

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

<p>Paper 8021/11 Essay</p>

Key messages

- Focus on the key words in the question.
- The introduction/exposition should include what the essay is setting out to do, defining the key terms; and outlining the possible outcomes. The main body of the essay should contain a discussion of the opposing viewpoints. The recap and conclusion should not be simply repeating previous material but drawing together ideas, weighing up their relative importance and worth.
- Candidates should have a clear, definitive understanding of the command words used in the General Paper – an exploration of past papers and mark schemes will illustrate what the requirements are.
- Essays should include examples which are relevant to the question and support the points being made.
- An appropriate academic register should be adhered to throughout an essay; avoid using contractions.
- Avoid contradicting points made in earlier parts of the argument.
- Try not to list points but try to develop a considered argument for each area covered.
- Weigh and judge arguments do not merely state points.
- Attempt to include some sophisticated vocabulary.

General comments

A pleasing number of the essays encountered were lucid, informative and well argued. Opinions were expressed but few of the essays were too opinionated. Learners were usually fairly knowledgeable on their chosen topic. Responses were seen across the range of questions. A good number of candidates seemed to have been taught the exam technique well and managed to construct responses with an introduction, argument, counterargument and summary.

There was evidence of thoughtful planning in many scripts, although it is possible to spend too much time on this. Consequently, some essays were unfinished and significantly shorter than the suggested 600–700 words. Without planning, it is easy for an essay to begin with an assertion which is then contradicted later on. Planning also helps give an essay a clearer sense of direction. Taking a few minutes to think through precisely what the question is asking and organising thoughts accordingly, before beginning writing, is time well spent.

It is important to try to use correct linking words, such as *moreover*, *furthermore*, *therefore*, *on the other hand*, instead of phrases like: *First off*; *Moving along*; *To wrap this up*; *Adding on*. It is tempting to use contractions, e.g. *aren't*, *don't*, *didn't*, *wouldn't*, *can't*, *isn't*, *it's* and *I've*, among others to save time, these are too informal for an essay and the full wording should be used. Also, essays should avoid using vocabulary that is too informal, e.g. *kids*, *to do stuff*, *off of*. The presence of terms such as 'things' or 'stuff' also reduce the quality of an essay. Other spellings that caused confusion included *weather/whether*, *lose/loose*, *there/their* or the misspelling of *received*.

The level of knowledge was generally good and there was evidence of analysis and attempts at some critical evaluation in many scripts. Some candidates produced answers which could have been more developed and focused. A few candidates were able to develop individual ideas into sustained arguments. Weaker essays, simply listed points on each side of an argument, but did not go on to develop a genuinely reasoned personal view. Discussion of the differences between the opposing ideas and their implications can improve an essay beyond a series of assertions. Sweeping statements in answer to the question without the support of appropriate evidence were also a feature of weaker essays. Spending time choosing a question about which one has sufficient knowledge is important to ensure the answer contains enough examples and evidence to back up the arguments used in the essay.

Some candidates were unable to differentiate balance from contradiction. There were abrupt changes of direction in otherwise thoughtful essays. Using connectives such as 'however', 'nevertheless', introduces balance and aids in the recognition of other points of view, while retaining the overall thesis of an essay.

Conclusions were evident in most essays, even if in a basic form. Many candidates wrote conclusions that built on the points developed before. Some candidates used the conclusion to evaluate their arguments or the question. In some cases, candidates repeated or rephrased points in subsequent paragraphs, which did not allow them to demonstrate fully an understanding of the meaning of the question. Many candidates missed the opportunity to go beyond the question and consider the broader implications of their ideas on others or society as a whole.

Many candidates used examples that linked to or were relevant to the question. Successful essays used appropriate, specific examples which enhanced and developed the argument presented. Examples were sometimes general rather than specific. Often a general point would be made without taking time to consider wider implications. Some candidates used lists of examples rather than using examples to develop and explore an argument. Building examples seamlessly into a paragraph by adding them after a point or explanation helps give weight to a developing argument. Examples should not be used in isolation and can be developed or interrogated to make further points, giving added depth to a debate.

There were a small number of rubric infringement scripts where candidates had written in a language other than English, Spanish being the most common. These could not be awarded any marks as responses should be written in English. There were also a number of candidates who attempted to answer more than one question, in some cases attempting to answer all 10 questions on the paper. This limited a candidate's possible achievement as a mark can only be awarded for the best response.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

A business's main aim is to maximise profits. Discuss.

There were many well-written and focused responses to this question. Candidates wrote about what various aims companies had and whether maximising profits was the main aim, or if there were other issues that were more important. Discussion was a feature of a higher-level answer, as a candidate might explore the selfish need of owners to become rich at the expense of paying workers less and failing to maintain or improve the quality of their products and services. It was good to see acknowledgement of worker exploitation in developing countries, citing some of the major clothing brands.

There were some anecdotal examples, where candidates drew on their own experience of a family business. Most of these supported the main argument and exemplified how they value customer loyalty and put service for the community above profits. Some more able candidates evaluated how a business's main aim might be social, e.g. businesses that donate to charity, which was a pleasing stance to see candidates take on this question.

Some candidates explained the process of making a profit and the workings of businesses large and small. These answers were often focused on how a business made a profit rather than the need to make as much as possible and therefore were not focused on the wording of the question. Weaker responses did not include any specific examples and simply described what a typical business did.

Question 2

War is only ever destructive and brings nothing good. Evaluate this view.

War is clearly a major area of concern for young people. Knowledge of important wars and their consequence was prevalent. A weakness of some responses was the inclusion of a multitude of examples with only a little consideration of both sides of the argument.

More successful responses synthesised specific examples of war and its effects and evaluated how these impacted on the social, political, economical, physical and/or mental effects of war, clearly exemplifying their points. Occasionally, candidates broadened their focus to the war on drugs and terrorism and the war on poverty. BLM or Women's Rights were also used as 'war'. All of these were relevant when used appropriately. The citation of the American Civil War gave rise to some interesting essays on the foundations

of democracy and freedom of speech. Equally, some quite original accounts compared the World Wars of the 20th century to the more subliminal and less physical aggression of the Cold War. The more successful responses balanced historical and contemporary knowledge and understanding with some personal insight about the futility and necessity of war.

Many good responses wrote eloquently of the loss of life, landscape and buildings and exemplified their argument with examples. The phrase '*nothing good*' challenged many candidates. Some claimed that one had to have war first before peace could occur, whereas others expanded on that theme by arguing that there were 'good' wars that led to the establishment of the USA and the end of slavery after the American Civil War. Weaker responses offloaded everything known about war with various undeveloped examples and did not examine the key words in the question and were without significant evaluation or critical judgement.

Question 3

To what extent should the ability to use Information Technology be education's top priority?

Many candidates wrote about the role Information Technology (IT) plays in education and did not consider whether it should be education's top priority and, if not, what should be.

A typical argument was that as IT is used more now in the wider world, schools need to train candidates for the world in which they are going to live. Very few candidates explored the myriad of priorities for schools, other than making candidates IT 'literate'. Weaker arguments did not focus on education but wrote about the IT examples that filled their lives. The command phrase '*To what extent*' was sometimes ignored in favour of description.

Stronger responses argued how important IT is for learning and how it is widely used in the workplace, therefore it is vital, above all other things, that it is used in all education settings. Others argued about the health and safety aspects of using IT, such as the problems associated with the internet, or spending too long using IT at the expense of any other activities.

Many candidates wrote about the Covid lockdown and the transfer of education online as the backdrop of arguing for the merits of IT being a central priority for school. Some candidates made eloquent pleas for face-to-face interaction, writing about a possible curriculum that would have among its priorities debate, expression and creativity.

Many essays demonstrated a view that IT was the only way forward for education. What was not evident was the examination of how electronic resources can lack the definitive information gathered from a printed source or the face-to-face contact and study with an expert. The consideration of how impersonal technology had made learning was a common point raised.

Question 4

Human actions can prevent all natural disasters. Evaluate this view.

This question was often answered well by candidates who knew about the impacts of climate change and acknowledged that whilst humans partly contribute to the increase in the number of natural disasters, the term 'natural disasters' itself implies that they are naturally occurring. There were some good responses which discriminated between those disasters which could be prevented and those that could not and what could practically be done to mitigate the damage caused. Stronger responses could explain how various natural disasters happened in scientific terms and were clear about which ones could not be prevented. The general knowledge on plate tectonics, tornadoes and flooding was very sound and some candidates had experienced hurricanes which made the example more pertinent. Typical exemplification included Hurricane Katrina and earthquakes in California.

