader's subsequent career choices. The writer's binary simplification of the issue was also discussed: 'The ability to access scores of books on your e-reader will not prevent you from enjoying your handsome and well-filled bookshelves on your return from your travels'. Others sympathised with the writer's love of the physical presence of books but also took the longer view of the inevitability of change: 'This is just the next stage in our development. Did you object when the typewriter gave way to the laptop?' Responses at this and sometimes at lower levels made the reasonable assumption that the writer was older than themselves, and suggested that negative views of screened devices were a generational prejudice not shared by their peers. An authoritative and perceptive response enjoyed the irony inherent in the writer's anecdote about obtaining the author's signature on a copy of 'Fahrenheit 451': 'It is fitting that the novel you had signed was about the destruction of books—an issue that would not have occurred if those libraries had been digital'.

Marks in Band 2 were awarded when there was more than just simple agreement or disagreement with the claims of the passage material, and some of the qualities of Band 1 responses were evident if employed with less assurance. Responses often began by reproducing and agreeing with the criticisms of e-readers and the attractions of paper books, covering the material with reasonable thoroughness, and with some degree of evaluation. Here evaluation often resided in the alleviation of concerns about e-readers, describing recent technological developments, and, while accepting the high initial cost of the devices, showed how economical they made reading in the long run. These responses often pointed out that paper books were hardly indestructible. Responses awarded marks at the top of Band 2 usually made a range of points, often including the unassailable nature of the text regardless of its means of presentation: 'E-readers also carry the same story, plot and characterisation that we enjoy….and are more eco-friendly.' Responses at all levels discussed the environmental cost of physical books raised by the writer, although weaker responses rarely assimilated the point coherently. Responses awarded marks in Band 2 sometimes considered the environmental issue carefully, but then pronounced the costs worthwhile if the pleasures of reading physical books were to be enjoyed. These responses were often over-long but did include a number of evaluative points. Others shared the writer's love of 'real' books but found the article's attitudes irresponsible: 'I would rather lose a bit of comfort than lots of trees be cut down for my pleasure'. In this Band personal anecdotes about discovering a love of literature through beloved copies of books were often found although they rarely added to the marks for Reading.

The majority of responses were awarded marks in Band 3. There was adequate breadth of coverage of the reading material but less recognition of implicit meanings or faulty or illogical reasoning. A mark of 6 could be given where the key points were reproduced with some appropriate development, such as discussing the advantages of e-readers in the absence of libraries and bookshops, or their light weight in overburdened school bags, and understanding of the writer's views and reservations was clear. At this level however responses often emphatically supported both sides of the e-reader issue so that no clear point of view was apparent, and the claims and assertions in the article were accepted unquestioningly. Where there was clear understanding of the main thrust of the article but only a limited selection of points discussed a mark of 5 was given. The typical pattern of the responses awarded a mark of five or six was to offer a selection of the points in favour of 'real' books, perhaps with some technological remedies for the concerns about e-readers. There was little discussion of the underlying issues, and the response would often conclude with a personal or admonitory comment.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where there was some misunderstanding of the main thrust of the article - although this was quite rare - or a lack of focus on the reading material, or overlong anecdotes which did not express a clear view on the topic. Firmer links with the material and a wider range of points could be awarded a mark of four, but where coverage of the material was very flimsy a mark of three was more appropriate. Only a very few responses were given marks below three, when very little had been written and connection with the text and task was only peripheral. A small number of responses simply 'lifted' material or copied unselectively, thus seriously affecting both Reading and Writing marks for **Question 1**.

M**arks 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

While almost all responses began with at least some recognition of audience –if only, 'I am going to tell you about…' and employed second-person or first-person plural address, a number appeared to forget their intended audience after the first paragraph and wrote about the writer in the third person. Sometime the style was too informal for a letter to a stranger, or assumed acquaintance and addressed the writer with an invented name. Weaker responses often supplied an inappropriately familiar valediction, or demanded a response to their views which frequently were no more than a reproduction of those in the article.

The most effective responses took into account their intended audience, a cookery writer with a love of literature and reading, and maintained an appropriately direct and formal tone and style of address. The best responses demonstrated considerable authority and confidence, one in the top Band beginning, 'We are living in a time where innovations emerge every day, changing our lives in a way never thought possible. The emergence of e-readers will bring about the inevitable end of books and, as much as it pains me to say it, this is something we must accept.' The great majority were written in the required voice of a person who had read the article. Several adopted a persona very similar to that of the writer, and unconvincingly claimed to have the same books mentioned in the article. Although this did not necessarily detract from the value or

quality of the evaluation within, the Writing marks were affected by the lack of a sense of audience. The most accomplished, evaluative responses demonstrated their stance from the start, the direction the argument would take being immediately signalled. These responses were unfailingly courteous and closely focused on their intended audience to the last words: 'Perhaps you'll even consider adding one of your cookery books to the digital landscape—I'm sure it would be most welcome.'

In the middle to lower mark range, responses were mostly appropriate in tone and form, but they often followed and reproduced the wording of the passage quite closely; while there was little wholesale copying of clauses or sentences from the material, close paraphrase was often seen. In a few weaker responses the requirement to write a letter was forgotten, and the material in the passage merely described.

Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, an overview of the principles underlying the debate on technology in literature was given rather than a list of the advantages and disadvantages of both forms.

Responses given Band 2 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the passage but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed to meet the demands of the task. Responses opened with a considered greeting and introduction and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of the purpose of the letter. Some responses awarded marks in Band 3 were very lengthy, covering all the material in the article exhaustively and only offering a brief personal view at the end. Weaker responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passage whereas Band 3 responses usually organised and re-sequenced ideas more selectively.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were limited in structure and 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 form of a letter and conclusions and valedictions were cursory or omitted.

