

# GENERAL PAPER

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Paper 8001/01

Paper 1

## General comments

The improvement in the structuring of essays, which was commented on in the previous report, has been maintained by the majority of Centres. Introductions now usually set the scene for what is to follow quite clearly and succinctly. In too many instances however, conclusions are not well written. They tend to repeat the main points of the essay, often in a list-like fashion, without sufficient recourse to the most significant points and without drawing the threads of the argument together to present the personal view of the candidate. There were some welcome signs again this year that candidates in some Centres had checked and corrected their English thoroughly and systematically before handing in their work. This ensured that they did not lose marks for careless, avoidable errors. This systematic checking of the English should be prioritised by all Centres in a drive to improve the standard of the written English. Many candidates still need to consider very carefully the exact wording of any essay title before finalising their choice of which essay to attempt. The attached notes on candidates' answers indicate the questions where a substantial number of candidates did not study the essay title with sufficient care. This led to their essays being only partly or marginally relevant because they ignored key words and did not address the essay as set, which resulted in an unnecessary loss of marks. Likewise, an essay title on the examination paper within a topic area, which may have been anticipated and rehearsed in lessons, does not necessarily indicate that this is an obvious, easy option for the candidate. The candidate may have a good, overall knowledge of the topic, which obviously could be utilised, but it is absolutely vital to read the question with the utmost care to pick out the key words. The precise wording of the question needs the closest scrutiny so that the candidate can respond to it in a direct and precise manner without digression and irrelevance and without simply recording everything which has been learnt about the topic area. The skill lies in the ability to tailor one's knowledge to the specific demands of the question. It is a skill that needs to be acquired and practised by a not insignificant number of candidates.

As has been the pattern for many years, 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 that the meaning of the content is difficult or even impossible to deduce.

Examiners saw a number of poorly presented scripts this year. Deficiencies included scarcely legible handwriting, no margins on the answer paper and no question numbers being provided. Rough work was sometimes not crossed out.

This year Examiners noted more 'short' answers (under 250 words) and more 'shortish' answers (251-450 words) than usual.

As every year, there were problems with candidates writing their Paper 2 answers in their Paper 1 script and/or Centres sending both components in the same envelope to CIE. This cannot happen again as, starting with the October/November 2010 examinations, the two components will be totally separate.

## **Use of time**

Candidates experienced few problems coping with the time restraints on this syllabus. However, a number of candidates embark on their essays without due preparation or charting in the form of notes or diagrams arising from brainstorming. This sometimes leads to an essay being abandoned although a substantial amount has been written. The subsequent second attempt is often rushed and inadequately constructed with little or no time left for checking for careless errors in the English. Such candidates need to allot sufficient time to a clear lesson plan to avoid losing marks by wasting valuable time on an unsuccessful first attempt.

## Use of English

As previously mentioned in the report and in recent sessions, Examiners see evidence of a wide range of candidates' 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 which often leads to the content being obscured. However, in most cases, even if the English is not totally accurate or the idiom is sometimes not fully appropriate, there is no real problem following the points that the candidate is attempting to make.

Some candidates often have a wide range of vocabulary at their disposal but are not always able to use these words in the correct context.

It is regrettable that the same errors occur every year. A systematic eradication of these rudimentary errors in the following list is the quickest route to higher marks for the use of English element.

- subject/verb non-agreement
- 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' 'infact' 'aswell'.

Candidates need to be more aware of the value of a final, systematic check in the last ten minutes or so of the examination. However, there is some evidence that a number of Centres have made noticeable progress in this direction and it is to be hoped that others will follow this example and thus aid their candidates to gain higher marks.

### Comments on specific questions

**1** This was quite a popular question. Almost half the responses were competent or above average. Many were perhaps understandably focused on the younger generation and seemed influenced by technological innovation, westernisation and increasing affluence. The better answers included traditional games and pastimes enjoyed by parents and grandparents with direct reference to and examples from their own country.

**2** This attracted few responses. Most candidates were simply unaware of the range of historical evidence available and not familiar with means of verification which meant that reliable and unreliable sources could not be adequately discussed. Few examples were offered apart from archaeological remains. However, a sizeable minority of budding historians were able to discuss the range of sources and issues in some depth and were able to support their main points with relevant illustration.

**3** This was a popular question which tended to produce rather generalised answers which over-praised governments for providing even very basic services. Some answers hinted at all kinds of corruption with tax money disappearing into the pockets of those in power but little evidence was supplied to support this point. Better answers knew the various channels through which different taxes flow and were able to give detailed and concrete examples of how their particular government had spent tax revenue wisely, and in some cases unwisely, on identified and democratically agreed priorities.