There were some examples of essays that appeared to have been prepared in advance for the topic of global warming or pollution. These discussed general environmental issues with little focus on the wording of the question. Less successful essays tended to focus on the physical damage of disasters, such as tornadoes, without linking these to how human actions might prevent them. Lengthy descriptions of disasters and their consequences prevented weaker responses from accessing higher level marks due to their being insufficient analysis of their causes and effects, as well as the possible solutions.

Question 5

Careful testing is the most important consideration when developing new medicines. Discuss.

Stronger responses explored the range of dilemmas faced in the development of new medicines. These included whether animals needed to be used in testing or if other methods were as effective, leading to a discussion about whether human needs should always come first and that careful testing on other species was therefore justifiable. Also mentioned in these responses was the balance between the need to save lives using new medicines and the length of time that testing takes due to tight controls of regulation on the process.

Weaker responses stated that testing was the most important consideration when developing medicines without reference as to whether anything else might be of importance. The balance of content weighed heavily towards the Covid vaccination programme, and the success and failure of certain vaccines was based on the allergic reaction of a handful of people compared to the many thousands of successes. Very few candidates argued beyond the importance of testing in order to ensure mass protection and reducing the impact of side-effects – something which would have created a higher level of argument. Some essays did explore other medicines, such as cancer treatments and drugs for diabetes and HIV, with comment on how testing has allowed for the safe and successful roll out of new and improved treatments.

Many essays would have benefitted from having a larger range of examples to strengthen their arguments and many responses generally concluded that careful testing was a slow but necessary process. Priority and cost were occasionally offered as other factors.

Question 6

To what extent do you agree that space tourism is a waste of precious resources?

More successful essays focused on how space tourism is expensive and generally a waste of resources when there are still areas of our planet that are unexplored. These responses were well versed on those individuals and enterprises who are actually preparing for this form of tourism (such as Elon Musk and Richard Branson) and aware of the needs of our own planet, which seemed to many, to be more deserving of the resources we have. There was some comment on the exclusivity of such activity. There were some very good responses which carefully weighed up the enormous costs involved against the opportunities to be part of a mission of discovery.

Many essays focused on space *exploration* rather than space *tourism* which is a different concept. Some essays unconvincingly suggested that space tourism was used primarily to explore how likely colonisation would be on other planets or the likelihood of alien life being found on other planets. More successful responses engaged with the fact that tourism is primarily for recreational purposes and evaluated how purposeful/impactful such an activity is.

Question 7

Museums and/or art galleries are no longer required now we can view their contents online. Discuss.

This question resulted in a number of thoughtful and well exemplified responses based on personal experience of galleries and museums, including the MOMA, the Salvador Dali local collection, motor museums, and natural history museums. Particularly useful examples gave reference to exhibitions that help to immerse audiences in experiences that cannot be replicated online such as the Titanic Museum Attraction in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. The more comprehensive opportunities available online were recognised, but the sheer pleasure and thrill of being close to artefacts usually was seen as more positive. The effect of the pandemic was cited, with many candidates reflecting on the positive value of educational visits to local museums and galleries. It was recognised by many that online viewing provided access to an almost unlimited number of artworks and exhibits. There were a number of balanced conclusions where the general consensus was that art has a value that is difficult to recreate virtually.

Many essays focused on convenience and cost, whereas stronger responses examined matters of personal engagement, aesthetic appreciation of texture and detail, having time to study artworks and artefacts or the notion of just being there to see it in the flesh. Weaker answers generalised rather than citing places or experiences to use as a basis of an argument or viewpoint. There were some descriptive essays that only described various museums or works of art instead of engaging more fully in the debate provoked by the question.

Question 8

Censorship of any form of artistic expression is unjustifiable. Discuss.

Responses explored whose decision it is to censor and the reasons for censorship, considering whether or not explicit art is worthy of censorship and often concluding that it is still valid as art. There were some very passionate responses from candidates aware of individual rights and the danger of allowing vested interests to prevent free expression. The exclusion of certain texts on some school syllabuses was assessed on more than one occasion. Stronger essays examined the need to protect the vulnerable and children from inappropriate content, but often questioned what might constitute 'inappropriate'. Banksy seems to be well-known and that example provided the basis for how essential graffiti can be in highlighting injustice. A few candidates mentioned the inappropriate violent content of video games watched by their generation and there was some sophisticated and convincing discussion of the need to censor this content.

Answers which drifted away from the main theme of the question included discussions about internet censorship, social media and the dangers that a lack of control might pose for young people. The use of propaganda and the need for its control during wartime was well-placed where the essay concentrated on the artistic content of broadcasts, posters, speeches. Some essays digressed into political bias and dictatorships and the way that politicians manipulated the population rather than how this may have been done. Some candidates concentrated on the word 'censorship' and then were inclined to offer any examples they could think of where censorship was an issue, which gave their responses less of a focus.

Question 9

Targeted online advertising is nothing more than an invasion of privacy. Discuss.

The question presented the ideal opportunity for techno-savvy candidates to explain the pros and cons of advertising on the internet and how our data and preferences can be manipulated and influenced through subliminal means. The level of understanding of targeted advertising was clear in most responses. Essays were often well-informed with specific examples. A few addressed specifically the concept of privacy and what it entailed. There was a sound general knowledge of what you can or cannot turn off on a computer to halt the 'invasion'. A balanced argument was often presented indicating the usefulness of some targeted advertisements. Responses focused on how it is often part of business models to use targeted online advertising, but generally concluded that it was often an invasion of privacy because we live in an age of consent on so many things.

Weaker responses contained many examples, without being accompanied by more developed discussion. Some answers included ideas about advertising in general, but did not focus their material on targeted online advertising. Several responses provided lengthy descriptions of targeted advertising and provided a narrow argument where they predominantly criticised it as an invasion of privacy and drew links between this and examples of scamming and cybercrime without providing evidence to support their claims.

Question 10

It is no longer necessary to learn to write by hand. Discuss.

Many answers argued that writing by hand is still necessary and disagreed with the statement in the question, primarily because it is crucial for signing documents and is part of a person's identity. Stronger responses discussed the sensory/motor benefits of handwriting and how it allows us to exercise our brain, with writing by hand serving as a foundation for drawing, making notes and planning. Others stated that handwritten responses are more indicative of an individual's style and powers of expression than computer generated responses. The link between writing and language acquisition was made in several essays.

Weaker responses included one-sided arguments and those that simply described when it was better to write by hand and when it was more useful to use technology to write. Some candidates commented on their own experiences of working online during the pandemic. Many candidates took the approach of examining and praising the use of technology for writing/typing and felt that writing by hand had become obsolete, making assertions that writing by hand is no longer necessary. On the other hand, it was also recognised in many answers that they were writing their responses by hand, and stated that cursive writing is rarely taught these days.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

<p>Paper 8021/12 Essay</p>
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Key messages

- Read all the questions carefully before selecting one.
- Make a plan as this helps in organising the response.
- Keep the introduction focused and concise.
- Address the keywords of the question throughout the response.
- Organise and link points and paragraphs in a coherent structure.
- Develop the points with explanations and relevant examples.
- Present arguments rather than descriptions and lists.
- Take opportunities to analyse and evaluate throughout the response and not just in the conclusion.
- Write a conclusion that synthesises the argument rather than pose new questions or repeat earlier points.
- Use a range of precise vocabulary and idioms appropriate to the context.
- Use punctuation correctly and appropriately.
- Avoid making numerous cancellations and insertions of words or phrases.
- Set time aside to check for errors in grammar, especially in agreement, use of articles and tenses.

General comments

The appeal and accessibility of the questions were seen in the spread of choices made by candidates. A wide range of performances and approaches were seen, indicative of the candidates' interests, backgrounds and courses of study. Many essays were within the recommended word limit though some were twice that length and consequently, repetitive and lacking in focus. The majority of responses communicated using a good standard of written English. There were noticeable errors in many responses, which might have been corrected if more careful proofreading had occurred.

Most responses had clear introductions but there were still a number that tried to create a historical backdrop that was unnecessary, for instance, describing the origins of democracy or the history of sport in **Question 1** and **2**. Introductions should proceed directly to answering the question and rather than spending time outlining all the points which the essay then discusses. Generalised introductions are not helpful, and neither are lengthy openings that take up more than one paragraph.

Stronger responses had a logical line of argument where the viewpoint was apparent. Many followed the pattern of making a point, supporting it with some development and exemplification and linking this back to the question. Weaker essays often depended on assertion or sweeping statements with generalised examples. They were often based on broad issues that are related to, or tangentially relevant to the question and developed ideas in a vague fashion. It was fairly common to see statistics, research and quotations that were clearly fabricated, and these detracted from the arguments. Whilst it was good to see essays that offered some balance and alternative viewpoints to the arguments, sometimes these contradicted earlier arguments or had ambivalent conclusions.

