

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN-ORAL)

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Paper 0522/01

Reading Passage (Core)

## Key Messages

- It is important for candidates to take careful note of questions that contain the instruction to 'use own words' and attempt to develop strategies for processing their answers, not relying on wholesale lifting, as this does not provide evidence that the passage has been understood.
- Candidates are encouraged to attempt to show awareness of the designated genre for **Question 2** (in this case, a newspaper report) and to use some features of it when writing their answers.
- Candidates should plan their response to **Question 2** both carefully and appropriately and focus closely on the specific requirements of the question. Lengthy responses containing unnecessary, extraneous material are likely to contain unforced errors of expression and the time constraints of the examination militate against there being sufficient opportunity for proof-reading such responses.

## General Comments

In general, candidates were well prepared for this paper and responded with interest to the subject matter of the reading passage. Overall, the sub-questions that constituted **Question 1** discriminated successfully, with those who had focused on close reading of both the passage and the questions scoring high marks. The key discriminator, as in previous series, was whether the candidate had engaged not only with the wording of the question, but also with the connotations of key words within the passage (especially in **Questions 1(f)** and **1(g)**). Centres are encouraged to emphasise to candidates the importance of thinking carefully about a writer's choice of words and of how to explain their appreciation of specific vocabulary as used in the context of the passage. As has been mentioned in previous reports, credit cannot be given to answers which explain the meaning of a particular word by using the root word as a different part of speech (e.g. 'realisation' and 'something that was realised').

There were a large number of enthusiastic responses to **Question 2** and candidates would appear to have welcomed the opportunity to write a continuation of an episode that was shrouded in mystery. As mentioned in the Key Messages section of this report, it is important to plan and organise responses to this question carefully before starting to write, as many continuations of the story could have been improved with more careful concentration on the precise focus of the question and also with closer attention to providing explanations which reflected the setting and circumstances of the original. A small number of candidates did this very well, effectively building up a sense of fear and suspense only to produce a carefully contrived anti-climax in which the mysterious follower turned out to be a younger sibling of the narrator playing a practical joke; less successful responses were those that finished with a similar conclusion but lacked the atmospheric build-up as well as the sense of a contrived use of bathos.

The great majority of candidates completed the paper confidently within the time allowed - in general, those who did not do so had become so involved in their responses to **Question 2** that they were attempting to write over-complex narratives. It was encouraging to note that there were noticeably fewer no-response answers than in previous series.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Give two details from paragraph three ('I was tormented...') that suggest the writer is being followed. (2)

This proved to be an accessible question, with the majority of candidates securing at least one mark. The most frequent combination of correct responses comprised the 'faint rustling sound' and the 'echo of footsteps' with fewer candidates mentioning the equally correct point that the sound stopped 'whenever the narrator stopped'. Some responses selected a quotation and then explained why this suggested that the narrator was being followed. Although this question did not necessarily call for such a detailed approach, candidates who adopted this strategy gained full marks. Incorrect responses tended to focus on the narrator's feelings (e.g. "*he was tormented*"). Candidates were generally aware that two reasons had to be offered in response to the question, indicating that they understood that a two-mark question requires two discrete points for the answer. This trend appeared throughout the paper.

- (b) Give one word used in the passage which suggests that the narrator is feeling distressed (paragraph three, line 11). (1)

This question was generally answered successfully although a significant few thought the required word was 'imagination' or, more rarely, 'rustled'. A small number of responses did not observe the instruction to give 'one word' and consequently lost the mark for a vocabulary question where the answer was apparently understood because the word 'tormented' was not specifically indicated.

- (c) (i) By referring to paragraph eight (A twig snapped...), using your own words, explain:

- (i) how the narrator reacts to the sound of the twig snapping, and why (2)

Generally, candidates responded purposefully to this question by selecting and rephrasing appropriate information and most gained at least mark by explaining how the narrator reacted ('turned' or 'looked into the trees'). Fewer referred to the equally correct point that he 'looks to see what is making the sound' as the preferred reason for this reaction, and many also correctly identified the narrator's feeling of fear. The key point in this question was that an explanation of how the narrator reacts required a physical focus and therefore the fact that the trees were described as 'sinister' was not relevant. The 'stopping' and 'turning' was stated in the passage and the 'looking' was implied by the narrator's 'facing' the trees and by the following line that he could 'see nothing or 'too much'. Candidates should be encouraged not only to unravel the question but also to read around the key sentence to establish both explicit and implicit relevant factors.

- (ii) what he does next (1)

As with **Question 1 (c)(i)**, when answering this question, it was important for candidates to focus on the narrator's motive(s) for his actions. The possible correct answers were that the narrator turned west/towards the beach/sea/across the headland/continues in the direction that he was going. The requirement across the two parts of this question to identify the specific order in the chain of events proved to be quite challenging with a significant number offering information relating to **Question 1 (c)(i)**; for example, the narrator '*looks into the trees*'; '*looks to see what is making the sound*'. Relatively few gave precise details about the direction the narrator headed in, with '*turns west*' as the preferred response from those who did.

- (d) Why does the narrator find it difficult to speak at first, and what is his voice like when he does speak (paragraph nine, 'My heart beat...')? (2)

This question was answered correctly by a large number of candidates with most opting to refer firstly to the physical reason as to why the narrator found it difficult to speak and then describing what his voice sounded like. This question did not require the use of 'own words' and so a selective lift of the relevant words in the passage was sufficient to gain the two marks available; those who attempted to find synonyms for 'dry' and for 'croak' ran the risk of losing the marks available if the synonyms chosen were insufficiently precise. Less successful responses tended to focus on the fact that the narrator was frightened, and nothing else, thereby explaining *why his throat was dry* as opposed to why he found it difficult to speak. However, most candidates were able to offer at least one correct detail in response to the question ('*his throat was too dry*').

- (e) **By referring closely to paragraph nine ('My heart beat...'), using your own words explain the narrator's concerns about his journey to the beach. (3)**

This proved to be a challenging question with very few gaining all three available marks.

The key to answering the question is to be found in the phrase '*concerns about his journey to the beach*'. As with **Questions (c)(i), (c)(ii), and (d)**, the focus of this question had to be clearly identified, and the focus related to the context of the journey as opposed to the feelings of the narrator *per se*. The sequence of the narrator's concerns begins with his fear that his pursuer was close to him and then goes on to describe the difficult journey ahead. Only a small number of responses successfully identified the length of the journey as one of the concerns although many were able to identify the slope covered in vegetation and the dark trees. It should be noted that quite a number of responses did not differentiate clearly between the 'noiseless shadow' and the 'shadowy trees' by mixing the separate factors together. Another common feature of less successful responses was the failure to identify the exact nature of the narrator's concerns in reaching the beach. Although the forest and the slope were frequently cited, relatively few qualified these references appropriately by highlighting the specific quality of each item (the *shadowy* trees and the *bushy* slope) that made it so problematic for the narrator. Indeed in some responses *bushy* had been crossed out. When preparing candidates for this examination in future, Centres are advised to focus on strategies for identifying the level of qualification required in an answer.