**4** This question was quite popular, particularly with male candidates, some of whom were very knowledgeable about the financial excesses of the Premier League in England. Not surprisingly, candidates tended to deal with negative issues such as grotesquely high wages and transfer fees, profit focused club owners, performance enhancing drugs, cheating, winning by whatever means and by match fixing and gambling. Most felt that many sportsmen were not good role models although better responses did pick out examples to illustrate the opposite thus balancing the picture to some extent. They were also able to point to sports where amateur ideals still thrive and where amateur sportsmen are active in raising money for charities.

**5** This was not a popular question and, for the most part, was not well answered because a number of candidates attempting this question did not really properly understand the concept of alternative medicine. However, a few responses were very good with excellent knowledge shown and examples given of a range of accepted alternative therapies from different parts of the globe.

**6** This was a very popular question and produced a fair number of good responses from young people who knew their way around computers and who knew how to put this knowledge to best advantage. They used detailed examples to underline main points and looked in some depth at how present and potential dangers are addressed. Weaker answers were not evaluative and offered little assessment of whether cyber crime represents an ever-increasing danger. They also included few examples of media-reported cyber crime.

**7** This was popular, but it produced many poor answers. The average responses tended to be limited to the obvious points about human/plant life etc. being totally and irrevocably dependent on water while oil, although being useful for fuel and derivatives such as plastic, can pollute and harm life. These answers tended to lack a considered balance as the positives about oil were often underplayed. Better answers, which were not uncommon, dealt with more sophisticated issues such as renewability and ownership of water as a possible flashpoint between neighbouring countries.

**8** This was also a popular answer tackled by many who did not possess the scientific knowledge to argue for and against the proposition with any conviction and who demonstrated little awareness of how human activity could have or did in fact cause global warming. The best responses showed how the planet's natural cycle could have been affected by increasing industrial output with its subsequent emissions and above all, what measures can be taken to slow down, arrest or mitigate its effects. Such answers also stressed the need for global research and cooperation at all levels to predict and address any potential future dangers to the planet and its inhabitants.

**9** This question was reasonably popular and was usually quite well done with examples offered mainly from TV, cinema, sport and fashion. Negative aspects were focused on extravagant lifestyles leading to various excesses and antisocial behaviour. Candidates also identified an obsession with the 'perfect' body and image in general and other forms of egocentricity to the detriment of more fundamental and lasting human values. Although candidates did admire some of the celebrities for different reasons such as looks and/or sporting skills, the general consensus was that most were not good role models. Some pitied the celebrities for being pursued by newshounds and paparazzi but few realised that many celebrities relish being constantly in the headlines. Better answers were not confined to negative aspects and were thus better balanced and gave examples of celebrities lending support to charitable work and supporting various humanitarian causes. They evaluated quite clearly the features and extent of contemporary celebrity culture which is fuelled by sections of the media.

**10** This was moderately popular, but was not usually answered very well. Most responses were very limited in scope with scant reference to the use of technology in libraries and to the variety of services libraries can offer today. Most answers tended to be limited to School or local libraries with hardly a reference to specialist libraries and to the conservation of older and historical texts. Similarly, the role of libraries in supporting education and culture received little attention.

**11** This was a reasonably popular topic which produced a wide range of quality in the responses. Weaker answers drifted into generalised comment on music and failed to show the particular appeal of the chosen genre and there was too often a lack of illustrative examples. 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. They made the reasons for the appeal of their chosen music abundantly clear and major points were supported by naming specific composers and appropriate pieces of music.

**12** There were few takers for this question. 'Art' was neither well defined nor discussed with any conviction and again there was a lack of specific examples to support points. Weaker answers concentrated on the 'eye of the beholder' indicating that opinions can differ considerably on 'beauty' but a link was seldom made to art or the work of any particular artists.

# GENERAL PAPER

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Paper 8001/02

Paper 2

## General comments

The examiners are pleased to report the almost universal observation of the primary rubric this year: that candidates answer only one question. There were also few examples where the various word limits had been exceeded and, mercifully, candidates do appear to have noted that quoting a fictional quantity at the end of an answer will not fool Examiners: a stated limit of 100 words will not escape an Examiner's attention where the length is significantly in excess of the allowed limit. It is still evident that some candidates waste precious words in repeating the question, leisurely scene setting or unnecessary expansion of material that ought to have been self-evident. In such cases it becomes impossible to raise and develop sufficient points within the word limit to obtain a good mark for content. Candidates' examination technique in many respects is sound: for example, there were few if any instances of candidates running out of time, although there was scant evidence to show that many had drawn up a rough draft in advance of producing the final version.

