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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/12
Reading Passages (Core)

Key messages

- 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.
- Candidates should read all questions carefully to ensure that their answers focus on the questions.
- Proof reading is essential. Marks were lost through avoidable mistakes which could have been corrected by candidates checking over their work.
- In **Question 1(g)**, candidates should avoid repeating the meanings of the underlined words in the second part of the question but should focus their response on describing the effect of the whole phrase.
- In **Question 2** candidates must remember to deal with all 3 bullet points attempting to 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 **Question 2**.
- In **Question 3(a)** candidates should only make one point on each line and avoid repeating similar points.

General comments

Overall, the passages proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates and they responded positively to both passages and 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 examiners reported seeing a reasonable number of high-quality responses to **Question 2**. It is clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for these questions and were confident in their approach.

Responses to the sub-questions in **Question 1** revealed that the main points in the passage had been clearly understood and many responded well to the more straightforward questions. In general, the questions enabled all candidates to produce some correct answers while at the same time challenging those who were more perceptive to gain higher marks. The majority of candidates were familiar with the requirements of **Questions 3(a)** and **3(b)**. There was very little evidence of candidates not working within the paper time limit and few examples of No Response answers. Where a response had not been attempted it tended to be to **Question 1(g)** or **3(b)**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Give <u>two</u> reasons why the writer wanted the trip to Delphi to be cancelled (paragraph 1, 'I took a look …'). *[2 marks]*

Most candidates scored at least 1 mark on this question with many gaining 2 marks. The most popular responses focused on the 7-day non-stop touring and the exhaustion felt by the students owing to this. Relatively few candidates picked up on the students' need for a break, and even fewer identified the lengthy drive facing them on the trip to Delphi. Quite a number of candidates believed mistakenly that the writer thought that not going to Delphi would have no detrimental effect on the students' educational experience because they had visited so many historical sites prior to this. This might well have been the case, but it is not stated or implied in the passage.

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(b) **Using your own words, explain why the writer wanted to speak to the guide 'out of earshot' (line 8).** *[1 mark]*

A large number of candidates merely recycled the question by stating that the writer did not want to be heard. Those candidates who gained a mark on this question did so by attempting to explain 'why' the writer did not want to be heard when speaking to the guide about the trip to Delphi. These explanations varied in detail and often in quality, but implicit or explicit references to the cancellation of the trip or, indeed, the possible negative reactions of some of the students who did want to visit Delphi were successful in gaining the mark for this question.

(c) **Using your own words, explain the writer's reasons for finally deciding to go on the trip to Delphi (lines 8–12).** *[2 marks]*

Many candidates were able to score at least one mark on this question by identifying the writer's reason(s) for eventually deciding on going ahead with the trip to Delphi. The most popular reasons given were avoiding disappointing both the guide and those students eager to go. Relatively few candidates identified the guide's advice to the teacher to go ahead with the trip.

(d) **Using your own words, explain the writer's feelings when they first began to explore the site at Delphi (lines 13–21** *[2 marks]*

A number of candidates were able to identify at least one of the above points, but a minority merely copied out lines 13 and 14 from the passage ignoring the question requirement of own words. Those candidates who attempted to recast the words from the passage were rewarded, and answers which conveyed the idea of being 'captivated' in any sense were also rewarded.

(e) **Give two reasons why the writer found the stadium at Delphi so impressive (paragraph 9, 'At the top …')** *[2 marks]*

The majority of candidates were able to score two marks on this question through citing the ancient age of the stadium and its huge size. However, a number of responses identified the stone benches as an impressive feature of the stadium. Candidates who referred to just the 'size' of the stadium (without reference to how big it was) did not gain the mark because they did not demonstrate full understanding of why the size of the stadium was impressive.

(f) **Using your own words, explain the true source of Delphi's power (paragraph 11, 'And I realised …').** *[2 marks]*

As with **1(d)**, a number of candidates simply copied lines 32 and 33 of the passage and by doing so did not gain any marks. Any recasting of the words of the passage the lines did gain the marks. The key concepts for this question were Delphi's 'simplicity', 'its natural, basic elements, its 'mystery', and its 'sacred' nature. A few candidates were also able to identify that it gave visitors a link to the past and made them aware of their place in human existence.

(g) **Give the meaning of the underlined words in the following three phrases as the writer uses them in the passage. Then explain how the phrases help to suggest the narrator's thoughts and feelings about Delphi and her visit there.**

The new layout of **Question 1(g)** led to more carefully structured answers from the majority of candidates and there were fewer examples of candidates simply repeating meanings when asked for an explanation of the whole phrase. Where candidates did not define the meaning of the individual word in the first part of the question, they were credited with it in the next part where appropriate.

(i) **'awe'**

Many candidates found it challenging to explain the meaning of 'awe' with some trying to use the context of the passage to help them. A number of candidates were able describe the sense of 'wonder', 'admiration' or 'astonishment' evoked by the word but many simply thought it conveyed a sense of happiness, or a feeling of being impressed, without any added qualifier. A few candidates believed 'awe' indicated that the narrator did not like Delphi. A few candidates attempted to explain the word 'awe' in whole sentences as opposed to a simple synonym and explanations such as 'lost for words' or 'lost in the moment' were rewarded.

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(ii) 'feeling in awe of the timeless magnificence of the surroundings'

As noted with previous papers, it is important that candidates do not attempt to explain the given phrase in terms of the narrator's thoughts and feelings by simply repeating words from the quotation such as 'timeless' and 'magnificence'. It is also important that candidates do not merely repeat their answer to **1(g)(i)** because the question calls for a much broader explanation than focusing on a single word. Many candidates were able to identify the narrator's sense of the impressive or beautiful nature of Delphi and its huge impact on both the teacher and the students. Very few candidates made reference to the historical setting or length of time conveyed through the quotation.

(iii) 'significance'

The majority of candidates were able to explain the meaning of 'significance' with synonyms such as 'value', 'importance', or 'greatness'. Candidates gained more marks on this single word question than on the other two single word questions.

(iv) 'it was as if everyone recognised the significance of the place'

Many candidates were able to identify the sense of the shared experience or shared understanding of the school party about the importance of Delphi, as well as its huge impact on them. A few candidates also referred to the mystical or special qualities of the place. Most candidates were able to score 1 mark on this part of the question, but a number of responses just repeated the given phrase, replacing significance with the meaning offered in the first part of the question, for example, 'everyone recognised the importance of the place'.

(v) 'overwhelmed'

Those candidates who offered explanations or synonyms for 'overwhelmed' which conveyed the feeling of being 'overpowered', 'deeply moved or affected', 'astonished', 'amazed', or 'emotional' gained the mark. The words 'shocked' or 'surprised', without a suitable qualifier indicating the depth of feeling, did not gain the mark, although both words were accepted in **1(g)(vi)** within the explanation of the whole phrase.

(vi) 'We stood and stared, overwhelmed by its size'

The most common answers which gained marks for this explanation were those which focused on their shock or surprise at the huge size of the stadium. It was important for candidates to identify the massive size of the stadium as opposed to just referring to its size in order to gain a mark for this point. Very few candidates scored a mark for explaining that they were stunned into silence or immobility, or mesmerised.

Question 2

Imagine that you are one of the students who visited Delphi, in <u>Passage A</u>. It is the evening of your visit and you have now returned to Athens.

<u>Write a letter to your parents, telling them about your experiences so far.</u>

In your letter you should include the following points:
- **details of your trip and your feelings about it before you visited Delphi**
- **your thoughts and feelings about the visit to Delphi <u>and</u> about how your teacher reacted to it**
- **what you have learnt from your trip so far <u>and</u> why you would (or would not) recommend your parents to make a similar visit.**

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

Begin your letter: 'I had mixed feelings when I first set out on this tour …'

Write about 200 to 300 words.

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

[Total: 15 marks]

For this task, the majority of candidates seemed to understand quite clearly the need to address each of the bullet points given in the question and to give a credible account of their personal thoughts and feelings about the trip to Delphi, both before and after the visit. The vast majority of candidates were comfortable writing a letter to their parents, offering an appropriate register and tone. The most successful responses explored their feelings before going on the trip, as well as their feelings after seeing the ancient site. Many cited their exhaustion and initial feelings of reluctance to go on the trip, followed by delight and surprise when reflecting on their experience. The explanation of the teacher's behaviour was often a differentiator in the higher band responses where a few candidates were able to adapt the perspective skilfully to consider what the teacher may have been thinking and feeling at that point based on the behaviour described in the passage. Some candidates wrote a more general narrative of the events of the passage without focusing on the three prompts given in the question rubric or addressing it clearly to his or her parents. This often resulted in less suitable material being included, such as the conversation between the teacher and the guide which the students would not have heard. A small minority of candidates merely copied extracts from the passage with very few own words, or produced letters which were too close to the original passage and often written from the perspective of the teacher.