- (f) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by the words in italics in the following phrases: (6)**

As in previous series, this proved to be a challenging series of questions with the majority of candidates attempting to explain the vocabulary by providing single word synonyms. This is an acceptable ploy but candidates should be aware that sometimes single word synonyms might not explain the target word fully and that an explanation which entails a description of the phrase might be more effective in conveying the writer's intended meaning. Again, candidates should be encouraged to look for contextual clues in the passage to help them explain what is meant. Candidates should be wary of merely paraphrasing all or part of the words being explained. For example, the narrator 'realised it was not pleasant' is not an acceptable explanation of 'unpleasant realisation'. It is also important to keep in mind when answering this question that each of the two words italicised should be explained independently.

- (i) **'unpleasant realisation' (line 20)**

This was generally answered well with many acceptable explanations of 'unpleasant' and generally accurate interpretations of 'realisation' such as 'came to know', although many attempts to explain 'realisation' were unsuccessful through the use of related words ('realised', 'realising').

- (ii) **'hopelessly perplexed' (line 22)**

Explaining the word 'perplexed' proved particularly challenging for many. Some thought it meant *annoyed* as opposed to *confused*, and others, because of attempting to separate the meanings of the two words, wrote that the narrator had 'given up' or 'had no hope'. Such answers illustrate the pitfalls of not considering the two words in the context of the passage. However, the most successful responses were able succinctly to paraphrase the original phrase, for example as 'completely confused', thus showing a clear understanding of both words.

- (iii) **'stealthy stalker' (line 22)**

There were relatively few candidates who scored two marks on this part of the question as many attempted explanations were not qualified fully. This was possibly because the term 'stealthy stalker' was seen as tautological and therefore many candidates simply attempted to explain 'stalker'. In less successful responses, the explanation did not quite identify the meaning of the term; for example, it was described as a 'follower' or someone who 'follows quietly' which was outside the context of the passage and such explanations did not convey the deliberate and cunning attempt to track the narrator by remaining hidden in the shadows. The most successful responses were those that identified that the narrator's pursuer was following in a furtive or cunning way.

**(g) Re-read lines 1 to 8 ('I walked eagerly...' to '...one formless blackness.')**

The writer uses the following phrases to create a sense of unease for what the narrator is experiencing.

**Choose three of the phrases and then explain how each one of them helps you to understand this atmosphere. (6)**

As with **Question 1(g)**, which also tested language usage, this was a challenging question with only a very small number of responses gaining more than 4 of the 6 marks available. The most successful responses kept firmly in mind the idea of 'a sense of unease' for the narrator and the 'atmosphere' created. Without this focus, less successful responses merely paraphrased or reworded the selected phrases. The four phrases, although ostensibly all of a similar theme, provided ample opportunity for candidates to demonstrate appreciation of effect in terms of atmosphere and unease. It is important that candidates attempt to deal with the phrases individually and not merely repeat generalised comments for each or some of them, or even use the wording of one phrase to explain the effect of another.

**(i) 'The blue sky above grew swiftly darker...' (line 3)**

Only the most successful responses commented on the change of atmosphere arising from the change in light exacerbated by the speed of the change and on the implications contained in the word 'darker'. A significant number of candidates stated the change was only gradual or slow which indicated that the word 'swiftly' was either ignored or misunderstood.

**(ii) 'only a few small stars pierced the gloom ...' (lines 3-4)**

Many responses referred to the absence of starlight but few explained the implications of 'pierced' and 'gloom'.

**(iii) '...grew black and mysterious.' (line 5)**

Although many responses showed understanding of the connotations of blackness comparatively few considered the implications of 'mystery'.

**(iv) 'the tree-tops appeared in ghostly silhouette' (lines 6-7)**

Many found difficulty in explaining the connotations of 'ghostly silhouette' without merely paraphrasing that the trees were like ghosts, with little further development about unease and a frightening, unreal atmosphere. The most successful, however, developed on the sense of menace that was conveyed and also on the possible skeletal appearance of the trees.

**(h) Re-read from "I was tormented ..." to "... headland." (lines 11-38)**

**Write a summary of what we learn about the follower and its effect upon the narrator in this section of the passage.**

**Write a paragraph of about 50-70 words (7)**

As in previous papers, this question presented candidates with an opportunity to gain up to 7 marks by simply reading and selecting from a part of the passage, carefully. There was, however, a need to separate the two aspects of the question; namely, what we learn about the follower and what we learn about the narrator. The more successful responses did just that and were able to identify a balance of points between the two, whereas the less successful ones merely wrote about one or the other. There was some loss of focus in places which arose from either blanket copying or misreading of the passage. There was also a good deal of repetition which narrowed the range of some answers, resulting in fewer marks being gained. One common misconception about the 'follower' was that it lacked the courage to attack the narrator whereas, of course, this judgement is pure speculation on the part of the narrator as he struggles to rationalise the reason for being stalked. There were relatively few instances where full marks were awarded for responses to this question.

Centres are reminded that the format of the summary question will change from June 2015 onwards when marks will be awarded for both Reading and Writing. One of the main consequences of this change is that written responses that significantly exceed the required number of words and/or which list indiscriminately

from the original passage, will be penalised. (*Centres requiring further information about this question should look at the Specimen Paper for 2015 and the Example Candidate Response Booklet which are available on Teacher Support.*)

The relevant points relating to this question are:

**The creature:**

- (1) a shapeless lump (N.B. Credit attempts to use own words)
- (2) moves stealthily / quietly / stalks the narrator / keeps to the shadows / stays close
- (3) echoes footsteps / stops when narrator stops
- (4) makes a faint rustling sound when moving / stumbles

**Effect upon narrator:**

- (5) tormented (by the rustling sound)
- (6) feeling of being followed/watched
- (7) perplexed / loses her/his way
- (8) moves carefully / keeps to the open spaces
- (9) increases speed
- (10) stops and starts / stands rigid / keeps turning round / listens carefully
- (11) thinks (s)he is imagining it / nerves are on edge / blood pounds in ears
- (12) the experience makes the narrator more determined to reach the beach / sea

**Question 2**

**Imagine that you are the narrator. On your return home you write an article for a newspaper about what happened on the remote island.**

**Write an article for the newspaper about your experience.**

**In your newspaper article you should describe:**

- what happened that night-
- your thoughts and feelings at the time
- who or what your follower turned out to be, and what happened next

