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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12
Reading

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- followed the order of the questions as set
- attempted all parts of all questions
- followed task instructions carefully, responding appropriately to the command words in the question
- based their answers on the correct text and/or section of text
- focused on the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for each question
- noted the marks allocated to each question and targeted their response time accordingly
- paid attention to the guidance offered in tasks – for example, explaining three choices from each of the two paragraphs identified in **2(d)**, indicating clearly the one example from the text extract they were using in **2(c)** and identifying a word/phrase (not a sentence) in each part of **2(a)**
- avoided repetition, inventing irrelevant material and/or introducing their own opinion
- used their own words where instructed to do so, avoiding unselective copying and/or lifting from the text
- planned a logical route through the ideas they were intending to use before writing their answers to longer questions
- selected just the material that was most appropriate for the response to the question
- checked and edited their responses to correct any incomplete ideas or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated that they were largely familiar with the format of the Reading paper and understood the general demands of each of the three questions. There were some candidates who did not pay attention to the guidance offered in the task instructions; they missed opportunities to evidence their skills and understanding. Instances where one or more tasks had not been attempted were rare, though there were occasions where responses to part questions were incomplete or missing, limiting the possibility of scoring higher marks.

Candidates appeared to find the three Reading texts equally accessible and engaging. There were some excellent answers to all three questions, with a number going above and beyond the demands of level 5. In less successful answers, a failure to complete all aspects of a task and/or a loss of focus on the rubric limited the evidence of understanding and skills offered or resulted in redundant material. For example, a few candidates attempted to choose and explain choices from a paragraph not identified in the language question (**2(d)**).

Similarly, there were some less well-focused responses from candidates who had scored well in the smaller sub questions but missed opportunities to target higher marks in other higher tariff tasks; for example, by writing considerably more than the maximum of 120 words advised for the selective summary **Question 1(f)**. Others focused solely on word count at the expense of other aspects of their answer –spending time counting individual words and/or writing out full draft versions of their answer is unlikely to be an efficient use of time in the context of an examination. Candidates are reminded that the word guidance offered in **Question 2(d)** and **Question 3** is not a requirement of the task in itself – the guidance is offered to help candidates organise their time and offer sufficient evidence of their skills and understanding to target higher levels.

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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 each response. They did not add unnecessary material and focused on answering each question as set. Most candidates were careful to follow the line or paragraph references in the questions to help them to move down Text A in order and direct their attention. Most candidates remembered that in a test of comprehension their responses to these initial short answer questions needed to be derived from Text A in order to evidence their Reading skills and are not based on their personal opinion, imagination or experience.

Less successful responses attempted to include extra guesses in response to **Questions 1(a)–(e)** taking up valuable examination time by doing so, as well as diluting evidence of understanding. Some candidates offered circular answers in one or more of their responses, repeating some or all of the language of the question where own words were specified as required. Such responses provided limited evidence of understanding and missed out on marks: for example, in **1(b)(i)** by suggesting 'this means they were nearly extinct' or in 1(b)(ii) 'that it means they promised to take action'. In **Question 1(f)** a few candidates relied heavily on the language of Text B and/or copied whole chunks of text, limiting the available evidence of their own skills and understanding as a result.

In **Question 2** candidates needed to identify (in **2(a)**) and explain (in **2(b)**) words and phrases from the text, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer in **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task in **Question 2(d)**. Effective answers were careful to refer back to Text C to locate specific relevant choices and consider their meaning in context. Opportunities for marks were missed by a few candidates in **Question 2(c)** who did not clearly identify just one example from the text in their explanation and attempted to offer a generalised overview instead. Likewise, in **Question 2(a)** those who copied out whole sections or sentences from the text rather than identifying the exact word/phrase that matched the sense of just the underlined word/phrase in the question did not provide secure evidence of their understanding. To aim for higher marks in **Question 2(d)**, candidates should ensure that they explore and explain the meaning of each of the words they have chosen in some detail before moving on to consider associations and connotations or suggest effects. Most candidates were able to suggest three potentially useful examples for analysis in each half of the **2(d)** task and offer basic effect / meaning in context, though some candidates were not sufficiently focused or detailed in the examination of their choices. In less effective responses, generalised comment and/or labelling of devices without explanation of how these were working in this instance meant opportunities to target higher levels were missed. A small number of candidates did not address the **Question 2(d)** task effectively, offering few or no clear choices.

In **Question 3** responses for the most part had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task, though a few candidates lost their focus on the text: for example, writing creatively about their own real or imagined experience of tourist attractions/reserves which were not relevant in a response to reading task. Most candidates had remembered to write from Fateh's perspective, with the best focused on interpreting the evidence in the text throughout from his standpoint. Responses across the cohort covered a wide range of levels of achievement, with top level answers offering thorough responses that carefully interpreted and integrated detail from the text, navigating the timescale shifts successfully to develop and extend ideas relevantly. Mid-range responses often missed opportunities as a consequence of uneven focus, a lack of planning beforehand and/or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text overall. Less successful responses either offered only brief reference to the passage, included evidence of misreading and/or repeated sections from the text without modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and should be avoided.

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

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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. Successful responses paid attention to the paragraph references and command words in the instructions to demonstrate efficiently the evidence of understanding required. Some mid-range responses missed opportunities to target higher marks, for example through overlong explanations, striving to offer own word answers where these were not needed and/or repeating language of the text where own words were required. Candidates should note that where use of own words is necessary to evidence understanding the task guidance makes that clear.

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 Text A from the beginning, picking up on pointers where appropriate to help them to identify relevant material. Some less successful answers clouded the evidence of understanding by including additional unnecessary material and/or extra guesses – an inefficient use of examination time.

(a) Give the two aims of International Tiger Day according to the text.

In **Question 1(a)**, candidates working chronologically through the text and tasks recognised that lines 1 and 2 detailed the two aims of International Tiger Day. Some candidates made use of the question stem to help focus their answer, whilst others simply wrote the key words of their answer alongside each bullet – either approach was acceptable. A small number of those not reading or copying with due care made the mistake of suggesting that an aim was to increase 'conversation'.

(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:
(i) 'brink of extinction' (line 3):
(ii) 'vowed to act' (lines 4–5):

In **Question 1(b)** task guidance made it clear that use of own words was required to evidence understanding. Where answers failed to score both marks it was sometimes the result of having explained just one aspect of the phrase: for example, in **Question 1(b)(ii)** offering a meaning for 'vowed' only and repeating rather than explaining act/action. 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 **1(b)(i)** that 'brink of extinction' meant that tigers were at a critical point for the survival of the species / tigers were at extremely high risk of dying out.

(c) Re-read paragraph 2 ('Since the beginning …').

Give two reasons why people may be concerned about the population of tigers.

In **Question 1(c)** candidates re-reading paragraph 2 closely were able to identify at least two of the three distinct reasons in the text; many picked up on the suggestion that the speed of the loss was alarming, and likewise many noted that tigers only lived on one continent. A few candidates missed opportunities to score both marks by identifying only part of an idea: for example, it was not correct to say that only 3900 tigers remain; the text was clear that there were only 3900 tigers remaining in the wild.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4 ('The dwindling number … in Asia.').
(i) Identify two factors that have reduced the numbers of tigers in the wild, other than human behaviour.
(ii) Explain how human behaviour has had a negative effect on tiger numbers in the wild.

Candidates who paid attention to command / key words in the question were best placed to offer creditable responses and make efficient use of their time. Effective answers distinguished between human behaviour in **part (ii)** and factors other than human behaviour in **part (i)** and based their answers as instructed on paragraphs 3 and 4. For example, in **part (i)** they were careful to note that it was a lack of, or declining, genetic diversity that had reduced tiger numbers and that certain diseases / fast spreading diseases were another factor. Candidates who were less focused on the details of the task sometimes missed opportunities to target both marks in **part (i)** for example, by

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suggesting that climate change (paragraph 5) might be a factor. Similarly, in **part (ii)** a few candidates did not remain focused on paragraphs 3 and 4, moving on instead to offer / repeat the suggestions of climate change along with the tradition of hunting tigers for souvenirs.

(e) Re-read paragraph 5 ('For centuries … retaliation.').

Using your own words, explain why some people may consider that capturing or killing tigers is acceptable.

In **Question 1(e)** the most effective explanations showed that candidates were able to derive three distinct reasons of the five available in paragraph five. Candidates who recast the relevant information using their own words as instructed were best able to demonstrate that they had teased out and understood the separate aspects – with most successful answers focused on the justification of killing tigers in terms of the threat they posed to livestock, tradition and their perceived value as souvenirs. Less well focused answers sometimes repeated the question instead of offering an explanation: for example, asserting redundantly that 'some people think it is OK to hunt tigers because they consider it acceptable to kill them'. Others missed opportunities to evidence their reading skills by suggesting answers that were not mentioned in the text – such as tigers attacking humans.

(f) According to Text B, what should we find concerning about tigers being kept in captivity?

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, misreading and/or inclusion of extraneous details meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks.

