

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0990/12
Reading

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- worked through questions in the order set
- followed task instructions carefully, responding appropriately to the command words in the question
- considered the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for each of the three questions
- paid attention to the guidance offered to help them focus their answers – for example, explaining six examples overall in **2(d)** and using just one example from the text extract in **2(c)**
- avoided unselective copying and / or lifting from the text
- considered and used relevant ideas, opinions and details in the response to reading task rather than inventing untethered material
- used their own words where instructed to do so
- returned to the text when necessary to check understanding of an idea or important detail
- planned the ideas to be used and the route through longer answers before writing
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- checked and edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates appeared to find all three texts equally accessible and engaging. Occasionally, a failure to follow the rubric and / or complete all aspects of a task limited the evidence of understanding and skills offered – for example, by explaining the whole extract rather than choosing an example from it in **Question 2(c)** or writing far more than the maximum of 120 words advised for the selective summary **Question 1(f)**.

In **Question 1**, candidates scoring highly had worked through the tasks in the order presented and made efficient use of their time, for example by paying attention in **Questions 1(a)–(e)** to the marks and space available as a helpful indicator of the length and detail they needed to offer in their response. They did not add further unnecessary material and focused on answering each question as set. Most candidates followed the line or paragraph references in the questions carefully to help them to move down Text A in order and to direct their attention. Most, but not all, remembered that in a test of comprehension their responses to these initial short answer questions needed to be derived from the text in order to evidence their Reading skills. The majority of responses avoided offering unsolicited personal opinion or comment.

Less successful responses often attempted to include extra guesses in response to **Questions 1(a)–(e)**, diluting evidence of understanding by doing so. Some offered circular answers, repeating the language of the question where own words were specified as required; such responses provided little evidence of understanding as a consequence. In **Question 1(f)** some candidates relied heavily on the language of the text and / or copied whole chunks of texts, limiting the available evidence of their own skills and understanding as a result.

In **Question 2** candidates needed first to identify and / or explain words and phrases from the text, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer via **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task, **Question 2(d)**. More effective answers were careful to refer back to Text C to locate specific relevant choices and consider meaning in context. To aim for higher levels in **Question 2(d)**, candidates should explore and explain in some detail the precise meanings and effects of the examples of interesting or powerful language use they have identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose. Most were

able to suggest three potentially useful examples for analysis in each half of the **2(d)** task and offer basic effect / meaning in context, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently clear, careful or detailed in the examination of their choices. In less successful responses, generalised comment or labelling of devices without explanation of how these were working meant opportunities to target higher levels were missed.

In **Question 3** responses for the most part had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task. Most candidates had remembered to talk from Maria's perspective, with the best remaining focused on the evidence in the text and keeping in mind their audience throughout. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities as a consequence of uneven focus and / or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text. Less successful responses either included only brief reference to the passage and / or repeated sections from the text with minimal modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

Whilst Paper 1 is primarily a test of Reading, 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – divided between **Questions 1(f)** and **3**. In these questions, it is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing. It is advisable to plan and review responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that unclear and / or inaccurate writing is likely to limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Comprehension and summary task

Questions 1 (a)–(e)

Short answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** required candidates to read and respond to Text A. More effective responses paid careful attention to the command words in the instructions to demonstrate effectively and efficiently the evidence of understanding required. Some mid-range responses missed opportunities to target higher marks, for example through overlong explanations and / or striving to offer own word answers where these were not needed. Candidates should note that where use of own words is required task guidance makes that clear. Less well focused answers on occasion diluted the evidence of understanding by including additional unnecessary material and / or extra guesses – an inefficient use of examination time.

Successful responses provided evidence that candidates had understood the need to interpret and use details in the text carefully to answer each of the comprehension questions to show what they could do and understand. They followed the order of the sub questions to work through the text from the beginning, picking up on pointers where appropriate to help them to identify relevant material.

(a) Give two examples of animals that have been culled, according to the text.

In **Question 1(a)**, candidates reading closely recognised that the text identified grey squirrels specifically and deer as examples of animals that have been culled. Some candidates made use of the question stem to help focus their answer, whilst others simply wrote the key words of the answer – either approach was acceptable. Candidates reading less carefully suggested incorrectly that red squirrels and / or blue-tits had been culled.

(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:

- (i) 'appropriate method' (line 1):**
- (ii) 'Large numbers' (line 4):**

In **Question 1(b)** task guidance made it clear that use of own words was required to evidence understanding. Simply reorganising all / some of the phrase was a feature of less effective answers. Where answers failed to score both marks it was sometimes the result of having explained just one aspect of the phrase, for example in **Question 1(b)(i)** explaining 'appropriate' only and repeating the word 'method'. More effective answers were able to indicate that they had securely understood the meaning of both aspects of the question in the context of the text – for example, in **1b(ii)** that the huge amount of deer meant there were far too many of them.

(c) Re-read paragraph 3, ('This type of conservation ... and the environment.')

Give two reasons why people might be against cutting down trees.

Candidates who paid attention to command / key words in the question were best placed to offer creditworthy responses and avoid spending excess time on overlong answers to lower tariff questions. For example, in **Question 1(c)** candidates following the instructions in the task did not try to suggest ideas from their own experience about why people might be against cutting down trees (including environmental arguments such as ‘they give us oxygen’) but instead re-read paragraph 3 to identify the two reasons offered in the text, giving these as their answer. Well focused answers showed that both the objection to the interference with natural progression and the subjective nature of the decision had been understood – either by careful selection of relevant quotation from the text, or through precise use of own words.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5, (‘However, we must ... in their movements.’).

(i) Identify two reasons why cutting down trees is important.

(ii) Explain how mammals once helped to maintain the natural balance in the woodlands.

In **part (i)** of **Question 1(d)** successful answers were careful to identify two separate and distinct reasons from the three available, rather than simply repeating the idea of ‘restoring balance’ expressed in different ways, and focused their explanations on three specific actions of mammals in **part (ii)** to outline efficiently their behaviours that had contributed to maintaining natural balance. Less well focused answers sometimes repeated the question – for example asserting that ‘mammals helped to maintain natural balance’ – and / or offered just one similar / general idea for each part of the question.

(e) Re-read paragraph 7, (‘It can seem ... insects and berries.’).

Using your own words, explain why birds like blue tits and nightingales are not usually found in dense woodland areas.

In **Question 1(e)** the most successful explanations showed that candidates were able to derive three distinct reasons from the specified paragraph and had not misread details of the text or task. Candidates who recast the relevant information using their own words as instructed were best able to demonstrate that they had noted and understood the three aspects of the explanation – related to sunlight, vegetation and access to food sources. Additional unsupported comment on occasion blurred evidence of understanding in mid-range answers – for example, overlooking the need to tease out answers from the text a few candidates suggested that the main problem of access to food sources was because the dense woodland was too thick for the birds to fly through. Similarly, unsupported assertions that there was no food, rather than less food, to be found in dense woodland areas diluted evidence of understanding. Where candidates had paid less careful attention to the question, opportunities were missed to demonstrate close reading skills. For example, a few candidates attempted unsuccessfully to answer the question by simply copying unselectively from the paragraph and a smaller number tried to speculate about why ‘birds might like blue tits or nightingales’ and / or attempt to discuss why ‘nightingales **are** usually found in dense woodland’.

(f) According to Text B, what makes the cherry blossom season in Japan so popular?

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

Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

In their responses to **Question 1(f)** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas from Text B and some understanding of the requirements of the task. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea and / or inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks.

Where responses were most effective, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal or no rewording or reorganisation of the original. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and / or sentences from the text. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

The most effective responses to the selective summary task often showed evidence of candidates having planned the content and organisation of their answer before writing their response. There were some extremely effective and well-crafted responses that demonstrated both concision and precise understanding of an impressively wide range of relevant ideas.