Many candidates attempted to cover the three bullet points offering a balanced response to the whole task. However, although some candidates produced promising letters, they only focused on the first two prompts in the question, simply repeating the third bullet point by suggesting that their parents visit Delphi themselves. These responses often gave convincing descriptions of the trip to Delphi and the reaction of their teacher as well as themselves but didn't use the details in the passage to suggest what they had learned from the trip, or why it would be a good place for their parents to visit in the future. Some candidates chose to completely ignore the third bullet point. Quite a number of candidates did remember to address the third bullet point and wrote about the lessons that they had learnt about the ancient world, the magnificence of the buildings or the mystical nature of the site. These were often linked to their parents' love of history and visiting ancient sites and led naturally into a recommendation for them to visit Delphi themselves.

Some candidates' rather narrative approach to the task led them to cover the prompts partially by, for example, stating that some students didn't want to visit Delphi but not describing their own feelings about it, or describing the teacher's reaction to Delphi as though it was their own. The less successful responses tended to be those where candidates) simply repeated the details from the passage without attempting to change the perspective at all. This meant that although, generally, there wasn't extensive lifting of material there was often little sense of candidates putting themselves in the position of the character and giving life to his or her experiences. The weakest responses simply lifted large sections of the passage, describing the teacher's experience as a result.

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 invented material about the bus trip, picnics or meals, souvenir shops or wrote at length about trips taken earlier in the tour. All development of the ideas in the passage should be firmly tethered to the details given resulting in feasible extension.

The best responses – and there were a number – managed to develop imaginatively all three bullet points using and developing the finer details in the passage. These responses firmly tethered any development to the sights, sounds and experiences that the school party was exposed to that day.

Question 3

(a) ***Notes***

What do you learn about the history of Ostia Antica and what it offers to modern-day visitors, 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]

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This question gave candidates the chance to boost their total score by appropriate selection. It was generally answered quite well with many candidates making one point per line as instructed and focusing on the topic and the question. However, there were a small number of candidates who (largely by selective lifting) included several points on the same line thereby self-penalising. Sometimes candidates included more than 10 relevant points, but by putting them more than one point on each line gained fewer than 10 marks overall.

There were also some points repeated several times, most notably focused on the individual sites in Ostia Antica, and also by offering both 'a major naval and trading base' and 'commercial significance' for point 3. Many candidates also offered a number of points about Ostia Antica's decline for point 6 with, for example, factors such as 'Tiber no longer navigable', 'roads overgrown' and 'muddy oblivion' being offered as separate points. Similarly, with what is offered to modern-day visitors, points 10 and 12 were often presented as partial repeats, with some candidates offering one example from each in a list of different points. So, for example, for point 12, some responses separated the bar, the public toilets, and the residential villas as three points. It was important for candidates to recognise the differentiation between the major sites of point 10 and the Impressive mosaics and columns of point 12. Two examples for each of these two points respectively were sufficient to gain a mark.

The average mark for this question about the history of Ostia Antica and what it offers to modern-day visitors was about 7. Very few candidates scored 10 marks and relatively few scored below 5 marks. Generally, there was reasonable focus on the question leading to fewer irrelevant points. A number of candidates erroneously included 'the harbour city of Ancient Rome' and/or 'under-visited archaeological site' in their list. These points are not part of the passage as they are direct lifts from the introduction so could not be rewarded.

Numerous candidates included the 'modern apartment blocks', 'high fences', and 'no sea-view' of modern Ostia, ignoring the fact that they are clearly not included as attractions in the passage and do not focus on the 'history' as required in the task. It is important that only relevant points are selected from the passage and that candidates focus carefully on the question.

(b) ***Summary***

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about the history of Ostia Antica and what it offers to modern-day visitors.

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

Your summary should not be more than 150 words.

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

[5 marks]

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

Most candidates tried to write with some concision and to use own words where possible. Better responses managed to reorganise points and to stay focused on the two aspects of the question, although a large number did lose focus at the end by referring to the modern apartment blocks of modern Ostia. There were some responses which started off quite well but then became list like by listing the examples of points 10 and 12. A good number of candidates lifted material selectively but comparatively few merely copied from the passage with no recasting. The most commonly lifted phrases were 'muddy oblivion', 'buildings preserved up to the second storey', and 'the Tiber was no longer navigable'. Obviously, those candidates who had included material from the introduction, in **3(a)**, often began their summary with this. The best responses were organised, concise, with some own words and sustained focus.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/22
Reading Passages (Extended)

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- used their own words appropriately and precisely when explaining, using and interpreting ideas
- avoided copying and/or lifting from either passage
- considered carefully the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each task
- paid attention to the key words, guidance and instructions for each task
- returned to the text when necessary to clarify an idea or reconsider an important detail
- gave equal attention to all sections of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- checked and edited their response to amend any careless slips, incomplete ideas or unclear points
- adapted their writing style to suit each task, taking account of voice, audience and purpose

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated a familiarity with the format of the paper and the general demands of the three tasks. There were very few instances where all or part of a task had not been attempted, though on occasion opportunities to target higher marks were missed where candidates offered a restricted range of ideas, misread details and/or dealt unevenly with each part of the task in hand. Better responses indicated an awareness of the need to use, rather than repeat, the material from the passages in order to answer the questions. The most successful answers were able to modify the material in the passages skilfully and use it to show understanding, remaining focused on the specific demands of each task. Less successful responses were often over reliant on the wording and/or sequence of the text(s) and paid limited attention to the details of the question, providing less convincing evidence of skills and understanding as a result. Centres are reminded that simple paraphrasing and/or copying of the text should be avoided.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible, and were for the most part able to finish the paper within the time allowed. Very occasionally, achievement was limited by a failure to follow the rubric and/or complete all aspects of a task – for example, by writing from the wrong perspective in **Question 1**, explaining fewer than 8 choices in **Question 2** or writing far more than the maximum of 250 words advised for **Question 3.**

More successful answers were able to interpret and use details to demonstrate accurate, purposeful reading in **Question 1**, offer detailed explanation of meaning and effect as they considered their selections from the text in **Question 2** and show understanding of carefully identified, relevant ideas which addressed the specific focus of the task in **Question 3.**

Most **Question 1** responses attempted all three bullets of the task and were aware of the need to reinterpret Nathanial's account of his experiences from the perspective of a journalist writing the article as described. Many candidates were able to respond appropriately to the passage, with the best taking on the role of a journalist convincingly and demonstrating a particularly strong sense of purpose and approach to create thorough and engaging articles. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities through more mechanical treatment of the text. Less successful responses sometimes repeated the narrative with minimal modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the passage and/or any introduction to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

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For **Question 2** candidates need to consider appropriate choices of words and phrases from each of the two specified paragraphs and offer precise, focused comments in relation to these choices. To target higher bands, candidates should explore and explain in some detail the meanings and effects of the examples of interesting or powerful language use they identify, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Most were able to suggest potentially useful examples for analysis, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently clear or careful in the examination of their choices. A number repeated the language of the choices in their explanations, and/or offered generalised comments, diluting evidence of understanding as a result.

In **Question 3** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas. Though all points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, opportunities were missed to target higher marks, often as a result of repetition of aspects of the same idea from the early part of the text and/or inclusion of material not relevant to the focus of the question. Where responses were most successful, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less well focused responses were over reliant on copying from the text, with minimal/no rewording or reorganisation of the original. Candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response. They should not however lift whole phrases and/or sentences from the text, or rely on simply listing ideas in the order of the passage. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

Though Paper 2 is primarily a test of Reading, candidates need to keep in mind that 20 per cent of the available marks are for Writing, divided equally between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and reviewing their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that unclear style will limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

You are a journalist writing an article for a monthly music magazine. You were at the gig in the park, and at the party afterwards, and interviewed band members and some of their audience.

Write your magazine article.

In your magazine article, you should:
- **explain who the band are, their style, and the history of the band**
- **describe the concert, audience reaction and the aftershow party**
- **introduce Stanley and consider how he fits in with the band.**

Base your article on what you have read in Passage A, but be careful to use your own words.

Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your article: 'This month's featured concert …'

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the passage and task in at least general terms. Many offered extended responses, reworking and attempting to develop the material with their audience in mind and engaging with both task and text. Where content had been planned in advance, and the route through the answer considered beforehand, answers were often able to include a good range of relevant ideas – both explicit and implicit – in relation to all three bullets. Where responses relied too heavily on simply tracking through the text, replaying the passage, answers were less well focused and often repeated rather than developed ideas. The least successful responses copied sections of the text with minimal modification and/or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading key details and information.