Where responses were most effective, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words and to keep their explanations concise. Overview was evidenced in some of the most successful answers where relevant ideas had been carefully selected from different parts of the text and organised helpfully for their reader. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal or no rewording or reorganisation of the original, often resulting in redundancy. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and/or sentences from the text. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

The most effective responses to the selective summary task showed evidence of candidates having planned a route through the content of their answer before writing their response. Many had produced and followed a bullet point plan. There were some extremely effective and well-crafted responses that demonstrated both concision and precise understanding of a wide range of relevant ideas.

Most candidates appeared to be aware of the need to try to use their own vocabulary where feasible – without changing or blurring the original idea – and to organise points helpfully for their reader. On occasion, candidates overlooked the need for concision in a selective summary task and resulted in excessive explanation, with some candidates continuing to write far more than the maximum of 120 words advised in the task guidance. Others adhered to the advised length of the response but took far too long to explain just a few ideas. A small number of candidates chose to write a heartfelt, but largely irrelevant, lament for tigers in general, leaving little space for relevant points. Candidates producing effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood a fairly wide range of relevant ideas, communicating these accurately and concisely in their own words.

The majority of candidates showed at least some awareness of the need to avoid excess, though not all were able to select ideas efficiently to navigate around more obviously redundant material: for example, the details of threats to wild tigers as result of growing human populations, loss of

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habitat and illegal hunting (of both tigers and their prey species) which were not relevant to the focus of this selective summary question. In some answers, rather than looking for an 'umbrella' point (such as 'exploitation' for all the different ways in which this happened) candidates included all the details from the text related to it, impacting on the evidence of both focus and concision they offered. Careful planning and organisation of ideas beforehand would have helped to address this issue.

More effective responses were not dependant on the structure or language of Text B to communicate their ideas and were consequently able to offer more concise explanations. Less effective responses sometimes relied on trying to offer a précis of the whole text in the order it was presented and often repeated ideas as a result. Many of these answers simply tracked through and replayed the text, substituting occasional own words – an approach that diluted evidence that the text and/or task had been understood. A small number of candidates misread details in the text, for example suggesting incorrectly that one worry was that captive tigers had not been trained.

In low to mid-range answers, some candidates indiscriminately lifted phrases / longer sections of text without careful selection of a central idea indicating misreading: for example, asserting that a concern in the text was that 'the captive tiger population resides in zoos'. Candidates need to be aware that just rearranging words within a sentence and slotting in substituted words here and there, is not a short cut to providing secure evidence of their skills and understanding.

The least effective responses were almost entirely reliant on the language of the original – candidates are reminded that lifting sections of text and splicing them together is unlikely to evidence understanding of either the ideas in the passage or requirements of the task.

Advice to candidates on Question 1(f):

- after reading the task instructions, re-read Text B to identify just those potentially relevant ideas you can use in your answer
- plan the ideas you are going to include ahead of writing your response; draw a neat line through your planning afterwards
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted in your plan; check that they are distinct and complete
- check whether there are repeated ideas which could be covered by one 'umbrella' point
- discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the specific focus of the question
- return to the text to 'sense check' any ideas you are unsure of before you try to use them
- organise and sequence your ideas to make them clear to 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 text themselves 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
- check back to ensure that you have included all the ideas you planned to use
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write 'no more than 120 words' and aim for concision.

Question 2

(a) <u>Identify a word or phrase from the text</u> which suggests the same idea as the <u>words underlined</u>:

(i) The railway station was <u>empty of people</u> when the narrator arrived.
(ii) The paintings of tigers on the walls of the station <u>attract the interest of</u> people travelling through.
(iii) The owner of the guesthouse was <u>slow and unwilling</u> to welcome the narrator.
(iv) The guesthouse room had a <u>stale, damp</u> smell.

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 and efficiently giving the correct word or phrase only as their answer. Other responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out the entire sentence in each case, substituting the word or phrase and then bracketing or underlining their answer. Marks were sometimes missed where answers were unfocused: for example, incorrectly offering 'solitary', or 'sleepy town' in **2(a)(i)** or adding in extra words that went beyond the meaning of the underlined words – such as 'prised' in **2(a)(iii)**. Very occasionally,

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candidates had misread the instruction to 'identify a word or phrase from the text' and tried to offer an explanation of meaning in their own words.

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

Next morning, I introduced myself to Fateh, the wildlife warden for the park. He looked over his luxuriant moustache disbelievingly at me and my camera. No one came here, he told me, to 'visit'.

Jolting along dirt tracks, we drove out towards the reserve. Slowly the wilderness took over. I scanned the thickening forest for wildlife, unaware my tracking skills would take years to develop.

(i) luxuriant
(ii) Jolting
(iii) scanned

In **Question 2(b)**, some answers offered just one carefully chosen word or phrase as their answer, whilst others offered evidence of understanding through longer explanations. Either approach could be creditworthy, though candidates should be careful not to dilute evidence of understanding by offering various suggestions and extra guesses of different meanings that are contradictory and/or not in line with the text. Successful answers had considered the precise meaning in context of each of the words underlined, recognising for example that in this instance 'scanned' did not refer to reading a document. Less successful answers showed evidence of misreading: for example, suggesting that 'jolting' was the action of 'walking along'. Other answers missed opportunities to evidence secure understanding in **2(b)** by offering more generalised explanations only, such as 'moving' for 'jolting'. In stronger answers, there were some very good attempts at explaining the more challenging idea of 'luxuriant' in relation to Fateh's moustache, such as 'grandiose' or 'rich and well-maintained'. Less effective answers noticed a link between 'luxuriant' and 'luxury' but were unable to consider or explain the idea in context using their own words.

(c) Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests his feelings as he learns to track tigers.

Use your own words in your explanation.

My first days felt like shedding one layer of skin and growing into another. As you track a tiger, the language of the jungle envelopes you in its folds. You're alert to the tension in every rustling leaf, in every impression on the ground. Animal tracks whisper stories of the night. You're a jungle detective seeking clues of tigers having padded past.

In **Question 2(c)**, those candidates who focused clearly on using one example taken from the text extract as instructed were best placed to demonstrate their understanding. Effective answers often began with an explanation of meaning(s) in context, ahead of going on to explain what the meaning(s) suggested in relation to Val's feelings as he learns to track tigers. Those making the most efficient use of time often identified their example by underlining it in the text of the question or using it as a subheading for their explanation. Effective responses often centred their answer around the image of '**shedding one layer of skin and growing into another**' and were able to exploit their chosen example to good effect to suggest something of the natural growth and/or change implied. Other strong responses focused on the overwhelming and all-encompassing feeling of being 'enveloped' when considering the example the '**language of the jungle envelopes you in its folds'.** The best had often discussed the meaning of the word(s) 'language' and/or 'folds' too and what those words might suggest (for example that Val feels he needs to learn to understand to interpret signs, details and information in his surroundings). Many choosing the phrase '**a jungle detective seeking clues**' were able to comment simply and in general terms on the excitement it suggested, though fewer had considered or explained the meaning of individual words within this choice and missed opportunities to target higher marks through more comprehensive explanation as a result.

Most successful responses had carefully noted the number of marks available and focused their response to make three distinct points in relation to their one chosen example. Less successful responses often attempted to discuss more than one example – time that might have been more

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profitably spent in **Question 2(d)** where there were up to 15 marks available. Some less effective responses did not pay careful attention to the instruction to select from the given extract and attempted unwisely to paraphrase the whole extract and/or discuss it in very general terms. On occasion, opportunities were missed to offer evidence of understanding through circular answers that simply repeated the language of the text.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 2 and 10.

- **Paragraph 2 begins 'In those days …' and is about the town of SM.**
- **Paragraph 10 begins 'Visiting research-scientists …' and is about Noon and the writer's feelings about this tiger.**

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

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of six relevant selections – three from each paragraph – often beginning by explaining literal meaning and then moving on to consider effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language through detailed discussion of sharply focused choices centred around images, individual words or phrases. Where candidates had considered all of the key words in slightly longer choices they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses.

Some candidates used their choices as sub-headings for developed explanations to good effect, though candidates responding in note form were less well placed to demonstrate understanding fully and often offered only partially effective or thin explanation as a result. Similarly, those relying on repeating the language of the text within their explanations missed opportunities to target higher marks. The strongest responses considered words within their choices individually, as well as suggesting how they worked within the longer phrase and/or in the context of the description as a whole. Rather than selecting the first three choices in each half they came across, or the most 'obvious' literary devices, successful responses often set out to identify those relevant selections that they felt best able to explain. Some of the strongest responses explored how their judiciously selected choices worked both individually and together to influence the reader's impression, building to an overview. Responses at level 5 frequently showed imagination and precision when discussing images, for example in relation to the 'garish hotel chains' that were 'yet to sprout' and the (images that) 'remain etched on [Val's] mind'.