**You should base your ideas on what you have read in the passage, but do not copy from it. Address each of the three bullet points.**

**Begin your newspaper article: 'When I arrived on the island...'**

**Write between 1 and 1½ sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.**

**Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 10 marks for the quality of your writing. (20)**

**READING**

A good number of responses attempted to follow the incremental build-up of suspense in the passage. Some did so by using own words; some did so by using intermittent lifting; and some did so by copying larger, selected parts of the passage. The most successful responses mainly comprised those attempting own words and more often than not these accounts ended appropriately with some description of the follower

unless there was a contrived cliff-hanger to increase the mystery or suspense. There was much humour/surprise/bathos in stalker revelation such as: puppy dog(s), a lamb, a 'friend 'prankster, Big Foot, a film crew cameraman, a Ben Gunn-type castaway, a hidden protector, James Bond type secret agents, and so on. There were even Tales of the Unexpected with spirits walking the earth, and Military Manoeuvres. The least successful accounts tended to lack an ending and were frequently over-reliant on the original and signalled this by ending with 'Who's there?'

Most responses seemed to have understood the passage well and were able to use much of its content as the basis of their answers to the set task. Bullet points 1 and 2 were covered competently by the majority of candidates. Bullet point 3 proved more problematic as there were two sub-tasks involved which were not always fulfilled. Although the creature was described, for example, the resolution of the trip to the island was not always made clear. When preparing candidates for this question, Centres are advised to emphasise that, from June 2015 of the 50 marks available for the paper, 40 (i.e. 80%) relate specifically to Reading. It is therefore essential that candidates' responses for the Directed Writing task are firmly grounded in the text under analysis. As has been observed in previous series, candidates' treatment of Bullet Point 3 proved a key discriminator and the most successful responses developed this point in some detail.

## WRITING

Apart from those accounts which merely copied from the passage, candidates' responses were generally well written and appropriate. Overall, spelling of everyday words and those in the passage was fairly accurate, and the more successful responses employed a range of sentences with some precise vocabulary. The most noticeable area for improvement, however, is with sentence punctuation as many responses used commas for full stops throughout. Such was the frequency of 'comma splicing' that many potentially Band 2 responses were finally placed in Band 3 because of it. There were also some accounts which failed to sustain the use of the past tense, and a few which wrote the account in the third person.

The more successful responses, however, employed a narrative format confidently although relatively few fulfilled the requirement of creating a newspaper article. The majority of responses achieved Band 3 or above. In general, paragraphs were used confidently, particularly where the three bullet points were used as a structural guide. The breadth of vocabulary employed was, at times, quite sophisticated although it was not always correctly spelt. Overall, it would seem that the narrative format was sufficiently accessible to allow candidates at all levels to write at length and with interest.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

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Paper 0522/02  
Reading Passages (Extended)

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for **Reading (40 marks)**. In addition, there were up to **10 marks** available for **Writing**: 5 marks in **Question 1** and 5 marks in **Question 3**. Candidates are advised that in order to aim for high marks in this component they should:

- read the passages very carefully – avoid skim-reading
- read the questions carefully
- give equal attention to all sections of each question
- spend time planning responses, especially in **Questions 1 and 3**
- use their own words and not lift whole phrases or sentences from the passages
- select only the material that is appropriate for the response to the question
- only make a point once in a response
- give thought to the structure and sequence of the material in the response
- adopt a suitable voice and register for the task, different for each question
- make sure that responses to **Question 1** are sufficiently developed
- practise note-making, sequencing and concise expression.

## General Comments

Candidates' responses this series indicated familiarity with the layout of the paper and the demands of each question. There were still some responses that depended too heavily on the wording of the passage in **Questions 1 and 3**. Centres are reminded that candidates are expected to adapt and modify the material in the passage for higher band marks, and that copying from the passages is to be avoided.

Candidates appeared to find both passages equally accessible and were able to finish the paper within the time allowed. Most candidates had been entered for the appropriate tier, though some clearly would have benefited from being entered for the Core tier.

There did not seem to be many significant misunderstandings of the content of the passages, although at times finer details were confused – whether the office belonged to the Head of Department or the Deputy Head mocked in the magazine, for example. Careful reading is essential to ensure that the finer details are teased out and used to support ideas firmly and securely.

Copying was sometimes evident in **Question 1**, especially in response to the first bullet point: there is a significant difference between using textual detail in support of points and lifting whole sections of the text or key phrases. The description of the students' behaviour for the young teacher, and their unsatisfactory attempts to complete homework, were often copied, in particular. Candidates must change the language of the passages in response to **Question 1** and **Question 3** in order to achieve a higher Reading and Writing mark.

For **Question 2**, in order to achieve higher marks, candidates must make appropriate choices of words and phrases and need to make specific and detailed comments about these choices. To gain marks in the higher bands, candidates need to write detailed explanations of the effects of their choices, demonstrating sound understanding of the writer's purpose. Weaker responses tried to explain the selected language in the same words as the language choice. Candidates should avoid using a grid or table format to respond to this question, as it usually limits their ability to explore the choices they have selected and often leads to repetition.

In **Question 3** many candidates managed to earn a mark in double figures by finding a reasonable number of points. The majority of candidates used their own words in **Question 3**, and attempted to summarise the ideas. However, candidates must be aware that the meaning must not change so that the summary is factually inaccurate. An example is changing missing classes due to bad weather, to missing classes due to rush hour in Passage A. Inclusion of material outside the passages is also not rewarded and is distracting. This happened more frequently in **Section A** on the advantages and disadvantages of evening classes where some candidates wrote at length about missing family time, for example, rather than making a concise point. There were many examples of excessively long responses, and this is still an area that sometimes leads to a lower Writing mark. Most lengthy responses were due to inclusion of unnecessary material, indiscriminate copying of the passages, or repetition. There were noticeably fewer responses offered in note-form; where a candidate has included a plan, they should put a line through it to indicate clearly that it is not part of the response.

On this Reading paper 20% of the available marks are for Writing, split evenly between **Questions 1** and **3**. It is important that candidates consider the quality of their writing and avoid using lifted material from the passages. Most responses were written in an appropriate register, but some Writing marks were affected by awkward expression or limited style, over-reliance on the language of the passages, or structural weakness and incoherence. Some candidates wrote the responses as the personas in the passages, as pieces of personal writing including descriptions of feelings and views, rather than in the informative style required in **Question 3**. Candidates should ensure that they pay attention to the length guidelines for their response to these questions, particularly **Question 3** where lengthy answers cannot score highly on the Writing mark.

It is essential that the skills of selection and modification are demonstrated on this paper. In addition, there needs to be a strong focus on the actual wording of the questions. Candidates should aim to plan their responses. Effective planning ensures that there is no repetition between sections of a question, that they are all given equal attention and coverage, and that there is a coherent and logical structure to the response.