Exemplification is an important part of an argument and adds credibility when there is a range of local and international examples. It is also useful to offer different kinds of examples within a category, for instance, different types of sport in **Question 2** or music from different periods of history in **Question 8**. Anecdotes were sometimes effective but reliance on personal stories as supportive evidence should be avoided.

The best essays engaged fully with the chosen question and analysed its possible meanings. They demonstrated a full understanding of the terms in the question, progression in the argument and evaluation throughout the response. These discussions were supported with a range of well-chosen examples and

nuanced development. Strong responses maintained an academic register and did not use colloquial terms (kids; whole lot of; gonna) or contractions.

Weaker essays had frequent errors in agreement, especially between subject and pronoun or subject and verb, sequence of tenses, paragraphing, punctuation and sentence construction. Comma splicing and the omission of commas were common problems which affected communication, especially as there were often lengthy sections of writing that were poorly punctuated and required re-reading. Although many candidates attempted to employ a range of vocabulary, there were still a considerable number of essays that were largely unambitious in their word choices and sentence structures.

Legibility of handwriting was also often a problem and candidates would be advised to keep to the recommended word limit as the more they wrote, the more the handwriting deteriorated, and grammatical errors increased. It is also advisable to keep cancellations and insertions of words and phrases to a minimum.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

For this question, it was good to see that candidates had a sound knowledge of the principles and practices of democratic governments. Weaker essays tended to be descriptive of the features of democracy instead of linking these features to effective governance. Stronger essays offered examples of democratic and non-democratic governments from the past and present, and were able to argue the strengths and weaknesses of their governance. Candidates dealt with issues such as elections, accountability, freedom of expression, the role of opposition parties as well as economic and social progress. Stronger essays not only dealt with the practical aspects of effective government but also looked at political philosophies.

Question 2

There was a wide range of performance on this question. Most responses attempted to strike a balance between individual performance and teamwork and argued their importance in a variety of contexts. There were many well-informed discussions with detailed examples from football, cricket, tennis and basketball. Some essays restricted themselves to a single sport which did sometimes narrow the scope of debate whilst others referred to sport in a generalised manner and gave few specific examples. Stronger essays tended to be those which appreciated that there was a variety of circumstances where individual skill and talent were more important than teamwork and vice versa. For instance, some argued that teams with famous, highly skilled players were not guaranteed victories if teammates did not work well together. Some argued that even those involved in individual sports require the support of family, managers and coaches.

Question 3

This question was generally well-answered as responses were often thoughtful and carefully considered. Whilst many defined 'geography' as a location with specific terrain and climate that influences identity, others took a broader view and discussed how the community or country in which a person is born or brought up, has an impact on identity and lifestyle. Candidates discussed the effect of family, culture, community, religion and the political landscape on how people think and behave. Stronger essays talked about how immigrants retain their identity despite relocating, how the internet and mass media spread ideas which affect our sense of identity and how people's personality traits can surmount the impact of their surroundings.

Question 4

Candidates who chose this question usually had a firm understanding of data and statistics and were able to present the advantages and disadvantages of their use in decision-making. Weaker responses did not focus on what 'accurate' decision-making could mean and simply described instances where personal or business decisions could be made either using data or subjective factors such as feelings and instinct. Stronger answers considered the use of surveys, opinion polls, historical information and emotions in terms of their reliability and application in a range of decisions, from buying a house to choosing a life partner to allocating funds from a national budget.

Question 5

Strong essays on this topic were grounded in detailed knowledge of advances in medical science and the ethical or legal issues which accompany them. Many candidates provided lists of medical developments and their benefits without addressing the issue of limits. Better essays did focus on limits, but these were largely generalised ideas of restrictions with little reference to any legal, religious, financial or ethical frameworks. Weaker essays were often vague and grouped a wide range of advances together, labelling them as either good or bad. These responses did not differentiate between developments in medicines, medical equipment, procedures or treatments. Some digressed to scientific or technological advances, such as computers and appliances. There were also a number which became overly focused on vaccines developed in response to the Covid-19 virus.

Question 6

This question was not well-answered because candidates addressed the issue of protecting their country's environment and lost sight of the second part of the question. Candidates often wrote about deforestation or pollution that resulted from building more roads and usually viewed the expansion of the transport system in a negative light. Better responses tried to balance the needs of their country and its people with the potential damage to the environment, with suggestions of how a transport system can be expanded in an environmentally-friendly way. As this question was about the candidate's local context, it might have been a better choice for candidates in countries where there is a variety of transport, such as rail, water and air routes.

Question 7

Many of the candidates who chose this question had extensive knowledge of the important role of forests in the water and food cycles. Much information was presented about forests providing shelter and resources to humans and animals alike as well as how forests help to regulate the temperature of the environment and prevent floods and landslides. However, whilst many agreed that the destruction of forests was the 'greatest' threat, this claim was not always backed up with reasons. Also, a more detailed comparison of deforestation with other global threats could have improved many answers. Weaker answers focused on describing the devastation caused by felling trees with some asserting that large numbers of wild animals would overrun towns and harm people hence causing the greatest threat to human survival, or that entire populations would starve because forests have been destroyed.

Question 8

Responses tended to focus on modern musical artistes and genres and compared the musical style or lyrics to examples from a fairly recent 'past'. Arguments were usually centred on singers and musicians being influenced or inspired by older artistes and examples tended to come from just one or two sources. The 'past' was often defined as a singer's own past experiences which had an impact on their song-writing. The stronger candidates discussed music from different centuries and some were able to look closely at the use of traditional and electronic instruments as well as changes in musical composition over the eras. However, most candidates did not argue from the standpoint that the past 'heavily' influences music that is popular today and only agreed that there is influence from the past, which is another clear perspective.

Question 9

There was a tendency among candidates who chose this question to write about the difficulties and challenges arising from learning a foreign language, such as English, rather than the problems caused when translating between languages. Better answers discussed the pitfalls of translating literature, humour and idioms as well as misunderstandings in everyday conversations. There were some interesting responses which looked at the differences in grammar which could also cause confusion.

Question 10

Candidates who attempted this question had a generally good understanding of censorship with regard to whether news is open or restricted. Stronger candidates saw how news can be edited and directed to follow a party-political line and how choices have to be made as to what items are included in a news broadcast or report. Many responses offered alternative channels for people to find out the 'truth' and these included social media, news agencies, documentaries and witness accounts. Weaker answers described the need to censor sexual or violent imagery on the news to protect viewers.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/13
Essay

Key messages

- Try to make introductions concise and relevant without repeating the question.
- Maintain an academic register; avoid an informal conversational style.
- Conclusions should do more than summarise the points already made.
- The best conclusions suggest that further debate might be needed.
- Find a balance between spending time planning the essay and writing it.
- Paragraphs are an effective way of signposting clearly the development of a debate/argument.
- Evaluation and assessment are vital components of an essay.
- Make use of examples that support and develop ideas.
- Focus on the key words in the question.

General comments

Answers were generally communicated clearly, using the expected academic register. Many candidates were familiar with sophisticated vocabulary and expressions.

There were also a number of candidates who attempted to answer more than one question, in some cases attempting to answer all 10 questions on the paper. This limited a candidate's possible achievement as a mark can only be awarded for the best response.

It is important to try to use correct linking words, such as *moreover*, *furthermore*, *therefore*, *on the other hand*, instead of phrases like: *First off*; *Moving along*; *To wrap this up*; *Adding on*. It is tempting to use contractions, e.g. *aren't*, *don't*, *didn't*, *wouldn't*, *can't*, *isn't*, *it's* and *I've*, among others to save time, these are too informal for an essay and the full wording should be used. Also, essays should avoid using vocabulary that is too informal, e.g. *kids*, *to do stuff*, *off of*. The presence of terms such as 'things' or 'stuff' also reduce the quality of an essay. Other spellings that caused confusion included *weather/whether*, *lose/loose*, *there/their* or the misspelling of *received*.

More common phrases that should be avoided as they do not have the correct register: *let's say*; *yes, you might think*; *no, you might say*; *how would you feel if, do you think that*.

Comments on specific question

Question 1

Countries with the largest armed forces always have an advantage. Evaluate this statement.

