

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8001/01

Paper 1

General comments

The structure of essays has shown some improvement again this year. Introductions are usually no longer rambling and overlong but set the scene quite succinctly for the essay. In some cases however, conclusions are not well written. They tend to be simply a reiteration, usually list-like, of the main points already discussed in the essay.

There was some evidence that a reasonable proportion of candidates had checked and corrected their English where appropriate. This saved them losing marks for careless, avoidable errors. This thorough and systematic checking of the English should be second priority to the urgent, continued need to concentrate on the exact wording of the question before embarking on the writing of the essay. The attached notes on candidates' responses to the questions indicate the questions this year where too many candidates did not read the question closely enough and therefore ignored key words, depriving themselves of higher marks. Similarly, the appearance of an essay title on the examination paper on a topic or similar area of interest to something which may have been anticipated and rehearsed in lessons does not signify that this is therefore an easy option for the candidate. The candidate may have a good, overall knowledge of the topic, which obviously could be beneficial, but it will be necessary to read the question with the utmost care taking due note of any key words so that candidate can respond in a direct manner to that particular question and not simply offload everything known about the topic area. The skill lies in the ability to adapt one's knowledge to the specific demands of the question. It is a skill that needs practice.

As usual, a wide range of ability was seen again this year, particularly in the fluency and accuracy of the English. Weaker scripts are sometimes so full of errors in the English that the meaning of the content is obscured.

Several Examiners this year received script parcels from Centres that had been incorrectly assembled. Centres are asked to return Paper 1 scripts in Paper 1 envelopes separately from Paper 2 in Paper 2 envelopes.

Use of time

Candidates had no problems with coping with the time constraints on this syllabus. However, many do not make sufficient notes or diagrams to chart their essay. Sometimes, after writing a page or two, the essay is abandoned and the candidate embarks on a second answer. This is clearly a self-penalising waste of time and can lead to there being no time for a thorough language check before handing the paper in at the end of the examination session.

Use of English

As in previous sessions Examiners see evidence of a wide range of ability to write English fluently. Some candidates have virtually full operational command of the language and therefore score highly in the Use of English mark but the weakest candidates are unable to express themselves with any real accuracy. However, in most cases, even if the English is not absolutely accurate or the idiom is sometimes not appropriate, there is no major problem comprehending what the candidate wishes to state.

It is a shame that the same errors occur year after year. A systematic eradication of the very common errors in the following list is the quickest route to higher marks for the use of English element of an essay's score.

- non-agreement of subject
- missing endings on plural nouns because of carelessness and/or poor checking
- frequent incorrect use of definite and indefinite articles

- confusion between their/there, to/too, here/hear
- incorrect use of apostrophes
- incorrect comparative forms such as more easier/ more richer/ more harder
- incorrect use of commas leading to loss and/or ambiguity of meaning
- words not separated e.g. 'alot' and 'infact'

The need for a final, systematic language check in the last ten minutes or so of the examination still needs to be emphasised to candidates. Some Centres have made noticeable improvement in this direction and it is hoped that others will follow suit so that their candidates will gain higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was reasonably popular. Some candidates, despite the wording of the question, chose only one group or minority because they felt this was the major issue in their respective country. Opinions on the treatment of minorities often varied widely, even from candidates of the same Centre, which seemed to reflect their status in that society, personal observation and sometimes prejudice. Better answers were supported by data from credible sources and convincing examples. Such essays frequently included issues of gender and class in addition to ethnic issues.

Question 2

This was quite a popular question. Weaker answers were narrowly focused and tended to deal solely with the dangers of nuclear weapons with little attention being given to 'put pressure on' and to 'justifiable'. Better answers discussed the neutral policing of established nuclear power installations in various countries regarding the enrichment of uranium. They looked critically at the reasons that could possibly justify the imposition of restrictions by a recognised international body. Some questioned the USA's continuing development of a nuclear arsenal alongside its attempts to prevent other countries such as Iran and North Korea, from developing a nuclear capability for the generation of electricity.

Question 3

Many candidates attempted this question and answers were often limited to the realm of personal relationships. However, many candidates supported their views with interesting and credible examples and were able to demonstrate how the occasional, little 'white lie' could be preferable to the stark truth to spare a friend's feelings in trivial matters. There was general consensus that honesty is almost always the best policy and that ultimately 'the truth will out'. Better answers also covered truth in matters of national security, religious teachings and in courts of law to ensure that justice is done without fear and favour. Politicians were singled out as the least reliable regarding the truth and better answers made it clear that concealing the full truth for political gain is also a form of telling lies.