In relation to paragraph 2, many answers identified 'still figments of shiny future ambition' as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the sense of economic success ahead for the town that it indicated and some going on to connect this to 'the mushrooming' of hotel buildings and 'chattering tourists'. Some of the best answers detected some hesitancy and/or sense of nostalgia for the earlier time in the word 'shiny' when considered alongside 'garish' and were able to offer an effective alternative explanation to those who interpreted the changes to the town as wholly positive. Candidates are reminded that alternative, valid responses can be credited – where they can see more than one possible interpretation they can offer these as evidence of their understanding of how language can work.

Limiting their comments to an explanation of just one word within longer choices meant some candidates offered partially effective explanations only: for example, not all considered the word 'pleasant' alongside 'obsession' and many weaker answers dealing with this popular choice did little more than repeat /replay the wording of the text to assert that Val was obsessed with the tiger. Others explained 'slicing' in literal terms only – comparing it to cutting with a knife – without going on to consider how that related to Noon's movement through the water and the impression created.

Some mid-range answers offered more careful selection and explanation in one half of their response than the other – often repeating words such as 'erupting' and 'remain'(ing) when discussing paragraph 10 rather than finding synonyms to evidence understanding of meaning. Some more general comments around Val's mental images / memories of his relationship with Noon missed opportunities to consider the distinct meanings of 'summon up' and 'etched'. Many candidates were able to explain that 'sprawled' referred to the unplanned layout of the town, though fewer considered 'sleepy' in terms of the town itself. Some paid little attention to how the words were being used in context, offering completely unrelated suggestions that could not be supported

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by reading the text: for example, 'the town had nothing but a messy railway track and the people slept all the time instead of cleaning it up and making it a better place to live.' Those offering evidence of understanding at higher levels were often able to go on to consider how 'sleepy' and 'sprawled' worked together: for example, that the town back then was more (or too) relaxed and unconcerned about its image.

Some candidates reasonably selected words within longer choices separately: for example, highlighting 'grew' and 'pleasant obsession' as two choices - though not all explored or explained these separate elements fully. Some selected words that they had not understood: for example, 'garish' was often presented as a positive. The least successful answers to **2(d)** offered inappropriate comments such as 'The writer uses words brilliantly to help the reader imagine they are there'. This kind of empty, generic comment is unlikely to be a useful starting point for discussion of how language is working in a particular given section of the text and can create a false sense of security, meaning candidates move on without saying anything more concrete to evidence their understanding. Satisfactory responses offered a clear explanation of the literal meaning of each example they had chosen, whilst stronger answers touched on effect. Candidates working at higher levels were often able to visualise images, using explanation of precise meaning / what you could 'see/hear happening' in context as the starting point for their explanation of effect. Weaker responses often only labelled devices and/or offered no more than a generic explanation of the writer's reasons for using them.

Repetition of the vocabulary of the text to communicate ideas in the explanations offered was common in less effective responses: in particular, 'few' 'closeness', 'obsession' and 'boasted' were often repeated. Candidates are reminded of the need to ensure that their explanations in **Question 2(d)** are in their own words and can be clearly understood. Whilst the task does not assess writing skills, encouraging candidates to explore their choices fully and operate at the very edges of their vocabulary, it is nevertheless important that candidates read back their explanations to check that what they have written is what they mean and evidences their understanding. For example, some candidates referred to 'fragments' rather than 'figments' and offered inappropriate comments as a result.

In **Question 2(d)**, it is the quality of the analysis when considering how language is being used 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. 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 unlikely to be useful and/or result in very thin general comments at best. Opportunities were missed in a small number of answers where choices were from one paragraph only. Some of the least effective answers to **Question 2(d)** appeared to have been answered last and were very brief, generalised and/or incomplete. The most successful answers were often able to 'talk their reader through' their understanding of words within relevant choices, considering different possibilities of meaning, associations and connotations, ahead of arriving at an understanding of how and why these particular words might have been used by the writer in this context.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- make sure that the quotations you select from the text are precise; do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- copy words and choices correctly from the text
- in each part of 2a make sure that your selection is from Text C and is clearly identified; remember you are looking for a word or phrase, not a whole sentence
- in 2b be careful that your explanation is consistent with how the word is used in context
- in 2c try to say three separate things about your one chosen example
- in 2d, choose 3 examples from each of the two specified paragraphs (6 choices in total)
- where you are trying to explain meaning, read your answer back to check that your explanation makes sense
- when explaining how language is working avoid empty comments such as 'the writer helps us to imagine the scene': you need to say how your chosen example does this to show your understanding
- make sure your explanations deal with each of the key words within an identified choice separately as well as how they work together
- when you are unsure how to explain the effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice and work from there

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

Question 3

You are Fateh. Following the release of Val's book about his experiences at Ranthambore and the work you have both been doing there, you are interviewed for a national television show.

The interviewer asks you the following three questions only:

- **What does Ranthambore offer visitors; what might our viewers like about Ranthambore if they visited and what sort of thing could they do there?**
- **Can you tell us about the various different people and animals associated with Ranthambore and how you feel they and you have contributed to Ranthambore's success?**
- **Ranthambore is located near SM. How and why has SM changed since 1976?**

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

Begin your interview with the first question.

Having worked through **Question 2** and already familiarised themselves with Text C, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to think their way into the attitude, opinions and memories of Fateh, Ranthambore's park warden, as distinct from those of Val, the narrator. The question offered candidates three questions in the bullets to help them identify relevant ideas in relation to what the park now had to offer, those who had contributed to its success over the years and how the nearby town of SM had changed during that time. Where candidates paid attention to the guidance in the task and introduction around timescales and different locations they were best able to use and develop ideas in their answer to show that they had read the text closely and understood.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the narrative and task in at least general terms, though there were some who overlooked key features / information in their responses to the interviewer's questions; for example, by not mentioning Val, Noon, or even tigers, at all. Many others had engaged with both task and text to offer competent or better responses, evidencing some evaluation and interpreting ideas from the perspective of the experienced warden Fateh who from the beginning had had ambitions for the park. Where candidates had paid careful and equal attention to each of the questions they were often able to develop ideas (explicit and implicit) from the text to create a convincing voice for the character of Fateh.

Whilst the task guidance specified that only these three questions were asked, some answers added further exchanges between the host and interviewee. On occasion this did help to demonstrate awareness of suitable register / orientate at the beginning of a response but ran the risk of taking the focus away from the text itself: for example, where answers became overly concerned with introducing advert breaks / pleasantries that added little evidence of reading. Other responses attempted to rely on just tracking back through the text, replaying the passage from Val's point of view, meaning answers were less well placed to offer Fateh's perspective and target higher marks. Such mechanical answers often also became over reliant on the language of the text to communicate ideas – signalling insecure understanding of both task and text.

The least successful responses copied sections of text with minimal modification and/or included inaccuracies as a result of misreading of key details and information. The most convincing responses to **Question 3** indicated that candidates had revisited the passage to carefully examine the details of Val's account and make judgements based on the evidence in the text about how things had changed since the time of his first visit.

The first question invited candidates to revisit the information in the text about Ranthambore, selecting from Val's description those details relevant to the present day appeal of the place for visitors: for example, the films that 'still fascinated' visitors 'today', the tiger reserve itself, the lakes and the wilderness/jungle. Stronger answers considered carefully how Val's own experience on his initial visit would be different to that of tourists

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visiting now: for example, picking up on the suggestion that rules now kept visitors safe and that accompanying a more experienced tracker might be possible but was not routinely offered. Suggestions that tourists on a day/short trip would be able to perfect their skills to track tigers themselves or could see white-backed vultures in real life were not in line with suggestions in the text. Likewise, some candidates sometimes wandered from the text, for example listing other animals such as elephants, lions and koalas that visitors could see. A good number did develop the idea of seeing tigers in their natural habitat as appealing, but sometimes included ideas from the other texts and discussed mistreatment of tigers at the expense of evidencing their reading skills in relation to Text C. Invention of attractions such as exciting water slides, lovely restaurants, picnic areas and hot tubs were not in line with the text and suggested that a few candidates had lost sight of both text and task.

Bullet 2 required candidates to identify and comment on the various characters – people and/or animals – associated with Ranthambore who had contributed to Ranthambore's success. Most mid-range answers included reference to Val, Fateh and Noon, with stronger answers often also referencing the research scientists and more occasionally the celebrities. Effective responses sometimes developed the descriptions of murals at the station, created by local painters, in their answer to the third question and could be credited accordingly.

When answering the third question many candidates were able to offer a good range of ways in which SM had changed, though not all made the distinction between Ranthambore as presented in the passage and the separate location of SM, missing opportunities for secure supporting detail and development as a result. A few only wrote about the SM of 1976 and never got round to discussing the changes since then.

The best answers showed evidence that candidates had planned their ideas before writing, considering which bullet the information they had identified best suited. They navigated time shifts in the text and task particularly effectively and were often able to develop Fateh's sense of pride in his/their achievements as he answered the interviewer's questions. Where candidates had not identified and planned ideas in advance, they often overlooked details for bullet one that came later in the text, and/or confused time scales; for example to suggest that there was just one place for visitors to stay (the guesthouse), that Noon could be seen with cubs or that travel from the station was by horse-drawn carriage only.