One of the key words in this question is 'always' and candidates who recognised this usually produced thoughtful answers that amounted to more than a list of various conflicts. Several impressive responses contrasted the American Revolutionary War with America's involvement in Vietnam. Those two examples alone provided candidates with scenarios that fit exactly with a full understanding of the question. Other strong responses highlighted how tactics and technology can make large standing armies relatively unimportant and many made pertinent references to conflicts in Korea and Afghanistan where despite huge military might, less well-trained groups have fought larger forces to a standstill. To quote from one essay that used the First World War as an example: 'Where is the advantage when hundreds of thousands lie dead on the battlefield? I can only see wasted lives and grieving families.' In that remark there is focus on another word in the question and a touch of evaluation.

Question 2

To what extent do individuals have control over their own futures?

This was a very popular question which elicited some very sophisticated responses. It was a question which allowed all abilities to write using their own knowledge and experience. Interestingly many suggested that a stroke of good fortune like winning the lottery, can radically alter one's future! There were a some interesting philosophical approaches that referred to Karma and even predestination. Stronger responses included a more pragmatic approach, contrasting personal effort and determination with issues beyond the control of the individual such as accident of birth, actual accidents, serious illnesses, social and economic circumstances of life and victimisation in the workplace. The American Dream narrative was commonly referred to and there were some interesting examples of rags to riches stories. A few answers revealed a sensitive awareness of poverty in different parts of the world and of those millions of people who are homeless and hungry.

Question 3

The main purpose of education is to prepare people for the world of work. Discuss.

The strongest responses were evaluative and questioned the methodology of education and tied it into the creation of workers to perform a life of mundane tasks. Other strong responses considered the wider purposes of education such as life skills, cultural appreciation, social development and the encouragement of individual talent. Weaker responses listed what is learned in Primary and Secondary education, with the idea that College was the panacea to all problems in life. Many saw only 'work' on the horizon, although a few interesting responses commented upon the fact that the whole of life is an education either through experience or catching up on what might have been missed or neglected at an earlier stage. A number of candidates specified home and community being just as enriching as the education schools can provide. There were references to people denied a formal education for reasons of race or class and how their struggles for justice exhibited the value they placed on education. A few candidates commented upon the inequalities in education caused by many opportunities being available only to the wealthy.

Question 4

Evaluate the extent to which recent scientific developments have improved people's lives in your country.

Many of the strongest responses included a clear evaluative element and considered scientific developments in their own country rather than only in general or global terms. Weaker responses tended to be descriptive and though they often wrote about scientific developments of a global significance, they needed to be framed in a local context. Descriptive answers needed to give more attention to the matter of the improvement of people's lives. Overall, the knowledge base was good, and it was clear that science is of great interest to learners. Several candidates mentioned Covid 19 and the vaccine issues, others considered transport developments both here and in Outer Space, while others showed knowledge of genome sequencing, IVF and other developments in medical science. This question illustrated the necessity for learners to keep up to date with current affairs.

Question 5

Using a telephone is the best way of communicating. To what extent do you agree?

The question elicited critical and evaluative responses. Many raised the addictive and isolating aspects of their use but also commended the smartphone for its many features and its usefulness in emergencies and in everyday matters. These answers also considered the alternative methods of communication; face-to-face, letters, emails and personal visits. Learners were able to relate their own experiences of using smartphones, demonstrating how these have an impact and influence on their lives. Very few answers differentiated between smartphones and telephones. Some weaker responses answered the question by including all that they knew about information technology without significant evaluation. Also, there was some digression from the question to extol the virtues of various apps, which was of less relevance to question.

Question 6

To what extent might it be possible to prevent future famine?

The majority of responses to this question were of a good quality. They included relevant examples, such as the famines in Ireland in the nineteenth century and drew comparisons with famines today and relatively recently particularly on the African continent. They also went on to consider the problems posed by climate change, followed by a consideration of how agricultural innovations might help. The inclusion of an evaluative conclusion, such as recognising the difference between prevention and amelioration of famine enhanced many of the responses.

Question 7

Evaluate the benefits of staying at home during your annual holiday, rather than visiting a foreign country.

This was a fairly popular question but in retrospect a question that should only have been attempted by those who have visited a foreign country or could imagine what it would be like to visit a foreign country. Where this was not done, answers tended to be too restricted, confined to the money saved by staying put and the joys of 'hanging out with friends' in the local area. Those that opted for a narrow approach were only answering part of the question. However, credit was given to those candidates, particularly those from the USA, who argued that visiting another state was tantamount to visiting another country. One candidate compared a visit to Michigan in the dead of Winter to staying at home in sun-drenched Florida. There was more to the essay than that but he or she might as well have been visiting a foreign country.

Question 8

Explain why artists, such as painters, filmmakers or musicians, are often inspired by terrible events in human history.

There were a few responses to this question but not always by candidates who could back up their observations and arguments with examples. The strongest responses to this question included thoughtful understanding of the way certain events have inspired great works. Most notable examples were references to Goya and the war photography of Robert Capa demonstrating a clear understanding of the question's potential. The Holocaust was often mentioned, and candidates were able to use Eli Wiesel's 'Night' as an example. There were well-crafted responses well versed in African American history, which wrote movingly about slavery, referring to Jazz and the Blues. Weaker responses were made up of general comments stating that war, revolution, disasters of all kinds, have inspired art, films and music, without linkage to specific examples.

Question 9

Museums have no right to hold and exhibit items that belong to other countries. Discuss.

There were some strong responses to this question which wrote well-developed answers. The overall feeling was equally balanced between an obligation to return artefacts and a determination to keep them. Some argued that frequently visited museums should be able to keep and share artefacts from other countries so that more people benefited from seeing them. Examples included African masks and sculpture, Egyptian treasures, and paintings from various parts of the world. A few candidates saw a moral obligation to return artefacts they regarded as spoils of colonialism. Essays which adopted this approach were well argued. Another common example mentioned were the Elgin Marbles and several responses referred to indigenous cultures, mainly in the USA, who were, they argued, robbed of much of their heritage.

Question 10

Advertising is losing its influence on people in the world today. To what extent do you agree?

Most candidates made the point that advertising in its many forms is pervasive in modern society, something we cannot avoid but may choose to ignore. A few pointed out that the only advertisements to influence them were for products endorsed by celebrities. The most compelling answers were aware of the insidious effects of targeted advertising and the loss of privacy it entails. Other candidates broadened their responses by referring to political advertising as merely preaching to the converted, adding that advertising for good causes can still have a positive influence. Those taking this approach had evaluation built into their responses because the transient and the spurious were compared with the worthwhile results achieved, for example, by disaster relief appeals.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

<p>Paper 8021/21 Comprehension</p>
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Key messages

- In **1(c)**, with regard to the standard of written English, some responses exhibited a strong command of the language, with excellent organisational and analytical skills both in evidence as well. These candidates incorporated connectives and conjunctions into their responses, so that their answers were structured in such a way that the considerations cited were signposted clearly as advantages or disadvantages. Their responses were nuanced, gaining credit by using modal verbs (e.g. 'may', 'might', 'can' and 'could'); incorporating constructions such as 'he seems' and 'it is likely that...', and employing words such as 'the possibility', 'potentially' and 'probably'. Responses that were too generalised, assertive or speculative were seen. A few responses included informal language (e.g. 'gonna' and 'that's great and all').
- In **2(c)**, some candidates copied words and phrases from the Insert and placed them in quotation marks. Unfortunately, when responding to questions requiring the use of the candidate's own words, words and phrases that are copied from the material cannot be credited even when the candidate acknowledges and attributes them by placing them in quotation marks.
- Some candidates wrote more than was allowed in **1(b)(i)**, **1b(ii)** and/or **1(b)(iii)**. One of the key skills examined on this paper is the ability to compose succinct responses, resulting in material appearing after the word limit not gaining credit. It is highly recommended that a candidate does not include an introduction or repeat the question as part of their response.
- It is essential to read the question carefully and to respond to the focus required by that question. For example, in **1(b)**, candidates gaining credit explained the reasons why Darin, Edvard and Kwame might find the house itself unsuitable as directed. Weaker responses instead, focused on the compatibility of the different personality types. In **1(c)**, candidates gaining credit discussed the reasons why Bo himself would choose one of the three potential housemates as required, whilst weaker responses offered reasons more suitable to answering **1(b)**. In addition, some candidates, not noting the instruction to explain which one of the three Bo would be most likely to choose and not to refer to another candidate, provided reasons why two or all three of the potential housemates would be chosen by Bo. In **2(d)**, candidates gaining credit identified the advantages of the programmes for Spain and the Spanish people as instructed, but some candidates explained the advantages for the participants in the programmes (e.g. 'you will make yourself stand out amongst other candidates...'). In **2(e)**, a few candidates thought that the question was seeking the disadvantage of doing a course or seeing Spain only on-line.
- It is important that candidates note the section of material that they have been directed to by the question. In **2(c)**, stronger responses offered advantages from Programme 1 only.