Accuracy

Responses in Band 1 combined a fluent and authoritative style, typified by precisely employed, formal vocabulary and a wide range of sentence structures, with a very high level of technical accuracy. Responses given a mark of eight or nine were often clearly and competently written, but their vocabulary lacked ambition or precision and indeed would often have been deemed quite limited had it not included many words from the passage. There were frequent errors of sentence separation, the misuse of commas being the major fault at the lower end in this Band. This, and a lack of paragraphing, often restricted the Writing mark to a Band below that awarded for Reading. Two types of writing typified responses awarded marks in Band 4 and below: the first, more common one lacked any evidence of controlled shaping, and simply followed the patterns of speech. There were very frequent basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar; however, it was not only the weakest responses that used capital letters randomly and inaccurately. The second type was often characterised by secure spelling and quite ambitious vocabulary, but marred by serious structural faults in sentences and syntax, errors of agreement and tense, and an uncertain use of prepositions. Here, articles were sometimes omitted or 'the' was used rather than 'a' or 'an'. Meaning was sometimes blurred by the levels of error.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

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

Section 2: Composition

Descriptive Writing

2 Describe a river as it flows from its source high on a mountain.

OR

3 Describe a visit to an art gallery or museum.

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

This genre was chosen across the range of abilities, with the second option being marginally more popular. At all levels of achievement many felt it necessary to provide some context for the required scene, weaker responses, especially to **Question 3,** sometimes developing their writing too far along the path of narrative, thus forgetting the requirements of this type of writing. Stronger responses framed their descriptions in a much more controlled manner, providing just enough context to introduce their writing and to provide cohesion, but the most successful responses to both questions involved the reader immediately without preamble. In the middle range some responses were more narrative in manner than is usually desirable for this genre, but included much vivid detail and developed images. Here, Examiners were able to award marks in the middle Band. The best responses to both questions produced writing of a very high order, earning marks at the top of Band 1. These were highly evocative, often creating overall pictures of considerable clarity and employing a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary.

Question 2 was the least popular of the four composition choices, but produced a high proportion of the most accomplished responses. There were two main interpretations of the requirement to 'describe a river as it flows from its source high on a mountain', both legitimate. The first focused on the initial springing of the water, and the scene immediately surrounding it; the second followed the whole course of the river as it grew and descended, passing through many different types of countryside and even seasons. Writing of a high order was seen in both. Most responses were descriptions by a single, first-person observer on either a country walk or a dedicated expedition and the most successful focused on the water in all its various states and moods. Some responses awarded marks in Band 1 depended on an overall, extended metaphor or personification which gave life to the river and culminated in its 'death' at the end, when it merged with the ocean, sank into a cavern or was choked with pollution. These were often moving and accomplished meditations on the natural world, or vividly demonstrated the 'complex, sophisticated and realistic' content of Band 1 Mark Scheme descriptors. One response awarded marks at the top of Band 1 created a landscape intensely alive in all its aspects: the river began as 'a faint skinny whistle of freezing transparency….rubbing away at the soft rock in its path'. A little later the augmented stream was 'forcing its way past the green mouldy knuckles of the mountainside'.

Responses given marks in the middle Bands approached the task more straightforwardly, with varying degrees of accomplishment. Because the requirement was to describe something in motion, the majority of responses were able to produce a variety of relevant ideas, covering the water itself at different stages of the river's life and also the landscape and animals along its course. These responses often included enough descriptive detail to create the 'impression of reality' required for marks in Band 2, and were clearly intending to describe, but lacked the intensity of gaze upon the subject apparent in the top Band responses. Sometimes the intended effect was diluted by trying to describe too many aspects of the scene. There were at this level however many effective pieces which demonstrated a grasp of the requirements of the genre; some, if lacking the assurance of the top Band responses, were interesting and original. There were some engaging pieces awarded marks in Band 3, but often a higher mark was precluded by a lack of clarity in the picture created. At the lower end of the Band and below it, the writing often became driven by narrative, even though a few relevant descriptive details were included. Although botanical or zoological knowledge forms no part of the assessment, some responses were weakened by the unlikely combinations of flora and fauna included in the scene which reduced its realism: colours and creatures more to be expected on a coral reef were located in freezing mountain streams. At this level also, appropriate vocabulary with which to articulate thoughts and feelings was often lacking, and there was some reliance on clichés such as movement as fast as 'a cheetah chasing its prey'; 'cotton candy clouds' also appeared with some frequency.

The second option was a little more popular, and elicited responses across the mark range. Many different types of museums and art galleries were featured, and most descriptions created a sense of reality –perhaps reflecting the writers' familiarity with such places. In responses awarded marks in Band 1 there was some

very sophisticated writing, with richly detailed sensory description. A key discriminator here was the originality of the images, and the sophisticated precision of the vocabulary which conveyed them. One assured response created a convincing, ironic vision of a city museum destroyed in some apocalyptic event: 'Stone men lined the ruined walls, frozen in their failure to protect their home, others crumbled into marble dust as they drowned out of history and into oblivion…'. These vivid portraits were grounded in reality and at the top of the Band the writing sometimes conveyed a euphoric intensity of experience. Another response awarded marks in Band 1 most effectively conveyed the contrast between the sunlit galleries of classical Greek statuary 'with eggshell limbs', and the dark medieval portrayals of crucifixion and martyrdom in adjacent rooms.

