

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/11
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- In **1(e)** candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same word in their answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole quotation.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to go beyond the text for the third bullet point.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format for **Question 2** and follow the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.

General comments

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

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Give **one** detail that the writer enjoyed, despite the bad weather (paragraph 1, 'When I first visited...').

Many candidates successfully identified that the writer enjoyed the emperor's summer retreat although quite a number omitted the words 'retreat' or 'citadel', perhaps indicating there was some uncertainty about the meaning of 'retreat'. Candidates who omitted either or both of these words were given the benefit of the doubt and the mark was awarded. Some candidates opted for the stormy weather as an enjoyable factor, although it seemingly contradicted the information given in the question. Such responses, expressed in a variety of ways, were also awarded the mark, although 'bad weather' on its own was not credited because it was in the question. Some candidates answered with material from earlier in paragraph one, such as 'sleeping in an open-sided hut' or 'walking up the hill to the ruins', and even 'sleeping on his own' when closer reading would have revealed there was no comment from the writer that he had enjoyed these activities. Some candidates wrote about the writer's enjoyment at spending the night in the rain and getting soaked.

- (b) Give **two** reasons why the writer chose the Salkantay trail rather than the Classic Inca Trail (paragraph 2, 'If you believe ...').

Most candidates gained at least one mark on this question with many identifying the reasons for the writer opting for the Salkantay Trail. Many candidates referred to the luxurious lodges or better accommodation found on the trail as being a reason for the writer's choice, while others thought correctly (in spite of the subsequent 'galloping downhill on rocky, dirt roads') that travelling by horse was an enticing factor. A few candidates did not gain a mark because of a lack of precision. For example, 'accommodation' or even answers such as 'beautiful accommodation' did not convey that the lodges on the Salkantay Trail were 'better' or 'more comfortable' than the tents found on the Classic Inca Trail. Obviously, a building could be

both beautiful and uncomfortable, and answers which concentrated on the visual impact of the lodges lacked focus on this particular question. Similarly, some candidates while commenting on the beauty of the Salkantay trail failed to identify that this visual impact related to the scenery, writing answers such as 'it is more attractive' or 'astounding', only.

- (c) *When the writer first sees his horse, he describes it as 'woefully unenthusiastic'. What does this suggest about the horse's suitability for the journey (line 14)?*

It was quite clear from many answers that candidates were unsure about the meaning of 'woefully' and its effect on the degree of the horse's lack of enthusiasm. Many candidates thought that the horse was not capable of making the journey often describing it as 'tired' or 'too old'. Such answers were not credited because the horse's indifference about the journey related to attitude not capacity. Answers which focused on attitude were rewarded unless they referred to the question in a circular manner such as 'The horse was not suitable for the journey because it was unenthusiastic'. Answers which stated that the horse 'was not enthusiastic' or 'had no enthusiasm' were awarded one mark only. Answers where candidates had attempted to explain the horse's attitude in their own words were awarded two marks. There were many candidates who understood that the horse 'did not want to make' or 'lacked interest in' the journey or was just too plain 'lazy'.

- (d) *Using your own words, explain what features of Pedro's behaviour show that he is 'relentlessly enthusiastic' (line 17).*

A few candidates misread the question and applied the 'relentlessly enthusiastic' to the horse and not Pedro. Often this misreading was then carried over into **Question 2** when describing the horse-back journey. The answer that he enjoyed 'riding very fast or downhill over uneven and rocky ground' needed to be expressed in own words as requested by the question. Some candidates ignored this and merely lifted 'He had a passion for galloping on rocky dirt roads'. Such lifts, or partial lifts, were awarded one mark only whereas full explanations in attempted own words were given two marks. Responses which merely focused on Pedro's passion for horses or love of his job were not awarded a mark.

- (e) (i) *Re-read lines 9–11 ('Up to 500 people ... below freezing') and lines 21–22 ('My first impression ... But it wasn't.'). Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined in each of these phrases:*

When answering this question, it is important that candidates explain the meaning of the word which is underlined, only, and do not extend their answer to the whole quotation or another part of it. A number of candidates, for example, gave an explanation of the 'dramatic passes' as opposed to the word 'undulated' in (e)(i). One method employed by candidates was a kind of scattergun approach where they listed lots of possibilities in the hope that one would be correct and sometimes, they did hit on the right answer, probably by chance.

1. *'an undulating route with three dramatic passes'. (lines 9–10)*

As with previous papers, synonyms or explanations which conveyed the general meaning of 'undulated' were accepted and many candidates were able to gain a mark for this question. Such answers more often than not identified the route as being 'curvy' or 'not straight' but a few answers were more precise in identifying the route's 'dipping' and 'uneven' nature. Of the three words to be explained in (e)(i), this was the most understood by far.

2. *'My first impression of the lodge was of eerie grandeur...' (line 21)*

Very few candidates were able to explain the meaning of the word 'eerie' in this context, especially in relation to the contradictory lodge's 'grandeur'. The few who were able to explain its meaning, focused on its 'creepy' or 'mysterious' nature as well as its 'odd' and rather 'strange' grandeur.

3. *'such a tantalising, no-expense-spared structure in such a bleak spot could only be an illusion'. (lines 21–22)*

Very few candidates understood the meaning of 'bleak' in this context with many answers describing it as being 'beautiful' or 'amazing'. The few responses which did gain a mark for this question either identified the 'barren' or 'bare' nature of the landscape or described its 'desolate' or 'isolated' or 'remote' characteristic.

- (ii) Explain **how the language in each of these quotations in 1(e)(i)** helps to suggest the impressive nature of the surroundings through which the writer is travelling. In your answer you should refer to the whole quotation, not just the underlined words.

The second part of this question was often answered better than the first as candidates were able to look at the whole quotation. The main problem was the same answer was often used for each part of (e)(ii), such as 'it was amazing', or repeated phrases or words from (e)(i). The question wanted some clear focus on the phrase and general comments like 'amazing' or 'beautiful' were not very helpful. Candidates who looked for a more precise meaning did better, although some did so by using lifted words and did not, therefore, gain a mark.

As with previous papers, many candidates simply repeated their answer from (e)(i) and therefore gained no mark. Others couched their answers in the words of the quotation as opposed to attempted own words. Such explanations were not rewarded and often were circular in nature. Candidates should have been aware of the overall focus of the question which was 'the impressive nature of the surroundings', when attempting to explain the selected references. Generally, candidates who failed to understand the implication of the underlined word in (e)(i), were unable to gain marks in (e)(ii) when considering the same quotation. However, those candidates who considered the meaning of the reference from a wider perspective were often able to gain marks in (e)(ii) even if they had been unsuccessful with the corresponding reference in (e)(i).

- (f) Give **two** details that the writer found memorable about his ride on the z-bend trail. (lines 27–29)

Candidates often gained two marks for this question by identifying two of the memorable details such as the glittering, turquoise glacial lake, the flying condors, and the sun-filtered clouds. A number of candidates lost marks because of a lack of precision in their answers. It was important, for example, to identify the precise feature of the lake which made it so memorable to the writer. Answers which merely referred to the 'glacial lake' or 'the colour of the lake' did not gain a mark but those which identified the lake's glittering or shining or turquoise water did. Similarly, answers which simply mentioned 'it was sunny' or 'glittering' without the respective contexts of clouds and lake were not rewarded. Some candidates did not refer to the condors or birds flying and focused on their wing span alone and therefore did not gain a mark for this detail. No mark was given for 'the exotic meal they ate' which was outside the question's line parameters.

- (g) Re-read lines 33–35. **Using your own words**, explain the difference in the environment as the writer comes down the mountain.

Candidates were faced with a wide choice when explaining the environmental differences between the higher and low altitudes, owing to the wealth of detail given from lines 33 to 35. A summary of the features to be found at the higher levels would include plain, stone buildings or villages; crops such as vegetables and maize; and rivers and bridges. In contrast, at the lower levels, the writer describes flowers such as orchids; fruit such as bananas; and flocks of birds such as parrots and hummingbirds. As always when the question required the candidates to use their own words, complete lifting of the actual lines from the text was awarded one mark only but selective relevant lifting through omission or recasting was often awarded two marks. Candidates did not have to include all of the details of the different features listed above but they did have to identify some basic contrast of the actual respective features to be found there. The vast majority of candidates were able to do this and therefore gained two marks but there were a few responses which managed to reverse the features for each altitude or give some geographical explanation that did not come from the passage, and therefore gained no marks.

Question 2

Imagine that you and your family have been on holiday riding horses on the trail to Machu Picchu. When you return home, you are interviewed on local radio about your holiday.

Write the words of the interview in which the interviewer asks you three questions:

- *What was the scenery like on your journey to Machu Picchu?*
- *How did you feel about making the journey on horseback?*
- *What things would you suggest an older person, like me, would find interesting about the trip?*

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

Begin the interview:

'Interviewer: I have with me this morning (your name), who is going to tell us about a visit to Machu Picchu ...

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

(15)

Candidates in general responded well to the interview format of this question and there were many responses which successfully demonstrated an appropriate interview register, with convincing polite interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Those responses which did not include some version of the three specified questions were unlikely to score higher for Reading than Band 3, but those responses which included additional questions were not penalised and, more often than not, gained additional credit. The relatively few responses which comprised narrative accounts based on the three questions but did not specifically include them in the account, were not penalised. As with previous papers, convincing and relevant development of the third bullet point was usually important to gaining higher band marks. Responses, however, which only touched upon the possible interesting features of the trip for older people yet contained detailed development of the first two bullet points which was firmly tethered to the passage, were also rewarded with higher band marks. As always, those candidates who attempted to write their interviews in their own words as far as possible, were suitably rewarded for both Reading and Writing. Those candidates who mainly lifted phrases from the passage were unlikely to score higher than Band 3 marks for Reading or Writing.

A number of candidates treated **Question 2** as purely an imaginative writing task as opposed to a piece of directed writing based mainly on the information given in passage A. Some candidates wrote convincing interview accounts but seemed to be more concerned with establishing an appropriate register, as noted above, rather than developing information based on their respective reading and understanding of the passage. Such responses, therefore, often involved polite interaction – sometimes embellished with humorous asides – between interviewer and interviewee. Comments about the scenery on the journey to Machu Picchu, for example, were often limited to 'beautiful' or 'amazing' with no mention of features such as the glacial lake or the respective features of different altitudes or the Salkantay Trail itself. A number of responses when answering the first bullet simply ignored it and wrote about the stormy weather or the horse, Cesar. This type of approach was particularly evident with the question about making the journey on horseback. The best responses included pertinent comments about Cesar's ostensible lack of interest in the journey and their reluctance to ride a horse on such rough terrain. Often their doubts were offset by the safety of the saddles used for the journey. Many candidates, however, simply stated either their love of, or inexperience of, horse riding with no reference to the passage whatsoever. Similarly, many responses to the interviewer's question about what would be interesting for an older person making the trip simply repeated ideas from the two previous answers rather than, say, developing points about the comfortable accommodation provided. Advice for older travellers also varied from a straightforward 'don't go', to detailed and thoughtful responses about the ancient sites, friendly people and luxurious lodges by the lodges, the fascinating birds such as the condors, or the good food and wonderful Peruvian hospitality.

Although the question did not state that the candidate and their family had been on holiday riding horses on the Salkantay trail to Machu Picchu it is implicit that they did because of the horse riding and the actual focus of the passage. Some candidates wrote about making the journey with their families using the Classic Inca trail, thereby either limiting the information available to them for development or wrongly attributing Salkantay

features in their accounts. As always, candidates should read the question carefully in order to determine the precise nature of what they are being asked to write.

The least successful of these accounts for both Reading and Writing marks were those which were either very close to the passage or contained much lifting. General accuracy was evident but many struggled with the past tense and a number had handwriting that was very difficult to read.

The majority of candidates gained Band 3 and above Writing marks by establishing an appropriate register with some degree of clarity.

*Read carefully Passage B, Rapa Nui National Park (Easter Island), in the Reading Booklet Insert and then answer **Question 3 (a) and (b)**.*

Question 3

Answer the questions in the order set.

(a) *Notes*

*What does the passage tell you about Easter Island **and** its statues, according to **Passage B**?*

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

*You do **not** need to use your own words.*

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

(10)

(b) *Summary*

*Now use your notes to write a summary of what **Passage B** tells you about Easter Island **and** its statues.*

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

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

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

As always, the key to gaining higher marks on **Question 3a** was avoiding repetition and answering the question by selecting relevant points.

Many candidates scored well on this question with many gaining seven marks or more. Some candidates lost marks by failing to include contextual detail in their answers. For example, 'not clear' as an answer did not gain a mark for point 4 on the mark scheme because it did not indicate that it was the settlement date which was uncertain. Candidates must make sure that the context of their answer is clearly stated rather than implied. Similarly, candidates should always restrict their answers to one clear point per line, and never extend the 10 lines to add extra points.

Of the fourteen points identified in the mark scheme, seven related to information about Easter Island and seven referred to the stone statues. For the former, point 1 described the size of the island and the fact it once was Polynesian and point 2 identified its geographical location. Point 3 related to its artistic culture and architecture with point 4 addressing the uncertainty of its first settlement. Points 5 and 6 covered the state of its ecosystem and the possible reasons for this. Point 7 identified Easter Island's popularity for tourists and, more specifically, the popularity of the Rano Raraku quarry.

For the statues, point 8 described the placing of the statues by the Rapa Nui across the island, and points 10 and 11 described both their height and weight. Many candidates included points 10 and 11 as one point. Point 9 covered the 'mystery' as to why the statues had been crafted and the two features of honouring leaders or ancestors, or that we simply do not know why. Those candidates who answered 'mystery statues' did not gain a mark for point 9 because such answers did not focus on the reason they were created. Point 13 focused on the shape and appearance of the statues with Point 14 indicating their present-day deterioration. Many candidates lost marks for point 12 with answers such as 'There were 400 statues on the island'. The reference to 400 statues in the passage quite clearly locates them in the quarry as does the

reference to their various stages of completion. By implication, there are many more statues around the island, as noted in point 8.

Only a small number of candidates gained full marks, although many achieved six or above.

Most candidates tried to use own words when writing the summary although sometimes that meant that the meaning was blurred. Some answers were well written but very long as they had tried to include too much information. Many responses had own words but lacked organisation. The best answers comprised two clear paragraphs, one on the island and one on the statues.

Generally, however, many candidates wrote fairly concise summaries and attempted to answer in their own words as far as possible. The best responses were well focused on the passage and points were expressed clearly and concisely. The weakest responses were often verbose and unfocused comprising either frequent lifting of phrases and sentences or unnecessary personal commentary. Candidates should remember to organise their material so that it does not read like a list of unrelated features, and to ensure that their material is as concise as possible rather than just brief.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- Candidates should read all questions carefully to ensure that their answers focus on the questions.
- In the sub-questions in **Question 1** where candidates are asked to answer in their own words, candidates should avoid lifting long phrases or whole sentences from the passage.
- In **Question 1(d)**, candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same answer in **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the single-word definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all three bullet points in **Question 2** and attempt to structure their response effectively to address the task. Some planning before writing is recommended.
- In **Question 2** candidates should develop the ideas in the passage, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to develop the details offered in the text for the third bullet point, using the passage to develop a plausible response.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct style and register for **Question 2**.
- Candidates should avoid copying from the passage in **Questions 2** and **3(b)**.
- In **Question 3(a)** candidates should only make one point on each line, focus sharply on the task, and avoid repeating similar points.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to most candidates, and they responded positively to both the passages and the questions. Most of the vocabulary appeared to be within the range of candidates at this level. Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and a number of detailed and focused responses to **Question 2** were in evidence. It is clear that the majority of candidates were confident in their approach to the different question types.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many candidates responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time offering opportunities to candidates who were able to engage with the text at a deeper level to gain higher marks. The majority of candidates were familiar with the requirements of **Questions 3(a)** and **3(b)**. Some candidates did not attempt all the questions, instead offering No Response answers to **Questions 1(d)(ii)**, **1(e)**, **1(f)** and **3(b)**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Give two features of the area north of Lisbon that make it popular with tourists (paragraph 1, 'In this region ...')? [2]

This was a fairly straightforward question with many candidates gaining both marks. The question did not ask for candidates to use their own words so those who copied the appropriate answer from the text were equally rewarded. The choice of answers was broadly divided into the geographical features of the area, and the interesting buildings for tourists. Candidates could also gain a mark by citing its proximity to the coast. Most candidates were able to gain at least one mark on this

question, with a number gaining both of the marks available where they were more selective in their use of the passage.

- (b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer finds unusual about the interior of the Almaa Hotel (paragraph 2, 'One of the oldest ...').** [2]

In order to gain marks on this straightforward question candidates were required to reword the relevant material from the passage. Many candidates lifted 'simply furnished' and 'dark corridors with a touch of spookiness' making no attempt to put this into their own words. Others were able to successfully paraphrase these phrases and cite the plain furnishing and the dimly lit / creepy corridors.

- (c) **Using your own words, explain the effect the writer achieves by describing the fortress as 'snaking up the hillside like a mini Great Wall of China' (line 11).** [3]

In this question candidates were required to explain the effect of this simile in terms of its description of the fortress. Successful responses explained that it implies that the fortress is very long, curves up the hillside, or is highly visible. Other responses needed to focus more on the effects of the image rather than identifying the simile and repeating words from the question such as 'snaking'.

- (d) (i) **Re-read the passage. Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined in the following quotations:**

- 1 *'...you find an astonishing mixture of styles ...' (lines 15–16)*
- 2 *'...from the delicate carved Arabic interior of the Palace of Monserrate to the Alpine chalet ...' (lines 16–17)*
- 3 *'...a breath-taking collection of lakes, grottoes, waterfalls, fake doors and secret tunnels that take the visitor through an 'underworld' in the grounds of a vast gloomy mansion.'* (lines 19–20) [3]

Most candidates appeared to understand the requirements of this task. Most candidates attempted to explain what the writer meant by the **words underlined** using appropriate synonyms and were able to gain 1 or 2 marks. Other candidates produced 'catch all' phrases which were more suited to **Question 1d(ii)**, as they offered an explanation of the whole phrase.

- 1 Most candidates managed to explain the meaning of the word 'astonishing' in the context of the passage and offered words such as 'amazing' or 'surprising'. Other candidates tried to explain *why* it was astonishing so did not gain the mark.
- 2 Explanations of the word 'delicate' were mostly successful and focused on fragility. Occasionally, candidates focused on the beauty of the carvings without explaining the word underlined.
- 3 A number of candidates accurately explained 'breath-taking' using synonyms such as 'impressive' or 'amazing'. Other responses offered very literal explanations (focusing on an inability to breathe) rather than explaining the meaning of the word in the context of the passage.

- (ii) **Explain how the language in each of these quotations helps to suggest the unusual appearance of the buildings in Sintra. In your answer you should refer to the whole quotation, not just the underlined words.** [6]

A few candidates were able to offer relevant explanations of the whole phrases focusing on the question. A number of candidates merely repeated their answers to **Question 1(d)(i)** and therefore gained no further marks. Some candidates who had given explanations in **1(d)(i)** for the whole quotation rather than the underlined word, then failed to give the same explanation in **1(d)(ii)** where it would have gained at least one mark.

1 ‘... you find an astounding mixture of styles ...’ (lines 15–16)

A few candidates commented on the uniqueness / unexpectedness of finding such a variety of styles in one place, or the way that the language expressed the joy / delight of the writer and were subsequently awarded marks for this. Many candidates repeated the language of the passage in their explanation and were unable to gain marks as a result.

2 ‘...from the delicate carved Arabic interior of the Palace of Monserrate to the Alpine chalet ...’ (lines 16–17)

A number of candidates made relevant comments about the time, effort and skill taken to produce the carvings and the implication of grandeur, ornateness and / or beauty in the language. Some responses repeated their explanation of ‘delicate’ from **1d(i)** without considering the whole phrase.

3 ‘... a breath-taking collection of lakes, grottoes, waterfalls, fake doors and secret tunnels that take the visitor through an ‘underworld’ in the grounds of a vast gloomy mansion.’ (lines 19–20)

A few candidates offered relevant comments in response to this question, mostly focusing on the secrecy of the setting. Most candidates simply repeated the language of the passage and subsequently did not gain any marks. Very few candidates commented on the language associated with ‘fairy-tales’ or ‘adventures’ in this phrase.