Question 4

This was quite a popular topic and most candidates were able to offer an appropriate range of advantages and disadvantages for their own nation and/or region. It was interesting to read that cultural erosion, although generally perceived as a disadvantage in most countries, was seen in some areas also as an agent for long needed change in such matters as outdated superstitions and questionable traditions, particularly relating to gender.

Question 5

A popular question. Many candidates focused on the more obvious perils of smoking, alcohol consumption and drug taking. Many of those candidates who responded to 'what more' felt that enough time, money and effort has already been spent on trying to get people weaned off potentially fatal habits with little perceived success. Therefore further action along these lines was likely to prove similarly unsuccessful. Alternative measures included huge price increases or a total ban on the production and sales of alcohol and tobacco, both of which were argued without little consideration of practicality and viability, not to mention economic constraints and outcomes. Better answers focused also on diet, exercise, responsible sexual behaviour and sedentary lifestyles.

Question 6

A reasonably popular question. Most candidates recognised the ever increasing global demand for more electricity and the depletion of non-renewable resources. They were aware of a wide range of renewable resources but tended to describe them rather than assessing them on a cost/benefit basis. It was too glibly assumed that these alternatives could quite easily meet global needs. Only the best answers dealt with energy-saving. Some candidates did not mention nuclear energy at all and many of those who did were unaware of the prevailing safeguards in this industry which would preclude a second Chernobyl.

Question 7

The term 'rich countries' was rarely exemplified and this caused much generalisation and some sweeping assertions. Similarly, few candidates realised that poorer people in rich countries can fare worse technologically than rich people in poorer countries. Better answers acknowledged that richer countries bear enormous research and development costs and therefore deserve to have first use of new technological products. Only the very best responses considered that the latest hi-tech products are not always appropriate to the needs of developing countries and that the sale of outdated but functional and effective technological products at bargain basement prices, from the developed to developing countries, is a much more sensible solution.

Question 8

Quite a number of candidates paid insufficient heed to the wording of this question. 'The most exciting development' clearly refers to *one* development. Similarly, the question clearly asks for one development from 'science or technology or medicine.' Some candidates discussed three or more developments, others selected one item from each of the alternatives of science/technology/medicine. The 'why do you find it exciting' aspect of the question was often underplayed or even totally ignored. Fortunately, many of those who adhered to the wording of the essay produced work of a good standard.

Question 9

An extremely popular topic and often well done. Weaker answers lapsed into generalised comment on music's various attractions, with limited reference to personal involvement and insufficient supporting examples. In some cases, no musicians, composers or specific pieces of music were named. Better answers were understandably dominated by those who actually played an instrument, were brought up in a musical family and who had been exposed to music from the earliest age; indeed some extolled the advantages of having been exposed to music while still in the womb. Their essays were more analytical than descriptive with the 'in your own life' aspect given close focus.

Question 10

There were relatively few takers for this question. Given that a significant number of candidates answering it came from multilingual societies, it was surprising that few saw this as the main thrust of their answer. Scant attention was paid to the issue of cultural versus national identities or the possible implications of the supremacy of one language in a multilingual country. Greater consideration was given to learning foreign languages, particularly English, as it is seen as a universal language and therefore important for many professions and for good job prospects.

Language as access and insight to different societies and cultures and/or as a means of a deeper appreciation of one's native tongue was scarcely mentioned.

Question 11

The general feeling was that more emphasis should be given to the arts in school because of the perceived need for well-rounded individuals with skills such as creativity, innovation, confidence and cultural understanding and awareness. Better answerers were able to support their claims with appropriate examples while weaker answers tended to be generalised with some confusion between art and arts.

Question 12

Few candidates opted for this question but those that did were often very knowledgeable and obviously, in some cases, aficionados which meant that they were able to provide a wide range of appropriate examples. Better answers were able to trace the historic development of cartoons and animation from very early Disney

up to the present day with some interesting points recorded about the messages contained in cartoons, their role in children's development and the nature of their appeal to all ages. The 'social' value generally received more attention than the 'artistic' angle.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8001/02

Paper 2

General comments

In several respects, the old bugbears of previous years seem to be on the retreat. Only a handful of candidates were ill advised enough to attempt more than one question while even fewer were unable to complete the Paper. Although 'lifting' from the text still featured in such exercises as **Questions 13 (a), 13 (b), 15 (a), 15 (b) and 15 (c)**, where weaker candidates did little or nothing with the material that was provided except to repeat it verbatim, it was neither so prevalent nor so slavish as in the past. Minor infringements of rubric, as in **Questions 15 (f) (i) and (ii)**, were also comparatively rare. As regards written expression, meaning was seldom in doubt, even in scripts riddled with basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The English, however, of most candidates was perfectly workmanlike except when it came to the agreement of noun and pronoun, as in the following example: 'Cell phones are so convenient. It (sic) can be used anywhere.' As always, a pleasing number of candidates wrote with commendable fluency and with an impressive variety of vocabulary and syntax, especially when freed from textual constraints.

