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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12
Reading

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- addressed tasks in the order set
- followed instructions carefully, responding appropriately to the command words in the question
- considered the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to show for each of the three questions
- paid attention to the guidance offered to help them focus their answers – for example, writing no more than 120 words in the summary and using just one example from the text extract in **2(c)**
- avoided unselective copying and / or lifting from the text
- considered the ideas, opinions and details in the text rather than inventing untethered material
- used their own words where required
- returned to the text when necessary to check understanding of an idea or important detail
- planned the ideas to be used and the route through longer answers before writing
- gave equal attention to all aspects of each question
- selected only the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- avoided repetition
- edited their responses to correct any careless errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated familiarity with the revised format of the paper and understanding of the general demands of the three tasks. Instances where a task had not been attempted were rare; there were relatively few occasions where responses to part questions were incomplete.

Candidates appeared to find all three texts equally accessible and engaging. Occasionally, a failure to follow the rubric and / or complete all aspects of a task limited the evidence of understanding and skills offered – for example, by explaining fewer than 6 choices in **Question 2(d)** or writing far more than the maximum of 120 words advised for the selective summary **Question 1(f)**.

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

Less successful responses often attempted to include extra guesses in response to **Questions 1(a)–(e)**, diluting evidence of understanding by doing so, and/or responses did not refer back to the text to find the material relevant for their answer. Some offered circular answers, repeating the language of the question where own words were specified as required; such responses provided little evidence of understanding as a consequence – for example in **1(b)(i)** by suggesting 'this means the contribution doctors are making to the health of individuals'. In **Question 1(f)** some candidates relied heavily on the language of the text and / or copied sections, limiting the available evidence of their own skills and understanding as a result. Meanwhile,

in attempting to use their own words for short answer questions that did not demand this some candidates had unnecessarily added to the challenge and as a result moved away from key ideas and / or clouded the sense of their answer.

In **Question 2** candidates needed first to identify and / or explain words and phrases from the text, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer via **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task, **Question 2(d)**. Stronger answers were careful to refer back to **Text C** to locate specific choices and consider meaning in context. To aim for higher levels in **Question 2(d)**, candidates should explore and explain in some detail the precise meanings and effects of the examples of interesting or powerful language use they have identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose. Most were able to suggest some potentially useful examples for analysis in each half of the **2(d)** task, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently clear or careful in the examination of their choices.

In **Question 3** responses for the most part had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task. Most candidates had remembered to sign off their letter as Adam, with the best keeping in mind their audience and purpose throughout. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with mid-range responses often missing opportunities as a consequence of adopting a more mechanical treatment of the text, leaning heavily on the order and structure of the original passage. Less successful responses either included only brief reference to the passage and/or repeated sections from the text with minimal modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and to be avoided.

Paper 1 is primarily a test of Reading, however 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – divided between **Questions 1(f)** and **3**. In these questions, it is especially important that candidates consider the quality of their writing – planning and reviewing responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Leaving sufficient time to edit and correct responses is advisable. Overall, candidates should be aware that unclear and / or inaccurate writing is likely to limit their achievement.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Comprehension and summary task

Questions 1(a)–(e)

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

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

1(a) What is meant to be the purpose of National Doctors' Day?

In **Question 1(a)**, candidates reading closely recognised that the text had explained that National Doctors' Day was '<u>meant to</u> bring attention to the service of all doctors – living or dead.' Where candidates chose to use their own words to express this precise idea the mark could be awarded – for example, some suggested it was meant to 'publicise the work of doctors', or 'shine a light on doctors' work'. The use of own words was not however a requirement and on occasion in less secure answers attempts to rephrase the idea clouded evidence of understanding. Some candidates made use of the question stem to help focus their answer whilst others simply wrote the key words of the answer – 'to bring attention to the service of doctors (living or dead)' – either approach was acceptable.

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

(i) 'their contribution to individual health' (lines 2–3):
(ii) 'to reflect on the wellbeing of doctors' (lines 3–4):

In **Question 1(b)** task guidance made it clear that use of own words was required to evidence understanding. Simply reorganising all/some of the phrase was a feature of weaker answers. Where answers failed to score both marks it was sometimes the result of having explained just one aspect of the idea, for example in **Question 1(b)(i)** explaining 'contribution' only. More effective answers were able to indicate that they had securely understood the meaning of both aspects of the question in the context of the text – for example, in **Question 1(b)(i)**, avoiding suggestions in less well focused responses that this was about doctors helping patients one at a time, to evidence understanding that the work of doctors (living and dead) had resulted in improvements to everyone's wellbeing.

1(c) Re-read paragraph 2, ('Doctors suffer _ patients too.').

Give two ways in which the physical and emotional effects of burnout might affect doctors' attitudes to their work.

Candidates who paid attention to command / key words in the question were best placed to offer focused responses and avoid spending time on overlong answers. For example, in **Question 1(c)** these candidates simply gave two ways in which the physical and emotional effects of burnout might affect doctors' attitudes to their work – using the bullets to help them - and did not attempt to elaborate, explain or move beyond attitudes to work.

1(d) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4, ('Doctors have … and training.').

(i) Identify two ways in which hospitals could make things better for doctors.
(ii) Explain why doctors can find it hard to ask for help.

Similarly, in **Question 1(d)** they understood in a test of Reading that to 'identify two ways' they needed to recognise criticism of hospitals in the text, rather than offering their own ideas outside of the passage.

(e) Re-read paragraph 5, ('Perhaps if _ difference?').

Using your own words, explain why some people could think that National Doctors' Day is not worthwhile.

In **Question 1(e)** the most successful explanations were able to derive three reasons clearly from the text, and did not stray into speculation and / or misread details. Candidates used their own words, as instructed, and were able to demonstrate that they had noted and understood that National Doctors' Day did not mean a day off for all doctors, that a lunch organised by employers was insufficient reward and that the day made no tangible difference. A few candidates attempted to answer this question based on their own opinions rather than the possible reasons provided by the text. This led to answers which included suggestions that the day was not worthwhile because 'doctors were very important to people's health and, if given a day off, then those patients would suffer or even die'. A few offered empty responses, recycling the language of the original question unhelpfully, suggesting that 'the Doctors' Day is not worthwhile because it's not worthwhile'.

1(f) According to Text B, what are the attractions and challenges of being an MSF doctor?

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

Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

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

A few candidates dealt with only one aspect of the question, limiting the range of ideas they could include and / or presented their own view of the attractions / challenges of being an MSF doctor rather than demonstrating their understanding of the attractions and challenges according to the text. Where responses were most effective, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words, to keep explanations concise and to organise their ideas helpfully. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal/no rewording or reorganisation of the original. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and / or sentences from the text. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

The strongest responses to the selective summary task often showed evidence of having planned the content and organisation of their answer before writing their response. There were some very effective, well-crafted responses that demonstrated concision and accurate reading of the passage and question. Some candidates chose to deal with each part of the task in turn, others dealt with both at the same time. Both approaches worked well in carefully planned and executed answers where repetition was avoided. The majority of candidates showed at least some awareness of the need to avoid excess and did not make reference to more obviously redundant material such as sharkologists, holidays or goats. Less effective responses tended to repeat ideas (often due to copying the introduction), most commonly the challenges of conflict and disease / epidemics. They also often included extraneous material about working in emergency medicine and / or attending medical school. Candidates who had spent time reviewing their initial selection of ideas were best placed to recognise similar examples of the same idea – for example points related to other people's interest in the job – and were often able to group those examples usefully together under one umbrella point, avoiding repetition of ideas or inclusion of unnecessary detail.