### Comments on Specific Questions

#### Question 1

**Imagine that you are the new head teacher in Passage A. You address the staff on the first day of term. Write what you say to them. You should: describe what you have noticed about the students in this school; explain how the staff have contributed to the poor ethos of the school; present and justify your three point plan for improving the school for the coming year. Base your writing on what you have read in Passage A. Address all three bullet points. Be careful to use your own words.**

**(20 marks: 15 for Reading; 5 for Writing)**

Stronger responses to this question selected and condensed the events in the passage and modified the ideas to create a suitable style for a spoken address, and a highly convincing voice for a new head teacher who is addressing the staff of a school which clearly needs some improvement. They were able to sustain the use of supporting detail throughout the response, firmly tethering any development to details in the passage.

The first bullet allowed them to infer the head teacher's impressions of the students, many highlighting their lazy approach to homework and their lessons, poor behaviour and lack of enthusiasm, while acknowledging that with one or two teachers there had been marked improvements in behaviour, attitude and performance. The second bullet allowed candidates to use the numerous clues in the passage to develop suggestions how the failings of the teaching staff may have led to the poor ethos of the school. The best responses firmly linked their ideas for the third bullet to details in the passage: improving the structure, delivery and content of lessons, linked to copying from textbooks while the teacher reads the paper; a refurbishment and brightening up of the school buildings, linked to the dull classrooms, lack of wall displays, or lighting rig blowing up; improving behaviour, linked to rowdiness in corridors or misbehaviour in lessons, are some examples of ideas used to inform a three point plan for improving the school.



A feature of better responses was full and equal attention paid to the three bullet points with clear modification of the ideas, but the responses always remaining firmly tethered to the passage. Middle-range responses made reasonable use of the passage, with some attempt at own words, but tended to stick closely to the events and ideas in the passage, and to present them in the same order as in the passage, often using some of the same words. A noticeable feature of such responses was far more attention paid in the first bullet to the improved attitude and behaviour of the students experienced by the young teacher, ignoring the evidence for poor performance elsewhere. This often led to a rather limited response to the first bullet as it did not give a clear overview of the students. The second bullet posed fewer problems, although again some candidates focused too heavily on the two teachers doing a better job, ignoring much of the passage. In the third bullet some candidates completely missed the opportunities to tether their suggestions to clues in the passage, instead writing at length about charity fund raising events, school trips, health and safety training for staff, or Ofsted inspection requirements. They were clearly asked to suggest three key improvements, which required some development and detail to justify the necessity for these measures and in what ways they would improve the school. Instead some candidates simply listed a number of measures with no explanation or development. Others focused on only one or two suggestions, producing very little in response to bullet three.

A significant number of candidates misread the ending of the passage, mistakenly assuming that the enthusiastic young member of staff had become the new head teacher. This tended to lead to rather limited responses to the first bullet point, as they focused solely on the students' more redeeming features. Although they used the format of a spoken address correctly, they generally took the form of giving an unselective narrative retelling her experiences of her teaching, the play and the magazine, rather than choosing only the details that would be required to focus on a new head teacher's impressions of the students and the staff. Such responses lacked a sense of purpose. Some careless reading was evident in the confusion about whose office she visited, the genders of the writer, the deputy head and the head of department, and confusing the 'maze of tortuous passages' with 'the narrow rows of shabby desks' and the general interior of the classroom.

The least successful answers were often thin, simple or short. However, due to the familiarity of the setting and subject matter, a number of less successful responses invented their own material, or possibly included personal experiences, and wrote far too generally about failing schools, poor teaching and poor student behaviour. Many made-up scenarios were referred to, such as disastrous school trips, prior inspection reports, the new head teacher spying on the staff for a whole year, or the old head teacher's misdemeanours and failings recounted in vivid detail. Others focused so completely on expressing the new head teacher's feelings of disgust and frustration with the teachers that they did not use the passage at all. Where almost the entire response was invented and could have been written without reading the passage, there was very little option but to award Band 5 marks.

The Writing mark reflected the clarity, fluency and coherence of the response and how well it used language to capture the strategic approach of the new head teacher, and his/her unwavering determination to improve the school. The better written responses adopted a formal but incisive tone and judiciously used the overwhelming evidence in the passage to support the purpose of the talk. These responses used language appropriate for a head teacher's position and status and were often very convincing. Less successful responses sometimes used inappropriate language such as 'kids' for the students, or even aggressive language which could have been deemed as rather offensive by the teachers being addressed.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 1:**

- ensure that you adopt the correct voice and persona by reading the question carefully
- think carefully about appropriate voice, style and purpose
- answer all parts of the question, giving equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- answer in your own words and adapt material from the passage to make it an appropriate response written in the required style
- plan your answer to ensure that the material is sequenced logically and to avoid repetition
- select the most appropriate ideas from the passage
- develop and modify some of the ideas relevantly
- use relevant details from the passage to demonstrate close reading.

## Question 2

Re-read the descriptions of (a) the school magazine and reactions to it in paragraph 4, beginning ‘I also allowed the senior students...’ and (b) the Head of Department and his room in paragraph 8, beginning ‘Because he left me to my own devices...’. Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

(10 marks)

It was expected that the response would take the form of continuous prose to allow candidates to explore their choices fully. Marks were given for the relevance of the words and phrases chosen to answer the question, and for the quality of their explanations. Credit is given in **Question 2** for the ability to select a range of interesting or unusual examples of words and phrases relevant to the focus of the question in each section. Responses that went on to explore and explain meanings of the words were awarded further marks. Responses that also explored the effects that the use of particular words had on the reader could score up to the highest mark of ten.

The majority of candidates found this question the most demanding of the three, as it requires a wide vocabulary, close reading, and an ability to relate to subtleties of language beyond explicit meaning. It was noticeable in this series that few candidates approached **Question 2** using a grid or table format. This benefited candidates greatly, as when using a grid often the same material is duplicated in two of the three columns. This approach also often forces responses to be expressed very briefly or in note form and does not allow for varying development of comments according to the complexity of the language choice being discussed. It is also rare for responses offered in a grid format to consider meanings.

The most successful responses to **Question 2** showed precise focus at word level and were engaged and assured in their handling of their appropriate choices. They selected carefully, including images, put the choices in context, and answered both parts of the question equally well. They were able, for example, to explain the self-importance and pomposity of the deputy head, suggested by ‘like a Roman senator’, make a link between the magazine selling ‘like a flash of lightning’, but giving rise to a ‘ferocious thunderstorm’ in the ensuing outrage of the staff, or the sense of belonging to the past and the defeatism of the head of department suggested by ‘faded sepia’ and ‘mournfully’. Less successful responses tended to offer rather generic meanings that did not fit the context of the passage, for example relating ‘tortuous’ to inflicting pain. There was some misinterpretation of words such as ‘tyrannical’, which a number of candidates thought related to dinosaurs.

