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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12
Reading

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- worked through the tasks in the order set
- attempted all parts of all questions, noting the marks allocated to each question and organising their response time accordingly
- followed task instructions carefully and based their answers on the correct text and/or section of text
- responded appropriately to the command word(s) in the question
- focused on the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for each question
- avoided repetition, inventing untethered material and/or introducing their own opinion
- used their own words where appropriate
- avoided unselective copying and / or lifting from the text
- planned the ideas they were intending to use in longer answers
- checked and edited their responses to correct any unforced errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated that they were familiar with the format of the Reading paper and the general demands of each of the three questions had largely been understood. There were some candidates who did not pay careful attention to command words in each question and/or offered mechanical answers that simply played back sections of text with little modification, missing opportunities to evidence their skills and diluting the evidence that they had understood what they had read. There were very few instances where whole tasks had not been attempted, though occasionally responses to part questions were incomplete or missing and/or answers were uneven, limiting the possibility of scoring higher marks.

Candidates appeared to find all three Reading texts equally accessible and engaging. There were very few examples of significant misreading. There were some excellent answers to all three questions, with a number going above and beyond the demands of level 5, though candidates do need to ensure that they do not spend too long on one question at the expense of another. In the least 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 paragraphs other than 4 and 5 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 a full draft version 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 efficiently and offer sufficient evidence of their skills and understanding to target higher levels.

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 further 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, though a number of the least successful responses tried to answer questions based on one part of the text from another and/or by unselective copying. 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. Others simply copied out sections of text with limited modification – often negating any suggestion of understanding by doing so. A number of otherwise stronger 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, and/or addressed only part of the question in their answer. Such responses provided limited evidence of understanding as a consequence and missed out on marks they might reasonably have been expected to target – for example in **Question 1(b)(i)** by suggesting 'this means the fluid was red'. In **Question 1(f)** a few candidates relied heavily on the language of **Text B** and / or copied out 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 via **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task, **Question 2(d)**. Stronger answers were careful to refer back to **Text C** to locate specific relevant choices and consider their meaning in context. 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 were not providing secure evidence of their understanding. Likewise, 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. To aim for higher levels 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 a little basic effect / meaning in context, though a number of candidates were not sufficiently clear, careful or detailed in the examination of their choices. In less successful responses, generalised comment 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 little relevant comment and/or few or no clear choices in one or both halves of the question.

In **Question 3** most responses had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task, though a few candidates lost sight of the text – for example, writing creatively about feeding and breeding hippos to bring them back from near extinction – ideas not suggested or rooted in the text. Others based their response on their own real or imagined experience of tourist attractions/reserves which were not relevant in this Response to Reading task. Most candidates had remembered to write from Baruti's perspective, with the best focused on interpreting the evidence in the text throughout from his standpoint to persuade his audience of local business people to support the OPT's work. A few were less focused on task details and missed opportunities to develop – for example, speaking from Susan's perspective or addressing their talk to a group of tourists about to go on a trip with the OPT. Responses across the cohort covered the full range of levels of achievement, with top level answers offering responses that used a wide range of ideas, carefully interpreted and extended with detail from the text in support. 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 with limited or no modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and 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 inaccurate writing where meaning becomes unclear 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**. Stronger 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. Less successful responses often repeated the language of the text where own words were required and/or relied on copying longer sections of text with little or no modification to address the question as set.

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. Occasionally, opportunities to evidence understanding were missed where explanations offered were unclear or changed the meaning from that of the original text – candidates are reminded that whilst Writing is not assessed in **Questions 1(a)–(e)**, answers do need to be sufficiently precise to communicate details from the text accurately.

(a) What was the Ancient Greek name for hippos?

In **Question 1(a)**, most candidates recognised that line 1 referenced the Ancient Greek name of 'hippopotamus', though some read on to the translation as 'river horse' which could also be accepted. Some candidates made use of the question stem to help focus their answer, whilst others simply wrote the key words of their answer – either approach was acceptable.

(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:
(i) 'scarlet fluid' (line 4):
(ii) 'rotund creatures' (line 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)(i)** offering a meaning for 'scarlet' only and repeating rather than explaining 'fluid'. 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, offering straightforward synonyms for each word. In **1(b)(i)** successful answers often explained 'scarlet fluid' simply as meaning 'red liquid' and in **1(b)(ii)** had understood the implication that hippos did not appear sleek and built for speed, for example by describing them as 'rounded animals'**.**

(c) Re-read paragraph 2, ('The stubby-legged … meat.').

Identify two hippo behaviours which have surprised scientists.

In **Question 1(c)** candidates re-reading paragraph 2 closely were able to identify two distinct reasons in the text – many had picked up on the suggestion that both the fast running speed of hippos and their behaviour of eating meat were presented in the text as surprising to scientists. A few candidates missed opportunities to score both marks through imprecise use of detail – for example, suggesting incorrectly that hippos could run at 300 kph.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 3 to 5 ('One detail … vulnerable.').

(i) Give two reasons why people think that male hippos are aggressive.
(ii) Explain why, according to some experts, hippos may have changed their behaviour.

Candidates who paid attention to command / key words in the question were best placed to offer creditworthy responses and make efficient use of their time. Successful answers in **1(d)(i)** were able to give **two** reasons from the three offered in the text, making use of the bullets in the response area as an efficient way to present their ideas and then check that their answers were distinct. Likewise in **1(d)(ii)**, candidates paying attention to the command word 'explain' used information from the text, reworking it to offer secure evidence of close reading and score the

maximum 3 marks. On occasion, candidates diluted evidence of their understanding – for example, not reading back to check the sense of their answer, so suggesting that 'hippos weigh up to 3200 kg and measure up to 40 cm in length'. Other missed opportunities by offering incomplete ideas – for example, not explaining why tussles or fights over territory could be seen as being linked to hippos' meat-eating behaviour since these occasions resulted in opportunities for, or facilitated, carnivory. Some candidates offered no evidence of understanding by copying out long sections of the specified paragraphs of text without any modification or recasting of the material, failing to take note of the instruction to 'explain why'. In **Question 1(d)**, candidates do not need to avoid using words from the text within their explanations, though should be careful to address the task as set.