The majority of candidates showed at least some awareness of the need to avoid excess and did not make reference to any of the more obviously redundant material such as Japan's dazzling technology, curfews enforced by city councils or environmental degradation. Less effective responses tended to repeat ideas – most commonly in relation to parties or celebrations. They also often included extraneous material about the 2007 anime film. Candidates who had spent time reviewing their initial selection of ideas were best placed to recognise similar examples of the same idea – for example points related to all of the various types of food and / or cherry-blossom-themed items available – and were often able to group those examples usefully together under one umbrella point, avoiding repetition of ideas or inclusion of unnecessary detail.

More effective responses were not dependant on the structure or language of Text B to communicate their ideas. Less effective responses sometimes relied on trying to offer a précis of the whole text in the order it was presented. In these answers excess material, often through repetition, was commonplace and evidence of understanding more limited. In low to mid-range answers, some candidates indiscriminately lifted longer sections of text, occasionally substituting words and / or altering word order, without careful selection of a central idea – diluting evidence of understanding of both task and text. Candidates need to be aware that simply rearranging words within a sentence, slotting in substituted words here and there, is not a short cut to providing secure evidence of reading skills and understanding. This kind of approach is likely to result in confusion and / or errors that further betray weaknesses in candidates' comprehension – for example that 'most people live in crowded flats' or that cherry blossom season 'takes its title from a bittersweet tale of a young man and woman who became separated over the years.' More effective responses evidenced careful reading of the text and showed candidates successfully identifying both explicit and implicit ideas. They avoided the misreading of details evident in less secure responses – for example, that cherry blossom season was 'a time when all your family, friends, lovers and colleagues would all meet up together'.

The least effective responses copied sections from the text with little modification and / or were almost entirely reliant on the language of the original – candidates are reminded that lifting sections of text and splicing them together is likely to evidence little understanding of either the ideas in the passage or requirements of the task. The least effective responses often included strings of unnecessary details, again frequently copied from the text. One common example of this was the reference to cherry blossom season inspiring the arts being followed by the list of art forms, the song being sung in schools and details of the anime film.

Most candidates appeared to be aware of the need to try to use their own vocabulary where feasible without changing or blurring the original idea and organise points helpfully for their reader. On occasion, candidates overlooked the need for concision in a selective summary task and significant excess arose as a result of lengthy explanation, with some candidates continuing to write far more than the maximum of 120 words advised in the task guidance. Others adhered to the advised length of the response but were verbose in explaining a few ideas. Candidates producing effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a fairly wide range of relevant ideas, communicating these accurately and concisely in their own words.

Advice to candidates on Question 1f:

- after reading the task instructions, re-read the text to identify potentially relevant ideas you can use in your answer
- plan the ideas you are going to include ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- identify and discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the focus of the question
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted in your plan, checking that they are distinct and complete
- return to the text to check any ideas you are unsure of before you try to use them
- organise and sequence your ideas helpfully for your reader; do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the original text
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the passage would understand
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write ‘no more than 120 words’ and aim for concision.

Question 2

(a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- (i) The **very loud noise** of the waterfall.
- (ii) Maria **keeps turning around very quickly** to point out crocodiles.
- (iii) Some of the group **bravely and willingly** cross the river without footwear.
- (iv) Maria walks at a **quick pace**.

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified in each part the correct word or phrase from Text C to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example – simply giving the word or phrase as their answer. Other responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out the entire sentence in each case, substituting the word or phrase and then bracketing their answer. Marks were sometimes missed where answers were incomplete or unfocused. Very occasionally, the specific instruction to identify a word or phrase from the text was overlooked and candidates attempted to explain the meaning of words underlined in their own words, missing the opportunity to evidence relevant skills and understanding.

(b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined:**

Howler monkeys **groan** from treetops on either side of the river. We also pass a temple with dark tunnels where fruit bats **huddle** and squeak above us, and eventually reach a wide **shaded** area where 30-metre-tall trees share space with temples well over a thousand years old.

- (i) **groan**
- (ii) **huddle**
- (iii) **shaded**

In **Question 2(b)**, successful answers had considered carefully the precise meaning in context of each of the words underlined, recognising for example that ‘groan’ described the nature of the sound made by the monkeys and ‘shaded’ meant that the area was protected from the sun rather than simply dark. Less effective answers sometimes appeared to have confused ‘groan’ with ‘growl’ suggesting incorrectly that the monkeys were angry, or appeared to be guessing in general terms when suggesting that ‘groan’ referred to the noise monkeys make in the same way that bark might refer to the noise a dog makes, or that ‘huddled’ meant hanging upside down or flying.

- (c) Use **one** example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests what the jungle coffee was like.

Use your own words in your explanation.

To demonstrate, she chops off an arm-size branch of a native tree, letting us sip the sweet, running sap. She whittles the bark and boils fragrant shavings of the branch, soon producing a bubbling gold broth. ‘Jungle coffee,’ she says. I have two cups’ worth. It’s delicious.

In **Question 2(c)** where candidates had focused clearly on using just one example taken from the text extract they were best placed to demonstrate their understanding. Successful responses often centred on the image of a ‘bubbling gold broth’ and were able to exploit it to good effect; many were able to offer full explanations just through discussion of the associations of ‘gold’ and what those implied about this jungle coffee. Some considered the suggestions of a natural delicacy through discussion of ‘sip the sweet running sap’. Some explored the contrast between the writer’s expectations of jungle coffee and its unexpectedly ‘delicious’ taste. Many cited ‘I have two cups’ worth’ as evidence that the ‘coffee’ was particularly good, with more successful answers not relying on recycling words from the text such as ‘delicious’ and ‘sweet’ to do so. A number of successful responses had noted carefully the number of marks available and focused their response to make three distinct points in relation to their one chosen example. Less successful responses often attempted to discuss more than one example – time that might have been more profitably spent in **Question 2(d)** where there were up to 15 marks available. Some less effective responses did not pay careful attention to the instruction to select from the given extract and attempted unwisely to paraphrase the whole extract and / or discuss it in very general terms. On occasion there was some evidence of misreading, meaning opportunities were missed to consider the writer’s perspective – for example, by suggesting that it was Maria who had said ‘I have two cups’ worth. It’s delicious.’

- (d) **Re-read paragraphs 5 and 10.**

- **Paragraph 5 begins “You have to jump” ...’ and is about how the party decide to reach the pool and their experience in it.**
- **Paragraph 10 begins ‘The darkness is all-encompassing ...’ and is about the final moments in darkness at the camp.**

Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three relevant selections in both parts, often beginning with explanations of meaning and moving on to consider effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language in each case through detailed discussion of sharply focused choices. Where candidates considered all of the key words in slightly longer choices they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses. Candidates responding in note form and / or relying on repeating the language of the text within their explanation were less well placed to demonstrate understanding fully and often offered only partially effective explanation as a result. The most effective responses considered words within their choices individually, as well as suggesting how they worked within the longer phrase and / or in the context of the description as a whole. Rather than selecting the first three choices in each half they came across, or the most ‘obvious’ literary devices, successful responses often set out to identify those relevant selections that they felt best able to explain. Some of the most effective responses explored how their judiciously selected choices worked both individually and together to influence the reader’s impression, building to an overview, with the best responses offering an almost forensic analysis of each. Responses at level 5 frequently showed imagination and precision when discussing choices, for example in relation to the other-worldly beetle.

In **part (a)**, many answers had identified ‘frothy azure luxury’ as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the sense of indulgence it suggested and / or recognition that ‘azure’ was the beautiful blue-green colour referred to earlier in the text when describing the ‘frothy’ pool at the base of the powerful waterfall. A number of answers missed

opportunities to target higher marks by limiting their comments to explanation of just one or two words of the three – for example through repetition rather than explanation of ‘frothy’ and/or ‘luxury’. Others reasonably treated ‘cradled in frothy azure luxury’ as one image though did not discuss ‘cradled’ and overlooked the possibilities it offered for demonstrating understanding of effect. The least successful offered empty comments such as ‘cradled and frothy azure luxury – here the writer talks about how it feels and their experience so that with these 2 phrases we can see and or imagine how it looks and feels’. More secure responses went on to explore what use of the image suggested about the experience of being in the pool, and on occasion were able to offer some interesting analysis of how this might be seen to be working in contrast to other choices that suggested the challenge of arriving there.