The following response was written by a candidate in this examination series and is given as an indication of what constitutes an appropriate type of response to the question. It is not intended to be a model answer.

### **(a) the school magazine and the reactions to it in paragraph 4**

*The writer portrays the magazine as bold, aggressive and almost scandalous through the choice of language. There is a sense of rebellion, emphasised by phrases such as ‘denounced as tyrannical’ and deputy head looking like a ‘Roman senator’. ‘Tyrannical’ is hyperbolised, rallying people to overthrow this evil power. ‘Roman senator’ is used as a simile to describe the strict and authoritative teacher, however it comes across as insulting because this teacher is female. Verbs such as ‘attacked’ and ‘screamed’ are aggressive and clearly intended to wake up the ‘sleepy readers’, creating a bold, forceful and belligerent effect. Adjectives such as ‘gaudy’ and ‘uproarious’ have connotations with inappropriate and tasteless behaviour and scandals. The fact that it ‘sold out like a flash of lightning’ emphasises the speed with which it was bought, stressing that it was prohibited and something everyone wanted to get hold of.*

### **(b) the head of department and his room in paragraph 8**

*The head of department and his room are described with a sense of despair and decay by the writer. The head of department himself is ‘secreted away’ in ‘a cosy little nest’ highlighting the fact that he would rather not face his duties and avoids any confrontation by secluding himself and hiding in a homely and warm place where he feels secure. He is like a chick that refuses to leave the safety of its nest. The fact that he is ‘camouflaged’ also strengthens the impression that he doesn’t want to be found and that he blends in with his dull surroundings rather too easily. His room is deliberately difficult to find at the end of a ‘maze’. His room was all ‘brown’, ‘faded sepia’ and ‘the colour of biscuit’ – very neutral, boring colours that suggest the place has no personality or life. It is also not well kept because the desks are ‘shabby’ adding to the sense of resignation and the fact he has given up.*

Less successful responses sometimes adopted a 'technique spotting' approach identifying literary techniques, such as personification in 'screamed' or use of simile in 'like a flash of lightning'. This approach often led to rather generic comments about the effects of the techniques rather than the words themselves which limited the response. Other candidates repeated the same explanation after each choice, for example, that the room is very dull in **(b)**. These less successful responses often took the form of a commentary on the entire paragraph for each half of the question, containing some relevant choices and some brief explanation of them. Occasionally candidates offered an extremely sparse number of choices or simply lifted the whole paragraph and offered a general comment.

#### **Advice to candidates on Question 2:**

- focus on the question carefully to ensure that all your choices are relevant
- re-read the whole paragraph before making selections. Choose the best and not those which happen to come first
- choose a range of words and phrases that seem powerful. Do not write out whole sentences, but also do not offer only one word if it is part of a descriptive phrase
- do not write out the beginning and end of a long quotation with the key words missing from the middle
- remember to put quotation marks around your choices. This makes it easier for the Examiner to identify them and makes it easier for you to focus on the exact wording
- treat each of your choices separately and do not present them as a list or give a general comment which applies to all of them
- avoid general comments such as 'this creates a strong visual image', or 'this draws the reader in and makes them want to read on'. Such comments will not earn any marks at all
- if you are not sure about effects, try to at least give a meaning, in context, for each of your choices
- remember just spotting literary devices is not enough. You need to go on to discuss their meaning and effect in context
- to explain effects, think of what the reader sees and feels when reading the word or phrase, because of the connotations and associations of the language
- include images from each paragraph, and try to explain them.

#### **Question 3**

**Summarise (a) the advantages and disadvantages of attending evening classes, as described in Passage B; (b) why the writer felt pleased with her job, as described in Passage A. Your summary must be in continuous writing (full sentences; not note form).**

**Use your own words as far as possible. Aim to write no more than one side in total, allowing for the size of your handwriting. Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing**

**(20 marks)**

To answer this question successfully, responses needed to identify fifteen points that were relevant to the question and to present them succinctly and in their own words as far as possible. This is an exercise in informative writing, which should be clear and to the point, and in a different form from the passages. There were twenty-three content points available in the mark scheme, which gave candidates a generous leeway. The majority of candidates' demonstrated an awareness of the appropriate style for a summary, with few examples of wholesale copying or responses written in the style of a commentary. The majority of candidates read the question carefully and attempted to select relevant material using their own words where possible.

Generally, part **(a)** tended to be more accessible than part **(b)** as candidates found it easier to select what advantages and disadvantages were offered by evening classes. A small but significant number of candidates based their answer to both **(a)** and **(b)** on Passage B which meant that there was nothing to reward for Reading in part **(b)**.

A very small number of candidates wrote in partial or complete note-form despite the instruction on the question paper to write in continuous prose and full sentences. Where the notes were partial, all content points were credited but the Writing mark was reduced. Where the response was entirely in note form candidates were penalised by a reduction to both marks.

The most successful responses selected and re-ordered the relevant information from the passages, with a clear focus on the actual questions, and wrote them in fluent sentences, within the prescribed length and using own words as far as possible. They avoided writing introductory statements and making comments, and concentrated on giving a factual objective summary, more or less equally balanced over the two sections. More able candidates carefully selected only the relevant points, re-grouping and reorganising them as necessary. For example, in Passage A the reasons for the writer being pleased with her job did not include any negative observations about the school, the students or the teaching staff, and the stronger responses recognised this. Passage B also contained a number of examples which stronger candidates were able to condense into a single point, for example, improving qualifications or skills. In Passage A, a significant degree of selection was required to exclude unnecessary information; for example in Passage B, the name of the city was unnecessary as long as rush hour was mentioned. Ideally the style adopted needed to be far more informative and objective than the original passage. The strongest candidates were able to do this successfully, but a number of candidates wrote in both sections as the writers themselves and attempted lively voices, which was inappropriate for this question.