(e) Re-read paragraphs 6 to 8 ('Others believe … story.').

Using your own words, explain why some scientists do not believe that the behaviour of hippos has changed.

In **Question 1(e)** the most successful explanations reworked the relevant information only, using their own words as appropriate, to identify three distinct reasons in their explanation of why some scientists do not believe that hippos eating meat marks a change in the animals' behaviour. Many candidates identified that hippos eating at night meant that their occasionally carnivorous behaviour was likely to just not have been spotted, though some offered only this point and so missed opportunities to target higher marks. Others indicated less careful reading of the text by suggesting that hippos 'aren't built for taking down prey or biting into flesh' or that 'biomechanical limitations' hold hippos back.

(f) According to Text B, what problems can be caused by this kind of 'hippo' and how should these problems be tackled?

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 extra 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 strongest 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 significant excess arose as a result of lengthy explanation, with a few 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. 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 select only those ideas relevant to the focus of the question, though not all were able to select ideas efficiently to navigate around more obviously redundant material – for example, the explanation of the term 'hippo' as 'the highest paid person in the office' appeared at the start of the text and often took up (word-for-word) the opening lines of answers in the mid-range or below where excess was often a significant feature.

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 an own words version of the whole text in the order it was presented and often repeated ideas and/or unnecessary detail as a result. A small number of candidates misread or miscopied details in the text, for example suggesting incorrectly that 'hippies' were a problem in offices. In low to mid-range answers, some candidates simply linked lifted phrases and/or copied sections of text rather than carefully identifying the central idea – for example, asserting incorrectly that a 'suggested solution' was for 'any new project to be kept secret'. 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 1f:

- 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 of the ideas you planned to
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write 'no more than 120 words' and aim for concision.

Question 2

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

(i) Susan attended a short meeting to receive information before getting into the boat.
(ii) A wooden mokoro is skilfully made by carving out a mature tree.
(iii) To pass their licensing examinations, polers would need to show that they were able to meet the needs of a wider variety of visitors.
(iv) One poler passionately and forcefully argued against the suggestion in the book.

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 exact word or phrase only as their answer. Other responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out the entire question in each case, substituting the word or phrase from the text and then bracketing or underlining the relevant section of their answer.

Marks were sometimes missed where answers were unfocused – for example, offering responses that covered only part of the meaning of the underlined phrase such as 'vehemently' in **2(a)(iv)** or adding in extra words from the text that went beyond the meaning of the underlined words. Very occasionally, 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.

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(b) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:
(i) preserve
(ii) lucrative
(iii) convert

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 and checked that their suggestions did not move away from the intended sense, recognising for example that in this instance 'convert' meant 'changing to' rather than 'changing into'. A number of candidates were unsure of the meaning of 'lucrative' – for example, suggesting variously that it meant rare, strict or difficult. Likewise, meanings of 'preserve' connected specifically to storing food were not appropriate in this context

(c) Use <u>one</u> example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests Susan's attitude towards hippos.

Use your own words in your explanation.

Travel was through channels made by hippos. These channels were often clogged with vegetation, so polers had to push hard to get through. Sometimes a male hippo decided that he didn't want commuters using 'his' channel, rising unexpectedly out of the water, huge mouth gaping and honking warnings at the traffic. Hippos always had right-of-way and polers had to be alert. Sometimes they'd spend days opening up new channels to avoid aggressive hippos.
There were some terrifying near-misses!

In **Question 2(c)**, those candidates who had focused clearly on using just one example taken from the text extract as instructed were best placed to demonstrate their understanding. Some underlined their chosen example in the text, others copied it out as a subheading for their explanation – either approach was acceptable.

Successful answers included those which began with an explanation of the meaning of their example in context, ahead of going on to explain what the meaning suggested about Susan's attitude to hippos. Successful responses often centred their answer around the extended image of traffic and commuters and were able to exploit their chosen example to good effect, often suggesting some humour, affection and/or guarded respect being evident in Susan's interpretation of hippo behaviour.

The 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 profitably spent in **Question 2(d)** where there were up to 15 marks available. Some weaker 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.

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(d) Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5.

- **Paragraph 4 begins 'I will never forget …' and describes Susan's memories of the morning's journey.**
- **Paragraph 5 begins 'Late afternoon …' and is about the hippo safari.**

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

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three relevant selections from each paragraph - often beginning by explaining literal meaning and then moving on to explore effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language through detailed discussion of 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 each of their choices as a sub-heading for their explanation of it to good effect, though candidates 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 language use and offered answers that were balanced across both parts of the question.

Choices from paragraph 4, usually centred around the idea of the idyllic nature of the morning spent on the water. Many answers identified 'utter tranquillity' as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the sense of peace conveyed. Some of the best answers also explored the description of the mokoro's movement as 'swishing through …' recognising something of the relaxed happiness or insouciance suggested and/or considered how 'essence' invited the reader to consider both the intrinsic nature of the experience and its restorative perfume. Many candidates identified 'snapshot' as reminiscent of a photograph taken by a camera, though some took this literally suggesting that Susan was taking pictures with her phone. A number of candidates lost sight of the focus of the question – the journey – attempting to discuss less relevant choices concerned with setting up camp on the shoreline.

Some mid-range answers offered more careful selection and explanation in one half of their response than the other – with some indicating less secure understanding of events as described in paragraph 5, for example through references to the polers and tourists being 'huddled together' and/or 'spouting, chuffing and grunting' rather than recognising these phrases as describing the actions of the hippos. Occasionally candidates miscopied quotations from the text, resulting in some inappropriate or inaccurate explanations – for example, suggesting that 'hippos were carried across the still water'. 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 'scuttle' and what it suggested about the nature of the movement to add to the sense of speed conveyed by 'hastily' and many weaker answers dealing with this popular choice did little more than repeat /replay the wording of the text, often going on to demonstrate misunderstanding in relation to the reaction of the others who were often suggested as being terrified too.