The most convincing responses to **Question 1** showed evidence of candidates having returned to the passage to interpret and reorganise Nathanial's account of events for the imagined readers of their magazine article. Many made good use of the guidance in the bullets to help them identify and then organise the ideas they might include and used the prompt offered as a helpful starting point for their response.

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The first bullet of the question invited candidates to collate and interpret both the factual historical information Nathanial had discovered relating to the band and explicit details offered regarding their current line-up. Better answers had gathered and reworked relevant information from various parts of the passage, dealing effectively with the chronology and confidently differentiating between the different incarnations of the band. Almost all answers recognised that the band Nathanial had joined comprised of elderly musicians and included reference to their appearance – though simply tracking through the passage rather than reading purposefully meant that some answers went on incorrectly to suggest that they had all pasted on moustaches and/or bleached their eyebrows. Similarly, almost all answers included the listed names of the band members. However, where answers relied on simply paraphrasing the passage rather than reworking ideas to address the task many missed opportunities to show evidence of close reading by linking relevant details to each name. Stronger answers recognised implications and were able to develop ideas in relation to individual band members, for example noting and commenting on the fact that clarinet-player Clyde, as leader, had decided unilaterally to shift the style of the band to jazz and that tuba-player Wally had experience of war. Less successful answers showed signs of not having read closely or planned out their ideas by using details incorrectly – for example by referring to the most recent band line-up as 'The Littlest Big Band'.

Many candidates did make good use of the guidance within each bullet to help focus their response and in bullet two were able to include a range of potentially relevant ideas. Most had understood that the concert was outdoors and that the audience were mostly of a similar age to the older band members. Those who relied on mechanical lifting from the text sometimes diluted evidence of reading skills and understanding through incorrect copying, for example by reporting that 'This concert will be their last in a local park', that it was 'The last of their series of open-air summer concerts' or that 'Ruth performed a terrible rap act'. Some answers confused the party and the concert. Better answers offered some comment on the atmosphere or ambience of the concert and/or party afterwards, suggesting variously the sense of nostalgia and energy. A number of candidates offered the comment 'old is gold' and might have gone further. Many developed ideas related to the contrast between the journalist's expectations beforehand and the gig itself, often going on to describe enthusiastically the success of the concert with everyone enjoying the music. Occasionally, errors with spelling or grammar affected the sense of an idea and provided less secure evidence of close reading – for example by suggesting that a table at the after-show party was 'covered with snakes' or that party goers were 'dancing on records'.

When dealing with the third bullet of the task answers often included details of Stanley's name, appearance and skills. References were made to the efforts he had made to fit in, though sometimes this was limited to recycling of the phrases 'the kid goes the extra mile' and ' felt like a little kid with a whole army of grandparents'. Fewer went on to consider his future with the band. A few of the least successful responses confused Stanley and Clyde, did not notice the implication that Nathanial returned to the party and/or suggested that Stanley was an '8 year old kid'.

Answers tracking the structure of the text rather than identifying ideas in relation to each bullet and then planning a logical route through their article made it more difficult for themselves to write clearly and/or maintain an appropriate style. Stronger answers showed evidence that candidates had decided beforehand on a voice for their journalist and kept their readers in mind throughout. On occasion less effective writing contained some awkward expression, for example as a result of insecure vocabulary choices or inappropriate use of idiom. In the weakest answers lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of sections of text not uncommon and affecting evidence of both Reading and Writing skills. The best answers were able to both inform and engage, offering a clear and interesting article for the benefit of an imagined readership who may, or may not, have had knowledge of the band beforehand.

Advice to candidates on Question 1:

- consider how the response to reading task is asking you to adopt a different perspective to that of the text – for example by writing from the point of view of a character other than the narrator
- consider the audience and purpose for your response before you begin writing
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain in your answer
- read the passage carefully, more than once, identifying the key ideas and details you can adapt for use in your answer
- give equal attention to ideas relevant to each aspect of each of the three bullet points
- plan a route through your answer beforehand – you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and/or link ideas from each
- express ideas from the text which are relevant to your answer using your own words

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- do not just simply repeat details from the text – extend and develop relevantly a number of the ideas you include
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response
- do not waste time by counting the exact number of words in your answer – the number of words suggested by the question is a guide to help you plan your time, not a limit.

Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of:

(a) the concert in paragraph 6, beginning 'Clyde puffs …'

(b) the partygoers in paragraph 29, beginning 'Looking back …'

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery.

Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Responses in **Question 2** needed to identify precisely a range of relevant examples of language for discussion and provide sufficiently focused and clear analysis of these in order to evidence understanding of how the writer was using language in each case. Where the meaning of words was considered carefully in context, candidates were often able to go on to suggest something of the effect and better answers ensured that they had considered all key words within choices. Opportunities to target higher marks were missed where meaning was not explained and/or selections had not been carefully considered beforehand. Rather than selecting the first four choices in each half they came across or the most 'obvious' literary devices, successful answers often set out to explore those words and phrases they felt best able to explain. Some of the strongest answers showed evidence of candidates having identified many of the potential choices from each paragraph in a planning stage before beginning their response and then selecting from their original list those they wanted to tackle.

Candidates are reminded it is the quality of their analysis which attracts marks. Answers which simply list literary devices used and/or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks in a language question.

A number of weaker answers relied on simply spotting literary devices and as a result struggled to interpret meaning or effect. For example whilst many candidates who selected it were able to offer credible interpretations of the ways in which the end of the concert was 'like landing a plane' and what that suggested, others struggled to comment as a consequence of having simply identified it as an example of a simile 'because it used the word like' with little understanding of how the image was working. Taking time to select from the full range of potential choices those about which they felt most able to comment, rather than simply feature spotting, would have helped a number of candidates who offered only thin or inappropriate comment.

Repeating the language of the original in their explanations was a feature of some partially effective explanations. Likewise potentially relevant comments were offered in general terms rather than linked to / evidenced by precise quotation from the text. The best answers were able to explore connotations and suggestions of words within the choices they had selected as well as go on to consider how exactly those created a particular image / effect for the reader.

Many candidates were able to provide satisfactory evidence of skills and understanding in either one part of the task or the other and might have targeted higher marks by extending their explanations to consider 'how' or 'why' the words chosen were creating the general or basic effect they claimed. The majority of candidates were able to show that they recognised at least some potentially interesting examples of language use and could begin to offer some relevant comment. For marks in the top bands, candidates need to be careful to select and interpret choices accurately, considering examples in context and demonstrating that they understand some of the subtleties of how the language is working. Answers offering less careful or considered choices sometimes prejudiced the evidence of understanding they were able to demonstrate in relation to meaning and effect, for example by attempting to discuss selections such as 'laughing in the waves', 'landing like a plan', or 'waves warbling'.

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Better answers focused on exploring and explaining each of their choices in detail, offering some high quality analysis in each half of the question. They avoided repetition of very similar comments in relation to more than one choice and did more than simply identify features, with the best recognising and explaining imagery with some imagination. There were various alternative explanations offered for example when dealing with 'framed in a rosy window' (some commented on the romanticised/ idealised picture it created, others focused on the idea of a still image that could be remembered and cherished as a memory forever). Many referred to 'a movie flashed on the wall' as being something too perfect or unreal to exist and there were also some clear explanations of 'hanging in space' with references to the ages and feelings of disconnection to the modern world. Others missed opportunities to profit from their general understanding and go on to explore and explain each choice specifically and instead offered only partial or very weak effects, for example in repeated comments such as 'this shows their energy/enjoyment'. A few candidates appeared to have learned by heart some introductory words / generalised comments, for example relating to synaesthesia and kinaesthetic imagery, which they used regardless of whether they made sense or added anything to the analysis. These were often at the expense of comments focused on the actual words in the phrase.

There were plenty of potentially useful choices relating to both the description of the concert in paragraph 6, and the partygoers in paragraph 29. Where candidates had not paid close attention to the detail of the task less relevant choices were sometimes considered. In relatively rare cases, candidates selected from the wrong paragraph and/or offered only two choices from each paragraph rather than the four from each suggested and consequently offered more limited evidence of Reading skills. At times, potentially useful choices were not fully explored or explained and opportunities missed as a result. For example, 'gang' was quite neatly explored as suggesting teamwork or a youthful image by many candidates, though fewer went on to recognise the humour or incongruity. Similarly 'coaxing' was rarely explained, though 'sad wah-wahs' was commonly related to babies and/or the melancholy sound of the trombone.