More effective responses did not rely on the structure or language of **Text B** to communicate ideas. Less effective responses often relied on trying to offer a précis of the whole text. In these answers excess material was commonplace and evidence of understanding often limited. In low to mid-range answers, incomplete awareness or where lifting was present meant that some candidates tended to concentrate on substituting words and / or altering word order without careful selection of the central idea – diluting evidence of understanding of both task and text. Candidates need to be aware that simply moving word order around within a sentence, slotting in substituted words here and there, is a not a short cut to providing secure evidence of reading skills and understanding. This kind of approach is likely to result in confusion and / or errors that further betray weaknesses in candidates' comprehension. For example, errors included suggestions that 'MSF have got people meeting from all over the world in one place', or, 'you can make loads of money as it is less lucrative'. More effective responses evidenced careful reading of the text showed candidates successfully identifying both explicit and implicit ideas. They avoided the misreading of details evident in less secure responses – for example, that people in the countries visited could not be relied on, or that accommodation was always great. They recognised that salary and accommodation were not being presented by Craig Spencer as attractions for the job. Similarly, the more effective responses had clearly understood that 'rewarding' was not referring to financial gain

The least effective responses copied sections from the text with little modification and / or were almost entirely reliant on the language of the original. Some candidates were able to recast information, organise it helpfully, and use their own vocabulary where feasible without changing or blurring the original idea. On occasion, candidates overlooked the need for concision in a selective summary task and significant excess arose as a result of lengthy explanation, continuing to write far more than the maximum of 120 words advised in the task guidance and / or took far too long to explain just a few ideas having stopped at 120. Candidates producing the most effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a wide range of relevant ideas, communicating these accurately and concisely in their own words.

Advice to candidates on Question 1f:

- re-read **Text B** after reading the task instructions, in order to identify potentially relevant ideas given the focus of the question
- 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 as relevant to check they are distinct and complete – for example, whether there are repeated ideas which could be combined or ideas which need further explanation
- return to the text to 'sense check' any ideas you are unsure of before you try to use them

- organise and sequence your ideas helpfully for your reader – do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the original text
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the passage would understand
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- avoid repetition of points
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write 'no more than 120 words' as a reminder in the selective summary of the need for concision.

Question 2

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

(i) Adam did not recall making an informed, planned choice to become a doctor.
(ii) When he was training, the idea that he would become a doctor gave Adam the motivation to achieve what he set out to do.
(iii) Once he had completed his training at medical school, Adam was looking forward to applying what he had learned.
(iv) Adam found working as a doctor during the daytime extremely boring.

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified in each part the correct word or phrase from **Text C** to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example – simply giving the word or phrase as their answer. Other responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out the entire sentence in each case, substituting the word or phrase and then underlining or bracketing their answer. Marks were sometimes missed where answers were incomplete or unfocused answers.

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

Night shifts were an unrelenting nightmare. At night, you're given a paging device affectionately called a bleep, and responsibility for every patient in the hospital. All of them.

(i) unrelenting
(ii) affectionately
(iii) responsibility

In **Question 2(b)**, successful answers considered carefully the context for each of the words underlined, recognising for example that 'affectionately' as used in the text did not mean that the paging device was loved by Adam and his colleagues.

2(c) Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests how difficult it is for Adam to deal with his patients.

Use your own words in your explanation.

It's a 'build-your-own-burger' of symptoms layered on conditions layered on diseases. You're a one-man, mobile, essentially untrained A&E department, reviewing an endless stream of worryingly sick patients who, twelve hours earlier, had an entire team of doctors caring for them. It's sink or swim – you have to learn to swim because otherwise a tonne of patients sink with you.

In **Question 2(c)** where candidates focused clearly on using **one** example from the text extract they were best placed to demonstrate their understanding. Effective responses often centred on one of the images, highlighting in their explanation the impossible nature of the task facing Adam. Some considered the complexity of the patients' conditions, on occasion noting the repetition of 'layered' in the burger metaphor. Some explored the contrast between a solitary Adam and the entire team previously caring for the patients. Many explored an aspect of the sink or swim cliché, with more successful answers offering a full explanation of how this suggested the desperate predicament Adam faced.

There was some evidence of misreading in relation to 'worryingly' – for example that the patients were worrying about things and so were awkward to manage. Less successful responses often repeated the language of the text and / or limited their explanation to what was being said in their example, rather than exploring how that helped the reader to understand the difficulties Adam faced. A number of answers attempted to discuss more than one example – time that might have been more profitably spent in

Question 2(d) where there were up to 15 marks available. Some responses attempted to paraphrase the whole extract, or discuss it in very general terms. On occasion answers repeated the question offering no evidence of understanding, stating 'the writer suggests here how difficult it is for Adam to deal with his patients'.

2(d) Re-read paragraphs 2 and 4.

- **Paragraph 2 begins 'As you might _ ' and is about Adam's progress through training.**
- **Paragraph 4 begins 'You turn up _ ' and describes the daytime work as a junior doctor in the hospital.**

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

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three relevant selections in both parts, often beginning with explanations of meaning and moving on to consider effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language in each case through detailed discussion of sharply focused choices. Where candidates considered all of the key words in slightly longer choices they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses. Candidates responding in note form and / or relying on repeating the language of the text within their explanation were less well placed to demonstrate understanding fully and often offered only partially effective explanation as a result.

The strongest responses considered words within choices individually, as well as suggesting how they worked within the longer phrase and / or in the context of the description as a whole. Rather than selecting the first three choices in each half they came across, or the most 'obvious' literary devices, successful responses often set out to identify those relevant selections that they felt best able to explain. Some of the strongest responses explored how their judiciously selected choices worked both individually and together to influence the reader's impression, building to an overview.

In part a, many answers had identified 'like a superhero' as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the grounds for comparison between a superhero and a doctor. A number of answers missed opportunities to target higher marks by limiting their comments to labelling of the device only. More secure responses went on to explore what use of the image suggested about Adam, and on occasion were able to offer some interesting analysis of how this might be seen to be working alongside other choices that also might be seen to suggest speed, force and / or power such as 'propelled', 'blow' and 'armed'. Some candidates selected one or more less interesting choices such as 'remotely prepared', 'turn theory into practice' or 'not really what I'd trained so hard for' that did not engage them in a productive discussion about how language can convey meanings and effects.

In part b, many responses suggested that there were 'humorous images' or 'images that really helped you to imagine what ward round was like' though did not always go on to outline or explore the details of how or why. The simile 'like a hypnotised duckling' was a popular selection, though not always fully exploited in the explanation offered. Where responses were most successful, candidates had often considered the meanings of the words 'hypnotised' and 'duckling' separately before explaining how they combined in the overall picture. Stronger answers were often able to visualise the image, using explanation of the meaning / what you could 'see happening' in context as the starting point for their explanation of effect.