On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of an interview with most either providing Fateh's answers only or adding only minimal extra dialogue from the programme's imagined host – both of which worked well as approaches. Many looked to create a sense of natural conversation which worked well when the answer remained focused on using relevant ideas from the text, though a few candidates wrote out a playscript, complete with stage directions and/or spent considerable time welcoming studio audiences, and/or advertising next week's show. Whilst setting the scene for the interview was outside the passage and task, and candidates should be wary of moving too far away from the text by doing so, short orientations focused on introducing Fateh, the nature of his links to the park and Val were used to good effect by some candidates both as a way to think themselves into the context and as a means of offering relevant development. On occasion, stronger answers were able to carefully develop points relevant to the text and integrate supporting details through more extended contributions and reactions of the host during the body of the interview, though some less successful answers were drawn away from the text and evidence of reading by their attempts to reproduce TV hosts they were familiar with and/or overlong preambles which diluted Fateh's voice / limited his contributions.

On occasion, unforced errors with punctuation and grammar detracted from otherwise stronger writing – resulting for example in some awkward expression or loss of clarity. 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 that the register sounds appropriate. Where responses lapsed into more mechanical reproductions of ideas and/or tended towards lifting, the audience had often been forgotten and opportunities to use language convincingly were overlooked. In the least effective answers, lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of whole sections of text not uncommon in these responses. This affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills. Meanwhile, answers at the top end were often presented in a polite, relaxed and reflective style.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- remember to base your answer on the ideas and details you find in Text C
- keep the audience and purpose for your response in mind throughout your answer
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage; look for the clues and evidence in the text to help you make judgements about characters and situations

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- 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 so make sure you have covered all aspects of each bullet
- 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.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

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

To achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise responses effectively to persuade, discuss ideas and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- adapt their style and structure for different audiences, purposes and genres
- 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

Almost all candidates understood and responded appropriately to both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Instructions for the examination were also widely understood and most candidates attempted Question 1 and either a descriptive or narrative writing task, although a few candidates only responded to one question on the paper. Some responses to descriptive questions were more narrative in intent than descriptive and although Examiners credited description wherever possible, some responses showed misunderstanding of how descriptive writing differs from narrative. **Question 1** responses were written mostly in candidates' own words, but a number were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert. This seriously limited the marks that could be awarded for both Reading and Writing.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and some engagement with the topic of the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a letter written to a known figure of authority and most candidates reflected this formal relationship in the style and register of their letter. Lapses in formal expression, missing valedictions or sentences copied from the texts were characteristic of less effective responses, as well as inconsistent accuracy.

Most candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages, although many included short phrases from the texts. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response which argued consistently throughout. Effective responses showed some ability to probe and challenge the views given in the texts as well as give the candidate's own opinion about whether fidget gadgets should be permitted in the classroom.

In the middle of the mark range, responses tended to reproduce the points made in the texts, sometimes with a little personal opinion given at the end, with some beginning to evaluate. Many at this level made suggestions about how fidget gadgets could be incorporated into school life. Some of these solutions showed a thoughtful grasp of the conflicting ideas in the texts while others were less evaluative, such as the suggestion that gadgets should be used at breaktimes when a closer reading of the texts would suggest they would not be necessary outside the classroom.

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Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. In some responses at this level, this resulted in a contradictory response in which the evidence in favour or against the efficacy of fidget gadgets was given in the same sequence as it appeared in the texts, without real comment. Others produced summaries of what each text said with less secure understanding of how to select ideas to create a reasoned argument.

For the Writing mark, there was often a clear attempt made to adapt the style and register to reflect the relationship between writer and recipient of the letter. In most cases, some understanding was shown of how letters are structured and how ideas are presented in them. In some, the careful use of rhetoric such as questioning or exclamations helped to convince and persuade. The most effective responses paid specific attention to the audience and style required for the task. These were lively and persuasive but consistently formal, often respectful, in tone. Most in the middle range of marks wrote in a more straightforward style and there was less focus on scrutinising the ideas in the texts. Less effective responses relied more on the sequence of the points made in the texts with less selection and reordering of ideas from the originals. This sometimes resulted in contradictory ideas, weak paragraphing and less cohesive responses.

In ***Section B***, 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 engaging and sustained, especially for the first descriptive writing question. The idea of a street which had 'changed over time' was interpreted in some responses as the changes observed as night falls or at different times in the year, such as before and after the monsoon season. Many effective responses described quite poignantly how a street remembered from childhood had been transformed by modern life. These interpretations were valid and many evoked a clear sense of place which was specific and detailed. In the second task, the ways in which people 'have become stuck' and the settings where this had happened were also very varied. There were some very claustrophobic elevators and lifts, lonely rural landscapes and various modes of transport. Effective description of these scenes often focused on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator as well as details of the surroundings and observations of other people. Some less successful responses to this question were clearly intended as narratives rather than descriptions, often focused on recounting how a group had become stuck and how they got out of the situation. Examiners sometimes found only limited descriptive content to reward. Less effective responses to both questions tended to become dominated by events or lengthy narrative preambles to set the scene rather over-balanced the focus of the task. In both questions, 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 were characterised by a lack of descriptive detail and a tendency to narrate rather than describe.

The best narrative writing engaged the reader with well-drawn and interesting characters and scenarios which were well-prepared. Both narrative questions elicited a very wide range of approaches and examiners awarded marks in all Levels here. Effective and engaging responses to the first question sometimes interpreted the 'dark mountain' in figurative ways, as a manifestation of psychological turmoil or fear, though the majority involved some adventure on a literal mountain. Less effective responses focused on rather ordinary series of events, such as a trek with friends in which there was limited sense of drama or jeopardy. The second narrative question elicited response with many varied interpretations of a 'plan which goes wrong', from ambitious science fiction plotlines to more straightforward school or friendship stories. Less effective narratives tended to become a series of events which, while relevant to the task, were not developed, engaging narratives.

In some narrative writing responses, several candidates used a prepared story which seemed imposed on the task and not always relevant to it. In some cases **Question 1** responses in the same scripts showed a range of skills and abilities which may have resulted in more successful narrative responses than what was submitted. For marks in Level 4 for Content and Structure, 'relevant content' is required and prepared stories did not always help candidates to do well in ***Section B***.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The headteacher of your school or college is considering whether or not to allow learners to use fidget gadgets in lessons. Write a letter to the headteacher giving your views.

In your letter you should:
- **evaluate the ideas, opinions and attitudes in both texts**
- **give your own views about the possible effects on learners and teachers of allowing fidget gadgets to be used in lessons.**

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

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.

The task required candidates to consider and evaluate the ideas in both texts and to convince the head teacher of their school that fidget gadgets should or should not become a feature of classroom life in the school. 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.

More effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which addressed and evaluated the most salient ideas about how fidgety people learn compared with those who do not fidget and whether schools should accept that fidget toys could be useful to such people in the classroom.

The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised determined the Level and mark awarded for Reading. These implicit ideas often involved, for example, the idea that since fidgeting is innate to some people and cannot be controlled, fidget toys should be considered a necessary aid to learning, even a student's right in a school that has a duty to teach everyone. In responses given marks in Level 5 and 6 for Reading, examiners often rewarded some thoughtful consideration of how to balance the apparently conflicting needs of different students, those who learn best without distraction and those for whom distraction is necessary. In Text A, for example, the idea that fidget toys could help to relieve stress was developed by some candidates who argued that schools had a duty to create a learning environment which was safe for all students or that teachers who found fidget toys irritating probably found all forms of fidgeting annoying because they did not understand its function. In Text B, the teacher whose opinions were expressed here was often viewed sympathetically but with some argument that if lessons were not so 'tedious' students would have less need of fidget gadgets to keep them on track. Other responses focused on the responsibility of teachers and parents to discriminate between students who really needed such gadgets and those who were simply caught up in the latest fad.

The evidence given in Text A for the function and nature of fidgeting also required some probing for responses to be awarded marks in Level 5 and 6. Some candidates cast doubt on the use of fidget gadgets to alleviate fidgeting when the claims made seemed contradictory. Something which could both calm and energise bored or anxious students was considered doubtful by some candidates and others saw the implications of this as impossible to manage in a classroom. The marketing of such gadgets with a teenage audience in mind was sometimes considered as cynical and in other responses as a clever, inexpensive way to meet the needs of a neglected and denigrated proportion of the school population. Equality of access to education and inclusivity was often cited in carefully evaluated responses as a reason to allow fidget gadgets.

