

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/11 Essay 11

Key messages

- Essays should be written in formal English.
- Do not use abbreviations e.g. 'don't', 'won't', 'isn't'.
- Proofread answers afterwards and correct errors.
- Do not spend too long writing an introduction.
- Use paragraphs to construct a coherent argument.
- Successful conclusions are those which step back and form an independent judgement on the issues discussed.
- Do not contradict opinions expressed in an essay.
- Focus carefully on the specific wording of the question.
- Provide appropriate examples to support ideas and opinions.
- Avoid listing examples or describing examples in too much detail.
- Evaluation, an important feature of an argument, is the ability to step back and offer an independent judgement on the issues discussed and should be included as part of the argument.

General comments

The key words in questions were recognised and acted upon by many candidates. There was some misreading of **Question 4**, where 'safer' was seen as 'easier'. Most of the introductory paragraphs were interesting and focused; examples were often included and these were always expanded upon in subsequent paragraphs. Some candidates could have gained higher credit with the addition of a conclusion.

Although errors were frequent in some essays, it was rare to come across an essay where communication was impeded seriously. Candidates need to use clear paragraphing to structure their argument. A simple way to link paragraphs throughout an essay is to pick a word, phrase or name from the preceding paragraph and use this in the first sentence of the subsequent paragraph, while ensuring that a fresh point is the focus of all paragraphs in the body of the essay. A good example is a response to **Question 6** on electric cars. The essay's introduction contained the sentence 'scientists are striving for ways to reduce pollution.' The opening sentence of the next paragraph was 'many of these scientists are committed to electric car development as one of the ways to create a more sustainable planet.' The simple mention of 'scientists' maintains continuity. This essay continued to link paragraphs culminating in a conclusion that was effective because it did not simply summarise the points already made, raising further questions in the reader's mind, something that candidates should strive to do.

There were some impressive, fluent, imaginative responses. In contrast, the use of everyday language e.g. 'don't get me wrong' and 'this might sound crazy' sometimes resulted in an informal, conversational essay using shortened forms and colloquial expression. Candidates should communicate in a formal, academic way. The use of contractions, slang expressions, conversational openings and endings of paragraphs, as well as speculative rhetorical questions were very common. Overuse of metaphors and attempts to employ more complex phrases and vocabulary sometimes did not work and led to misunderstanding. Generally, this did not prevent the overall meaning being lost.

Candidates can improve by avoiding the use of overlong sentences and using punctuation to effectively sequence points. Common errors included the overuse of prepositions, using 'although' at the start of sentences rendering such sentences non-sentences and the overuse of informal words such as: 'stuff', 'ok', 'okay', 'pros and cons'. There was evidence of tense and agreement problems such as: 'computer technology are...'. There were many occasions of overuse of direct, colloquial address 'think about it', 'don't get me wrong' and 'this might sound crazy'. Confusion between 'amount' and 'number', 'less' and 'fewer' was also evident. 'In a nutshell' was used by some candidates in their conclusions – this is informal and

inappropriate for a formal essay. On a positive note – phrases like ‘to start off with’ and ‘to close up my statement’ were less frequent.

The most successful responses had an evaluative edge, where the candidate draws on other knowledge to illustrate a point with reflection and analysis. One candidate in response to **Question 2** described the range of shops catering for the dietary needs of people of faith in their own town. The candidate saw these as adding a colourful and often delicious diversity but added ‘while not entirely indicative of a cultural divide the fact that so many outlets exist can help us to visualise the issue.’ In this instance, there is evaluation in the subtle invitation to the reader to see that, for some, diversity might be a problem.

Question 4, attracted many knowledgeable responses but fewer instances of evaluation. Candidates can improve their responses by stepping back and offering a judgement on the issues they have presented in their argument. Some candidates can be assertive, making over-generalised claims such as ‘all people frequently use streaming services’. Arguments would be more convincing without such assertions or with the word ‘some’ replacing ‘all’. Overuse of the rhetorical question was usually a feature of weaker essays.

Most candidates produced well-contextualised responses and cited examples relevant to their country and context. A small minority relied on hypothetical illustrations or no exemplification. For example, candidates answering **Question 1** did not cite or refer to any specific career when arguing about the significance of work experience or academic study. Some essays contained too many examples which did not allow an argument to develop. Carefully chosen and developed examples are preferable in an essay rather than undifferentiated lists or descriptive information which is not used to advance an argument.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

When preparing for a career, work experience is more important than academic study. Discuss.

Candidates generally demonstrated a sound understanding of the question. Responses included discussions on the diverse nature of work experience, ranging from gaining firsthand insights into employer expectations to acquiring specialised skills through personal interaction. A few candidates tended to focus excessively on specific professions, such as nursing and surgery, rather than addressing the broader spectrum of careers. Analysis and evaluation were pivotal to this question, and candidates were expected to critically assess the importance of both work experience *and* academic study. Many candidates effectively examined the benefits of work experience in terms of self-understanding, skill development, and motivation. To improve, candidates must also evaluate the simultaneous role of academic study and consider how these elements could complement each other in preparing individuals for a career. By discussing their own personal experience to show empathy/understanding in the essay, candidates could have gained more credit.

Question 2

Assess the challenges for societies where there are many faiths.

Many candidates exhibited a broad understanding of the diverse faiths and forms of worship present in society, providing examples that ranged across various religions such as: Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. Several responses effectively examined the influence of both dominant and less dominant faiths on society, considering the impact of their traditions. Instances of candidates using compelling and manipulative tactics, such as urging readers to imagine scenarios in diverse countries were observed, enhancing the persuasiveness of their arguments. Some candidates made incorrect references, such as mixing up details about Islam and Hinduism, indicating a lack of precision in their understanding of different religions. To produce a more coherent and analytical argument, candidates must refer to the opening statement and link their examples back to the overarching judgement about the harmony or discord in society. Many candidates demonstrated an understanding of the challenges societies face in terms of tolerance towards various religions, with discussions on avoiding feelings of threat or segregation. Effective evaluations were made by some on the benefits of cultural enrichment through participation in diverse religious festivals, showcasing an ability to critically assess the positive aspects of religious diversity.

Question 3

To what extent would the even distribution of wealth bring social harmony to your country?

Responses to this question were generally confident and candidates seemed to embrace the 'your country' requirement of the question. Some candidates had some quite in-depth knowledge of Communism and Marxism, though this was sometimes at the expense of focus on the question. Responses generally maintained focus on the chosen country, discussing how wealth is distributed and its impact on social harmony. Social cohesion, opportunities for lower-income earners, and potential reductions in greed and corruption were effectively discussed by candidates. Some answers provided examples and evidence to support their arguments, showing a degree of analytical thinking. Some responses showed a limited understanding of a range of countries, suggesting a need for broader perspectives and comparisons.

Question 4

Computer technology has made everyday life safer for everyone. To what extent do you agree?

While candidates generally demonstrated a good understanding of the positive impact of computer technology, there was a need for more critical analysis and exploration of potential threats or negative implications. A number of candidates either misunderstood the question or disregarded the focus of it, choosing to argue how computer technology had made life easier, not safer. Candidates, regardless of their location, had no problem in finding suitable illustration for their arguments, which ranged from CCTV, two-factor authentication to facial recognition. The majority of responses argued how social media had made life unsafe for all young and vulnerable people, not only in terms of physical danger, but also mental health. Many candidates provided a good range of examples, such as security cameras, online learning during COVID-19, computer technology used in healthcare settings, smartphones, and tracking technology, demonstrating a solid understanding of the question. Candidates could have improved their responses by including critical analysis and by exploring the potential drawbacks or threats posed by computer technology.

Question 5

Humans should do everything possible to save all endangered species. Discuss.

Responses generally demonstrated a good understanding of the threats and considerations related to saving endangered species. Some responses appropriately considered the threats facing endangered species, including the impact on food chains, ecosystems, and the potential loss of species that could benefit humans. Several candidates discussed economic aspects, such as gains from tourism and the economic cost to countries, adding depth to their arguments. Some responses emphasised the human responsibility to care for the planet's resources for future generations, showing a broader understanding of the issue. Candidates can improve on delving into reasons why humans may be unwilling or unable to save all endangered species. A more comprehensive exploration of counterarguments would have strengthened the overall discussion. Some responses contained general statements without providing specific examples or details to support their arguments; more specific examples and evidence could enhance the persuasiveness of the essays. Candidates could have discussed issues connected to hunting, the use of zoos and wildlife parks, poaching, tagging and surveillance by rangers, as well as many other ways of protecting endangered species. There were few references to charities, wildlife organisations, and the intervention of governments to legislate and protect. Many essays linked endangered species to food and developed arguments around a complete diet change to prevent their extinction.

Question 6

Electric cars will be the most common form of road transport in the future. To what extent do you agree?