(e) **Using your own words, explain why Marco chose to live in a cave (paragraph 5, ‘After such flamboyance ...’)** [2]

Most candidates gained at least 1 mark on this question by explaining that Marco found the monastery too comfortable. Fewer candidates scored the second mark by referring to his desire to live alone. Some candidates mistakenly thought that he moved to a cave to be more comfortable.

(f) **Using your own words, explain what changes Tomaz has made to the House of the She Pine Tree (paragraph 7, ‘I found further ...’)** [2]

Most candidates were able to gain 2 of the 3 marks available for this question by explaining that Tomaz re-purchased his father’s artwork and hung it back on the walls of the house. Few candidates scored the third mark available by explaining that he had turned the house into a museum or guesthouse.

Question 2

Imagine that you have been on a school visit to Sintra. When you return, you are asked to give a speech to younger students in which you describe your experience and encourage them to go there.

Write the words of your speech.

In your speech you should include:

- information about the history of Sintra
- what there is to see there
- why Sintra might be an interesting place for a family holiday.

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

Begin your speech: ‘Good morning, fellow students ...’

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

For this task most candidates seemed to understand quite clearly the need to address each of the bullet points given in the question, and to give a variety of details about the history and places to visit in Sintra to convince other students that it would be an interesting destination for a family holiday. The most successful considered the style and purpose of their responses carefully, addressing an audience of younger students and selecting the most appropriate material from the passage to persuade them of Sintra's suitability as a future holiday destination. They tended to focus on the interesting historical details, the sites and activities likely to interest the students, and to highlight the range of different attractions and activities available to justify Sintra's suitability as a family holiday destination. The vast majority of candidates' responses were appropriate in their register and tone. Some responses adopted a rather narrative style but they did attempt to address the audience. These tended to lift details from the passage without selecting and adapting the material, and at times, without focusing clearly on the prompts in the question rubric. A small minority of candidates merely copied extracts from the passage with very few of their own words. Some candidates appeared confused as to whether they were recommending Sintra as a school trip or a family holiday, but these responses were usually able to include relevant ideas despite this apparent confusion.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points offering a balanced response to the whole task. Others only focused on the first two prompts in the question and did not offer any developed reasons for Sintra being a suitable destination for a family holiday. These responses repeated details about the history of Sintra and outlined ideas about what to see and do there. Higher marks could have been gained by developing the third bullet. While some candidates did not address the third bullet point, others only made a cursory reference to it at the end of their speech. Where candidates did address the third bullet point, they wrote about the range of interesting buildings, the opportunities for walking outdoors, the quiet beaches on the coast, and the opportunity to learn about history and architecture.

In a few responses there was extensive lifting of material and insufficient evidence of an attempt to write for the specified audience and purpose.

To gain the higher marks of Bands 1 and 2 for Reading it is essential that candidates develop ideas based on the passage rather than add their own imagined content. A few responses lacked focus on the passage instead describing imagined outings and sight-seeing on destination unrelated to Sintra. These responses bore little relation to the passage and became works of fiction, which of course, is not within the remit of the Reading Objectives for this paper.

The best responses – and there were a number – managed to develop imaginatively all three bullet points using, adapting and developing the finer details in the passage.

Question 3

(a) Notes

What do you learn about the features and the history of the Long Man, according to Passage B?

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

You do not need to use your own words.

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

[10]

This question required candidates to select appropriate relevant points from Passage B. It was generally answered well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed and focusing on the topic and the question. Some candidates included more than one point on the same line thereby not achieving the marks they may otherwise have been awarded. Sometimes candidates included more than 10 relevant points, but by putting more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks overall. There were also some points repeated several times, most commonly associated with the geographical location of the Long Man. Some candidates included irrelevant details that did not focus on the Long Man's features or history, most commonly a lift of 'more elegant in his powerful simplicity'. Occasionally candidates added numbered points at the end of their response; these extra points were not marked, as they are expected to select 10 only. It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly to ensure that they are picking out the appropriate material and equally that an attempt is made to set out the relevant individual points on each of the 10 lines. This also facilitates the avoidance of repeating similar points. Only a small number of candidates gained over 7 marks, although the majority of candidates achieved 5 or above.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the features and the history of the Long Man.

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

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

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

[5]

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

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

<p>Paper 0500/13 Reading Passages (Core)</p>
--

Key messages

- In **1(c)** candidates should remember that they cannot simply repeat the same word in their answer to **(ii)** as they used in **(i)** but should elaborate on the definition given in **(i)** and focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- Candidates must remember to deal with all 3 bullet points in **Question 2**, and attempt to develop ideas, both factual and inferential. The key message here is to look for clues within the passage and to develop those ideas, beyond the text, for the third bullet point.
- Candidates need to ensure that they are writing in the correct format for **Question 2** as well as following the bullet points to construct their response to the task. They also need to ensure that they pay attention to their spelling, punctuation and grammar to assist clarity.
- When selecting points for **3(a)** candidates should be careful to enter only one relevant point on each line in the answer box as only one point is credited for each line.

General comments

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

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and the majority of candidates responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. There was very little evidence of candidates not working within the paper time limit and relatively few examples of **No Response** answers. Overall, the standard of performance of most candidates was of a satisfactory to very good level, with only a very small number performing at a less than satisfactory standard.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Which word in lines 1–2 suggests the writer’s state of mind? [1 mark]**

The great majority of candidates gained the one mark available for what was a straightforward question – the word required was ‘anxiety’. It is worth noting here that the question should be answered by stating only the one word and nothing more.

- (b) **What does the writer expect to find when the visiting a castle (paragraph 1, 'It was with ...')?**
[2 marks]

The key to gaining the both marks for this question was to identify that there were types of details that were relevant. Thus, any of the details about the appearance of the castle ('moss-clad'; 'stone' or 'grey exterior') and reference to sounds ('moaning of owls' or 'rattling of rooks') would gain the two marks. Additionally, a mark was awarded to a response that, having identified one of these details also mentioned that the writer might have expected to find 'echoing rooms.' The majority of candidates correctly gave two appropriate details.

- (c) (i) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words underlined in each of the following quotations (paragraph 2 'Clytha sits on...'):**

- (1) 'Clytha sits on a curious bump of a hill ...' (line 7)
(2) '... all we could spot, at first, were some small pointed towers peering coyly from behind a grove of trees.' (lines 7–8)
(3) '... we had to proceed up the hill, through an iron gate, and along a meandering overgrown pathway.' (lines 8–9) [3 marks]

Not all candidates appeared to understand the precise requirements of this task. The question asked them to explain in their own words what the writer meant by the words underlined. Some candidates gave answers that would have been more appropriate to discussion of the whole phrase in (c)(ii). However, many candidates recognised the need to explain just the underlined word and a good number of candidates gained three marks for this part of the task. It is also worth noting that in the case of 'curious' some thought has to be given to its use in this context – a small number of candidates explained the word as being interested in something or wanting to find out. This is of course one meaning of 'curious' but is not relevant in the context in which it is being used here.

Examples of acceptable responses to these words would be:

- (1) unusual; unexpected; strange or odd
(2) shyly; timidly or unassumingly
(3) winding; wandering; rambling or curving.

- (ii) **Explain how the language in each of these quotations helps to create the atmosphere around the castle when they first arrive.**

In your answer you should refer to the whole quotation, not just the words underlined.
[6 marks]

Many candidates achieved marks on this question by showing some understanding and offering a partial explanation of individual phrases (as a whole). Most commented successfully on the way the language suggested that the place was remote or hidden.

Less successful responses made general comments which were largely re-iterating the quotation or lifting the language from the phrase and simply produced a circular explanation without demonstrating a clear understanding of the effect of the individual phrases. As in previous sessions, the marks gained from this question often totalled fewer than for (c)(i). Sometimes this was because answers to (c)(ii) did no more than repeat those given for (c)(i) or because a misunderstanding was carried through from (c)(i). It is important to note that each phrase requires a different explanation, as some less successful responses gave very similar explanations for all three phrases. It is also worth pointing out that the explanations of the phrases should be grounded in the context of the question as opposed to simple interpretations of the words used. A small number of successful responses made the connection between the atmosphere and the hidden, secretive aspects of the castle.

- (d) **Using your own words, explain what the writer thinks is unusual about the Welsh landscape as she drives through it (paragraph 3, 'It is said ... ').** [2 marks]

The great majority of candidates selected appropriate details from the paragraph and a good number gained two marks. A small number of candidates lost marks by repeating long sections of the paragraph – the key is to select information and to use own words as far as possible. Details that were acceptable were:

- there are a lot of castles
- hills appear suddenly
- castles are hanging onto the hills.

- (e) **Using your own words, explain how the writer suggests Wales has changed (paragraph 5, 'By the 19th century ... ').** [2 marks]

This question demonstrated the need for careful reading of the instructions. A good number of candidates got one or two marks by referring to details from the later part of this short paragraph – essentially details that follow the words 'times changed' in the second sentence. Candidates who used information from the first sentence did not get awarded any marks for this question. Details that were acceptable were:

- Wales is less wealthy now; has economic problems or poverty
- the coal mining industry has gone
- there is a lot of unemployment.

- (f) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by: 'the fortresses may now assist a country they once helped dominate.' (lines 23–24)** [2 marks]

This was a difficult phrase for candidates to express in their own words. However, a good number managed to get at least one mark by showing some understanding. To get two marks candidates needed to give an explanation something like: the castles that used to rule over Wales can now help the country. Another way to get one mark was to offer some comment on the castles helping Wales by attracting tourists.

- (g) **Using your own words, explain how the writer's daughter reacts to the castle (paragraph 7, 'One of its four ... ').** [2 marks]

The majority of candidates gained two marks for this task by offering the following details:

She is overwhelmed with delight (has always wanted to be a princess) and puts all her belongings on the bed and falls asleep.

Question 2

Imagine that you are the writer's son or daughter. After you have left Clytha castle you write a journal entry describing your visit.

Write the words of your journal entry.

In the journal entry you should include the following information:

- your first impressions of Clytha castle
- what it was like and how it may have been different from your expectations
- what you liked most about the visit.

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

Begin your journal entry: 'I have just left the most unusual place ...'

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

For this task the majority of candidates seemed to understand quite clearly the need to address each of the bullets and to give a credible account of the events of the passage from either the girl's or the boy's point of view. The majority understood the fairly straightforward format and gave answers with an appropriate register and voice for a child. The task provided a challenge as it required candidates to adopt a child's view of behaviour that was amusing to the adult parent who wrote the original. Some dealt with the very effectively by commenting on their brother or sister's response to the castle which they could view with some amusement. Only a small number of candidates wrote responses that did not reflect a child's perspective in any respect or wrote from the original writer's perspective.

Most candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points in a balanced approach. However, the less successful responses tended to be those where candidates (albeit in their own words) simply repeated the details from the passage. This meant that although there wasn't extensive lifting of material there was often little sense of candidates going beyond the details in the passage which obviously had a bearing on the detail included for the third bullet point.

More successful responses were able to give a reasonable sense of expectations, first impression and later discoveries which was the key to a full answer. As noted, this included, in the most successful cases, a credible sense of a family relationship. A good proportion of candidates some success in attempting to address the third bullet point. Overall, the responses showed a very good understanding of the passage, the atmosphere of the place and the son or daughter's feelings about the going inside and about walking around the castle.

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

Question 3

(a) Notes

What do you learn about the structure of Uluru and about Dreamtime, according to Passage B?

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

You do not need to use your own words.

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

[10 marks]

This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total score by the appropriate selection of 10 relevant details. It was answered very well with many candidates making one point per line and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a significant number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising – only one mark is awarded for each line regardless of the number of points it contains.

Very few candidates included more than 10 marks worth of relevant points, but by putting more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks. Similarly, only the first 10 lines are marked, so candidates who added further lines and points were still only credited for points included in the first 10 lines.

It is essential on this question that the candidate reads the question clearly to ensure that they are picking out the appropriate material and equally that some attempt is made to set out the relevant points one on each of the 10 lines. This also contributes to avoidance of repeating points in the summary that follows. A good number of candidates gained full marks; the majority achieved seven or above.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the structure of Uluru and about Dreamtime.

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

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

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

[5 marks]

Although some students were able to achieve Band 1 for clear, concise and fluent summaries the majority of candidates' responses were Band 2 (points were 'mostly focused' and made 'clearly') or Band 3 ('some areas of conciseness'). The least successful responses, of which there were only a few, were marred by personal comments and unselective 'lifting'.

The most successful responses showed careful planning and organisation of material with some synthesis of points. Middle range responses tended to be list-like with a series of loosely connected statements or to focus mainly on one the two required elements.

Concluding Comments

Most candidates completed the paper in some detail and the responses to **Question 2** in particular were of a generally good standard. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach and, overall, this seemed to an accessible and engaging paper. Those who have marked the paper over the years have generally been impressed with the seriousness and competence with which candidates of all levels have approached the questions and hope that similar candidates in the future will continue with this seriousness of purpose in whichever syllabus they attempt.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/21
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read both passages carefully, taking time to ensure that they had understood key details
- considered the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show in each response
- planned the content and route through their answer ahead of writing
- identified and edited ideas within their response in need of clarification and/or further detail
- avoided repetition
- gave equal attention to all sections of each question
- adapted their writing style to suit the task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- used a range of appropriate vocabulary to communicate ideas clearly and precisely
- did not rely on the language and/or structure of the original text to communicate ideas
- used clear, legible handwriting.

General comments

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible, and the majority of candidates finished the paper within the time allowed. Candidates' responses generally demonstrated an understanding of the need to select and adapt relevant material from the passages to answer the questions. On the whole, candidates attempted all parts of the three questions and most responses were an appropriate length.

Most responses to **Question 1** were focused on the question and generally all parts of the task were attempted. Good responses displayed a sound understanding of the ideas in Passage A including a range of relevant ideas that were typically developed effectively and supported by appropriate detail to describe Mikaela's thoughts and feelings about what she and Jane did during the morning, what happened after Jane returned later that evening, and Mikaela's relationship with Jane and Niki. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material, and often produced uneven responses including irrelevant material related to, for example, breakfasts, visits to the park and watching favourite television programmes. Less successful responses demonstrated evidence of a misreading of parts of Passage A, particularly those concerning the events which took place and the relationship between the characters.

For **Question 2**, in order to achieve higher marks, candidates must make appropriate choices from the specified paragraphs and offer detailed comments about these choices in the context of the passage. Many responses contained some accurate explanations of meanings and had identified some linguistic devices but only partially explained effects. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice – for example, suggesting that 'imprisoned figure' means that the person is imprisoned, or that 'a sea of movement' means that it is like the sea moving. Some candidates missed opportunities to consider individual words within longer choices and demonstrate understanding at higher levels, repeating instead rather broad and vague comments such as 'this shows that the market was waking up' and/or simply labelling devices without exploration of how the example was working within this particular context.

In **Question 3**, many candidates identified a reasonable number of points. In **Question 3(a)** short notes that clearly identify the point are required, rather than whole sentences. Candidates do not need to use their own words, though some chose to do so which then benefitted their summary writing in **3(b)**. In **Question 3(b)** candidates' own words need to be used. Some responses included phrases directly lifted from the passage,

and as such did not achieve higher band scores. Candidates should use their own words as far as possible in this summary task in order to demonstrate understanding of the original wording. Some candidates misinterpreted the stance, writing as the grandfather, often including redundant information and unnecessary comment as a result, and ultimately impeding their ability to produce an effective summary of the key points of the passage.

Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading: 20% of the marks available across the paper are awarded for Writing, and this is split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is therefore important that candidates consider the quality of their writing. Planning can support this in helping candidates to avoid repetition between sections, as well as awkward expression, and in ensuring that each question is dealt with in sufficient detail. Undeveloped language and inconsistency of style will limit candidates' achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Candidates are advised to allow adequate time for checking and editing their responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are Mikaela from Passage A.

Write your diary entry for the day's events.

In your diary entry you should include your thoughts and feelings about:

- **what you and Jane did during the morning**
- **what happened after Jane returned and later that evening**
- **your relationship with Jane and Niki.**

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

Begin your diary entry, 'Dear Diary, Today has been quite eventful ... '

Write about 250 to 350 words.

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

The majority of candidates made some attempt to engage with the task of writing a diary entry that included Mikaela's thoughts and feelings for the day's events. A few candidates misread the beginning of the passage and described Mikaela either sitting in the car or waiting outside the market, drawing on the car or the shop window. Some candidates misread the term market as referring to a supermarket. Additionally, the character of Jane was incorrectly referred to as a friend, niece or daughter rather than Mikaela's granddaughter. Some candidates included a 'grandmother' as an additional character to Mikaela and Jane. In relation to the third bullet, some candidates conflated this with details of Mikaela's feelings towards Jane and Niki which often led to generalised comments on being grateful and appreciative.

In response to bullet one, most candidates included details such as 'drawing stick-people on the window', 'buying groceries' and 'enjoyed shopping', despite some misreading of Mikaela waiting for Jane in the car. Development of Mikaela's concerns about being left alone and her feelings of boredom were also in evidence in some candidates' responses. Stronger responses focused on Mikaela's sense of isolation, expanding on this with references to illness, worry about Jane and the distractions or danger of the market.

Some responses addressed bullet two thinly while others relied heavily on lifting details about making soup and playing cards. Some mid-range answers missed opportunities to develop and interpret the material, instead replaying the passage – albeit in their own words – and often producing uneven responses. This somewhat mechanical approach demonstrates at best a reasonable level of understanding. Responses featuring adaptations of material from the passages indicate a more competent or thorough reading and an ability to go further in interpreting meaning. Some candidates wrote a speculative response based on unrelated ideas such as Mikaela and Jane watching the finals of 'Bake-off' together or preparing smoked vegetables and rice for dinner, followed by playing dominos. All ideas need to be rooted in the text.

In relation to the third bullet, most candidates were able to identify details about the help offered to Mikaela, although some did not differentiate between the more specific ideas linked to companionship and practical help, or concentrated on Mikaela's feelings of love towards Jane. There was also some misuse of pronouns, with a few candidates describing Niki as a woman. Some responses suggested a love triangle including Mikaela herself, while others included ideas not tethered to the text for example imagined past histories for the characters. Successful responses showed understanding of the explicit and implicit meaning of the text, developing ideas of Mikaela's feelings of dependence, guilt, and hopes for Jane and Niki's relationship.

Good responses addressed each of the three bullet points and included material relevant to each one. They contained a range of ideas that were developed and closely related to the passage. They also integrated a number of details. Less successful responses were more generalised incorporating few details from the passage or repeating ideas.

The Writing mark reflects the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response, how well it demonstrates an awareness of the genre, and how successfully it addresses audience and purpose. Overall, the quality of writing in candidates' responses was reasonable, though on occasion, awkward expression and/or structural inaccuracies detracted from the overall effect. Stronger answers addressed each of the bullets and interwove details from all aspects of the text, indicative of efficient planning. An inconsistency of style was observed in some responses, whilst copying directly from the text was the most frequent feature of the weakest writing.

Advice to candidates on Question 1

- Read the whole passage carefully, including the introduction.
- Plan your answer to ensure that your response is well sequenced and avoids repetition.
- Write in a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.
- Answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to make it appropriate to the task.
- Answer all parts of the question, addressing each of the three bullet points in reasonable detail.
- Do not copy from the passage.
- Develop and extend your ideas in relation to the passage.
- Allow sufficient time to edit your response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the world outside Mikaela's window in paragraph 1, beginning 'Mikaela watched the world pass by ...'
- (b) the scene at the market in paragraph 4, beginning 'Ahead, the market was beginning to wake up ...'

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

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

In **Question 2**, responses are expected to take the form of continuous prose in order to allow candidates to explore their choices fully and consider how their selected examples of language are working in the context of the passage. Analysis in both (a) and (b) needs to be sufficiently precise and extended to allow candidates to explain how each word within a chosen phrase is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions. Responses which took the form of brief notes under sub-headings signalling language choices lacked full consideration of the subtleties and complexity of the language being discussed. Some responses offered little relevant comment and a number featured repetition of the language of the passage or task with comments relating to the crowded nature of the streets and the busy market.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** featured high quality comments and tackled imagery with precision and imagination on carefully selected choices of language in both (a) and (b), thus showing a clear understanding of the writer's intended meaning. Empathic responses successfully explained for example the contrast between 'freedom' and 'imprisonment', as well as Mikaela's response to what she saw. A few

candidates picked up on the dangers of the market, though were unable to satisfactorily explain 'elongated body undulating and rippling' or 'fluttering awnings', particularly where they had perceived the market as a supermarket. This resulted in a general lack of comment about the threat, chaos and colour of the market.