In Text B, more effective responses challenged the rather pejorative tone used by the teacher here and the assumptions made in the text that the needs of students who couldn't be trusted with fidget toys or whose learning would inevitably be disrupted by their use in class should be considered more pressing than those who might benefit from fidget toys. Some tackled the implication that such gadgets were merely a fad or trend by suggesting that if that was the case, it would all soon subside, leaving only those students who found them beneficial still using them and therefore banning them was unnecessary and cruel. Similarly, as one candidate explained, '*Since fidgeters who can't help their fidgeting will find other ways to fidget if their*

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toys are banned, teachers will be fighting a losing battle against stressed students who can't engage with the work. Why wouldn't this teacher want engaged and interested students to teach?'

The listed examples of potential benefits in using fidget toys in Text A required some probing, rather than summarising, for marks in the higher Levels. For example, the idea that fidgeting is a trait which cannot be changed suggested for some candidates that fidget toys were unnecessary and were indeed just a marketing success for commercial interests who had created a distraction which had previously been contained and limited in classrooms. For others, the claims made for the efficacy of the toys were contradictory and unverifiable and some were far-fetched, such as the idea that weight loss could be encouraged by their use. As one candidate wrote: '*Those calories are much better spent on healthy, outdoor activities, not on mitigating the effects of a boring, sedentary life*.' The rights of teachers were carefully considered in thoughtful responses given marks in the higher Levels. In some cases, it was argued that teachers needed to educate themselves and their students about fidgeting and why it was necessary for some students. Teachers' responsibility to make lessons less stressful, boring or taxing was also seen by some as a better way to cope with fidgeting than fidget toys, while others acknowledged this but argued that students needed to learn how to keep themselves engaged without causing distraction to others as a life-skill that would apply to many situations, such as taking examinations or attending business meetings.

These kinds of explanations and extensions of the ideas in the texts were more evaluative than a simple opinion or summary and warranted marks in Level 5 or above. However, responses in which a range of such evaluations were made, or ideas in the texts were assimilated to create a highly evaluative critique were less common and there were few Level 6 responses for Reading.

Responses given marks in the middle range – in Level 4 and lower Level 5 – tended to be more straightforward, with some reflection and comment on the benefits of fidget gadgets in Text A and often some opinion about the teacher's point of view in Text B. Marks in Level 5 were given where some comments amounted to 'some successful evaluation'. Most common here, where there was just enough evaluation for 10, were comments about the need for a method to decide which students would genuinely benefit from using fidget gadgets and which would not, which showed some understanding of implicit ideas. Some solutions and opinions offered did make use of implicit ideas whereas some did not: for example, many responses suggested that such devices should only be used at breaktimes or that teachers should confiscate them from people who used them inappropriately. These ideas, while offering some development from the texts, sometimes missed the salient details in the reading material. In some responses, however, these kinds of comments were enough for examiners to award a mark in Level 5, providing there was some specific focus rather than generalisations about whether fidgeting itself should be discouraged or allowed.

Responses given marks in Level 4 often showed an understanding of the main ideas in the texts and offered a straightforward summary of the ideas in them without examining some of them more closely to address the question. Examiners also noted that the focus of the comments was more general and missed some of the implications of the ideas in the texts. In Text A, for example, some responses reflected that fidget gadgets could both energise and calm students but there was no comment made on this claim. In Text B, the more negative, sceptical tone of the teacher was often reflected but the contradiction between this writer's views and those in Text A was missed and a less cohesive response was created as a result. Where candidates reproduced the points made in both texts, there was less critical awareness of the writers' arguments and points of view.

Less effective responses, given marks in lower Level 4 or below, 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. There was some conflation of fidgeting and the use of fidget gadgets. 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 resulted in contradictory or disconnected responses. Responses at this level were also poorly adapted for a letter with awkward references to 'Text A' or 'Text B' which showed some lack of awareness of what knowledge the intended recipient of the letter had. Ideas were sometimes summarised with very limited conclusions or comments on them which made it difficult for Examiners to award marks above Level 4.

A small number of weaker responses, given marks below Level 4, were almost totally reliant on lifting or copying from the texts, where there was little of the candidate's own words in the response and the task was not understood. This inevitably resulted in low marks for both Reading and Writing.

Marks for writing

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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

Across the ability range, an appropriate, formal standard English allowed examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Although not always sustained, many letters began with an opening paragraph introducing the writer as a pupil in the school, or occasionally the parent of a pupil, and the topic of the letter. Some enlivened their style with anecdotal or rhetorical content. One letter, for example, began with an engaging introduction which showed a clear understanding of audience: '*You won't be surprised to hear that I am in favour of fidget gadgets for pupils like myself who are often in trouble and waiting outside your office for scolding on a weekly basis for tapping my feet, wriggling in my seat or generally being a nuisance*.' This technique, successfully used by some candidates at Level 4 and above, was to write in the voice of a student who themselves suffered from fidgeting and could therefore speak with some experience. As one wrote, '*It can be very harmful to criticise young people who are only trying their best but simply cannot keep still*.' In other responses, candidates wrote about their classmates whose constant fidgeting was irritating and affected their concentration detrimentally.

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 the specific audience rather than summarise the content of the texts in a straightforward way could sometimes compensate for other elements of style such as weak spelling or insecure grammar. Conversely, there were many responses which were accurate in the main but showed limited adaptation of style from the original texts to suit the style, context and register of a letter to a head teacher, reducing the effectiveness of the response.

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 letter. While most responses to varying degrees worked their way through the ideas in the texts, less effective responses tended to refer to the texts as Text A and B with limited grasp of what the intended audience knew or understood and the style showed less awareness of how letters are constructed.

Structure

As mentioned above, responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged was clearly derived from the ideas in the texts but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the conflicting points made in the texts were addressed but the whole response was made cohesive by a persuasive argument. The central debate about the rights of different learners in a classroom was grasped from the start and the ideas in the texts were organised as arguments and counter-arguments in a coherent letter. The argument being pursued determined the sequence of ideas in these responses rather than the sequence of the original texts.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. This often avoided the clashing of contradictory points from each text. Many used the bullet points in the question to help structure their responses, with an introduction and a conclusion and valediction which reflected the kind of relationship a school or college student would have with their head teacher. Some responses aimed for an ending which challenged the head teacher appropriately, sometimes with a little rhetoric: '*I know you want to provide the best education for ALL students in your school, not just those who learn in an acceptable manner. This is your chance to prove it*.' An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more tied to the sequencing of the texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording or some phrases were lifted from the texts. Letters often began appropriately but lost the register and form of a letter before the end.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled as well as appropriate in tone and register was given a writing mark in Level 6 for Writing. These responses were often engaging and showed a strong awareness of audience but were also fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely

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selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used, often rhetorically, to engage the reader.

Some complex sentence structures were chosen which conveyed with some subtlety the contending views in the texts and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though perhaps 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 plain, the language used was apt and generally accurate. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. Common misspellings at this level included some words from the texts, such as 'gadget', 'fidget' and there was some copying of phrases and sentences which could not be credited as the candidate's own style. Other errors such as the incorrect use of homophones and the omission of definite and indefinite articles tended to affect fluency in Level 4 and below.

Faulty sentence structures, fluctuating tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Level 4. Tense and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was so extensively copied that responses 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 the ideas in the reading texts
- always justify and explain the reasons why you agree or disagree as this shows evidence of evaluation
- make sure the ideas you use are derived from the passage
- aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them
- think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the texts.

Section B

Descriptive Writing

2 Describe a street which has changed over time.

3 Write a description of a group of people who have become stuck somewhere.

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates and were interpreted in a wide variety of ways. In the first task, many kinds of streets were described. These included many streets remembered from childhood and revisited after many years, busy city streets at different times of the week or day and some streets described during different seasons of the year. All these interpretations were acceptable and valid and most made good use of the contrast implied in the question to provide details to highlight how the street had changed over time. Occasionally, the preamble to the description of the street, the journey to it and why it was undertaken, tended to outweigh with narrative the description of the street itself. However, in many responses where the focus on detail was consistent, examiners awarded some very high marks for this question.

This tendency to narrative and lack of specific detail was also evident in some responses to the second question, perhaps more frequently seen here by examiners than in the first question. The range of scenarios in which people became 'stuck' was very varied, though where the situation was short-lived, as in the many responses in which people were stuck in lifts, this tendency to narrative was kept in check. People becoming stuck in cars and buses while on a journey, or in some lonely location without a phone signal, often involved more narrative introductions and timelines, though this was not always the case.

Some effective responses to the first question created an engaging atmosphere from the start as the narrator observed their surroundings. Returning to a childhood location after a long time was a common scenario and responses which created a strong sense of nostalgia often worked well. In some highly effective responses,

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small details were compared between the past and the present, evoking a sense of a carefree childhood in a poor, undeveloped area which had since been modernised. Some complex and ambivalent emotions were sometimes depicted with subtlety in these pieces as the writer remembered events, sense impressions and people from the past. Street food smells conjured up from the past, along with familiar, friendly faces were sometimes contrasted effectively with sophisticated restaurants and anonymous but gleaming food outlets. The laughter or mischief of young children playing on the street in the past was described in one response to have been '*stolen by the sound of traffic clogging the street*.'