The majority of responses to **Question 2** were awarded marks in Band 2 and at the top of Band 3. They were competent and convincing descriptions of the interiors and exhibits of large galleries and galleries, often conveying a sense of awe at great columns and high ceilings seen for the first time. There were repeated tropes such as the clicking of heels on marble floors, the excited groups of schoolchildren with worksheets and the dour guards protecting the exhibits, but these were usually well executed and realistic enough to avoid cliché. Frequently responses were competently structured by the movement of the individual or group from one room to another. Elsewhere, responses described just two or three paintings or other exhibits in some detail; others in the middle Bands chose to describe visitors such as old men, camera-wielding tourists or mothers with fractious children. These responses often failed to create atmosphere effectively. Sometimes a single famous art work such as the Mona Lisa was depicted. Some amusing descriptions conveyed the writer's bewilderment at 'abstract' art installations.

Responses awarded marks in Band 4 often included a disproportionate amount of narrative, recounting at length the plans for the visit, the journey to the gallery, and the return home. At all levels beginnings and endings were often reflective. but the importance of the experience was sometimes belied by inadequate vocabulary, with too easy a dependence on less effective adjectives such as 'amazing', 'awesome' or, worse, 'humungous'. Responses given marks below Band 3 were often simple narrative accounts with little descriptive detail or evocation of feeling, setting or atmosphere.

Marks in the top Band for Style and Accuracy were awarded to those responses which demonstrated a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary in the creation of images and effects but were also controlled and crafted to produce a harmonious whole virtually free of error. In the middle ranges, vocabulary was plainer or less-precisely applied, and images less striking. Weaker responses were sometimes limited to unelaborated accounts of personal experience, especially in response to the second of the two questions. Consecutive sentences beginning with 'I' (often lower case) typified these formulaic responses.

The most frequent issue in awarding style and accuracy marks for descriptive writing was the significant number of responses in which many sentences were without a main or finite verb. Even where there were other qualities which went some way to compensate, Examiners found it very difficult to award a mark higher than Band 4 where this error persisted. Responses awarded writing marks in Band 2 or 3 for **Question 1** often earned lower marks for the compositions. Uncertain control of tense marred many responses, especially to **Question 2** where an initial context or a narrative preamble was provided, and then referred to in the body of the composition. Although flashback was sometimes effectively employed, weak control of tenses was often exposed. A lack of effective paragraphing, and misuse of commas, also reduced the marks for many responses. Sometimes responses given marks in Band 4 or below for style and accuracy demonstrated an extensive range of vocabulary, and accurate spelling, but had poor control of syntax and sentence structure, sometimes to the point where communication was impaired. Occasionally the tendency apparent in some descriptive pieces to pack writing with as many multisyllabic or arcane examples of vocabulary as possible, often mistakenly or imprecisely employed, resulted in low marks for style and accuracy because communication was impaired.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:

- **remember the key requirements of descriptive writing; you are not writing a story**
- **try to be original, both in the scenarios and the images you create**
- **make deliberate choices in your vocabulary and sentence structures to create effect.**

Narrative writing

4 Write a story with the title, 'A Missed Opportunity'.

OR

5 Write a story that begins, 'Jas had to go back to the place where it has all started…'.

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

Narrative writing was the choice of almost three quarters of the candidature, with **Question 4** being far more popular. Marks across the range were awarded to responses to both questions. Examiners were able to award marks at the top of Band 1 in a number of cases, but at all levels of achievement engagement with the tasks was evident, with both titles producing some lively and often intriguing narratives. Responses to both titles often included interesting descriptive detail, which enhanced the narratives. The difficulty evident in many responses of creating satisfactory conclusions to the stories was noted, underlining the need to have the end of the story in mind in the process of writing it.

Responses to the first of the narrative options employed a variety of interpretations of the 'missed opportunity' although disappointment in employment, educational, romantic or, most frequently, sporting situations was by far the most frequently-seen subject. There were crime and adventure stories adapted to the title more or less effectively: these were often over-packed with event and lacked characterisation. Sometimes in the lower ranges only the most tenuous connection with the title was maintained; very occasionally none at all could be found. Frequently the response was written in the first person and seemed like a section of autobiography without any narrative shaping or development of tension other than failing to achieve the desired career, examination or sporting success. There was often effective description of feeling in these responses but more is required to constitute a successful narrative.

Considering the very large number of responses to **Question 4**, a relatively small number were awarded marks at the top of Band 1: these narratives were closely focused in time and space, employing a few well drawn characters and spare but effective dialogue and telling setting detail. One such response began and ended with brief meditations on the galactic explosions surrounding the birth of a star; the narrator was the brother of a gifted musician struggling with an eating disorder, and the opportunity missed was that of stardom in the concert hall because of her overwhelming physical weakness. Similarly concise and tightly structured, it was a convincing and moving narrative about a family reconciliation that happened just too late.

In the middle range there were often stories with interesting concepts and engaging characters which might have qualified their narratives for inclusion in the top Band of marks, but they were frequently marred by precipitate or ill-planned and unconvincing endings. A frequent scenario was the protagonist being summoned to an interview or audition on the other side of the country, or indeed the world, at very short notice and failing to arrive on time because of bad weather or oversleeping. A very large proportion of the responses were about missed chances to be selected for Premier League or national football teams, or having been selected, missing a crucial penalty shot. Very frequently these responses were given marks in Band 3 or below because they demonstrated none of the desired qualities of narrative writing such as characterisation, convincing setting detail or effective dialogue. Often an actual match from recent times was factually recounted. In this range too candidates often spent time on preambles to the main story and then finished abruptly.