Careful reading might have helped some candidates avoid errors such as trying to explain 'trial' rather than 'trail'. Similarly, opportunities for precise and imaginative explanation of images were sometimes missed where candidates attempted to explain the meaning of words without considering how they were being used in context – for example, there was some merit in describing the meaning of a troop (noun) but more successful answers unpicked the connotations of troops (verb).

Repetition of the vocabulary of the text in the explanations offered was common in less effective responses, whilst more convincing responses were able to offer explanations of precise meaning in their own words which then lead them on to consider effect. Candidates are reminded of the need to ensure that their explanations in **Question 2(d)** are in their own words and can be clearly understood. Whilst the task does not assessing writing skills, encouraging candidates to explore their choices fully and operate at the very edges of their vocabulary, it is nevertheless important that candidates read back their explanations to check that what they have written is what they mean and evidences their understanding.

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

Selections in **Question 2(d)** need to be clear and deliberate, helping to focus the analysis which follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are less likely to be useful and result in very thin general comments at best. Opportunities were missed in some answers, 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. Similarly, some candidates attempted to guess at the meanings of words they did not understand rather than select those where their understanding of meaning might be more secure – for example resulting in unhelpful explanations of 'exhausting' rather than 'exhaustive'.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- make sure quotations you select from the text are precise and accurate – do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- where you are trying to explain meaning check that your explanation makes sense and is correct in context
- when explaining how language is working avoid empty comments such as comments that 'the writer shows us what it is like to be there' – unless you say how and in what way your chosen example does this you are not showing understanding
- consider each of the key words within an identified choice separately as well as how they work together
- when you are trying to suggest effect and are unsure, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice
- when you are trying to explore and explain images, consider the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create
- allow time to edit your answers – for example, to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

Question 3:

Imagine you are Adam. After reading your diaries, you write a letter to your parents reflecting on your time in medicine and your decision to quit.

In your letter you should explain:

- **why you went to medical school and what medical training was like**
- **the challenges involved in working on the wards as a junior doctor and how you felt about the job at the time**
- **why you felt you had to give up and your feelings as you look back now.**

Already familiar with **Text C** having worked through **Question 2**, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to think their way into the ideas, attitudes and opinions of the narrator and writer Adam, years after these events, writing to his parents reflecting on his time in medicine and the decision to quit. The question offered candidates three guiding bullets to help them identify relevant ideas for their letter which they might use to show that they had read closely and understood.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the text and task in at least general terms. Many had engaged with both task and text to offer competent responses, evidencing some evaluation and interpreting ideas rather than simply repeating them. Where candidates had paid careful attention to each aspect of each of the bullets they were often able to develop ideas, both explicit and implicit, in the text to include convincing, well related suggestions of Adam's feelings, judgements, opinions and attitudes.

Whilst many answers followed the order of the bullets to help organise the material, not all chose to do so and where content had been planned in advance either approach proved equally successful. Where the route through the answer had been considered carefully beforehand, candidates were often able to include a good range of relevant ideas – both explicit and implicit – over all three bullets, making and exploiting links between ideas where useful. Where responses relied on just tracking through the text, replaying the passage, answers were less focused and often became over reliant on the language of the text to communicate – signalling insecure understanding of both task and text. The least successful responses copied sections of text with minimal modification and/or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading of key details and information.

The most convincing responses to **Question 3** indicated that candidates had revisited the passage to examine carefully the details of Adam's recollections and make judgements based on the evidence in the text about his feelings. They were able to think their way into the role of Adam, making explicit for their imagined readers those underlying ideas and attitudes only hinted at in the passage.

The first bullet of the question invited candidates to include in Adam's letter to his parents explanation of why he had gone to medical school in the first place and what medical training was like. Bullets two and three guided candidates to include Adam's thoughts in relation to the job itself and reflect on his reasons for giving up and feelings as he looked back now years later. Where candidates' responses relied on simply working through the text in order, opportunities to tease out Adam's feelings before, during and after his experiences of both training and the early years as junior doctor on the wards were often missed.

Where candidates had noted the audience and purpose for their response, they were often able to capitalise on that – for example by suggesting to his parents that his decision to embark on medical training had been influenced by a desire / expectation to follow in his father's footsteps and that his motivation once he got there was largely image led as he liked the idea of being seen as saving lives. Some of the most effective answers linked Adam's romanticised view of the medical profession with his enthusiastic naivety on day one of the job, looking back with some nostalgia or sadness at the young hopeful version of himself.

Where candidates had identified key details related to training and progressed to explain them in their own words, they were better able to evidence understanding and evaluation. For example, whilst many were able to suggest that training was hard, better answers went on to interpret the details offered – that it lasted for 6 years, involved learning wide-ranging information about the human body and that it was largely theoretical / did not prepare the students for the job ahead. Some mid-range responses only hinted at the nature of medical training through passing detail and opportunities for development were not taken. The least effective responses copied out sections of paragraphs one and two with little or no modification.

Misreading in relation to ideas in bullet one was relatively rare. On occasion, errors regarding the point at which Adam was writing (including the suggestion that he was currently thinking about quitting and / or had not been able to complete the six years of medical school) were sometimes self-limiting. Opportunities for offering secure, supporting detail and development were missed as a result. The task invited candidates to evidence close reading by exploring different perspectives in time, and the time frame outlined in the introduction to the text had however been noted by the majority of candidates and fully exploited by those successfully targeting higher levels.

In relation to the second bullet, almost all answers recognised that working on the wards as a junior doctor involved both hard work and / or some boring tasks. Responses evidencing otherwise reasonable reading often missed opportunities to aim for higher levels through filling their response with repetition of unfiltered narrative details – listing for example the unpaid four hours and dozens, sometimes hundreds, of tasks spent filling in forms, making phone calls etc. often alongside the basic assertion that you had to turn up every morning for the ward round. Where information was lifted from the text with limited modification this often diluted evidence of understanding. On occasion detail was misread – for example to suggest that Adam was working in A & E during the night shift and/or was working on a ship. In the least secure answers, unselective copying from the text betrayed misunderstandings of situation or vocabulary.

In dealing with ideas related to bullet three most answers were able to recognise the mental toll / stress and unreasonable expectations, though some relied on lifting phrases and / or replaying incidents such as being woken to prescribe sleeping pills for a (now sleeping) patient at 3 a.m. rather than making his reflections and feelings on those details explicit. Stronger answers had often taken some account of the narrator's tone – suggesting variously that he might remember some aspects of the experience fondly, might find some amusing looking back, or might feel some disappointment / anger at how things turned out. A number of stronger answers offered well related development suggesting for example that Adam's motivation for publishing the diaries was a desire to make sure that the public do begin to recognise the challenges of being a doctor. Less successful responses that moved away from the task as set to speculate about new careers and adventures for Adam such as engineers and flight attendants / travelling were operating outside of the text. Candidates need to remember that any development offered has to be rooted in the facts and details of passage to be creditworthy as evidence of their reading skills and understanding.