In other responses, a street remembered from childhood was remembered much less fondly and details focused on the poverty and hardship of the past were contrasted with the cleanliness and beauty of the present environment: '*The new little houses on either side of the street gleamed in the hot sun, their pristine yards dotted with trees*.' In some responses, a street which had been ruined by weather or conflict rather than modernisation sometimes created a poignantly nostalgic atmosphere. As usual in descriptive writing, the choice of details and closely observed images helped to conjure a sense of place. In one effective description, the writer's thoughts and feelings were described as they left a street in ruins, after some sort of unnamed disaster, for the last time. The response closed with, '*I took the turning towards the railway station, careful not to look back at the devastation behind me under which was buried my childhood dreams, my family's love and my hopes for the future*.' These effective responses were characterised by a focus on detail and the conscious creation of a clear, though sometimes subtle atmosphere which evoked a strong sense of place.

The second question was less often selected than the first but, for some candidates, proved a good vehicle to show their skills. The range of different scenarios in which people became stuck, and the range of people observed, was very wide but as mentioned above a shorter time scale often helped to produce a sharply focused description. There were several responses in which lifts malfunctioned or rooms could not be exited, and this gave plenty of opportunities for detailed descriptions of a group of people who responded in different ways to the situation. In one quite frightening description, the panic induced by a stuck lift was viscerally described: 'Her child pulled on her dress, totally oblivious to his surroundings but whimpering with terror as his mother slumped against the glass wall of the lift struggling to breathe. Her fear was palpable.' The boredom of time spent in such a confined space, the fear of missing an important appointment or the mounting irritation felt by the writer towards the people thrown together in such circumstances were all depicted with some skill and effectiveness at the highest levels.

Other scenarios where people became stuck offered opportunities for humour or bathos, as in the case of one group who became stuck in a small tent at night, listening to the sounds of a creature outside. The imaginings of the writer about the creature were deliberately overblown and hyperbolically described, only for a domestic cat to be revealed at the end. While there was some narration here to achieve the intending conclusion, the focus on the thoughts and feelings of the writer was clearly descriptive and effective in creating the fevered atmosphere inside the tent.

Level 5 responses to both questions used a wide range of details and were well-constructed, although were less consistently effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but were usually a little more predictable or drifted into narrative. In the second question, for example, long preambles about a group of friends setting out on a trip together tended to overshadow the descriptive elements. The characters were often named but not really described. In the first question the contrasting elements of the street in the past and the present were more mechanically organised with some repetitive structures.

For Content and Structure, responses given marks in Level 4 tended to become narrative quite quickly, especially in the second question. In some responses to both questions, overlong preambles often gave way to more specific description though the description sometimes became a more straightforward list of what was seen and heard. 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 or were simple narratives about camping trips or streets which had changed because of some event which was recounted.

Responses which had little descriptive content were more frequently submitted for the second question than the first and occasionally there was evidence that the difference between narrative and descriptive writing was not understood. Where responses were largely descriptive at this level, details were listed and paragraphing was insecure or not used. Brevity or a lack of cohesion also limited the marks examiners could award at this level.

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High marks for Style and Accuracy reflected the precise and varied vocabulary, used carefully to achieve specific effects, as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, highly rewarded responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to evoke atmosphere and engage the reader. Highly effective responses showed an ability to use both simple and complex language and sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres of, for example, tranquillity or chaos. In less effective responses, vocabulary was sometimes wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide ranging vocabulary was lost by imprecise and inappropriate use. More plain, clichéd or repetitive vocabulary was often characteristic of Level 4 marks.

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, although this error was less evident than in previous series. 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, especially between pronouns and verbs, and fluctuations in tenses which created an awkward style lacking in fluency, even where other elements were accurate, such as spelling or sentence construction.

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 without telling a story
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a particular atmosphere
- write sentences with proper verbs and do not switch tenses
- use vocabulary precisely: complex words used wrongly do not help your style.

Narrative Writing

4 Write a story with the title, ‘The dark mountain.’

5 Write a story that involves a plan that goes wrong.

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plotlines, characters and scenarios in these responses, based on valid interpretations of the questions. Effective responses given high marks by examiners, were well organised and often original interpretations of the questions which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative, to produce moments of tension or drama, to vary the pace of the story and create well-rounded characters were elements of the ‘features of fiction writing’ credited by examiners. In the first question, responses given higher marks for Content and Structure were often tightly structured, sometimes original interpretations of the title in the question. The ‘dark mountain’ was sometimes figurative or symbolic of some aspect of the protagonist’s mind, such as depression or a phobia or something which prevented them from succeeding in some enterprise. A character’s struggle with anxiety was the main idea in one effective response, with the ‘dark mountain’ interpreted as an obstacle to achieving the goal of speaking out against injustice. The metaphor was sustained throughout though with some subtlety.

Other interesting stories involved more literal interpretations of the title but were nonetheless quite complex and credible portrayals of characters and settings. Fantasy or science fiction genres sometimes featured, suggested by the mystery of the ‘dark mountain’ and often maintaining the style, ideas and features of the genre convincingly. In one fantasy story, the warring armies of two nations fought to gain control of the mountain so that a royal heir imprisoned in a cave could be released. More conventional backdrops were equally engaging, however, in responses given high marks. Two old friends who met after some years to climb the mountain as they had done as children was the premise that developed into a close study of past resentments and jealousies within the relationship, for example.

There were also some very effective narratives to address the alternative narrative question. The ‘plan that goes wrong’ was interpreted in many different ways and provided the plot was credible and the characters well-rounded, Examiners could award high marks here. Most of these were chronologically organised stories though there was some more ambitious structuring of the narrative. There were, across the mark range, many bank heists and robberies though some effective ones involved plot twists which had been signalled but were yet unexpected. One member of a gang which robbed a bank turned out to be a police informer or a double-crosser, for example, and in more effective responses these ideas had been planted early by some

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careful characterisation. Other responses began with characters looking back ruefully on a criminal enterprise from prison or sometimes from somewhere they had escaped to. This structure, in the hands of a skilful writer, sometimes gave opportunities for a more considered characterisation and a more engaging narrative.

More small-scale, domestic settings were sometimes equally successful and engaging, especially those which employed humour or a self-deprecating portrayal of a hapless 'planner' whose attempts at organising a surprise party or some other event were thwarted. There were some genuinely funny responses, such as one in which a brother planned to return after years away from home as a surprise for his young sister's birthday, only to find that the sister was no longer a little girl and the last thing she wanted was an older brother spoiling her fun: '*The look of bored contempt on her face as I stood there in all my regalia holding a balloon and a box of sweets told me all I needed to know. She had no more need of a big brother than she did of a balloon*.'

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually a little more straightforward in structure and approach but cohesive and with some engaging features. 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, relevant to the task. Responses in this range were usually chronological accounts but were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some resolution. There were many which involved bank heists or treks up the dark mountain with a group of friends, but where credible characters and settings were created, examiners could award marks in Level 5. Effective characterisation of the protagonist or narrator was often a factor in examiners selecting a mark in Level 5 rather than Level 4. While some Level 5 narratives were a little predictable, stories needed to be well-managed with some conscious shaping of the narrative beyond a simple retelling of events. In responses to the first question, for example, some sense of jeopardy was created in most narratives at this Level, either by an accident or some other moment of drama. In the second question, Level 5 responses were usually chronological accounts but where the main character or characters were credible and their actions and motivations were made clear.

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 developed narrative writing. At this level, stories were often more dependent on a series of events, without the preparation of setting and character to engage the reader. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. Similar plots and scenarios were often used as those in more effective narratives but the narratives were less effective in engaging the reader. For **Question 4**, for example, treks undertaken with a group of friends were just as common but at Level 4 the characters were often named but not described or their personalities explored. In **Question 5** responses, this was shown in many responses where a simple list of people in a gang were described briefly in epithets or very briefly: '*Jet was the cool one so he broke the safes, Faisal was the techy geek so he dealt with the computers and Ishmael was the nervy one that looked out for any trouble*.' While most less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative and the reader was less engaged as a result.

Responses given marks in Level 4 and lower were usually simple accounts of events and showed limited awareness of the reader or the features of narrative writing which elevate an account into a developed story. While there was usually some relevance to the task selected, the plot was either very simple or confusing and characters lacked substance, often appearing only as names. Dialogue was either used very little or, occasionally, too much, with limited storytelling to help the reader make sense of events. Occasionally, responses at this level were pre-prepared stories, or stories from revision websites which had limited relevance to the question set. Responses which seemed to be based on questions set in previous examinations were also limited in relevance or were awkwardly adapted, limiting the mark Examiners could award for Content and Structure.