Candidates showcased a strong grasp of the electric car landscape, emphasising Elon Musk and Tesla's pivotal role in transforming the industry. Notable insights included Tesla's technological advancements and its influence on making electric vehicles more mainstream. Better arguments linked the rise of electric cars, notably Tesla, to broader societal efforts to combat air pollution which demonstrated an insightful understanding of the interconnectedness between technological advancements and collective environmental consciousness. Some responses focused only on Tesla, neglecting a more comprehensive discussion that encompasses other key players in the electric car market. A broader exploration would help enhance the depth of analysis. A few candidates overlooked thorough exploration of counterarguments, such as infrastructure challenges and industry resistance: a critical evaluation of opposing viewpoints would improve the quality of arguments. Arguments were usually balanced to some degree and were largely focused on environmental and cost benefits, as well as the swing away from petrol- and diesel-powered cars by eminent car manufacturers. Many candidates pointed out the lack of infrastructure that was in place to cope with large quantities of electric cars, the impracticability of waiting for a battery charge mid journey, and the environmental problem that exists from the mining of lithium and the safe disposal of electric car batteries.

Question 7

To what extent have streaming services benefited the film industry?

Streaming appears to be an important source of entertainment for many young people. The subtlety of the question – *streaming services benefited the film industry* – was sometimes missed. Many essays consisted of a celebration of streaming platforms, outlining the strengths of different channels, the cost of services, the restrictions placed on clients, and the convenience. The best essays made links between the cinema release of a film and its continued success through its subsequent release online, rather than waiting a long time before television broadcast. Many responses largely focused on the rise of streaming services during the COVID pandemic, and the increasing demise of cinemas, arguing that although streaming services were financially sustaining the film industry and offering much more variety to viewers, the convenience of such services were beginning to render cinemas obsolete. It was sometimes concluded that streaming services were much more fitting with the modern pace of life. Another popular line of argument was that streaming services encouraged multiculturalism by enabling easy access to foreign films and TV series, as well as providing the opportunity for lesser-known directors and actors to receive publicity. Candidates also argued that streaming services provided easy advertising for other films, thus resulting in a larger audience and ultimately, more money made by the film industries. Some candidates focused their arguments around the recent actor and writer strikes in Hollywood, arguing that streaming services were exacerbating the issue of unfair pay. They also argued that the public were gradually becoming disillusioned with these services, which were often seen to be prioritising quantity of content over quality. To further enhance their responses, candidates should utilize more varied examples of streaming services, thoroughly analyse and evaluate the ethics and justifications behind using the services and present their arguments with a more persuasive and compelling personal voice.

Question 8

Television dramas about historical events are a good way to learn about the past. Discuss.

There were some strong responses to this question, demonstrating a good understanding of the topic and its relevance to real-world contexts, particularly in relation to America and the teaching about wars and slavery. Answers to this question were not always well illustrated and opportunities to discuss specific historical dramas such as *The Crown*, *The Great* and *Bridgerton*, which are very popular, were missed. Candidates often argued about the tendency for such dramas to distort happenings from the past in order to gain viewers. Similarly, they argued that historical figures were susceptible to being romanticised by directors in order to make them more appealing to viewers. There was much discussion about the ability of television dramas to engage an audience, capture their imagination and inspire them to learn more about an event, topic or historical figure. Many stated that the world is growing into a place where reading books and other documents which reveal the events of the past is not the preferred way of learning.

Question 9

News should only be published or broadcast with the consent of those it is about. Discuss.

Many responses to this question were well argued, making good use of illustration to enhance their points. Several responses pointed towards the lives of celebrities and how reporting of their private life was invasive and unfair, potentially negatively impacting their mental health. A common argument was the danger of allowing individuals, organisations or governments to dictate what could and could not be published about them, and how this was against the principles of free speech, potentially endangering the public. Clearer examples were needed in some arguments and a number of essays were very general with no examples included. A key area of consideration was the need to maintain public awareness of the world around them. As a result, some essays concerned themselves with a different question: the importance of publishing and broadcasting news so that people remain informed. The idea of *consent* was not examined in these arguments. A number of essays simply agreed with the statement thereby precluding any discussion. Better responses were able to provide instances where consent should be of no concern to those who publish or broadcast news, such as when this involved criminal activities and varieties of institutional wrongdoing.

Question 10

To what extent does literature reveal what it is to be human?

Many candidates were able to write convincingly and knowledgeably, developing a well-reasoned argument. Using examples from a variety of sources and authors, it was possible for some essays to reveal clear links between the human psyche and the imaginary characters in both classical and popular fiction. This included the stress of relationships, fears, and threats. Some very good examples of books and plays were used in support which went beyond simply naming the source but also included reference to characters and scenes. Meaningful examples included Shakespeare's 'Macbeth', Miller's 'The Crucible' and Fitzgerald's 'The Great Gatsby'. The essays that offered illustrations from these texts were able to explore the central characters in the light of the key phrase 'what it is to be human'. The question allowed candidates to argue and discuss quite an abstract concept with use of their own personal experience. A small number of responses made no mention of any works of literature which led to very vague and generalised arguments.

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Paper 8021/12 Essay 12

Key messages

- Choose the question carefully.
- Aim to keep plans short.
- Focus the introduction on keywords from the question.
- It is essential that the appropriate academic register is maintained.
- Avoid the use of contractions such as *'didn't, couldn't or won't'*.
- Analyse and evaluate instead of describing or explaining.
- Apply examples and link them clearly to points made.
- Use the conclusion to evaluate and synthesise arguments rather than repeating them.
- Check carefully for errors in grammar.
- Use precise vocabulary appropriate to the context.

General comments

A large range of essays on each of the questions were seen on this paper, with variations in perspective as well as quality. The majority of candidates produced relevant answers with some development. The quality of communication varied and was usually the main factor in determining the mark achieved. Overall, there has been the use of English continues to show improvement, both in terms of idiomatic accuracy as well as overall confidence and fluency.

The majority of answers were organised with some degree of control. In strong responses, where the control of expression reached higher levels, this was frequently accompanied by sustained levels of analysis and evaluation.

Overall, responses were clear and organised but tended to be largely descriptive and/or explanatory within the format of an argument. The key element that was missing was analysis and evaluation of the question and this needed to be more than just a couple of statements in the conclusion.

Candidates who planned their answers tended to communicate their argument more clearly, though occasionally they appeared to have spent so long making detailed plans that there was little time to write the answer in as much detail. Some scripts contained substantial crossed through passages or paragraphs; it was sometimes not clear that what replaced the crossed-out work was substantially different or better, and candidates could be encouraged to have confidence to shape and develop what they have written rather than replace substantial sections.

Virtually all responses featured a relevant introduction. Candidates should be discouraged from writing lengthy introductions that define every term in the question or supply historical background that stretches back centuries. For instance, it is unnecessary to define politicians and voting (**Question 2**) or provide a history of warfare (**Question 1**).

Candidates were aware of the need to support their arguments with examples and many provided specific and useful illustrations. In weaker responses, candidates did not show how the examples validated the point being made and the reader was left to make the connections. There was a rising trend for candidates to include statistics and research at every opportunity. Candidates must ensure that any statistics included within their response is accurate as their veracity can be easily checked.

Some candidates used headings throughout their essays which is a format more suited for reports. Others framed their responses as debates and addressed the reader personally, for instance *'Let me begin by agreeing with the question'*; this is also an inappropriate format.

Conclusions were also brief or absent in a small number of instances, and there was a tendency for most conclusions to be either fairly basic or a reiteration of, rather than a resolution of arguments. Occasionally, weaker responses gave readers direct advice or urged the reader to act in a particular way in their own life after having read the essay. Candidates should use the conclusion as an opportunity to add valuable evaluative material.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

All young people in your country should spend time serving in the armed forces. Discuss.

Generally, candidates were able to give a balanced overview of the issue of service in the armed forces. Candidates recognised that this was mandatory in certain countries but felt that the benefits outweighed the negatives. They acknowledged that young people spending time in service would enhance a country's defensive capabilities but perhaps even more importantly, young people (typically males) would benefit from time spent in a disciplined environment where they could develop skills of self-reliance and teamwork. Other positives included better physical fitness and meeting and befriending people from different backgrounds.

Weaker responses included reasons why a country should have or grow its armed forces, which ignored the specific issue in the question about the impact on young people. Some candidates missed or ignored the reference to 'your country' in the question and discussed the issue from a global perspective, thus providing many examples that lacked relevance. Some wrote generally about careers in the military service or gave observations about military service around the world.

There were some strong answers where candidates were quite impassioned by the disruptive impact of compulsory military service on their education or how recruiting young people would make other countries think their country was a threat. Stronger essays recognised that service in the military was not for everyone and that some young people could contribute to their country in other ways. Better responses argued that increasing the number of young people in the armed forces was less effective than investing in better military equipment.

Question 2

To what extent do the personal characteristics of politicians influence how people vote?

Strong answers drew on specific examples of historical and contemporary political figures from candidates' own countries and elsewhere, who had used personal identity and charisma to secure power. High-profile populist politicians were regularly referenced and hardly anyone found it unusual that a politician's personality, rather than their policies, strongly influenced voters. Overall, responses tended to describe politicians' personal characteristics, actions or policies at the expense of analysing and evaluating the extent of their influence on voters.

Weaker answers were less secure in maintaining a focus on personal characteristics, often considering more generally how a political figure gained power, frequently prioritising the policies put forward without considering this in the light of the required focus on personal characteristics. A few wrote more about democracy in general than about the characteristics of politicians which missed the focus of the question.

Question 3

It is important to limit how long someone works each day. Discuss.

Most responses had very little variety in approach and arguments tended to be quite generalised and descriptive. As a result, the level of communication was frequently the major distinguishing factor of the quality of response. There was also a tendency for some candidates to write an advice text about limiting work hours and the need for time management and relaxation instead of an essay discussing and arguing the issues.

