



Cambridge International AS Level

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

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Paper 2 Comprehension

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INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes



INFORMATION

- This insert contains all the resources referred to in the questions.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Material for Section A

Background

Sarantown University currently offers on-campus study-bedrooms to all its first-year students, who typically then move into private rental accommodation in the city for the remaining years of their courses. However, rental costs and crime rates have increased significantly in Sarantown in recent years, so the university authorities are worried about attracting potential applicants. Bilal Mendes-Smith, Head of Student Accommodation, has a long-term plan for university-owned rooms to be available to all final-year students. The first phase of this ambitious plan is underway. A building site on the outskirts of Sarantown has been acquired, and the university is now seeking a company to design its brand-new accommodation block. The budget for the building project is \$3 million.

The contract brief

Sarantown University aims to achieve as many final-year student rooms as possible on the new site, while also providing all the necessary shared facilities. We are keen to work with reliable designers who appreciate our budgetary constraints and other considerations. Ideally, the new building and bedrooms will not only be appropriate for students, but also for our conference guests, maybe even tourists, during vacations.

These are the two companies which have tendered for the contract:

Company A: Sarantown Select

- established five years ago by three former students from the university
- specialises in modern, functional designs
- won a regional award two years ago for a high school's new computer and resource suite

Company B: Barton Build

- Sarantown's oldest architectural firm whose chief executive is due to retire next month
- known in the Sarantown area for their traditional designs and restoration of older buildings
- recently redesigned Sarantown's disused public swimming pool complex

Extracts from the companies' presentations

Karen Stevens (co-chief architect of Sarantown Select): I envisage a simple design with a plain exterior, as the focus should be on the student experience inside. Solar panels on the roof will power all the hot water and lighting. We'd include a garden in a spacious central courtyard, and space for bicycle storage. I remember, in my last year at university, I just wanted a quiet study space, so all the rooms will be sound-proofed. Windows will open onto the garden, rather than the surrounding roads. We'll also give careful thought to the location of the stairs and communal kitchens and bathrooms. No leisure area, I think, as that would invite people to gather and be noisy. Students need good wi-fi connectivity, of course, and we'll install a state-of-the-art security system, with entry and intercoms linked to smartphones. And one touch of luxury – a washbasin in each room. We can accommodate 180 students.

Georg Walters (chief executive of Barton Build): We're all about creating beautiful and memorable buildings that people can love for years. Too many university buildings are unattractive from the outside – just boxes, really. We'd look to bring some style to student living. Students seem to want so much more than a bedroom – it's all so different from my day. They're demanding their own en-suite bathrooms and air conditioning, and cafés and the latest entertainment systems in their communal areas. It's more like designing an international airport lounge! And if the university is serious about hosting conference guests and tourists, then there must definitely be a wow factor when people scroll through the promotional pictures on the university's website and social media pages. We'll certainly work on that. Of course, that all comes at a cost and takes up space, so we'll go upwards – six storeys – and fit in 120 rooms. We also offer fully costed construction plans, for effortless transformation of our designs into reality.

Additional Information

- 1 Sarantown University's main campus is located about three kilometres to the west of the city centre.
- 2 Local planning rules now restrict the height of new buildings to no more than three floors.
- 3 Bilal Mendes-Smith has a nephew about to begin studying architecture at the university.
- 4 The university aims to have recovered the cost of the building, from student rentals alone, after no more than five years.
- 5 Last year, Sarantown Select was fined for recommending too few fire doors in a hotel.
- 6 The new building will be located some seven kilometres to the east of the city centre.
- 7 Barton Build's plans were submitted two days after the deadline.
- 8 Sarantown Select offered work placements to three Sarantown University architecture students last year, one of whom has secured a job there after graduation.
- 9 The new building will form one part of extensive redevelopment work recently approved by the city planning department.
- 10 Students attend university courses for 40 weeks of the year. University accommodation rent is currently capped at \$100 per week.
- 11 The original campus of Sarantown University was constructed more than 150 years ago. Three of its accommodation buildings, and the university's library, have been nationally recognised for their historic features.

- 12 Most students ride bicycles when getting around the campus and city centre.
- 13 Barton Build's swimming pool project resulted in a large overspend because some of the design features required much more technical expertise and materials than had initially been evident from the plans submitted.
- 14 Estimated build costs for the accommodation block: \$2.1 million for Sarantown Select, and \$3.2 million for Barton Build.
- 15 All new buildings must obtain an energy efficiency certificate.
- 16 There are good bus routes all over the city, although buses in the east of the city are infrequent after 20:00.