Some more general initial comments around the scariness of the situation in connection with the word 'eerily' coloured the candidate's interpretation of the rest of the paragraph. Attempts to prove this 'overview' of paragraph 5, rather than adding to the quality of the analysis often caused candidates to miss the contrast between the reassuringly measured approach and respect of boundaries shown by the more experienced poler(s) leading the expedition and the overconfidence of their younger colleague that resulted in hilarity for those watching him at a safe distance. Some candidates persisting with a generalised assumption of scariness suggested incorrectly that 'raucous amusement' meant the group were horrified by events and/or that the hippos were

attacking the tourists, occasionally with the defeated hippo having to 'scuttle back hastily into the shelter of the reeds'. Answers aiming at higher levels had often chosen to focus bullet 2 on the 'brash young' poler's bravado or miscalculation in edging too close to the enormous male hippo and then explained him having to 'scuttle back hastily' as reminiscent of some frightened insect or small animal.

The least successful answers to **2(d)** offered generic empty comments such as 'This line creates imagery of what everything looked like and what type of atmosphere was created' or 'the words in this paragraph appeal to different senses'. Comments like these are not helpful to candidates since they do not evidence understanding 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. Satisfactory responses offered a clear explanation of the literal meaning of each example they had chosen, whilst stronger answers also identified 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, 'memory' 'stress(ful)' and 'skilfully' were often repeated. Repetition of the same explanation for each choice by some candidates often meant they missed opportunities to present more convincing evidence of their understanding – for example, though peaceful and calm was a generally relevant comment in relation to a number of possible choices in paragraph 4, simply repeating it meant the precise meaning of words within choices were overlooked.

In **Question 2(d), i**t 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 or only three choices were offered overall. 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 **2(a)** make sure that your selection is from **Text C** and is clearly identified – remember you are looking for just a word or phrase to match the sense of the underlined words in the question
- in **2(b)** be careful that your explanation is consistent with how the word is used in context (if unsure, try substituting your answer in the text to check it)
- in **2(c)** try to say three separate things about your one chosen example
- in **2(d)**, choose 3 examples from each of the two specified paragraphs (6 choices in total)
- only offer an overview in **2(d)** if you have spotted that there is a relevant connection between your chosen choices in a paragraph
- 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
- 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 Baruti. Weeks after Susan's arrival, you are giving a speech to a group of local business people to persuade them to support the work of the OPT.

In your speech you should:

- **explain what exactly the OPT is and what it has achieved so far**
- **describe what tourists particularly enjoy about trips with the OPT**
- **suggest how the support of local business people might help the OPT and benefit local people, animals and the wider region.**

Write the words of your speech.

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

Having worked through **Question 2** and already familiarised themselves with **Text C**, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to adopt the perspective of Baruti, the founder of the OPT, as distinct from that of Susan, the narrator. The task guidance invited candidates to present a persuasive speech, aimed at a group of local business people. Some candidates missed the opportunity to offer and develop a range of key ideas appropriately by opting instead to address a group of foreign tourists about to head out on a trip. A few attempted to answer the question as Susan and limited the development they were able to offer as a result.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood both the narrative and task in at least general terms. Some in the mid-range though omitted potentially useful details and information in their explanation of the OPT – for example, by not referencing 'what the OPT had achieved so far'. Where candidates had planned their response beforehand they were often able to draw on ideas from later in the text to address this first bullet successfully, for example by holding up the (first) direct bookings and clearing of wasteland for the new permanent camp as convincing examples of the OPT's success and hard work to date.

Whilst many had engaged with both task and text to offer competent or better responses, evidencing some evaluation and interpreting ideas offered initially by Susan through the lense of Baruti, there were fewer who capitalised fully on their understanding of the details of Susan's narrative. Some candidates who had been able to talk in detail about Susan's feelings regarding the hippos and the boat ride in their responses to **Question 2**, referenced neither in question 3 when invited to extend those ideas to the appeal for tourists in general for bullet 2. It was not unusual for an answer to make no reference to hippos at all or conversely to suggest inaccurately that the hippos were being fed, bred and cared for by the OPT. Most candidates did reference the appeal of the polers themselves – their friendliness and/or skill – and more successful answers went on to extend and promote the sense of authenticity offered by the OPT's trips and/or the romance of evenings spent around the campfire.

In bullet three, some candidates did little more than repeat the question asserting there would be benefits 'to local people, animals and the wider region' without any indication of how, what or why. Candidates responding to the text and task more carefully were able to pick up on suggestions that (financial) support from local business might mean it was possible for most /all of the polers to replace their boats with more eco-friendly and/or longer-lasting options, or that the appeal of seeing hippos in the wild could attract more visitors and boost the local economy, potentially changing local attitudes towards these animals. The best answers often requested support for training /education of the polers to specifically target the communication skills they might need when dealing with a wider range of visitors and saw the planned improvements to infrastructure and equipment as opportunities for local business to profit and/or be involved.

Some mid-range responses that relied on mechanically tracking back through the text and replaying the passage touched on ideas that were potentially relevant for bullet 3 – for example mentioning the plans for a permanent camp with a shower block – but missed the opportunity to interpret and use those ideas to target higher levels. 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 for example, some confused the polers (local men), mokoros (boats) and hippos (animals). Occasionally insecure responses strayed into speculation regarding white-water rides and hotels that might be built in the area with local business' support – suggestions not supported by or rooted in the text.

The best answers showed evidence that candidates had identified relevant ideas and details from the text before writing, considering which bullet the information they had located best suited and how the perspective of Baruti might differ from / add to that of the narrator Susan. They had often noted that the speech was set only weeks after Susan's arrival when Baruti would not know the length of her final stay and so were able to extend a wider range of ideas as a result – for example suggesting his concern / the need for more permanent / paid teachers to support training for licensing exams. Where candidates had not identified and planned ideas in advance, they often overlooked details and/or confused timescales – for example missing bullet one ideas that came later in the text, or presenting plans as already achieved, leaving less to say about them as a result.

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On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of a speech and many were able to build carefully convincing and well-structured arguments, drawing on a strong sense of audience and developing the easy, persuasive style of Baruti referenced in the text. Occasionally, over-reaching with vocabulary clouded meaning and/or errors with punctuation or sentence structure meant sense was difficult to follow. 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.

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
- 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 the response effectively to inform, persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- use confidently the different kinds of content required for description and narration
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to create specific effects on the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task and style required.