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 to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6. A sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary allowed examiners to consider the highest marks for Style and Accuracy. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate and largely fluent whereas Level 4 responses were plain in style and lacked some range and precision in vocabulary. At this level, the writing had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as weak sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors. Quite common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 responses, such as misagreements and some awkward use of prepositions. The correct punctuation of speech was rare below Level 5. Errors in sentence control and

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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 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, limiting the mark for Style and Accuracy. Weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed, was a common weakness in Level 4/low Level 5 writing, though the mixing of tenses and the use of incomplete sentences were perhaps more prevalent in the descriptive writing.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:

- think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative
- consider imaginative ways to structure your story, using time lapses or different narrators: these structures will need careful planning
- characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader; do not rely on events
- check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes
- choose your 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:

- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and context for each of the three assignments
- read critically and thoroughly evaluated the implicit and explicit ideas, opinions, and attitudes they 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 events and situations.
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of appropriate vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of argument, description, or narrative
- demonstrated a high level of accuracy in their writing
- engaged in a process of careful editing and proofreading to identify and correct errors in their writing.

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

- centres followed the guidelines and instructions set out in the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook
- 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 and helpful advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- following feedback, candidates revised and edited their first drafts to improve their writing
- candidates checked, revised, and edited their final drafts to identify and correct errors
- teachers provided marks and summative comments at the end of the final draft of each assignment which clearly related to the appropriate mark level descriptors
- teachers indicated all errors in the final drafts of each completed assignment
- centres engaged in a process of internal moderation and clearly indicated any mark adjustments in the coursework portfolios, on the Individual Record Cards, and on the Candidate Assessment Summary Forms.

General comments

A significant number of candidates produced interesting coursework portfolios which contained varied work across a range of contexts. There was evidence to show that many centres set tasks which allowed candidates flexibility to respond to subjects related to their personal interests or experiences. Most coursework portfolios contained writing of three different genres. There were few incomplete folders.

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Most centres provided the correct paperwork and completed all relevant forms accurately. Some centres provided summative comments closely related to the mark schemes at the end of each completed assignment. These were extremely helpful in helping moderators to understand how and why marks had been awarded and centres are thanked for following the process as instructed in the Coursework Handbook.

A major concern in this session was that some markers of the coursework portfolios did not indicate errors in the final draft of each assignment and/or provide a summative comment which referred to the marking level descriptors to justify the marks awarded. Failure to follow this process often resulted in inaccurate or inconsistent marking and was one of the main reasons for adjustment of marks.

Administration

Successful administration was when centres:

- indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment
- carried out a thorough process of internal moderation which was clearly signposted on the assignments themselves as well as on all relevant documentation
- supplied marks and specific comments relating to the mark schemes at the end of the final draft of each assignment
- accurately completed the Individual Candidate Record Forms (ICRF) and the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF), including any amendments made during internal moderation
- ensured that each coursework folder was securely stapled or tagged and attached to the Individual Candidate Record Card (ICRC)
- submitted their sample of coursework folders without using plastic or cardboard wallets.

Internal Moderation

Centres are expected to carry out internal moderation as directed in the Coursework Handbook. There was a general trend of greater accuracy of marking by centres where there was clear evidence of internal moderation than centres where no internal moderation process was evident on the coursework folders and documentation.

Some centres did not record changes made at internal moderation on the candidates' Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRCs) which caused some confusion about the final mark awarded to candidates. Centres are requested to ensure that any changes made at internal moderation are signposted clearly on the work itself then also recorded on the ICRC as well as on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF).

Using the coursework handbook

A cause of concern is that some moderation issues persist even though there are clear instructions in the Coursework Handbook, and the same concerns have been raised in previous Principal Moderator Reports. To ensure effective and accurate marking is achieved, and that all paperwork arrives safely for moderation, it is essential that all the instructions given in the Coursework Handbook, and on the relevant forms, are carefully followed.

Below highlights the three most significant issues related to the administration and annotation of candidates' work which led to mark adjustments following moderation:

1 Indicating all errors in the final version of each assignment

- Some of the assignments showed little or no evidence of complying with the instruction in the Coursework Handbook that markers should indicate all errors in the final draft of each assignment. This process helps markers to effectively and accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of work and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. If this process does not take place, it is difficult for markers to make a balanced judgement. In several centres there was evidence across all three assignments that markers had awarded marks from the higher levels of the assessment criteria to work containing frequent, and often serious, errors that had not been annotated by the marker. This inevitably led to a downward adjustment of marks by the moderator. It is important for all who mark the coursework portfolios to fully understand the importance of indicating and taking into account all errors in the final draft of each assignment.

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2 Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC)

- Some centres did not attach the portfolios of work to the ICRC in accordance with the instructions in the Coursework Handbook and point 4 on the electronic version of the ICRC.
- On some folders there were errors in the transcription of internally moderated mark changes, or it was unclear which mark was the final one. Where internal moderation has taken place, any mark changes should be transferred from the assignment to the ICRC to ensure that the moderator has a clear understanding of all mark changes.

3 Coursework portfolios

- Several centres used plastic wallets to present candidates' work as an alternative to securely attaching the individual assignments to the ICRC; this caused extra work for moderators and increased the risk of work being mislaid. Centres are requested not to place coursework folders into plastic or cardboard wallets.
- A few centres included more than one rough draft; this is unnecessary and can lead to confusion. Please ensure that the rough draft included is clearly labelled as a draft.
- Some rough drafts contained annotations and specific feedback; centres are reminded that when markers offer feedback on a rough draft, it should be general advice. No errors should be indicated, and the marker should not offer corrections or improvements.

Comments on specific assignments:

Assignment 1

Candidates were successful when:

- they responded to interesting texts which contained engaging content
- they demonstrated analysis and evaluation of the individual ideas and opinions identified within a text
- the form, purpose and intended audience of their writing was clear to the reader
- they wrote in a fluent, accurate and appropriate style.

Many candidates responded to texts which were of an appropriate length and challenge and which appealed to the interests of the candidates. Successful texts included articles exploring issues relevant to young people in which the writer expressed strong opinions; less successful texts were those which were of limited personal interest to the candidates, or those which were overly factual or informative. Texts selected for **Assignment 1** should be an appropriate length, explore ideas and offer opinions, and use rhetorical or literary devices designed to provoke or sustain the reader's interest to ensure that the text offers scope for candidates to fully engage and respond to it in a sustained piece of writing. Centres are encouraged to use a good range of relevant and up-to-date texts for **Assignment 1**. Other less successful texts were ones where the candidate fully endorsed the writer's views and opinions because they offered few opportunities for evaluation, as required by the mark scheme. It is also crucial to select texts for their quality of written communication: some centres submitted responses to poorly written texts taken from a variety of websites. Many of these were too long and tended to be informative, offering very little scope for rigorous evaluation or analysis.

If centres are unsure about how to approach and set tasks for **Assignment 1**, they can refer to the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Both documents provide advice and guidance about task setting and text selection and can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge website.

Reading

In this moderation session there was a significant trend for many centres to award marks for reading from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the middle-level assessment criteria. Candidates who successfully met the higher-level assessment criteria were those who demonstrated a consistently evaluative approach to most of the ideas and opinions in a text, and provided a developed, sophisticated response which made direct references to (or included quotes from) the text. Candidates who engaged in a general discussion about the topic or subject of a text, or those who did not thoroughly evaluate a text, tended to produce work which more appropriately met the Level 4 assessment criteria in Table B (reading). The most common reasons for adjustments to a centre's marks for reading were when

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moderators identified a trend of candidates engaging in a general discussion about the topic of a text/s, or when the number of points covered were 'appropriate' rather than 'thorough'.

Writing

Many candidates responded to texts in an appropriate form and style. Letters were the most popular choice of form, and many candidates demonstrated some understanding of audience and purpose. When candidates were less successful with writing, it was often because the form, intended audience and purpose of the task were not clear. This made it difficult for the candidates to meet the highest-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments to writing marks for **Assignment 1**. Successful responses to **Assignment 1** tasks were those in which the writing was highly effective, almost always accurate, and consistent throughout in the 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 or below, Table A (writing). In this session 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.

Another common reason for the adjustment of marks for writing was because of the accuracy of the candidates' writing. When errors impaired meaning, such as the incorrect construction of sentences or use of grammar, typing errors, or the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck, the overall quality and efficacy of the discussion was affected. Errors such as these are classed as serious and make it difficult for candidates to meet the higher-level assessment criteria; this type of writing is more characteristic of writing achieving marks from the middle to the lower levels of the assessment criteria. There was a tendency for centres to over-reward ambitious vocabulary that had some merit in its selection but was not always used precisely or effectively in the response.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:

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

Assignment 2 (description):

The majority of tasks set for **Assignment 2** were appropriate and encouraged candidates to write in a descriptive style. Many candidates wrote engaging and vivid descriptions from experience or their imaginations, which were a pleasure to read. There were a number of descriptive assignments which slipped into narrative accounts; this was sometimes due to the nature of the tasks set, such as describing an experience or holiday. This was quite often a reason for adjustment of marks from Table C (content and structure).