On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of an informal letter with most adopting an appropriately warm and friendly tone for a letter from Adam to his parents. Occasionally there were inconsistencies such as inappropriate valedictions and / or angry rants that blamed his parents for forcing him into medicine. However, in finding their voice for an older, more reflective Adam many candidates were

able to use language in their response that sounded convincing and consistently appropriate. Many adopted an apologetic stance and outlined why they had chosen to write rather than ring / email. Whilst setting the scene for the letter in this way was outside the passage and task, and candidates should be wary of moving too far away from the text by doing so, short such orientations were used to good effect by some candidates as a way to think themselves into the context. On occasion, unforced errors with punctuation and grammar did detract from otherwise stronger writing – resulting for example in some awkward expression. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to read back through their response to correct any mistakes or inconsistencies in their use of language – for example to ensure that meaning is clear and the register sounds appropriate. Though examples such as 'Hello I am Adam' or 'Yours faithfully, A Kay' indicated some loss of focus in relation to the intended audience, most candidates had set out remembering that they were writing to parents, with the best keeping this in mind throughout the response. Where responses lapsed into more mechanical reproductions of ideas and / or tended towards lifting, the audience had often been forgotten and it was not unusual for such responses to be signed off in the candidate's own name.

On occasion, inappropriate and frequent use of stock phrases such as 'it was no cakewalk' 'in the pink of health', 'in a nutshell' and 'the cherry on the top' began to detract a little in otherwise convincing responses, whilst some insecure use of overly complex vocabulary also clouded meaning. In the least effective answers, lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of whole sections of text not uncommon in these responses. This affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills. Meanwhile, answers at the top end were often presented in a polite, relaxed style carefully structured for the benefit for the reader.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

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

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDOSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22
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 engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task and style required.

General comments

Examiners found that in most cases a secure understanding was shown of what was expected in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. A large majority of responses were sustained and there were few very brief scripts or responses which showed misunderstanding of the task or question. Similarly, nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task. In **Question 1**, only a few responses were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert, although some lifting of phrases or sentences was fairly common.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for an article for a specific audience of young people and there was often a clear attempt to consider both sides of the argument represented in the texts. The majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response, often concluding with some more specific advice to the readership. Comments were anchored in the ideas given in the reading texts. In the middle of the mark range, responses tended to reproduce the points made in the texts, sometimes with an opinion given about some of the points made. A substantial number of responses at this range made some comments about the ideas in the texts but were less successful in probing or offering judgements about them.

Less successful candidates tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. In some responses at this level, this resulted in a lack of cohesion and some simple reflection without comment of competing ideas.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. Sometimes, insufficient use was made of the reading material and opinions on the use of technology in wider society were offered with limited reference to the specific ideas in the texts, or sometimes limited acknowledgement of the specific audience for the article. There was, however, often a clear adaptation of style and register to appeal to an audience of young people, with some understanding shown of how magazine articles are structured and presented.

The most effective responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for the task. These were lively but evaluative in style, using ideas from the texts to create and structure arguments and often employing rhetorical devices such as questions and exclamations or humour. Most in the middle range of

marks wrote in a more straightforward style and there was less focus on arriving at a clear judgement based on the texts. Less effective responses relied more on the sequence of the points made in the texts with less selection and reordering of points from the originals. This sometimes resulted in responses which had less overall coherence.

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

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were very effective and sustained. There were some imaginative evocations of places which had been significant in various ways to the writer in the first descriptive writing question which Examiners found engaging and effective. A wide range of approaches was employed in the second task, with some highly effective and detailed descriptions of the mounting tension, drama and elation associated with a wide range of types of competition. In both cases, these descriptions were more effective when there was specific detail and where the description created an atmosphere which evoked the scene credibly and engagingly. Less effective responses to both descriptive writing questions tended to stray too much into narrative and lose some descriptive focus, particularly in the second task. In the first task, less successful responses tended to offer a more generalised beach or holiday destination scene which did not carry the same emotional impact and resonance as more effective descriptions.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were credible. Both narrative questions elicited a very wide range of approaches and interpretations and Examiners awarded marks across the range here. Effective and engaging responses to the first question, which required some kind of delay, often used an unexpected hitch or reversal of fortunes to help give shape and purpose to the narrative while less effective pieces wrote about more obvious, less significant 'delays' which were resolved in less interesting ways. While some included more mundane events, other narratives were less credible or were more simple, chronological accounts, under-developed in style and less cohesive in structure.

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

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Directed Writing

Question 1

Write a magazine article for young people about how far they should keep up with the latest technologies.

In your article you should:
- **evaluate the views and attitudes people have towards new technology**
- **give your own views, based on what you have read.**

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

Begin your article with a suitable headline.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 25 marks for the quality of your writing.

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where

the letter was also both accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate register for the specific task, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. More effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement. These implicit ideas often involved, for example, some discussion of the possible impact of security and privacy breaches in the first text and some grasp of the way the marketing of new technology exploits consumers' social aspirations. In responses given marks in Level 6 for Reading, Examiners often rewarded some careful grasp of the implications suggested by the texts. Analysis of a social drift towards allowing machines to make everyday decisions for humans mentioned in **Text A,** for example, elicited some focused commentary and there was some thoughtful evaluation of the commercial exploitation of consumers in **Text B**. More effective responses homed in on the impact of technology on young people's lives and aspirations, as directed in the task, and often showed some perceptive evaluation of their specific vulnerabilities.

Responses given marks in the middle range tended to be more straightforward, with some reflection, perhaps, of both the benefits and pitfalls of the Internet of Things in **Text A** and the impact of social media on young people's buying habits. Responses at this level often included some opinion or reaction to the ideas in the texts, such as comment on whether the automation of everyday activities would lead to laziness in young people or whether the purchase of new technology should be driven by 'need' or 'want'.

Middle range responses often showed an understanding of the main ideas in the texts and offered sensible views on them while not always examining or probing them consistently. Examiners also noted that the focus of the comments was more general and missed some of the opportunities afforded by the task to focus on young people as consumers of new technology and the ways in which their lives were particularly affected by their attitudes to it.

Less effective responses showed some understanding of the ideas in the passage but there was reference to a narrow range of points or there was some misunderstanding of the details. The different categories of consumers listed in **Text B**, for example, were often reproduced without comment and where there was some opinion or discussion, there was some tendency to write about the impact of technology and devices in general, rather than the innovations associated with the Internet of Things or the automation of everyday activities. Weaknesses in organising ideas coherently were characteristic of responses in the lower levels. The sequence and organisation of ideas often reflected closely the order of ideas in the texts and this sometimes resulted in contradictory or disconnected responses. Responses also often had fewer characteristics of an article or the information in the texts was not well adapted in terms of register and style for the purpose and audience required.

Marks for reading

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about whether the rise of new technology was largely beneficial or detrimental to young people. Most responses included the evidence in **Text A** of the potential of advancements in technology, especially the Internet of Things, to take over more mundane tasks for consumers. Most showed some understanding of the article's references to the benefits and the drawbacks of this in terms of privacy and security. More thoughtful responses considered carefully whether having technology perform everyday tasks would result in young people's time being released for more interesting or significant activities or would exacerbate teenagers' laziness.

In some effective responses, the discussion centred on whether relinquishing control of their lives to machines, or the global corporations that lay behind them, was a danger in itself. In some cases, at the highest level, this probing approach provided a useful route into **Text B**'s more implicit ideas – as one candidate wrote, 'Behind these shiny new baubles, performing simple tasks we never even thought about before, is the kind of cynical manipulation of us seen in the marketing strategies which label us as vain, greedy and selfish.' The idea of environmental and societal waste was also referred to in these high level responses. The Internet of Things made some candidates wonder whether 'simple gadgets that did simple things' would become obsolete and the waste of environmental resources in producing gadgets which the technology industry would simply encourage consumers to abandon after a short time was also considered thoughtfully by many candidates. The categorisation of consumer groups in **Text B** was recognised in these more effective responses as part of a sales strategy, rather than a neutral observation, and there were some clear judgements made about how young people's insecurities were perhaps exploited by commercial interests.