**The following answer, produced by a candidate in this examination series, makes over 15 Reading points, but if handwritten would easily fit on to one page. It offers an example of how a successful response may be presented.**

**Part (a) the advantages and disadvantages of attending evening classes**

*There are many positives associated with attending evening classes, primarily the fact that you can still keep a day job and continue to earn money to support yourself. It allows you to refresh once learned knowledge and work towards degrees and qualification. Additionally it can help rejuvenate people's mind-sets making them feel more alive and there is always a really positive atmosphere to learn in, helping you forget the stresses of work. Unfortunately there are several drawbacks while studying late: many people struggle to focus and study hard after a tiring day at work, meaning exams often have to be re-sat. Time is usually tight meaning people have to rush to their classes and this hurry is usually worsened by rush hour. Inevitably the rainy season will also prevent some people from attending classes. It also means missing out on time with the family and neglecting duties at home.*

**Part (b) why the writer felt pleased with her job**

*There were numerous reasons she enjoyed working at the school – she felt she had developed a strong relationship with her students and they seemed to like her. They were also open to her drama ideas allowing her to produce a play for the end of term which pleased the parents. Her popularity with the parents increased further due to the better than average exam results her students produced. They also started producing great pieces of work which she pinned up proudly in her colourful classroom. She made friends with a colleague and this meant she had someone to laugh with and share ideas.*

Less successful responses were more confused and did not adopt the correct focus for this question, instead presenting part (a) as a personal narrative story recounting the writer's difficulties when trying to study and work at the same time; although it was still possible to gain high Reading marks with this approach, a factual style is the best option for the summary question. In less successful responses to part (b) some candidates focused solely on the writer's attempts to improve the school and suggest new ideas at staff meetings, which was not focused on the question. Some candidates included an unnecessary introduction to both sections thereby adding to length and reducing concision. The inclusion of irrelevant or repeated material, or a commentary, diminished the focus and depressed the Writing mark.

**Advice to candidates on Question 3:**

- read the question carefully and underline the key words
- re-read the passage after reading each part of the question, in order to find the precise information to answer it
- plan your answer carefully by listing relevant points in as few words as possible
- read through your list of points and link any that are similar or the same
- write up your answer in full sentences
- do not write an introduction
- do not use quotes in your answer to **Question 3**
- do not write a narrative, or in the first person
- do not copy whole phrases from the passages
- write no more than one side of average handwriting
- write in an informative style and never add to the content of the passage
- make each point only once.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN-ORAL)

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Paper 0522/03

Directed Writing and Composition

## Key Messages

This paper was mainly assessed for Writing, although there were ten marks available for Reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- structure ideas logically and organise their writing effectively
- create thoughtful and well-structured arguments, produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives
- construct sentences accurately and vary sentence types to create effects
- select appropriate and wide-ranging vocabulary with precision.

## General Comments

Examiners found that most scripts showed a clear understanding of the tasks undertaken and of the different skills required in both questions, Directed Writing and Composition. Most responses, at all levels of achievement, were reasonably developed and relatively few scripts were very brief or unfinished. There were, however, more than a few where more than one composition question had been attempted, with one from each genre being the most common rubric infringement. While these scripts represent only a small proportion of the total entry, attempting to answer three questions in the time given for only one inevitably limited the achievement of these individual candidates.

Most responses showed a real engagement with the topic in **Question 1** and with the task to give advice. There was very little copying of the wording of the passage by candidates across the mark range. Better answers here addressed specific ideas in the passage and were able to show a sensitive understanding of the dilemma facing the writer. Weaker candidates tended to offer advice in general terms with less reference to the particular issues raised in the passage. Assertion or simple reaction to the writer of the passage was common at this level.

Most responses across the mark range adopted a suitable tone and style for the kind of letter required and nearly all adhered to the format of a letter. Better responses showed some subtlety in the style, reflecting a sensitivity to the recipient of the letter, whereas weaker responses were more limited in the tone adopted and were occasionally rather aggressive.

Directed Writing responses in general could have been improved by a more careful use of the specific ideas in the reading passage and a willingness to probe beneath the surface to consider the writer's point of view.

All three genres and all questions were addressed in fairly equal numbers in the compositions, with the descriptive task about a classroom without a teacher the most popular choice and the second narrative question the least. Better responses were characterised by a sound understanding of the demands of the genre selected. Discursive tasks were addressed sensibly, with often thoughtful ideas on the given topics. Descriptions were, in better responses, both detailed and cohesive overall although weaker scripts relied too heavily on narrated observations of events and incidents rather than the evocation of atmosphere. In the narrative writing, many stories were engaging and sustained the interest of the reader with well-created characters and settings. Weaker responses were characterised by simple storylines which were largely a series of events and by predictable or ineffective endings. Many composition responses would have

benefited from a better understanding of the features of good writing in the different genres and of how to use them under timed conditions.

### **Comments on Specific Questions**

#### **Section 1**

##### **Question 1**

**Read carefully the letter addressed to Elena in the Reading Booklet. Then answer Section 1, Question 1 on this Question Paper.**

**Imagine that you are Elena and you are going to answer Freya's letter.**

**Write your letter, which will be published in the magazine.**

**In your letter you should:**

- **identify and evaluate Freya's arguments and concerns**
- **give Freya suitable advice for her situation.**

**Base your speech on what you have read in the transcript. Be careful to use your own words.**

**Begin your letter: 'Dear Freya,  
I was sad to read your letter and I understand your feelings. However, I am sure that your situation is not as hopeless as you imagine...'**

**(25 marks)**

25 marks were available for this question, of which 15 were for the quality of writing and 10 for the understanding and use of the content in the passage.

High marks were awarded where some sympathetic understanding of Freya's frame of mind was shown, and where the letter was both appropriate in style and technically accurate. Better responses here reflected an understanding of Freya's sense of loss and hurt despair, implicit in her letter, and while more practical solutions were also sometimes offered, this advice was rooted in a sensitive reading of her fear of the future without her son. In the middle range of marks, reference was made to a range of different concerns mentioned by Freya in her letter and the advice given was often straightforward and practical. Weaker responses showed some grasp of Freya's distress but relied more on a general assertion of Jacob's rights to 'fly the nest', with less developed use of other points made in the passage. Some at this level agreed that Jacob was indeed 'selfish and heartless' and reiterated one or two of Freya's reasons for saying this.

#### **The marks for Reading**

The best responses adopted a consistently sensitive but evaluative stance towards the claims made by Freya in her letter. These answers showed some skill in reading between the lines of Freya's letter, locating her bitterness and slightly over-dramatic despair in the grief she feels at the loss of her son. Her implied resentment – or jealousy - of her future daughter-in-law was sometimes alluded to as well as her sense of abandonment and fear of a lonely future. At this level, her claim that she would lose all communication with her son was often understood as a reflection of her bitterness rather than a realistic prospect: one response suggested that 'her all-or-nothing reaction may result in your worst fears coming true', for example. While solutions to specific problems were sometimes offered, at the highest level a cohesive argument emerged, based on a sensitive overview of the balance between Freya's rights and responsibilities as a parent and Jacob's as an adult son.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 2 where some understanding was shown of Freya's fears and there was some evaluation. A mark of 7 was awarded for many responses where some evaluative comments were made, often about the value of Jacob's expensive education for a future on an isolated farm or Freya's rather exaggerated claims that she would lose all contact with him. At this level, responses tended to identify Freya's specific concerns and argued that they were unfounded or unjustified. For example, many argued that parents' sacrifices could not be repaid by their children and that there was much to be proud of in Jacob's achievements rather than being resentful. These evaluative points were often enough for Examiners

to award a mark of 7, although at this level responses often also relied on more general advice where a more consistently evaluative stance was required for a higher mark.