Although 'lifting' from the text featured in many answers where weaker candidates did little to develop the material, there has been a significant improvement in this regard in recent years. Almost all candidates were able to write functional English where the meaning was not in doubt, even in those scripts which contained a high number of basic errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. An extremely common error seen across many Centres was the omission of the definite article. In **Question 14**, so many answers to **(b)** began 'DVD we are most likely to watch is ...', while in **Question 15** sentences concerning the coin were likely to start 'Maria Theresa Thaler is ...'. In **Question 14**, it was surprising to find that many candidates had real difficulty in constructing a grammatically correct sentence to get under way in **(b)** and **(c)**. In addition to the omission of the definite article, the following examples were very common: 'I would most likely to watch ...'; 'DVD C are least likely to watch ...' when the simple insertion of 'We' in front of the phrase 'are most likely', which was given in the text, would have sufficed.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 13

This was quite an original style of question which may, in part, explain why it was attempted by only about 7% of candidates.

- (a)** The Question asked candidates to describe what Marcel Toublo had *done all those years ago* and credit could be obtained by extracting information from the newspaper cuttings about the loans he had obtained from the banks, his disappearance before a chess tournament, and his failure to pay back the money which led to the collapse of the company. Unfortunately, many candidates took a very different line by inventing a scenario to describe Marcel Toublo's secret life in the intervening years leading up to his recent relationship with Evelyn Wutebo; all very interesting, but not what was required. Others simply stated who Marcel Toublo was: the Chairman of Unisalp, a good chess player, etc. which did not attract credit.
- (b)** This was well answered by many candidates who could see that Evelyn Wutebo had a responsibility to assist the police with their inquiry to clear up the case; many also believed that s/he had a moral duty to return the money to those ruined by the collapse of Unisalp. The point that Evelyn Wutebo could get in trouble by withholding information was often included, and some imaginative candidates saw the potential for monetary reward and fame.
- (c)** This was also well answered. Many candidates saw that the money could be irresistibly tempting to improve Evelyn Wutebo's lifestyle. Much was made of the fact that some of the money had been spent and it was widely thought that Wutebo had a right to the money having befriended Marcel Toublo. Surprisingly few made much of the facts that Toublo was dead and beyond the



reach of justice and, given that any crime had been committed so long ago, that investigation was unlikely to bear fruit and it would be very difficult to trace former shareholders and return their money.

- (d) This was badly answered. Hardly any candidates picked up obvious irrelevancies such as Toublo's tobacco habit or the fact that he was a Chess Grand Master - facts that had no bearing on the moral dilemma faced by Wutebo. It was common for 'Select one point' to be interpreted in terms of choosing a complete cutting. Those that did so floundered in attempting to justify their choice.

#### Question 14

This is a familiar type of question and, given the subject matter; it was unsurprising to find that it was the most popular choice. What was surprising was the extent: well in excess of 80% of candidates attempted it, making Q14 one of the most popular questions in the history of the paper.

- (a) The vast majority of candidates obtained good marks on what proved to be a straightforward introduction. The question provided six points which referred to age or marital status, but phrases such as 'there have been times in your life...' and references to tea drinking were not specific to middle-aged widows. Whilst most candidates, realising that only five marks were available, were suitably concise, others used up time by providing extensive and unnecessary explanations.
- (b) and (c) These may be considered together as they were based on the whole of the text and called for exactly the same skills.

On the whole these sections were answered well as candidates felt comfortable with the situation and approached the task of choosing films with a degree of enthusiasm. Whilst almost all candidates were able to select relevant material from the text, what distinguished the good from the merely adequate was the extent to which the selected material was developed. Far too many answers simply produced a point from the list without any explanation as to why it had been chosen. Take, for example, Point 9: 'Your relative disapproves of sex, violence and strong language on the screen.' This was used by virtually every candidate to rule out 'The Platinum Bullet' but many did not say why. The stronger answers went on to say that a film that features thugs and attractive women is likely to contain material that would offend the sensibilities of the relative. The same film was often rejected by referring to Point 19: 'The last film you watched starring Jimmy Pledge was much the same as before.' Again, some candidates left it at that whilst better answers went on to say how boring such a film might be, and the really perceptive linked this to the relative's tiredness (Point 18), and that a boring film might send her to sleep.

Such lack of development was not confined to (c) as many candidates failed to justify their choice of preferred DVD in (b). Many candidates choosing 'No Room in the Ambulance' correctly extracted various points concerned with the relative's belief in faith healing and miracle cures, the recent local epidemic, and the reference to Medical school without further comment and, consequently could be awarded only partial credit.