Many candidates' responses displayed evidence of confidence with meaning and an ability to explain words such as 'liberated pedestrians', 'drawn into a current' and 'a sea of movement'. Some effects were explained well; many candidates could comment on Mikaela's loneliness for example. The strongest responses considered meaning and effects throughout. The weakest responses featured very few language choices, or offered few explanations for their use beyond the very general. Some candidates appeared to have adopted a 'technique spotting' approach identifying literary techniques resulting in commentary about the effects of such techniques rather than about the effects of the words themselves. Other candidates repeated the same explanation after each choice, for example, that the market was busy in **(b)**.

Other less successful responses took the form of a commentary on the entire paragraph for each of **(a)** and **(b)**, combining choices such as 'bags bounced and bounded...in enthusiastic obedience' and 'like a large beast groaning in dismay' and thus resulting in a very generalised explanation related to the movement of the pedestrians or the opening of the market. Some candidates offered single word choices only, and not always selecting the most appropriate ones, for example, offering 'watched' instead of 'watched the world pass by the window'. This does not demonstrate evidence of close reading or an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning. A few candidates discussed the choices outside the context of the passage, such as defining 'imprisoned' by linking it to criminal behaviour and not to Mikaela was watching from the window.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- Choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful. Do not write out whole sentences or give only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase.
- Treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list with one general comment to cover them all.
- Avoid general comments such as 'it makes you feel like you are really there' or 'this is a powerful image'.
- Consider the connotations and associations of the language used in order to explain its effects.
- Use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeating the words from the chosen phrase.
- If you are unsure about effects, begin with an explanation of meaning in context for each choice.
- Do not simply label literary devices you notice, consider the context in which they are being used.
- Try to explain images in each paragraph.

Question 3

(a) Notes

According to **Passage B**, what does this grandfather wish for his grandchildren in their future lives?

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

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes from **Question 3(a)** to write a summary of what this grandfather wishes for his grandchildren in their future lives, according to **Passage B**.

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

Your summary should include all 15 of your points in **Question 3(a)** and must be 200 to 250 words.

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

To answer this question successfully, responses needed to identify 15 points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly and in their own words. This is an exercise in informative writing; a style which differs from that of the passages. Most candidates understood that they should not go beyond line 15, or include more than one point per line. Better more focused answers typically scored 10 or more of the available content marks. The second part of the task required candidates to use their notes, adapting and organising them to produce a summary in their own words. A significant amount of direct copying was observed.

The question focused on what the grandfather wishes for his grandchildren in their future lives. Better responses were clear and unambiguous. Weaker less-focused responses did not fully address the task. A number relied on working through the passage – often with limited modification of the original. These typically offered long explanations or repeated ideas relating to ‘other cultures’, ‘show[ing] kindness’ or ‘education’, for example listing ‘education’, ‘studying’, and ‘taking exams’ as separate points. Others adopted a narrative tone and depended heavily on the language of the original rather than using synonyms for language such as ‘material wealth’, ‘fulfilment’ or ‘wealth of the mind’. Another source of weakness was the presentation of incomplete or inexact ideas – for example, meeting people, without the sense of them being from a different culture. Where three or more points were given on a single line in part **(a)** such as ‘stand still for a second, reflect, look at what you possess’ or ‘education enables you to be broad-minded and to think critically’ these could not be fully credited.

Carefully checking responses for accuracy in spelling and grammar is essential in **3(a)**. Candidates should also ensure that they include sufficient detail in relation to the question; for example, some candidates wrote ‘relationships’, whereas it is ‘happiness in relationships’ that the grandfather wishes for his grandchildren in their future lives.

Successful **Question 3(b)** responses demonstrated careful organisation of points from **3(a)** which were delivered with concision and fluency and did not repeat points in the same order or language of the passage. These avoided introductory statements and commentary, and instead concentrated on giving a factual objective summary in the candidate’s own words.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- Read the question carefully to identify the specific focus of the task, underlining key words.
- Re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to find the precise information needed to answer it.
- Reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 distinct points.
- List your points – one complete idea per numbered line – using as few words as possible.
- Avoid repetition of points.
- Remember that you can choose to use your own words in **3(a)** and that you must use your own words in **3(b)**, although you do not need to change key words.
- Plan your response in **3(b)** to ensure that your ideas are well organised and logically sequenced.
- Do not write in narrative form, or in the first person, or in any other inappropriate form.
- Write informatively and do not comment on the content of the passage.
- If using a word-processor, number your points in **3(a)**.
- Pay attention to the guidance on the length of your answer for **3(b)**.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read both passages carefully, taking time to ensure that they had understood key details
- considered the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show in each response
- planned the content and route through their answer ahead of writing
- identified edited ideas within their response in need of clarification and/or further detail
- avoided repetition
- gave equal attention to all sections of each question
- adapted their writing style to suit the task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- used a range of appropriate vocabulary to communicate ideas clearly and precisely
- did not rely on the language and/or structure of the original text to communicate ideas
- used clear, legible handwriting.

General comments

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible. The majority of candidates finished the paper within the time allowed and many of the best responses showed signs of having been carefully planned and edited. Candidates' responses generally demonstrated an understanding of the need to identify relevant material from the passages to answer the questions. More successful responses were able to recognise implicit as well as explicit ideas – using, explaining and adapting the material to demonstrate their understanding of both tasks and texts. Less successful responses typically relied on the language of the text, rather than paraphrasing.

The most successful responses were focused and considered thereby demonstrating evidence of close reading of both passages. Less successful responses offered insufficient evidence of skills and understanding, for example, not developing ideas in line with evidence in the text for **Question 1**, not extending explanations when discussing choices in **Question 2** and/or not selecting relevant information in **Question 3**. A few candidates did not pay sufficient attention to key instructions. For example, some responses included explanations of fewer than eight choices (four in each half) in **Question 2**. Some candidates might have benefitted from more efficient use of time – for example, counting the number of individual words in their answer and ending it arbitrarily at the point at which the recommended upper word limit was reached without having addressed all parts of the question. More successful responses showed evidence of candidates having planned their ideas, using the word guidance to help them judge the amount of time they might need to spend on each section. The weakest answers to all three questions often relied heavily on copying vocabulary and expressions from the text. Candidates are advised to modify relevant ideas and details in a text rather than simply reproducing them in order to demonstrate that they have fully understood them.

The majority of responses to **Question 1** showed at least some familiarity with the form specified. Many candidates demonstrated an awareness and appreciation of the reader, organising and explaining their ideas clearly and including some helpful detail. Better responses avoided the repetition prevalent in those weaker responses that relied on replaying the text, with or without paraphrasing. The best responses showed an understanding of the need to revisit and reconsider the events in Passage A from the perspective of Thomas' mother, using clues and suggestions in the text to inform their interpretation of her feelings and reflections.

To demonstrate understanding in **Question 2**, candidates need to make appropriate choices from each of the paragraphs specified and offer detailed explanations for the language featured as it is used in the context of the passage. Most responses were able to offer at least some relevant explanation of meanings in either **(a)** or **(b)**, with better answers offering sound explanations in both **(a)** and **(b)**, and the best exploring and providing precise meaning and/or effects. Weaker responses included explanations for the chosen language which employed the same words as the original, and as such resulted in at best a partial explanation. The best answers explained how the language was working by carefully and thoroughly attending to the imagery evoked by the words or phrases chosen.

For **Question 3**, mid-range responses identified a number of explicit ideas in part **(a)**, though these were not always entirely focused and as such repetition of ideas was evident. Candidates are reminded that **Question 3** is a selective summary task, not a précis. Approaches which result in simply tracking and rewording the passage are not conducive to fully addressing the task. The most successful responses avoided excess material and focused on identifying, organising and communicating the ideas required to answer the question as set.

Whilst Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, 10 of the available marks are awarded for Writing, and these 10 marks are split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is therefore important that candidates consider the quality of their writing. Planning can support this in helping candidates to structure their responses and to avoid awkward expression. Candidates are also advised to read their explanations back in order to ensure that meaning is clear. Inaccurate language and inconsistency of style can limit their achievement. Candidates are advised to allow adequate time for checking and editing their responses, to avoid over-reliance on the language of the passages as well as to correct any meaning-impeding errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are Thomas's mother from Passage A. Months later another parent wants to hold a children's party and asks you whether you would recommend Mr Pengelly as an entertainer.

Write a letter to the parent.

In your letter you should comment on:

- **your memories of what happened during the magic show at Thomas's party**
- **your thoughts and feelings about Mr Pengelly that day**
- **whether you would recommend him.**

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

**Begin the response, 'Dear friend,
Thomas's party will stay in my memory for a long time ...'**

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

In **Question 1**, candidates needed to demonstrate that they had read the text carefully – understanding both explicit and implicit ideas contained within it – and using these in their letter to reflect on events from Thomas's mother's perspective, and to consider whether or not to recommend Mr Pengelly. In less successful answers, errors such as suggesting that Edward, rather than Thomas, was the birthday boy diluted evidence of understanding. Similarly, those responses which invented detail outside of the text

missed opportunities to offer relevant development and reach higher bands. For example, suggestions that Thomas' mother had booked Mr Pengelly as he was offering a discount and/or advertising online, or that he had been more expensive than others and as such was expected to be better were not supported in the text and consequently offered no evidence of close reading.

Where candidates considered the implications of details within the text they were able to develop and extend their ideas convincingly from Thomas' mother's point of view. For example, some candidates noted Thomas's mother's 'flustered' responses. Combining this with an observation of Thomas's complaint that they had 'been nice to Mr Pengelly for a long time now!', they judged that there must have been a prior arrangement, promise and/or reprimand which Thomas's mother had hoped to keep from Mr Pengelly and were therefore able to develop her feelings of embarrassment. Some responses extended the idea that the magic tricks were less interesting to the children than playing on the games console, suggesting that Mr Pengelly's brand of magic might be considered old fashioned, and included this in their advice in response to bullet 3.

In response to bullet 1, some candidates' responses included unfocused, speculative information, such as unsupported detail about who had been invited to the party, the food on offer, presents received and how many children were present. Some responses suggested that Mr Pengelly had performed splendidly and everyone had had a good time, which the passage did not support. Other responses made reference to the material but involved a mechanical replaying of events in the text without reflection or interpretation, and as a consequence one or more of the bullets in the task was missed. Replaying the text often revealed misreading or misunderstanding of the text, for instance by suggesting that the audience participation trick had involved Thomas trying to screw the magic wand into his forehead and/or that Mr Pengelly had broken the game controller. Copying from paragraph one was common in weaker responses.

When approaching the second bullet, better answers often referred to both the mother's and Mr Pengelly's disappointment and embarrassment and picked up on the explicit detail that suggested her obvious sympathy for him. More mechanical answers were less relevant, for example the mother noting her own kindness in offering Mr Pengelly a drink. Those responses which addressed the three bullets equally achieved higher marks. In a number of responses, more careful focus and development of a greater number of ideas thus providing more evidence of a deeper understanding of the text would have increased marks awarded for bullet 3.

Candidates who suggested that Mr Pengelly was new to magic and just needed more practice had overlooked details in the text indicating that this was not the case. Others, reading more carefully, noted such details as the leaflet offering 're-training', the dented top hat, his slow hands and 'last tragic bow' as evidence that Pengelly had been a magician for some time. Many recognised that he was better at fixing the console than performing magic tricks and some made the connection that his recognition that things could be fixed extended to his act – suggesting he may well complete the training course and revitalise his skills. Responses asserting that Mr Pengelly had ruined the party and that the mother threatened revenge had missed something of the nature of Thomas' mother. Others reading closely recognised the mother's attempt to hide her embarrassment from Mr Pengelly, the familiarity with which she addressed him, the fact that she may have been tempted to give him the benefit of the doubt and/or feel sorry for him, and Mr Pengelly's reference to her kindness in giving him the job. A number of reasonably successful responses suggested that Thomas' mother felt she could not recommend Mr Pengelly as an entertainer since he had been unable to hold the attention of his young audience, though she was still able to vouch for his kindness and perseverance, noting the relevant details in the text to support this.

The most successful responses made clear from the outset whether they would be recommending Mr Pengelly or not and built their argument accordingly, using, extending and developing ideas from the text and maintaining awareness of the reader. These responses addressed all three bullets, though did not rely on the bullets in the organisation of their ideas thus enabling them to avoid repetition. Occasionally, candidates appeared to have focused on the quantity of words in their response at the expense of the quality of their ideas and explanations. Centres are reminded that whilst overlong or unduly short responses are not advised in **Question 1**, word guidance is offered primarily to help candidates plan their time. The total number of words suggested in the guidance for **Question 1** should not be regarded as a word limit. Lapses into narrative resulted in an inconsistency of style in weaker responses, whilst copying directly from the text was the most frequent feature of the weakest writing.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- Read the passage and take time to clarify your understanding.

- Imagine yourself in the role and/or situation as described in the task.
- Plan your answer to ensure that your response is well sequenced and avoids repetition.
- Write in a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.
- Answer in your own words: do not copy from the passage.
- Address all parts of the question equally.
- Develop and extend your explanations to show an understanding of the explicit and implicit ideas in the passage.
- Allow sufficient time to edit your response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the magic tricks in paragraph 6, beginning ‘Blinking, he surveyed ...’
- (b) what happened to the game controller in paragraph 9, beginning “Time to eat!”

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

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

Responses to **Question 2** which took the form of continuous prose allowed candidates the best opportunity to explore their choices fully and show an understanding of how the language is working in the context of the passage. Extended analysis in both (a) and (b) is required if candidates are to fully explain each word within a chosen phrase and to consider how the language is contributing to and affecting the reader’s understanding and reactions.

There were relatively few errors related to basic meanings in candidates’ explanations, though some showed a loss of focus. For example, some candidates confused ‘crumpled’ with crumbled and ‘skidded’ with skipped. Other responses detracted from the focus of part (b) including explanations for the possible damage to the polished floor in ‘skidded’ and ‘clattering heavily’ rather than considering precisely what had happened to the controller. Some erroneously selected language such as ‘howl’ which did not describe the controller. A number of candidates appeared to have attempted to make all their choices conform to one general impression rather than making connections and/or building to an overall impression. For example, some responses included the theme of entrapment in part (a), with everything trying to escape – an idea which did not work when applied to ‘humiliating dent’. Others featured a car crash analogy in part (b) which worked well in reference to ‘skidding’ and ‘a sharp juddering halt’, while attempts to interpret the joystick as a person suffering dislocation and broken bones were less credible.

The most successful responses were balanced over (a) and (b), often using a discussion of meaning, connotations and associations in relation to each word selected as a starting point for their effect. Strong responses considered part (a) choices as a reflection of Pengelly’s feelings, and successfully illustrated how each one contributed to this. A few picked up on the irony of the use of ‘grand stage’ when applied to his role as a party entertainer. Similarly, a number of better responses commented on the comic aspect in part (b), even the irony of the buttons’ circus-like antics providing more entertainment than the magician. Stronger responses unpicked individual elements of choices and considered how they worked together. Mid-range responses often missed opportunities to achieve higher marks by providing a general comment and/or dealing with only one of the words in their choices.

Candidates who appeared less secure in their own use of vocabulary often repeated rather than explained or explored their potentially interesting choices such as ‘neatly cracking open’. Successful responses noted the perfectly clean break suggested by this phrase, interpreting it as an indication that the controller could be fixed, while others were reminded of an image of an egg or nut split satisfyingly in two to reveal its contents. Where choices were the result of device spotting and/or unselective copying, candidates often struggled to offer a full explanation. The weakest responses relied heavily on the language of the original when attempting to explain thus providing minimal evidence that the language of the choice had been understood. The most successful responses included high quality comments and tackled imagery with precision and imagination in both parts of the question.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- Identify a range of words and phrases that seem powerful in each paragraph.
- Choose the four examples from each paragraph you are best able to explain.
- Treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list with one general comment to cover them all.
- Avoid unsupported general comments such as ‘it really describes what is happening’ or ‘this helps the reader picture the scene’.
- Consider the connotations and associations of the language used in order to explain its effects.
- Use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeating words from the chosen phrase.
- If you are unsure about effects, begin with an explanation of meaning in context for each choice.
- Do not simply label literary devices you notice; explain how exactly they are working in context.
- If you notice connections between choices, explain and explore them to support your discussion of effect.
- Only provide a general comment related to language use in each paragraph as a whole, where you have arrived at that comment through close analysis of your language choices.

Question 3

(a) Notes

According to **Passage B**, what are the particular advantages of choosing a robot manufactured by Radical Robot Designs?

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

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer.

The particular advantages of choosing a robot manufactured by Radical Robot Designs.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes from **Question 3(a)** to write a summary of the particular advantages of choosing a robot manufactured by Radical Robot Designs, according to **Passage B**.

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

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

Responses that addressed **Question 3**, the selective summary task, successfully identified a number of distinct advantages of choosing a robot manufactured by Radical Robot Designs. The best responses did not include extraneous material such as information related to robots in general, nor did they feature repeated examples of the same point. Strong responses showed a clear understanding of ideas, often employing own words in part **(a)** and always doing so in part **(b)**, thus avoiding the lifting of phrases prevalent in weaker responses. There were a small number of candidates who did not offer 15 points in part **(a)** leaving one or more lines blank. Where candidates attempted to simply list their part **(a)** ideas in part **(b)**, evidence of skills and understanding was reduced and this impacted on achievement. Lifting ideas from the text by cutting and pasting with minimal changes to word order often resulted in their intended meaning being lost. Responses which replicated the style and tone of Liam Cheng’s original pitch or which copied directly from the text did not fully address the task as set. Explanations in stronger responses were informative and concise, avoiding repetition and comment. The best prose responses were impersonal in style and carefully structured with ideas confidently expressed in the candidate’s own words.

While it may have been reasonable in part **(b)** not to attempt to reword some of the phrases from the text such as ‘advanced algorithms’ and ‘neural networks’, potentially stronger answers missed an opportunity by not using own words for other ideas such as the robots’ ability to ‘discover faults and make judgements’ or ‘learn quickly and effectively’. Answers should not rely on the language or structure of the original text to communicate ideas. Redundant introductions and conclusions, along with a tendency to track the passage, were features of less successful responses. The best answers signalled a revisiting of notes in part **(a)** to revise and refine ideas, planning and an awareness of the reader.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- Read the question carefully to identify the specific focus of the selective summary task.
- Re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify potentially relevant ideas.
- Reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to establish and select 15 distinct points.
- List your points in note form – one complete idea per line.
- Avoid repetition of points
- Remember that you must use your own words where practical in the prose response (part **(b)**).
- Plan your prose response in **3(b)** to ensure that your ideas are well organised and logically sequenced.
- Write informatively and do not comment on the content of the passage.
- Pay attention to the guidance on the length of your answer for **3(b)**.
- When checking and editing your answers to **Question 3**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/23
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- read both passages carefully, taking time to ensure that they had understood key details
- considered the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show in each response
- planned the content and route through their answer ahead of writing
- reviewed their response to identify and edit areas in need of clarification and/or further detail
- avoided repetition
- gave equal attention to all sections of each question
- adapted their writing style to suit the task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose
- used a range of appropriate vocabulary to communicate ideas clearly and precisely
- did not rely on the language and/or structure of the original text to communicate ideas
- used clear, legible handwriting.

General comments

Most candidates demonstrated an awareness of the requirements of each question and appeared to find both passages equally accessible. The most successful candidates displayed a sound understanding of both passages and of the requirements of both of the tasks, recognising and responding to implicit as well as explicit ideas and adapting the material to demonstrate their skills.

Most candidates attempted all parts of each task; there were few incomplete responses or questions not attempted, and the majority of candidates appeared to have organised their time effectively. For **Question 1** there were some engaging, focused and well-structured interviews written in an appropriate style. Weaker responses contained a narrow range of ideas, few of which were developed. For **Question 2** most responses included some well-chosen examples with clear explanations of meaning and attempts made to explain effects in both **(a)** and **(b)**. Strong responses featured relevant and precise examples with clear explanations of effects and images while also identifying and exploring the use of irony and humour. Weaker responses contained some inappropriate or inexact choices with meanings limited to the very straightforward and comments being very general. For **Question 3** many candidates included a number of precise and relevant points in part **(a)** and the prose summaries in part **(b)** were for the most part, focused and concise. Less strong responses lacked clarity and precision and relied heavily on phrases copied from the passage.