Examiners awarded marks in Band 3 where there was adequate breadth of coverage of the passage but without the evaluation mentioned above. Responses at this level addressed some of the specific concerns expressed by Freya but often countered them by assertions that Jacob was not 'selfish and heartless' and that she would see her grandchildren despite her fears. She was advised to welcome the added freedom of life without Jacob and to socialise more with other farmers, hire extra workers for the farm and, most frequently, to ask for Jacob's help in teaching her how to email. These comments were sufficiently rooted in the details of the passage for 5 or 6, but lacked a real grasp of Freya's underlying fears and concerns for Band 2.

Weaker responses showed some general understanding of Freya's predicament but relied on rather unrealistic 'fixes' for her problems which did not reflect her real fears. Some at this level asserted simply that it was natural for Jacob to leave his family home and that Freya could not and should not try to prevent him. While this was a valid reaction, little or no support was offered for this view from the passage. Naïve solutions to Freya's problems were suggested such as selling the farm, moving closer to the city or 'going on a world cruise'. Some made guesses about what Jacob thought and felt – 'he loves you really and will stay in touch' - but tended to ignore the better evidence of Freya's feelings as reflected in the passage.

General advice tended to overwhelm weaker responses so that the passage itself was covered only thinly. A mark of 2 or 3 was awarded where there was some valid but general advice connected to the passage.

A clearer grasp of Freya's point of view and of the roots of her despair, implied in the passage, would have improved performance in this question.

### **Marks for Writing**

15 marks were available for style and a sense of audience, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **Style and audience**

A sympathetic, politely persuasive tone was appropriate for the kind of letter required here and in most responses there was a clear attempt to adopt a suitable style. There was a dual audience for the letter – personally addressed to Freya but published in a magazine – which necessitated a formal, respectful register. In a few cases, some prior relationship between Freya and Elena was assumed which showed a less secure awareness of audience and sometimes a rather sneering or hectoring tone was used which struck a jarring note. Most high-scoring responses showed some subtlety in their style so that difficult advice could be made more palatable and Freya's own inadequacies addressed without offence. At the highest level, the style was authoritative because it provided reassurance and inspired trust, even though the advice given was sometimes uncompromising. Examiners could award high marks for Writing in such cases even where there were many minor technical inaccuracies

In the middle to lower mark range, the style was often appropriate although there were sometimes lapses in candidates' awareness of the intended audience. Over-familiarity between the writer and the recipient sometimes gave the impression that the two women knew each other of old and Freya was berated inappropriately in some responses for her selfishness or sneered at for her weaknesses in a way which did not ring true for the kind of letter required.

### **Structure**

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, calibrated their arguments carefully for maximum effect. Freya's underlying fears were exposed gradually and her own weaknesses and selfishness revealed subtly. Responses given 8 or 9 for Writing tended to reflect the sequence of points made in the article and were sensibly structured and paragraphed. Some reproduced Freya's arguments as a whole before countering them in the second half of the response while others dealt with each as they arose in the passage. Occasionally this led to some contradiction overall where Freya was advised to take on more workers as well as sell the farm, or both to let Jacob go and to talk him out of leaving because he was needed on the farm.

Some weaker responses given marks below Band 3 were less coherent in structure and tended to return to the same few ideas at different points. Some leapt straight into their advice with perfunctory introduction to their letters and a few forgot the valediction at the end.

### Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a Writing mark in Band 1. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Examiners looked for precision in the control of a fluent and subtle style and gave the highest marks where it was sustained throughout the response.

Responses given 8 or 9 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Although the style was usually appropriate and the level of formal language was sustained, a range of quite basic spelling and punctuation errors was evident. 'Comma-splicing' of sentences began to creep into writing at this level, apostrophes were misused and, very commonly, the mis-selection of homophones was evident.

While some of these minor errors could be compensated for by secure sense of audience or a varied vocabulary, persistent use of commas where full stops were needed kept many marks for Writing in Band 4. In many cases, Examiners could not award marks in Band 3 for responses which were otherwise mostly accurate and which showed some clarity and coherence. Incomplete sentences were also frequent and the misuse or omission of capital letters common at this level. A few mistakes rarely seen before made frequent appearances this series, such as the use of 'his' for 'he's' and the colloquial use of 'yous' for the plural 'you'.

### Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- Consider the writer's point of view and how this affects their arguments.
- Look for underlying ideas or implicit meanings in the passage as well as the more superficial points being made.
- Aim for breadth of coverage of the ideas in the passage as well some depth in evaluating them.
- Be aware of the audience for your writing and adapt your style accordingly. Think carefully about the right style for a speech, an article or a letter, for example.
- Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as the use of commas where full stops are needed or lapses in clarity or formality, as these will inevitably reduce your mark.

### Section 2: Composition

#### Question 2

#### Argumentative/Discursive writing

- (a) **Would you enjoy being one of these: a teacher, a police officer or a doctor? Explain why or why not.** (25 marks)

OR

- (b) **'Getting old is something to be dreaded.' Do you agree?** (25 marks)

Both questions were popular choices at all levels of achievement and most candidates offered relevant ideas with some development and explanation of them. Quite a few candidates addressed all three career options in their answers to the first question and although Examiners did not penalise those who misread the question in this way, most high-scoring responses gave more considered and thoughtful views on one. Some also attempted an unnecessary comparison of the three professions which was not a productive approach to this question. There was some naivety in the reasons given for or against particular jobs in weaker responses and some were brief and quickly ran out of ideas.

In the second question, there were some extremely thought-provoking answers which addressed the idea of ageing and old people with intelligence and depth. Some better responses discussed the different attitudes towards old people in different cultures or the ways in which old people could be seen socially as both an asset and a burden. Average responses were characterised by relevant, valid ideas which were more



straightforward, such as the effects of old age on the body. Weaker responses tended to rely on a few rather stereotypical ideas about the elderly.

There were some engaged responses to the first question in terms of their content and structure. Better responses showed some clarity of purpose in outlining the attractive features of one of the three professions, often with some discussion of possible drawbacks. Some candidates made thoughtful use of their particular perspective on the teaching profession to write about both the aspiration to enthuse and guide children in their learning and the potential for misery created by disaffected candidates or the drudgery of marking. Similarly, the high esteem in which doctors are usually held was seen by many as tempered by the immense responsibility of the job and the inevitable failures involved. Working as a police officer was also seen as a job commanding respect and implying personal authority by most. Some, however, commented on the hostility some communities felt towards the police and the inherent dangers of working amongst criminals. Responses at this level tended to touch on the ideas and ideals which underpin these professions rather than, or as well as, the more practical aspects of doing the job. Marks in Band 2 or above for content and structure were given for these thoughtful, often quite probing responses.