Sometimes a candidate's Style and Accuracy marks were higher than in **Question 1** because they were able quite slickly to adopt the language of sports commentary. Responses given marks below Band 3 tended to be undistinguished series of events, weaker examples sometimes limiting their settings to the identification of a city or the name of a stadium. Here too characters were entirely undeveloped or even un-named, being only a 'gifted young boy' or an 'old man'. Typical of many event-driven responses was an imbalance in their constituent parts, with the crucial failure, catastrophe or injury occurring abruptly and often in a final, short paragraph. Most structures too were unvaryingly chronological.

The second narrative question was less popular, but elicited some effective narratives and a wide range of subject material. The stimulus sentence encouraged the use of flashback and complex structures in many responses, which were usually well managed. Many of the responses were rather dark and sometimes disturbing tales of confronting childhood cruelty or abuse. Stories involving bereavement or lost love were also widespread.

Responses awarded marks in Band 1 included some tightly plotted, assured narratives: one memorable and most engaging response focused on the return journey of a young woman to her half-remembered childhood home: vague and fearful imaginings were triggered by the scent of lemons in the groves outside the city. No explanation of the events or resolutions of the story were given, but it remained long in the memory. Another effective story concerned cheating in exams and the manipulation of a hapless head teacher by Jas and her fellow protagonist: the reader was consistently engaged by the clever plotting.

In the middle ranges were many predictable stories of teenage romance, and also some moving stories of bullying in schools. Because of the 'return' in the title most of these avoided simply chronological accounts, and were often quite engaging even where flashback was inexpertly handled. Characterisation was often very limited. Some stories of quite close focus and effective narrative drive could have achieved marks in a higher Band but for they did not supply a satisfactory ending other than the return 'to where it all began'. Some weaker responses were over-packed with events or characters barely distinguishable from each other. Occasionally plots drifted over many years or even generations and were not well managed.

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

Style and Accuracy

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

Ways in which the writing of narratives could be improved:

- **plan your story so that you do not run out of ideas for the plot, and you can bring it to an interesting conclusion**
- **remember that you can use your own interpretation of the titles**
- **make your story believable by creating realistic characters and settings**
- **leave some time to check through your work for errors which will seriously affect your mark, such as basic errors in spelling, capital letters and punctuation.**

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/32
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

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

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

General comments

Examiners found that, in most cases, a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were few very brief scripts. A very large majority of candidates understood the instructions for the examination and completed Question 1 and either a descriptive or narrative writing task.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic of graffiti and street art in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the ideas addressed in the passage and usually some attention paid to the style and format of a letter. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage. Better answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument of their own. Examiners noted that in many responses across the ability range, the appropriate valediction at the end of the letter was not given.

Weaker candidates tended to reiterate the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence rather than selecting points and commenting on them. In some weaker responses, the second bullet point, steering candidates towards evaluation of ideas, was not addressed.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response. The nature of the task was better understood in more focused responses. Sometimes, insufficient use was made of the reading material and there was less understanding of the argumentative nature of the task. The required formality of style and register for a letter to an editor was well understood by the majority of candidates, even where technical weaknesses were apparent. In weaker responses, there was often some general commentary on graffiti, with one or two points from the passage addressed but opportunities to discuss, weigh up and evaluate the ideas in the passage were missed.

Better responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for a letter to a newspaper editor. These were persuasive in purpose, using ideas from the passage to create and structure arguments and often employing rhetorical devices and showing a strong sense of audience. Some in the middle range of marks wrote in a more general style and there was less focus on the proposal made for a designated area for street art and its implications. Valedictions were frequently forgotten - a feature sometimes symptomatic of an insecure grasp of audience and purpose, and at this level the points made followed the sequence of the passage with less selection and regrouping of ideas to create an independent argument.

In the compositions, the descriptive and narrative genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers, although narrative questions were generally more popular at all levels of achievement. Better responses to the

composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the first descriptive question about entering a cave were original and engaging in the kinds of sense impressions included. As is usually the case, these were better when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere specific to a cave. Some responses focused on the sights and sounds observed by the narrator while others evoked the thoughts and feelings of the narrator as he/she surveyed the scene below. There were some clichéd images in weaker responses and sometimes less focus on the cave itself and more on events leading up to entering the cave.

There were some engaging descriptions of urban and rural landscapes in responses to the second question, as well as some which focused on more on the narrator's thoughts and feelings on a familiar journey. Weaker responses here tended to rely on simple narration of a journey to school or college or the journey itself was neglected in favour of describing a destination which did not quite meet the demands of the task.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Stories involving a noise outside were very varied and often, at the highest level, moving and effective. The second narrative question also elicited a wide range of responses with varying content and Examiners awarded marks across the range here.

Weaker narratives paid less attention to the needs of the reader and sometimes the content was less credible and the characters less well drawn.

Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The best descriptive writing was specific, used some original and thought-provoking imagery and effectively evoked the atmosphere of the time and place described. 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 the most effective writers who selected this genre.

Comments on specific questions

Directed Writing

Question 1

There has been a proposal for an area to be designated for street art and for street art workshops to be run for young people where you live.

Write a letter to the local newspaper giving your views.

In your letter you should:

- **explain and evaluate the different opinions about graffiti or street art in the article**
- **give your own views on how far you think the proposal will benefit the local area.**

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

Begin your letter, 'Dear Editor… '

Write about 250 to 350 words.