The task set specified the audience for the article as young people and most responses reflected this in both the style of the response and the ideas selected from the texts. Some perceptive responses explored the ways in which young people were both naturally drawn and easily exploited as consumers of technology and showed a mature awareness of the implicit ideas and values in the texts. A common approach in effective responses was that the march of technological progress was inevitable and young people should embrace it or be 'left behind' in the future. Some responses used the implied assumptions in both texts that simply opting out of using new technology was not a viable option to argue that being aware of and alert to security and privacy issues could limit their damage. Young people, some argued, were better placed to find solutions to these pitfalls than older consumers who simply tried not to engage with new technology until they had no choice. Others explored the distinction between a genuine interest in how new technology worked and an obsession with purchasing it to improve one's social status. The potential for career opportunities was also addressed with some thoughtful evaluations, particularly in contrast with the short-term social boost in possessing the latest gadget. Similarly, having everyday tasks undertaken by machines was seen as part of the progress of technology rather than being necessary in itself to relieve consumers of tedious but necessary chores. The goal of technological progress was seen by many thoughtful candidates as important and resistance to it useless, although its pitfalls should be mitigated.

Responses given Level 6 marks for Reading showed a grasp of the underlying ideas and implicit views in the texts. Most of these saw the issue of human versus technological control of our lives as a key idea in **Text A**. The most effective of these responses combined an evaluation of this text with a subtle appreciation of how young people specifically need to be aware of contending commercial forces, based on a close reading of the second text. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically highlighted some of the privacy / security concerns of the first text with some evaluative comment on the dangers of laziness as well as the environmental waste and damage implicitly referred to in the second text. Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to particular points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments usually focused on the need to be mindful of privacy concerns while keeping up with technology or on the foolishness of buying new technology simply to acquire approval on social media or among peers.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passages. There was often less argument and focus on using the texts to arrive at a judgement about keeping up with new technology, though some simple opinion based on personal preference was often given. These comments tended to be more general in nature, such as the observation that 'it's important to have a balance in life' or 'technology is the future so we have to keep up with it'. While such ideas were derived from a reading of the texts, they were often more general and not as well anchored in the specific ideas in them.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words, simple opinions on them were offered. Less successful responses showed some misunderstanding, drifted away from the passages or addressed the material thinly, and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. There was some misreading of the privacy issue in **Text A**, with some responses relying on lifted sentences but showing some weak grasp of the idea. The purpose and nature of **Text B** was not well understood at this level, with most candidates accepting at face value the information in it with limited examination. Copying of phrases was also very common; where lower marks were awarded, some firmer links with the passages were needed and such marks were 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

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

Style and audience

Candidates could adopt a range of appropriate styles and registers for their articles and could show their understanding of the intended audience of young people in a variety of ways. Across the ability range, an apt, fairly conversational but standard English style allowed for Examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Although not always sustained, many articles began with a suitable headline and a lively introduction which engaged the interest of the reader. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in a light-hearted way but making their case effectively and with some impact. Many adopted the voice of a young writer who understood the attractions and obsessions associated with new gadgets and technology for their audience: 'Don't get me

wrong, I'm as guilty as the next member of Gen X of lusting after the latest iteration of some niche gaming app that I know my friends really want.' This tone of authority acquired through values shared with a young audience was a subtle and successful adaptation of style and register for many high-level responses. Other choices were made in favour of a more adult, informative style: 'I'm here to guide you through the minefield of new technology ...' or 'My advice to you …' were typical phrases used in this kind of response.

In the middle range of marks, Examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking and suggested a Level 3 mark, if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage a young audience rather than make straightforward statements based on the texts could sometimes compensate for other elements of style such as weak spelling or insecure grammar.

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

Structure

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

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed so that conflicting ideas were addressed separately. The main benefits of modern technology or the proposed benefits of the Internet of Things were often addressed first, with some discussion of the privacy issues of the first text and often some deliberate selection from the second text to drive a particular view on the issues. An overall coherence and structure were required for this level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.
Less successful responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas and there was limited awareness of how the information in the texts could be used to marshall an argument for or against keeping up with technology.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing, which was accurate and controlled as well as appropriate in tone and register, was given a writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used to create specific effects. Rhetorical devices, such as the use of contentious, challenging questions or exclamations, were often used at this level, such as 'So how are we meant to navigate through these quickly changing currents?', or, 'It's not exactly feasible to turn your back on modern technology in this day and age, is it!' Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation.

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

Faulty sentence structures, insecure tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 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 Level 4. The

omission of definite or indefinite articles, tense errors and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Band 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content nor 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
- think about the purpose of the texts in the reading material and how that affects what is being said
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly; think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

Section B: Composition

Descriptive Writing

2 Write a description of a place you would like to go back to.

3 Describe the other contestants in a competition before, and after, the winner has won.

Write about 350 to 450 words on <u>one</u> of the following questions. Answer on this question paper.

<u>Up to 16 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 24 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.</u>

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates though the first task was more often selected. There was a wide range of scenarios evident. In the first task there were some strongly evocative descriptions of places from the candidate's own past or childhood, including houses, parks or sometimes busy streets, which elicited some detailed and effective responses. Responses tended to be more effective if the chosen place had some emotional connection with the writer which was relayed to the reader, rather than a holiday destination or a more stereotypically beautiful landscape such as a beach or forest scene.
In the second question, most responses made good use of the direction in the task to focus on specific times before and after the competition. Many kinds of 'competition' were represented in the answers, from drama, dance or singing contests to spelling bees or interviews for jobs, university places or promotions. The implied use of the narrator as a fellow competitor given in the question was used to good effect in some responses and most avoided a narrative structure by focusing on the signs of nervousness and anxiety before the competition and the elation and disappointment after it.

Some successful responses to the first question focused on the writer's thoughts and feelings as they thought about or reminisced about a place from the past. A childhood home or familiar place from the past featured in a number of evocative responses to this question, often partially remembered in subtle glimpses of details which were imbued with emotion and memory. In other scenarios, the place was approached in a more physical way, after a brief introduction which explained how the writer came to be returning there. As is often the case in effective descriptive writing, closely observed details helped to recreate the place in the reader's mind. A glimpse of a partially exposed tile in a rather dilapidated house was used effectively in the opening paragraph of one response, for example, a detail which allowed the writer to recreate the room through the memories of how it used to be. Another very effective description used the idea of searching for a particular tree in an overgrown garden as a structural device, ending with the discovery of the tree and the carved initials on it long ago. Unusual or apparently insignificant but closely observed details created an impression of reality in the best responses. Most were constructed in a fairly straightforward way, with each paragraph devoted to some aspect of the scene. Most responses at all levels of achievement were sustained and developed. At the highest level, many showed skill in building a detailed, often emotionally charged scene. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's attention by linking the different elements described in an engaging, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure as well as carefully chosen detail.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but usually a little more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve more stereotypical ideas, such as a favourite holiday destination or a beach scene. Details about the sea, sky and the beauty of the landscape were included though sometimes lacked the sense of a specific, clearly observed place seen in more effective pieces. Most responses attempted to evoke the peace and tranquillity of such scenes although some made good use of descriptions of people and other activities such as local fisherman arriving to shore with laden boats or beach sellers' cries as they hawked their wares. Other sense impressions such as the smell of beach food or the saltiness of the sea often helped to focus attention on description and avoid narrative.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become unbalanced or included over-long narrative introductions such as packing for the holiday, the journey to the airport and arrival at the resort's hotel. Such features often gave way to more specific description but in many cases the choice of a holiday destination made it more difficult to sustain the use of ideas and images which evoked a sense of place or time which was significant to the writer. In some, the description sometimes became a more straightforward list of what was seen and heard and lacked the emotional engagement suggested by the title. The descriptive content tended to be a little more stereotypical or general than responses given higher marks.