Whilst Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, 20% of the marks available across the paper are awarded for Writing, and this 20% is split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is therefore important that candidates consider the quality of their writing. Planning can support this in helping candidates to organise their responses and avoid awkward expression, while reviewing is vital to ensure that candidates' meaning is clear. Language inaccuracies – particularly those impeding meaning – and inconsistency of style can limit candidates' achievement as can over-reliance on the language of the passages.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Imagine you are Doris. Years later, now successful yourself, you are interviewed by a national radio programme about your family, brother and memories of the upbringing the two of you had.

The interviewer asks you the following three questions only:

- **What do you remember about your family and the values and attitudes to life they each had?**
- **Your brother claims he started his career in journalism at the age of eight. Tell us your memories of him and what happened at that time.**
- **Looking back, can you explain how the skills and qualities you had as a child helped you get where you are today?**

Write your response to each of the interviewer's questions.

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

Begin your interview with your answer to the first question.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

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

Most candidates understood that the three bullet points in the question covered the totality of what they needed to address and no extra questions or comments from the interviewer were required. This adherence to the requirements of task resulted in some well-focused and well-structured responses. The majority of answers were written from the perspective of Doris. Only a few were written from Buddy's viewpoint – usually the result of copying phrases from the passage – and often this was rectified later in the interview.

For the first bullet the majority of answers were focused on the values and attitudes of the three main family members; Doris's father, mother and brother, and most included relevant details from the passage. There was some variation in how candidates interpreted these details. Some made negative comments about the mother, for example, suggesting that she had a cruel, domineering and manipulative nature, without providing evidence from the text to support these interpretations. Where candidates made reference to her criticisms of Buddy, her insistence that he continue to try and sell magazines in the rain, even though he was only eight years old, and her conversation with the PCP executive, credit was given for supporting detail and effective development. Most interviews referred to the mother's ambition for her children; her determination that they would be successful and not grow up like their father. Many referred to her 'fancier ideas' and included references to 'desks, white collars and well-pressed suits'. Good responses interpreted these details as evidence of her desire to see them in professional careers and her hopes that their move to the city from the countryside would provide them with opportunities to be more successful than their father and his rural family.

Most answers included details of the father's overalls, calloused hands and fourth-grade education while better responses recognised the implication of these details referring to him as a hard-working man engaged in manual labour. Some commented on the contrast between the attitudes and outlook of each of the parents. Some referred to the father's support and kindness in buying *The Post* from Buddy after he had failed to sell any copies and was feeling despondent. Several references were made to the mother's concern about Buddy's inactivity and lack of gumption. Some touched on his love of rummaging, collecting discarded items and listening to the radio, but these details were rarely developed and only in a few responses was it suggested that Buddy's love of stories and the radio inspired his later career in journalism, or that his laid back approach and shyness prevented him from becoming a successful salesperson. Several commented on his kindness in buying apples to celebrate Doris's success. Few responses mentioned the grandfather and father's family. References were made to the grandfather asking Buddy if he wanted to be President and Buddy's reply about becoming a garbage man because of his love of collecting. Stronger responses expressed Doris's resentment at the fact that only boys were asked about their future careers and related this to her desire to prove herself and be successful. Weaker responses contained a narrow range of ideas that lacked development. They also relied on copied phrases.

The response to the second question was often the most detailed, though in some cases there was a lack of development. Good responses not only described the events that led to Buddy being recruited as a newspaper salesperson, but also explained that the mother decided to take action after Buddy announced that he wanted to be a garbage collector. References were made to his initial enthusiasm, the importance he placed on his job and his later disillusionment and disappointment in a number of responses. Good responses went further by detailing the mother's determination to secure the job for Buddy by misleading the PCP executive about Buddy's qualities, and her refusal to allow Buddy to give up despite his failure. Some included Doris's views about his lack of sales technique; she knew that Buddy's shyness prevented him from approaching strangers and that standing in the same place waiting for people to ask him for a magazine was the wrong approach. There was some excellent development of Doris's success at selling for example, referring to the thrill she felt at having the opportunity to leave her household tasks and her eagerness to show what she was capable of. In some stronger responses, references were made to Doris's mother's instructions to Buddy, to Doris knowing that she had to be proactive, and also to her being intelligent enough to realise that she had a captive audience at the traffic lights where drivers had no escape and could not refuse to buy a paper from a determined but innocent-looking seven-year old. Weaker responses gave a largely narrative account of events that was heavily reliant on direct lifting of words and phrases from the passage. There was also some evidence of a misunderstanding of Buddy's job; references to him delivering free newspapers to houses.

For the third interview question, the majority of responses included several skills and qualities that Doris had as a child. They included references to her determination, confidence, enthusiasm, energy, persuasive skills and capacity for hard work. Better responses discussed these qualities and explained how and why they helped her to achieve success. There were a lot of details throughout the passage that could have been selected to support Doris's reply to this question. Better responses had effectively identified and developed these details, making references to her family and childhood experiences, and explaining how these shaped her future. Examples included: Doris's sense that her career prospects were being ignored by older relatives making her more determined to succeed despite her gender; Doris's familiarity with hard work given that she's always done chores at home; the experience of hearing her mother talk about gumption, determination (her 'never-say-quit spirit'), all necessary attributes for success; Doris seeing how persuasive her mother was with the PCP representative; Doris listening to her mother advising Buddy about selling, and; her awareness that Buddy had failed due to a lack of courage, self-confidence and initiative. Good responses also made reference to Doris's career as a politician, journalist or CEO of a sales company and explained how important her skills and qualities were to her current position, for example, her competitiveness, her tendency to seek opportunities, her ability to connect with people and her determination to never give up. These were all relevant inferences from the passage and were rewarded as evidence of development. Weaker responses included quite general comments about achieving goals and about Doris being grateful to her family for their support. Some responses expressed gratitude to Doris's mother for the skills and qualities she taught, without explaining what those skills and qualities were. Weaker responses tended to include few of Doris's attributes while some contained phrases copied directly from the passage.

Most candidates showed some familiarity with the informal and conversational style appropriate to a radio interview. Many responses were strengthened by comments such as, 'journalism – if you could call it that', 'you should have seen Mother's face' and 'Poor Buddy hadn't a clue'. The strongest responses created an authentic voice for Doris, they were fluently written and they contained a range of appropriate and interesting vocabulary. Weaker responses lacked clarity, relied heavily on the wording of the passage or contained direct lifting of language from it.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- Read the passage and take time to clarify your understanding.
- Imagine yourself in the role and/or situation as described in the task.
- Write in a suitable voice, tone and style for the persona in the response.
- Answer in your own words; do not copy from the passage.
- Select ideas from all parts of the passage and decide which are more appropriate to which bullet.
- Develop and extend your explanations to show an understanding of the explicit and implicit ideas in the passage.
- Avoid repetition.
- Allow sufficient time to edit your response.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

- (a) the executive's description of what the job entails and Buddy's initial reaction in paragraph 12, beginning 'The executive announced ...'
- (b) Buddy's reaction to the idea of being a writer in paragraph 24, beginning 'I clasped the idea ...'

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

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

Responses to **Question 2** which took the form of continuous prose allowed candidates the best opportunity to explore their choices fully and show an understanding of how language is working in the context of the passage. Extended analysis in both (a) and (b) is required if candidates are to fully explain each word within a chosen phrase and to consider how the language is contributing to and affecting the reader's understanding and reactions.

The majority of candidates attempted both parts of this question and there were very few non-responses or incomplete answers. Despite the large number of options available, some candidates did not include explanations of sufficient appropriate examples. Including fewer choices and/or not attempting both parts of the questions, limits candidates' opportunity to fully demonstrate their understanding of language use.

In part (a) several responses gave an overview of the exaggerated importance attached to the job of selling newspapers and of Buddy's initial enthusiasm. Good responses supported this with appropriate examples and clear explanations of key words. There was a recognition of the irony in describing the ordinary canvas bag as 'handsome', and an understanding of the gently mocking tone in the phrase 'presented with reverence'. There were some excellent explanations of 'soldiers of the free press' where Buddy imagined himself as part of an army battling to bring a fair and unbiased newspaper to the people, and waging a war against fake news. This image was often linked to the phrases 'fit for my holy quest' and 'sword-arm free' with references made to knights and crusaders undertaking an important and religious task. Some discussed the childlike image of an eight-year-old boy pretending to be a brave fighter ready to draw his weapon for a noble cause. There were some clear explanations of 'freshly printed copies' and the enthusiasm inferred from the words 'raced home'.

Weaker responses gave similar explanations for different phrases, or gave general comments that did not refer to specific words. For example, the idea of fighting a battle and protecting people was explained with reference to 'soldiers of the free press', 'holy quest' and 'sword-arm'. Some explanations lacked precision and were not focused on individual words and on how they contributed to overall effects. Some included over-long choices, with comments relating to only a few of the words within them. The word 'embarked' was often overlooked when explaining 'highway to journalism' and some responses gave a literal explanation of the word 'highway,' i.e. as a fast-moving road, without considering the metaphorical idea of Buddy starting out on a career path. Though a popular choice, few explained the giddy and intoxicating effect of 'heady ink'. Candidates are advised to select carefully from the choices available and to choose those they feel best able to comment on, and to ensure that they address all of the words encompassed within a choice in their explanations.

In part (b) several responses commented that the two paragraphs reflected the changing attitudes of Buddy towards his job. Good responses explored relevant examples to illustrate the hardships he faced and his disillusionment at selling newspapers, as well as how the handsome bag was now a 'sack', and his sense that he was 'peddling' inferior goods. There were some clear explanations of the word 'trudged', and of phrases 'rejected by surly strangers' and 'savaged by the elements'. Good responses discussed these over-stated descriptions of what was a laborious, thankless and dangerous task for Buddy. There were also clear explanations of Buddy's captivation by the idea of himself as a writer in the phrases 'clasped the idea to my heart' and 'enchanted by the vision'.

Weaker responses included some inappropriate choices with quite ordinary language that could not be rewarded, for example, 'couldn't be classified as work' and 'I'd never met a writer'. Some included general

comments about the hardships of selling without reference to specific words or phrases to illustrate them. Some weaker responses included explanations of 'savaged' without reference to the harsh 'elements' or weather conditions, and some gave a very basic meaning of the word 'strangers' without mentioning or addressing the words 'rejected' or 'surly'. Individual words within a phrase offer scope to explore effects as well as to unpick images: better responses took this opportunity to elaborate on the phrase 'rejected by surly strangers' as evidence of Buddy's sense of failure and of the negative impact on his self-esteem at being continually turned down or ignored by hostile people. Stronger responses recognised the use of exaggeration and humour in the writer's descriptions and were able to explain how the use of alliteration contributed to the effect.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- Identify a range of words and phrases from each paragraph which it might be useful to discuss.
- Select the four examples from each paragraph which you are best able to explain.
- When identifying literary devices, explain why and how they have been used in this context.
- Avoid general comments such as 'this creates a picture for the reader' or 'this helps to imagine what it was like'.
- Consider the connotations and associations of the language used in order to explain its effects.
- Use your own words to explain your choices rather than repeating words from the chosen phrase.
- If you are unsure about effects, begin with an explanation of meaning in context for each choice.
- Focus on specific key words within selected phrases to explain how they contribute to the overall effects.

Question 3

(a) Notes

According to Passage B, for what reasons do people decide to change career?

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

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer.

(b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of the reasons people decide to change career, according to Passage B.

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

Your summary should include all 15 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 200 to 250 words.

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

The majority of responses demonstrated a solid understanding of Passage B and of the question. Most answers included one point per line in part (a) as required, and answers to part (b) were more focused as a result. Good responses concentrated on the reasons why people changed careers and avoided extraneous material such as the personal experiences and pieces of advice that were included in the passage. It was equally valid to present points as either positive or negative reasons for change, for example, feeling undervalued in their current career could alternatively be expressed as the need to feel valued in a new career. Good responses included relevant points from the passage with precision and clarity, identifying the reasons people decide to change career, and summarising these effectively. Weaker responses included general pieces of advice such as 'decide what you want', or paraphrased the passage without focusing on the specifics of the task as set. Evidence of skills and understanding was inevitably diluted where ideas were not clear, complete or where they were copied unselectively. For example, the idea that people changed career because they had come to realise what they really wanted from a job was not always expressed clearly. In a number of responses there was some duplication which might have been avoided through

careful review. For example, the opportunity for greater flexibility and the freedom to organise one's own workload were too similar to be treated separately; better answers combined these under one point.

Many part **(b)** responses were informative and written concisely in an appropriate style. The best responses were structured effectively with similar ideas grouped together and not simply listed as a series of unconnected points. For example, practical issues such as commuting and low pay appeared together in one grouping of ideas, and less tangible points such as following a dream and wanting fulfilment and new challenges in another. Some responses presented positive and negative reasons for the same point together, and this often contributed to a more fluent and cohesive summary. The best responses were written in the candidate's own words. For example, many referred to redundancy rather than the job not existing, the journey to work as a paraphrase of the daily commute and to feeling unappreciated instead of undervalued. Using alternative wording in this way demonstrated a clear understanding of ideas as well as knowledge of a range of appropriate vocabulary. Weaker responses included comments, long explanations and an over-reliance on the wording of the original. Lifting whole phrases or sentences often resulted in a lack of focus and concision and displayed a less than secure understanding of the task and passage.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- Read the question carefully to identify the specific focus of the selective summary task.
- Re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify relevant ideas.
- List your points in note form – one complete idea per line.
- Re-organise the information from the passage and group similar ideas together.
- Make sure that your summary conveys the intended meaning of the writer.
- Avoid repetition of points.
- Remember that you must use your own words where practical in the prose response (part **(b)**).
- Write informatively and do not comment on the content or style of the passage.
- Pay attention to the guidance on the length of your answer for **3(b)**.
- When checking and editing your answers to **Question 3**, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/31
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were 10 marks available for Reading in **Question 1**.

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

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

General comments

The great majority of responses showed confident awareness of what was expected in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the Paper, and rubric infringements were very rare. A small number of scripts had no response to Section 2.

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

Some excellent answers which interrogated the views expressed by the writer of the passage showed a mature awareness of the pressures on employees in modern high-tech workplaces. Concern about the mental health of such employees was the basis for support of the campaign although many responses also included references to regulations around regular breaks during the working day. Some strong responses enthusiastically supported the campaign's assertions of the wide-ranging benefits of resting or sleeping at work but while still showing an ability on the part of the candidate to develop their own views in a suitably evaluative manner. Other responses recognised the varying realities experienced by different companies but with thoughtful reservations. Some refuted the campaign's demands without recognising the concerns driving them. Those responses which offered some challenge to the article's assertions and attitudes were more able to show evaluation of the material where candidates justified their objections.

The best responses combined an assured grasp of the content and attitudes expressed by the various personae represented in the passage, with an independence of thought reflected in the structure of their writing. They were evaluative of the whole thrust of the article from the outset, selecting and commenting on its details to support views and being sensitively aware of the attitudes of the speaker in the text. In these responses an ability to effectively summarise the different ideas expressed was apparent.

In Band 3, responses often reproduced the points offered by the writer with some, often anecdotal, development, and gave their conclusion in a final paragraph the tone of which was sometimes at variance with what had gone before. Some weaker responses began with an apparently whole-hearted acceptance of the need to have a nap at work but then completely reversed this opinion by the end of the letter without sufficient justification.

While it was appropriate to give due consideration to the beliefs and testimonies in the article about the Take-a-Break campaign, the question also required candidates to give their own views on these ideas, and quite frequently, responses did not develop a clear stance on the topic. Although even at the lower levels of achievement there was often some coverage of the material, many responses at this level showed such limited coverage of the material that they could not be awarded a Band 3 score for Reading, despite a level of written fluency and accuracy worthy of a higher-level score. Some candidates demonstrated an originality of thought in Section 2 compositions that was not evident in their handling of the reading passage.

Most responses paid attention to the style required, were somewhat evaluative in purpose, and used the passage to create and structure arguments with a sense of audience. Some weaker responses struggled to find the appropriate tone and style of address beyond 'Dear Team', and were inappropriately informal or aggressive.

In Section 2, there was usually a clear awareness of the differing requirements of the two genres; in this examination series the narrative options were much more popular than the descriptive ones, and the standard observed across both was high. As always, the best responses were typified by careful structuring, a wide-ranging and precise vocabulary, and a high level of technical accuracy.

Question 2, the least popular of the composition choices, evoked some excellent descriptions with some conscious crafting for effect which did not drift into narrative, though a level of narrative – appropriate for the purposes of cohesion – was also apparent. Weaker responses to both questions in the descriptive genre typically featured simple, sequential narrative, the listing of ordinary details, and limited vocabulary.

Strong responses to **Question 4** and **Question 5** typically engaged the reader from the beginning, and also provided a satisfactory and believable resolution to the story. The topic of **Question 4**, writing about something previously believed to have been lost or destroyed, produced some excellent narratives encompassing a wide range of scenarios, although most candidates chose to write about lost possessions, relationships or loved ones. Many responses to **Question 5** concerned the day before a wedding, an examination or other important event. At the lower end of Band 2 and in Band 3, some otherwise well-written stories had weak and unconvincing endings: there needs to be more awareness of the distinctive requirements of the genre in this respect. A small number of promising narratives stopped very abruptly without any meaningful conclusion. Notable in this examination session was the number of compositions in both genres that lacked relevance to the specific questions, resulting in a lack of cohesion or credibility. A small number of responses were neither descriptive nor narrative, but rather discursive or even markedly didactic: these read as moralising pieces on various topics only loosely connected with the questions.

Weaker responses in both Section 1 and Section 2 sometimes struggled to find the correct register and tone for their intended audience and were marred by frequent basic errors in punctuation and syntax. The use of commas where full stops or semi-colons were required and weak control of tense were evident at varying levels of achievement. There were also a considerable number of compositions which were not paragraphed, especially relating to the setting out of dialogue.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

Question 1

Imagine that you run a small company. Your staff have asked you to join the Take-a-Break campaign.

Write a letter to your staff in which you should:

- **Consider the different ideas discussed in the passage**
- **Explain the decision you have made about joining the Take-a-Break campaign.**

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

Begin your letter: 'Dear Team...'

Write about 250 to 350 words.

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

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

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

Marks in Band 3 were awarded where a reasonable understanding of the issues was in evidence, albeit with an acceptance of claims at face value, and some points were subjected to extended discussion and development. Responses here were typified by enthusiastic support for the benefits of napping at work while offering equal consideration to its disadvantages before deciding on one side in a concluding paragraph.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the main ideas but did not present a clear point of view. Very thin use of the detail and a lack of a coherent organisation of ideas were characteristic at this level.

The marks for Reading

The passage proved accessible at all levels of ability with little evidence of misunderstanding except, rarely, where a lack of linguistic competence prevented clear expression. The best responses were evaluative throughout, commanding the subject from the beginning, and demonstrating an ability to objectively assess the views expressed in the article and adopt a wider view. Here there was evidence of an ability to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the campaign's proposals as they related to a small company and the relative success of the adjustments made by the different employers and experts cited in the article. These responses assimilated this information and interrogated some of the article's assertions and decisions, for example that '[Nathaniel Scaer] suggests napping only when absolutely necessary.'; 'What is "absolutely necessary" for one employee would not trouble another; think of the resentment in the workplace when an individual finds a nap "absolutely necessary" every afternoon while his fellow workers plod on with their jobs because they have gone to bed at a reasonable time the night before.' Some Band 1 responses showed sustained awareness that the task required the writer to be the owner of a small company, and that all of the alternatives to napping, such as sporting activities and leisure areas in or adjacent to the office, involved costs not easily borne by a small firm: 'We are a minuscule company compared to others, meaning employee numbers, client numbers, physical space, company money...'; 'If we were to install such a room we would be crammed shoulder to shoulder in the remaining space, hampering efficiency and creativity...'. Another high-level response questioned the thinking behind the campaign, fearing that it would encourage 'a climate of laziness and irresponsibility; it is up to each of us to ensure that we are rested and prepared for work, not having that extra drink the night before and thinking, "Oh I'll have a nap tomorrow afternoon."'.