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

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, Examiners could award very high marks indeed. Better responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the passage, particularly the central idea about whether graffiti should be considered an art form or simply vandalism.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some listing of the various examples of attitudes to graffiti in different parts of the world and sometimes with some personal opinion on the topic given. These details were an accurate reflection of the ideas in the passage although opportunities to scrutinise them or offer a critique on them were not always taken. Some responses at this level were hindered because a clear stance on the proposals in the task was not adopted.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the ideas about graffiti in the passage but less use was made of the range of ideas in the passage and there was sometimes some misunderstanding of the details or of the proposal. 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, drawing inferences and making judgements about whether graffiti can be considered a genre of, or an art form. In most responses, there was much sympathy for the idea of graffiti being a form of self-expression which could become an art form in the right hands. In higher Band responses the question itself had been carefully read and a decision made about whether both elements of the proposal, the specified area for street art as well as the workshops, would benefit young artists, ordinary residents and the local economy.

Perceptive responses often went to the heart of the debate in the passage: whether street art was the expression of the same artistic impulse as shown by artists who painted on canvas or whether its clandestine nature and secretive participants made it a potentially criminal activity. Many at this level argued convincingly that the ways in which different countries and cultures interpreted ideas about graffiti suggested that some societies prized art itself more highly and fostered it more appreciatively in all its forms. There was some thoughtful probing of the idea that street art was an essential outlet for young artists who could not afford the trappings of more conventional artistic efforts. The idea, implied in the passage, that there was a difference in quality, intention and acceptability between tagging and using buildings as a canvas for artistic works was

addressed in more depth in successful responses. The potential benefits and limitations of the proposals outlined in the task were also probed thoughtfully at this level.

Some perceptive responses explored the idea that illegality and subversion were, perhaps, an essential element of street art and were unlikely to be curbed by creating a safe, legal space in which to practise it. While many responses included the point that artists should seek the permission of the building's owner before drawing all over it, more perceptive candidates showed an understanding of graffiti's roots as an act of social rebellion.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passage. There was often less argument and focus on the implications of the proposals, with responses reflecting the ideas in the passage but not always evaluating them. While the points made were given in candidates' own words, simple opinions on them were offered rather than evaluation of them. For example, it was common at this level to reproduce the opposing views surrounding street art but then, in response to the proposals, to simply agree that art was a legitimate form of self-expression and should be allowed in designated areas.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some tracked through the passage simply but showed limited reorganisation of the ideas or argument, or reproducing some of the examples from across the world with limited awareness of the different attitudes they highlighted. Opinions about the proposals in responses at this level were not always rooted in the passage: one common misreading took the last example given in the passage of erecting two large boards for street artists to use as the proposal being made in the task. These responses, as a result, made no reference to the second part of the proposal of running workshops for young street artists.

Where a mark of 4 was awarded, some firmer links with the passage were needed, whereas 3 was generally given for very thin or brief responses in which there was some misreading of the ideas in the passage.

Marks for writing

15 marks were available for the quality of writing produced.

Style and audience

A formal 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 used a more rhetorical, stylistically persuasive style and presented their arguments to a potentially varied readership in a deliberately contentious and engaging way. Although not stipulated in the task, some candidates chose to adopt the voice of a budding street artist, or in some cases a local resident affected by graffiti on their property. In some cases, these choices helped to focus the response on articulating a particular point of view quite effectively.

In the middle range, the style was often appropriate although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience, showing some insecure understanding of the appropriate style for the task. Most often at this level there was limited argument to give the response shape and purpose, even where the passage was adequately reflected. Valedictions were fairly often not included at this level, partly because the sense of purpose for the task was not sustained.

Weaker responses sometimes had limited overall cohesion because the conflicting opinions in the letter were simply reproduced. Valedictions were often missed at this level, sometimes highlighting a limited understanding of the conventions of letter-writing.

Structure

Responses awarded high marks for writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, an overview of the issues at the heart of the graffiti/street art debate in the passage was given; an exploration of the contending views of individual artistic freedoms and notions of what constitutes artistic beauty.

Responses given Band 2 for writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the passage but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed to meet the demands of the task. Responses opened with a considered introduction and ended with a concluding paragraph which showed a clear sense of the purpose of the letter. Weaker responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passage whereas Band 3 responses usually organised and re-sequenced ideas more selectively.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were limited in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This often led to some basic reiteration of the contradictory 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.

Responses given marks in Band 1 were authoritative and subtly argued with a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and very few technical errors. Sentence structures varied and were consciously used to create specific effects. Rhetorical flourishes, such as the use of contentious, challenging questions, were often used at this level.

Band 2 responses 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 apt, a range of quite basic errors was made which limited the effectiveness of the writing. Homophones were insecurely used, especially your/you're and their/there and apostrophes were omitted or used where not necessary, even where the writing was otherwise accurate. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in responses at this level. Key words for the task such as 'vandalism', 'benefit' and 'compromise' were frequent errors, for example, although sentence separation and grammatical agreement were usually secure.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by a secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, faulty sentence structures often kept writing marks for **Question 1** in Band 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Persistent use of commas where full stops were needed was the single most common reason Examiners were unable to award marks in Band 3 for otherwise clear, coherent responses. Sometimes whole paragraphs were actually strings of simple sentences with commas rather than full stops to separate them. This weakness was noted by Examiners as prevalent in many thoughtful responses where the mark for Reading was significantly higher than that for Writing.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- **be prepared to explore, challenge and discuss the ideas in the passage**
- **make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passage**
- **look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writer**
- **aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.**
- **be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly**
- **check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, missing or wrongly used apostrophes, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words.**

***Section 2*: Composition**

Descriptive Writing

2 Describe a cave in the first moments as you enter it.

OR

3 Describe a short journey you make often.

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

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

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range. In the first task, there were some strongly evocative descriptions of scenes inside a cave, along with some exploration of the thoughts, reactions and feelings of the narrator.

In the second question, a wide variety of details and images was used to describe a familiar journey, often to good effect, and responses at the highest level to both questions showed that there was a clear understanding of how evocative descriptions are created.