Less effective responses given marks in Level 3 or below often included less well organised lists of details briefly given rather than developed. Other responses at this level became a series of events, often outlining the activities undertaken on each day of a holiday with limited focus on description beyond some more cliched elements such as 'a crystal clear sea' or 'candyfloss clouds'. Most responses to this question were organised and paragraphed but at this level the descriptions of each feature were brief and general rather than developed and specific.

The second question was less often selected than the first although there were some effective and highly skilled descriptions here. Various scenarios worked well for candidates given high marks for Content and Structure here. Backstage or green room scenes before and after a competition allowed candidates to scan the room for different characters who reacted in different ways to the anxiety before a competition. More effective descriptions focused on the ways in which characters' behaviour betrayed their state of mind. These often included small, closely observed gestures such as the tapping of nervous feet on the floor, competitors glancing obsessively at the clock as their call to compete neared or the trembling of an outwardly calm competitor's hands around a glass of water. Rivalries between competitors were also highlighted in some unusual images such as one candidate's description of a competitor whose 'eyes darted around the room, unerringly avoiding the fixed stare of her biggest rival which lasered her from afar.' At the moment the announcement was made at the end of one singing competition described, the winner was described as 'chillingly cool, savouring only the victory over his hated rival rather than the winner's prize.'

The focus on the two specific moments given in the question was handled with confidence by many candidates given high marks for Content and Structure. In one response, the competition featured was an interview for a much-wanted job opportunity. The outcome was conveyed with some skill and subtlety only by the shaking of hands by the different interviewees in an atmosphere brimming with tension and suppressed aggression and the observation of 'the faked, slight smile I somehow found to plaster on my face'. Some responses effectively focused on the same characters before and after the competition results were known, giving the response a clear structure and cohesion. While most descriptions were written in third person, some skilfully developed responses evoked the atmosphere through first person reflections of thoughts and feelings, an approach which sometimes worked successfully to imbue the scene with a tangible intensity: 'I try to tell myself it doesn't matter, there's always next year, my time will come. But right now, this is all there is, life or death.'

Examiners gave marks in low Level 5 or Level 4 where the writing was more typically narrative than descriptive in focus, where there was limited organisation of the details described or where strings of details were listed with less overall cohesion. Responses tended to tell the story of the competition rather than evoke the experience of the competitors, although most included some relevant detail about how competitors behaved or reacted at different points. Thoughts and feelings were sometimes stated – 'I was terrified but a bit excited at the same time' – rather than conveyed in more effective, engaging ways. Some ideas and images tended to be more predictable, although most pieces were quite sustained and paragraphed appropriately.

Less effective responses given marks below Level 4 were generally characterised by confusion between features of descriptive and narrative writing and relied on simple narration of events with limited focus on description of characters and how they behaved and reacted.

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

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

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

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

Section B: Composition

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story which involves some sort of delay.

5 Write a story set in two times or places.

Write about 350 to 450 words on <u>one</u> of the following questions. Answer on this question paper.

<u>Up to 16 marks are available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 24 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.</u>

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses. Examiners sometimes saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title or where the given title or the quotation in the question was not used or the story did not really use these ideas. Occasionally, narratives seemed to be answers to previously set questions rather than those on the current paper and in some cases the Content and Structure marks were lower as a result.

Effective responses, as is often the case in narrative writing, were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative, to produce moments of tension or drama and to vary the pace of the story were credited by Examiners as essential elements of narrative writing, as was the use of characterisation to create believable protagonists and characters.

There were various structures employed in effective responses to the first question, as well as more straightforward chronological recount. The idea of ‘delay’ was central to the plot of more effective stories, such as those in which the delay led to a meeting with someone significant to the narrator, such as a future partner, or where the delay was instrumental in the narrator learning some important lesson or in saving the life of the narrator. Delayed flights or trains were very common across the mark range but more effective responses wove the stories around the consequences of the delay rather than the delay itself being the focus of the narrative. Some high-scoring narratives were written in specific genres, such as fantasy, science fiction or war, in which the delay in relaying a command or pulling a trigger had significant consequences. More effective responses showed an ability to create credible characters, even if the scenario itself was fantastic or unfamiliar. One story set in a spaceship which was battling forces from an alien civilisation depicted a captain who was wracked by fear and indecision because of a bad judgement made in the past which was hinted at but never revealed). He delayed taking action with catastrophic consequences. While

the setting and scope of the narrative was a little over-ambitious and difficult to control, the portrayal of the captain was concise and sharply focused.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless engaging for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt create a developed story which was relevant to the task. Responses in this range, whilst often more straightforward, chronological accounts, were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution or conclusion to the story overall. The idea of delay was often used to give some moral lesson learned, such as the delay in catching a plane to college which caused one narrator to realise he should study nearer home because his family needed him. Other academic setbacks, such as having to resit examinations, also usually turned out to be beneficial in different ways and other common storylines often involved an important life lesson in humility or patience.
Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of good narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events but sometimes lacked attention to characterisation and setting. 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 used, such as delays to flights or trains, but there was less awareness of the needs of the reader. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than creating characters. In many responses at this level, the delay itself was the subject of the story. Taxi journeys through heavy traffic to airports or flights not boarded because of mislaid passports were very common plotlines at this level and although some similar stories were given Level 5 marks these tended to be less engaging or used less developed characterisation. While the majority of less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative style.