Selections in **Question 2** need to be clear and deliberate – helping to focus the analysis which follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are less likely to be useful and often result in very thin general comments at best. On occasion, candidates selected phrases containing a few words and then went on to unpick the separate elements of these with some success. Others narrowed the focus down to single words and then reassembled the image. Both were potentially useful approaches where careful explanation was offered and replaying of the language of the original as part of the commentary was avoided. Repetition of the words of the choice within the explanation offered was a feature of a number of lower range answers – often an indication that the meaning of the vocabulary selected had not been fully understood. Suggested meanings for selections such as carousel (casserole) and silhouettes (stilettos) were inaccurate in a small number of answers.

Opportunities were missed in some answers, such as where a chosen phrase contained more than one word of interest and the answer moved on too quickly – offering a more general explanation of the phrase as a whole and/or only considering one of the words it contained. For example, a number of answers discussed the use of 'noodles' and/or 'lassos' but missed the chance to consider the effect of 'golden'. Similarly, some candidates having identified 'stir up a flock of audience jazz-hands' limited their discussion to either 'stir up' or 'flock' rather than consider each in turn and suggest how they might work together.

Planning of relevant ideas ahead of writing would have helped some candidates to avoid empty phrases such as 'the writer's use of language helps the reader to image the scene'. Unless the answer goes on to suggest exactly how and in what ways the writer is doing this, such comment can offer a false sense of security and take up valuable examination time unprofitably. Stronger responses, offering considered and careful analysis focused on language use in both parts of the question, were often able to build to a useful overview of how the language was working and evidence clear understanding.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- once you have identified the potentially relevant choices to answer part a and part b, select your strongest four from each paragraph to explore and explain
- make sure your choices are precise and accurate – do not copy out lines of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice you wish to discuss
- avoid empty comments such as comments that 'the writer has used lots of great adjectives'
- show your understanding in full – consider each of the key words within your identified choice
- if you are unsure of effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) you have identified
- try to explore and explain the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the precise effect the writer might have wanted to create

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- allow time to edit your answer – for example to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood

Question 3

What facts are interesting and important about the musical instruments used in this concert, according to Passage B?

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

Your summary should not be more than 250 words.

Candidates who addressed the task successfully, often showed evidence of having planned beforehand both the content and route through their answer. They had identified those points that were potentially relevant to the focus of the question (the musical instruments used in the Paris concerts) and reflected on their potential answers to refine their ideas and avoid excess. For example, they were able to group examples usefully together under one umbrella point, identify implied points and/or avoid repetition of ideas or inclusion of unnecessary detail. Successful answers did not rely on the structure or language of the text to communicate ideas and considered carefully the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for the selective summary task. Less effective responses had often relied on trying to offer a précis of the whole text and/or tried to paraphrase the original or shadow it, substituting (sometimes inappropriate) vocabulary for individual words. The weakest answers adopted a cut and paste approach, copying sections from the original and/or were almost entirely reliant on the language of the text.

On occasion, incorrect and/or incomplete lifting from the text also served to dilute evidence of understanding in potentially stronger answers which would have benefitted from careful editing. Reading back through their answer afterwards to make sure that it would both make sense as a piece of informative writing for a reader who had not read the original passage and summarised the key information that reader would need to know in relation to these instruments would have helped a number of candidates target higher marks. Often answers began well and showed some understanding of relevant ideas but lost focus, for example by repeating information and/or including information not relevant to the instruments themselves. A few less successful answers showed evidence of having misread details of the task – for example by offering comment from outside the text in relation to musical instruments in general rather than information from the text related to lithophones specifically. Misreading of details in the text diluted evidence of understanding in some answers – for example it was not correct to suggest that the lithophones would be played alongside xylophones in the concerts.

Where candidates had paid careful attention to the task as set, they aimed for concise and well organised answers using their own vocabulary where practicable and appropriate to help clarify meaning for their reader. They demonstrated their understanding of relevant ideas within the context of the whole text, for example avoiding unsupported assertions that the instruments ‘were the first MP3s’ in favour of more nuanced explanations related to their portability. Strong answers did not repeat the separate details related to the age of the stones at different points in their answer, but rather organised their response to connect and summarise that information under one point. Competent answers showed they had focused on the specifics of the task as set and did not include detailed accounts of Gonthier’s actions, the composer of the concert piece or timings of the concerts, but instead kept their sights clearly on the instruments themselves. Candidates producing the most effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a wide range of relevant ideas, explaining them in their own words and skilfully selecting and organising points to offer an overview. On occasion, potentially effective answers lost sight of the need for concision in a selective summary task and significant excess arose as a result of continuing to write way beyond the maximum of 250 words advised in the task guidance.

Where answers copied wholesale from the text with minimal or no modification, or offered a response which communicated only a few relevant ideas, candidates missed opportunities to target higher marks. The best responses showed that candidates understood the need to be accurate, clear and concise in the use of their own words when summarising relevant material from the passage. Stronger answers were careful to recast information, organise it helpfully, and use their own vocabulary where feasible without changing or blurring the original idea. For example , better answers reorganised the material rather than relying on the order of the text – avoiding repetition by doing so and establishing useful links such as that between the ‘accidental ‘ discovery of the stones in the dessert and the chance discovery of their musical potential. Stronger answers were able to offer their own vocabulary consistently, though in the mid-range some lifting of phrases was

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common with fewer candidates offering confident alternatives for 'brought back by troops', 'short and slim enough to be carried in one hand', or 'signal danger/call people to dinner'.

In low to mid-range answers, incomplete awareness or understanding of why they might want to avoid lifting meant that some candidates tended to concentrate on substituting words without careful selection of the central idea – diluting evidence of understanding of both task and text – for example by changing 'gently tapping' to 'peacefully tapping' or substituting 'artefact display centres' for museum. Candidates need to be aware that simply moving word order around within a sentence or replacing just one word is not a short cut to providing secure evidence of their reading skills and understanding. Where candidates relied on this approach it often resulted in changes to the sense of the idea which undermined evidence of understanding further – for example, through assertions that the instruments were 'played like xylophones by tapping stones on the mallets' or 'carefully crafted with stone rods'. Candidates need to work to show understanding of ideas rather than simply track the passage making minimal changes and/or slotting in substituted words.

Errors in grammar and spelling were evident on occasion and prejudiced achievement in some answers – for example some responses suggested that the stones were 'brought to Algeria and Sudan', or 'were bought by French troops'. When copying less familiar vocabulary accuracy is equally important – it was incorrect for example to suggest that the instruments were 'hit with a mullet'. The best answers were clear, concise, largely accurate and well organised.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- re-read the passage after reading the question, in order to identify the potentially relevant content points
- you can use spare pages in your answer booklet to plan your ideas ahead of writing your response – draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- identify and discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the focus of the question
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted to check they are distinct and complete – for example whether there are repeated ideas which could be combined or ideas which need further explanation
- check you understand each idea you use and aim to explain it in your own words
- organise and sequence your ideas helpfully for your reader – do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the passage
- write informatively and accurately, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points
- when checking and editing your answer, consider whether each point you are making could be easily and precisely understood by someone who has not read the passage
- though you do not need to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write 'no more than 250 words' as a reminder in the selective summary of the need for concision.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/32
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

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

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise their writing effectively to persuade and interest the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct varied sentences accurately and to create specific effects on the reader
- select appropriate, precise and wide-ranging vocabulary

General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. A large majority of responses, regardless of achievement, were sustained and there were few very brief scripts. All candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task. In **Question 1**, very few responses were mostly or wholly copied from the passages in the Reading Booklet Insert, though there was some more extensive lifting of phrases in some.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of university application and some of the factors in deciding whether it would be suitable in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for the letter to a relative. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. Better answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the passages to arrive at a considered decision about whether to apply for a place in university. In the middle of the mark range, responses tended to reproduce the points made in the passages, sometimes with a little opinion about which view was appropriate for the writer or with some development of the ideas. A substantial number of responses at this range made limited or no reference to the second passage, although some reflected in general terms that university is not suitable for all students.

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

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response and the ideas in the passages were scrutinised thoughtfully. Sometimes, insufficient use was made of the reading material, especially the second passage, and there was less understanding of the evaluative nature of the task. The measured but informal style and register for a letter to a relative was well understood by the majority of candidates. In weaker responses, there was often some general commentary on the importance of a university education for future job prospects, with one or two points from the passage addressed but the requirement to weigh up and consider the validity of these ideas was missed. Some addressed the relative as if he or she had written the article in the Reading Booklet Insert, missing the opportunity to comment more critically on its contents.