General comments

Examiners found that most responses showed a secure understanding was how marks were awarded for both tasks, Directed Writing and Composition. There were few very brief scripts, incomplete scripts or scripts in which the instructions regarding which questions to answer were not followed. Nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** and either a descriptive or narrative writing task, with very few rubric infringements seen. In **Question 1**, most responses were written mostly in candidates' own words. There were a few responses which were mostly or wholly copied from the texts in the Reading Booklet Insert, although some lifting of phrases or sentences was common. Where this lifting of material was more extensive, marks were inevitably limited for both Reading and Writing. In ***Section B***, most candidates understood how the content of descriptive and narrative writing differs, although there were stories submitted for the descriptive writing tasks which made it difficult for Examiners to award high marks for Content and Structure.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the topic of the reading texts in **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a speech addressed to a known, specific audience of young people. The register required here was well understood, with most responses reflecting a familiarity with young people and their concerns, particularly their attitudes to fashion. Most candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response. Some opinion was often given about whether or not young people's attitudes to fashion needed to change as a conclusion to speech. Comments made about the dilemma faced by young people making choices about fashion were rooted in the ideas given in the reading texts. In the middle of the mark range, responses tended to reproduce the points made in the texts, sometimes with an opinion given about some of the points made, with some beginning to evaluate. A substantial number of responses at this range made some comments about the ideas in the texts, though not always probing or offering judgements about them. In many cases, responses reflected the judgement made in the texts that recycling and re- wearing clothes were some of the ways in which the effects on the environment of fast fashion could be ameliorated. More effective evaluation tended to challenge some ideas in the texts rather than replicate them.

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Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. Some salient ideas in the texts were not quite addressed, such as the main thrust of the argument that an environmentally aware generation were contributing to one of the most damaging industries. Some tended to ignore the environmental concerns which weakened the saliency of responses.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. The balance of rights between protecting the environment and self-expression was often effectively evaluated. Less effective responses sometimes gave a summary of the ideas in the texts but without the focus of considering to what extent young people could or should change their behaviour. Overall, however, there was often a clear adaptation of style and register to appeal to an audience of young people. Introductions, conclusions and the structure and organisation of ideas required in a speech were well understood by most candidates.

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

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. Many responses to the descriptive writing questions were very effective and sustained. There were some imaginative evocations of untidy rooms, from teenage bedrooms and rooms abandoned hurriedly for different reasons. Less effective responses to this question tended to become more narrative or the details given became rather exaggerated and unrealistic. For the second question, a wide range of descriptions sunny days in more urban settings was submitted with the most effective selecting details which evoked the sensations and sights of a hot day. In the middle range, the specific focus on a sunny day was rather missed and the description centred on cafes or markets visited with limited reference to specific ways in which the sun affected these experiences. Less effective responses sometimes included some cliched details or were more generic descriptions of the streets and amenities on a city street.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Write a speech for your year group explaining whether or not you think young people should change their attitudes to fashion.

In your speech you should:

- **evaluate the attitudes and ideas in both texts**
- **give your views, based on what you have read, on the effects a change in attitudes to fashion might have on young people, the fashion business and the environment.**

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

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the speech was also accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task and audience, the highest marks for Writing could be awarded. More effective responses here focused carefully on the arguments in the texts, with the highest marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views with confidence and perceptive evaluation. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement. These implicit ideas often involved the extent to which young people followed fashion trends in an unthinking way or a critique of older people's hypocrisy in criticising young people's behaviour when most environmental damage had been done by them. The tension between young people's use of fashion as a form of self-expression to develop their unique style, while at the same time being heavily influenced by trends, was noticed in some thoughtful responses. The interviewer's comment in Text B that '*The way that particular brands dominate the teenage market*

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seems to suggest there's not much experimenting going on' needed some probing and interpretation with this in mind. Similarly, Text B's claim that young people were aware of the effects of their choices on the environment was asserted and yet their use of fast fashion suggested otherwise. Other apparent contradictions were sometimes considered such as young people using fashion to create their unique style but also to 'fit in' with a particular group.

In some responses, it was sometimes asserted that 'not all young people followed fashion trends in a mindless way' whereas in more effective responses the responsibility of big brands to not cynically exploit young people's immaturity was discussed. As one candidate mentioned, '*The responsibility for saving the planet isn't just on our shoulders; fashion giants create the demand for fast fashion as much as they meet it*.'

While most candidates argued that the harmful effects of fast fashion could be mitigated by second-hand clothes and re-using clothes over a longer period, in some evaluative responses it was argued that young people's purchasing power could be harnessed to force change in the fashion industry into producing more sustainable clothes at affordable prices. This was a point of view which could be supported by careful evaluation of some of the ideas in both texts.

In responses given marks in Level 6 for Reading, Examiners often rewarded some careful grasp of the implications suggested by the texts. For example, some responses showed some effective challenge to the idea that young people contributed to much of the pollution created by fashion by pointing out that older generations ran these fast fashion businesses and profited from them. Making ethical choices in every walk of life was difficult but necessary. As one response suggested, '*It's easy to criticise young people for something they did without thinking themselves when they were young, especially when those people now drive petrol-guzzling cars and eat meat every day*.'

Marks for reading

As always, the most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about the advantages and pitfalls involved in using AI in schools.

Most responses included the reference in Text A to the emissions created by the fashion industry and how wearing clothes more often could reduce them. More thoughtful responses considered carefully what the real meaning of fashion and self-expression was for young people and how different sectors of society could share the responsibility for saving the planet. Some wrote about how commercial pressures could be exerted on fashion brands by young people and the authorities to incentivise them to produce their goods more sustainably. Others argued that fashion as a means of expressing identity was shallow and based on fragile adolescents trying not to feel self-conscious, and that the risk of environmental damage was not worth it.

Some healthy scepticism was shown about older adults blaming the young while having enjoyed the benefits of fashion in their own time. Conversely, some saw the use of fashion for young people to 'define their identity' as so vital to their freedom and development that other ways to reduce environmental harms should be implemented.