For the second narrative question, there were varied interpretations of the title which offered some challenge in terms of structure for many ambitious writers. Some narratives were based in the same location at different times, such as the story of an attack on a young girl in the same city but many centuries apart. The more modern version of the attack served to show how little attitudes had changed over time and was an engaging and thoughtful interpretation of the question. Some effective responses built the narrative around the idea of time travel in which characters either deliberately or accidentally moved in time to give a different perspective on events around them. Two different locations with different characters were also used quite skilfully in some stories where the link between the characters was only shown at the end. One chilling dual narrative told the parallel stories of a terrorist and his victim, each preparing for the day with no understanding of each other's lives or plans.
Level 5 responses were generally quite effective accounts in which the content was perhaps less ambitious or less tightly controlled but there was still some organisation and shaping of the narrative and a cohesive story was produced. Some stories met the demands of the question by a time lag in the middle, with the first half was set much earlier, or occasionally earlier than the second section. More straightforward accounts of school experiences such as bullying then moved in time to a point where the bullied narrator employed the bully and while these kinds of narratives had some cohesion the idea of a dual narrative using two different times was not integral or not made interesting overall. In some, there were science fiction elements including time travel but the story was made more complicated rather than more illuminating by the time changes. In attempting to control an intricate plot, characterisation was sometimes not as well developed and settings were more sketchily drawn at the bottom of Level 5 and in responses given Level 4 marks.
Responses given marks in Level 4 and lower were usually simple accounts of events and showed limited awareness of the reader or the features of narrative writing which elevate an account into a developed story. Scenarios which quickly became cliched and unengaging were used and some responses became confusing and muddled in attempting to control stories through different times and locations.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects which helped to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still accurate and largely fluent while Level 4 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, sentence separation and grammar errors. Quite common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 responses, such as misagreements and imprecise vocabulary. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or

grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the mis-spelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed, though the mixing of tenses was also prevalent in the descriptive writing.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:

- Think about the build-up towards the most important moment in your story.
- Make sure you know how your story ends before you begin.
- 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.
- Use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create particular effects.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/03
Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

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

General comments

Many candidates produced interesting coursework portfolios which related to their personal interests or experiences and contained varied work across a range of contexts. Most candidates responded to a wide range of appropriate texts for Assignment 1. Some candidates created engaging and effective descriptions and narratives. Most assignments were within the 500 to 800 recommended word limit.

All the centres are thanked for ensuring that their samples of work were sent to Cambridge in good time to meet the final coursework submission date. The majority of centres supplied and accurately completed all relevant forms and documents. It was noted with some concern that, with the majority of samples seen, the requirement to provide summative comments at the end of each assignment, and to annotate all errors in the final versions of candidates' work, had not been followed. At times, it was unclear as to how and why marks had been awarded. It was also noted that there was a general trend to award marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the mid to lower level assessment criteria.

Administration

Most centres supplied and correctly completed all relevant documents; for example, a Coursework Assessment Summary Form for the whole cohort, the MS1, one first draft of candidates' work and the texts used for Assignment 1. This was most helpful for the moderation of the samples. When moderators encountered difficulty, it was when the administrative processes outlined in the syllabus and Coursework Handbook had not been followed. This was most noticeable in the way in which centres approached the annotation of candidates' work. Teachers are required to annotate candidates' work to indicate the reasons for their marking decisions. This should include summative comments at the end of each assignment indicating, with reference to the mark scheme, how and why marks had been awarded. Teachers are also required to annotate all errors in the final version of each assignment. These processes help those awarding marks to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the work and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. If these processes are not followed it can result in inconsistencies in marking, or issues with the accuracy of the application of the assessment criteria. Teacher responsibilities in relation to

these processes can be found in Section 1.1.7 of the Coursework Handbook. It is essential that such processes are followed by all who mark coursework.

Another area of concern to the moderators related to internal moderation. In order to establish a single, reliable rank order for all candidates, it is essential that a process of internal moderation is carried out. With the majority of the samples seen there was little, or no evidence to indicate that internal moderation had taken place. The Coursework Handbook (sections 1.1.7, 2.2, 2.4 and 4.5) gives guidance on how to implement and manage internal moderation. Centres must ensure that a process of internal moderation takes place and that it is clearly indicated on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form and the coursework portfolios.

Comments on specific assignments

Assignment 1

It was pleasing to note that the majority of candidates responded to texts which were of an appropriate length and challenge, and which appealed to the interests of the candidates. Texts about water shortages in India, gender equality, information literacy and environmental issues produced some interesting and thoughtful comments which reflected the concerns that young people today have about the world and their environment.

Reading

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

Writing

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

Moderators also noticed a general tendency for centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which contained quite frequent, and often quite serious, errors which impacted on the overall meaning and effect of candidates' work. Writing awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table A should be 'mostly' or 'almost always' accurate. Errors made with sentence construction and grammar, typing, the incorrect selection of vocabulary from spellcheck, or the incorrect use of vocabulary can affect overall meaning and clarity and should be taken into account when awarding marks from Table A. Issues with accuracy was one of the more common reasons for adjustment of marks.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1

- be prepared to thoroughly explore, challenge and discuss the ideas in the text
- try to avoid making general comments about the topic or subject of the text, instead, try to make sure that your comments are specifically related to the ideas, opinions or attitudes that you have identified in the text
- look for, and use in your response, inferences made indirectly in the text
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the text and comment on them

- try to develop your points to create a thorough, detailed and clear line of argument or discussion
- make sure that the audience and purpose of your writing is clear and adapt your style accordingly
- make sure that you carefully proof read your work and check that your punctuation, vocabulary choices and grammar are correct.

Assignment 2 (description)

The majority of centres set tasks which were appropriate. Candidates produced some interesting descriptions of a range of subjects, such as busy places and buildings, and objects or people of personal importance to the candidate; for example, returning to a family home, re-discovering a childhood treasure, or a loved relative such as a grandparent.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those in which the candidates had carefully selected vocabulary to create a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place or person, and which were well sequenced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. When candidates were less successful was when they were overambitious with their vocabulary choices, included imagery or idioms which did not fit the context of their writing, or included unrealistic and unconvincing scenarios (for example, haunted houses, spooky graveyards). Writing which lacks credibility and realism would be expected to be given marks from Level 4 in Table C (content and structure). Descriptions which remained fully focused on description and avoided narrative development were also successful in meeting the higher-level assessment criteria. It was noted that the descriptions of a significant number of candidates were characterised by the inclusion of overlong narrative preambles explaining the events leading up to the focus of the description. This detracted from the overall impact and effect of the descriptions and should be awarded marks from Level 4 or below of Table C (content and structure). One of the most common reasons for adjustments to marks was when the moderators identified a trend of awarding marks from the highest-level assessment criteria for content and structure to writing which displayed the characteristics more typical of Level 4 or below.

Another reason for adjustments to marks was when moderators identified a trend of the awarding of marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to writing that contained a limited range of sentence structures, incorrectly constructed sentences, or contained frequent errors with punctuation and grammar. Writing which achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. The moderators saw some writing which displayed these characteristics, but a significant majority of the writing awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6, Table D more frequently displayed the characteristics of writing expected from Level 4 or below. Many candidates ‘told’ the reader about the scene being described, rather than ‘showing’ the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images. The moderators also noticed a general trend for candidates to use repeated sentence structures and create almost list-like descriptions, which added to the ‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’ style of writing mentioned above. In addition, the work of a significant majority of the candidates contained frequent and serious errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of candidates’ work. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, changes in tenses, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Quite often, the meaning of sentences was blurred, or meaning was lost altogether. Errors which affect meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as ‘minor’. As mentioned earlier in this report, the absence of summative comments and annotation of all errors made it difficult for the moderators to determine whether errors had been taken into account when marks had been awarded. Accurate and effective application of the assessment criteria is achieved through the careful weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and the application of a mark which ‘best fits’ the assessment criteria. To achieve this, it is essential that all errors are identified and indicated by the markers. Engaging in this process allows markers to effectively balance the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and apply marks that are most appropriate to their candidates’ work.