Better responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for a letter to a respected but close relative who had made an effort to help the writer. These were polite but evaluative in style, using ideas from the passages to create and structure arguments and often employing rhetorical devices and showing a

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strong sense of audience. Some in the middle range of marks wrote in a more discursive style and there was less focus on arriving at a clear judgement based on the passages. Weaker responses relied more on the sequence of the points made in the article with less selection and regrouping, and often with limited reference to the second passage, and this made for a disjointed and less coherent style and structure.

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

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the first descriptive question were very effective and sustained. The range of sense impressions and the hectic pace of a restaurant kitchen gave imaginative writers plenty of scope to create images and effects. There were some imaginative evocations of a future school in the second descriptive writing questions which Examiners found engaging and effective. As is usually the case, these were better when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere which evoked the scene imaginatively. Weaker responses to both descriptive writing questions tended to contain straightforward physical descriptions or some reliance on narrative with less descriptive focus.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Responses to **Question 3(a)**, based on a character fulfilling a dream or ambition, were very varied and often, at the highest level, moving and effective. The second narrative question also elicited a wide range of approaches and interpretations and Examiners awarded marks across the range here.

Weaker narratives were less credible and there was often less overall cohesion and narrative purpose. Some were more simple accounts and were under-developed in style and less cohesive in 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 stimulate the reader's sympathy were features understood by the most effective writers who selected narrative writing options.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

Question 1

Imagine that you are trying to decide whether or not to apply for a university place. A relative has sent you the information in the two passages.

Write a letter to your relative in response to what you have read.

In your letter you should:
- evaluate the opinions and ideas about going to university in the two passages
- explain whether or not you think going to university might be useful for you.

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

Begin your letter, 'Dear …'

Write about 250 to 350 words.

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

High marks were awarded where there was some challenge and discussion of the points made in the passages, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in it. Where the letter was also both accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, often with a consistent sense of audience, Examiners

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awarded the highest marks. Better responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the passages, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the conflicting views represented in the two passages with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the inferences contained in the passages were probed and made explicit tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some listing of the explicitly stated advantages of attending university, some discussion of how student debt could be mitigated and sometimes a brief summary of what the students in the second passage said.

These details were an accurate reflection of the main ideas in the passage although opportunities to scrutinise their validity were not taken. Some opinion or decision was often given at the end of the response but this did not amount to an evaluation of the ideas. Responses at this level could have been improved by more thoughtful consideration of the opposing ideas rather than simple reproduction of them.

Weaker responses showed some understanding of the ideas in the passages but less use was made of the range of ideas or there was sometimes some misunderstanding of the details. Often, there was little evidence that the second passage had been read. Weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic at this level, particularly where contradictory points conflicted with each other. Where the second passage was represented in the response little attempt was made to integrate the opinions in it into a coherent whole.

Marks for reading

The best responses, as always in this task, adopted a consistently evaluative stance and read effectively between the lines of the passage, drawing inferences and making judgements about whether a university education was the best option for a student nowadays. Most responses included the evidence in the first passage suggesting that a degree improved young people's chances of getting a good job in the future and most showed some understanding of the need for hard work and commitment to ensure that these rewards could be reaped. More thoughtful responses went to the heart of the issue in considering whether the potential hardships in terms of debt and social life made 'education for its own sake' an investment for the future or a waste of three years' worth of more varied opportunities.

In higher Band responses the question's requirement that the issues should be discussed from the point of view of a student actively considering applying to university gave candidates a clear purpose for their reading of the passages. Perceptive responses often saw through to the crux of the debate in the passages: whether a university education is worth the effort and sacrifice involved and whether it was appropriate for them. Many at this level argued convincingly, using sensible inferences from both passages but also challenging some of the assumptions made in both. The statistic given in the article that 96 per cent of graduates were employed or in further studies was often properly challenged in Band 6 responses: 'employed' did not mean that the jobs graduates were doing were genuinely jobs for which degrees were needed and 'further study' as an end in itself was not necessarily a desirable outcome. Some also mentioned that three years was a long time to wait to feel the benefits of a university education.

The cost of a university education was almost universally referred to but at the highest level there was more scrutiny of the claim made in the article that students could easily repay the debt. The idea that taking part-time work to mitigate the cost of a degree may jeopardise a student's ability to commit to academic studies was used in high Band responses, as was the opposing argument that it could be considered an investment rather than a debt. Some doubted the implication of the claims made in the article that the quality of teaching and resources made the cost reasonable and pointed to the fact that employers wanted more than degrees. While the article suggested that these additional skills could be acquired as part of one's overall university experience, joining entrepreneurs' societies and volunteering as well as studying seemed, for some candidates, unlikely or an excessive burden. In some high level responses the second passage was used to counter the assumptions in the article, or vice versa: for example, the idea from the second passage that if students were unsure which career to pursue there was no point going to university was often addressed by reference to the career advice offered at university. One sensible idea derived from Hazel's comment in the second passage was that three years spent trying out different things to 'work out what I really want to do' was indulgent and would simply waste three years which could be spent getting a degree which was at least proof of ability and commitment. Some thought Ajay's real reason for not going to university was the cost and detected some envy of student life in his comment, while others developed the idea that 'sitting at a desk' was not everyone's preferred method of learning to argue that university learning as described in the article involved much more than that.

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Band 5 marks could be given where Examiners found some evaluative commentary but the response as a whole did not have the consistently critical approach needed for Band 6. Fairly straightforward judgements were made at this level, such as the idea that not all students were capable of the intellectual standard required for a degree (as implied by Edon's comment) or that relying on parents to fund a university education meant that there had to be some certainty of gaining a good job in the future. Examiners could also credit as evaluation the view that student debt could be a motivating force at university to make a student work hard to be able to repay it, as much as a daunting prospect.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passages. There was often less argument and focus on using the passages to make a decision, rather than a simple opinion based on personal preference. While the points made were given mostly in candidates' own words, simple opinions on them were offered rather than evaluation of them. For example, many wrote that because they knew that they wanted to be a doctor or a business entrepreneur, this was reason enough to go to university or that because their families could afford the cost of a degree they would not be saddled with student debt. In some responses given 6 marks for Reading the arguments in both passages were regrouped a little but some contradictions or more subtle ideas were not addressed. For example, the benefits of learning from experts were reproduced from the article without comment alongside Ajay's comment that professional qualifications were more valuable. To score higher marks for Reading, Examiners looked for some scrutiny of these apparent contradictions rather than reproduction of them.

Weaker responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passages or addressed the material thinly. Some tracked through the passages simply but showed limited reorganisation of the ideas or gave a straightforward paraphrase. As mentioned above, this approach sometimes shed light on conflicting ideas which were not well understood below Band 3. Generalisations about university education being beneficial or expensive were made and most commonly at this level, phrases and sentences were lifted and copied from the passage and were poorly sequenced so that Examiners were not convinced that the main ideas were understood. Misunderstanding of some words and phrases such as 'invaluable' was common and copying of 'solid communication skills, experience of administration, initiative and commitment' was very common. Where a mark of 4 was awarded, some firmer links with the passages were needed, whereas 3 was generally given for very thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was some insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

Marks for writing

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

Style and audience

An informal, polite tone was required for a letter from one relative to another and most responses were written in an appropriate register, even where the writing was technically weak. Some markers of a more familiar relationship such as enquiries about health were very often given appropriately at the beginning of the letter, as well as some appreciation for the concern shown by the recipient about the writer's future implied in the act of sending the passages to help with decision-making. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical, stylistically persuasive style and presented their arguments with some subtlety of tone, always maintaining a respectful friendliness but making their case effectively and with some impact. The use of a young person's voice addressing a family member in their writing gave many candidates a clear focus and style which was sustained throughout.

In the middle range, the style was usually appropriately informal although there were lapses in awareness of that audience. The content and tone of the letter, once the opening sentences were given, became more reportage of the passages than an explanation of a decision to someone familiar who needed to be convinced. Most often at this level there was limited argument to give the response shape and purpose, even where the passages were adequately reflected.

Weaker responses sometimes had limited overall cohesion because the conflicting opinions in the passages were simply reproduced as they appeared in the original. Some wrote as if the recipient of the letter was the author of the original article, showing an insecure or unsustained understanding of audience and purpose.

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Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the decision which emerged was clearly derived from the ideas in the passages but was not dependent on their 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 passages 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 arguing a coherent case.

Responses given Band 6 marks for Writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the passage but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed so that conflicting ideas were addressed separately. Some use was made of the ideas in both passages. Weaker responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the passage whereas Band 5 responses usually organised and re-sequenced ideas more selectively. Straightforward Band 5 responses were paragraphed and balanced and followed the conventional structure of letters, though opening and concluding paragraphs were often brief, single sentences.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 5 were limited in structure and more dependent on the sequence of ideas in the passages, often with some lifting and copying. This approach led to some weakness in cohesion and some contradiction.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 7. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used 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 Some exclamation such as ‘Is it really worth it when a degree is only one thing employers are looking for?’ and some measured use of the familial relationship in the task was evident at this level: ‘I’m sure you have my best interests at heart, dear aunt, but we each have to follow our own path in life, don’t you think?’