Marks in Band 2 were awarded when there was more than just simple agreement with or reproduction of the various claims and assertions made in the passage, and some of the passage's implicit meanings were scrutinised. Responses often began by referring to the campaign and the employees' request to join it, before prioritising for discussion different aspects of the material, most frequently the provision of facilities for sleeping during the day and the implications of such provision for both the firm's productivity and the staff's wellbeing. At this level there was some careful selection of material and an awareness that one solution could not be expected to fit every type of business enterprise. There was also some constructive discussion of the possible effects on a working office of a noisy leisure area, perhaps featuring 'a mini bowling alley and basketball hoops' in a corner. Responses awarded a Reading mark of 7 usually selected or developed material less effectively but still tried to give a balanced view, or demonstrated an ability to evaluate observations from the passage. Here, there was usually a sustained awareness of the needs of 'their' firm: 'We are a small but growing company, and we must have all our staff available at all times to help make important decisions.' Responses awarded a mark of 8 typically evaluated a number of ideas and solutions from the passage, or were evaluative throughout in their approach, sometimes signalling this in the opening paragraph: 'I have given much thought to your proposals about the Take-a-Break campaign and I must say from the outset I feel its implementation would be damaging to our small business.' Some partly-evaluative responses maintained too narrow a focus on one area of the reading passage – perhaps the provision of a nap room – to the detriment of a fully developed answer to the staff.

Responses were awarded marks in Band 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the reading material, representing both sides, but without presentation of less explicit meanings or where there was limited scrutiny of the points made by the various people cited in the passage.

A mark of 6 was awarded where key points were reproduced demonstrating a clear understanding and some appropriate development of, for example, the health advantages of regular relaxation or the social benefits of 'off-task' socialisation with colleagues. Here, compromise was usually offered as a solution suitable for all parties. Responses given a mark of 5 often uncritically reproduced points in the passage and then offered contradictory views so that no clear stance was discernible. A mark of 5 was also given where understanding was shown of the main thrust of the article but only a limited selection of points were discussed. At this level, while there was often an attempt to cover every point made in the article, evaluation or meaningful development was lacking.

Responses received marks below Band 3 where there was some misunderstanding of the main thrust of the article, although this was quite rare, or where there was a lack of focus on the reading passage, or over-long anecdotes which did not present a clear view on the topic. Here, the various employers and experts cited in the passage were often confused, with Mo Garra – the co-founder of a technology company – being presented as the writer of the article. Firmer links with the material and a wider range of points could be awarded a mark of 4, but where coverage of the material was thin a mark of 3 was more appropriate. Very few responses were given marks below 3 and this occurred where very little had been written and connection with the text and task was peripheral. A small number of responses lifted material or copied unselectively, thus having a significant impact on Reading and Writing marks for **Question 1**.

Marks for writing

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

Style and audience

While almost all responses began with at least some awareness of audience, a number of candidates appeared to quickly forget the intended audience, and did not demonstrate sustained awareness of their role as an employer or of the reader as the employees, but instead described, summarised or paraphrased the passage. The necessary direct address was sustained in the majority of responses. Equally, in most cases concern for the staff's wellbeing was expressed in a way which demonstrated awareness of style. In some cases, techniques such as rhetorical questions or repetition were used effectively.

The most effective responses took into account their intended audience and maintained an appropriately direct tone and style of address throughout. The best responses demonstrated considerable authority and confidence, a typical example from the top Band beginning, 'I am grateful that you have confided your concerns about stress in the workplace with me, and I wish to assure you all that I will consider the Take-a-Break proposals with the greatest care.' At this level too there were some responses couched in a more informal but still appropriate style, perhaps reflecting the greater intimacy possible within a small workforce. One response on considering the dangers of oversleeping if naps were allowed, directed comments to various employees individually in a good-humoured way: 'Yes –this means you, Charlie!' Other equally strong responses demonstrated a clear assimilation of the points of the article without making any explicit reference to it.

Responses given marks in Band 2 and Band 3 were often appropriate in tone and form, but often followed and reproduced the wording of the passage quite closely; while there was little wholesale copying of clauses or sentences from the passage, paraphrase was often close and dependent on the vocabulary of the original. In some middle and lower-level responses, the requirement to write a letter giving a decision was not adhered to, and the material in the passage was merely described with an occasional use of direct address. These responses often displayed minimal awareness of audience, referring to an article, of which the source or content was not discernible.

Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the passage confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument which was clearly rooted in the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, an overview of the concepts underlying the Take-a-Break campaign was given rather than a list of the advantages and disadvantages of napping or relaxing at work, with the reading passage being seamlessly incorporated into an authoritative and engaging response.

Responses given marks in Band 2 for writing tended to reflect the priority of points as presented in the article but were reordered into a sensible structure and paragraphed appropriately. Responses opened with a considered address to employees and ended with a concluding paragraph demonstrative of a clear sense of communicative purpose. Some responses awarded marks in Band 3 were over-long, covering all the material in the article exhaustively and offering just a very brief personal or decisive view at the end. Others offered lengthy anecdotal development on the perils of stress and overwork.

Weaker responses sometimes struggled to present a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of points within the passage. Without a re-ordering of the points made in the article, responses did not have the sense of purpose and audience required of the letter. Some responses offered a simple paraphrase of points with little changed but for the substitution of a few synonyms. One feature of ineffective structuring was a lack of paragraphing.

Accuracy

Responses in Band 1 combined a fluent and authoritative style, typified by precisely employed, appropriate vocabulary and a wide range of sentence structures, with a very high level of accuracy. Responses given a mark of 8 or 9 were often clearly and competently written, but with less ambitious vocabulary lacking range and precision. Sometimes sentences from the passage were rewritten but were awkwardly worded. Errors of sentence separation and a lack of paragraphing often restricted the Writing mark to a band below that awarded for Reading. Two types of writing typified responses awarded marks in Band 4 and below: the first and most common lacked evidence of controlled shaping, and simply followed the patterns of speech and the chronology of the article. Basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar were very frequent in these responses, and the inappropriate use of capital letters seemed more widespread than in previous sessions; in some cases the whole response was written in upper case. The second type of response awarded marks in Band 4 or below was characterised by accurate spelling and quite ambitious vocabulary, but contained serious structural faults in sentences and syntax, errors of agreement and tense, and an incorrect use of prepositions. Here, articles were sometimes omitted or 'the' was used rather than 'a' or 'an'. Meaning was occasionally impaired or impeded by these errors. The frequent misspelling of key words from the passage such as 'campaign', 'focused', 'necessary/unnecessary', and 'vigilance' was noticeable.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Candidates should be prepared to explore, challenge and discuss the ideas in the passage.
- Candidates should ensure that the ideas they use are derived from the passage.
- Candidates should identify and use inferences made indirectly by the writer.
- Candidates should aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas presented in the passage as well depth in evaluating them.
- Candidates need to be aware of their audience and adapt their style accordingly, demonstrating an awareness of genre convention such as the typical opening and ending of a letter.
- Candidates should check their punctuation, grammar and spelling.

Section 2 – Composition

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

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

Descriptive Writing

- 2 You wake up after a period of time to find things around you have changed. Describe the first few minutes as you adjust to your surroundings. [25]

OR

- 3 Write a description with the title, 'The Tree'. [25]

The composition was chosen across the range of abilities, with the second option being marginally more popular than the first. At all levels of achievement many candidates provided context for the required scene. Weaker responses, especially to **Question 3**, were sometimes very narrative in form with limited descriptive focus. Stronger responses framed their writing in a much more controlled manner, providing just enough context to introduce their descriptions and to provide cohesion, but the most successful responses to both questions involved the reader immediately. Some responses were more narrative in style than is typical for this genre but included much vivid detail and developed images. Here, responses were awarded Band 3 marks. The best responses to both questions produced writing of a very high standard, achieving marks at the top of Band 1. These were highly evocative, often creating overall pictures of considerable clarity and employing a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary.

Question 2 was the least popular of the four choices but produced some of the most accomplished responses. Most descriptions involved waking from a state of unconsciousness or even coma, often very prolonged; others, effectively and often humorously, described jolting into wakefulness after falling briefly asleep on a train, bus or even in a history lesson. Writing of a high standard was observed in both approaches. The majority of the responses awarded Band 1 and Band 2 marks for Content and Structure showed a clear awareness of the words 'first few minutes' in the task and restricted the time scale of their descriptions accordingly. This discipline ensured that the response did not drift into lengthy narrative. One response awarded marks in Band 1 was relatively brief but convincingly conveyed the fearful bewilderment of the first chaotic moments of awareness of being in a high-dependency ward: 'My eyes flutter frantically as I awake; the eyes of hovering men and women pierce my soul as they assess my physical being. Dried blood is crisp on my forehead. Metal trays and trolleys squeal and squeak...' It gradually became clear in this response that the speaker had been the victim of a major accident while in another response at this level the circumstances of the awakening person were never explained. This effectively created a terrifying, claustrophobic picture: 'Dark. Strange. Freezing. Why would my room, in the middle of summer, feel so cold and unfriendly?' Here there is no relief from complete darkness so the speaker depends on tactile images: 'The cold is penetrating my bones...I can see nothing but I can feel my conscious breath creating clouds of fog in the air...' Such responses created the 'convincing, original, overall picture with varieties of focus' required of Band 1. Some responses avoided the description of objective reality, restricting themselves to evoking thought and feeling. This was a valid approach to the task and often produced very effective responses, although where this was not supported by a range of vocabulary, the resultant response was sometimes vague or repetitive.

Responses given marks in Band 2 and Band 3 approached the task in a more straightforward way. Many successfully described waking in a hospital environment and attempting to rationalise the circumstances which led to them being there, although this description was often contained within an expanding narrative covering days or even weeks before and after the event. Quite often the period of unconsciousness was found to have been many years, and the incredulous speaker described wrinkled and otherwise aged siblings and friends surrounding the bedside. There were often convincing character sketches here, but the drift to narrative weakened the overall effectiveness of the response. Such responses included enough descriptive detail to create the 'impression of reality' required for marks in Band 2, but lacked the intensity of gaze upon the subject apparent in Band 1 responses. Sometimes the intended effect was diluted by trying to describe too many aspects of the scene. There were at this level however many effective responses which demonstrated a grasp of the requirements of the genre, a number of which were interesting and original. There were some engaging responses awarded Band 3 marks, but often a higher mark was not awarded due to a lack of clarity in the description. Also at this level some responses attempted to describe awakening in various dystopian societies but these lacked convincing detail and were often ineffective. At the lower end

of Band 3 and below, the writing often drifted into narrative, sometimes involving kidnapping or science fiction adventures, albeit with the inclusion of a few relevant descriptive details. Some Band 4 responses simply provided lists of items seen in the place where the speaker awoke or recounted what happened chronologically with limited attempts to provide a description.

The second descriptive option was marginally more popular, and elicited responses across the bands. The **Question 3** task was for the most part interpreted literally with candidates giving a physical description of a significant tree. Inventive, metaphorical descriptions were rare, although some awarded marks in Band 1 for Content and Structure used a tree as a metaphor: 'The thick swell of summer was like an emanation of my childhood.' A few responses detailed the spread of a family tree of ancestors and descendants. Where a physical description of a tree was given, it was almost always massive, and dominated its surroundings. Responses often described the life cycle of the tree with varying effectiveness, or the appearance of the tree in the different seasons. Some Band 1 responses were framed in narrative around a person, often a grandparent, or around an important event connected to the tree. These responses sometimes veered too far in the direction of narrative writing but qualities of Descriptive Writing, as outlined in the mark scheme, were awarded on their own merit. Across all levels of achievement responses attempted to evoke the importance of the tree to the speaker, with varying levels of success. The desired 'impression of reality' was often achieved, even where language competence restricted marks to Band 4 or below. In responses awarded marks in Band 1, there was some very sophisticated writing, with richly detailed sensory description. A key discriminator here was the originality of the images of often mundane and familiar objects and places such as foliage, bark, gardens, woods and parks, which made them appear fresh and new to the reader, as well as the precision of the vocabulary used to convey them. One excellent response created and sustained a convincing vision of a tree as a nurturing mother, comforting and enriching: 'I clung to her strong brown arms, her soft green hands caressing me as no human did...'

Most responses to **Question 3** were awarded marks in Band 2 and Band 3: they provided competent and often convincing descriptions, including some well-chosen images, or effectively describing the writer's thoughts and feelings about their chosen tree. Many of these responses included descriptions of the creatures who lived in the tree, sometimes including animals from many areas of the world. Responses awarded a mark of 7 or below often lacked a sufficiently close focus on the subject and descriptions were commonplace and unoriginal: leaves were green, bark was brown, blossom was pink and the clouds above were like cotton candy. Some responses were extremely broad in focus, taking in large areas of surrounding countryside or long periods of time. Responses awarded marks in Band 4 and Band 5 typically took the form of simple narratives featuring a tree or a treehouse. At the lower levels, responses included little descriptive detail or evocation of feeling, setting or atmosphere.

Responses awarded marks in the top band for Style and Accuracy demonstrated a wide-ranging and ambitious vocabulary in the creation of images and effects. These were also crafted to produce a harmonious whole and were virtually free of error. In responses to **Question 2**, the sustained use of the present tense was often very effective and served to avert a drift to narrative. In the middle ranges, vocabulary was less sophisticated or less precise, and the images less striking. Weaker responses were sometimes limited to accounts of personal experience, especially in response to the first of the two questions. Consecutive sentences beginning with 'I' (often lower case) typified these responses.

In previous sessions, the most frequent issue in terms of Style and Accuracy was the significant number of responses in which sentences did not contain a main or finite verb. While this issue persisted in numerous responses in this session, issues of tense inaccuracy were also frequent and equally damaging. A lack of effective paragraphing and misuse of commas also lowered Style and Accuracy marks for many responses. Sometimes responses given marks in Band 4 or below for Style and Accuracy demonstrated an extensive range of vocabulary, and accurate spelling, but displayed communication-impeding control of syntax and sentence structure.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved:

- Candidates are reminded to consider the key requirements of descriptive writing which differ from that of a story.
- Candidates should aim to be original, both in terms of the scenarios and the images they create.
- Candidates must ensure that their sentences are complete, and include verbs.
- Candidates are advised to make deliberate choices in their vocabulary and sentence structures in order to create effect.
- Candidates should be consistent in their use of tenses.

Narrative writing

4 Write a story which involves finding something which was previously believed to have been lost or destroyed. [25]

OR

5 Write a story with the title, 'The Day Before'. [25]

Narrative writing was the choice of more than two thirds of the candidature, with **Question 5** being more popular than **Question 4**. Marks were awarded across the range to responses to both questions. At all levels of achievement engagement with the tasks was evident, with both titles producing some lively and often intriguing narratives. Responses to both titles often included interesting and enhancing descriptive detail. A difficulty in creating satisfactory conclusions to candidates' stories was evident, underlining the need to have the end of the story in mind earlier on in the writing process.

Responses to the first of the narrative options recounted the loss of a variety of important objects, most commonly a piece of inherited jewellery (often a grandmother's necklace) or a watch of sentimental importance. Other responses detailed the loss of parents or grandparents, friendship, romantic relationships, opportunities or, often movingly told, that of one's self-respect or dignity. A significant number of responses to this question concerned a loss of identity after the discovery of adoption papers.

Those responses to **Question 4** awarded marks at the top of Band 1 were narratives closely focused in time and space, employing a few well drawn characters with sparing but effective dialogue. Two of the most successful ones used the finding of the previously-lost item as an initial spur to the narrative rather than as a conclusion or resolution. One began, 'I gazed in amazed recognition at the tarnished silver earring in the corner of the little-used suitcase. If only I had known or guessed then what its finding would mean for our family I would have thrown it through the open window of the box room.' This engaging and controlled opening was followed by a convincing story of family disintegration. Elsewhere the nature of the 'loss' incurred was only gradually and carefully revealed in the final part of the story. The subject of another engaging response was the discovery by an adventurer of a priceless ruby, the theft of which had cataclysmic results for the surrounding rainforest. This was quite a far-fetched tale but engaged the reader with its realistic character drawing and setting detail: 'Peter Gray was used to this atmosphere: the flaming heat, the emerald jungle, and the outstandingly irritating buzz of mosquitoes. He would rather fight a bear than endure those invertebrate demons for another cursed second.'

There were many action adventures, but these were rarely awarded marks above Band 3. They were typically over-packed with events, and lacked character development or description of setting. Often, weaker responses lacked plausibility beginning with accounts of the protagonist having breakfast or greeting parents before setting off on great journeys across continents. Responses awarded marks in Band 3 were mostly told in first person and were essentially uneventful and undeveloped accounts of lost objects suddenly rediscovered. At the lower end of the band and below, the events were often incredible, such as finding a lost wedding ring in the same cove in Ibiza where it had been lost twenty years before, or of inexplicably finding a necklace in the street of one city when it had been lost in another. These sometimes suggested the possible reliance on a previously-prepared story about the loss of something important, resulting in a lack of focus on the specific wording of **Question 4**. Stories of personal loss and bereavement which lacked narrative qualities such as character development, the creation of setting, and climax and resolution were given marks for Content and Structure in Band 3 or below.

Responses awarded marks below Band 3 tended to be simple series of events in limited settings, for example 'my house' or 'my school'. Typical of many event-driven responses was an imbalance in their

constituent parts, with the crucial loss, recovery or personal renaissance occurring abruptly and often in a final, short paragraph.

The second narrative title, 'The Day Before', was the most popular of the composition choices and elicited some effective narratives and a wide range of subject material, in which an effective management of plot twists was evident. Many responses to **Question 5** simply concerned events taking place a day earlier, without the dramatic and narrative possibilities of 'The Day Before'. At all levels of achievement, there were stories of weddings or engagements being cancelled because of events of the previous day; these usually involved romantic or familial betrayal or discovery of a criminal past. There were effective depictions of the nervous build-up to an important examination, tournament or overseas trip. Some accomplished responses – integrating evocative descriptions – recounted waking up in hospital after an attack or accident. Responses awarded marks in the top band fulfilled the requirements of a convincing plot, with description, characterisation and climax, and cogent detail. One such response was very carefully crafted, using the thread of time adeptly, beginning with 'the perfunctory ticking of a second hand' to create a dismal, ominous tone. The response then employed the future tense effectively to foreshadow a powerful climax; a divorce petition dropping through the letter box. Another Band 1 response was an engaging and entertaining story of a murderous dinner party involving adulterous neighbours whose affairs had been witnessed for months by the narrator – a window. This challenging technique was carried off wittily: 'Watching human outbursts is very entertaining. They get all red and splotchy when they cry...'; 'Look at her, so small and fragile, trying to scrub all the blood from the dining table.'

In the middle and lower bands such unusual techniques were less successful. A number of responses consisted of stories told from 'beyond the grave' and were usually less effective. Some weaker responses were over-packed with events or characters barely distinguishable from each other or with unlikely combinations of events and characters. The weakest responses were usually very brief or lacking direction, and offering little to engage the reader.

Style and Accuracy

High marks for Style and Accuracy were awarded to many responses featuring varied and effective vocabulary and structure, and minimal error. In Bands 1 and 2, syntax and sentence structure were often effectively manipulated for effect, especially in the creation of narrative tension. In this genre, any inability to punctuate and paragraph dialogue properly is exposed, and can adversely affect otherwise fluent and accurate writers. In Band 3, despite the presence of a few basic errors of spelling and punctuation, and plain, unvaried vocabulary, a mark of seven or eight was awarded where sentence structure was clear and accurate and straightforward paragraphing was in evidence. Band 4 marks were given where misuse of commas and weak punctuation was frequent. Errors in agreement and tense were typical here, as was inconsistency in the use of gender pronouns, and confusion of 'this' with 'these'. The misuse or omission of capital letters also lowered marks awarded in some cases. In this examination series some responses were written entirely in capital letters and there was some interference of vocabulary and grammar from other languages. Occasionally, a Band 5 mark was awarded due to errors in sentence structure and syntax which seriously impeded communication.

Ways in which narrative writing could be improved:

- Candidates are advised to plan their story to ensure that they do not run out of ideas for the plot, and so that their story reaches an interesting conclusion.
- Candidates can develop their own interpretation of the titles.
- Candidates should make their story believable by creating realistic characters and settings.
- Candidates should allow time to check their spelling, use of capital letters and punctuation.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/32
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although 10 marks were available for reading in **Question 1**.