Some candidates selected one or more less-interesting choices such as ‘agrees to an alternative’, ‘swim upstream’ or ‘the best swimming hole’ that did not engage them in a productive discussion about how language can convey meanings and effects. In **part (b)**, many responses suggested that there were ‘scary images’ or ‘images that really helped you to imagine what it was like to be there’ though did not always go on to outline or explore the details of how or why. The simile ‘like a penlight’ was a popular selection, though not always fully exploited in the explanation offered. Where responses were most successful, candidates had often considered it in relation to the whole description of the beetle, for example picking up on various suggestions of mechanical movement and / or an artificially bright/directed light source in contrast with the darkness surrounding them. More effective answers were often able to visualise the image, using explanation of the meaning in context as the starting point for their explanation of effect.

Careful reading might have helped some candidates avoid errors and opportunities for precise and imaginative explanation of images were sometimes missed where candidates attempted to explain the meaning of words without considering how they were being used in context. Repetition of the vocabulary of the text to communicate ideas in the explanations offered was common in less effective responses, whilst more convincing responses were able to offer explanations of precise meaning in their own words which then lead them on to consider effect. Candidates are reminded of the need to ensure that their explanations in **Question 2(d)** are in their own words and can be clearly understood. Whilst the task does not assess writing skills, encouraging candidates to explore their choices fully and operate at the very edges of their vocabulary, it is nevertheless important that candidates read back their explanations to check that what they have written is what they mean and evidences their understanding.

Candidates are reminded it is the quality of their analysis which attracts marks. Answers which simply list literary devices used and / or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks in a language question. Selections in **Question 2(d)** need to be clear and deliberate, helping to focus the analysis which follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are less likely to be useful and result in very thin general comments at best.

Opportunities were missed in some answers where task guidance had not been followed, such as where a chosen phrase was not from either of the specified paragraphs and / or choices were from one paragraph only. Mid-range answers often showed better understanding in the half of the question they tackled first, sometimes appearing to be incomplete. Some of the least successful answers to **Question 2(d)** were very short or offered only general outlines of each paragraph without selecting choices. The most successful answers were often able to ‘talk through’ their understanding of words within relevant choices, considering different possibilities of meaning, associations and connotations, ahead of arriving at an understanding of how and why they might have been used by the writer in this context.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- make sure that the quotations you select from the text are precise and accurate – do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- where you are trying to explain meaning check that your explanation makes sense
- when explaining how language is working say how and in what ways a chosen example works within the context of the text to show understanding
- consider each of the key words within an identified choice separately as well as how they work together
- when you are trying to suggest effect and are unsure, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice

- when you are trying to explore and explain images, consider the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create
- allow time to edit your answers – for example, to add in further detail and / or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

Question 3

You are Maria. You are interviewed for a television programme about people with interesting jobs. The interviewer asks you the following three questions only:

- **What do your clients particularly enjoy about the jungle trip?**
- **What skills and qualities make you a good guide?**
- **How do you advise your clients to prepare for the challenges of the jungle?**

Write the words of the interview.

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

Already familiar with Text C having worked through **Question 2**, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to think their way into the ideas, attitudes and opinions of the tourists' guide, Maria, as distinct from those of the narrator. The question offered candidates three questions in the bullets to help them identify relevant ideas in relation to Maria and her job which they might use in their answer to show that they had read closely and understood the passage. Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the text and task in at least general terms. Many had engaged with both task and text to offer competent responses, evidencing some evaluation and interpreting ideas from the perspective of the experienced guide accompanying the party on an organised trip rather than simply repeating the descriptions and viewpoint of the inexperienced tourist narrator. Where candidates had paid careful and equal attention to each of the questions they were often able to develop ideas (explicit and implicit) from the text to create a convincing voice for the character of Maria.

Whilst the task guidance specified that only these three questions were asked many answers added further exchanges between the host and interviewee. On occasion this did help to demonstrate awareness of suitable register / orientate at the beginning of a response, but ran the risk of taking the focus away from the text itself. Where responses attempted to rely on just tracking back through the text, replaying the passage, answers were less well placed to offer Maria's perspective and target higher marks. Such mechanical answers often also became over reliant on the language of the text to communicate ideas, signalling insecure understanding of both task and text.

The least successful responses copied sections of text with minimal modification and / or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading of key details and information. The most convincing responses to **Question 3** indicated that candidates had revisited the passage to examine carefully the details of the narrator's account and make judgements based on the evidence in the text about how Maria had ensured that her clients enjoyed their trip. They were able to think their way into the role of Maria, making explicit for their imagined viewing audience those underlying ideas and attitudes only hinted at in the.

The first bullet invited candidates to revisit the narrator's description of events to offer an evaluation through Maria's eyes of what her clients enjoy about these trips – more effective answers provided an explanation of the potential highlights rather than replaying the whole narrative. Bullet 2 required candidates to reflect on the skills and qualities Maria displayed and consider how she might present these as relevant or important to her role of guide on an organised trip. Similarly, to evidence close reading of Text C when answering the third question candidates needed to offer advice that would be suitable for members of this kind of party on this kind of trip based on details of the narrator's account.

Where candidates' responses relied on simply working through the text in order, opportunities to offer and develop a range of ideas across all three bullets were missed. The most effective answers did more than list the activities of a trip, often going on to comment on how and why exactly these activities might appeal to Maria's clients and sometimes distinguishing between the more adventurous in the group and the more cautious or nervous. Many noted the implication that the experiences on the jungle trip were new / contrasted with their usual lifestyle for her clients and developed ideas based on detail in the text to make explicit some of their reactions, for example to the beetle, pool and food.

Where candidates had considered the audience and purpose for their response, they were often able to capitalise on that to integrate details and sustain development. Aware that the television programme was about 'people with interesting jobs' some candidates set out from the start to persuade their viewing audience of Maria's fascination and delight in the job, often leading usefully onto ideas for bullet 2.

In relation to the second bullet, almost all answers recognised the significance of Maria's jungle skills and knowledge to an extent – for example citing her ability to make jungle coffee, find their way and point out animals of interest. Responses evidencing otherwise reasonable reading often missed opportunities to aim for higher levels through filling their response with repetition of unfiltered narrative details rather than interpreting or developing them. Where information was lifted from the text with limited modification this often diluted evidence of understanding. On occasion detail was misread. Likewise, suggestions that clients 'enjoyed seeing elephants in the wild' indicated some details needed more careful checking ahead of inclusion.

Some of the most effective answers picked up on Maria's 'impish' laughter to suggest that she enjoyed gently teasing her clients and linked this to hints that she may have been orchestrating and organising events and experiences throughout the trip for effect. Some mid-range responses on occasion lost sight of the text or task – for example blurring the distinction between Maria's voice and that of the narrator (missing opportunities for development) and / or moving away from the evidence in this particular text.

In dealing with ideas related to bullet 3 most answers were able to recognise that carrying too much equipment in your backpack was not a good idea and offered advice to 'take only essentials' – not all however read closely to note that the waterproof jacket was something clients were 'never going to need' or that as food was provided by Maria 'chocolate cookies' and 'hard-boiled eggs' might be unnecessary too. A number of more effective answers offered well related development in relation to relevant ideas for bullet 3, suggesting for example that appropriate clothing for the trip might include anything light enough to swim in / to dry off quickly. Many advised physical preparation or some training in advance of the trip to ensure that clients could keep up with the pace and challenge, as well as the varied terrain and swimming upstream. A number also recognised the need to be open to new experiences and willing to try new things – recognising the narrator's delight for example having tasted the jungle coffee. Candidates need to remember that any development offered has to be rooted in the facts and details of passage to be creditworthy as evidence of their reading skills and understanding. Where candidates moved into more speculative suggestions they were often missing opportunities to target higher marks.