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

Band 6 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually plain, the language used was apt. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style without damaging the meaning conveyed. Commonly used words were also wrongly spelled in responses at this level, particularly key words for the task such as ‘experienced’, ‘commitment’ and most commonly ‘tuition’. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and ‘an university’ was fairly often used.

Faulty sentence structures, insecure tense use or weakly demarcated sentences often kept writing marks for **Question 1** in Band 4, even where other technical skills such as spelling were more accurate. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 where mostly correctly structured sentences are required. Structures such as ‘Thank you for the passages which you had sent to me’ were common. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was more frequent and more damaging to fluency at this level, as was mis-agreement between pronouns and verb forms. In rare cases, material from the passage was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Band 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content or the style of the response was the candidate’s own.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Be prepared to challenge and disagree with ideas in the passage and always justify and explain the reasons why you agree or disagree.
- Make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passage.
- Look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly by the writer.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.

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- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the kind of style the recipient of your letter would expect as well as how letters should begin and end.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

Section 2 – Composition

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions. Answer on this Question Paper. 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(a) Describe the kitchen of a busy restaurant at lunch time.

OR

2(b) Imagine your school or college 25 years from now.

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates and Examiners saw a range of different approaches to the tasks. In the first, most popular task, there were some very detailed and strongly evocative descriptions of hectic restaurant kitchens, often employing extended images of battlegrounds or warzones.

In the second question, some different approaches were evident, from the idea of returning to a school attended by the writer many years before as a pupil to an imagined, futuristic vision of school for the next generation. The highest level of response to both questions showed that there was a clear understanding of how detailed and evocative descriptions are created.

Some successful responses to the first question focused on a range of details and images which were held together cohesively by the use of a short span of time such as a lunchtime service or by consciously developed extended images of the kitchen as a military battle zone with the head chef as a commander figure barking orders at scurrying kitchen staff. A few different kinds of interpretations were evident and often effective, such as a kitchen in a palace in historic times or a particularly horrific kitchen incongruously serving an elegant, fine dining restaurant. Effective details often included sensory features such as the clang and clatter of saucepans and cutlery, the din of machinery and the shouts of staff as well as the bright colours of sauces bubbling in huge containers, the pristine whites of the kitchen staff's clothing and the various aromas, both enticing and repellant, associated with busy, commercial kitchens.

Band 5 responses were characterised by rather more obvious images and ideas and the sensory impressions given were more mechanically listed and organised in different paragraphs. Some began with rather more general impressions of a hectic kitchen, such as 'the chefs were all running up and down from the sink to the pans, trying to keep up with the orders' and sometimes sights, sounds and smells were more stereotypical of a kitchen than specific and well-observed details. Few responses at this level lapsed into narrative with little real description or lost the main features of descriptive writing. At the lower end of Band 3 for Content and Structure, some responses began with a rather long introduction before the kitchen itself was addressed in the task. The reason for the meal, the wait for a table or some focus on the restaurant rather than the kitchen sometimes unbalanced a description which took a while to get underway. In some, the description sometimes became a more straightforward list of what was seen. The descriptive content tended to be a little more stereotypical or general than responses given marks in Band 6.

Weaker responses were characterised by a tendency to list details briefly rather than effectively develop them or a narrative introduction continued into a series of events more than description. Most responses to this question were organised and paragraphed but at this level the descriptive detail was more haphazard and less cohesive.

The second question was less often selected popular but there were some effective descriptions of school grounds, classrooms and teachers which Examiners rewarded highly for the creation of atmosphere and range of detail. In some, the school was visited many years after the writer had been a pupil there and there was often a sense of nostalgic memory, both pleasant and unpleasant in the description of now derelict or abandoned classrooms which had once been familiar and significant in the writer's life. Other responses at the highest level were highly imaginative evocations of a school in the future which more resembled clinical

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science laboratories than classrooms and where there were fewer teachers than robots or computers. While gadgetry and technology featured strongly in these responses, the best gave a glimpse of what pupils actually experienced in the school as well as the methods by which they learned.

While there were effective responses which adopted both of these interpretations of the question, some at the bottom of Band 5 tended to focus on explaining more than describing at times, or gave a list of improvements which their current school would have made within 25 years, such as more sports facilities, brighter, more appealing classrooms or a better computer resources.

Examiners gave marks below Band 5 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus, and where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were listed with limited overall cohesion. At this level, responses became simple, unengaging accounts or lists rather than a description of an imagined location.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were, in the best responses, reflective of the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In the middle range, vocabulary was less rich and varied but there was still a fair degree of accuracy in spelling and sentence construction. In weaker responses, as is often the case in descriptive writing, tenses switched between past and present, sometimes within sentences. Incomplete or verbless sentences giving snapshots or impressions were fairly common but errors in the use of tenses were also frequent. In the second question, where a kind of list of desirable improvements was given, the conditional tense was sometimes used in places and the use of 'it/they had' instead of 'has/have' was noted. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, while not always a serious impediment, became more damaging to the style with frequency. This often meant that Examiners could not award marks in Band 5 where the style was otherwise quite accurate and secure.

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content. Choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus.
- Remember the key features of descriptive writing and keep your focus on details.
- Write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses.
- Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Narrative Writing

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions. Answer on this Question Paper. 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.

3(a) Write a story about fulfilling a dream or an ambition.

OR

3(b) Write a story using the title, 'The Cancellation'.

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

Better responses, as is often the case in narrative writing, were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used interesting but credible ideas and developed balanced and engaging stories. The fulfilment of a dream or ambition which was required in the first task varied very widely from sporting and academic ambitions to other kinds of goals in life such as landing a dream job or having children. Most were chronologically told narratives with some understanding shown of what engages the reader: some setback or jeopardy was often used in better responses to keep the reader's interest. One effectively told adventure story of an expedition through jungle, for example, built tension effectively by including the narrator's own internal monologue of fears and anxieties throughout.

Middle range narratives were usually more straightforward in structure and approach and in some cases these responses sometimes relied on rather unlike or far-fetched scenarios such as top jobs in New York law firms or scoring a goal in a World Cup final. Examiners could award marks in Band 5 for Content and Structure, even where the sequence of events was not very credible, provided the narrative was organised and there was some attempt at characterisation. Responses in this range, whilst often more predictable,

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were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution or conclusion to the story overall. Some stories where the action and plot were a little strained were redeemed by the effective creation of a character or narrative voice.

Weaker responses were often more dependent on a simple series of events with less developed characters and a focus more on action than other features which engage and interest the reader. A simplicity of content rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. Often the same kinds of scenarios as in better responses were evident but there was less awareness of the needs of the reader and less skill in engaging the interest of the reader in terms of narrative shaping and the creation of credible characters.

For the second narrative question, there were many varied interpretations of the title, both literal and more figurative. Some effective responses were based on the cancellation of holidays, examinations or journeys which then led to unexpected consequences such as meeting an important or significant person in an airport lounge or finding an alternative holiday destination which turned out to be important in various ways. Others used a metaphorical interpretation to create a story about a different kind of 'cancellation' such as the ending of a relationship or a life in narratives which were dramatic and effective. Both approaches resulted in some highly effective and engaging stories although better responses prepared the reader and shaped the narrative in an engaging way.

Band 5 responses were generally more straightforward accounts in which the content was ordinary but there was still some organisation and shaping of the narrative and a cohesive story was produced. These tended to be a little less imaginative in their interpretation of the task but with some understanding of how stories create interest for the reader. Some involved similar scenarios to those awarded higher marks but the characters were less fully realised or the ending lacked impact and interest. Straightforward accounts of turning up at school for an important examination only to find the place deserted and empty, or narratives involving the cancellation of holidays after much excitement and preparation were fairly common.