By way of contrast, far too many candidates still failed to heed the instructions in the Paper regarding the acceptable length of an answer. All too often, words were wasted repeating the question or setting the scene or expanding material that should have been self evident. Hence, candidates passed the prescribed word limit without having covered the requisite number of specific points for a respectable mark for content. In other instances, candidates, realising what was wrong, rather than start from scratch again, jettisoned whole lines, either at the end or in the body of the answer, so that any semblance of a well-constructed argument was lost. In some cases, the result was also illegibility, as when a lengthy phrase or clause had been crossed out and three or four words had been hastily scribbled above it. The besetting sin, therefore, of candidates in this Paper has always been prolixity – writing too much about too little.

Examiners noted the reluctance of candidates in **Questions 14 (d) and 15 (e)** to respond to the challenge of reacting to the text in the light of their own particular circumstances, glimpses of which one has always had in any illustrative sentences that they have composed at the end of the traditional comprehension exercise. In the context of the recent examination, it would have been worthwhile to analyse stock dilemmas that confronted teenagers or to ascertain whether the mores concerning the use of mobile phones were universal or dependent on where one lived.

Question 13 proved to be extremely popular, partly because its format was not markedly different from that of many assignments devised over the years, and partly because it involved a situation that might well befall candidates in the not too distant future. By the same token, **Question 15** followed well-established lines while it attracted many takers for whom the mobile phone was of paramount importance, so much so that they occasionally succumbed to the temptation to parade their own expertise at the expense of the passage itself. A far smaller proportion of candidates ventured into **Question 14**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 13

(a) and (b) These questions are best considered together since they are based on the whole of the text and call for exactly the same skills.

In both exercises, relevant information was usually selected but, all too frequently, was simply listed without further comment. The most able candidates, however, economically developed individual points and these followed a logical train of thought and fully endorsed any conclusion to be reached. Whereas nearly every candidate understood the various statements made in the advertisement, few saw the advertisement for what it was, an advertisement, while there was much confusion over the detailed information that featured below it. Take, for example, Point 1: 'You have the use of a second-hand car with 120,000 kilometres on the clock.' Here, many candidates

wrongly assumed that the young person in question owned the car. Some thought that the firm itself was going to supply him with a similar suitably-aged vehicle. Others imagined that the 120,000 kilometres referred to the additional mileage that could be expected of the engine before it eventually broke down while a few unfortunates believed that 120,000 kilometres was its top speed. Turning to other examples, in some instances imperfect understanding of English accounted for such misconceptions as 'a few' roads being open, as opposed to 'few' roads. On numerous occasions, an elementary application of other disciplines was lacking as when candidates claimed that the would-be applicant would be much nearer the Concool factory, if he lived with his sister, whereas he would be only seven kilometres further away if he remained where he was, 125 kilometres from Detsad. At the other end of the spectrum, the most perceptive candidates made much of the retired uncle and the subject's good university degree in Applied Physics.

- (c) There was plenty of scope for candidates to follow up the leads provided in the advertisement but also to explore the financial ramifications of selling air conditioners. In the event, most candidates at least questioned the starting salary and how bonuses were worked out even though they often neglected to justify their line of approach. Candidates, however, began to go off at a tangent when considering the status of the firm and working conditions. The weakest candidates did not even pay lip service to financial matters when they hared after such concerns as length of holidays and the most suitable accommodation.
- (d) Quite frequently, insufficient distinction was made between an ideal ('most suitable') applicant and one that just happened to meet the minimum requirements of the advertisement, such as car ownership. The least satisfactory answers, in fact, were entirely negative and presented the context from the perspective of the applicant rather than from that of the firm. Nevertheless, it was common to encounter answers that went well beyond a simple list of desiderata and stressed such attributes as experience, communication skills, dynamism and love of travelling.