General comments

- It is recommended that if a question does not instruct the candidate to write a response in their own words or within a certain word limit, candidates use the relevant wording from the material. Responses in own words are often not precise enough to gain credit. In **1(c)**, for example, changing '*rent*' to 'fees' or 'loan' affected the clarity of responses.
- Some candidates did not respond to all the sub-questions. It is highly recommended that a candidate attempts every part of a question.
- It is recommended that candidates indicate clearly if their answer to an individual question is not in the correct response area for that question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) Candidates gaining the most credit noted that they were being asked to explain what might put off any potential housemates as they approached the house and offered external factors, such as seeing the neglected house next door and/or the dying plants Bo's courtyard, or realising how noisy the street was in reality, and explaining the implications then of living there. Common misunderstandings were to offer general observations that were not obvious from the street (e.g. the rise in house robberies, the limited storage space or the size of rooms) or were comments on specific potential housemates.

(b) In (i), the disadvantages most commonly selected were the problems Darin would have, firstly, when cooking as the kitchen was small or the fridge was located elsewhere and, secondly, when wanting to visit new restaurants as there were no facilities nearby. Musical aspects were often cited: the noisy street inhibiting his ability to study, practise or listen to music, or the limited storage space proving to be a problem for him regarding his instruments. The following was an example of a succinct response: 'The limited size of the kitchen would offer a keen cook like Darin very few opportunities. Equally restrictive would be the limited storage space for the instruments his music studies would require.' Valid points beyond the mark scheme included the ideas that, with his wealthy background, Bo's house might not live up to his expectations, his parents might be prepared to pay the rent for somewhere better or that he was likely to have expensive instruments which might get stolen. Common misunderstandings included the following: the size of the fridge itself, the location of the fridge and how Darin would clash personally with Bo (so not focusing on the house itself).

In (ii), candidates gaining the most credit gave succinct responses regarding the disadvantage for Edvard, a keen gardener, of there not being much of a garden at Bo's; weaker responses were characterised by long descriptions of the courtyard and dying flowers, leading to the candidate running out of words. Other points seen regularly were the inability to wander round a garden to de-stress; the lack of exhibitions, shows and concerts to attend in Bo's area, as well as the probability of the noisy street disturbing him in various ways. An insightful response cited the disadvantage that any plants he might cultivate in the courtyard ran the risk of being stolen as house robberies had been increasing in the area. Common misunderstandings were that he could not watch a small television, he was used to living in a luxurious hotel and the distance from Bo's house to the hotel was an issue.

In (iii), many candidates cited the issues Kwame would have both watching and playing sports. Nuanced responses, such as 'With their interest in sport, you can assume Kwame has all the equipment which may not fit the small storage space...' and 'He likes to watch sports on a high-definition television and apparently Bo's television is small...' were offered. Some candidates gained credit for realising that his social life would be affected either by Bo's house rule on visitors or the distance from Bo's house to anywhere suitable to socialise. A common misunderstanding was to cite just that his home was 200 km away and this would be the first time he had been away from home, not noting that this would be the same for any rental in the city and so needed to be linked to the unsuitability of Bo's house.

Overall, higher marks were achieved from responses that were more detailed and specific to each potential housemate. Generalised or vague statements about, for example, the inconvenient location of Bo's house required more precise information to be creditworthy. In addition, some candidates selected random pieces of information from the material, then cited them in their answers without any development, so that their answers were more of a narrative than an analysis.

(b) Higher level responses exhibited the ability to interpret the evidence offered in the material and read between the lines to show understanding of various aspects of Bo's situation and how they linked to his likely choice of housemate. They understood that the most convincing responses are nuanced. Candidates gaining high marks gathered pieces of information from across the material and put them together to create cogent arguments. Such candidates would offer a consideration that had been developed, whether by explanation or by linking two pieces of information from

different sections of the material, thereby highlighting the ability to present sustained and relevant analysis. For example, 'becoming close to Darin would be beneficial for the ambitious Bo, since Darin's parents can use their connections to help him climb the ladder at A2Z Ace Accountants' and 'Ed has done a degree in English Literature and we know that Bo enjoys relaxing and reading as well. This suggests that Bo and Ed will have something in common and they can share opinions about books and make recommendations to each other.'

Some responses were characterised by a confident use of comparatives and superlatives, such as mentioning that Edvard appeared to be calmer and more thoughtful and that Bo and Edvard were closest in age.

Valid points beyond the mark scheme seen included the following: 'However, Darin's parents happen to be audited by the same accounting business Bo works at. This could mean a conflict of interest and Bo could be caught in the middle if things go wrong...' and 'Kwame would be the best choice for Bo because they have a similar line of work and could talk about work issues they might have.'

Some candidates could have attained higher marks if they had considered both the advantages and one disadvantage as instructed, thus ensuring that they offered a balanced response by including a disadvantage. Some candidates gave a creditworthy disadvantage, but then did not explain why it was an issue – they developed it with a mitigation as to why it would not be a problem. A few candidates communicated more disadvantages than advantages.

Some candidates selected random facts, then cited them in their answers without any development or indication of whether they were advantages or disadvantages, so that their response was more of a narrative than an analysis.

A few candidates supported the choice of one housemate by stating that the other two potential housemates were not as suitable in certain ways, rather than by explaining the advantages and disadvantage of the chosen housemate as directed. In addition, a lack of focus on the question resulted in some candidates offering considerations relating to the reasons why the chosen housemate would want to live in Bo's house and/or a reason why they would not. Higher marks could also have been gained if some responses had been less assertive and focused on the housemate rather than Bo, such as Darin will cook for Bo, Edvard will fix the garden for Bo and Kwame will become Bo's personal trainer.

Misunderstandings noted included the following: a few candidates did not understand what was meant by Edvard working a night shift, thought that Kwame would be the least needy housemate and that Kwame's job was a permanent one.

In addition, weaker responses were characterised by the repetition of considerations and/or a consideration and its development being separated from each other in the answer, thus impacting upon the clarity and fluency of the response.

- (c) Responses gaining credit noted that the focus of the question was on Edvard's previous accommodation and offered appropriate considerations, such as finding out whether he had been able to pay his rent, whether he had paid his rent on time, the name of his previous landlord to find out if there had been problem/to get a reference and whether he had been asked to leave or had chosen to leave. Weaker responses were characterised by candidates not noticing the reference to 'previous accommodation' and offering questions about Bo's accommodation, Edvard's education or Edvard's hobbies.
- (d) Candidates who followed the instructions to suggest one quality or characteristic scored well, often citing respect, good communication skills or reliability, then developing the point by adding in order to avoid disputes, resolve problems or not make a housemate feel uncomfortable. Weaker responses gave two qualities or characteristics, or the development was a simple restating of the question.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Candidates gaining credit located the correct phrase and quoted only the relevant section in the material that had exactly the same meaning. Sub-Questions (i) and (iii) were scored the most often, whilst (iv) proved to be the hardest for candidates as *'to become a master'* was a distractor.
- A few candidates misread the question and explained what the phrases meant, such as if you excel at something, you are good at it.
- (b) The most commonly cited points included the identification of the following uses: an excess of exclamation marks, an exclamation mark with a question mark, you to address the reader directly and expressions such as *'Ooh & aah'*. Some candidates noted also the uses of slang and contractions. Weaker responses offered, for example, the use of an informative style, the inclusion of Spanish words or random sentences from the material.
- (c) Candidates gaining credit offered some excellent synonyms: 'The enhancement of your Spanish is a real advantage', 'no need to be fluent in the Spanish language', 'never mind your current ability in the language', 'fluent or clueless, this will work for you', 'you will improve your Spanish in the environment of native speakers' and references to learning 'at first hand' or 'hands-on' were some examples seen. Weaker responses would have gained higher marks if key words and phrases had not been copied from the material or they had noted offered points from other programmes.
- (d) Stronger responses focused correctly on the advantages for Spain and the Spanish people of the relevant programmes. The advantages cited the most included the economic, cultural and linguistic benefits from having more workers, volunteers and/or tourists in the country. Some insightful responses seen referred to potential for longer-term benefits when these participants in the programmes returned home, spreading awareness of all aspects of Spain and promoting Spain in their own country – perhaps expanding business links. A few responses commented on the potential for Spain's role in conservation in Programme 6 to be more widely known about, perhaps encouraging more activism. Some candidates misread the question, focused on the benefits of these programmes for the participants and simply quoted sections of the material.
- (e) Candidates scoring well pointed out that looking at a single site was not enough as one needed to look at multiple sites, do more research and/or read reviews in order to check the trustworthiness of the company, how competitive the pricing was and/or whether the programmes offered were the most suitable. Some candidates offered generalised comments about the disadvantages of booking online or vague comments that could apply to travel brochures as well. Weaker responses focused on the disadvantage of these types of programmes or Spain itself as a destination.
- (f) Creditworthy synonyms beyond the mark scheme were noted: 'excite you' for '*set your heart racing*', and 'buzzing' and 'teeming' for '*bustling*'. There are three ways candidates could have gained higher marks. It is essential that candidates use the same grammatical form as in the question (e.g. 'being excited' is not the correct grammatical form to replace '*set your heart racing*'), provide only one synonym per question, especially as only the first answer is marked, and ensure that the synonym offered exactly matches the original word or phrase (e.g. the synonym should match '*set your heart racing*' rather than encompass the whole idea that '*Spain has programmes that will set your heart racing*').
- (g) Creditworthy sentences seen included the following: 'Knowing that you have got into your dream college will set your heart racing', 'A cell, though too small for humans to see, is a bustling network of processes that keep us alive' and 'The multitude of aquatic species in the coral reef showed its wide diversity of marine life.' Candidates could have gained more credit in a number of ways. It is important to ensure that the subject matter of the sentence offered is not the same as in the material; check that the exact meaning of the word or phrase is clearly defined in the sentence given; respond with only one sentence per word or phrase; and, finally, use the three words or phrases given in the question rather than the candidate's own three synonyms.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/22
Comprehension