Responses given marks in Band 4 were usually simple accounts of events and showed limited awareness of the reader or the features of narrative writing which elevate an account into a developed story. Scenarios which quickly became cliched and unengaging were used, such as murders, kidnappings or chases, many of which lacked credible explanation. Other less successful approaches to the question involved simple plotlines where some event was cancelled and the narrator's disappointment was recorded but without a real understanding of how to create a narrative voice. These responses lacked narrative shaping and interest. Some produced organised and paragraphed pieces which were simple accounts but there was little real narrative drive or story-telling.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. Punctuation within sentences, in dialogue and for effect was characteristic of responses in the higher Bands and where coupled with a sophisticated palette of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Band 6 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still accurate and largely fluent while Band 5 responses were plain in style and lacked some range in vocabulary but had few errors which damaged the clarity of meaning such as weak sentence control and sentence separation or repetitive grammar errors. Some at this level, though not as many as in previous examinations, were limited by the use of vocabulary which was more complex but not used accurately

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept a number of responses out of Band 5. Similarly, though less frequently, basic punctuation errors and the mis-spelling of simple words sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. The misuse of capital letters, where a capital for the personal pronoun was often missing and proper names were not capitalised, was fairly common from Band 5 downwards. Capital letters used where they were not required was also sometimes noted. The most frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Band 5 was imprecise use of tenses and a lack of clarity of style.

A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 5 and even when written in a fairly pedestrian style Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Where there were errors, even quite frequent errors, but the style had more ambition and variety, a mark of 9 was awarded. Weaknesses in constructing sentences or frequent grammatical and punctuation errors resulted in marks below Band 5. A few responses were very faulty in style, making it difficult to follow the meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

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Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved

- Plan how to resolve your story in an interesting way before you start writing.
- Try to consider alternative interpretations of the titles given.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader. Don't rely on events.
- Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/04
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- wrote original and interesting assignments and used their own words to reflect 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

The moderators were impressed with the interest, concern and thoughtfulness displayed by the candidates about global and local issues. This was most evident in the responses to Assignment 1 tasks, but could also be seen in the responses to the texts in Assignment 3. The majority of centres ensured that candidates wrote in three different genres and that an element of individual choice was offered by the tasks set.

With many centres the assessment of writing was generally satisfactory; many candidates wrote accurately and used language appropriately. Less successful writing tended to contain frequent errors with grammar and punctuation. Common errors were missing articles, the inaccurate use of commas and the use of vocabulary which did not fully match the context for which it had been used. The moderators noted that a significant majority of centres did not indicate errors in the final pieces of their candidates' work, or seem to take the errors into account when awarding final marks. Teachers are expected to indicate all errors in the final versions of each completed assignment so that they can more accurately balance the strengths and weaknesses of the portfolios as a whole.

The marking of reading was slightly lenient across the majority of coursework portfolios seen. Candidates who had responded more to the topic than the text quite frequently received marks from Band 5. To gain marks from the top band 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.

Good practice was where:

- centres set a range appropriately challenging tasks which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects 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 were relevant to the candidates' interests and which contained ideas and opinions to which they could respond;
- centres set tasks which allowed candidates to respond in three different genres of writing;
- candidates revised, edited and carefully proof read their first drafts in order to improve their writing;
- teachers provided informative summative comments relating to the mark scheme at the end of each completed assignment;
- teachers indicated all errors in the final versions of each completed assignment;
- coursework portfolios were securely attached and presented as indicated in the Course syllabus;

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- 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.

Administration

The majority of centres accurately completed all relevant paperwork. A significant number of the centres tended to include extra cover sheets, submit work in plastic wallets and did not securely attach the individual pieces of work to the candidate's Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC). The Course syllabus requests that centres only submit work using the forms provided by Cambridge (e.g. the ICRC) and that plastic wallets are not used for the presentation of coursework. The Course syllabus also requests that staples or treasury tags are used to securely attach the individual pages of the coursework portfolios to each other. Plastic wallets and paperclips are not secure because the individual pages of work can become detached or mislaid during the moderation process.

Moderators noted that that with the majority of the centres there was little evidence to indicate that a process of internal moderation had taken place. Whilst it is likely that centres had carried out this process, it is important that centres show evidence of this on the candidates' work and in the final columns on the Candidate Assessment Summary Form (CASF). Information about how to carry out internal moderation can be found on page 17 of the 2019 Course syllabus.

Some centres supplied excellent and detailed summative comments at the end of each individual assignment. This was most helpful in allowing the moderators to understand how and why marks had been awarded. The most useful comments were those which indicated the strengths and weaknesses of each piece and related directly to the mark scheme. Guidance about teacher comments on portfolios can be found in on page 16 of the Course syllabus under 'Marking instructions' (point 2).

Assignment 1

The majority of candidates wrote about topics which were of importance or interest to them. Candidates explored a wide range of interesting and appropriate issues such as deforestation, nepotism, equality of the sexes in India and the Indian education system. It was clear to the moderators that the candidates were concerned about local and global issues.

Moderators noticed that with a significant number of Assignment 1 responses there was a tendency for the responses to be quite factual and contained limited evidence of candidates' personal opinions. This type of response seemed to be closely derived from the research candidates had carried out. There was evidence to suggest that candidates relied heavily on the words and phrases found in their research. If candidates rely too heavily on the words and phrases seen in their research documents they could run the risk of inadvertently plagiarising a document. Plagiarism is a contravention of the Syllabus rules and should be avoided at all times.

Advice to learners

- when planning and preparing to write Assignment 1 be careful to make sure that you use the information you find to present your own, original ideas, thoughts and opinions about a subject;
- when writing your response make sure that you use your own words and phrases and avoid relying too much on the words and phrases you have seen in research documents;
- try to use your own words instead of quoting long chunks of text from your sources;
- acknowledge your use of quotes;
- carefully proof read your writing and check for errors with commas, articles, prepositions and grammar;
- carefully proof read your work to make sure that you identify and correct typing errors and check that your vocabulary choices match the context of your writing.

Assignment 2

There were some well written and engaging responses to assignment 2 tasks, especially those accounts which stemmed from personal experiences or memories. Better candidates tended to select interesting and sometimes unusual details, whether writing about a real or fictitious moment. Candidates who included uninteresting details which did not develop character/s or plot scored less well than those who added detail to develop specific aspects of character/s and plot.

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Generally speaking, the accuracy and fluency of the writing in the responses to Assignment 2 tasks were of a lower standard than that seen in Assignments 1 and 3. There was a general tendency for candidates to overuse simple sentences or make quite frequent grammatical or punctuation errors. These issues affected the overall fluency and enjoyment of the final pieces of writing and sometimes did not allow candidates to meet the higher band marking criteria.

Advice to learners

- when writing to describe try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of ideas and images;
- when writing a narrative try to include details that adds to the development of the plot or which adds to the characterisation of your character/s;
- write about something you are familiar with or something you know well;
- make sure that the images you create and vocabulary you use match the context and content of your writing;
- take note of the comments about accuracy in the last two bullet points under the heading 'Advice to learners' for Assignment 1.

Assignment 3

Most of the texts used for Assignment 3 were appropriate and of sufficient challenge for the learners at all levels. A wide range of appropriate topics were covered including, Indian students studying abroad, helicopter parents and university funding in India.

When candidates provided an extended overview of the text, or wrote an overall, structured response that assimilated most of the ideas and opinions presented within the text they did well and were able to meet the highest level assessment criteria for reading. A significant number of candidates were unable to do this because they had used the text as a stimulus for a general discussion about a topic instead of analysing, evaluating and developing the specific ideas or opinions contained within a text. This led to a general trend of a slight over-awarding of marks for reading across a significant number of centres.

Some texts were not suitable because they contained limited ideas and opinions with which candidates could engage. Mainly factual news reports and extracts from Nineteenth Century novels are examples of this type of text and should not be used for Assignment 3 because they do not offer candidates the opportunity to meet the higher band assessment criteria.

Advice to learners

- choose a text that presents a strong, possibly controversial, argument about a subject or topic;
- choose a text of approximately two sides of an A4 piece of paper;
- 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;
- take note of the comments about accuracy in the last two bullet points under the heading 'Advice to learners' for Assignment 1.

Conclusion

Appropriate task setting and completion of relevant forms is a strength of many centres; centres are thanked for their attention to detail with this matter. There is room for further improvement in the way in which centres annotate the final versions of completed assignments and for their application of the assessment criteria for the reading element of Assignment 3. It is clear when reading the completed coursework portfolios that centres are working hard to help their learners to develop the skills needed to meet the assessment criteria. As stated at the beginning of this report, the concern and thoughtfulness demonstrated by the young people producing the work was impressive and moderation continues to be a fascinating and rewarding experience for all in the Moderation team.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/05
Speaking and Listening

Key messages

Generally, the standard of assessment was at or near the expected level. Candidates were given full but fair credit for their efforts by centres using the mark scheme effectively.

Candidates were clearly given the opportunity to choose their own topics and in most cases these choices proved judicious.

The application of appropriate administrative procedures remains an issue for some centres. It is important that centres follow the instructions in the current syllabus regarding the correct way to introduce each candidate's recording, the number of recordings to include in the sample sent to Cambridge and how to successfully complete the Oral Examination Summary Form. Further guidelines are also included in the current Coursework Handbook for 0500 First Language English.