Material for Section B

Is it time to consider 'quiet quitting' my job?

Fed up with answering emails from your boss at the weekend? Ever busted a gut to complete a near-impossible task by the deadline? Well, you're not alone. You may even be considering joining the 'quiet quitting' revolution.

What is quiet quitting?

Quiet quitting refers to workers disengaging from aspects of their job they consider excessively demanding and beyond their contractual requirements, but without openly declaring this decision. Similar to 'working to rule', they contribute the minimum of time and effort, and bring little enthusiasm to their activities. 5

In a competitive world, there is pressure – overt or implicit – to arrive early and work late, to read a document or attend a remote meeting or course outside working hours, and to respond instantly to 'Can you just ...?' requests. While each such demand or intrusion on your time may seem minor, the cumulative effect can feel oppressive, resulting in frustration, exhaustion and demotivation. 10

Nobody enjoys feeling undervalued or exploited. Unless eager to climb the career ladder, employees are increasingly aiming for an improved work/life balance, and are less willing to do more than they are contractually obliged – or paid – to do. 15

Why is it happening?

The working from home (WFH) phenomenon, initially enforced during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, is partly responsible for blurring the lines between our work and leisure time. Simultaneously, the pandemic saw more people start to question their habits, values and priorities. 20

WFH is facilitated by technology and the prevalence of 24/7 communication devices. In the past, an email sent at 16:55 on a Friday would probably not have been read until Monday morning. Nowadays, it will ping instantly on the recipient's smartphone and, even if no reply is immediately expected, can be a distraction throughout the weekend. The same goes for holidays. The moment the plane lands, you'll see that someone has been in touch while you were airborne. Even a colleague's cheery text wishing you a fun trip reminds you of what awaits back home. 25

Rising living costs have made workers resentful of additional, unpaid requests, and less inclined to comply. If they see little chance of gaining internal promotion, or improved conditions and better salaries elsewhere, then quiet quitting seems to offer a non-confrontational solution.

Are there any downsides?

Consciously or not, most of us are eager to please, especially if our job is generally enjoyable, and even more so if we like our boss. If the workplace culture is to exceed minimum expectations, those who choose not to join in may be criticised, or even marginalised. 30

High salaries come with high expectations. A city banker in London describes being in the office all night when negotiating multi-million-dollar deals with counterparts in Tokyo or Sydney, and frequently having to break off plans with friends at short notice. On the plus side, as he is regularly reminded, he earns a fortune and will probably retire before he is 40. Not an obvious candidate for quitting, quietly or otherwise! 35

While quiet quitting avoids conflict and gives an illusion of control, it is unhealthy in the longer term, since existing issues are never addressed. If things are bad enough to make you feel so defiant, then you may be better off *actually* quitting! Quiet quitting further burdens your colleagues, doubtless affecting workplace relationships; a cycle which may even 'guilt trip' you into resuming 'normal' service. 40

What can bosses do?

If a boss suspects someone of quiet quitting, they can either get tough on those no longer deemed to be pulling their weight, or question why one or more of the people they supervise feels it necessary to down tools. Are *their* organisational skills at fault, if they regularly ask people to complete tasks at the last minute or out of hours? Is *their* workplace culture unreasonably demanding? 45

Some employers adopt a passive-aggressive solution, known as 'quiet firing'. Mirroring quiet quitting, this minimalistic approach to managing employees ultimately aims to drive the disaffected worker(s) away. Clearly, this brings its own problems: inefficiency and reduced quality of work, a toxic atmosphere, high staff turnover, and possible legal action for constructive dismissal. 50

Are there any alternatives?

Talk to your immediate supervisor. Unless they know a problem exists, they can't help. If your work sometimes necessitates extra hours at short notice, make sure your flexibility is recognised. When you have had to work hard, negotiate a reward in return. 55

Learn to say 'no'. If you're the only one required to do more, ask yourself why. It is tempting to feel flattered, as if you alone have the necessary skills. More likely you are simply being too compliant. 60

Set boundaries. Don't initiate out-of-hours calls to your boss or co-workers. Embed a message at the foot of all your work emails, detailing times when you are available to respond. This sounds more positive than 'I refuse to answer emails between ...'.

Find the balance. Protect your own interests, but be prepared to go the extra mile when really necessary. Assess each task's importance and how crucial its timing is. For occasional last-minute action imposed by external factors, you might agree to the extra work – but not every time. 65

Look elsewhere. Working hard may be less demoralising if you enjoy and feel valued in your job.

In conclusion, if all else fails, turn off your phone, announce your intended non-contact time – and stick to it! 70

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