A common approach in Level 5 and low Level 6 responses was that fast fashion was an inevitable part of young people's lives but that its harmful effects could be ameliorated by young people changing their behaviour in ways which appeared in the texts, such as buying second-hand and reusing clothes, as well as other groups taking more responsibility to reduce waste. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically developed this idea in some detail but may have accepted at face value most of the points made in the texts.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments usually focused on why young people commonly used fast fashion, as outlined in the texts, but did not always see the contradictions in the arguments given or address whether young people's attitudes should change.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but without the more implicit meanings mentioned above or with less scrutiny of the points made in the passages. Often, there was a clear paraphrase of both texts but limited comment on the ideas in them. Where there were some brief opinions, usually at the end of the response, they tended to be more general and not strongly anchored in the specific ideas in the texts. There

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was sometimes some misunderstanding of which generation bought expensive clothes and the main issue of fast fashion versus environmental awareness was missed. Some argued that clothes were too expensive and wasted young people's money, showing some misreading of the detail in the texts.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words. Less successful responses tended to paraphrase and list ideas and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. Where a mark of 6 was awarded, some firmer roots in the passages were needed, whereas 5 was generally given for thin or mainly lifted responses in which there was some insecure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

Marks for Writing

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

Style and audience

Candidates needed to adopt an appropriate style and register for a speech to a familiar audience of young people in a reasonably formal setting. Most responses showed a clear understanding of this required register, even where technical writing skills were weak, and this allowed for Examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Although not always sustained, many speeches attempted to engage the attention of their peers with a light-hearted introduction, assuming some shared ground with the audience in terms of fashion. Some high scoring responses used a more rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in an engaging way but making their case effectively and with some impact. At the highest level, some of the ironies and contradictions of young people's habits were exposed and discussed in persuasive ways which challenged the specific audience. One candidate opened the response with some carefully worded challenge to young people: '*Isn't it outrageous that nobody seems to be listening to us young people when we warn them about the damage they're doing to our futures! We're the victims of older people's greed and ignorance, after all. Aren't we?*'

In the middle range of marks, Examiners could sometimes award marks in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage and persuade their peers could sometimes compensate for other elements of style such as weak spelling or insecure grammar. Conversely, some responses were generally accurate but were largely summaries of the reading material rather than speeches with a specific audience. Sometimes, in reaching for a less formal register appropriate for the audience, overly colloquial expressions such as 'y'all' or 'gonna' were used.

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 style. Where the reading material was heavily lifted or copied, there was often little of the candidate's own style for Examiners to reward, though these kinds of responses were quite rare.

Structure

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

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. This often avoided the clashing of contradictory points from each text or the repetition of similar ideas, such as the idea of self-expression which appeared in both texts. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

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

Accuracy

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

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

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. There were occasional lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical misagreement, often between plurals and verb forms. Common spelling errors in this range included 'environment', 'fashion' and 'dilemma', as well as other words used in the texts.

Faulty sentence structures, fluctuating tense use or too much lifted or copied material often kept writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was very common, as were tense errors, and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Band 4 for Writing or for Reading because both the content and the style of the response was not the candidate's own.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- be prepared to challenge the ideas in the reading texts
- look for contradictions in the arguments and point them out
- group ideas from both texts together and discuss them rather than repeat them
- think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience
- check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.

Section B

Descriptive writing

2 Write a description of an untidy room.

3 Write a description with the title, 'A sunny day in a town or city'.

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates and Examiners awarded a wide range of marks for these responses. Both questions were interpreted in a wide variety of ways which Examiners could reward appropriately. In the first task, there were many detailed, organised and effective descriptions of teenage bedrooms, rooms abandoned for various reasons such as the death of its occupant or a hurried exit in the face of war. The second question elicited a range of scenarios, though the most effective tended to make more use of the implied idea in the task that the weather changed the appearance or experience of the town or city.

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Responses, as is always the case, were more effective if they contained vivid and specific details rather than more general or stereotypical ideas and images. This generalisation and lack of specific detail was a more common weakness in the second question, where some responses were more generic than concrete in the selection of buildings or areas to describe. Lower in the mark range, responses to both questions were a little prone to narrative though Examiners rewarded description wherever such details appeared.

Some effective responses to the first question described rather typical untidy teenage bedrooms but with a level of detailed observation that gave the description credibility and interest rather than relying on cliché. Mounds of clothes were variously described as 'an amorphous mass of clashing colours' or 'a pile of teetering garments which threatened to collapse if just one more abandoned shirt was thrown in its direction'. In one engaging response, a room in which an older relative once lived had been left as it was on the day they became ill: '*My grandfather's glasses lay forlorn on his cluttered desk, the crossword in the crumpled newspaper half complete*'.

In the second descriptive writing question, more effective responses were often given coherence by a focus on the hot weather and its effects on the surroundings and people observed. In some, the sunny day marked the opening up of a town or city after a hard winter: '*The sound of children playing in the park, the laughter of teenagers gathering in groups for their first trip to town in months, were unfamiliar but welcome signs of a town waking up to greet the sun*.' Some responses successfully evoked a sense of the claustrophobia of extreme heat in the city: '*People hugged the narrow strip of shade thrown by the skyscrapers that blocked the sight of the sun if not its punishing, sweltering heat*.'

In both descriptive writing questions, unusual, closely observed details created convincing, evocative scenes in the best responses. Where they were sustained and developed and showed skill in building a detailed, convincing overall picture, Examiners could award marks for Content and Structure in Level 6. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's attention by linking the different elements described in an engaging, cohesive response. Level 6 responses were characterised by this cohesive structure, often provided by the narrator's thoughts and feelings or a specific atmosphere, as well as carefully chosen detail and striking images.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were sustained and competently organised but usually a more predictable. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve less striking images and more stereotypical ideas. In the first question, some responses were exaggerated or lacked organisation. Maggots and cockroaches, peeling walls and much broken furniture sometimes became too extreme to create credible scenes or the response shifted focus mid-paragraph or was not organised enough to help the reader build up the picture from the details. In the second question, many Level 5 descriptions involved a walk around a town's streets, visits to parks or cafes, observations of shop fronts, passing pedestrians or vehicles. These were clear features but often lacked closely observed details to bring the description to life and there was less use made of the sunny weather to add a specific focus to the response.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become more narrative in intent, especially in the second question, or more cliched features appeared at this level, particularly in the first question. There was sometimes too much explanation of why the room was untidy, dialogue between a parent and child about tidying the room or an overlong preamble before a walk through the town, including the names of companions and shops, rather than descriptions of these features.