Key messages

Candidates are advised to read the questions carefully before beginning their answers, to ensure that they know exactly what it is they are being asked to do. This includes the number of points they need to offer (and develop, exemplify or explain) and whether the question necessitates a response written largely in their own words, or whether copying from the material more directly is acceptable, to demonstrate understanding and selection of relevant information. Furthermore, if there is a word limit in place, it is essential to respond succinctly, without offering too much additional detail and/or any kind of introduction which might ‘waste’ words.

General comments

The material in both **Sections A** and **B** were generally well understood and there was engagement with the questions set, especially in **Section A**. Rubric infringements and blank response areas were rare. The vast majority of candidates showed an ability to communicate points clearly in written English and to organise their work in the answer spaces provided, generally offering an appropriate number of points relative to the available marks for the question. While some errors were made in terms of locating and supplying the required points from the material, candidates generally appeared to understand what it was they were being required to do at each stage.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

The candidates seemed to find the material accessible. There was variation in the number of points selected, conveyed and explained accurately and in the ability of candidates to adhere strictly to, for example, the word count rubrics in **Questions 1b** and **1c**.

Question 1

Most candidates attempted all the questions and there were very few blank response areas in the relatively high-tariff **Questions 1a**, **1b** and **1c**. Occasionally, the logic of the chosen points was questionable and there were some responses which focused, for example in **Questions 1a – 1c**, on the ‘other resort’, in contravention of the rubric. In rare instances, the wrong person was chosen in those questions. The language style of **Question 1d** proved more accessible than similar questions asked previously/on other variants of this paper, while **1e** (extension with own ideas) was a good differentiator in terms of the focus required.

- (a) The majority of candidates understood that the idea here was to identify points relating specifically to Gok and to Axian City and its Plaza hotel, making connections about what Gok would (and would not) find suitable and enjoyable. A few candidates wrote too generally about Axian, with no specific reference to Gok’s personality or interests, although an occasional relevant point could sometimes be inferred in such responses. Others were able to list features which he might like but did not link these to any of his stated tastes and preferences. Most responses, however, did not struggle to connect the most common advantages, such as his liking for cultural activities with the exhibition centre and concert hall, the cafés for ‘people watching’ and the classical architecture on offer both in the city and at the hotel. Many responses, indeed, were able to develop more than the required minimum of two advantages. However, the differentiation in this question tended to occur with the provision of appropriate balance (a disadvantage). Many candidates picked up that Gok was not keen on sports. However, this was not a particularly logical choice, sporting activities being common to both holiday destinations and also being optional. A few perceptive candidates

successfully linked the point about not liking to sweat with the cooler, fresher climate in this part of Rican, however. The more obvious negative points – those relating to the need to use the crowded public transport (or taxis) to get around the city, distance from the airport, the poor state of the roads and landslides, and Gok's propensity to travel sickness – could easily be developed, once identified, as there were several angles from which to consider these issues. Balance was sometimes not developed or explained negatively, with an alternative being provided instead, which was not in the spirit of the question. Good examples of balance successfully conveyed and developed:

However, Axian City is 300 km away from the airport. As Gok gets travel sick and does not like public transport, this long distance would upset him. However, Gok can get travel sick, so he avoids public transport and since activities, entertainment opportunities and accommodation are widely dispersed across the city, from the street markets in the west, cafés in the central square, cinemas in the eastern part and accommodation in the west, the need to use public transport may arise frequently, which may prove inconvenient to Gok.

Note that the detail in the second example far exceeds the level of detail needed to count as a developed point but is included for its very good evidence of understanding and also the use of more nuanced observations – *may*, as opposed to the more definite and assertive *will*.

- (b) In both **1b** and **1c**, the most common reason for candidates not scoring all available marks was not being strict enough in their following of the 60-word limit and thus providing material which might well have been creditworthy, but did not fall within the word count. Usually this meant that the balance point could not be considered. Going too far beyond the word limit was generally a result of unnecessary introductions being offered and/or of giving too much detail about a point, for example listing all the available sporting activities in **1c**, instead of establishing the link between relevant pieces of information and then moving on. Most candidates were able, in **1b**, to identify and link key points relating to Tonja's sociability and desire to meet the locals (Axian's lively atmosphere and its venues attractive to residents – including, quite perceptively, the crowded public transport), her loving films (the cinema) and walking (mountains and trekking programme), and wishing to purchase unique souvenirs (the street markets). Balance was usually offered either in the lack of availability of massages to ease her feet after walking, or the hotel's larger number of rooms making her less likely to enjoy it, liking as she does smaller hotels in which she can become acquainted with the staff. As noted for **1a** (above), occasionally the attempted development of the balance would resemble a mitigation (e.g. she could manage *without* the massage, or she might *still* get to know the staff in the hotel) and this could not gain credit. Examples of well-phrased sections of answers:

Since The Plaza is a large hotel, it most likely boasts a large staff, preventing Tonja from effectively acquainting herself with the staff.

The Plaza is a large hotel with 100 rooms and Tonja would prefer more intimate accommodation.

- (c) Most candidates correctly identified two clearly explained advantages here, most frequently Pia's enthusiasm and aptitude for sports and the wide range of sporting activities on offer at Zixa Beach Resort, and her singing talent matching well with the weekly *Zixa's Got Talented Guests* evening, some noting her likelihood of winning a prize. Good use was made of the tennis angle, either identifying it as her specialism and thus the availability of classes being a benefit or, perhaps more perceptively, recognising that, as someone already playing to a high level, the coaching likely to be offered at a holiday resort would probably be too basic. Pia's wildlife sanctuary work and the cruise on offer were far less seldom linked, while her enjoyment of open spaces was not often successfully used, either because the connection to the site being more cramped than anticipated was not noted, or because candidates focused on the *busy city environments* angle, which was a distractor in being a negative of Axian, and thus not relevant here. The disadvantages also proved more elusive in this question, and not only where responses had 'run out of words'. One of the few misunderstandings of the material was evident in responses to this question, because *sleek ... international modern design* was not infrequently taken to be the opposite of *contemporary design and interiors*, with their *clean, simple lines*. This point was therefore generally attempted (unsuccessfully) as an advantage. The poor initial reviews of the resort were sometimes offered as a valid negative feature but most candidates found it difficult to develop this idea for a second mark and/or only offered a mitigation, such as that it is new and might improve. Example of succinct but developed advantages:

Since Pia enjoys caring for animals, the opportunity at Zixa to view and enjoy the local wildlife will be sure to grab her attention. Pia's talent within the art of singing is sure to get her excited about the weekly Zixa's Got Talented Guests evening to showcase her talents.