Some successful responses to the first question gave startling and original descriptions of the unique sensations and details encountered in a cave. A number of descriptions at this level also focused on the contrast between the sights and sounds just outside the cave and those within it. Some responses described effectively the particular effects of darkness and the heightened sense effects of sound, touch and small as a result of limited visibility. While there were many details in common, such as the dripping of water, an earthy small or the scuttling of bats overhead, some cave descriptions were infused with a strikingly original atmosphere of grandeur, space and tranquility.

Middle Band responses were characterised by rather more obvious images and ideas such as references to menacing icicles, bats and pools of stagnant water. Sometimes, these rather clichéd details dulled the effect of the description as a whole, although few responses at this level lapsed into narrative or lost the main features of descriptive writing.

Weaker responses were characterised by a tendency to list details rather than effectively develop them and there was increasingly a tendency to narrate overlong preambles or to include over-dramatic details, such as unexplained bodies or burning fires, which in turn became narrative in intent. Sometimes the reason for entering the cave, or the circumstances in which the cave was found, tended to overwhelm the descriptive elements of the response.

The second question was also popular and there were some effective descriptions here which focused on frequently undertaken and familiar journeys, such as a car trip or walk to school or a visit to relatives. Some successful responses evoked a strong sense of the candidate taking a fresh, appreciative look at their own town or village and benefited from close attention to familiar details such as the morning activities of neighbours or the effect of different seasons on a much loved landscape. The fluctuating thoughts and feelings of the narrator – often feelings of affection or dread – provided a cohesive thread for some effective descriptions and at the highest level the atmosphere of the landscape was reflected in the subtle response of the writer to the scene described.

Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus, and where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were listed with limited overall cohesion. At this level, responses became simple, unengaging accounts of breakfasts eaten, cars alighted and journeys through undescribed streets undertaken to school or some other location. In other less effective descriptions, the destination of a journey rather than the journey itself was described and this approach tended to limit the range and variety of details used. Some journeys and destinations lacked the sense of familiarity implied in the task. There were some basic descriptions of holiday destinations or simple mechanical sequences of actions which lacked effectiveness.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were, in the best responses, reflective of the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the consistent technical accuracy of the writing. In the middle range, vocabulary was less

rich and varied but there was still a fair degree of accuracy in spelling and sentence construction. 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. A very common weakness here also was the demarcation of sentences with commas rather than full stops. This often meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 where the style was otherwise quite accurate and secure.

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**
- **choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.**

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story that begins, 'It started late one night with a noise outside…'

OR

5 Write a story with the title, 'The Rescue.'

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

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

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses.

Better responses, as is often the case in narrative writing, were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used interesting but credible ideas and developed balanced and engaging stories. The 'noise' which was required to begin the story in the first task varied very widely but at the highest level was always integral to the continuing story rather than incidental to it. There were various structures employed in these better responses rather than straightforward chronological recount. Stories sometimes began with a memory of the noise and its consequences, with the reflections of the narrator afterwards. One story, for example, involved the noise generated by a friend throwing stones at the narrator's window although some details were withheld from the reader to provide an interesting and intriguing denouement as the reason for friend's distress and secrecy emerged. There were some moving accounts of gangs, terrorists and even government forces descending on a village at night, with some horrific consequences. While there were some graphic scenes included, at the highest level these were written with restraint and control which made them all the more effective. Other responses at this level were characterised by a single incident, often frightening in character, such as a break-in or attempted burglary, in which the focus on the narrator's reactions and feelings created real interest and tension for the reader.

Middle range narratives were usually more straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases, although the characterisation and setting were effective and credible, these responses overall sometimes relied on some over-dramatic and less likely scenarios. Responses in this range, whilst often more predictable, were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution or conclusion to the story overall.

Weaker responses were often more dependent on a series of events which were triggered by the noise outside but which were not prepared for by attention to characterisation and setting. In some cases the noise outside was not significant and the story itself was unrelated to it. A simplicity of content, rather than weakness in organisation, was typical at this level. Often the same kinds of scenarios as in better responses were evident – burglaries or break-ins by potential murderers – but there was less awareness of the needs of the reader and less skill in engaging the interest of the reader in terms of narrative shaping and the creation of credible characters.

For the second narrative question, there were many and varied interpretations of the idea of a 'rescue', some literal and some more metaphorical in nature. Both approaches resulted in high level, effective and engaging stories. Narrators or protagonists were shipwrecked, lost in deserts, mired in difficult and destructive lifestyles and while these ideas featured across the mark range, better responses prepared the reader and

shaped the narrative in an entertaining way. Some different genres were used to good effect in responses to this question, such as warring factions in a fantasy landscape or historically based accounts of wartime rescues of Jewish families.

Band 3 responses were generally more straightforward accounts in which the content was ordinary but there was still some organisation and shaping of the narrative and a cohesive story was produced. These tended to be a little less imaginative in their interpretation of the task but with some understanding of how to create a satisfactory experience for the reader shown. At this level, getting lost in hostile landscapes, plane crashes, falls and broken bones were common subjects for narratives.

Responses given marks in Band 4 were usually simple accounts of events and showed limited awareness of the reader or the features of narrative writing which elevate an account into a developed story. The idea of a rescue was sometimes a tangential pretext for a haunted house story or a story about being followed in a dark street or getting lost in a forest, scenarios which can quickly become clichéd and unengaging.

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. Responses awarded marks in Band 2 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still accurate and largely fluent while Band 3 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary but had few errors which damaged the clarity of meaning such as weak sentence control and sentence separation.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept a number of responses out of Band 3. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. The most frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Band 3 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed.