Less effective responses given marks in Level 3 or below often included less well organised lists of details briefly given rather than developed. Other responses at this level became a series of events, often narratively recounted, of a visit to a town or city, the process of preparing for a journey through a town rather than a detailed description of it. In some responses to the first question, there was less narrative but often the description became a list of features which lacked organisation and paragraphs. Some lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in these Level 3 responses, although some were quite well-written and accurate.

High marks for Style and Accuracy often reflected the precise and varied vocabulary used as well as the technical accuracy of the writing. In both descriptive tasks, similar details were often included but better responses had a much wider range of vocabulary, precisely deployed to create specific effects. Highly effective responses showed a confident ability to use both simple and complex language, striking images and personification, as well as a range of sentence structures to create subtle, complex atmospheres. In less

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effective responses, vocabulary was sometimes wide-ranging and complex but used with less precision. In a few cases, this insecure use of language resulted in a style which was difficult to follow and the credit which could be given for a wide-ranging vocabulary was lost by its imprecise use and lack of clarity. Obscure, sometimes archaic language sometimes revealed a lack of understanding of its meaning rather than a wide range of vocabulary.

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

Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content; choose a scenario which gives you a range of details on which to focus
- keep your focus on details which will help you evoke a specific 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 which includes the words, '… I had a feeling I might be wrong …'.

5 Write a story with the title, 'The watch'.

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range and there was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses. Examiners sometimes saw narratives which did not comfortably fit with either title and which, on occasion, seemed more suited to titles set in previous examinations or were pre-prepared. In some cases, this lack of relevance affected the mark for Content and Structure.

Effective responses were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative and to produce moments of tension or drama and to vary the pace of the story were credited by Examiners as essential elements of narrative writing, as was the use of characterisation to create believable protagonists and characters. In the first question, better responses often incorporated into the narrative the idea of the narrator's apprehension or doubt about a character or situation so that the quotation in the question was integral to the story. One narrative, for example, involved the narrator travelling alone in a train carriage in which only one other passenger was travelling, a character who aroused suspicion. The narrator reassured themselves that the other character was just an ordinary person, despite appearances, making the quoted sentence significant to the story's outcome. In other narratives, relationships between friends or other characters were explored, highlighting with the use of the quotation an underlying lack of trust which was often vindicated and sometimes turned out to be unjustified. These kinds of narratives depended largely on effective characterisation and there was some subtlety in creating characters in the higher mark range. In one response, on meeting a long-lost cousin, the narrator provided a description which signalled some elements which were used later in the narrative's denouement: '*She was beautiful, vivacious but with a shyness, a sort of coyness which seemed to endear her instantly to everyone in the raucous student bar where we met. She was mesmerising, especially to the young men who hung on her every, empty word*.'

Most narratives addressing this question were chronological accounts with varying degrees of development, characterisation and shaping although come candidates chose more ambitious structures. Some used the insight derived from insight to show how early suspicions about a person or situation unfolded, occasionally using flashbacks and dual narratives to use the quotation in the question in interesting ways. While such structures are more difficult to control, Examiners could often reward these approaches for their ambition and engagement. One quite successful narrative, for example, told the story of a reunion with a character claiming to be a childhood friend of the narrator, disfigured in an accident, through a dual narrative in which the friend struggled to convince the narrator and the narrator reacted with initial suspicion.

More commonly in the middle range, narratives were straightforward accounts in which events tended to dominate and there was more limited attention paid to characterisation and setting. Plotlines involving

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robberies or trips with friends to various locations or getting lost in forests or cities were often organised and somewhat cohesive but did not engage the reader.

There were some narratives which Examiners saw several times in this series and in previous examinations, suggesting that pre-prepared material was sometimes used, often with only partial relevance. One such story involved a man who had recently lost his wife, the mother of the narrator and who took the child on a journey which ended up in a new foster home. Many details were replicated in each of these responses. Another involved an examination taken by the narrator in which similar details, phases and vocabulary appeared. While many stories are derived in some way from other sources, relevance to the question, and some sense of the writer's own voice, are significant in the assessment here.

For the second question, there were many different plotlines, characters and events which allowed candidates to show their narrative writing ability. In many at all levels, the watch in the title was a physical object which was imbued with significance for the narrator. Watches passed down from one generation to another featured often or given by significant characters such as a dying fellow soldier on a battlefield or a father fleeing the family home because of some danger. In some narratives, the watch was lost or damaged by the narrator, occasionally stolen, with the narrator's thoughts and feelings highlighted quite effectively evoked in describing how the story unfolded. Other interpretations of 'the watch' included soldiers taking turns to guard a military post or an older sibling 'keeping watch' by babysitting younger siblings. A large minority of narratives also featured a watch with more science fiction properties, such as time travel or occasionally space travel. While some of these were well-managed and created interest in the characters and settings involved, many in the middle range found this genre quite difficult to bring to life and the narrative became a series of events and locations with limited credibility.

Examiners awarded marks in Level 6 for Content and Structure for narratives which created convincing, interesting scenarios and characters in responses to both questions. While the events in a story were important in creating such credibility, Level 6 responses paid attention to characterisation and how events were driven by character traits and choices.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless cohesive and reasonably credible for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt create a developed story which was relevant to the task. Responses in this range were more usually chronological accounts but were cohesive and balanced and contained a suitable ending depicting some satisfying resolution. For the first question, this often included the use of the quotation in the question to create some sense of doubt or intuition which was later vindicated. For the second narrative question, Level 5 responses often involved a watch which was significant to the protagonist for emotional reasons, with some sense of jeopardy created by the loss of the watch in some way. Whichever interpretation was given to the tasks, for Level 5 marks for Content and Structure stories needed to be well-managed with some conscious shaping of the narrative beyond a simple retelling of events.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of effective narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events, lacking attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. Similar plots and scenarios were used as those in more effective narratives, particularly in 'The watch' narratives, but at this level there was a tendency to say what happened or to state who the characters were rather than drawing the reader in by shaping the narrative. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than developing characters as credible and rounded. 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. Some responses became confusing and muddled in attempting to control stories. This was particularly seen in responses to the second question where the watch was discovered to have time travel properties. The locations or times travelled to were not always, in themselves, interesting enough to create a developed narrative.