On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of an interview and were guided by the task to ask and answer three questions only, with most either providing just Maria's answers or adding only minimal extra dialogue from the programme's imagined host – both of which worked well as approaches. Whilst setting the scene for the interview was outside the passage and task, and candidates should be wary of moving too far away from the text by doing so, short orientations focused on introducing Maria, the exact nature of the trips she guided and the questions to be asked were used to good effect by some candidates as a way to think themselves into the context. Sometimes more effective answers were able to carefully develop points relevant to the text and integrate supporting details through more extended contributions and reactions of the host during the body of the interview. Some less successful answers however were drawn away from the text and evidence of reading by their enthusiasm to imitate TV hosts they were familiar with and/or the inclusion of overlong preambles of pleasantries which diluted Maria's voice / limited her contributions.

On occasion, unforced errors with punctuation and grammar detracted from otherwise more effective writing. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to read back through their response to correct any mistakes or inconsistencies in their use of language – for example to ensure that meaning is clear and the register sounds appropriate. Where responses lapsed into more mechanical reproductions of ideas and / or tended towards lifting, the audience had often been forgotten and opportunities to use language convincingly were overlooked.

In the least effective answers, lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of whole sections of text not uncommon in these responses. This affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills. Meanwhile, answers at the top end were often presented in a polite, relaxed and reflective style.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read Text C carefully, more than once, and reconsider any points that you are unsure of
- remember to base your answer on the ideas in Text C
- keep the audience and purpose for your response in mind throughout your answer
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage; look for the clues and evidence in the text to help you make judgements about characters and situations
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points: the bullet points are designed to help you to identify a wide range of relevant ideas you can use in your answer
- plan a route through your answer beforehand: you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and / or link ideas from each
- do not copy directly from the text: use your own words as far as you can to express ideas
- try to do more than just repeat details of what happened: developing ideas allows you to better show your understanding, for example by explaining feelings or commenting from the point of view of the character you are writing as
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- remember that the number of words suggested by the question is a guide to help you plan your time, not a limit.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0990/22
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- be sure you know the different styles of writing required for description and narration
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task and style required.

General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task, with very few rubric infringements seen by examiners. In **Question 1**, most responses were written mostly in candidates' own words. Only a few responses were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert, although some lifting of phrases or sentences was fairly common.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for an article for a specific audience of young people and there was in many a clear attempt to consider both sides of the argument represented in the texts. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response, often concluding with some more specific advice to the readership. Comments made about seeking advice from experts were rooted in the ideas given in the reading texts. In the middle of the mark range, responses tended to reproduce the points made in the texts, sometimes with an opinion given about some of the points made, with some beginning to evaluate. A substantial number of responses at this range made some comments about the ideas in the texts, though not always probing or offering judgements about them.

Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. In some responses at this level, this resulted in a lack of cohesion with conflicting viewpoints given side by side.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response; the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. Occasionally insufficient use was made of the reading material and opinions on the usefulness of technology in seeking advice were offered with limited reference to the specific ideas in the texts. Less effective responses also sometimes showed limited awareness of the specific audience for the article, providing a commentary on the texts and the angles adopted by their writers but without adaptation to the style and format of an article. Overall, however, there was often a clear adaptation of style and register to appeal to an audience of young people, with some understanding shown of how magazine articles are structured and presented and how rhetorical language can be used to engage and persuade readers.

The most effective responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for the task. These were lively but evaluative in style, using ideas from the texts to create and structure arguments and often employing rhetorical devices such as questions and exclamations or humour. Most in the middle range of marks wrote in a more straightforward style and there was less focus on weighing up the kinds of advice

which could be sought from different sources. Less effective responses relied more on the sequence of the points made in the texts with less selection and reordering of points from the originals. This sometimes resulted in responses which had less overall coherence.

In **Section B**, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of good writing in each.

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 descriptive writing questions were very effective and sustained. There were some imaginative evocations of the experience of waking up in a strange environment the second descriptive writing question. A wide range of approaches and scenarios was employed in this task, with some highly effective and detailed descriptions as the narrator became aware of their surroundings.

In the first task, many different kinds of structures, workplaces and buildings were described. Derelict factories appear frequently, as well as factories employing armies of workers moving in a uniform, often automaton-like way. Less effective responses to this question were written in a discursive rather than descriptive style. In these responses, candidates often wrote about the importance of factories and factory processes to the modern world and to a nation's economy but without a focus on description or specific detail. Descriptions were more effective when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere which evoked the scene credibly and engagingly. Less effective responses to both descriptive writing questions tended to stray too much into narrative or discussion and lose descriptive focus, particularly in the first task. In the second task, less effective responses tended to offer a more generalised scene.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Both narrative questions elicited a very wide range of approaches and interpretations. Effective and engaging responses to the first question, which asked for a narrative involving the solving of a problem, gave purpose and cohesion to the story while less effective pieces wrote about more obvious or more mundane 'problems' which were solved in less interesting ways. Some responses included ordinary events, whereas less effective narratives were less credible or were under-developed in style and were less cohesive in structure.

Some 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 credible characters were features understood by the most effective writers who chose narrative writing options.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Write a magazine article for young people about who they should listen to when faced with decisions in their own lives.

In your article you should:

- evaluate the attitudes and opinions about experts in each of the texts
- give your own views, based on what you have read, about getting the best advice.

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

Begin your article with a suitable headline.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Question 1

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the letter was also both accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task and audience, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. More effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement. These implicit ideas often involved, for example, some discussion of the relative usefulness of the internet, friends and family for advice on different kinds of problems and some grasp of the way 'experts' may not present themselves suitably despite their expertise.

In responses given marks in Level 6 for Reading, examiners often rewarded some careful grasp of the implications suggested by the texts. In Text A, for example, some responses showed some effective challenge to the idea that the internet could not be trusted for advice by suggesting that many common, less significant problems are better dealt with by a quick, convenient and crowd-based source of advice rather than the help of an expert. Even more effective responses homed in on the need for caution in seeking advice from any source, including experts, and often emphasised that the motives of celebrities, friends and experts should be scrutinised before accepting their advice.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some reflection and comment on the pitfalls of following others' advice in Text A and on the doubts highlighted about the way experts sometimes speak and present themselves in Text B. Responses at this level included some opinion or reaction to the ideas in the texts, with marks in Level 5 given where some comments amounted to 'some successful evaluation'.

Responses given marks in Level 4 often showed an understanding of the main ideas in the texts and offered sensible views on some of them while not always examining or probing them consistently. Examiners also noted that the focus of the comments was more general and missed some of the opportunities afforded by the task to focus on young people as those most likely to need advice on a range of issues with limited experience of life. In Text A, for example, some responses at this level contained some confusion about who the writer considered to be 'experts' or took the illustration of looking for a restaurant as the only kind of problem addressed in the text. In Text B, the characteristics deemed necessary for experts – to show 'expertise, honesty and benevolence' – was often reproduced but with less understanding of how these attributes build trust which plays a part in evaluating advice.

Less effective responses showed some understanding of the ideas in the passage but there was reference to a narrow range of points or there was some misunderstanding of the details. Weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic of responses in the lower levels. The sequence and organisation of ideas often reflected closely the order of ideas in the texts and this sometimes resulted in contradictory or disconnected responses. Responses also often had fewer characteristics of an article or the information in the texts was not presented as an article.

Marks for reading

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about the advantages and pitfalls involved in seeking advice as a young person from the various sources mentioned.