- (d) This question was generally well answered, with many candidates able to offer at least two of the possible answers relating clearly to informal language. Others correctly named some of the features, rather than selecting examples from the material, such as *slang*, *(over)use of exclamation marks* and *use of contractions such as you've, there's*. Where marks were lost, this tended to be because too much of a run-on or run-in was offered, for example *Head off (to our entertainment centre)* or *(After ... a relaxing day in the spa,) guess what – there's more!*
- (e) Most candidates were able to offer a consideration of what a guest remaining in an all-inclusive resort might miss. They usually referred to the range of sights, foods, experiences and the opportunity for cultural appreciation and exchange with local people, and most candidates were able to explain or exemplify their idea to gain the second mark. Some responses were too focused on the individual becoming lazy, or on boredom or cost. There was some misunderstanding here, with the chief advantage of an all-inclusive package being that prices are known in advance and largely fixed. An occasional thoughtful point was made about captive audiences and the possibility of a better range and value of similar excursions existing outside the resort. A few candidates focused still on the specific resort in the material and thereby limited the scope of their responses, or considered the impact on local people and trade, which was not the focus of the question. One developed disadvantage was sought, so limited credit could be gained for answers listing two or more unrelated points.

Section B

Despite some technical language in the material, most candidates appeared to find the reading comprehension quite accessible and successfully navigated the two sources offered here, each with a different slant on the same topic (drones over airports and in conservation; one depicting them as a nuisance, the other as a useful tool). The differences in the quality of answers resulted from the need to locate the precise element required by the focus of the question and then clearly render the point(s), including within a word limit (**2b** and **2d**) or in a candidate's own words (**2c**), where necessary.

Question 2

Candidates were mostly less successful in **Section B** than **Section A**, especially with regard to the precision required for the language identification (**2e**) and manipulation (**2g** and **2h**) questions. Although short and with a relatively low tariff, both the own words (**2c**) and word count (**2b** and **2d**) questions tested the candidates.

- (a) Most candidates were able to offer the correct idea, of not knowing what a drone will do and/or where it will fly, i.e. that 'unpredictability' was the key issue for *air traffic controllers*. Most incorrect responses had the wrong focus, and considered for instance the impact on travellers.
- (b) The most common reason for answers not gaining both marks here was exceeding the word count. It was possible, within just 20 words, to state that *a police officer thought it possible no drone existed* and that *two people arrested were released without charge*. Common distractors were those points which did not focus on the question but which indeed seemed to offer proof that drones *had* been present; the 67 sightings at Gatwick Airport, the television camera operator at Heathrow Airport and the police statement of doubt later being blamed on poor communication.
- (c) This own-words question proved to be quite challenging. While it was permitted to use certain key technical words from the material (radar, drone(s)) without change, the brief nature of the required points meant that most other terms did need to be rendered other than in ways found in the material and that a reasonable degree of precision was required. Where candidates scored here, the mark for the stand-alone *inaccurate* was most commonly awarded, for *not accurate*, *inaccurately*, *unreliable*, *people may misjudge other objects for drones* or *lacked/lacking precision*, but not the less specific *inefficient*. The word *small*, from the first point sought, was not often successfully conveyed in own words (*tiny*, *miniature size*, *not big enough*), while *spotted by eye* (*seeing them in person*, *located by sight*, *manually*) and *any action* (*any response*, *attempt to disrupt them*) also proved difficult to re-word. An example of a successful response:
It gets difficult to detect them by radar signals as they are tiny. Detecting them through sight is the only option, which is why this process becomes sluggish. It is not precise either.
- (d) As with **2b**, remaining within 20 words while still offering the required level of detail was the biggest challenge. Most candidates rendered some part of each of the two possible points, usually omitting the *return-to-home* angle of the jammers and remote controls, and the *sensitive airspaces* for the software preventing the drones. Two ideas from the material were fairly frequent distractors; the

training of eagles and the building of one's own drone and subsequently adapting its hardware and software.

- (e) (i) In all four 'identification' questions, precision was key. Candidates were required to select the words which form the same meaning as that given on the question paper, i.e. no run-ins or run-ons were permitted, as the ability to select terms with the exact same meaning was being tested. Similarly, enough detail was needed to convey the meaning in full. For example, while missed hyphens and the missed article could be tolerated, *just-in-time* alone was insufficient to convey the sense of 'system'; hence, *basis* was also required to gain the mark. Common distractors were *built-in return-to-home function* and *pre-programmed paths*.
- (ii) This was the most commonly correct of the four sub-questions in **2e**, though occasional answers offered only the *technologically* or *savvy*.
- (iii) This proved the most difficult of the four parts of **2e**. It was necessary to convey the idea of 'as ... are being felt', which *aftermath* alone did not quite do. The full phrase *in the aftermath (of)* was needed here. A not uncommon distractor was *collateral damage*.
- (iv) Here, the elements most frequently omitted were *only* and *way* (from *(the) only sure-fire way*).
- (f) (i) Candidates tended to do well on this question, at least in terms of location of the correct elements, although there were some answers which included erroneous material, usually descriptive sections regarding the purpose, features and successful outcome of the drone scheme on the islands. Since the question did not require points to be communicated in candidates' own words or within a limited number of words, a reasonable level of precision was required to gain each mark. For example: *more precise*; *increased feasibility*; *practical way of addressing the threat on rugged island terrain*, and being *simpler* than operations involving *helicopters and pilots*. (Italicised words required for the mark to be awarded.)
- (ii) Many candidates did not identify the correct part of the paragraph here for the single mark. There were frequent references to the particular bird species found on one specific island, while the question referred to the islands more generally. Some responses were written with the right idea but omitted essential detail, most usually the scarcity of predators.
- (g) (i) Where candidates are asked to provide synonyms for words or phrases, some important principles apply, most specifically the requirement for both accuracy in meaning and consistency of grammatical form. If, for example, an adjective is presented, then an adjective is also sought, i.e. the term offered should be able to replace the one found in the material and make lexical and syntactical sense. For *disrupted* (past participle, used adjectivally) the most common correct response was *interrupted*, while *disturbed* (grammatically sound but not quite the same sense; too vague) and *cancelled* (grammatically acceptable but too definite) were common incorrect answers.
- (ii) For *autonomously* (adverb), a common answer was *automatically*. This was deemed not to be an exact equivalent, along with *freely*. Better answers included *on its/their own*, *without anyone controlling*, *without external control*, and *by itself*.
- (iii) The adjective *invasive* needed both the idea of being present when/where it should not be, and a sense that this poses a threat. For this reason, potential synonyms *intruding/not local* and *dangerous* each rendered only one half of this concept. Other responses used an infinitive (*to invade others' territory*) or a noun phrase (*a species which...*) and so were not in the appropriate grammatical form. The most common correct answers were *intrusive* and *invading*.
- (iv) For this question, weaker candidates commonly understood the meaning of *concerted* to be equivalent to 'determined' or relating to concerts or to concentration/determination. Stronger candidates offered adjectives which suggested collaborative effort, such as *coordinated*, *jointly planned/organised* (*planned/organised* alone insufficiently clear) or *collective*.
- (h) (i) To a degree, correct use of the terms from **2g** in the sentences for **2h** also required understanding of the original. Other principles apply in such questions; for the same grammatical form to be deployed, for a context other than that provided in the material to be considered, for a single sentence to be written, and for the meaning of the word or phrase to be fully clear in the new context, i.e. it should not be possible to substitute an antonym and for the sentence still to make sense. In **2hi**, more candidates provided a creditworthy example than did not, although *disrupted*

was quite often still applied to (*travel*) *plans*, too close to the original material's context. Successful examples:

Adam was scolded profusely by his teacher after he disrupted the class.

The outbreak of the pandemic has disrupted the economic growth of countries as people are unable to go to work.

The entire world's trade was disrupted after a ship blocked the Suez Canal.

- (ii) While the majority of candidates offered a valid sentence here too, there was quite a lot of overlap, even when grammatically sound, with the original context of flying and/or drones. It was acceptable, however, to refer to robots, AI and self-driving cars. Successful examples:

In the not-too-distant future, driverless cars will be able to be programmed to reach their destination autonomously.

In democratic states, every citizen can take decisions autonomously about who to vote for.

Ali was not forced to skydive; he made the decision autonomously.

In 1947 Pakistan was partitioned from India and given the right to govern autonomously.

- (iii) A number of responses relied on species, as in the material, and so could not gain credit. Good examples, however, often managed to include some sense of the definition of *invasive*, therefore making the term clear in context. For example:

Our new roommate was not respecting our personal space, so we kicked him out due to his invasive behaviour.

My boss asks a lot of questions about my personal life and can be very invasive at times.

Conservatives regard refugees as invasive parties who take away resources from the country's own people.

Patients may feel agitated about undergoing invasive surgical procedures.