The questions asked candidates to explain why a particular film's merits outweighed its disadvantages and vice versa: this was overlooked by most candidates. It was refreshing to come across candidates who appreciated that whilst Brad Lomarn was an unpleasant person - a negative point for Film B - his screen persona might be completely different. Also, whilst the relative may well enjoy a film set in Kwarania - a positive point for Film A - the nature of the action could well destroy her pleasant memories. Candidates who appreciated that watching 'What a Mess' would give the relative an opportunity to get over the bad experience in a restaurant given that Saxon Folly is on top form invariably gained high marks. A number of candidates restricted their discussion to the middle-aged widow or the relative which inevitably narrowed their perspective. A few candidates misinterpreted the question and offered two choices in (b) and (c): one they would/would not watch themselves and one chosen with the relative also in mind. Far more common were answers that did not restrict discussion to the selected DVD. Many candidates arrived at their choice by a process of elimination by considering the qualities of the other two DVDs without saying much or, indeed, anything about the film favoured most or least. A very common misconception was to confuse 'strong nerves' with a nervous disposition.



- (d) This question proved to be a real challenge for most candidates and, overall, produced a disappointing set of answers. The nature of the question was not appreciated. In asking 'What sort of person is the female relative' Examiners required candidates to assess the character and personality of the relative from the information provided. The majority of responses simply focused on what the relative *did* by regurgitating a number of points from the list of considerations. Answers which merely referred to her resting in the afternoon, her recovery from illness, her fond memories of childhood, etc. could attract only minimal credit. Many were unable to ascertain the relative's age- in part due to not understanding the expression 'back in the 1940s'. Whilst one could debate what constitutes middle- aged or elderly, candidates who believed the relative to be a young girl were very wide of the mark. The best answers linked the reference to Kwarania, her arthritis and her afternoon rest to old age; her disapproval of explicit scenes of sex and violence to a conservative, principled attitude; her recovery from illness and beliefs to strength of character, etcetera. Some answers were indulgent and wildly creative, but lacking any substance implied by the text. The fact that the relative rested in the afternoon was often attributed to laziness.

### Question 15

A comprehension exercise has been a feature of this paper since its inception; its format, largely unchanged over the years is one with which candidates are familiar. In previous sessions it has been by far the most popular question automatically attracting many who, perhaps, felt that it was easiest question to prepare for. In more recent times there is evidence to suggest that candidates have given more thought to their choice and the result has been a more even distribution across the questions. While many avoided **Question 15**, many who chose it lacked the analytical and linguistic skills to do themselves justice. Whilst the passage was no more demanding than those set previously, the questions required candidates to have a good overall understanding as it was necessary to link material from various sections of the passage.

- (a) This proved difficult for most. They were unable to describe how the checks on the authenticity of the thaler (paragraph 5) were made by scrutinising the features referred to in the first paragraph.
- (b) Whilst most candidates correctly identified economic reform, few were able to justify their answer by mentioning the improved financial and trading status that such reform brought.
- (c) This précis proved to be a formidable challenge as it required candidates to extract information from six of the eight paragraphs making up the passage. Many answers consisted of little more than wholesale lifting of sections, some of which had relevance and others not. The whole point of the exercise is to provide candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the text and their ability to express it in their own words. Those who can do nothing more regurgitate parts of the passage have signally failed and little or no credit could be given. A number recognised that the aesthetics of the thaler were a factor as was the silver content; the problem in many cases was that candidates were unable to find appropriate language to say so using their own words. The phrase 'longevity and geographical spread' lifted from paragraph 6 featured time and time again.
- (d) Most appreciated the significance of depreciation and decisions to switch to gold and national currencies. The problem for many was to avoid lifting material straight from the passage.
- (e) Most made a poor choice of feature, i.e. one that proved impossible to explain or justify, or gave multiple features which was outside the remit. Some of the best answers made a comparison with their own currency and alluded to the coins' features and the frequency with which they changed.
- (f) (i) The vocabulary proved difficult and very few candidates obtained anything approaching maximum marks. 'Stringent', 'scrutiny', 'recipients' and 'fluctuations' were the best understood words though the singular form was often given for plurals. 'Intricate' was invariably defined as 'unique', 'shrewd' was either not understood at all or expressed in too general a sense, whilst 'proliferate' was often vaguely defined in terms of general growth. Almost all candidates avoided 'superseded'.
- (ii) In view of the difficulties encountered in the previous section it is hardly surprising that few sentences accurately illustrated the meaning of the chosen word. On a positive note it is worth recording that, in general, candidates wrote single sentences, used the correct part of speech- though incorrect singulars were often carried over - and restricted themselves to using just six of the available words as they had done in (f)(i).