Most responses included the reference in Text A to the newer sources of advice offered by the internet and drew attention to the figure of 20 per cent of reviews which were deemed fake. More thoughtful responses considered carefully whether this figure should render such advice unreliable, pointing out that most reviews were sincere or that some problems were best resolved by quick, convenient searches. In some effective responses, this idea elicited some sensible consideration of the need to examine the motives of any person giving advice and it elicited the need for healthy cynicism when reading reviews. Many responses included some comments about ulterior motives on the part of celebrities or commercial companies which needed to be taken into account when seeking advice.

At the highest level, this probing approach provided a useful route into Text B's more implicit ideas about experts and the trust we have for them. Other effective responses developed the idea of trust and experts' disinterested but informed opinions which should be listened to even if their language is difficult. Many explored the idea, as one candidate put it, that 'different problems need different levels of expertise' and that the knowledge of experts was not necessary in all cases. The advice of family and friends was sometimes characterised as more important than expertise where personal matters were involved or that the life experience of an older family member was to be valued more than cold facts.

The task set specified the audience for the article as young people and more effective responses reflected this in the ideas selected from the texts as well as in the style. Some perceptive responses linked the kinds of problems young people often have with the sources of advice available to them which were mentioned in the texts. A fairly common approach in Level 5 and 6 responses was that trust has to be earned by experts as well as friends and family and that young people tended to rely too much on anonymous internet sources which did not challenge them or their choices. Some responses used the idea implied in both texts that who one trusts has to be evaluated and that decisions should take account of the intentions of anyone giving advice. Young people, some argued, needed to take responsibility for their decisions, whoever gave them advice, and should not avoid decision-making or give away the responsibility to make decisions to anyone else. As one candidate put it, 'Growing up means you have to look for people to challenge your decisions, not just find some random expert who thinks the same way as you.'

Responses given Level 6 marks for Reading showed a grasp of the underlying ideas and implicit views shown in the texts. Most of these saw the idea of trust as underlying all choices of good advice. The most effective responses combined an evaluation of ideas in both texts and arrived at a thoughtful overall judgement about the principles which should underpin the decisions young people make. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically highlighted some of pitfalls in looking for advice from internet users and celebrities in the first text with some evaluative comment on the nature of expertise and why young people should or should not place their trust in experts.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to particular points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments usually focused on the need to be aware of the motives of those who offer advice to young people.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passages. Often, there was a clear paraphrase of both texts but limited comment on the ideas in them. Where there were some brief comments, they tended to be more general in nature and while such ideas were derived from a reading of the texts, they were often not as well anchored in the specific ideas in them.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words. Less successful responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passages or addressed the material thinly, and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. There was some misunderstanding of who was considered an expert in Text A, with some responses relying on lifted sentences but showing some weak grasp of the idea. The purpose and nature of text B was not well understood at this level and candidates mostly reworded the text. Copying of phrases was also very common, especially in Text B. Where a mark of six was awarded, some firmer links with the passages were needed, whereas five was generally given for thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was some insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

Marks for Writing

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

Style and audience

Candidates could adopt a range of appropriate styles and registers for their articles and could show their understanding of the intended audience of young people in a variety of ways. Across the ability range, an apt, fairly conversational but standard English style allowed for examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a ‘sometimes effective style’ was required. Although not always sustained, many articles began with a suitable headline and a lively introduction which engaged the interest of the reader. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in an engaging way but making their case effectively and with some impact. Many adopted the voice of a young writer or a benevolent adult with an interest in young people. Those who chose the voice of a young person could adopt a more familiar tone of shared experience. Other choices were made in favour of a more adult, informative style, guiding young people through their potential choices for advice. Rhetorical questions or exclamations were used judiciously at this level to engage the audience: ‘Do you need help to navigate through the maze of decisions you have to make as a teenager? Well, I’m here for you.’ Others adopted a more familiar style using the same rhetorical device: ‘Who’d be a teenager these days, eh? It’s a nightmare of choices, decisions, bear traps and wrong turns that can change our lives in an instant.’

In the middle range of marks, examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking and suggested a Level 3 mark, if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage a young audience rather than make straightforward statements based on the texts could sometimes compensate for other elements of style such as weak spelling or insecure grammar. Conversely, responses which were accurate in the main but showed little adaptation of style from the original texts to suit the style of an article were sometimes limited in the marks available.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent article.

Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged was clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the first paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed but as a whole rather than a disjointed response to two quite different texts. The opening and concluding paragraphs of these effective articles tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case. The argument being pursued determined the sequence of ideas in these responses rather than the sequence of the original texts.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. This often avoided the clashing of contradictory points from each text. While internet sources of advice were usually considered first, some evaluation of their shortcomings often led more naturally on to a consideration of the role of experts. One common way at this level to combine the ideas in both texts, for example, was to argue that while the internet was often deemed a reliable enough source for less important decisions, experts were needed for more important ones, even if their language was off-putting. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas. While some brief opinion was sometimes given at the end of the response, these views were imposed on the structure of the original texts rather than argued for.

Accuracy

Effective writing which was accurate and controlled as well as appropriate in tone and register was given a writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used, often rhetorically, to engage the reader.

Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually fairly plain, the language used was apt and generally accurate. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical misagreement, often between plurals and verb forms.

Faulty sentence structures, fluctuating tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 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 Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was very common, as were tense errors, and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. Some confusion between 'experts' and 'expertise' was common, with some candidates thinking of the latter as the plural form of the former. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Band 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content or the style of the response was the candidate's own.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- be prepared to challenge the ideas in the reading texts; always justify and explain the reasons why you agree or disagree as this shows evidence of evaluation
- make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passage
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

Section B

Descriptive Writing

2 Write a description with the title, 'The Factory'.

3 Describe waking up to find the scene around you has changed.

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates and description was generally more often selected than narration. Both questions were interpreted in a wide variety of ways which examiners could reward appropriately.

Responses were more effective if they contained vivid and specific details rather than more general or stereotypical ideas and images. Generalisation and lack of specific detail was a more common weakness in the second question, although there were many highly effective responses which imaginatively evoked the thoughts and feelings of a narrator waking up in a hospital after an accident or in some other unfamiliar place which provoked fear or confusion in the narrator. Some fantasy scenarios also featured in responses to this question, with magically transformed landscapes sometimes effectively described.

Some effective responses to the first question conjured up an eerie picture of decaying industrial machinery in a derelict and unsafe factory structure. In one highly-rewarded response, the factory was a grim, depressing shelter whose atmosphere was intimidating and hostile; this created a dystopian scene of a different, secret world very effectively. In another response, the images used to describe the 'agonised

screaming' of a massive machine as it stirred sporadically in a disused factory vividly captured the sense of dereliction and abandonment. Other responses featured working factories, sometimes with conveyor belt workers whose synchronised movements recalled those of lifeless robots or 'mindless automatons', as one candidate wrote. In happier scenarios, factories producing baked goods were fairly common in which delicious smells pervaded the building and there was banter and cheerfulness among the workers. Sweet factories were also fairly common scenarios and high marks were awarded where original and striking images were used to evoke the atmosphere rather than more clichéd ideas or derivative images.

In the second descriptive writing question, more effective responses were given coherence by some implied or explained reason for waking up in an unfamiliar place. Some successful responses wove together, for example, frightening memories of a car crash which had resulted in the narrator waking up in intensive care. Another recalled half-remembered details of being kidnapped as the writer woke up in a bare, dingy room, frightened and in pain. There were other successful devices employed, such as waking up in a beautiful holiday resort after arriving late the night before in darkness, tired and grumpy.