- (iv) While most candidates were hindered here (as was evident from responses to **2giv**) by a lack of understanding of the term *concerted*, those who had understood it quite often relied on *campaign*, which was too close to the context of the material to gain credit. Good answers were able to offer context which demonstrated recognition of the collaborative nature of the term, with protests, demonstrations and similar being acceptable contexts. Politics/international relations and medicine seemed often to be at the forefront of candidates' minds, and these proved fruitful areas for this question. Successful examples:

A concerted effort from the richer countries can help eradicate the problem of hunger from many parts of the world.

Pakistan has been able to plant many acres of trees after a concerted attempt by the government and environmental organisations to protect the natural landscape.

The concerted protests of 'Black Lives Matter' created a sense of unity and community across the world.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/23
Comprehension

Key messages

The material in the Insert is the basis on which candidates should answer the questions. Therefore, it is very important that candidates read the material carefully before starting to write their answers. Whilst some questions may occasionally require candidates to answer from their own knowledge and experience, candidates are expected to focus their answers on the material given in **Section A** and **Section B**.

Candidates are advised to read the questions carefully before beginning their answers, to ensure that they know exactly what it is they are being asked to do. This includes the number of points they need to offer (and develop, exemplify or explain) and whether the question necessitates a response written largely in their own words, or whether copying from the material more directly is acceptable, to demonstrate understanding and selection of relevant information. Furthermore, if there is a word limit in place, it is essential to respond succinctly, without offering too much additional detail and/or any kind of introduction which might 'waste' words.

General comments

Most candidates engaged with the material and found it mostly accessible, especially **Section A**. **Section B** presented more challenges, especially the questions where candidates were required to write in their own words.

The majority of candidates attempted every question and only a small minority found the questions very challenging in terms of comprehending the questions or writing in clear English. It was pleasing to find that all apart from a very few candidates answered the questions with good grammatical accuracy and fluency.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

In questions where candidates are required to give advantages and one disadvantage for a particular option, answers should focus only on information that is most pertinent to that particular option. There will always be information in the material that is relevant to other options and not as relevant as other information. It is a skill, that candidates need to develop, to select pertinent information from one part of the material and link it to that in another.

- (a) This question required candidates to choose a school option that was most suitable for the family and also explain one disadvantage for their chosen option. A range of responses were seen with the most popular choice being option one, the private boarding school, followed by option three staying with grandparents.

The majority of candidates were able to link the sport features of the school with the boys sporting interests; they also recognised the pastoral strengths of the school, the ability to connect to parents using the internet, fellow candidates in the same situation as them and the fact that the children would be together. Some candidates were able to recognise that this was the worst case – scenario for Tino – firstly, because he was initially too young for the school and, secondly, that he would be separated from his mother and anxious with only his brothers around.

Many candidates that chose the grandparents option made the case for keeping the boys with family in the absence of their parents. The teaching experience of the grandfather was seen as a

bonus to help the boys in their schooling, especially Ethan. Some candidates saw the advantage in that his life would stay the same – hobbies, girlfriend (Ricardo) and schooling – to keep stability for the children. Option two was least popular, with the only real advantages cited by candidates being that the children’s mother had teaching experience to help with home schooling and that the family would be together allaying any anxiety for Tino of being separated from his mother.

- (b) This question assessed candidates’ ability to use the material in the Insert to write concisely about the least suitable schooling option as well as identifying only one advantage. In many cases candidates found it difficult to write their response within the word limit and often gained no credit for their advantage point which was beyond the word limit. Their answers, therefore, were automatically capped at a maximum of 8 marks.

The most popular option chosen was the home school at the oil exploration site. In this case candidates were able to link the point about poor internet connection and difficulties in connecting to teachers online, the long shifts worked by the parents and their difficulties in supervising and helping their children, the potential safety issues associated with the protests that could affect the camp. Other points linked to this were the difficulty Ethan might have with home-schooling (given he already struggled at school) and no opportunities for sporty children to participate in their respective sports. Many responses included the advantage of this option as being either the fact that the children’s mother had been a teacher and therefore could help with home-schooling or that Tino would be less anxious because he would be with his mother.

The other two options were chosen less frequently. The age of the grandparents was given due consideration as well as the recovery of the boys’ grandmother in contributing to the challenge of raising three boys. Several candidates cited the expense of private schooling, the separation of Tino from his mother and his age in their points about the boarding school.

- (c) Many candidates were successful in explaining the reasons behind the protests at the oil exploration site and scored maximum marks. Many made the general point about oil being bad for the environment and were also able to develop their point with reference to the impact on flora and fauna of deforestation. Others cited the need to move away from oil, a fossil fuel, and its polluting nature (air pollution and/or oil spoils) and look for more renewable energy. Occasionally candidates referenced the idea of resource nationalism as a reason for protest against large oil companies using national resources for profit.
- (d) This question was well answered and allowed candidates to use their own knowledge and experience to explain the benefits of home-schooling. Candidates were able to explain a range of reasons including disagreeing with the current school curriculum, religious reasons linked to the curriculum, keeping their children safe, for example, citing school shootings and bullying; occasionally elite sport was cited, meaning a child could train for their sport and be home-schooled.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) This question required candidates to answer in their own words. This is a skill that many candidates find challenging and have difficulty in executing effectively. The most frequent part of the text that was changed successfully into own words was the point about lionfish being an invasive species, with candidates describing them as having ‘invaded the sea’, being ‘not local’ and ‘intruding in these waters’. Very few candidates wrote about the negative impacts of lionfish on local ecosystems, people and jobs (fishing industry), restricting their answer just to the ecosystem and often lifting words from the text which affected their marks.
- (b) Like **Question 2(a)**, this question required own words. The expectation was for candidates to recognise that the lionfish had entered the Caribbean Sea in two possible ways: by accident when an aquarium was destroyed by a hurricane and deliberately, when former lionfish owners, who no longer wanted to look after the fish, let them go into the sea. Examples of creditable responses are: *the lionfish escaped from an aquarium by accident when it was damaged by a tropical cyclone; lionfish were let go deliberately by ex-pet owners who had grown tired of looking after them.*
- (c) Many candidates were able to correctly identify, within 30 words, the reasons why lionfish dominate the Caribbean Sea, citing lack of enemies, a high reproductive rate and the ability to live in a range of habitats and depths. Some candidates recognised that the warm waters of the Caribbean

encourage their reproduction. An example of a successful response: *they can survive in diverse habitats and depths; they repopulate rapidly and they have no natural enemies.*

- (d) In this question candidates were required to write in their own words and explain why lionfish are voracious predators. The strongest responses focused on the idea that the lionfish are 'not picky eaters'. Candidates are able to use some words from the text that are awkward to put into their own words. Numerical references are not part of these, and so candidates should make an attempt to write these in another form. Examples of successful responses: *They have highly expandable stomachs, leading them to have huge appetites so they can even eat fish more than half their size. Lionfish are not very picky eaters when it comes to their prey.*

- (e) This question required candidates to find synonyms. When candidates are required to identify a word in the material that has the same meaning as a word or phrase in the question, they should pick only the exact word or phrase that matches. If they copy the sentence or phrase that the synonym is in, they will not gain any credit. For example, 'extensive' is creditable for 'far-reaching' but 'extensive geographical range' is not.

Many candidates were able to successfully find synonyms for 'one-of-a-kind', 'bad', 'on purpose' and 'far-reaching'. Weaker responses struggled with 'courses of action' for which they were required to find the synonym 'measures'.

- (f) There were many strong responses to this question. Weaker responses included many that wrote much more than the 30 words required. The most common factors picked out were the nutritional value of the lionfish (Omega 3), lionfish being on menus in high-end restaurants and the great taste of lionfish. Some candidates recognised the importance of its abundance and so lots of supply for restaurants. When candidates were able to articulate clearly that eating lionfish gave environmental benefits, then credit could be given. An example of a succinct response: *Lionfish taste good, have very good nutritional benefits and are guilt-free to consume because eating them actually benefits the environment unlike eating other fish.*

- (g) The focus of this question was on the benefits and drawbacks of the actual training of sharks to consume lionfish rather than the fact that sharks would reduce the lionfish population (which many candidates cited).

Examples of creditable responses:

- *A benefit would be once the sharks are trained; humans have to do virtually nothing to control the lionfish.*
- *It would save money instead of paying people to catch the lionfish.*
- *It could be a problem because sharks are wild animals and unpredictable and they may stop eating the lionfish for no obvious reason.*
- *The training could be dangerous for the divers as sharks are wild animals and could attack them.*

- (h) Strong responses focused on the overfishing of groupers who struggle to predate on the lionfish and the fact that there are so many lionfish with such a fast reproduction rate it is too difficult to keep them under control. Weaker answers often repeated points made earlier in the paper.