Although candidates might have limited experience of paid employment, most were able to present a considered view of working life. The most successful answers identified both the drawbacks and the benefits of limiting the working day to employers as well as employees. Most agreed with the question and said there

needed to be more breaks which would refresh workers and lead them to be more productive. Good responses looked at the effect on the economy though some became overly descriptive in explaining how an economy accrues benefits.

Quite a few considered the work done by candidates and the pressure of homework and examinations. There was much focus on the costs of working too hard, such as the toll on relationships and poor mental health. Weaker responses focused on all kinds of health issues which lead to burn-out and suicide. Many referred to suicide rates in Asia, with some sweeping claims in relation to this point. Some used examples of celebrities and prominent business people to exemplify how working all hours can lead to success.

Stronger answers considered the need to reduce exploitative practices in some industries and countries and argued that regulating work hours might not be practical for workers in creative fields or for the self-employed. Evaluation was clearly seen in responses that reflected on the differences in working hours in developed and developing nations and how limiting the time that someone works would reduce their ability, and that of their country, to rise from poverty.

Question 4

A country's government should do everything possible to control the spread of infectious diseases. To what extent do you agree?

This was a popular question and almost all responses referred to the Covid-19 pandemic and their government's response to controlling it. This tended to result in answers that were relevant but lacked development beyond an account of how and why the government of their country took the steps they did when the question invited a much wider debate. Candidates frequently described the measures that different countries had undertaken rather than arguing whether governments were doing everything possible to control the spread and whether the measures were suitable, viable, practical or justified for the citizens of the country.

Weaker answers focused only on Covid-19, offered superfluous and extensive description of the means by which diseases are transmitted or wrote about the role of the government in providing health care to its citizens. Many simply agreed wholeheartedly that their government had 'done everything possible' and missed the potential scope offered by the wording of the question to discuss countries other than their own.

Stronger answers located the debate within a wider discussion of issues like freedom or the role of the government, the individual, the global responsibility of nations and even the private sector. They considered a range of infectious diseases, different periods in history and how various governments had responded. They compared the actions taken by different governments to tackle the same disease, for instance, Covid-19 and evaluated the timing and effectiveness of measures, ranging from free vaccinations, mask-wearing, lockdowns and how strictly these were enforced.

Question 5

The protection of the underwater environment should be the world's most urgent environmental concern. Discuss.

Many candidates were able to write authoritatively about threats to marine ecosystems and what can be done to protect them, as well as addressing the relative importance of other environmental issues. This led to some good analysis and evaluation as the importance of the various issues were weighed up.

There was universal recognition of the deleterious effect of plastic on the underwater environment and the need to tackle this as a matter of urgency. Overfishing and damage to coral were also highlighted. The perennial problem of dumping oil at sea was also recognised. Weaker responses did not address the key term 'most urgent' and described numerous examples of these threats to marine environments or were very descriptive in relation to other environmental concerns. Other environmental concerns included climate change, deforestation, pollution and more able candidates linked these ideas.

Stronger essays provided clear reasons as to why the underwater environment was in urgent need of protection. These gave examples of where there were other environmental aspects that required more urgent attention such as forests, grassland and tundra, through which the underwater environment would become better protected too. There were some excellent responses which looked at rivers, lakes and land waterways and connected them to the whole global ecosystem.

Question 6

Living a longer life is not always desirable. To what extent do you agree?

This was addressed from a variety of different perspectives, broadly from that of the individual, nation or world. Other sub-factors were referenced including criminals facing life imprisonment or the death penalty or terminally ill people having their lives prolonged by medical science. All of these approaches could be accommodated by the wording of the question but their success depended greatly on whether the candidate was able to retain a focus on the original question rather than digressing into discussions about capital punishment or euthanasia.

Many answers wholeheartedly agreed with the statement in the question and this led to a rather one-sided approach and limited analysis. Some candidates could have improved their responses by supporting points with specific examples and maintaining an appropriate academic tone throughout.

Stronger responses were thoughtful and philosophical, viewing the question from the fresh perspective of a young person.

Question 7

The problem of the global food shortage will never be solved. Discuss.

There were many very interesting, developed answers on the issue of global food shortage, most of which took an overall pessimistic view of the situation, though others argued it was entirely possible to solve the problem if other issues were addressed within the world economy and approach to production methods. Candidates were adept at discussing factors impacting food shortage such as climate change, soil quality, poverty and water availability. Some looked at global politics, corruption, population control and the impact of wars and natural disasters. Others discussed rural–urban drift and the unpopularity of agricultural jobs in developed and developing countries.

When candidates looked at the physical and human factors, they were able to provide more detailed arguments. In addition, when candidates were considering the reasons why the global food shortage could be solved, there was frequent mention of the move to mechanisation, urban farming, modern biotechnology and alternative food consumption, primarily in the form of insects or plant-based diets.

Stronger answers examined a wide range of international examples and their relationship to the global food shortages, highlighting global responsibilities.

Question 8

People should have the freedom to wear whatever clothes they choose. Discuss.

This was a question some candidates were clearly very passionate about, on both sides of the argument and this generated some very good answers. Candidates felt that the freedom to wear whatever one wanted should be a universal right, provided that their style of dressing does not promote hateful beliefs. Some argued against the premise, citing the need to defend tradition against the onslaught of westernised clothing ideas or to protect religious dress codes. Most agreed with the question and weaker responses agreed fully. Quite a few candidates gave the example of the hijab being banned in France and why they thought this is wrong. Others employed examples of celebrities who challenge gender dress codes. There were also good discussions of the need to dress according to the occasion, climate or occupation and uniforms were also a point of debate.

Weaker responses relied on the assertion that modest clothing would protect people from assaults.

Question 9

To what extent has society become too influenced by advertising?

There were a notable number of responses where the question had been reframed into a different topic, namely discussing the influence of social media rather than advertising which meant that those responses were self-limiting. There was confusion between news coverage and advertising, with candidates debating the influence of different media outlets rather than companies selling services and products. Some

candidates did not address the term 'too influenced' and instead, just gave descriptions of advertising campaigns.

Many candidates agreed with the question and talked about how celebrities and influencers are used to persuade people to buy products or how paid reviews are used to dupe the public. Better candidates argued that the huge extent of advertising could be seen in the rise of materialism, pester power and consumerism. They also explained how it is almost impossible to escape the constant advertising around us especially on the internet and the targeted advertisements as well as click-bait advertising. Trends being set through advertising was another popular topic, with candidates citing fast fashion retailers and advertisements for products claiming to 'change your life'. They referred to the insecurity of young people and the need to fit in with trends fuelled by advertising. Candidates were also able to see the positive impact of advertisements as an informative, educational medium.

Question 10

To what extent is it important to keep traditional arts alive in your country?

This question was popular with candidates from countries that have a long and rich history of arts and architecture. Generally, good answers were seen from those who attempted the question, with candidates usually showing a strong awareness of traditional arts in their country and usually arguing for their continued importance. Some weaker answers lost focus on the issue of arts and wrote more generally about the importance of tradition, an approach that was productive when the candidate produced examples of art to support but lost focus when this was not the case.

Most tended to focus on the concept of traditional arts maintaining the cultural identity of a country; many also referred to tourist interest and income brought in by the selling of such arts. Those who went further cited a lack of interest from the younger generations who embraced the digital world and considered that the focus on traditional arts and customs held a country back from the inevitable development taking place. Others discussed the waste of money by governments in preserving arts, claiming the funds should be used for other priorities such as education, the poor or business development.



ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/13 Essay 13

Key messages

- It is essential that the appropriate academic register is maintained.
- A conversational tone, as if you were messaging someone, is not appropriate.
- Aim to avoid the use of the verb 'to get' as much as possible.
- Refer to 'pros and cons' as 'positive and negative aspects'.
- Use alternative phrases to 'a lot of' and 'lots off.'
- Provide evidence for opinions rather than assertions.
- Avoid assertions in introductory paragraphs. Leave room for debate.
- Ensure that introductions are concise and relevant. There is no need to repeat the question.
- Paragraphs should be used to clarify the progression of ideas.
- Identify the key words in the question to achieve relevance and clarity.
- Relevant and developed examples are always needed.
- Spell simple and common words correctly.
- Avoid the use of contractions; for example, isn't, wouldn't, they're, aren't.
- The concluding paragraph should not just be a summary of what has gone before.
- The most impressive conclusions suggest that there might be more to say on the topic.
- Consider which examples can be used before attempting a question.

General comments

The entry for this session of the examination was relatively small and most essays revealed some knowledge of the chosen topic. There were more generalised responses with fewer examples than in the past. Essays without examples and debate were mainly responses to either **Question 9** on the responsibilities of museums or **Question 10** on believable characters in stories.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

To what extent do you agree that rich corporations are now more powerful than governments?

All responses to this question were able to provide examples and the influence of multinationals on governments was widely recognised. Several candidates referred to the economic and political power that corporations exert in both developed and not so developed nations in different parts of the world. One candidate wrote: 'the banks and corporate giants may seem to be all powerful but when they need to be bailed out, governments step in.' There is an evaluative edge to this observation. Those that adopted nuanced approaches like this did well. Another response alluded to the military/industrial complex to argue that armaments' manufacturers have a vested interest in conflicts that governments may wish to defuse. Again, evaluation was evident in this response.