Unusual, closely observed details created an impression of reality in the best responses. Most were sustained and developed and at the highest level showed skill in building a detailed, often emotionally charged scene. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's attention by linking the different elements described in an engaging, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure as well as carefully chosen detail and striking images.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but were more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve less striking images and more stereotypical ideas, such as a factory belching smoke or waking up, often inexplicably, to a beautiful landscape involving 'crystal blue seas' and 'cotton candy clouds'. There was at this level, however, a clear attempt to evoke an atmosphere and to describe some details without slipping into narrative.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become unbalanced or included over-long narrative introductions about school visits to factories or holiday destinations. Such features often gave way to more specific description though in some, the description sometimes became a more straightforward list of what was seen and heard, rooms visited in turn or sense impressions organised around the different senses. The descriptive content tended to be a little more stereotypical or general than responses given higher marks.

Less effective responses given marks in Level 3 or below often included less well organised lists of details briefly given rather than developed. Other responses at this level became a series of events, often narratively recounted, of a day of work in a factory or a sometimes rather aimless journey to return from an unfamiliar place where the writer had woken up. An approach seen more commonly than is usual involved discursive responses to the first question. Although some of these were organised and paragraphed, they contained very limited description and instead discussed the types of factories that existed and their importance to a country's economy, employment and prosperity. Some lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in these responses, although some were well written and accurate.

High marks for Style and Accuracy often reflected the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, similar details were often included but better responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to create specific effects. Highly effective responses showed an ability to use both simple and complex language and sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres. In less effective responses, vocabulary was sometimes wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide ranging vocabulary was lost by its imprecise use and lack of clarity.

As is often the case in less secure descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. Incomplete or verbless sentences also affected marks given in the middle range, even where other technical aspects of style were more accurate. Lapses in grammar, perhaps minor in isolation but more damaging when persistent, also kept responses out of Level 4 for Style and Accuracy. These included disagreement, especially between pronouns and verbs, and the omission of definite and indefinite articles was also common and damaging to otherwise quite accurate style at this level.

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; choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a particular atmosphere
- write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses
- use vocabulary precisely: complex words used wrongly do not help your style.

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story that involves solving a problem.

5 Write a story which includes the words ‘... this could not be the present ...’.

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. Examiners sometimes saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title and which, on occasion, seemed more suited to titles set in previous examinations. This lack of relevance affected the mark for Content and Structure.

Effective responses were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative, to produce moments of tension or drama and to vary the pace of the story were credited by examiners as essential elements of narrative writing, as was the use of characterisation to create believable protagonists and characters. In the first question, the ‘problem’ to be solved in the narrative was sometimes prosaic, such as cleaning up after a clandestine house party before the parents arrived home or averting a failure in important examinations by changing one’s mind-set. However, in some cases, highly effective stories were created from these plotlines by dialogue, characterisation and shaping the narrative to create moments of tension or hiatus which were satisfying for the reader.

There were various structures employed in effective responses to the first question, as well as more straightforward chronological recount. The idea of a ‘problem’ to be solved was central to the plot of more effective stories, although these included responses which were written in different genres, including fantasy, science fiction, detective fiction and war stories. More effective responses showed an ability to create credible characters, even if the scenario itself was fantastic or unfamiliar. More commonly, plots involved dilemmas which were derived from more familiar settings, such as school or the family, and these were also amongst the most successful.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless engaging for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt create a developed story which was relevant to the task. Responses in this range, were more usually chronological accounts, but were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution to the problem identified. The story was resolved to give some moral lesson learned, such as the importance of hard work or loyalty to one’s family or friends.

For the second narrative question, there were varied interpretations of the title, some using the idea of a ‘present’ as a gift with others constructing narratives around the ‘present’ as time. There were effective, skilled responses which used both of these interpretations. One Level 5 response developed a sense of mounting anticipation and excitement for a gift for a sixteenth birthday, ratcheting up the tension as the writer’s family seemed to have forgotten about the birthday before unveiling a disappointing gift in the form of a charitable donation in the recipient’s name. As the story developed, a new and significant friendship between the selfish, materialistic narrator and a homeless girl grew out of this gift, providing a valuable life lesson as a result.

Where the quotation in the title was used differently, it sometimes became an expression of disbelief, such as in one narrative where the narrator strayed off the tourist track in an unfamiliar city into the rundown back streets where life was very different and primitive for the poverty-stricken inhabitants. Elsewhere, the idea of time travel was used, sometimes involving time machines which accidentally set the protagonist out onto a journey into the past. Whichever interpretation was given to the tasks, for Level 5 marks for Content and Structure stories needed to be well-managed with some conscious shaping of the narrative beyond a simple retelling of events.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of good narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events, lacking attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. Similar plots and scenarios were used as those in more effective narratives – a family dilemma to be solved or a disappointing gift – but at this level there was a tendency to say what happened or to state who the characters were rather than shaping the narrative. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than developing characters as credible and rounded. In many responses at this level, the delay itself was the subject of the story. In the first question, problems were resolved by simple actions which were predictable or prosaic, such as resolving to work harder at school or fixing some part of a broken down car. While the majority of less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative and the reader was less engaged as a result.

Responses given marks in Level 4 and lower 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. Scenarios which quickly became clichéd and unengaging were used and some responses became confusing and muddled in attempting to control stories through different times and locations. This was particularly seen in responses to the second question where the tense of the quotation, ‘this could not be the present’ was often reproduced as speech which did not sit comfortably within the story.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects which helped to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given.

Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate and largely fluent while Level 4 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary. At this level, the writing had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as weak sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors. Common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 responses, such as misagreements, missing articles and imprecise, sometimes over-ambitious vocabulary. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 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 many responses out of Level 5.

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. A frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed, though the mixing of tenses and the use of incomplete sentences were perhaps more prevalent in the descriptive writing.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:

- **think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative**
- **consider imaginative ways to tell your story, apart from a chronological account**
- **characters’ thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader. Do not rely on events**
- **check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes**
- **use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create particular effects.**

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0990/03 Coursework Portfolio</p>

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read critically and gave a thorough response to the implicit and explicit ideas, opinions and attitudes they had identified in a text
- assimilated ideas from a text to provide developed, thoughtful and sophisticated responses
- supported their analysis, evaluation and comments with a detailed and specific selection of relevant ideas from a text
- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of arguments, description or narrative
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and context for each of the three assignments.

General comments

The majority of centres understood the changes in task setting required by the 2020 course syllabus. Most portfolios of work contained work written in three different genres.

The content of much of the coursework portfolios was interesting and related to the personal interests or experiences of the candidates. The moderation team reported that they read some thoughtful and insightful responses to interesting topical articles for Assignment 1, and that some candidates created some engaging descriptions and narratives.

Some centres successfully followed the administration procedures provided in the course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. However, the whole of the moderation team commented with some concern that a significant number of centres did not follow the procedures outlined in those documents.

Administration

Centres were successful with administration when they:

- indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment
- carried out a thorough process of internal moderation
- supplied specific comments and marks in relation to the mark schemes at the end of the final draft of each assignment
- ensured that each portfolio of work was securely attached to the Individual Candidate Record Card
- accurately completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Form, including any amendments made during internal moderation.

All moderators reported that when markers had not indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment there was a tendency to award marks from the higher bands of the assessment criteria, when marks from Level 4 or below would have been more appropriate. Some of the most common errors were typing and punctuation errors, missing articles, awkward or clumsy expression, tenses and verb / subject agreement. Errors such as these are not expected to be particularly evident in writing achieving marks from Level 5 or above. When markers indicate all errors in the final drafts it helps them to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the piece of writing as a whole and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. A thorough and careful process of internal moderation also helps to ensure that marks are appropriately and consistently applied by all teachers in a centre. Advice and guidance on how to implement and carry out internal moderation is given in the Coursework Handbook.

Another concern highlighted by the moderation team was that a significant number of centres did not securely attach the completed portfolio of work to their candidates' Individual Candidate Record Cards. Too frequently, moderators received pieces of writing, often unnamed, that had either been placed in plastic wallets, or had simply been placed in an envelope and sent to Cambridge with the supporting paperwork. Such methods significantly increase the chances of work becoming lost or mislaid during the moderation process.