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

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

General comments

In most cases a secure understanding of the requirements of the task was shown in responses to both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were few very brief scripts. A very large majority of candidates attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task. In **Question 1**, very few responses showed evidence of wholesale copying from the passage.

Most responses to **Question 1** showed an engagement with the topic of ‘appreciation’ and whether it should be taught as a skill in schools. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for the task and demonstrated a sound grasp of the ideas addressed in the passage. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passage. Better answers showed a level of independence. Here, candidates selected and commented on the details in the passage to support a cohesive argument, the structure of which was their own. Responses achieving mid-range marks tended to reproduce the points made in the passage, with little opinion or development.

Weaker candidates tended to repeat the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence rather than selecting, commenting on and reorganising points. In some weaker responses, this resulted in a lack of cohesion and some contradiction of ideas.

Most candidates used the bullet points in the question to effectively structure their response, and they critically scrutinised the ideas in the passage. Sometimes, insufficient use was made of the reading material and there appeared to be less understanding of the persuasive nature of the task. The required formality of style and register for a letter to a headteacher was well understood by the majority of candidates. In weaker responses, there was often a general commentary on the importance of appreciating what we have, addressing one or two points from the passage but the requirement to weigh up and consider the validity of these ideas was missed. Some addressed the headteacher as if he or she had written the article.

Better responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for a letter to an authority figure. These were persuasive in purpose, using ideas from the passage to create and structure arguments, showing a strong sense of audience and often employing rhetorical devices. Some mid- range responses were more discursive in style and focused less on arriving at a clear opinion based on the passage. Weaker responses relied more on the sequence of the points made in the article with less selection and regrouping, which made for a disjointed and less coherent style and structure.

In the compositions, the descriptive and narrative genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers. Stronger responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged.

Descriptive writing at the highest level of achievement was evocative and subtle and gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the first descriptive question were very effective and sustained. The different theatrical costumes and the setting of an old or abandoned stage theatre gave imaginative writers plenty of scope to create images and effects while there were many different and successful interpretations of 'The Crossing'. These achieved higher marks where there was specific detail and where the description evoked the scene imaginatively. Weaker responses to both descriptive writing questions tended to contain straightforward physical descriptions in the first question and some reliance on narrative with only a narrow descriptive focus in the second.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn, interesting and credible characters and scenarios. Responses to **Question 4**, in which a character decided to start a new life, were very varied and often, at the highest level, moving and affective. The second narrative question also elicited a wide range of approaches and interpretations.

Weaker narratives were less credible and often lacked cohesion and narrative purpose, particularly in **Question 5** where some simple accounts were more discursive than narrative in style and structure.

Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. The best descriptive writing was specific, used some original and thought-provoking imagery and effectively evoked the atmosphere of the time and place described. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of characters to elicit the reader's sympathy were features understood by the most effective writers selecting narrative writing options.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

Question 1

Imagine that you are a parent of a pupil at a school where the headteacher is considering introducing a series of lessons on appreciation.

Write a letter to the headteacher in which you should:

- **identify and evaluate the ideas about appreciation discussed in the passage**
- **consider how effective the proposed lessons might or might not be**

Base your letter on the ideas in the article, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the bullet points.

Begin your letter: 'Dear Headteacher ... '

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

High marks were awarded where there was some challenge and discussion of the points made in the passage, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of points. Where the letter was also accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, often with a consistent register, examiners awarded the highest marks. Better responses focused on the arguments in the passage, with the highest marks being awarded for confident handling and perceptive evaluation of the conflicting views. Further, the extent to which

'appreciation' could be considered a skill rather than a reflection of individual personality or of a person's upbringing were sometimes explored more thoughtfully at the highest level.

Mid-range responses tended to be more straightforward with some listing of the perceived medical benefits of an appreciative outlook, the tendency for people to acquire possessions which they do not always appreciate, and the need for more appreciation of family and experiences. These details accurately reflected the main ideas in the passage though opportunities to scrutinise them or weigh up their relative merits or validity were not exploited. Responses at this level could have been improved by consideration of the main ideas rather than simply reproducing them.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the ideas in the passage but the range of ideas was limited, or there was a misunderstanding of the details. Weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic at this level, particularly where points conflicted with each other.

Marks for reading

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance and demonstrated effective reading between the lines of the passage, drawing inferences and making judgements about whether appreciation was a valid topic for teaching in schools. Most responses discussed the medical evidence suggesting that there were health benefits in showing appreciation and made a distinction between the instant gratification of receiving material things and the more enduring appreciation of family and experiences. More thoughtful responses considered not just why showing appreciation was beneficial but also whether it was a skill which could or should be taught.

In higher band responses, an understanding of the requirement to write from the point of view of a parent was clear. Perceptive responses often went to the heart of the debate: whether schools have a duty to teach children to appreciate what they have or whether such a message would dampen their ambition. Many at this level argued convincingly, using the sensible inference from the passage that true appreciation was a quality developed early in life, that appreciation was the responsibility of parents rather than teachers. Some perceptive distinctions between 'real' and 'fake' appreciation were also made, using some of the details in the passage. Some candidates, for example, addressed the notion that the 'you scratch my back...' aphorism was itself a form of fake appreciation and the suggestion that appreciation was a 'social tool' undermined the essentially selfless nature of true appreciation. The implied criticism in the passage of posting pictures and messages of appreciation on social media was seen by some as unwarranted although many at this level considered such practices to be boasting under the guise of appreciation. Other perceptive evaluations of the reading material included observations on the conflict between ambition and settling. In high-scoring responses, some candidates argued that spoiling children with unearned gadgets and treats was a practice which itself limited their ambition while others warned against teaching children to be too easily satisfied with what they have. Responses which argued both in favour and against the idea of appreciation lessons were given high marks for Reading. The benefits for the wider school community of having kinder, more appreciative pupils provided evidence of evaluation of the material, as did the counter-argument that teaching children to 'settle for less' when some aspects of their lives may be highly undesirable was irresponsible. Others took issue with how such lessons would be delivered in schools and which learning opportunities would be lost as a result. While the passage suggested that there were plenty of resources available for teachers, some candidates saw some contradiction in the notion that a quality best learned by experiences, as mentioned in the passage, would be taught using text books in school. Similarly, arguing in favour of the lessons, some suggested that appreciation was merely an extension of politeness and good manners in social interactions, both of which were routinely taught by parents and schools, and that as another 'social tool' helping students to further their ambitions, appreciation should be taught as well.

Band 2 marks were given to responses which included evaluative comments but where the response as a whole did not have the consistency of critical approach required of Band 1. Judgements made in Band 2 responses were fairly straightforward, for example, the atmosphere of the school would change for the better if students appreciated each other more. Other responses made the point that as appreciation was learned at an early age, it may be too late when students reach their teenage years. Presentation of the view that education was crucial at this age and should take precedence over more nebulous lessons whose effectiveness could not be measured was also credited as evidence of evaluation.

Responses awarded marks in Band 3 for Reading displayed an adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but did not present the more implicit meanings or show sufficient scrutiny of the points it made. Responses reflected the ideas in the passage but commented minimally on their validity. While the points made were presented in candidates' own words, and commented on, they were not fully evaluated. For example, in some responses there was disagreement with the points made in the passage but little

justification or reasoning for this given. In some responses awarded 6 marks for Reading, the arguments on both sides were presented in a different order from that in which they appeared in the passage, but some contradictions or more subtle ideas were not addressed. For example, the benefits of being appreciative and being appreciated were not always distinguished and many at this level missed the contradiction in teaching appreciation and claiming that some people were born unappreciative. Scrutiny of these apparent contradictions rather than a simple reproduction of them was required in order to score higher marks for Reading.

Some weaker responses simply tracked the passage without sufficiently reorganising or paraphrasing ideas. This was indicative of conflicting ideas not having been well understood. In other weaker responses, opinions given about appreciation were either not rooted in a close reading of the passage or drifted towards a general discussion of the deleterious effects of mobile phones or social media. Most commonly at this level, phrases and sentences were lifted and copied from the passage and were poorly sequenced, again evidence that the main ideas had not been fully understood. Where a mark of 4 was awarded, some firmer links with the passage were apparent, while 3 was awarded for very thin responses or those in which ideas were mainly lifted from the passage.

Marks for writing

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

Style and audience

A formal, polite tone was required for a letter of this kind and most responses were written in an appropriate register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some high-scoring responses used a more rhetorical, persuasive style and presented their arguments with a subtlety of tone, making their case effectively and with some impact, though still with an appropriate level of politeness. Writing from the perspective of a parent gave many candidates a clear focus and style which was sustained throughout.

In the middle range, the style was usually appropriately formal for a letter to a headteacher although there were lapses in awareness of that audience, with the style becoming more akin to that of a report or summary of the original article rather than a persuasive argument. Most often at this level there was limited argument, even where the passage was adequately reflected. Valedictions were sometimes omitted at this level and the persuasive style and purpose of the letter was not properly sustained.

Weaker responses sometimes displayed limited overall cohesion where the conflicting opinions in the passage were simply reproduced as they appeared in the original. Many wrote as if the headteacher was the author of the original article, sometimes highlighting a limited understanding of the conventions of letter-writing.

Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing demonstrated confident handling of the material and an ability to present arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument which was clearly derived from the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the point of view of the writer gave shape and structure to the response as a whole and the ideas in the passage were assimilated and assumed rather than specifically referenced. The opening and concluding paragraphs addressed the purpose of the letter clearly and objectively, with the intervening sections making a coherent case which had been decided on at the outset.

Responses given Band 2 marks for Writing tended to reflect the points made in the passage but these were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed so that conflicting ideas were addressed separately. Weaker responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of points within the passage. Straightforward Band 3 responses were paragraphed and balanced and followed the conventional structure of formal letters, though opening and concluding paragraphs were often brief, single sentences.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were limited in structure and heavily reliant on the sequence of ideas in the passage, often with some lifting and copying. This approach led to some weakness in cohesion and where ideas were mentioned but not explained in the passage these were sometimes reproduced with limited adaptation: for example, the phrase in brackets in the passage, 'Isn't that ambition?' was often copied along with the rest of the sentence, highlighting a lack of understanding of what was being suggested here.

Accuracy

Responses in which writing showed accuracy and control were given a writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error.

Responses given marks in Band 1 were appropriately authoritative in tone and delivered arguments subtly, with a range of precise and sophisticated vocabulary, and with very few technical errors. Sentence structures were varied and consciously used to create specific effects. Rhetorical flourishes, such as the use of contentious, challenging questions, were often used at this level. One response, for example, asked 'Why would a student from a poor background, with little to appreciate, be taught to be grateful when only hard work and ambition will get him out of such a hard life?' Another posed the question 'Is it really the role of teachers to usurp the authority of parents and insist on gratitude rather than grades?' Measured use of exclamation and even a hint of controlled derision served to make arguments engaging and convincing: 'I'm sure the school authorities would love to have students who are grateful and appreciative all the time, but a sceptical, curious and critical mind is what's needed more in this day and age!'

Some complex sentences structures worked to balance and weigh up contending views, the grammatical control of which was assured through careful punctuation.

Band 2 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those awarded higher marks. Although the style was usually plain, the language used was apt. Some quite basic errors were made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style without impeding meaning. Commonly used words were also misspelled at this level, particularly key words for the task such as 'appreciation', 'gratitude' and 'resilient' though sentence separation and grammatical agreement were usually secure.

Faulty sentence structures or weakly demarcated sentences were typical features of Band 4 responses to **Question 1**, even where other technical skills such as spelling were more accurate. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors, for example the use of commas instead of full stops, meant that marks in Band 3 could not be awarded. Sometimes whole paragraphs consisted of strings of simple sentences with commas rather than full stops between them. The omission of articles was also fairly common, as was a lack of agreement between pronouns and verb forms. In rare cases, substantial material from the passage was copied and in such cases, responses did not achieve marks in Band 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content nor the style of the response was the candidate's own.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Candidates should be prepared to challenge and disagree with ideas in the passage and always justify and explain their reasons.
- Candidates should ensure that the ideas they use are derived from the passage.
- Candidates should identify and use inferences made indirectly by the writer.
- Candidates should aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas presented in the passage as well depth in evaluating them.
- Candidates need to be aware of their audience and adapt their style accordingly, demonstrating an awareness of genre convention such as the typical opening and ending of a letter.
- Candidates should check their punctuation, grammar and spelling.

Section 2 – Composition

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

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

Descriptive Writing

2 Describe the costumes you find in an old cupboard at the back of the stage in a theatre. [25]

OR

3 Write a description with the title, ‘The Crossing’. [25]

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices among candidates and a range of different approaches to the tasks was observed. In the first task, there were some strongly evocative descriptions of abandoned theatres or forgotten costumes which embodied powerful memories or aspirations.

In answer to the second question, a wide variety of details and images was used to describe different interpretations of a ‘crossing’, often to good effect. Responses at the highest level to both questions showed a clear understanding of how detailed and evocative descriptions are created.

Some successful responses to the first question focused on a range of different costumes, often those which had a powerful effect on the writer. There were striking images of sinister clown costumes, ethereal fairy costumes, comical animal suits or costumes worn in school productions which tapped into memories of happy or nervous times. Unearthing costumes which had been covered in dust revealed often closely observed details which were convincing and created an impression of reality. Most responses were constructed in a fairly straightforward way, with one paragraph devoted to a description of each costume. At the top of the mark range, some highly skilled writing took the reader on a journey into the narrator’s childhood or past, creating cohesive responses held together by a single thread or concept of ideas. One effectively written response, for example, featured a successful professional actor whose early amateur years were charted through the descriptions of costumes while another narrator used an increasingly tense atmosphere to release ‘blocked’ memories of a traumatic past event. These consciously crafted pieces in no way fell into narration but held the reader’s interest by linking the different elements described in an engaging way.

Band 3 responses were characterised by rather more obvious images and ideas and the sensory impressions given were mechanically listed and organised into paragraphs. Dust swirling like clouds or the musty smells of old fabric featured commonly. Although such images were less original and striking, they were relevant and apt and some were used effectively. Few responses at this level lapsed into narrative or neglected to include the main features of descriptive writing. At the lower end of Band 3 for Content and Structure, some responses were a little unbalanced featuring a long introductory preamble to the detriment of an expansion of details of the costumes themselves. The journey to the theatre, how the writer found the cupboard or the reason why the costumes had not been used sometimes tended to overshadow an otherwise competent descriptive piece. In some, the thoughts and feelings of the narrator were less developed and the description lapsed into a more straightforward list of what was seen in the cupboard. The descriptive content tended to be a little more stereotypical or general than stronger (Band 2) responses. In a significant number of responses at Band 2 and above, there was some conscious and often quite effective use of personification. The costumes, for example, ‘longed to be free’, ‘danced with delight’ or ‘stared forlornly back at me’ and where this technique was controlled and not over-used, the effects created were interesting for the reader.

Weaker responses were characterised by a tendency to list details briefly rather than develop them or they included a narrative introduction which became a series of events rather than a preamble to description. Details of the journey and the reasons for it, or the circumstances which made it necessary, tended to overwhelm the descriptive elements in a number of responses at this level. Most responses at this level were organised and paragraphed but the descriptions of each costume were brief and general rather than developed and specific.

In answer to the second question, some effective descriptions using a variety of interpretations of 'The Crossing' were observed across the mark range. Border crossings between countries or territories worked well for some candidates who achieved marks in Band 1. The tension and apprehension of standing in a hot, claustrophobic queue of hopeful migrants was evoked in one skilfully handled response in which the border guards were described as 'bored with their own indifference' and 'longing for cruelty'. In similarly effective descriptions at this level, other kinds of crossings were depicted, such as over a dangerous river, between lines of rushing traffic or across a busy intersection's zebra crossing. Scenarios which allowed for different elements of description afforded the best opportunities to sustain a developed piece. One described crossing a busy city street: the 'deluge of city workers released from their office prisons to spill onto the road', and another described a ferry crossing, and focused on the scene both inside the boat and on the fast-flowing currents of the river below.

Some successful responses interpreted the title more metaphorically, describing the 'crossing' from life to death, sleep to wakefulness or other less literal ideas. The fluctuating thoughts and feelings of the narrator were described, providing a cohesive thread for some effective descriptions, as well as for some of the memories triggered by particular details. While there were some effective responses which interpreted the title in a more metaphorical way, some at Band 3 lapsed into explaining rather than describing, or into narrative in attempts to clarify the nature of the 'crossing'.

Typical features of responses awarded marks below Band 3 were: a more narrative rather than descriptive focus; limited organisation of the details described; and a listing of strings of details with limited overall cohesion. At this level, responses appeared as simple, unengaging accounts of an event rather than a developed description of the surroundings at the time.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were, in the best responses, reflective of a precise and varied vocabulary as well as technical accuracy. In the middle range, vocabulary was less rich and varied but there was still a fair degree of accuracy in spelling and sentence construction. In weaker responses, as is often the case in descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. Incomplete or verb-less sentences were common, even in scripts where responses to **Question 1** showed a secure grasp of sentence structure. A very common weakness was also the demarcation of sentences with commas rather than full stops.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Candidates should try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content. They are encouraged to choose a scenario which provides a range of details on which to focus.
- Candidates should remember the key features of descriptive writing and maintain focus on details.
- Candidates should write sentences with verbs and not switch between tenses.
- Candidates should choose their vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story where a character decides to live a new life. [25]

OR

5 Write a story that begins, 'I thought the road would never end...' [25]

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices among candidates across the mark range and a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios were observed in their responses.

Better responses, as is often the case in narrative writing, consisted of well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title using interesting but credible ideas and developing balanced and engaging stories. The change of heart or decision to live a different life, required in the first task, varied widely but at the highest level evolved credibly from what had gone before. Various structures were employed in these better responses allowing them to go beyond straightforward chronological recount. Stories sometimes began with the narrator looking back, having made the decision to change or to leave a place in the past. Sometimes the previous life was hidden with the narrator facing the risk of it being revealed or discovered, effectively creating tension and paranoia. Escape from drug addiction, poverty, a life of crime or exploitation were common themes at all levels though the best responses focused more on the thoughts and feelings of the characters rather than on the graphic events which had led to the decision to change. One response charted the life of a bored, stressed and burnt out teacher who gave up respectability to lead a life of crime in sunnier climes. Standing up to bullying or taking control in other ways also featured, again providing an apt scenario which was often realistic and poignant. While some graphic or violent scenes featured in many responses, at the highest level these were written with restraint and control making them all the more effective.

Mid-range narratives were usually more straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases relied on over-dramatic and less likely scenarios, such as bank robberies or heists. Marks in Band 3 for Content and Structure can be awarded even where the sequence of events lacks credibility, provided that the narrative is organised and there is some attempt at characterisation. Cohesion and balance were therefore features of responses in Band 3, as was a suitable ending depicting some resolution or conclusion to the overall story. Some stories ended rather weakly at the point the character decided to change.

Weaker responses were often dependent on a simple series of events leading to the decision to change but lacked attention to characterisation and setting. Simplicity of content rather than weakness in organisation was typical at lower levels. Often, these included the same kinds of scenarios as in stronger responses, but there was less awareness and engagement of the reader in terms of narrative shaping and the creation of credible characters.

For the second narrative question, interpretations of the title were varied and could be both literal and figurative. Some responses built on the idea of a narrative based around a car journey – implied by the 'road' in the title – while others interpreted the road more metaphorically to create a story about a different kind of journey in life. Both approaches resulted in some high quality, effective and engaging stories. Narrators or protagonists travelled on roads towards success in different ways, professionally or academically, or through difficult or troubled times. While these ideas featured across the mark range, better responses prepared the reader and shaped the narrative in an engaging way.

Band 3 responses were generally more straightforward accounts in which the content was ordinary but there was still some organisation and shaping of the narrative and a cohesive story resulted. These tended to be a little less imaginative in their interpretation of the task but with some understanding of how stories engage the reader. Car journeys, often with parents or siblings, along dark forest roads or in unfamiliar, threatening landscapes featured more often at Band 3, with varying levels of success in developing credible plots and characters. Camp sites or holiday sites from which unwary characters ventured out along dangerous paths were also fairly common scenarios, resolved by sometimes implausible murders or by the safe return of a terrified protagonist.