Question 2

Assess whether the teaching of speaking and listening skills should be given priority in schools.

The key word 'priority' was considered by many candidates and it was generally recognised that success across the curriculum depends upon the possession of speaking and listening skills. Candidates pointed out that persuasive writing techniques often taught in schools have transferable value in speaking and that

listening as a skill is too often assumed rather than taught. One essay made the point that 'listening is more of an attitude of mind rather than a skill' and went on to question how it could be taught if the habit of attention had not been developed. Most of the candidates referred to the necessity of speaking well in job interviews. A prevalent view was that 'speaking and listening' belong in early years' education before reading and writing takes over.

Question 3

It is never justifiable to use animals for testing. Evaluate this statement.

The strongest essays widened the scope of response by considering how testing might reduce species' extinction and might even, through DNA extraction, bring extinct animals back to life. The testing of cosmetics on animals was frequently criticised especially as 'cruelty free' products are more widely available today. Weaker responses ignored the key word 'testing' with its scientific implications. Digression into issues such as hunting and sports involving animals were of less relevance to the question.

Question 4

To what extent should people fear developments in artificial intelligence (AI)?

Knowledge of the topic was usually extensive. Fears about unemployment, academic dishonesty and a decline in human creativity were expressed but were set alongside the present belief that AI content can be detected, that medical procedures benefit from AI and that AI, in the words of one candidate, might be used to 'alleviate food shortage' in many parts of the world. One compelling response asked if visual arts might become a thing of the past but added that 'it's the experience of creating music or art that matters' and that technology including AI has boosted 'musical creativity' rather than reducing it. Another essay of an evaluative and analytical nature warned readers of the misinformation that AI can generate through voice and image in many spheres of human activity with particular emphasis on how manipulation might influence the political sphere. Candidates should avoid viewing the developments as either wholly positive or wholly negative which limits debate.

Question 5

Evaluate the view that there is no place for creativity in scientific research.

The strongest responses offered relevant examples including Galileo, Darwin, and Marie Curie to argue convincingly that without creativity and courage, scientific progress would never be made.

Question 6

There are no benefits to space tourism. To what extent do you agree?

Responses to this question successfully used contemporary examples. Most of the respondents referred to space pollution and all the essays argued that there were more important concerns here on Earth. None of the candidates felt there were any benefits except exciting experiences for those wealthy enough to participate.

Question 7

Understanding the target audience is the most important consideration for a journalist when writing for a newspaper or magazine. Discuss.

Candidates that answered this question mentioned the political bias of specific newspapers and discussion included the idea that writing to please readers' expectations might lead to journalists compromising their own beliefs. The commercial interests of magazines were also recognised. One candidate wrote that 'magazines designed for teenagers' consumption must contain topics that teens are actually interested in, such as fashion and music.' Although examples were often general rather than specific, candidates understood the key words 'target audience'.

Question 8

Arts and crafts play no role in maintaining the heritage of your country. Evaluate this statement.

In answering this question, one candidate wrote about the Latin American influences on their country. The candidate highlighted folk legends, costumes, and expressions of belief. The wearing of demon masks was referred to in sentences which stood out because of their clarity and control; 'The word mask does not do it justice. It is the head of an intricately crafted devil with a deep frowning expression, eyes as sharp as daggers, and even sharper fangs.' This careful construction indicates the ability to write forcefully and accurately.

Question 9

The main responsibility of museums is to educate people about their history. Discuss.

Many of the responses to this question would have been made stronger through the inclusion of clear examples. Repetition of the idea that knowledge of the past connects with the present was common and needed exemplification to make it more than simply an assertion. There could have been more mention of specific museums and the possible roles of museums beyond education and preservation. There was recognition of museums as tourist attractions and places to go to on a day out. One strong essay focused on local history and included a description of a maritime museum which created a vivid picture of the candidate's port city throughout its seafaring history.

Question 10

To what extent does a good story need to have believable characters?

Weaker answers used very simplistic examples and focused too much on descriptive ideas. Stronger responses to this question offered good examples and elaborated upon them. These cited 'Spiderman' and 'The Joker.' One essay contained the observation that Spiderman: 'laughs, cries, and grieves like a human' and the other, just as evaluative, said that 'no human is as selfless as Spiderman and that is the point. We desire to be more like him.' The same essay referred to 'The Joker' as an 'iconic villain' and as 'a representation of chaos, a creation to despise.' Thoughtful connections between fictional characters and us were made.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/21
Comprehension 21

Key messages

- Candidates should maintain the appropriate academic register and avoid using informal language.
- Unless a question specifically requests a personal opinion or an overall view, it is essential that candidates offer responses that are precise, detailed and based on relevant material from the Insert. Broad generalisations and personalised responses attract little to no credit.
- It is highly recommended that candidates keep referring back to both the questions and the material, in order to familiarise themselves with all the relevant details and then include such details in their answers.
- It is strongly recommended that if a question does not ask the candidate to write a response in their own words or within a certain word limit (for example, **2(a)**, **2(b)**, **2(c)** and **2(e)**), candidates copy the relevant wording from the material. The use of the candidate's own words can affect the precision of the response.
- Responses to **2(d)** should adhere to the word limit and be written in complete sentences.
- **2(f)(i)** and **2(f)(ii)** required candidates to respond using their own words. This should also avoid the use of copied phrases in quotation marks.
- It is important that candidates refer to the section of material that they have been directed to in the question. It is also essential that candidates note which person mentioned in the material has been cited in the question, such as Gerrit Breeuwsma in **2(b)(iii)**.

General comments

- Some candidates did not offer answers to all the sub-questions. It is strongly recommended that a candidate attempts every part of a question.
- It is recommended that when candidates are allowed to copy from the material, they copy words carefully. For example, the words '*progress*', '*beliefs*', '*evolution*' and '*imagination*' proved to be difficult words to copy for some candidates.
- It is recommended that candidates indicate clearly if their answer is not in the correct response area for that question. When candidates cannot fit their response into the response area, they are advised to request an additional booklet rather than write in the margins.
- Candidates are strongly advised not to use ellipsis, as such responses are rarely creditworthy.
- It is not a requirement of the paper that a candidate supplies a word count at the end of each question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Candidates gaining the most credit successfully interpreted the evidence offered in the material and gathered pieces of evidence from across Section A to create four clearly expressed points (three advantages and one disadvantage). They understood that the most convincing responses are nuanced ones and gained credit by either using modal verbs (e.g. 'viewers might appreciate it more because they too can be a part of the action indirectly', 'this could be dangerous and have legal issues around it') or employing words such as 'probably'. Successful responses offered points that had been developed, whether by explanation, exemplification and/or linking two pieces of information from different places in Section A, highlighting their ability to present sustained and relevant analysis of the scenario presented. They were able to interpret the results of the survey as a whole and note the disadvantage that a quiz show would be the least popular choice in terms of

QYZ viewers. Examples of well-developed points included the following: 'He might decide to commission The Greatest All-Rounder 2023 because it will be available on screen three months after being commissioned, which means he can deliver it to his boss as soon as possible, thus making a lasting impression and maybe increasing his chances of promotion' and 'Furthermore, the production company (Creatif Zephyr) is a foreign company with offices all around the world and, therefore, partnering with them will give their channel international recognition and their content will be of quality as they are a huge company'. Many candidates followed the instruction not to refer to The Secret in their response.

Candidates can improve on providing specific analysis within their answer, rather than simply citing a list of points. Some candidates omitted to include a disadvantage, thus limiting the available credit for their response to a maximum of Level 3. Some responses were too vague to gain any credit (e.g. 'it will gain more viewers', 'which is good for Leroy' or 'they will be entertained') as there was no explanation as to why that would be the case. Common misunderstandings included the following: candidates being confused about the roles and responsibilities of QYZ, Creatif Zephyr, Leroy and/or the presenters; mixing up the roles of Leroy and the advertisers; alluding to the fact that Leroy would have to travel; referring to The Greatest All-Rounder 2023 as a reality show; citing the necessity for a government grant to cover the cost of the show; making reference to the popularity of quiz shows; claiming that Leroy or the presenters would win a life-changing amount of money or observing that the quiz show had already been on-screen for three months. Candidates need to ensure that they link facts selected back to the question to provide more of an analysis.

- (b) In (i), the best responses noted the first sentence in Additional Information Point 1 and correctly linked this piece of information to Point 9 with the relevant details. Weaker responses were characterised by numerical errors, such as incorrect references to the budget and/or the cost of the show (e.g. 'because \$4 million plus \$2 million equals \$5 million'). Some candidates offered answers in their own words that were either too vague (for example, the government were giving money to or supporting local companies, with no mention of 'grants') or incorrect (such as the government were lending money to local companies). Candidates need to ensure that their responses are specific and based on the information given.

In (ii), candidates scoring highly offered well-developed points: 'Emilia Fontu could choose to drop out at the last minute because she has been having second thoughts about The Secret after being offered a part on Broadway', 'Emilia, the supposed-to-be star of the show, is having second thoughts about the job as she's been offered a part in a Broadway show in New York, so she could ditch at any time' and 'The screenwriter won her TV award for a children's daytime programme and so the drama promised might not be up to the expectations of the show's mostly adult audience.' Weaker responses were characterised by candidates offering the number of shows and when the drama would be ready for screening as disadvantages, despite being instructed not to do so in the question.