General comments

Administration

Where centres had followed the relevant instructions in the syllabus the administration was of a high standard, thus allowing moderation to be a smooth and straightforward process. Where there were issues the following points may be helpful:

- All the recordings for the whole cohort should be sent to Cambridge as part of the sample, together with the appropriate paperwork. The centre does not have to make decisions on whose tests to include for moderation as the moderator will assess the whole cohort and then decide which candidates to sample more closely.
- The Oral Examination Summary Form should be completed by the examiner for the candidates included on the form. Therefore, where there are multiple examiners involved in the testing in the series, Cambridge requires a separate Oral Examination Summary Form from each examiner who took part. This allows the moderator to sample from across the examiners at the centre to ensure a consistent approach to assessment has been established by the centre, probably through the use of effective internal moderation.
- A separate introduction is required for each candidate's test. It is not acceptable for one generic introduction covering the whole of the centre's cohort to be included with the sample recordings. Centres should treat the introduction in the same manner as the front page of a candidate's answer book for a written paper. Each candidate is required to complete a separate answer book to uniquely identify that candidate and the same should be the case for each candidate's oral test.
- The examiner should introduce the recordings using the rubric in the syllabus. This must include the date on which the recording is made to confirm the test has been carried out within the specified window.

Conduct of the test

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

- Part 1 should be a minimum of 3 minutes. Please note this does not include the examiner's introduction. Where a Part 1 response is short, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met and assess accordingly. It is difficult to see how a response can meet higher level criteria such as 'sound' or 'full and well organised use of content' and 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting significantly less than three minutes. Equally, a response which is significantly overlong cannot be regarded as fulfilling the criteria for Band 1.

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- Given that both speaking and listening are assessed in Part 2, it is important that the discussions last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. In Part 2 a minimum of 6 minutes of discussion is expected. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation is met.
- It is unnecessary, and may even be counter-productive, for Part 2 discussions to last beyond the 7 minutes maximum stated in the syllabus.

There is no need for the examiner to engage in a lengthy, and frankly unhelpful, conversation with the candidate prior to beginning the test. Most candidates simply want to settle then immediately begin their Part 1 so an examiner who introduces the candidate by stating the relevant information and then allowing the candidate to begin the test is aiding that candidate's performance.

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

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

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

Comments on specific parts

Part 1 – The Individual Talk

Three factors underpin successful Part 1 responses:
- Candidates take ownership of a topic by choosing one that interests them
- Candidates have a good knowledge of the subject
- Talks are well-planned and prepared but not over-rehearsed to the point of artificiality. Neither do they rely heavily on notes. Natural fluency is essential.

Weaker candidates require greater input from centres in terms of preparation and technique.

Candidates should be reminded that simply regurgitating a talk that has been learned by rote will not merit marks in the higher bands. Task 1 is a performance so language devices and tone are important.

It is relevant to consider that this component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. To achieve the higher bands, the presentations should move beyond the descriptive to include elements of reflection and analysis.

Some examples of productive Part 1 topics include:
- My Role Model
- The Importance of Protecting the Environment
- The Importance of Basketball in My Life
- The Space Race
- Electric Cars v Petrol Cars
- Body Shaming
- Music and Life
- The Life of Snakes – My Passion
- Superstition
- Gender Equality

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Some less productive Part 1 topics include:

- Football
- Video Gaming
- Computers
- My Best Friend
- Time Management

Part 2 – The Discussion

The overall responsibility for the management of the discussion is the examiners. This includes the management of time. Examiners should ensure a full 6–7 minutes are allowed for the candidates to have the opportunity to display their abilities.

Generally, examiners conducted the discussions effectively and were supportive in their questioning to encourage and to settle nervousness. This helped students to achieve their best.

Examiners showed genuine interest in and enthusiasm for the candidates' topics and provided appropriate encouragement. This helped to put candidates at ease and created a more natural discussion.

It is important for examiners to ask more taxing questions. If a question proves too difficult it is always possible to reword or indeed ignore it and move in a different direction without the candidate being penalised.

Examiners should be aware that interrupting a candidate who has not completed a point is unhelpful, especially when it is more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue.

A Part 2 that consists of a candidate answering a series of questions asked by the examiner but otherwise remaining passive is not a successful format for a good discussion. There should be some ebb and flow in a natural discussion.

Advice to centres

- Prepare for this examination as any other – i.e. practise techniques/encourage research/think carefully about appropriate topics that fulfil the assessment criteria. Practise methods of presentation and discussion in other situations before preparing for this exam.
- Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through effective discussion and appropriate timings for both parts of the test.
- When conducting the discussions in Part 2, examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage candidates to think for themselves and show what they can do.
- In Part 2, examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early as this can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.
- Follow the instructions on how to present the recordings and documentation efficiently and concisely. Please check everything before sending it to Cambridge.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 0500/06
Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

Key messages

The administration of the component was generally very good with all relevant documentation included with the recordings sent to Cambridge. The accuracy of the documentation was also very good. Where there was an issue, it is important that the candidates' numbers included on the Coursework Assessment Summary Forms match the centres' actual entry numbers. This consistency allows for an accurate identification of the candidates when sampling.

The assessment was of a high standard and very much in line with Cambridge. Candidates were given full but fair credit for their efforts in each of the three tasks.

All centres who entered candidates for this series were compliant in each of the tasks that constitute this component.

The tasks created by the centres were appropriate to the requirements of the syllabus and accessible to the candidates. This allowed candidates full access to the marks range and gave them every opportunity to succeed.

General comments

Four separate items should be sent to Cambridge as part of the sample for Component 6. These are:

- Recordings of all the Task 1 and Task 2 activities undertaken by the cohort entered sent on a CD, DVD or USB drive
- The **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered
- A **copy of the marks** that have already been sent to Cambridge
- The **Individual Candidate Record Cards** for all the candidates entered.

Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the Moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.

Centres should use both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening 'Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full.

When completing the **Individual Candidate Record Cards**, specific information about the choices made for each task are more helpful than generic statements. A comment reading 'a talk about a hobby of your choice' is not helpful but 'my interest in (explain specific hobby)' is useful.

Centres should use digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a **commonly recognised audio file format** such as mp3, wav and wma (but not AUP) that can be played by standard computer software.

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.

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Comments on specific questions

Task 1 – The Individual Task

Carefully planned and prepared responses to tasks are generally more successful but these responses do not benefit from being over-scripted.

The response to the task generally took the form of an individual presentation. Centres are encouraged to allow candidates to choose their own topics, as opposed to dictating a generic theme. All centres this series followed these guidelines appropriately.

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. Able candidates should be encouraged to choose more exacting and mature topics that include an element of introspection and reflection within a compelling argument lasting 3–4 minutes. Again, it was apparent that centres had appreciated the importance of this concept and applied it accordingly.

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

- Meditation – its discipline and benefits
- Skateboarding
- Phobias
- Feminism
- The Power of Music
- Gender Equality in the 21st Century
- The Art of Communication
- My passion for …
- Why I Love … (a particular book/movie/work of art/etc.)
- The Purpose of Education

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

- Football (too generalised and lacking focus)
- Shopping
- My Pet
- Sports (too generalised)
- My best friend

Task 2 – The Paired Activity

The Pair-Based Activity works best between two candidates of similar ability discussing a topic they have prepared and that they feel strongly about. Alternatively, engaging in a lively role play can also be very effective. A clearly defined focus is better than a general exchange of views. Where candidates have clear viewpoints that lead to persuasive argument the resulting task will be more successful than when candidates are unsure of their opinions.

Entirely scripted responses, be they discussions or role plays, generally do not allow candidates to access the higher attainment bands.

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

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

- Books or Movies: Which Is Best?
- Pets and Their Effects on Their Owners
- Democracy v Communism
- Music as a Source of Inspiration

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- Merits v Demerits of Social Media
- Arguing for and against a current affairs topic such as gender equality or equal pay
- 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)

Task 3 – The Group Task

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 if the assessment criteria 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. A group should consist of no less than three members. A group consisting of three or four candidates is recommended as accurately assessing a group including more candidates can prove problematic. It is not a requirement that Task 3 is recorded or sent as part of the sample.

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

- A trial scene, possibly based on a literary text – e.g. George Milton, Arthur Birling
- A discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- Balloon debate – who to include/discard from a list of famous people where each candidate champions the cause of their chosen celebrity
- Planning a celebration or community event

General conclusions

The general standard of assessment by centres is at the correct level.

Where there are potential issues with the accuracy of the assessment, it is normally the length of the responses that is problematic.

Centres have become very efficient in the administration of the component and this is greatly appreciated.

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