Responses given marks in Band 4 were usually simple accounts of events showing limited awareness of the reader or of the features of narrative writing. Scenarios which quickly became clichéd and unengaging were typical, such as murders, kidnappings or chases, many of which lacked credible explanation. Other less successful approaches to the question involved accounts of the writer's progress through school or through life in general. These responses were discursive in style and intent, but lacked narrative shaping and interest. Some featured organised and paragraphed accounts of each year of the writer's schooling, the grades achieved and extra-curricular sports undertaken but there was little real narrative drive or story-telling.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were awarded where the quality of writing in the response was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were used with control, and were used to create particular effects. Punctuation within sentences – both in dialogue and for effect – was characteristic of higher Band responses and where this was coupled with a sophisticated vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Band 2 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still accurate and largely fluent while Band 3 responses were plain in style and lacked a range of vocabulary despite featuring few meaning-impeding errors.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, were persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy prevented a number of responses from achieving a mark above Band 3. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the misspelling of basic words appeared in otherwise competent writing, on occasion, to such an extent that they hampered marks for Style and Accuracy. The misuse of capital letters – the omission of a capital for a personal pronoun or for proper nouns – was fairly common at Band 3 and below. Some use of capital letters where they were not required was also noted. The most frequent reason for limiting an otherwise clearly written story to a mark below Band 3 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed, while mixing tenses was also prevalent.

A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even when written in a fairly simple style a mark of 7 or 8 was awarded. Where these contained errors, but the style showed ambition and variety, a mark of 9 was awarded. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks being awarded at Band 4 or below. A few responses were very brief and unclear in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:

- Candidates are advised to plan how they will resolve their story in an interesting way before they start writing.
- Candidates are encouraged to try to consider alternative interpretations of the titles given.
- Candidates should seek to engage the reader through characters' thoughts and rather than exclusively relying on events.
- Candidates should allow time to check their spelling and punctuation, as these could negatively affect their marks.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/33
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

This paper is mainly assessed for writing, although 10 marks were available for reading in **Question 1**.

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

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

General comments

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

Most responses showed a clear understanding and engagement with the topic in **Question 1**, often with a sound grasp of the ideas concerning tipping and the decisions made about tipping in the new restaurant, usually with some attention paid to the style and format of a letter. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying words from the passage. Better answers did not rely on the structure contained within the passage, but instead featured a selection of and comments on the details in the passage in support of a cohesive point of view. Weaker responses were typified by a reiteration of the ideas in the passage, often in the same sequence with little selecting and regrouping of points. Where the bullet points in the question were used to help structure the response, this was used to good effect. Occasionally, insufficient use was made of the reading material or a response demonstrated a tenuous grasp of the task itself. The implied required professional register for an employer writing to their staff was usually successfully applied. In weaker responses there was often some general commentary concerning the practice of tipping, with one or two points from the passage addressed, but opportunities to discuss, weigh up and evaluate the ideas in the passage were missed.

Better responses paid considered attention to the audience and style required of the task. These were engaging in purpose, using the passage to create and structure arguments with evidence of a sense of audience and purpose. Some mid-range responses showed less awareness of register, becoming overly colloquial in style and vocabulary. In other responses, valedictions were frequently forgotten, a feature symptomatic of an insecure grasp of audience and purpose, and at this level the facts about tipping in restaurants followed the sequence of the passage with less selection and reordering of ideas and ultimately, a lack of an independent point of view.

The descriptive and narrative genres were attempted in fairly equal numbers, though the narrative questions were slightly more popular. Better responses in the composition section overall were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected and of the particular ways in which the reader's interest could be engaged within that genre.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and although in the middle range some narrative content was in evidence, most responses gave a range of relevant descriptive detail. Most responses to the first descriptive question were well-organised and clearly structured using paragraphs, with sections about the location, the individual and some effective description of sensitive feelings and emotions. These were better where there was specific detail and where descriptions created a clear sense of atmosphere. There were some engaging descriptions of the chosen moment of tension in answer to the second descriptive question, with some very gripping descriptions of various moments of unease and concern. Weaker responses here tended to fall into narrative with limited descriptive detail.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and credible scenarios. Weaker narrative writing was often characterised by inconclusive endings, sometimes with simple storylines which largely consisted of a series of events with limited awareness of the reader. In some cases, there was limited narrative progression, even where characterisation was effective. Stories which began with the words, 'How am I going to explain this?' were often suitably dramatic and interesting. The second narrative question elicited a wide range of situations and locations where two or more characters were involved in a competition of some kind.

Composition responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good writing in specific genres. Descriptive writing was usually, but not always, focused on detail and evoking atmosphere, but could have been improved by the use of less clichéd ideas and expressions. The conscious shaping of narratives to interest and intrigue the reader and the creation of characters to provoke the reader's sympathy were features understood by effective writers.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

Imagine that you are about to open a new restaurant. You have appointed your staff and would like to introduce your policy on tipping at the restaurant.

Write a letter to your staff in which you should:

- **consider the different ideas about tipping discussed in the passage**
- **explain the decisions you have made about tipping in your restaurant.**

Base your ideas on the ideas in the article, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the bullet points.

Begin your letter: 'Dear Staff ...'

Write about 250 to 350 words.

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

[25]

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

High marks for the reading and understanding element were awarded where there was some challenge and discussion of the points made in the passage, rather than a straightforward listing of the points made in the passage. Where the letter was also both accurate and appropriate in style, often with a consistent sense of audience and a polished style, very high marks were awarded. Better responses tended to pick up on the implied points made by the restaurant owner and develop a detailed evaluation of these ideas. While the more straightforward aspects, such as tipping leading to arguments among staff and staff relying on tips as part of their income were readily identified in most responses, the highest marks were awarded where the benefits and downsides of supporting tipping were teased out and examined.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some listing of the ideas made about tipping and an acceptance or rebuttal of these claims at face value. These details accurately reflected the ideas in the passage but any comment on or examination of them was limited.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the main advantages and disadvantages of tipping, although there also appeared to have been some misreading in places. A thin use of the detail, or a limited ability to organise ideas coherently was also characteristic at this level.

Marks for reading

The best responses adopted a consistently evaluative stance and demonstrated a reading between the lines of the passage to provide a subtle critique of the ideas surrounding tipping in restaurants. At this level, the whole notion of the ethos of tipping and the problems it can cause for staff, management and the customers were fully addressed. These also contained the counter argument that tipping was always likely to happen regardless of any new policy and that it could be effective in some circumstances with a clear justification as a reward and recognition for excellent service. The exploration of the relationships between management, staff and customers was developed and evaluated. Some of the details in the passage were probed and challenged effectively, for example, the fact that the cooks and kitchen staff could be neglected if tipping was not effectively managed, or the implied consequences involved if the restaurant owner's ideas were not accepted. While most candidates implied that the owner's ideas were probably well-intentioned, in their responses, some wrote from the perspective of the owner knowing that they would be suspected of having some ulterior financial purpose not appropriate to the development of long-lasting working relationships.

The best responses also examined the nature of the restaurant business and the type of service that should be provided in order for a restaurant to be both financially successful and a happy community of workers. Some thoughtful reactions to the implications for the management, the different workers and the customers were also observed among these. In this way, better responses relied on thoughtful inferences drawn from the passage rather than on straightforward expressions of opinion or preference. A consistently evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 2 and above.

A mark of 7 was given where there were glimpses of evaluation, often offering a reason as to why a service charge might be fairer for all of the staff, but these were not consistent. Where responses reproduced the points made in the passage with limited comment or discussion of the ideas in it, marks could not be awarded above Band 3. Typical Band 3 responses were those in which there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage without the more implicit meanings mentioned above. Responses here showed a clear understanding of the specific claims made in the passage about whether to allow tipping or not, but tended to consist of a list the advantages and disadvantages of tipping, usually in the sequence in which they appeared in the passage. Where there was some commentary on these issues, only those that were evaluative could be credited as such. By way of example, Band 3 responses might state that tipping was definitely good, or bad, reproduce some ideas from the passage, but go no further. A teasing out of the implications and inferences from the passage was required for a higher mark to be awarded. Where there was straightforward but wide-ranging coverage of the points in the passage were awarded a mark of 6, while responses with a more limited selection of points were given 5 marks.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passage or addressed the material thinly. Some were hampered by a misreading of the task and a difficulty in understanding the concepts in the reading material. A mark of 4 was awarded where firm links to the passage were lacking, and a 3 was generally awarded for very thin or brief responses in which there appeared to have been a misreading of the task. Marks below 3 were typically awarded where responses consisted of a general commentary with very little connection with the passage.

It was equally appropriate for the owner to decide to support tipping or to suggest abolishing it. Most responses supported the idea of replacing tipping with a service charge while also allowing customers to reward staff if they chose to do so through tipping. Some candidates wrote as if they were Simon Aguado himself and the restaurant was already up and running. Although this approach demonstrated a misreading of the task, the material was usually sufficiently exploited such that an appropriate focus on the task was evident.

Marks for writing

15 marks were available for style, a sense of audience, structure and accuracy.

Style and audience

Most responses were written in a suitable register, even where the writing itself was technically weak. Some high scoring responses effectively combined a professional and managerial but still amicable and supportive tone. Here, candidates developed points about the other restaurant owners and workers mentioned in the passage and offered comments on their ideas.

In the middle range, style was often appropriate, although there was evidence of lapses in awareness of the intended audience. Letters sometimes started formally but changed tone, for example.

Weaker responses sometimes failed to address the staff at all and offered little adaptation of the style and tone of the passage for a different audience and purpose. A few responses had an almost aggressive and even abusive tone which was not appropriate. Valedictions were often missed at this level.

Structure

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, showed a confident handling of material and a cogent presentation of arguments. The issues addressed were combined into a persuasive overall argument which was clearly rooted in the ideas in the passage but was not dependent on its structure and sequence.

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

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passage. This often led to a reiteration of the points in the passage without the letter having a sense of purpose or audience. These responses showed a lack of awareness of the conventional structure of a letter.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 1. Such writing was not only authoritative in style and convincing in its arguments but also fluent and virtually error free. Responses of this type were fully appropriate in tone and register, while the range and precision of vocabulary employed in them also allowed for some quite complex arguments to be made with clarity.

Responses given a mark of 7, 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate, a range of quite basic errors was made which marred the overall impression, for example, the frequent use of 'could of' and 'would of' and the confusion of 'your' with 'you're' or 'their' with 'there'. The use of capital letters where they were not needed, even where writing was otherwise generally accurate, was also noted. Apostrophes were very often not used appropriately and sentence demarcation by commas rather than full stops appeared at the lower end of Band 3. Commonly used words were also incorrectly spelled in many responses. These included words used in the passage such as 'decision', 'desserts' and even 'restaurant' and frequent grammatical errors such as 'you was' and 'we was'. Again, these errors were sometimes observed in otherwise accurate and appropriate responses.

While some minor errors could be compensated for by a secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, incorrect sentence structures often limited marks for writing in **Question 1** to Band 4. Responses here often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but contained a number of quite basic punctuation and grammatical errors. Persistent comma-splicing was perhaps the most common reason for responses which were otherwise clear and coherent not achieving marks in Band 3 or above. In such cases, whole paragraphs consisting of strings of simple sentences with commas rather than full stops separating them were observed.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Candidates should be prepared to criticise or question the ideas in the passage.
- Candidates should identify and use inferences made indirectly by the writer.
- Candidates should aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas presented in the passage as well depth in evaluating them.
- Candidates need to be aware of their audience and adapt their style accordingly, demonstrating an awareness of genre convention such as the typical opening and ending of a letter.
- Candidates should check their punctuation, grammar and spelling.

Section 2 – Composition

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

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

Descriptive Writing

2 Write a description of returning to a place that reminds you of someone. [25]

OR

3 Write a description with the title, ‘A Moment of Tension’. [25]

The first of the descriptive writing questions proved to be the most popular. Both descriptive titles elicited responses across the mark range. In the first task, there were some strongly evocative and sensitive descriptions of many different locations producing a wide range of memories. In the second question, the best responses were able to describe a tense moment with much creative description of thoughts, feelings and emotions. The best responses were fully focused on description and avoided narrative development. In some cases, there was an unfortunate tendency to move towards narrative in the second task.

The places visited in the first descriptive task were, in the best responses, areas which appeared to have some personal meaning for the writer, often infusing the writing with a sense of nostalgia and engagement. There were often descriptions of places which evoked childhood memories, such as grandparents’ homes, previous holiday destinations or former schools, and at the highest level descriptions focused on the power of the chosen place to provoke deep feelings in the narrator. Successful integration of the location and the person being remembered was an effective approach. Responses avoided too much narration around the why the narrator returned, or why they took a journey to the chosen place. It was fitting and appropriate for responses to vary in focus from the point at which the individual was first at the location to changes that had happened over a period of time. There were some subtle observations of the changes in the narrator as well as in the place from the past to the present.

Mid-range responses were characterised by more straightforward, often more physical descriptions of places and people. There was some clear descriptive detail, although the way in which responses were organised was less varied and the approach somewhat repetitive, each detail being described with less subtlety and effectiveness. In many cases, details about the location and the writer’s range of feelings were listed, and opportunities to demonstrate a range of descriptive features were missed.

Weaker responses were often characterised by lengthy narrative preambles explaining the journey to the chosen place without really describing the key elements in the title. There was also some generalised and rather clichéd description at this level. A number of responses to this task had some very abrupt time shifts indicated by the phrase: ‘Flashback when...’

The best responses to the second question often included a clearly defined and established specific occasion in which the moment of tension was developed in descriptive detail. Strong responses opened with engaging, well-realised pictures of location and of the striking nature of the moment. Responses considered a wide range of individual events: The taking of an examination featured frequently as did sporting events and dramatic life-changing moments of decision.

Responses given marks in the middle range were more straightforward in their approach to the task, including some rather general qualities and attributes to describe the moment. The quality and effectiveness of the writing varied, but the structure of many mid-range pieces relied on this straightforward approach. Marks were awarded below Band 3 where responses were more narrative than descriptive in focus, where there was limited organisation of the details described or where details were listed rather than described, such that the purpose and intention of the writing was not primarily descriptive. The story of why the narrator had made the physical or psychological journey to 'the moment' was a common approach. There were a number of narrative plots concerning kidnappings and robberies where events formed the focus, at the expense of description.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were sometimes lower than those for Content and Structure in some original and interesting responses. The best responses employed a precise and varied vocabulary, controlled complex sentences, and correct use of punctuation within and between sentences. Images, words and phrases were employed to create specific effects and to bring the scene or character to life. In weaker responses, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences, and incomplete or verb-less sentences were common. This was apparent even in scripts where responses to **Question 1** showed a secure grasp of sentence structure.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

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

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story that begins with the words, 'How am I going to explain this?' [25]

OR

5 Write a story that involves a competition between two or more characters. [25]

The first narrative task was completed by the largest number of candidates with marks being awarded across the range for both titles. The first question elicited some engaging stories which included some interesting characterisation and setting. Many responses involved settings familiar to the narrator in which they were suddenly confronted by a typically negative situation. Scenarios included the aftermath of parties, problems with relationships, disappointing examination results and those in which the narrator was in fact a zombie. In better responses there was a clear resolution to the narrative as well as some control of tension and suspense to shape the reader's reactions. Better responses also clearly focused attention on characterisation and setting. Many responses moved from the title to establishing the scene requiring explanation and then moving backwards in time to create the plot structure for their narrative. This control of chronology required some skill in story-telling which was often evident in strong responses.

Mid-range stories were characteristically straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases, although the characterisation was effective and credible, the piece overall lacked narrative progression and drive. In some cases, there was a tendency to evoke quite convincingly the state of mind of the characters, but without a real story. These responses were effective descriptions but little happened to the characters such that there was no real plot or narrative cohesion.

Weaker responses tended to involve less well drawn characters as well as simple ideas, such as parents coming home to a messy house. These responses often relied too heavily on dialogue at the expense of narration, and simple, linear plot-lines, demonstrating less awareness of the needs of the reader.

For the second narrative question, the type of competition and the variety of locations covered was broad, and varied in terms of success and plausibility. The best responses were those which read authentically and where there was a build-up to the narrative, thus affording it greater credibility. There were some interesting

narratives dealing with sibling or business rivalry as well competitions such as chess tournaments, talent shows and football cup matches.

Less strong responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived narratives or by less control over the material. Responses given marks in Band 4 were especially dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while responses given marks in Band 5 typically took the form of brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. A number of responses focused entirely on the competition itself, with little attempt to develop character or setting. Fantasy battles between warring superheroes tended to move in this direction. Some stories consisted of a series of events which did not really cohere and in a few cases, there was little sequencing or overall clarity.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were awarded where the quality of writing in the response was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were used with control, and were used to create particular effects. Punctuation within sentences – both in dialogue and for effect – was characteristic of higher Band responses and where this was coupled with a sophisticated vocabulary, the highest marks were given. To be awarded a mark of 10 or above, a degree of fluency was required as well as a clarity and accuracy of style.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. In many scripts, inconsistent and inaccurate punctuation of direct speech was observed, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Basic punctuation errors, misused or omitted capital letters, the misspelling of basic words appeared in otherwise competent writing to such an extent, on occasion, that they hampered marks for Style and Accuracy.

A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even when written in a fairly simple style a mark of 7 or 8 was awarded. Where responses contained errors, but the style adopted showed ambition and variety, a mark of 9 was awarded. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks being awarded at Band 4 or below. A few responses were very brief and unclear in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:

- Candidates should plan how they will resolve their story in an interesting way before they start writing.
- Candidates are encouraged to consider how to create tension and climax in their story.
- Candidates should seek to engage the reader through characters' thoughts and feelings rather than exclusively relying on events.
- Candidates should allow time to check their spelling and punctuation, as these could negatively affect their marks.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

**Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio**

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them in a mature and sensible way
- structured the content of their writing in order to clearly guide the reader from one section of writing to the next
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of arguments or events
- 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 contexts for each of the three assignments
- revised, edited, proof-read and corrected the first drafts of each assignment
- wrote accurately and made few errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

General Comments

Content of folders:

Assignment setting is the key to producing good coursework. The very best coursework (not necessarily that produced by the most able candidates) showed young people thinking about and engaging with ideas, issues and concerns which shape the world around them and, in creative writing, reflecting their own observations and experiences thoughtfully and perceptively. Carefully planned assignment setting allowed candidates to write in a range of different styles for different contexts and allowed their strengths to shine through, demonstrating humour, playfulness, seriousness, and sophisticated understanding of complex subjects.

When assignments were generic or candidates were limited in their choice this was less likely to happen; a lower level of challenge and too much classroom input tended to produce more pedestrian responses, particularly with candidates of lower ability. Centres which offered a range of titles for the assignments allowed candidates to choose subject matter that engaged their interest and stretched their abilities. Some very serious issues were addressed, ranging from global issues to local concerns, which gave an interesting insight into the world that the candidates inhabit. Challenging topics stretched vocabulary and understanding, and allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability to construct coherent and sometimes complex arguments. Some of the best creative writing was written from personal experience. There was also some well-crafted fiction, in contrast to the less successful descriptions of haunted houses and dystopian-style zombie attacks that have been seen in the past.

The majority of centres included a first draft of one of the assignments. Moderators saw some very good practice and it was possible to see how final pieces had evolved significantly from first drafts, however for some centres drafting is still a missed opportunity. In a significant number of portfolios, annotations or comments by the teacher for improvement were rare or absent, and the first drafts were almost identical to the final pieces of work.

Assessment:

The assessment of writing by the majority of teachers was generally accurate, and most centres seemed to have engaged in a process of internal moderation. Some centres tended to be slightly lenient with their marking of writing because errors, such as comma splicing, typing errors or the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck did not seem to have been taken into account when marks were awarded. Teachers are reminded that they should indicate all errors in the candidates' final pieces of work. This process helps to ensure that teachers and moderators can easily identify the strengths and the weaknesses of each completed assignment and award the mark that best fits the finished piece of writing.

As with previous examination series there was a tendency with quite a number of centres to over-reward marks for reading. This was most evident in folders receiving reading marks from Band 5. To gain marks from this band a candidate needs to provide an extended overview of the text or write a structured response that assimilates the ideas and opinions they have identified in the text.

The vast majority of centres used the correct mark scheme (the one provided on pages 26 to 29 of the 2017–18 syllabus). Moderators noticed that a small number of centres seem to have used earlier versions of the mark scheme because they made references to Band 1 and Band 2 for high scoring pieces of work. Bands 7 and 8 are now the top two bands. The correct mark scheme to use for assessment of the coursework portfolio is the found in the Course syllabus for the year in which the candidate is entered for final assessment.