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 effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects which helped to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate and largely fluent while Level 4 responses were plain in style

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and lacked some range in vocabulary. At this level, the writing had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as weak sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors. Quite common errors of grammar and expression appeared increasingly in responses given low Level 5 and Level 4 responses, such as misagreements, missing articles and imprecise, sometimes over-ambitious vocabulary. Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, limited otherwise competently told stories to Level 4, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation or grammar. The omission of definite and indefinite articles, the incorrect use of participles or errors in grammatical agreement contributed to a lack of fluency and accuracy which kept many responses out of Level 5. Similarly, basic punctuation errors and the misspelling of simple words and wrongly selected homophones sometimes appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes frequent enough to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy. A frequent reason for keeping an otherwise clearly written story out of Level 5 was weak demarcation of sentences, most commonly the use of commas where full stops were needed. Though the mixing of tenses and the use of incomplete sentences were perhaps more prevalent in the descriptive writing, these weaknesses also limited the marks available in the narrative writing.

Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved:

- think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative
- consider imaginative ways to tell your story, apart from a chronological account
- develop characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader
- check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes
- use complicated vocabulary with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create 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 the 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
- supported their analysis, evaluation and comments with a detailed and specific selection of relevant ideas from a text
- assimilated ideas from a text to provide developed, thoughtful and sophisticated responses
- 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 used the new checklist to ensure that all instructions for submitting a coursework sample were followed carefully
- centres followed the guidelines and instructions set out in the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook
- appropriate texts were used for **Assignment 1**, which were of an appropriate length and 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 but 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 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 usually 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 usually 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 Cards (ICRC) 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. To avoid adjustment of marks for accuracy, it is essential that centres engage in this process and clearly indicate errors in their candidates' work.

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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 to the moderator 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.
- Some rough drafts contained detailed 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 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'.

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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 was 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) or below. 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 students 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 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.

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 of the use of language for specific effect. This is difficult for candidates to achieve if they over-use adjectives, include inappropriate

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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 the 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 to create specific effects.

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 detective or fantasy stories. Stories such as these, although containing a clear 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).

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 the 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.

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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 such as punctuation, use of prepositions and articles, tenses, and construction of sentences.

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Speaking and Listening Test

Key messages

Centre administration was of a high standard and all centres coped well with their application of Submit for Assessment (SfA).

Each candidate's test requires a full formal introduction to be made prior to the beginning of ***Part 1***. This introduction should include the centre name and number, the candidate's full name and candidate number, the date on which the test is being recorded and the name of the examiner. This is important information for the moderator. The overwhelming majority of centres were compliant with this requirement and are to be congratulated for their diligence.

There were relatively few issues reported with the general level of accuracy of the assessment. Where recommendations of scaling were made it was usually because centres had not differentiated appropriately between different levels of attainment, particularly in ***Part 2*** and specifically between Level 4 and Level 5.

Where lenient assessment had taken place at the top end of the mark scheme for responses to ***Part 2***, it was often because the candidates were given credit for responses that were not 'consistently' developed or where the examiner was in control of the conversation and the candidate was too passive. It is for this reason that a ***Part 2*** Conversation based heavily on a question-and-answer model is discouraged.

The conversation in ***Part 2*** is not a test of the candidate's knowledge of a particular topic but an assessment of how well a candidate can converse. Any attempt by the examiner to solely test knowledge of a topic through the use of closed questioning is poor practice and is heavily discouraged by Cambridge as being counter-productive to the candidate's performance in ***Part 2***.

Correct timing in the test is vital to successful performance. Generally, the timing of the tests across all centres was good with few instances of short ***Part 1*** talks or shortened ***Part 2*** conversations. As always, the candidates who observed the 3-4 minutes allowed for ***Part 1*** through careful preparation and practice were more successful. The timing of ***Part 2*** was generally accurate but it should be remembered that examiners must ensure a minimum of 7 minutes is allowed to enable a full ***Part 2*** to take place.

There were few reported instances of the rank order of merit being problematic within centres.

Administration - General comments

For all centres, administration of the test was diligent, accurate and easy to follow. Summary forms were completed to a high degree of accuracy and samples uploaded to SfA were well-chosen and reflected the full range of marks awarded within the centre.

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. For Component 04 it is the examiner who should complete the introduction but the same principle of identifying key information on an individual basis is still relevant.

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Conduct of the test - General comments

Once again, the standard of examining was generally very good with candidates being given plenty of opportunities to express their ideas and demonstrate their range of oratory skills productively.

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered:

- It is strongly advised that each test should begin with the examiner's formal introduction and be followed immediately by the candidate performing ***Part 1***, the Individual Talk. If an examiner feels that a candidate is very nervous and needs a moment of calming prior to the formal test beginning, it is recommended this is done before the recording is started. Examiners formally starting the test then engaging in 'off topic' conversation with candidates before asking them to begin their ***Part 1*** task is discouraged.

- Given that both Speaking and Listening are assessed in ***Part 2***, it is important that the conversations last long enough for candidates to demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation of 7 minutes is met so that candidates are given the fullest opportunity to demonstrate the range of skills they possess.

- It is also important that the conversations offer sufficient challenge to allow candidates to demonstrate the range of skills they possess. Focused questioning and prompts are needed to move the conversation forward, together with an adaptability on the part of the examiner to absorb the candidate's previous comments and to extend the conversation as a result. A ***Part 2*** that is merely a question-and-answer session is not a natural conversation and as a consequence is limited in terms of the marks that can be awarded.

- Examiners who rely on a pre-determined set of questions disadvantage their candidates, in particular with regard to the mark for Speaking in ***Part 2***. A question from the examiner should lead to an answer from the candidate which then may lead to a comment or prompt from the examiner that is connected to the same content matter. This will in turn lead to another connected response from the candidate; and so the conversation develops naturally.

- Examiners who dominate conversations or who frequently interrupt candidates during the conversation do so to the disadvantage of those candidates. Good examiners prompt candidates then allow them the opportunity to respond in full and to develop their ideas before moving the conversation forwards again.