A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even when written in a fairly pedestrian style Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Where there were still errors but the style had more ambition and variety, a mark of 9 was awarded. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks below Band 3. A few responses were very brief and faulty in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:

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

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/33
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

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

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

General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were relatively few very brief scripts. Only a handful of scripts were found by examiners to have had more than one composition question attempted, showing that the great majority were familiar with the rubric of the examination. In these rare cases, while each response was given due regard by Examiners, there was inevitably some effect where insufficient time had been devoted to one of the tasks.

Most responses showed a committed engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the perceived benefits and disadvantages of signing the Friendship Contract as described in the reading material, usually with some attention paid to the style and format of a letter. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage. Better answers here tended to structure their responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passage to support a cohesive point of view. Weaker candidates tended to reiterate the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence rather than selecting and regrouping points. Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material or there was only a tenuous grasp of the task itself. The implied register of expression between parents writing to each other was usually successfully applied. In weaker responses there was often some general commentary concerning the Friendship Contract, with one or two points from the passage addressed, but opportunities to discuss, weigh up and evaluate the ideas in the passage were missed.

Better responses paid attention to the audience and style required for a letter responding to the parents of the daughter's friend. These were engaging in purpose, using the passage to create and structure arguments with some sense of audience and rhetoric. Some in the middle range of marks showed an insecure register, becoming overly colloquial in style and vocabulary. In weaker responses, valedictions were frequently forgotten, a feature symptomatic of an insecure grasp of audience and purpose, and the points made about the idea of the Friendship Contract followed the sequence of the passage with less selection and reordering to create a point of view.

In the compositions, narrative questions were generally more popular than the descriptive questions. Better responses in the composition section as a whole were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and although there was some narrative content in the middle range, most responses gave a range of descriptive detail. Most responses to the first descriptive question, about describing someone recognised from a distance, were well-organised and paragraphed, with sections about the occasion, the individual and some effective description of feelings and emotions. These responses were better when there was specific detail and where the description created a clear sense of atmosphere. There were some engaging descriptions of spectators at the sports event described in the second question, with some very focused and credible description of different types of sporting event. Weaker responses here tended to fall into narrative with limited descriptive detail. Some responses spent too much time describing the sports event itself rather than being focused upon the spectators.

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 effective. Stories involving the words, 'Only trying to help ...' were often suitably dramatic and evocative. The second narrative question elicited a wide range of situations and locations where a character returned to a place with trepidation. Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. Descriptive writing was usually, but not always, focused on detail and evoking atmosphere and 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.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

Imagine you are Isabelle's parent. You have made a decision about whether to let her sign the contract or not.

Write a letter to the parents of the birthday girl in which you:
- **identify and evaluate the issues you think the Friendship Contract raises about the nature of friendship**
- **explain why, or why not, you will let Isabelle sign the contract and any concerns you might have.**

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

Begin your letter, 'Dear Mr and Mrs Dubois...'.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

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

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, Examiners could award very high marks indeed. Better responses here tended to pick up the implied points made by the parent of Isabelle and develop a detailed evaluation of them. While the more straightforward aspects, such as the claims made for the Contract being good for encouraging responsibilities or being contrary to the natural development of a friendship, were readily identified in most responses, Examiners awarded the highest marks where the benefits and downsides of the Friendship Contract were teased out and examined.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward. This involved some listing of the ideas made by the parent sending the invitation in the article and an acceptance or rebuttal 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 contract although there was also some misreading of some points. A thin use of the detail, or weaknesses in organising ideas coherently, was characteristic at this level.

Marks for reading

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage to provide a subtle critique of the idea of the Friendship Contract. At this level, for example, the whole notion of needing to make a formal contract before a friendship could begin was fully addressed, often with an expression of disbelief and worry. The need for friendships to develop and evolve, to learn through difficulties and arguments was clearly evaluated. Some of the details in the passage were probed and challenged effectively. For example, the fact that the children were too young to be involved in contracts which are more fitting to the world of business and adults, or the implied consequences involved if the contract was not signed and returned. The claims made that this Friendship Contract was as successful and normal as the parent stated were also examined with some insight. As some candidates pointed out, Isabelle and her parents might be thought to be at substantial financial or emotional risk if anything went wrong at some future date. While most agreed that the scheme was probably well-intentioned but not appropriate for developing natural and long lasting social relationships, some questioned the overall nature of the scheme and viewed the contract as being simply wrong.

The best responses also examined the idea of the nature of friendship and its development over time. At this level, there were also some thoughtful reactions to the role of the parent and teachers in this situation. Some responses showed insight into the problems created by placing the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of a young girl new to the area. In this way, better responses used thoughtful inferences drawn from the passage rather than making straightforward expressions of opinion or preference.

This kind of consistently evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 2 and above. A mark of seven was given where there were glimpses of evaluation, often offering a reason as to how a friendship should develop naturally, but a more consistently evaluative stance was required for higher marks. Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage with limited comment on it or discussion of the ideas in it, Examiners could not award marks above Band 3.

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 the idea of the Friendship Contract and some of the drawbacks as suggested by the reading material. Such responses tended to list the benefits and risks of the scheme, 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. For example, Band 3 responses often stated that the scheme was good or bad for Isabelle, or that the contract was a good or bad idea for an adult as well as for children and left the ideas at that point. 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. Examiners could award a mark of six where there was straightforward but wide-ranging coverage of the points in the passage but responses with more limited selection could be given five marks.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some were hampered by some misreading of the task and a difficulty in understanding the concepts of the contract. Where a mark of four was awarded, some firmer links with the passage were needed, whereas three was generally given for very thin or brief responses in which misreading appeared. Marks below three were rarely given but in these cases the response was often a general commentary with very little connection with the passage.