Moderators commented that they noticed a general improvement in the number of centres providing useful and detailed summative comments in relation to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment. This is most helpful to the moderation process because it helps moderators to understand how and why marks have been awarded.

Administration:

Moderators reported that the general standard of administration continues to improve; centres are thanked for their hard work with this matter. Most centres provided a completed Candidate Assessment Summary Form (CASF) for the whole cohort and clearly indicated on the CASF which candidates had been included in the sample submitted for moderation. With some candidates there was confusion because changes made to marks during internal moderation did not match those on the MS1. External moderation is based on the marks provided on the CASF. If marks are changed as a result of internal moderation they should be clearly indicated on the Individual Candidate Record Card (ICRC) and correctly transcribed to the MS1.

The majority of folders were presented as directed by the syllabus. A small but significant number of centres presented their candidates' work in plastic wallets without securely attaching all the individual sheets of paper to the candidate's ICRC. Other centres used paper clips as a method of securing the completed portfolios of work. Neither of these methods of presenting candidates' work is secure.

Good practice was where:

- centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks, which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects that they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience
- a wide range of appropriate texts were used for Assignment 3, which contained ideas and opinions to which they could respond and were relevant to the candidates' interests
- centres set tasks which allowed candidates to respond in three different genres of writing
- candidates' responses were within the recommended 500 to 800 word limit
- candidates revised, edited and carefully proof read their first drafts in order to improve their writing, checking for errors with:
 - basic punctuation such as missing full stops, the incorrect use of commas and semi colons, and the correct use of capital letters
 - typing errors
 - spelling, especially any words selected from spellcheck.
- teachers provided informative summative comments relating to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment
- coursework portfolios were securely attached and presented as indicated in the Course syllabus
- the CASF included all the candidates in the cohort and candidates were listed on the form in numerical order, with the candidates in the sample being clearly indicated by an asterisk

- there was clear evidence that a thorough process of internal moderation had taken place and changes to marks had been correctly transferred to the CASF.

Comments on specific assignments

Assignment 1

The most successful responses to **Assignment 1** tasks were those which allowed candidates to write about issues that were relevant and interesting to them. Many centres set broad tasks which invited candidates to write a persuasive speech or article about an issue that was important to them. These tasks offered flexibility for the candidates to adapt their writing to their own ideas and experiences and often resulted in original and interesting responses. Less successful tasks for **Assignment 1** were those in which candidates were offered little flexibility or choice with the subject or topic of their writing; the resulting assignments were often similar in content and structure, and lacked originality and interest for the reader. Common topics for this approach to task setting were the death penalty and euthanasia. Moderators reported that although some centres still set 'Don't get me started...' and 'Room 101' tasks for **Assignment 1** there was a noticeable reduction in this type of task. Responses to these tasks generally result in aggressive or rant-like writing about subjects (e.g. chewing gum, eating on buses) which limit the candidates' opportunities to develop their thoughts and ideas in a mature, persuasive and sensible way.

There was some blurring in terms of audience and purpose with some **Assignment 1** responses. Moderators found that where candidates were asked to respond with a speech, the intended audience was not always clear to the reader. The use of rhetorical devices for speeches often disappeared as the writing progressed, and the style of writing became more like that of an article. With informative writing some candidate's writing became narrative or descriptive as the piece developed. This was most evident when the candidates were writing about one of their own hobbies or interests.

In some responses to **Assignment 1** candidates were too reliant on the sources they had found when researching their topic. Many candidates, but weaker candidates in particular, had a tendency to rely on the language of the source material, and simply presented work that was a series of (sometimes) informative paragraphs which created a lack of cohesion in the writing as a whole. With this type of response moderators could not be confident that the resulting pieces of work were written in the candidate's own language. When candidates quote from source materials it must be acknowledged and a bibliography or reference list should be included at the end of the work.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:

- write about a subject that is of importance and/or of interest to you
- be aware of the audience and purpose of your response and adapt your style accordingly
- try to develop your points to create a detailed and clear line of argument or discussion
- try to use your own words instead of quoting chunks of text from your sources
- acknowledge your use of quotes.

Assignment 2

There were many well written and interesting responses to a range of tasks which included narratives, descriptions and autobiographical accounts of memorable or important events in the candidates' lives. The writing of action/adventure stories quite often lacked appeal and credibility because of the unlikely and unrealistic content of the narratives. Moderators were pleased to notice that there seemed to have been a move away from the setting of narrative titles in the gothic, dystopian, ghost and horror genres.

Many candidates demonstrated that they understood the need to include a wide range of vocabulary in their writing. Some candidates were very successful with their vocabulary choices. A significant number of candidates were less successful with their vocabulary choices because they used clichéd phrases, had a tendency to overwork their language or used imagery that was not wholly successful. Moderators noted that some centres had a tendency to reward the use of high level vocabulary, even when the effect and images created by the language used did not always fit the context of the writing in which it appeared. This was most evident with the responses to descriptive tasks.

Some centres had set tasks which required candidates to describe a scene from a film (e.g. The Hunger Games) or to imagine they were a character from a play that had been studied in English Literature (e.g. A

View from the Bridge). Whilst the resulting writing showed some originality with vocabulary choice and sentence and paragraph construction, the structure and content of such pieces were often very similar because the candidates followed the content and sequence of events of the film or play they had used as a stimulus. Tasks such as these do not help candidates to demonstrate that they understand the need to structure their writing to develop description or events and to provide overall cohesion, because the structure, and much of the content, has been provided for them. This should be taken into account by markers when balancing the strengths and weaknesses of the writing and awarding marks. With some centres this had not happened, which led to a slight over-rewarding of writing for some candidates.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

- when writing to describe try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of ideas and images
- when writing to describe try to avoid writing in list-like paragraphs which are unconnected
- write about something that you are familiar with or something that you know well
- when writing narratives remember to structure your writing carefully
- choose vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects
- make sure that the images you create match the context and content of your writing.

Assignment 3

There were some very well written responses to **Assignment 3** tasks, and some centres used a wide range of interesting and topical texts to which candidates responded with enthusiasm and interest. Some centres tended to over-reward marks for reading, for a number of reasons:

- The texts used for the assignments didn't contain enough ideas and opinions with which the candidates could engage.
- Candidates responded with a literary critique, or an analysis and evaluation of a writer's use of presentational devices, rather than analysing, evaluating and commenting in detail on the ideas and opinions contained within the text.
- Candidates used the text as a stimulus for a general comment on the topic rather than analysing, evaluating and commenting in detail on the ideas and opinions contained within the text.
- Candidates attacked the author and their journalistic background rather than analysing, evaluating and commenting in detail on the ideas and opinions contained within the text.
- Candidates produced unoriginal, formulaic and/or pedestrian responses because they were provided with a limited number of texts to which they could respond.
- Some texts were quite old and the ideas and opinions held by the writer have been superseded by world events or technological advancements, which made it difficult for candidates to respond with relevant, clear and persuasive discussion.

As mentioned earlier in this report, to gain marks from Band 5 candidates need to provide an extended overview of the text or write an overall, structured response that assimilates most of the ideas and opinions presented within the text. Some of the reasons listed above prevented a significant number of candidates from fully engaging with this process, which meant marks from the lower bands of the mark scheme were more appropriate.

The marking of writing for **Assignment 3** was generally accurate. Less successful writing tended to be produced by candidates from centres that had set one, or very few texts, for a whole cohort. Responses to this sort of task setting tended to lack originality of thought or evidence of the candidates' own thinking, and often had similar structure and content to the other candidates' in the cohort.

Examples of good texts included an article about the Finnish education system, an article about why zoos are a good idea and an article on a 'pay as you throw' recycling scheme in America. Articles which were mainly fact or reportage, or ones that candidates linked to other media sources such as television shows or interviews (e.g. Jeremy Clarkson, Katie Hopkins), were less successful, because candidates tended to attack the writers and comment on their journalistic background and personal lives instead of focusing on the ideas and opinions presented in the texts. Advice and guidance as to how to select texts for **Assignment 3** is given in the syllabus.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 3:

- give an overview of the main points or arguments contained within the text

- aim to cover most of the ideas and opinions presented in the text
- make sure that your ideas and responses are tightly linked to the ideas and opinions you have identified in the text
- be aware of your audience and adapt your style accordingly.

Conclusion

There were many examples of good practice and excellent writing and it is clear that the best work stems from candidates who respond to individual tasks and write from personal experience or the heart. It is also clear that many centres are working hard to help their learners to develop and improve skills required to meet the assessment criteria. Whilst there is room for further improvement with some task setting and the marking of **Assignment 3**, it is good to see that the need to write in three different genres seems to be generally understood across most centres and that there is some reduction in the setting of 'one size fits all' style of task. There has also been a general improvement in the quality of administration, for which all the centres are thanked.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/05
Speaking and Listening

Key messages

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

Where there were issues, the following guidelines may help to clarify administrative requirements.

Administration – General Points

- Each recording for every candidate entered should begin with a formal introduction by the Examiner to reflect the guidelines as outlined on page 34 of the syllabus. It is not acceptable for a centre to create one generic introduction for the whole cohort.
- All tests should be carried out within the boundaries of the test window stipulated by Cambridge. Each test should begin with a full introduction, including the date on which the candidate is being examined.
- The centre does not choose which recordings to send. The recordings for the full cohort should be sent as part of the package to Cambridge, together with the Coursework Assessment Summary Form(s) and a copy of the Mark Sheet(s).
- Please check the forms very carefully before sending to Cambridge. Errors of addition on the Summary Form and transcription to the Mark Sheet continue to delay the moderating process for a small but significant number of centres.
- Where total marks for a candidate have been altered because of internal moderation, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks has been changed.
- Whenever possible, please collate recordings onto one CD, DVD or USB drive unless the cohort's size prevents this.
- Please check the recordings at regular intervals during the testing process to ensure their quality. Please also check the CD, DVD or USB before despatching to Cambridge. Faulty recordings continue to delay the process of moderating a small minority of centres.

Conduct of the test

Generally, the standard of examining was very good with candidates given many opportunities to express their views and exhibit their 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. While this was aimed at putting candidates at ease before the test, it was not a necessary part of the process and led to some very long overall recordings which distracted candidates who wanted to begin their talks. 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 presentation.
- The importance of timing within the test should be appreciated. Part 1 should be a minimum of 3 minutes. Please note this does not include the Examiner's introduction. Where a Part 1 response is significantly short of the minimum 3 minutes required, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met and assess accordingly. A response is unlikely to meet higher band criteria such as 'sound' or 'full and well organised use of content' and 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting significantly less than three minutes.
- Equally, a response which is significantly overlong cannot be regarded as fulfilling the criteria for Band 1. It is in the best interests of the candidate that the Examiner steps in to halt any Part 1 talk that is in danger of exceeding five minutes.

- Given that both speaking and listening are assessed in Part 2, it is important that the discussions last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both. In Part 2 a minimum of 6 minutes of discussion is required. It is the Examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation is met.
- Candidates can take into the test one cue card containing prompt notes. A reliance on written material in Part 1 is counter-productive and only leads to a lack of natural fluency which affects performance.

Accuracy of assessment

In most cases, centres have applied the criteria accurately, appropriately and fairly whilst underpinning this through successful internal moderation procedures. When considering what marks to award, the following guidance may be helpful:

- Part 1 should last for a minimum of 3 minutes and a maximum of 4 minutes. Examiners should not interrupt or halt candidates within this time. Examiners should only interrupt to move the candidates onto Part 2 if they show no signs of reaching a natural conclusion after 5 minutes. If they are struggling to continue within the 3–4 minutes through loss of concentration or nerves, the Examiner may offer a prompt or two to help them get back on track. Asking a question is inadvisable as this normally indicates Part 2 has begun.
- The Examiner must ensure a full Part 2 discussion takes place that lasts between 6–7 minutes. Short discussions generally inhibit the candidate's ability to fulfil the criteria in the higher bands.
- Articulate, confident candidates may be over-assessed when the content is largely factual or linear in nature rather than including analysis and reflection. A travelogue that only narrates a holiday day by day would fall into this category.
- It is important that Examiners do not over-dominate the discussions in Part 2. Candidates should be allowed to talk and their contribution should be dominant, particularly for those being awarded marks in the higher bands where detailed responses to questions and prompts are required.

Approaches to Part 1

The most successful tasks are those where the candidates take ownership of a topic, have a strong base knowledge of the subject and are genuinely interested in what they are saying. Well planned and prepared responses are generally more successful, but responses do not benefit from an over-reliance on notes or over-rehearsal. Seemingly 'artificial' performances, where a natural fluency is missing, do not benefit the candidates.

Occasionally, candidates choose topics that are challenging or controversial perhaps because they feel that they will be marked higher with such content. They prepare Part 1 very thoroughly and generally perform well but lack the depth of understanding of the topic to discuss it at length in Part 2. When candidates choose topics, they should be encouraged to consider whether they feel confident enough to undertake a detailed and evolving discussion lasting at least 6 minutes.

Once again, Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken. Most tasks took the form of an individual presentation. Some dramatic monologues were presented and these tended to be well received. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. To achieve the higher bands, presentations should move beyond the descriptive to include elements of reflection and analysis.

Some examples of productive Part 1 topics include:

- Whatever you are, be a good one.
- Relationships.
- Feminism.
- My love of reading.
- Monologue from a concerned parent.
- A 'letter to my depression'.
- My violin.
- My love of travel.
- Benefits of bilingualism.
- Biomedical ethics.
- Seeking acceptance.
- Disneyland.
- Alice in Wonderland.

- How to be a better conversationalist.
- Mercedes Benz.

Some other examples of less successful Part 1 topics include:

- The person I admire most (where the talk is purely a descriptive series of facts and rumours).
- Bullying (too vague when generalised and a possible safeguarding issue where more specific).
- Football (too generalised and unfocused).
- Social Media (becoming cliché ridden and repetitive).
- Future Career Plans (where the talk is generic and unfocused).
- Favourite Movie/TV Show (Where there is no attempt to move beyond the narrative and descriptive).
- X-Box (Or any computer-related topic where the focus is on description only).
- My holiday (Where there is only a linear narration of events).

Management of Part 2

Good Examiners show genuine interest and enthusiasm in the candidates' topics, provide appropriate encouragement and are not judgemental.

Good Examiners give many opportunities for candidates to develop their ideas as fully as they can, providing open questions that help them to explore and develop the discussion. Equally, good Examiners avoid the use of closed questions, understanding that closed questioning limits the candidate's ability to respond at length.

Good Examiners are good listeners and do not hinder the candidates by interrupting or cutting into a discussion when it may be more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue. Detailed and developed responses are required if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded for Listening.

Good Examiners do not run out of relevant questions about the chosen topic and ensure a full discussion takes place. Good Examiners do not allow discussions to meander into general conversation that is not focused on the topic.

Advice to centres

- Please check administrative procedures to ensure a smooth and trouble-free moderation of your centre.
- Choosing the most appropriate topic is key to being successful in the test. Candidates should be aware that Part 2 offers the opportunity to be awarded twice the number of marks available in Part 1 so it is important that they choose wisely with Part 2 in mind.
- Although candidates should prepare thoroughly, it must be remembered that Part 1 is a demonstration of presentational skills and that recitation of a memorised topic will not fulfil the criteria for Band 1.
- Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through effective discussion and appropriate timings for both parts of the test. Keeping to the time limits in the syllabus will avoid candidates being adversely limited in the accurate application of the mark scheme.
- When conducting the discussions in Part 2, Examiners should have plenty of relevant questions to ask to push candidates to fill the time for the discussion. Examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and show off what they can do. Examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early, which prevents candidates from developing their own ideas.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

The standard of administration and accuracy of assessment continue to be of a high standard.

Key messages

Administration

- When completing an Individual Candidate Record Card for each candidate entered please provide specific information about the choices made for each task as this is important information for the Moderator. For **Task 1**, a comment reading ‘a talk about a hobby of your choice’ is not helpful but ‘my interest in (specific hobby)’ is useful for the Moderator.
- Cambridge requires a centre to provide four different items in the package sent to the Moderator. These are: a recorded sample on CD, DVD or USB drive; the Summary Forms for the whole cohort entered; a copy of the marks that have already been sent to Cambridge and the Individual Candidate Record Cards for the candidates included in the sample. Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre’s performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process.
- All the recordings for **Task 1** and **Task 2** for the whole cohort should be sent in the sample packet.
- Whenever possible, it would be most helpful if the recordings sent by the centre were transferred to a single CD, DVD or USB drive, in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software. Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge.
- For **Task 1** it is helpful if, for each candidate, the file name is the candidate’s name and examination number. For **Task 2** it is helpful if the file name contains at least the candidate numbers of both candidates involved.
- The Teacher/examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. For paired activities, it would be helpful if **candidates introduce themselves and the roles they are playing** before beginning the task so the Moderator can clearly distinguish who is speaking and when.

Key messages

Approach to coursework

- Although there is no formal requirement that activities should be of a minimum length, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met if the activity is very short.
- For **Task 1** a good comparison is the Part 1 presentation within the 05 speaking and listening test. For this, a candidate is required to speak for 3–4 minutes on a chosen topic. A similar length would be appropriate for **Task 1**.
- In **Task 2**, the Paired Task, it is important to offer both candidates an equal and sufficient amount of time to contribute for both speaking and listening. Short tasks of less than four minutes do not give both candidates enough time to convincingly fulfil the criteria in the mark scheme for the middle and higher bands.

General comments

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

For Component 6, centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks but the assessment criteria should always be used as a guide to the skills being assessed. The integration of literature into the activities is encouraged and continues to yield some excellent results in both **Task 1** and **Task 2**.

Comments on specific tasks

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

Task 1

A wide range of topics were undertaken. The task generally took the form of an individual presentation. Centres allowing candidates to choose their own topics as opposed to dictating a generic theme is viewed positively. It is important to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting, so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when these choices are made. More able candidates should be encouraged to choose more exacting and mature topics that extend their abilities to construct a compelling argument within a period of approximately 3–4 minutes that includes an element of introspection and reflection. Dramatic monologues in the voice of a chosen character have resulted in some very successful talks which stand out for their creativity and ingenuity.

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

- A significant event in my life.
- My love of a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive, is reflective and thought-provoking).
- A critique of a favourite book, work of art or movie.
- My passion for (e.g.) horses.
- The place I would like to live.
- Are we ready for (specific technological advance)?
- The Marvel comic universe.
- Why we should all follow a healthy diet.

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

- Should cannabis be legalised? (this has potential safeguarding issues).
- Football (too generic and unfocused).
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort in which no individual choice is allowed (ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident).
- Social media (unless a specific viewpoint is being argued).

Task 2

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about, or engaging in a lively role play that allows them to demonstrate their discursive strengths. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. 'Football', 'Body Image' and 'Social Media' remain popular topics but where there is no sense of audience or specific focus there will be little evidence to support a mark in the higher bands. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument, the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions. To this end, sufficient research and development should be built in to the preparation time leading up to performance of the task.

In general, entirely scripted responses, either discussions or self-generated role plays, do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands.

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

- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as the benefits of artificial intelligence or responses to climate change.
- Discussing a text or author both candidates know well but may have differing views about.

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

Some examples of less successful Task 2 activities include:

- Should cannabis be legalised? (this has potential safeguarding issues).
- Interviews where one of the candidates acts solely as the interviewer (this is limiting for the candidate).
- A single topic imposed by the centre for the whole of its cohort such as 'Room 101' in which no individual choice is allowed (ownership of and commitment to the topic is not always evident).
- Role plays such as two neighbours arguing or a customer complaining to a sales assistant. The evidence of the present and previous series suggests these often rely too heavily on scripts, generally become simple arguments and limit the candidates' ability to demonstrate the required range of speaking and listening skills.

Task 3

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

Some examples of productive Task 3 activities include:

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. 'Of Mice and Men', 'An Inspector Calls', 'A View From The Bridge', 'All My Sons'.
- A radio discussion of a significant event from a work of literature involving the key characters.
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint.
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity.
- A meeting in which the candidates discuss their roles in and possible contributions to a named community event.
- A review of a named event from the perspective of those involved in its planning.

General Conclusions

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