Instructions and guidance on how to mark and present folders of work for submission to Cambridge can be found in the course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Centres should pay particular attention to 'Teacher responsibilities' in Section 1 and 'Administration and Moderation' (Section 4) in the Coursework Handbook. Both documents can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge website.

Comments on specific assignments

Assignment 1

It was pleasing to note that many candidates responded to a good range of appropriately challenging and topical texts which were of clear interest to them. Candidates successfully responded to texts about veganism, gender equality, childhood obesity and aggressive dogs. Moderators commented that a significant number of centres set old, outdated, inappropriate or unchallenging texts for Assignment 1. Such texts tended to result in uninteresting or formulaic responses, or candidates talked about the topic rather than the individual ideas and opinions presented in the texts.

Reading

There was a significant trend for centres to award marks from the highest level assessment criteria to work which met the lower level assessment criteria. Candidates who successfully met the higher level assessment criteria were those who demonstrated a consistently evaluative approach to most points in a text, and provided developed, sophisticated responses which made direct reference to, or included quotes from, the text. Candidates who engaged in a general discussion about the topic or subject of a text, or those who did not thoroughly evaluate a text, tended to produce work which more appropriately met the Level 4 assessment criteria in Table B (reading). The most common reasons for adjustments to a centre's marks for reading were when moderators identified a trend for candidates to engage in a general discussion about the topic of a text, or when the number of points covered were 'appropriate' rather than 'thorough'.

Writing

Many candidates responded to texts in an appropriate form and style. Letters, speeches and articles for newspapers or magazines were the most popular choice of form and many candidates demonstrated some understanding of audience and purpose. Candidates who were able to meet the highest level assessment criteria were those who produced writing which was highly effective, almost always accurate and consistent throughout with their application of form and style. Work which showed insecurity with form and style, such as the omission of an appropriate salutation or valediction in a letter, a limited or inconsistent use of rhetorical devices for speeches, or lack of clarity of the intended audience, tended to meet the assessment criteria for Level 5, Table A (writing) or below. The moderators noted that there was a general trend with many centres to award marks from the highest level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower level assessment criteria.

Moderators also noticed a general tendency for centres to award marks from the highest level assessment criteria to work which contained quite frequent, and often quite serious, errors which impacted on the overall meaning and effect of candidates' work. Writing given marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table A should be

'mostly' or 'almost always' accurate. Errors made with sentence construction and grammar, typing, the incorrect selection of vocabulary from spellcheck, or the incorrect use of vocabulary can affect overall meaning and clarity and should be taken into account when awarding marks from Table A. Issues with accuracy was one of the more common reasons for adjustment of marks for Writing in Table A.

Candidates were successful when:

- the form, purpose and intended audience was clear to the reader
- they responded to interesting and relatable texts
- they demonstrated analysis and evaluation with the provision of thoughtful and perceptive responses to the individual ideas and opinions identified within a text
- they wrote in a fluent, accurate and appropriate style.

Candidates were less successful when:

- the form, purpose and intended audience was not clear to the reader
- they wrote about the topic rather than the individual ideas and opinions presented in the text
- they responded to texts which were of limited interest to them
- they analysed and evaluated a writer's literary techniques
- they adopted an aggressive or attacking tone and style towards the author.

Advice and guidance on how to select texts can be found in the course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1

- be prepared to thoroughly explore, challenge and discuss the ideas in the text
- try to avoid making general comments about the topic or subject of the text, instead, try to make sure that your comments are specifically related to the ideas, opinions or attitudes that you have identified in the text
- look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly in the text
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the text and comment on them
- try to develop your points to create a thorough, detailed and clear line of argument or discussion
- make sure that the audience and purpose of your writing is clear and adapt your style accordingly
- make sure that you carefully proof read your work and check that your punctuation, vocabulary choices and grammar are correct.

Assignment 2

Many centres set tasks which were appropriate. Candidates produced some interesting descriptions of a range of subjects such as busy places and buildings and objects or people of personal importance to the candidate; for example, returning to a family home, re-discovering a childhood treasure, or a loved relative such as a grandparent. Less successful responses were those in which candidates struggled to create credible and convincing descriptions; for example, dystopian/apocalyptic cities, haunted houses, scenes from World War 1, or clips from films.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those in which the candidates had carefully selected vocabulary to create a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place or person, and which were well sequenced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. Candidates were less successful when they were overambitious with their vocabulary choices, included imagery or idioms which did not fit the context of their writing, or included unrealistic and unconvincing scenarios (for example, dystopian cities/haunted houses). Writing which lacks credibility and realism would be expected to be given marks from Level 4 in Table C (content and structure) or below. A common reason for adjustment of marks was when centres awarded marks from the higher level assessment criteria to unrealistic and unconvincing writing which more appropriately met the lower level assessment criteria.

Moderators commented that descriptions which remained fully focused on description and avoided narrative development were more successful in meeting the higher level assessment criteria than those which were characterised by the inclusion of overlong narrative preambles explaining the events leading up to the focus of the description. This detracted from the overall impact and effect of the descriptions and should be awarded marks from Level 4 or below of Table C (content and structure). One of the most common reasons for adjustments to marks was when the moderators identified a trend of awarding marks from the highest level assessment criteria for content and structure to writing which displayed the characteristics more typical of writing at Level 4 or below.

Another reason for adjustments to marks was when moderators identified a trend of awarding high marks to writing that contained a limited range of sentence structures, incorrectly constructed sentences, or contained frequent errors with punctuation and grammar. Writing that achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. The moderators saw some writing which displayed these characteristics, but a significant majority of the writing awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 from Table D, were quite often more characteristic of writing at Level 4 or below. Many candidates 'told' the reader about the scene being described, rather than 'showing' the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images.

The moderators also noticed a general trend for candidates to use repeated sentence structures and create almost list-like descriptions, which added to the 'telling' rather than 'showing' style of writing mentioned earlier. In addition, the writing in a significant number of samples seen contained frequent and serious errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of a candidate's work. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, changes in tenses, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Often the meaning of sentences was blurred, or meaning of sentences was lost altogether. Errors which affect meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as minor. As mentioned earlier in this report, the absence of the annotation of all errors by the markers made it difficult for the moderators to determine whether errors had been taken into account when marks had been awarded. Accurate and effective application of the assessment criteria is achieved through the careful weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and the application of a mark which 'best fits' the assessment criteria. To achieve this, it is essential that all errors are identified and indicated by the markers. Engaging in this process allows markers to effectively balance the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and apply marks that are most appropriate to their candidates' work.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2

- make sure that the vocabulary you use matches the context and content of your description
- make sure that the images you create matches the context and content of your description
- try to 'show' readers your imagined scenario instead of 'telling' them about it
- keep your focus on the details of your description and avoid slipping into narrative
- carefully check and proof read your work to identify and correct common errors such as missing articles and prepositions, switches in tenses and typing errors
- try to avoid repetitive sentence structures, instead use a range of sentences for create specific effect.

Assignment 3

Moderators reported that they read some engaging, well-managed and convincing narratives. The most engaging and successful narratives were those in which the candidates created stories which featured well-defined plots and strongly developed features of fiction writing such as description, characterisation and convincing details and events.

Less successful narratives were those which did not convince the reader of the imagined situation or character, or had limited development of plot or character. This type of writing was most evident when candidates wrote in the genres of action, murder mystery, ghost, dystopian or adventure stories. Stories such as these, although containing a definite beginning, middle and ending, were often unrealistic and incredible, or lacked development of character or plot. Writing such as this is classed as 'relevant' or 'straightforward' and should expect to be awarded marks from Level 4 or below from Table C. The moderation team noticed a tendency with a significant number of centres to award relevant or straightforward writing marks from Level 5, or even Level 6, when marks from Level 4 or below would have been more appropriate. This was another common reason for adjusting marks.