Comments on specific sections of the test

Part 1 – Individual Talk

In common with previous series, the overwhelming majority of responses to ***Part 1*** were traditional presentations seeking to inform, explain and analyse. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this approach as it is the safest way to deliver a good mark for the candidate if organised, prepared and delivered successfully.

Very strong performances in ***Part 1*** successfully combined excellent knowledge and development of a topic, a tightly defined structure timed accordingly and a lively delivery style. Choosing a topic that can be explored and developed within the 3-4 minute time limit remains the first step to success. A topic chosen merely to impress a moderator with its supposed maturity or complexity but with which the candidate has little empathy, knowledge or experience will almost certainly lead to a lesser mark than one chosen because the candidate has a real enthusiasm for it. Similarly, 'Wikipedia' style talks where there is linear content based on numerous facts but little developed opinion or analysis do not tend to be very successful because they lack sufficient depth to engage the audience fully. It should also be remembered that half the marks for the test are accrued in ***Part 2*** so candidates have to be prepared to discuss in some depth the topics they have chosen. Any lack of knowledge is quickly exposed as the conversation develops. When choosing appropriate topics candidates should seriously consider whether they can easily discuss and develop subject content for the allotted 7-8 minute conversation.

A strong element of presentations achieving Level 5 in ***Part 1*** remains the structure underpinning the talks, supported by appropriate timing. A clearly defined persuasive argument or a cyclical arrangement that brings

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the concluding statement back to the initial point often helps candidates to fulfil 'the full and well-organised' descriptor for Level 5. Less successful structures tend 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. Self-reflection and analysis remain strong elements in moving a talk beyond 'adequate'. Stronger candidates integrated a good range of language devices into their presentations adapting register, tone and pace to suit. Rhetorical questioning, the use of figurative language and other linguistic techniques were also used purposefully.

It is accurate to say that almost any topic can be successful if used appropriately but some do seem to lend themselves more successfully than others.

Some examples of ***Part 1*** topics from this series that worked well include:

- Shooting (the Olympic sport) – My identity
- Feminism
- The impact of social media
- Is mental health awareness necessary?
- Procrastination
- The violin (my relationship with it)
- Covid and online classes – an exploration of the effects
- (Should we) Bring back extinct creatures?
- Art as an emotion
- Meritocracy
- Success

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

- Water conservation – specific focus required
- Movies – too vast
- Life is a relationship – an attempt at the metaphysical but a difficult topic to do justice to
- Football – too vague

Part 2 – Conversation

Generally, the ***Part 2*** conversations were well conducted and examiners asked appropriate and interesting questions which enabled the candidates to extend and develop their ideas. After initial questioning to stimulate the conversation, the use of prompts, instead of a steady stream of further questioning, was often more effective in eliciting developed responses from candidates. Unlike in ***Part 1***, the examiner can influence the quality of the candidate's performance in ***Part 2***. The most skilful examiners asked open questions that fed directly from responses given by the candidate. Good examiners engaged fully with the topic and corresponding discussion and increased the complexity and subtlety of the questions in order to allow candidates to appropriately demonstrate their ability to deal with 'changes in the direction of the conversation'. It should be noted that this descriptor does not mean that examiners should steer the conversation away from the central topic to something completely different. 'Changes in the direction' can mean introducing a new perspective on the topic or challenging a previously stated opinion but any ensuing conversation should still be focused on the topic presented in ***Part 1***.

Generally it was the case that examiners were supportive of candidates by remaining focused on the topic matter introduced in ***Part 1*** and showing an appropriate level of interest. Occasionally examiners spoke in too much detail and took too long to ask their questions. The aim should be to prompt and to lead rather than to debate. On rare occasions the examiner interrupted a candidate's response when there was clearly more to be heard, thus directly restricting what the candidate could say in response.

In one centre the examiner unwisely chose to 'test' some of the candidates during ***Part 2*** by asking a series of arbitrary closed questions on the chosen topic. In essence, challenging the candidates to demonstrate often obscure knowledge of the topic which they could not do. This approach does nothing to stimulate healthy conversations or indeed help the candidates to succeed.

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Advice to centres

- Adhering to the correct timings for each part of the test will allow candidates the best opportunity to be successful.
- Make sure candidates know the timings of the test. Ensure that their Individual Talk is 3-4 minutes long. You can help them in the test by interceding before 5 minutes and initiating the conversation.
- Helping a candidate choose the most appropriate topic is key to them being successful in the test. At the planning stage a gentle suggestion to choose an alternative topic may be very beneficial in some cases.
- Try to dissuade candidates from delivering a memorised talk in ***Part 1*** that may have artificial fluency but lacks any emotional attachment and suffers from robotic intonation. It is much better to prepare using a cue card so that what is said has some level of spontaneity.
- Ensure a full 7-8 minutes is allowed for the conversation in ***Part 2***. The examiner can control the timing of this.
- Administering the conversation in ***Part 2*** can be quite challenging for examiners so it may be necessary to practise just as the candidates should. Knowing the topic in advance and preparing some relevant back-up questions may help the examiner but they should not be restrictive, and the candidate should have no prior knowledge of them.
- Scaffold questions strategically to encourage higher level responses from more able candidates. This will help them to access the higher mark ranges.

Advice to candidates

- Choose a topic you are passionate about and one you can talk about for 3-4 minutes then discuss in even more detail for 7-8 minutes.
- Practise your presentation but do not learn it by heart.
- Have bullet point notes to help prompt you in ***Part 1*** but not the ‘full speech’. You will be tempted to read it or, at the very least, deliver it without appropriate liveliness and intonation. ‘Talk through’ each bullet point in a lively and enthusiastic way.
- Structure your Individual Talk carefully, making sure that it develops points and stays within the 3-4 minutes allowed. Long talks do not earn more marks! On the contrary, an overlong talk will be regarded as not being ‘well organised’ (a bullet point required for Level 5 marks).
- Respond to the prompts and questions from the examiner in ***Part 2*** as fully as possible by developing your ideas, giving examples and leading off into other aspects of the topic if you can.
- Watch good examples of speeches/presentations/talks to learn how good speakers make their speeches lively and interesting. Try to copy these techniques.
- Practise simulations of ***Part 2***. There are as many marks available for ***Part 2*** as for ***Part 1*** so treat each part as equally important.

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