In (iii), stronger responses were characterised by references to this friendship being potentially unethical in business terms: 'It could bring into question Leroy's judgement on behalf of QYZ as it is a conflict of interest', 'It could prevent Leroy from making objective business decisions due to bias towards and familiarity with Felix' and bias towards Felix meaning that Leroy would not 'explore the other option and look more into the details of Felix's pitch.' Some candidates were unsure of what might constitute 'a problem in business terms', so offered random facts from **Section A**.

- (c) Many candidates cited Point 7/The previous owner of QYZ was called M Pietsien. However, some candidates offered either a point in the Additional Information that was relevant to the scenario in **Section A** or a piece of information that was not found in the Additional Information.
- (d) Many candidates scored highly on this question, citing Additional Information Point 3 and then offering an analysis of this method of surveying people: for example, that the survey was 'not directly targeted but carried out through a third party', that the survey 'might not reflect the attitudes of the whole country' or that the way the survey was carried out was 'inefficient, as most people nowadays do not read the newspaper.' Weaker responses cited random percentages from the survey.
- (e) Stronger responses seen included the following: 'Because securing a younger audience means securing the popularity of their brand. Young people will share products on social media, spreading awareness of brands, thus increasing sales' and 'Young adults are not as good with their money as older age groups might be, causing a possible fast purchase which is not thought through. At a

younger age it is easier for them to be attracted to an idea, creating a need for the product'. Some candidates referred to their minds being 'malleable to trends and new products' or advertisers wanting to 'secure a long-lasting customer'. Some candidates confused advertisers with the television channel, offering answers linked to the shows rather than to advertisers, products and/or brands.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) The best responses noted the details in lines 2 to 4 and quoted all the relevant elements. Some candidates needed to provide more specific responses and spell key words correctly (e.g. 'imprt' for 'important' and 'down' for 'done').
- (b) In (i), candidates scoring highly noted the information in lines 6 to 10 and lines 35 to 38, then quoted all the relevant details. Candidates need to ensure they quote based on which person in the material has been cited in the question (e.g. Gerrit Breeuwsma). Some candidates could have improved their answers by making their response more detailed and directly quoting from the material.
- In (ii) and (iii), the most successful responses were restricted to the relevant quote and offered it as the first response: in (ii), by referring to the quote that it is '*because the ability to imagine things is the key to human progress*' and in (iii), by citing the quote that it '*lies at the basis of many scientific inventions*'. Candidates must include key details from the quote (e.g. 'we lose the ability to imagine things' in (ii) and 'it lies at the basis of scientific inventions' in (iii)) to gain full credit.
- (c) The best responses noted the relevant part of the third paragraph and quoted all the key elements. Some candidates would have gained more credit if they had not offered responses that omitted key elements (e.g. 'imagination makes us better people' for bullet point 4 in the mark scheme), responded using their own words that rendered their response too vague (e.g. 'we can imagine what other people's lives are like and be more kind'), offered very short responses (even though it was not a question with a word limit) or offered their own opinions on the matter.
- (d) Candidates scoring highly noted the line references and included all the key elements in their summary, as outlined in the eight bullet points in the mark scheme. Weaker responses were characterised by candidates offering their own opinions, citing the views of famous people (e.g. Hulk Hogan) or quoting Gerrit Breeuwsma instead of Anthony Storr.
- (e) Successful responses offered the relevant quote as the first response: '*it's the birthplace of all new technology*'. Some candidates offered lines 41 to 42, either as their only response or as their first response, so they did not gain any credit. Other candidates could improve their answers by avoiding offering opinions and ensuring that the key idea of 'birthplace' was included within their response.
- (f) In (i), most candidates gaining credit successfully reworded bullet points 2, 3, 4 and/or 5: 'abandon the notion', 'disregard the mindset', 'erase the belief', 'reject the concept' and 'leave the thought behind' were seen for '*letting go of the idea*'; 'that it has to serve us in some way' and 'that all things must have a purpose' for '*that everything should be useful*'; 'It is not important' and 'It is meaningless' for '*It does not matter*', and 'not focus on how realistic or achievable it is' for '*whether something is possible or not*'. The phrases most commonly lifted from the material were '*letting go of the idea*', '*everything should be useful*' and '*whether something is possible or not*'. Some candidates answered using their own words and did not gain credit for the content of their responses as they were too vague (e.g. 'You begin by' or 'Begin by' for '*You have to start by*').
- In (ii), candidates gaining credit were able to rephrase effectively, for example, '*You give your brain the opportunity*' by using phrases such as 'Your mind gets the chance'. Other examples of candidates' successful use of synonyms included the following: 'various concepts' and 'various thoughts' for '*different ideas*' and 'to make fresh connections' for '*to form new associations*'. Some candidates offered responses in their own words, but they did not gain any credit as their answers were too vague: 'to make connections' (no synonym for 'new') and 'between concepts' (no synonym for 'different'). The phrases most commonly lifted from the material were '*the opportunity*', '*form new associations*' and '*different ideas*'.

- (g) Responses gaining credit noted the instruction to identify the exact word or phrase in the material and quoted only the relevant word or phrase that had exactly the same meaning. For example, offered '*leave children to their own devices*' in (i) rather than '*leave children to their own devices a little more*' (which was not creditworthy) and '*dabble in*' in (iii) rather than '*dabble in new things*'. Some candidates misread the question, offering either their own definitions of the word or phrase (e.g. '*write quickly*' in (ii)), or gave instances from the material that they thought exemplified the word (e.g. '*give them hours without any plans*', '*Daydream*', '*choose something that you can do with little effort*' or '*let your thoughts wander*' in (i)). Some candidates did not note the grammatical form of the word and offered, for example, '*to jot down*' instead of '*jot down*' in (ii).



ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/22
Comprehension 22

Key messages

Candidates should ensure that they read all the questions, and the material, before starting to compose their answers. It is especially important to establish what exactly is required to gain maximum marks in any question or sub-question. In particular, candidates should seek to identify, for each question:

- the number of ideas required, whether stated specifically in the question stem (e.g. **1(b)**, **1(c)** **1(f)**, **2(a)(i)** and **2(c)(ii)**) or implicit in the number of available marks (e.g. **2(a)(ii)** and **2(h)**).
- whether the question requires only the location and identification of the relevant ideas (most of **Section B**), or whether there is a need to explain and develop the points selected (e.g. **1(a)** and **1(c)**).
- whether any question demands own knowledge, interpretation or some wider thought, i.e. the answer does not (directly) appear in the material (**1(d)**, **1(f)** and **2(b)**).
- any line numbers given, or clues in the wording of the question, which would help with location of the correct responses in the material (much of **Section B**).
- whether a word limit is imposed, in which case the response should be concise, but also convey the necessary points precisely (**2(d)** only).
- whether the same terms found in the material may be used, or whether the ideas need conveying mainly in candidates' own words (**2(e)** and **2(f)**).

General comments

Candidates generally demonstrated high levels of understanding of the material in both **Sections A** and **B**, and a degree of engagement with the questions. This was especially true of **Section A**, with some parts of **Section B** proving more challenging.

The vast majority of candidates were able to communicate their ideas clearly in written English, also organising their answers in the appropriate response areas. Errors of grammar and expression occasionally resulted in a loss of precision. Most candidates offered an appropriate number of points relative to the available marks for the question and seemed prepared for the range of question styles. Some responses did not refer to the essential relevant points from the material. Candidates should offer sufficient detail and precision, given the constraints and demands of particular questions. This was particularly true of those questions in which a word limit was imposed (**2(d)**) or which required ideas to be rendered mainly in candidates' own words (**2(e)** and **2(f)**); please see more detailed comments below.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The scenario for **Section A**, relating to establishing a hospital radio station in a new hospital, while presumably not immediately familiar to many, was clearly grasped by the vast majority of candidates. Most candidates had plenty to offer, especially in the extended responses required in **Questions 1(a)** and, to a lesser extent, **1(c)**.

- (a) In this 10-mark, levels-based extended response question, candidates needed to supply four well-developed disadvantages to gain full marks. Developments are credited when candidates make logical connections across different parts of the material or when they explain the significance of a point they have selected from the material or exemplify it. Some candidates were quite assertive in

their observations, suggesting, for example, that 'because Laurent has no social life, he will have no social skills'. Successful links are frequently characterised by using more nuanced language, something often achieved by the deployment of modal verbs. For example: 'Laurent's voice was monotonous during the demonstration, which the patients listening to the hospital radio might find rather boring over a two-hour broadcast.' and *Due to his ambition to host his own national radio show in future, Laurent has no social life. This may make it challenging for him to establish a rapport with patients on the wards, as he is required to talk to them to source requests for music to play on the show. / Laurent was previously sacked from the university radio station as he changed content without permission. This could be off-putting to Xan, as Laurent is likely to do the same at the hospital. / Laurent was fired from his previous job for changing the content without approval from the producer, which suggests that he is a loose cannon and may not follow orders.*

The majority of candidates correctly selected Additional Information point 4, identifying Laurent's lack of social life stemming from his longer-term career ambitions. Most simply copied it without developing the 'no social life' angle, for instance with reference to the need for 'exceptional people skills' (point 13). Some candidates further developed the idea that this 'brings into question Laurent's commitment to the hospital radio, as he may simply be using this as a stepping stone to gain recognition and achieve his ultimate goal / may leave as soon as he gains sufficient popularity. Even more perceptive responses were able to connect this with point 9 of the Additional Information.