Information and guidance on how to apply the mark schemes are given in sections 1.2.5 and 1.2.6 of the Coursework Handbook.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2

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

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Assignment 3 (narrative)

Task setting for Assignment 3 was generally appropriate and a number of candidates created engaging, effective narratives which were well managed and convincing. Candidates who recounted personal family events, such as the birth of a sibling and their developing relationship with that sibling, or memories of special family events with important people in their lives, tended to create more credible and interesting narratives than those who wrote adventure, murder mystery, ghost or action stories.

The most engaging and successful narratives were those in which the candidates created stories which featured well-defined plots and strongly developed features of fiction writing such as description, characterisation and convincing details and events. Less successful narratives were those which did not convince the reader of the imagined situation or character, or had limited development of plot or character. This type of writing was most evident when candidates wrote in the genres of action, murder mystery, ghost or adventure stories. Stories such as these, although containing a definite beginning, middle and ending, were often unrealistic and incredible, or lacked development of character or plot. This sort of writing is classed as 'relevant' or 'straightforward' and should expect to be awarded marks from Level 4 or below from Table C. Moderators noticed that there was a general trend across much of the work sampled for centres to award marks from Levels 5 and 6 to writing which more appropriately fitted the Level 4, or below, assessment criteria. This was another common reason for adjusting marks.

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

Advice to candidates for Assignment 3

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

Good practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was when:

- centres followed the guidelines and instructions set out in the syllabus and the Coursework Handbook
- a wide range of appropriate texts were used for Assignment 1, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond, and were relevant to their interests
- centres set a range of 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
- teachers gave general advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- candidates revised, edited and carefully proofread their first drafts in order to improve their writing
- candidates revised, edited and carefully proofread their work in order to identify and correct errors
- teachers provided informative summative comments relating to the mark scheme at the end of the final version of each assignment
- teachers indicated all errors in the final version of each completed assignment
- centres engaged in a process of internal moderation and clearly indicated this on the CASF and in the coursework portfolios.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Speaking and Listening Test

Key messages

For both centres transitioning from the old 0500/05 and 0500/06 components and for those new to the Speaking and Listening test this has been a successful series. Overall, centres have interpreted the new syllabus for 2020 and the guidance therein for 0500/04 successfully and are commended for doing so.

Centre assessment was accurate generally and sympathetic to the new level descriptors. For some centres, there has been a need to recommend slight adjustments but these have been initiated through a sense of focusing in on what differentiates specific descriptors at specific levels rather than a need to correct serious misinterpretations of the mark scheme.

With only a small number of exceptions, the administration of the component was accurate and helpful to the moderating process. Centres are to be congratulated on their professionalism and diligence.

Candidates' responses to ***Part 1***, the Individual Talk, were generally very strong and some very interesting topics were covered with aplomb. In the vast majority of cases the 3–4 minutes allowed for ***Part 1*** were utilised effectively by the candidates and timings were adhered to.

Part 2 now takes the form of a conversation that should evolve naturally through the 7–8 minutes time period allowed. A ***Part 2*** that depends largely on a question and answer format is not as successful as a naturally developing conversation.

Administration – General points

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

- All tests should be carried out within the boundaries of the test window stipulated by Cambridge International.
- Every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date on which the candidate is being examined.
- Centres may choose to create and use their own versions of the Oral Examinations Summary Form (OESF) as opposed to utilising the one provided by Cambridge International but in these cases the form used must accurately reflect the information required. One centre chose to use its own form but there was no breakdown of the marks given for ***Part 2***. Instead of showing separate individual marks for Speaking and Listening only an overall total for ***Part 2*** was included. This is not helpful for the moderator and should be avoided.

Conduct of the test – General points

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

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered.

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

candidates who really only wanted to begin their talks. It is strongly advised that each test should begin with the examiner's formal introduction and be followed immediately by the candidate performing ***Part 1***, the Individual Talk.

- The importance of timing within the test should be appreciated. Where a ***Part 1*** response is significantly short of the minimum three minutes required, please consider whether the assessment criteria can be adequately met and assess accordingly. It is difficult to see how a response can meet higher level criteria in a performance lasting significantly less than the prescribed minimum time allowance.
- Given that both Speaking and Listening are assessed in ***Part 2***, it is important that the conversations last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation of seven minutes is met.

Comments on specific sections of the test

Part 1 – Individual Talk

All the candidates entered in this series delivered their responses to ***Part 1*** as formal presentations. This is perfectly acceptable. It is clear that candidates prepared thoroughly for the test having researched their topics diligently. Many of the presentations were memorised which is acceptable as long as there remains an element of natural fluency to the delivery. The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic, had a strong base knowledge of the subject and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses are generally more successful but responses do not benefit from an over-reliance on notes or over-rehearsal. There was no compelling evidence witnessed of an overuse of notes although one candidate concluded his talk with a long quotation that may have been read from his cue card. This practice is strongly discouraged.

As with the old 0500/05 it remains the case that this new component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. Indeed, successful choice of topics was a strong element running through this series with many imaginative themes providing reflective and analytical opportunities for the candidates to explore. To achieve the higher levels, the presentations should move beyond the descriptive and narrative so this was welcomed by moderators.

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

Some examples of productive ***Part 1*** topics from this series include:

- Influential Young People of the 21st Century
- My Passion for Martial Arts
- Happiest Moments in My Life
- The Power of Fiction Writing
- Psychology and Tyrants (Machiavellianism)
- Why You Shouldn't Fear, Fear
- Decoding the Art of Lying
- Scientific Journalism in the Internet Age
- Global Warming
- World Without Boundaries

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

- Dogs (too generalised)
- Football (too generalised)
- My Favourite Mobile Game (Insufficient material)
- Marvel Cinematic Universe (Insufficient knowledge of the topic demonstrated)
- Social Media (little to say of consequence)

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

Part 2 – Conversation

There were many fine examples of examiners engaging in lively and interesting conversations on the chosen topics. Good examiners gave many opportunities for candidates to develop their ideas as fully as they could by providing open questions that helped them to explore and develop the conversations. Sympathetic examining in ***Part 2*** is a really important factor in allowing candidates to thrive and there was clear evidence of such good practice being employed by examiners in this series. Examiners understood their role in ***Part 2*** was to provide stimulus for the candidates to express their ideas and opinions on their chosen topics. Generally, candidates were not interrupted when in full flow and examiners were not judgemental when the candidates' responses could be deemed inaccurate or potentially controversial. Examiners do not need to agree with the statements the candidates make but may seek to challenge more able candidates if they feel this will stimulate them to develop their ideas more fully. This is a judgement call for the examiner and should only be made if the examiner is certain a candidate's reaction will be a positive one.

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

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

Advice to centres

- Keep preparing your candidates as you have for this series.
- Maintain the high level of accurate administrative professionalism displayed in this series. It is much appreciated.
- Consider how examiners can hone their skills in the delivery of ***Part 2*** of the test using the above guidelines.
- Choosing the most appropriate topic is key to being successful in the test.
- Although candidates should prepare thoroughly, it must be remembered that ***Part 1*** is a demonstration of presentational skills and that the monotonous regurgitation of a memorised topic will not fulfil the criteria for Level 5.
- Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through the maintenance of appropriate timings for both parts of the test. Keeping to the timings prescribed in the syllabus will avoid candidates being adversely limited in the accurate application of the mark scheme.