It was equally appropriate, in a response, for the parent to decide to sign the Friendship Contract, to sign it with reservations, or to refuse to sign it. Very few responses made any use of the humour and sarcasm implied within the material. Most took the threat of legal action literally, or demanded an actual list of terms and conditions for the contract.

Marks for writing

Fifteen 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 appropriate tone was required for a letter of this kind and most responses were written in a suitable register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some high scoring responses combined a friendly, adult, parental tone with some effective rhetorical devices. Candidates developed some points about the other parents and offered support or advice concerning their ideas.

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 changed tone, showing some insecure understanding of the appropriate style for the task.

Weaker responses sometimes failed to address the parents at all and offered little adaptation of the style and tone of the passage for a different audience and purpose. A few responses had an almost aggressive and even abusive tone towards the other parents and this was not considered to be appropriate. 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 Friendship Contract.

Responses given seven, eight or nine 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 in tone, the range and precision of vocabulary used allowed for some quite complex arguments about the nature of friendship to be made with clarity and style.

Responses given seven, eight or nine 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 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' or 'their' with 'there'. The use of capital letters where they were not needed, even where there was otherwise general accuracy in the writing, was also noted by Examiners. Apostrophes were very often not used appropriately and sentence demarcation by commas rather than full stops began to creep in at the lower end of Band 3. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in many responses. These included words used in the passage such as 'Friendship', 'invitation' and even 'Isabelle' and frequent errors with homophones and grammar errors such as 'you was' and 'we was'. These errors, particularly in grammatical agreement, created a jarring note sometimes in responses which were otherwise accurate and appropriate in style.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by 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 grammatical 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.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- **be prepared to criticise or question the ideas in the passage**
- **look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writer**
- **aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them**
- **be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly**
- **check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing full stops, missing or wrongly used capital letters, weaknesses in grammar or key words mis-spelt.**

Section 2 – Composition

Descriptive Writing

2 Describe someone you recognise from a distance at an occasion you are both attending years after you last saw them.

OR

3 Write a description of the spectators at a sports event.

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

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

Both descriptive writing questions were similarly popular for responses across the mark range. In the first task, there were some strongly evocative descriptions of many different types of occasions and locations for the individuals to meet. In the second question, responses were able to describe a range of sports events with a considerable degree of conviction and reality. Generally, the best responses included some combination of physical description alongside some description of the narrator's thoughts and feelings.

The occasions described in the first descriptive task were, in the best responses, areas which possibly had some personal meaning for the writer, often infusing the writing with a sense of nostalgia and engagement. There were often descriptions of school and college reunions, and at the highest level the description often focused on the power of the occasion to provoke deep feelings in the narrator. Candidates wisely avoided too much narration concerning the reason why the group of people had met together, or the journey to the occasion. It was fitting and appropriate for the response to vary in focus from the time the individual was first noticed until they were approached (or avoided). There were some subtle observations considering the changes in the target character from the past to the present.

Middle range responses to this question were characterised by more straightforward, often more physical descriptions of places and people. 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 less subtlety and effectiveness overall. In many cases, there were descriptive lists for the location and the writer's range of feelings, losing the range of descriptive opportunities offered by the title such as the changes in descriptive focus.

Weaker responses were often characterised by over-long narrative preambles explaining the gathering of the group or the journey to the occasion without really describing the key elements in the title. There was also some generalised and rather clichéd description at this level.

For the second question, the best responses often included particular moments where the description of the spectators developed but the piece as a whole was focused on the variety of the spectators' activities and their impression on the narrator. Better responses opened with engaging, well-realised pictures of the sports event and the striking characters that were observed. Responses considered a range of individual spectators, or sometimes the group as a whole and both approaches worked effectively.

Responses given marks in the middle range were more straightforward in their approach to the task, including some rather more general qualities and attributes of the spectators and the event. 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. Examiners gave marks below Band 3 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus, where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were listed rather than described. Here, the purpose and intention of the writing was not primarily descriptive. The story of why the narrator was going to the sports event and the journey there was a common approach at this level and in some Band 4 responses a narrative focus dominated at the expense of description. In some at the top of the Band, some general impression of the sports event and the spectators there was given but with limited detail or elements which brought the environment 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 where things do not go to plan. Use the title, 'Only trying to help...'

OR

5 Write a story where a character returns to a place they do not wish to go back to.

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

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

Both of the narrative questions proved more popular choices than the descriptive questions on this paper, with the second narrative task being completed by the largest number of candidates. Marks were awarded across the range for both. The first question elicited some engaging stories, often written in the first person, which included some interesting characterisation and setting. Many responses involved settings familiar to the narrator where they were suddenly shocked by a sometimes positive, but usually negative, development. Other scenarios included a number of things not going to plan with assignations with family, or friends, aliens or long-lost relatives. 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. Better responses also clearly focused attention on characterisation and setting. This control of chronology required some skill in story-telling which was often evident in good responses

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 characters but without a real story. These responses were effective descriptions but little happened to the characters and there was no real plot or narrative cohesion.

Weaker responses tended to involve less well drawn characters as well as some simple ideas, usually about trying to help a friend develop a relationship, or that the friend was in fact a vampire or a zombie and was beyond help. 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 locations covered was very wide with varying success and credibility. Amongst the returns to old homes, schools and aliens returning to Earth, the best 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.

Average and weaker responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived narratives or by less control over the material. 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. A number of responses concerned characters who, for some reason, returned to a previously visited haunted house. 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. For ten and above, a degree of fluency was needed as well as a clarity and accuracy of style.

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

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

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