Other points commonly gaining credit included those linked to Laurent's choice of music to play, being mainly classical. While minimal development consisted of comments such as *which will not appeal to everyone*, better responses were able to cite the relative popularity of classical music (43%), according to the questionnaire results, and noted that another category (pop) was significantly more popular (60%) among patients surveyed. Some stronger responses were further able to connect this with Laurent's past record in not accepting direction as to programme content, i.e. as evidence that he was *likely to do the same thing here*. Some candidates also noted that *he played his own choice of track first, before those requested by patients*, which was *not fully in the spirit of the show* and demonstrated something of a *narcissistic personality*. An occasional response was able to back up this latter claim, by identifying how *Laurent mentioned himself many times in the demonstration*, and that *he calls the show after his own name*. Perceptive responses also sometimes noted Laurent's slightly pompous air, in *assuming all the listeners share his taste in music*.

It is important candidates ensure that ideas offered fit the situation presented, the focus of the question and the internal logic of all the available information. For example, some responses stated that *classical music was the least favoured among patients*, when it was, in fact, the second highest choice. The issue of 'dead air' was sometimes erroneously cited here too since this criticism did not apply to Laurent's demonstration. A number of claims suggested that *Laurent gave no shout-outs* which is inaccurate, though they were less warm and specific than Anny's and *has no experience in dealing with hospital patients*. The ward visit which informed the demonstration means that he did, at least, have that experience of patient interaction to his name. It was valid to say that he had *no prior experience* in this regard (whereas Anny's was clearly much more extensive). Similarly, when claiming that *Laurent's choice of mainly classical music in his demonstration might not appeal to young people*, this missed the important detail relevant to this context, from the Additional Information (point 12), that the majority of listeners would consist of mothers with new babies, and elderly people.

Another misunderstanding related to the previous issues at the university's radio station, with some candidates stating, or implying by the vagueness of their observations, that Xan had been the producer who did not like the way Laurent presented, or his changing of the content. There was also erroneous reference to his *living near the hospital*, along the lines of *Laurent living so close by means he may be too lazy to get to work on time as he'd leave it until the last minute*, or with regard to traffic issues. His proximity to the hospital, relative to Anny, should have been recognised as a clear advantage, rather than a disadvantage. Another example of wrong focus was: *Laurent dreams of having his own radio and CCHR may not be Laurent's best choice because it's a charity staffed and managed solely by volunteers*. This would not be a concern for Xan, but only for Laurent. It is important always to ensure that ideas offered fit the situation presented, the focus of the question, and the internal logic of all the available information.

- (b) Most responses here were too vague about 'examples of Anny's people skills', suggesting only possible skills, such as *friendliness, enthusiasm* or *her ability to interact with people*, rather than

selecting actual examples, such as her specific and personal interactions with patients (and staff) when on the ward. It was acceptable to select and present quotes in support of this idea, but some candidates who did so quoted irrelevant parts of Anny's demonstration, such as her general greetings, or referenced her choice of tracks played. Merely stating that *she visited patients on the ward*, or *gave shout-outs*, was too vague to gain credit, since Laurent had also done so. One valid distinction here was the fact that *Anny gave shout-outs to staff as well as patients*, which Laurent apparently did not do. (If he did speak to staff members, he did not mention them in the demonstration.) There was also some irrelevant citing of Anny's technical issues and her enthusiastic tone in the demonstration. Those candidates selecting the valid point about her previous voluntary work in the old hospital often omitted the fact that she had willingly 'spent a lot of time' on this activity.

- (c) Most candidates were able to gain at least half the available marks here, usually with combinations of points relating to Anny's potential difficulties in getting to the hospital at the required times, and of the several instances of her technical failures. The question required four disadvantages to be explained, and most candidates presented four responses in which they had attempted to make connections across the material. An example would be in linking the distance of her office from the hospital (Additional Information point 11) with the prevalence of evening traffic jams (point 14). Occasional responses only mentioned the *morning* traffic, which was irrelevant to the intended timing of the radio broadcast, while others conflated the distance, traffic and potential lateness too much to gain full credit. Similarly, the fact that Anny 'occasionally' had to work late (point 16) was not always presented accurately, and candidates found it more challenging to develop this point. This could be achieved by questioning her overall availability, for example *for every show*, or by making a connection with Additional Information point 5, detailing the necessity to be present an hour beforehand, to meet patients on the wards and take their music requests. Occasional responses lost sight of the focus of the question, i.e. disadvantages to Xan, and mentioned the inconvenience or potential tiredness *Anny* would experience, which was irrelevant. There was also some misunderstanding, when candidates stated that *Anny does not live near the hospital*, rather than the fact that her office/workplace is far away.

On the technical side of things, candidates tended to identify Anny's unintended pauses as being examples of the 'dead air' which professional broadcasting aims to avoid, as detailed in the Additional Information (point 2). The other issues – the sudden loud music, her stuttering, and her failure to name the track – were less often successfully explained. Very few candidates, for example, suggested that the many elderly people and new babies in the hospital (Additional Information point 12) would be especially disturbed by sudden, unexpected loud noises. Equally, few responses suggested that there might be problems for the radio station if track names and artists' names were not mentioned, in terms of broadcasting rights, royalties and similar.

Some candidates suggested Anny's relative inexperience or lack of technical expertise would necessitate Xan's spending a lot of time training her, whereas it was made clear in the Additional Information (point 7) that Xan was more than happy to do this, hence this could not be considered a convincing disadvantage. It was creditworthy, however, to explain that *Her lack of experience might mean that Anny takes a lot longer to be ready to meet professional standards of broadcasting*, a clear disadvantage to Xan. An occasional perceptive answer also made the connection with the intention to broadcast over the internet (Additional Information point 10) and, if linked to the notion of quality, this was sufficiently distinct from Laurent, whose appeal would be the more likely obstacle, to gain credit.

Very few candidates identified Anny's repetition, in her demonstration, of the words 'great' and 'lovely', as being a potential source of irritation to listeners over a two-hour broadcast.

- (d) Most candidates did not grasp the thrust of this question, possibly focusing too much on the tabulated results of the questionnaire presented in the material, rather than looking at the information explaining how the data had been collected, which was the key issue here. There was a great deal of speculative comment relating to the numbers and percentages presented, or to the fact that three preferences were sought, from only five choices, and a range of comments criticising the music style classifications, and possible omissions. Some candidates clearly considered that rap music, for example, should have been included, which would hardly seem appropriate, given the setting. Some responses were completely off-topic, criticising Anny or Laurent and their musical choices, or stating that the problem related to patient turnover. Very few candidates correctly surmised that busy ward staff might not have had time to hand out questionnaires, or collect up and send them on when completed, such that results might not be completely representative.

- (e) The vast majority of candidates correctly identified either that the benefit of hospital radio to patients had been found, or proven, and/or that hospital radio improved patients' mood and recovery. Some irrelevant responses focused too much on the 'its own' part of the question, suggesting that every hospital was different and therefore needed an *individual* hospital radio station, to cater for its patients.
- (f) It was clear that not all candidates understood what was meant by voluntary work and volunteering, while other responses were too vague and cited possible disadvantages which could have applied equally to paid employment, such as lack of experience or skill. Speculative answers also included that there would be no leadership or direction, people from different backgrounds, or too many quarrels. Better responses cited the lack of obligation to attend, or to do so regularly, with potential impacts on services and quality, or focused on potential motivation, such as for self-improvement. Good examples include: *As there is no assured pay or employment contract, there isn't a commitment made whole-heartedly to an organisation. Therefore, this be [sic] easily ignored if personal commitments or problems come up, leaving the organisation helpless as they cannot hold the volunteers accountable. / 'All volunteers' means that they may not be there most of the time. This means that there will be a time when everyone is busy and there is no one to handle difficult situations.* Some candidates did not appreciate the more open nature of the question and continued to focus on the radio or hospital context, with a number thinking that the intention was for unqualified volunteers to undertake emergency surgery, nursing and similar.

Section B

Question 2

Candidates generally engaged well with the concepts introduced in **Section B** of the material and there were few serious misunderstandings of content evident in their responses. Incorrect answers tended to be those which had either not located the appropriate piece(s) of information to answer the question set, or did so with insufficient detail to gain (full) credit. Occasional responses were offered from outside the line references, where these were provided in the question stems.

In the summary skills question (**2(d)**), the ability to select and convey the essential points concisely was tested. In **2(e)** and **2(f)**, where the use of 'own words' was required, the main reason for marks not being awarded was over-reliance on terms taken directly from the material. Other renderings tended to lack the precision or emphasis of the original. (Please see comments below for more details.)

In questions which require identification and location of the correct answers from the material, and where there is no requirement for candidates to summarise or use their own words, there is little to be gained by not simply copying the necessary elements from the material. Indeed, attempts to paraphrase, in such cases, may lead to the omission of an essential detail, or a change of emphasis or focus. Examples include questions **2(a)(i)**, **2(c)(i)**, **2(c)(ii)**, **2(g)** and **2(h)**.