Question 14

Those who tackled this question tended to excel in **Question 14 (a)**, make a fair showing in **Question 14 (c)** but disappoint in **Questions 14 (b)** and **(d)**.

- (a) All that the question postulated was the straightforward identification of relevant evidence. In the event, virtually every candidate was completely successful although some quoted far more than was strictly necessary.
- (b) Although a similar question had been set in November 2007, many candidates made no attempt to explain the significance of various features in the email exchanges between Jeanne Quiller and Henrietta Ludo. Instead, they simply engaged in narrative or paraphrase – and got nowhere. Others saw, for example, that there was a clash of commitments between Jeanne Quiller's wedding anniversary and the next meeting of the IDBC, but were unable to explore situation or character any further. Elsewhere, a few candidates appreciated the motivation behind the references to Mrs Karnac and Alphonse and Marie Nerse but hardly anyone relished the more subtle parts of the final email.
- (c) A great deal of ammunition had been supplied to use against Jeanne Quiller and it was fired by a fair number of candidates who criticised her self-importance, her touchiness, her double standards and her deviousness, among other characteristics. Quite a few claimed, with reason, that she had, in fact, lost interest in the IDBC, whatever her protests. She did, however, have a band of loyal supporters among the candidacy as well as on the IDBC committee. They stressed her family values, her relevant experience, her formidable qualifications, her standing within the committee and the late hours she put in on behalf of a worthy cause. On occasion, though, both sides in their enthusiasm did not support their contentions sufficiently by detailed reference to the actual emails.
- (d) Having overlooked such pronouns as 'we', 'us' and 'you', a fair proportion of candidates misguidedly based their answer on the Quiller-Ludo feud rather than on a situation of their own devising. When candidates did answer the question on its own terms, the most astute concentrated on the conflict between social activities or family occasions and school or work engagements. In such instances, the context was usually explained well enough but it was fairly rare for convincing ethical principles to emerge. A handful of candidates wrote about two different occasions on which commitments clashed.

Question 15

Candidates were thoroughly at home with both the type of question and its subject matter. Three levels of ability were, however, apparent. The least able candidates merely reproduced or closely paraphrased what the author had written about mobile phones. The average candidates understood and reacted to the main lines of argument. The most able candidates appreciated the subtleties of the text without ever losing their grasp of the essentials.

- (a) Virtually every candidate who tailored an answer to fit the word limit managed to detect sufficient relevant material and so gain a respectable mark. Where they lost ground was when they failed to identify exactly who derived a sense of security from mobile phones, who identified themselves with the latest gadgets and who engaged in one-upmanship. As always, the tendency had to be resisted to dwell too long on one aspect: on this occasion, the nuisance value of mobile phones.
- (b) Like was rarely contrasted with like so that unrelated scenarios, such as men boasting and women seeking assurance, were placed in juxtaposition, though some candidates felt that gender differences could be detected when it came to one-to-one encounters, face-to-face or via texting.
- (c) Whereas (b) was quite searching, (c) should have involved no more than making broad historical sense of the seventh paragraph. As matters turned out, the weakest answers just quoted or paraphrased lines 45 – 47. Other unsatisfactory answers contrasted the use of mobile phones with that of the magazines and newspapers that had featured in a very restricted context in the previous paragraph. Almost all the rest showed little or no awareness of the connotation of 'pre-industrial times.' Hence, our remoter rural ancestors were commonly thought to use landlines as though the telephone had been invented with the wheel.
- (d) Released from any word limit, most candidates produced long, rambling answers relying on the 'grapeshot' technique. Stronger candidates focused on the 'emerging' and 'unwritten' aspects of conventions. Many of the rest became bogged down discussing specific rules and laws, in particular, how the use of mobile phones could or should be regulated.
- (e) As mentioned earlier, obvious opportunities to draw on personal experience were missed at this juncture. Most responses simply agreed with the author's observations, thereby merely echoing what had been grist to the mill in (a), without any attempt at illustration or refutation.
- (f) (i) Most candidates rightly contented themselves with one explanation for each of the words they had chosen while only a handful attempted eight rather than six definitions. No single word proved to be particularly formidable, although 'oblivious' was sometimes confused with 'obvious.' There were, however, quite a few near misses.

(ii) Few candidates wrote more than one sentence to illustrate each word. When this happened, it was the result of faulty syntax or punctuation. It was gratifying to note how few candidates composed sentences derived from the actual passage. The exercise, indeed, enabled some candidates who had made relatively little of the text to display considerable flair. The only word to be commonly employed in the wrong grammatical context was 'potential.'