Centres are reminded to set descriptive tasks and remind candidates to avoid using narrative writing techniques in their responses.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those where 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. Successful responses included descriptions of festivals and celebrations, or significant settings or places. Less successful tasks were those which asked candidates to describe events or scenarios of which they had no personal experience, or settings and situations in which the candidate clearly had no interest or engagement. Many of these responses relied on unconvincing descriptive writing which did not engage the reader. This type of writing is characteristic of work achieving marks from the middle to lower levels of the assessment criteria, although it was noticed that many centres awarded marks from the higher-level assessment criteria.

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Whilst many candidates showed a secure and confident understanding of language, there was still a general tendency by a number of centres to award marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to work which was highly ambitious, but which contained ineffective overuse of literary techniques and complex vocabulary; this seemed to be actively encouraged by some centres. To achieve marks from the higher-level assessment criteria, candidates need to demonstrate a confident and secure understanding and use of language for specific effect. This is difficult for candidates to achieve if they over-use adjectives, include inappropriate images or idioms and/or use obscure or archaic language. The overworking of language was a common reason for moderators adjusting marks.

Another common reason for adjustments to marks was when centres awarded 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 that achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register, and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. A significant number of the assignments receiving marks from centres from Levels 5 and 6 in 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 engaging the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images.

In addition, the work of some candidates contained errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of the writing. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, tense inconsistencies, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Errors which affect the meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as 'minor'. As mentioned earlier in this report, the absence of the indication of all errors made it difficult to determine whether errors had been considered when marks had been awarded; on some weaker assignments no errors had been annotated and the summative comment declared a high level of accuracy. 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 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 Coursework Handbook. Examples of good tasks and exemplification of the standard of work expected at the different levels of the mark scheme are also provided in the Coursework Handbook.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

- use a range of vocabulary suited to the context and content of the description
- create images appropriate for the context and content of the description
- create an engaging imagined scenario using language designed to have an impact on the reader
- avoid slipping into a narrative style
- proof-read responses to identify and correct common errors such as missing articles and prepositions, switches in tenses and typing errors
- avoid repetitive sentence structures; instead use a range of sentences for create specific effect.

Assignment 3 (narrative):

Much of the task setting for **Assignment 3** was generally appropriate and many candidates produced engaging and effective narratives which were well controlled and convincing. Successful narratives were those in which candidates created stories characterised by well-defined plots and strongly developed features of narrative writing such as description, strong characterisation, and a clear sense of progression. The narration of personal experiences and events, or responses where candidates were able to create convincing details and events within their chosen genre, tended to be more successful. Candidates were generally less successful when their understanding of audience and genre was insecure, and the resulting narratives lacked credibility and conviction. This sort of writing was often seen when candidates were writing in the genre of horror or fantasy 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. Some responses failed to conclude properly, ending with an unconvincing or unsatisfactory cliff hanger. 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 (content and structure).

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Very accurate work containing precise well-chosen vocabulary, and which maintained a consistent register throughout, could be awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D (style and accuracy). As with **Assignments 1** and **2**, there was a significant 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:

- create stories that are realistic, credible, and convincing
- remember that characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage the reader
- avoid clichéd scenarios and consider an individual and original selection of content
- carefully proof-read and check assignments for errors in punctuation, the use of prepositions, articles, tenses, and sentence structure.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Speaking and Listening Test

Key messages

The transition to Submit for Assessment proved to be a success with few issues arising. The general standard of administration of the test was excellent which made the moderator's task much easier. Assessment was generally accurate with few adjustments recommended by moderators. Where centre assessment was deemed to be lenient it was mostly due to over-crediting Listening in ***Part 2*** of the test.

Once again, candidates chose a very interesting and mostly appropriate range of topics for their tests which were enjoyable to moderate. The responses to the Individual Talk in ***Part 1*** to a large degree continue to be in the form of formalised talks as opposed to anything more creative but this is perfectly acceptable. However, where more creative options were chosen, they were very successful. The three to four minutes allowed for ***Part 1*** were utilised effectively by the candidates and timings were adhered to. This is particularly important when looking to award the content descriptor in the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Part 2 should consist of a conversation that evolves naturally through the seven to eight minutes allowed and be closely focused on the content from ***Part 1***. A ***Part 2*** that depends largely on a question and answer format is not as successful as a naturally developing conversation.

Administration - General comments

Administration by centres was of a high standard. Where there were issues, the following guidelines may help to clarify administrative requirements:

- Every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date on which the candidate is being examined; it is the examiner who should complete the introduction.
- 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 Assessment but in these cases the form used must accurately reflect the information required.

Conduct of the test

Once again, 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 an examiner feels that a candidate is very nervous and needs a moment of calming, it is recommended this is done before the recording is started.

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered.

- 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.
- Individual talks that last for significantly longer than the required maximum of four minutes may also struggle to fulfil the higher level content descriptor in the mark scheme. 'Full and well-organised use of content' indicates that the candidate has taken the timings into consideration when planning and delivering a talk.
- 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

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examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation of seven minutes is met. It is also important that conversations do not exceed the maximum eight minutes stipulated in the syllabus. Over-long conversations may be counter-productive and are unnecessary.

Comments on specific sections

Part 1 – Individual Talk

In most of the talks moderated it was clear that topics had been chosen carefully, appropriate preparation had been undertaken and the candidates were invested in the performances. There were very few instances of candidates preparing and delivering talks that were significantly short of the minimum three minutes required. There were, however, a number of candidates who exceeded the required maximum time by a significant amount. Most were halted quite appropriately by examiner intervention which is the recommended action to take in such circumstances.

Formal presentations were almost exclusively the medium for approaching this part of the test in this series. There were some examples of more creative approaches to ***Part 1*** including some monologues and recitals of poems written by the candidates themselves. Where poems were chosen, they were often accompanied by personal critiques by the candidates. This approach fulfilled timing requirements and illuminated the ideas behind the poems thus enabling interesting and developed conversations to take place in response to ***Part 2*** of the test. It should be stressed that any creative work used as the basis of ***Part 1*** should be generated by the candidates themselves.

There were few instances of topics being chosen purely to impress the moderator. Topics chosen because they sound 'mature' or 'serious' generally lead to poor performances, particularly in ***Part 2*** but also in ***Part 1***. It is recommended that the topics chosen are those that candidates have a genuine interest in and can be discussed in detail in ***Part 2***, where any lack of depth in knowledge of the topic is exposed to the detriment of the marks achieved.

A strong element of presentations achieving Level 5 in ***Part 1*** was the structure underpinning the talks. A clearly defined persuasive argument or a cyclical structure 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. While structure itself does not confirm a mark in Level 5, it does provide a strong basis for candidates to exhibit their linguistic and presentational skills. Talks awarded marks in Level 5 also consisted of more than just linear narratives. Self-reflection and analysis are important elements in moving a talk beyond the adequate.

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

- Sleep: Essential or a waste of time?
- Galactic cannibalism
- Eco psychology
- The dangers of AI
- Rainbow capitalism
- My mind when studying
- Jobs of the future
- Equality and inclusion
- My poem: Recital and critique

It should be noted that almost any topic chosen can be productive or less successful as a result of 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.

Part 2 – Conversation

Examiners should not feel the need to correct or contradict statements made by the candidates if they disagree with them or monopolise the conversation. Good examiners are empathetic to the candidates, take an interest in the topics chosen and are flexible in their manipulation of the conversation to tease out the very best the candidates can offer. They employ open questioning and subtle prompts. Sympathetic examining in

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Part 2 is a really important factor in allowing candidates to thrive and there was plenty of evidence of such good practice being employed by examiners in this series.

Where there were issues 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 to give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills and accrue marks.
- Allowing the conversations to progress beyond the maximum time allowed of eight minutes is unnecessary and may become counter-productive.
- ***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.
- It is important that questions are open and not closed. Closed questions do not allow candidates to consistently answer in the necessary detail to move beyond adequate.

Examiners are reminded, however, that candidates are required to respond in 'extended detail' to fulfil the first bullet point in Level 4 for Listening and to do so 'consistently' throughout the conversation. The odd developed response within a series of short, underdeveloped responses does not fulfil this criteria effectively and fulfils more accurately the 'maintained by the candidate's responses' criteria in Level 3 for Listening.

Advice to centres

- Adhering to the correct timings for each part of the test will allow candidates the best opportunity to be successful.
- Helping a candidate choose the most appropriate topic is key to them being successful in the test.
- Administering the Conversation in ***Part 2*** can be quite challenging for examiners so it may be necessary to practise just as the candidates should.

Advice to candidates

- Choose a topic that is of genuine interest to you and that you know a lot about. This is very important in ***Part 2*** as seven to eight minutes can seem a long time if you have little to say.
- Prepare your ***Part 1*** response thoroughly but try not to simply repeat a memorised talk in ***Part 1***. Being word perfect may seem the best option but may affect your intonation. It is much better to prepare using a cue card so that what is said has some level of spontaneity and is lively and fluent.
- Be prepared to ask some questions of the examiner in ***Part 2*** as this is one good way of speaking on equal terms and taking the conversation forward.

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