- (a) (i) Precision was essential in identifying the three activities, such as a colleague's 'quick' question. While most candidates gained two or three of the available marks, some renderings of 'every now and then doing a round of social media' were too vague to credit. For example, simply naming *social media*, or referring to *using*, *attending to* or *going through social media* did not convey quite the same sense as the original. More successful alternative formulations included *checking*, *browsing* and *surfing social media*. Incorrect answers referred to phone activity more generally.
- (ii) The vast majority of candidates correctly identified the 'beep from [her] phone' as the distracting sound. Occasionally, one or other of the required elements was omitted, or the sense of a phone *ringing* was conveyed, rather than the noise (or *ping*) generated by an incoming *notification* or *alert*.
- (b) A number of candidates correctly identified that the use of italics was emphatic, but not all were able to state clearly what was being emphasised by presenting 'be' in this way in the material. Successful responses related to the idea of *being in the moment*; *being both physically and mentally present*; *being appreciative of the people around [her]*, rather than *distracted by phones*; *to emphasise the wonderful emotion of being at the same place with others with no distractions*, and *She finally felt the moment of joy of actually being in the moment in the same place together with others*. Candidates are reminded that, in single-mark-tariff questions, only the first response is considered. Occasional candidates seemed to think that the use of 'italics' related to *being/speaking Italian*.

- (c) (i) While most candidates identified the notion of increased/more stimuli, it was also essential to convey both the sense of these having increased 'five times over' and 'since the 1980s'. Occasional candidates correctly calculated this time period to be *over the last 40 years*, which was an acceptable re-working of the original. Incorrect responses included reference to stimuli increasing *five times a day*. The alternative correct response, that stimuli are 'now equal to 174 newspapers a day', was far less rarely attempted. Distractors included correct answers to **2(c)(ii)** and **2(d)**, or occasional ideas from candidates' own knowledge or experience, despite the clear rubric instruction.
- (ii) The comparatives were essential for credit here; 'less productive' and 'stress levels are rising'. Most candidates were awarded at least one of the two available marks, and many gained both. Distractors included parts of the answer to 2d, repetition or paraphrasing of the question, or reference to 'moments when we're truly focused are increasingly rare', presumably because this appeared between the two correct answers in the material.
- (d) This was the only question on the paper requiring candidates to restrict their answer to a set number of words. While most candidates did confine themselves to answering 'in about 60 words', they often included an introduction, re-working of the question stem, or extraneous parts of the material, most commonly Tigchelaar's statement on line 26 ('This overactive brain can be problematic when you're trying to concentrate'). While most candidates were able to gain two or three of the six available marks, few gained more than four. There was some tendency to convey only part of the essential points, for example *The brain loves stimuli* or *...is always on guard for danger / always processing sounds around us and on the lookout for danger* [half each of two creditworthy points] and *We focus on one thing* or *... part of our brain is constantly processing surrounding signals*, whereas both elements were required to gain each of these two marks. These were, nevertheless, two of the points most commonly credited, along with *If things are happening even just a little bit too slowly for your brain, it automatically goes in search of new stimuli*. Most candidates wrote this out in full rather than summarising, thereby using up a large number of the available words. Some attempts were too vague, such as *Our brain processes multiple signals while doing one task*, omitting the idea of 'continually processing' or 'processing everything'. Occasionally, the material was not used when formulating the answer. Examples include: *Our brain keeps the things we've seen and listened to to confirm if it's real and for example when we are doing maths and then we change to doing science*. Very few candidates picked up the points about noticing when one's name is mentioned, or the beep from a phone grabbing attention. The temptation/being addictive ('to do short, quick things') point was also quite frequently credited.

Examples of concise renderings of the essential, creditworthy points include: *Never focused on one task, brains constantly process everything around. / Our name mentioned or a phone beep from across a room immediately trigger a reaction.* [successful conflation; **2 marks**] / *An incoming phone notification might be something important for us, so immediately grabs our attention.* [**2 marks**] / *When activities are too slow, brains seek new stimuli. / On functioning slowly, the brain looks for new stimuli. / The lure of quick things persists. / ...giving us the urge to undertake short tasks. / It is addictive to undertake only short, quick tasks, keeping us busy but not productive.* [**2 marks**]

- (e) This was one of two questions testing candidates' ability to convey key points of information 'as far as possible' in their 'own words'. Most candidates found it challenging to communicate the idea of 'requires little brainpower' in their own words, such as *needs minimal thinking; without investing too much cognitive thinking*, or *the depth of knowledge and focus required is low*. Vague answers referred to 'energy', 'effort' or 'input', without the requisite nuance that this was *mental*. The single available mark was, therefore, more often gained by attempts to render the notion of 'not very satisfying', for example *unrewarding, not at all gratifying, unfulfilling*, or *gives minimal sense of achievement when complete*. An answer which managed to convey both points correctly, though of course still only gaining the single available mark, was: *A task which needs less thinking, which does not feel fulfilling at the end of the day*.
- (f) This was the second, and longer, of two questions testing the ability to supply key points 'as far as possible' in the candidates' 'own words'. Barely any responses used incorrect sections of the material, given the direction offered by the rubric towards the relevant line numbers. A small number offered their own ideas about the problems of overactive brains.

This 'own words' question proved reasonably accessible overall, if only because there was a range of possible fragments of language to attempt, from within the line numbers cited, for a total of four

marks. Indeed, some candidates were able to offer more than the required four points. In such questions, candidates are not required to change words or phrases which have no obvious synonyms ('email' and 'attention-residue', for example) and it is permitted to use different forms of verbs present in the material (*switches*, from 'switch'), nouns from verbs and similar (*switch* [noun] from 'switch'/'switching' [verbs]; *stress* [noun] from its adjectival use in 'stress levels'), as well as minor linking words and similar. Some candidates almost completely ignored the instruction to use their own words and copied verbatim the relevant section. Such an approach gained no credit and candidates feeling unable to convey information from the material in an acceptable format might be best advised not to waste time merely copying, but to focus instead on other questions, where they might be able to polish more secure answers.

Examples of points successfully communicated in candidates' own words include: *Repeatedly bouncing among multiple things at once* ['every time you switch']; and *When you avert your focus onto something new, a small fraction of that focus is still on the last job / We will still be thinking about the task before, so our brain is not fully focusing on the current task* ['part of your attention' and 'remains on the previous task', so each worth two marks]; *When you avert your focus onto something new, a small fraction of that focus is still on the last job* [= 'Every time you switch', 'part of your attention', 'remains on the previous task'; worth three marks]; *the initial piece of work* ['the previous task']; *a quick glimpse at one's emails* ['a brief look at your email']; *Our focus will be divided* ['makes your mind split in two']; *termed as attention-residue* ['this is called "attention-residue"']; *this might cause mental exhaustion* ['takes energy']; *boosts the stress* ['increased stress levels'], and *causes it to be harder to focus / to concentrate* ['makes it even more difficult to pay attention']. The following response was worth more than the available four marks, conveying six of the points already exemplified above: When we change the activity we are performing to another activity (1) some of our brain may still be thinking of (1) the initial activity (1). This is due to us wanting to remember (1) what we did in the former activity (REP). This makes it much harder to focus (1) on one activity, hence adding to the stress (1).

- (g) Questions which impose no word limit and which do not require information to be conveyed in candidates' own words require detail and precision in the responses, for the award of full marks. It was essential here to clarify that switching between tasks should be done 'as little as possible', rather than merely being reduced, for example, and that one is advised to sit alone 'occasionally'. It was not necessary to add the reason for this. The third way of improving attention levels, mentioned in the material, was 'doing a second task that requires little brainpower'. Attempts to rework this in candidates' own words sometimes lost the meaning of the original. The point was also exemplified three times in the material and it was unfortunate that some candidates chose those three examples of the same point, as if they constituted three separate 'ways'. Any combination of the examples would still only equate to the same idea but could be credited in place of the point itself, given sufficient detail, such as listening to 'repetitive' background music'.
- (h) Occasional responses attempted to supply their own ideas here, in place of those found in the material, despite the clear rubric instruction. Similarly to **2(g)**, there was no need to paraphrase or abbreviate the responses, so some level of detail was sought for the award of marks, for example noting that 'everything is digital and... always on the go' and the ability to 'get information 24/7 and manage your life through one device'. Attempts to rephrase were often unsuccessful, such as *information is at the tips of our fingers*. Some candidates used their own words but in ways which did not relate to the text. Examples are: *unfinished tasks given by their boss* and *doing your homework*. There was also some misunderstanding of the phrase 'short dopamine hits', taken to mean 'hits of short dopamine', rather than 'short hits of dopamine'. However, it was more common not to gain this mark because reference to finding/seeking 'new information' had been omitted. The ideas of 'constantly' being 'switched on and in a hurry' and this being 'unnatural' were sometimes successfully conflated for two marks, and a number of candidates managed to convey more than the required three, of the possible five, creditworthy answers, suggesting good levels of understanding overall.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/23
Comprehension

Key messages

- It is essential that candidates read the questions carefully and note the instructions and guidance provided. For example, in **Question 1(a)** and **1(b)**, candidates were directed to the different conversations and needed to use only this information in their responses. Similarly, in **Question 2(a)** and **Question 2(h)** candidates were required to provide an exact word or meaning. Those candidates who did not observe the word 'exact' were unlikely to score here.
- It is important to observe the focus of the question. For example, in **Question 1(d)** candidates were asked to explain why Matilde would appreciate an Eduk8 concert ticket. Candidates were required to concentrate their responses on Matilde. References to the preferences of other members of Matilde's family were unable to gain credit.
- If a question does not instruct candidates to write a response within a certain word limit, it is highly recommended that candidates copy the relevant text from the material. Some responses were not detailed enough to gain credit and the re-wording of the original material unnecessarily affected the precision of responses.
- In word count questions **2(c)**, **2(d)** and **2(e)**, candidates must note the word count and provide succinct responses. In **Question 2(d)**, candidates were asked to answer in about 40 words. Some responses contained far fewer words and so did not cover all of the required points. In **Questions 2(c)** and **2(e)**, some responses went over the word limit. Unfortunately, words appearing after the word limit will not gain credit.