When moderators saw work which was very accurate, contained precise well-chosen vocabulary and maintained a consistent register throughout they could agree when centres awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D. As with Assignment 2, moderators noticed a trend for centres to award marks from the highest levels of the mark scheme to work which contained frequent and persistent errors, and which more accurately met the assessment criteria from Level 4 or below in Table D. This was a common reason for adjustment of marks. The comments made for Assignment 2 with regards to accuracy and the annotation of errors are also relevant to Assignment 3 and should be noted by all who mark coursework.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 3

- try to create stories that are realistic, credible and convincing
- remember that characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader; do not just rely on events
- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider an individual and original selection of content
- carefully proof read your work and check your writing for errors which will affect your mark, such as punctuation, your use of prepositions and articles, tenses and construction of sentences.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0990/04 Speaking and Listening Test</p>
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Key messages

Centre assessment generally accurate in line with the requirements of the new syllabus for 2020. With only a small number of exceptions, the administration of the component was accurate and helpful to the moderating process.

Candidates' responses to Part 1, the Individual Talk, were often well-organised and delivered confidently. Some very interesting and diverse topics were covered with a good degree of success. In the vast majority of cases the 3–4 minutes allowed for Part 1 were utilised effectively by the candidates and timings were adhered to.

Part 2 takes the form of a conversation that should evolve naturally through the 7–8 minutes time period allowed. A Part 2 conversation that depends largely on a question and answer format is not as successful as a naturally developing conversation. Where there were issues with timing they tended to arise in Part 2 and this is an area examiners should pay close attention to when conducting the tests.

The topic discussed in Part 2 must be the same as the one chosen by the candidates for Part 1. Any aspect of the topic introduced in Part 1 may be used to develop the conversation in Part 2 but any prolonged departure from the core topic will seriously disadvantage the candidate, as reflected in the mark accepted for Part 2.

Administration – General points

Centre administration was of a high standard but where there were issues the following guidelines may help to clarify administrative requirements:

- All tests should be carried out within the boundaries of the test window stipulated by Cambridge International.
- Every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date on which the candidate is being examined, the candidate's full name and examination number, the centre's name and number and the examiner's name. The information can appear in any order as this is not as important as the need for the information to be covered in the introduction. It is expected that the examiner conducting the test delivers the introduction and not the candidate. A generic introduction for an entire cohort does not help the moderation process.
- Centres may choose to create and use their own versions of the Oral Examinations Summary Form (OESF) as opposed to utilising the one provided by Cambridge International but in these cases the form used must accurately reflect the information required.
- It should be noted that 0990 First Language English and 0510/0511 Second Language English are different syllabuses and the speaking and listening tests are also separate components following different formats. A test undertaken in the 0510/0511 format is not acceptable as an 0990/04 test as it does not fulfil the criteria.

Conduct of the test – General points

Generally, the standard of examining was very good with candidates being given many opportunities to express their views and demonstrate their range of oratory skills.

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered.

- In some centres, examiners engaged in an ‘off topic’ conversation with candidates before asking them to begin their Part 1 task. It is advised that each test should begin with the examiner’s formal introduction and be followed immediately by the candidate performing Part 1, the Individual Talk.
- The importance of timing within the test should be appreciated. Where a Part 1 response is significantly short of the minimum three minutes required, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met and assess accordingly. It is difficult for a response to meet higher level criteria in a performance lasting significantly less than the prescribed minimum time allowance. Equally, if a candidate speaks for considerably longer than the time allowed or has to be stopped to avoid doing so, it should be carefully considered whether such a performance can fulfil the descriptor for Level 5 that states ‘full and well-organised use of content’.
- Given that both speaking and listening are assessed in Part 2, it is important that the conversations last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the examiner’s responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation of seven minutes is met wherever possible.

Comments on specific sections of the test

Part 1 – Individual Talk

With very few exceptions, all the candidates entered in this series delivered their responses to Part 1 as formal presentations. This is perfectly acceptable. It is clear that most candidates prepared thoroughly for the test having researched their topics at great length. Many of the presentations were memorised which is acceptable as long as there remains an element of natural fluency to the delivery. Over-reliance on memory and rehearsal can stilt the natural fluency of the presentation and impede performance. As always, the most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates felt ownership of a topic, had a strong knowledge of the subject, and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses are almost exclusively more successful than those delivered without proper preparation.

The Speaking and Listening Test allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. Topics with imaginative themes, providing reflective and analytical opportunities for the candidates to explore, tended to be the most successful, particularly if the candidate was able to move beyond the simply descriptive and narrative.

Another strong element of presentations achieving Level 5 in Part 1 was the structure underpinning the talks. A clearly defined persuasive argument or a cyclical arrangement that brought the concluding statement back to the initial point often helped candidates to fulfil ‘the full and well-organised’ descriptor for Level 5. Less successful structures tended to meander from point to point without such a strong sense of purpose. Whilst structure itself does not confirm a mark in Level 5, it does provide a strong basis for candidates to exhibit their linguistic and presentational skills.

It should be noted that almost any topic chosen can be productive or less successful based on the candidate’s own knowledge of the subject, the depth of research undertaken and the degree of preparation attempted, but clearly some topics offer more opportunities for development and discussion than others. When choosing a topic, candidates should give equal consideration to the Part 2 element of the test. As well as being confident to deliver a talk for 3–4 minutes a candidate must consider if there is also scope for a successful conversation lasting 7–8 minutes. The equal distribution of marks for both parts of the test means this becomes a very important consideration when choosing a topic.

Part 2 – Conversation

During Part 2 it is imperative the examiner gives candidates opportunities to expand their thoughts and to consistently speak at length within the conversation. Candidates who develop their thoughts and ideas always outperform those who merely respond passively to questioning.

Unlike Part 1 where the candidate is solely responsible for the quality of performance, in Part 2 the examiner dictates not only the timing of the test but also its pace and to a degree, the level of responsiveness of the candidate. A good examiner will not openly question a candidate's responses by being critical but will tease out a more developed response through careful prompting. Examiners who constantly interrupt or who try to monopolise the conversations do not help the candidates at all.

Generally, candidates were not interrupted when in full flow and examiners were not judgemental when the candidates' responses could be deemed inaccurate or potentially controversial. Examiners do not need to agree with the statements the candidates make but may seek to challenge more able candidates if they feel this will stimulate them to develop their ideas more fully. This is a judgement call for the examiner and should only be made if the examiner is certain a candidate's reaction will be a positive one.

Where there were issues and improvement can be made in examining Part 2 the following advice is offered:

- The timing of Part 2 is controlled by the examiner. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure Part 2 lasts for at least seven minutes in order to give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills and accrue marks.
- To ensure a minimum of seven minutes is completed in Part 2, the examiner should develop the conversation using notes made during the candidate's Part 1 presentation.
- It is important that any questions to the candidate are open and not closed. Questions needing only a perfunctory answer should be avoided because they limit the candidate's ability to respond at length.
- Part 2 conversations solely conducted on a question and answer basis, where the series of questions is only loosely connected and responses from the candidate are then ignored in favour of the next question on the list, do not fulfil the descriptors in the higher levels.
- Allowing the conversations to progress beyond the maximum time allowed of eight minutes is unnecessary and may become counter-productive. It is very doubtful whether any contribution made by a candidate after the eight minutes have been exceeded will have any bearing on the mark being awarded for Part 2.

Advice to centres

- Choosing the most appropriate topic is key to being successful in the test.
- Examiners must remain passive listeners in Part 1 unless the candidate falters to the point of not being able to continue. Even then, a gentle prompt is more productive than asking a question. Asking a question normally signals the transition from Part 1 to Part 2 in the test.
- 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 higher levels.
- Consider how examiners can hone their skills in the delivery of Part 2 of the test using the above guidelines.
- Part 2 is a conversation and not a question and answer session; candidates need to participate actively in Part 2.
- Efficient administration allows more efficient moderation of a centre and this helps all concerned in the process.