General comments

- It is recommended that candidates write their answers as legibly as possible.
- Candidates are advised to avoid the use of ellipsis, as such responses are generally uncreditworthy.
- It is strongly advised that candidates focus on their use of language.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) In (i), candidates were directed to the conversation between Chiara and Bastien and asked to identify two different pieces of evidence showing that Bastien really cared about buying a birthday present for his Mum. Candidates gaining the highest credit were able to locate the relevant material and express their answer clearly, for example: *Bastien was the first to mention the birthday and spoke enthusiastically when he was discussing it. Bastien searches through the flyers carefully and thoroughly.*

Some candidates were able to locate the correct information but their written response lacked the required detail and could not, therefore, gain credit, for example: *Enthusiastically referred to his Mum's birthday.* Other weaker responses referred to incorrect sections of the material.

In (ii), candidates were asked to use the same conversation to identify two different pieces of evidence showing that Chiara was not so interested in buying a birthday present for her Mum.

Candidates gaining full credit demonstrated the ability to locate the correct information and clearly express it in their response, for example: *Chiara admitted that she had not thought about what to get for her mother's birthday. She takes a hurried look at the flyers and wants to leave as soon as possible to meet with a friend.*

Weaker responses were often generalised such as *Chiara was using her phone* and *she was not interested in that*.

- (b) In this question, candidates were directed to the conversation between Matilde and Rocco and they were asked to identify the two statements showing that Matilde had been disappointed with previous birthday presents from her family. Candidates gaining the highest credit were able to locate the correct information and express the required detail within their written response, for example: *She spoke without much emotion saying, certainly no more flowers and chocolates / Rocco starts his question in a cautious tone and says he wants to get it right this time which implies that Matilde may not have liked previous presents.*

Some responses did not contain enough precise information, for example: *Matilde said she doesn't want flowers and chocolates*. Some candidates did not follow the instructions given in the question and used a different section of the material to answer the question, for example: *she wants to relive her youth*. A common misunderstanding noted Matilde's desire for an unforgettable reminder of her special day.

- (c) In (i), candidates were asked to explain how Bastien could afford the \$50 for Matilde to attend Remi's workshop. It was essential for candidates to note the date of the workshop in the question. Candidates gaining the highest credit were able to locate the relevant material in the Additional Information regarding Bastien's savings (point 8), allowance (point 12) and possible earnings (point 14), and combine these points with the information given in the Background stating that there were two weeks until Matilde's birthday, for example: *He has \$30 saved and needs to make \$20 more in just two weeks. Assuming there are at least two more Saturdays before her birthday, he could get \$10 in allowance. If he washes two cars, he will then have 10 more dollars which amounts to \$50.*

Some responses were too generalised to gain credit, for example: *Bastien receives \$5 every Saturday and left flyers in his local streets offering to wash cars for \$5 per car.*

In (ii), stronger responses noted that group size was the focus of the question and clearly explained why Bastien should try to book Matilde on a watercolour workshop rather than an acrylic one, for example: *The acrylic workshop is popular, the room is full to bursting and Matilde will be squeezed into a corner, whereas the watercolour workshop is spacious as Remi limits the workshop to six attendees.*

Other responses identified that one workshop had more or fewer attendees but did not offer a comparison of the two options.

In (iii), candidates were asked to explain why Matilde would be likely to prefer Remi's style of teaching art to that of her art teacher at school. Candidates who scored highly were able to locate the relevant information in Remi's Art Workshop flyer and Additional Information point 1, and clearly express their response, for example: *Remi provides advice in a non-judgemental way. Matilde's art teacher laughed at one of her drawings.*

In (iv), candidates were required to explain how Matilde's well-being might benefit from attending an art workshop. Here, they needed to note the information provided in Additional Information points 4 and 11. Some candidates also used the watercolour workshop review. Stronger responses were very clear and detailed, for example: *Matilde has had a lot of stress at work and as one of the reviews stated, it was very relaxing to just paint / Matilde has been under a great deal of pressure at work recently and painting can be very therapeutic, promoting good mental health.*

Weaker responses were characterised by generalised statements and a lack of detail, for example: *Painting promotes good health / Painting is therapeutic and calming / Matilde is experiencing a great deal of pressure.*

- (d) In this question, candidates were asked to explain why Matilde would appreciate an Eduk8 concert ticket as a fortieth birthday present. Here, candidates were required to make connections across different parts of the **Section A** material. The most successful responses contained three clear

reasons, for example: *Matilde has loved Eduk8 since she was a teenager but never got to go to the concert as a child. Now, she finally has an opportunity to see them in concert. One review stated that they played their older songs and Matilde would appreciate this as she will know the older releases. She mentioned to Rocco that she wanted to feel like she was young again and hearing their older songs might give her an immense feeling of nostalgia.*

Some candidates noted three reasons but did not develop their responses, for example: *Matilde loves Eduk8's new album and listens to it constantly on her headphones at work. As a teenager, she wanted to go to an Eduk8 concert but wasn't allowed to go. They are her favourite band.*

Common misunderstandings included references to Rocco's preferences, the issues with the drummer, ticket prices and her inability to attend the concert due to work commitments.

- (e) Candidates were asked to identify a disadvantage for Rocco and Matilde if they went to the Eduk8 concert in Perila Town. The best responses noted the date and time of the Perila Town concert and linked it to the absence of the support act at that location, as well as the consequences of a clash with Matilde's Literacy Club.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Responses gaining credit noted the wording of the question and successfully identified the exact word or phrase in the material, for example: in (iii), 'innards' gained credit but 'electrical innards' did not.

- (b) In this question, candidates were required to identify the two worrying statistics cited by WEEE. Most candidates were able to locate the correct information. Those who gained the most credit were able to provide the required level of detail in their response, for example: *5.3 billion mobile phones will be thrown away this year. The mountain of electrical and electronic waste will grow to 74 million tonnes a year by 2030.*

Weaker responses were characterised by the omission of key information such as 'this year', 'will grow to' and 'a year'.

- (c) In word count questions, candidates are strongly advised to avoid introductions and repetition of the question. Responses must also be written in complete sentences.

In (i), candidates were asked to explain the technological changes seen by Tony, in about 20 words. A large number of responses went over the word limit. Unfortunately, words appearing after the word limit will not gain credit. Many candidates gained some credit by stating that 'objects used to be designed to last'. Candidates then ran out of words to gain the second mark or responses lacked the required detail.

In (ii), candidates were required to explain what annoys Tony, in about 10 words. A high number of responses went over the word count and many answers started with 'he is annoyed by' which used nearly half of the words allowed. A successful response stated: *Plastic is poorly made, so it needs to be thrown away.*

- (d) In this question, candidates were asked to explain different reasons why volunteer, David, is so grateful to the Fixing Factory in about 40 words. Candidates achieving the highest credit were able to clearly note the key points with the required level of detail.
- (e) In the final word count question on the paper, candidates were asked to explain what made Noor walk into the Fixing Factory in about 20 words. Candidates gaining full credit were able to give the required level of detail within the word count. On this question, fewer candidates wrote an introduction and were able to access higher marks as a result, for example: *She was intrigued by the colourful signs and the bustling activity inside the shop because they don't often see things like that.*
- (f) Candidates were asked to use their own opinion to explain why Dermot and Marilyn turn on the kettle 'in tense anticipation'. Stronger responses included: *Dermot had supposedly fixed the kettle and they both hope that it works so Dermot does not stain the store's reputation / The kettle was*

broken and while troubleshooting they found a possible solution. The only way to find out if they were correct was to turn it on and find out if it has worked.

Common misunderstandings included the meaning of 'tense anticipation'. Weaker responses provided description instead of the required explanation.

- (g) In this question, candidates were asked to identify the two different misconceptions that 'cup of tea' fixes refute. Candidates scoring marks were able to locate the correct information and provide enough detail in their response, for example: *It is simply not cost-effective to fix things nowadays and it takes too much time and effort.*

Common misunderstandings included: *It takes the same time as drinking a cup of tea and costs less than a cup of tea.* Some candidates clearly struggled with the meaning of 'misconception'.

- (h) Candidates were required to state the exact meaning of the five words. Those gaining credit were able to provide an accurate synonym, for example: *decorate / amplifies / to face / expansion / ethics.*

Weaker responses did not observe the word 'exact' in the question and so were unable to gain credit.