Examiners gave 7 or 8 for responses where there was relevant material and most were properly paragraphed but there was more reliance on the day-to-day work involved in these professions. These were often rather pedestrian in style, with less thoughtful development to engage the reader. The enjoyment of fast cars was frequently cited as a reason to become a police officer, for example, or a dislike of blood as a reason not to become a doctor. Many responses at this level tended to dilute their discussion by writing about all three careers, although most were sensibly organised and paragraphed.

Weaker responses were usually quite brief with some rather naïve notions about what each job entailed. The alternative question elicited some strong responses. Examiners found much to reward in better responses where there was some sensitive discussion of what it means to be old in modern society or in different cultures across the world. The role of older people as teachers, their wisdom having been gleaned by long experience, was appreciated by some. One candidate wrote movingly about ‘the long-neglected values of fortitude, resilience and forgiveness which people who have lived through harder times live by’ and quite a few high-scoring responses highlighted the relatively low respect they felt was given to the elderly. A few very entertaining responses gave a much more light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek view of old people – ‘the urge to don a brown cardigan must be guarded against and resisted with determination’ – showing that questions can be tackled in different ways to achieve high marks for content and structure.

Average responses generally had a slightly narrower focus in their comments on how old age affects the individual. There was often some sensible and organised consideration of the disadvantages and advantages of ageing in these responses. Physical infirmities were sometimes listed rather than their impact considered and the inevitability of frailty and disease were commonly seen as something to be dreaded. On the other hand, freedom from work and family responsibilities was a boon of old age and there were some personal anecdotes about energetic grandparents who spent their twilight years having the time of their lives. Weaker responses were characterised by the simplicity of ideas or a listing of stereotypical features of old age such as the loss of physical prowess or grumpiness. Alternatively, responses relied on a simple description of an elderly family member.

Style and accuracy marks were awarded across the range in both questions, with the higher marks given for writing which was accurate, stylish and authoritative. Attention was paid to sustaining the interest of the reader at this level by a wide and ambitious vocabulary, precisely used. Some rhetoric and sense of audience in the style often lifted a Band 3 response into Band 2. A clear voice which challenged and engaged the reader sometimes compensated for minor errors in accuracy but equally, there were responses which were otherwise clear and competent which slipped into Band 4 because of persistent comma-splicing or faulty sentence construction.

Limited, simple vocabulary also kept some fairly accurate writing in Band 4. Commas used instead of full stops, sentence structures which lacked control, as well as a range of minor errors kept many responses out of Band 3. Where errors were sometimes not as damaging to the style, they were often too basic and too frequent for a mark in Band 3. Punctuation within sentences was weak at this level, as well as the spelling of quite common words, particularly homophones.

### **Ways in which the writing of arguments and discussions can be improved**

- **Make sure you have enough ideas to sustain your response and try to link them together to form a cohesive argument/discussion.**
- **Avoid simple assertions – explain your ideas to convince the reader of your point of view.**

- Check for basic errors, especially misused commas and capital letters, and misspelt common words.
- Try to develop ideas into paragraphs and avoid repeating the same point.

### Question 3

#### Descriptive Writing

**Describe a classroom of candidates with no teacher present. End your description as the classroom door suddenly opens.**

**(25 marks)**

**OR**

**You climb a tree and cannot be seen. Describe what you see and hear happening below.**

**(25 marks)**

Both descriptive writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range. In the first question, descriptions varied from evocative pieces focused on the perspective of the narrator to rather exaggerated lists of activities happening around the classroom. The second question was often rather better done with some highly accomplished descriptions of landscape and the narrator's reactions. Weaker responses to this question were, however, more likely to fall into narrative.

The best responses to the first question were often focused on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator rather than providing a description of the chaos in the classroom. A mounting fear, unnamed and unspoken, was evoked chillingly in one response in which the narrator attempted to avoid the attention of the class bully and there were many successful responses in which the footsteps of the teacher approaching the classroom provided an effective and cohesive ending. The sense of freedom from constraint without the classroom teacher was sometimes evoked with originality at this level, rather than a focus on the mayhem which ensued. The need for 'complex atmospheres' for Band 1 was addressed in different ways but originality and clarity of detail, as well as the use of evocative and subtle imagery in creating atmosphere, were characteristic of responses given marks in Band 1.

Middle and lower range responses tended to be more stereotypical and less closely observed in the scenes described. The description of different groups in the classroom and their activities predominated. Girls nearly always applied their make-up and talked about boys and paper airplanes and other flying missiles were almost universally thrown. These were, however, usually well-organised and there was some attempt made to evoke the frenetic atmosphere in the classroom. Some extended images worked well at this level. The classroom as a jungle or a battle scene was quite common but in some responses the image was carried through the piece with some effectiveness. Candidates became 'warriors' and thrown pencils etc. became 'guided missiles', for example, and although the extended metaphor was sometimes a little laboured there was some understanding of how imagery can enhance descriptive writing.

In some descriptions, lists of different groups and their activities sometimes gave way to rather exaggerated narratives of food fights, destruction of classroom equipment and physical aggression between candidates. Adding more destructive details did not usually add to the description's effectiveness in evoking atmosphere. Perhaps candidates' marks could have been improved at this level by a better understanding of what constitutes 'some attempt to create atmosphere' in order for Examiners to award marks in Band 3.

The second question was less popular but excellent responses in the descriptive writing tended to be answers to this question. Good writers often made much of the tree itself as the narrator climbed it, with some focus on the tactile quality of the bark and the play of sunlight through the canopy of leaves. There was also care taken to evoke the meaning of the hiding place for the narrator, often as a safe haven or an escape from the anxieties induced by the world below. The atmospheres created were sometimes complex and at the highest level the various landscapes described were infused with the feelings of the narrator – guilt and fear or serenity and calm - creating some highly polished responses. One response described the intense feelings of guilt and shame of a child who had climbed the tree to avoid being discovered as the perpetrator of some minor childish offence, for example, while others evoked a rather hypnotic and inspiring calm as they surveyed the landscape from above.

In the middle range, there was more physical description of details observed, usually well-organised and paragraphed and with some impact and effectiveness in places. There was some reliance on a slightly mechanical use of the senses but with enough clear intention to create atmosphere for Examiners to award a

mark in Band 3. In some cases, there was a narrative frame to the response – the tree was climbed in an attempt to escape some pursuer bent of violence, for example – but there was enough evocation of tension and fear to warrant a mark in Band 3.

Band 4 responses were more narrative than descriptive in focus, on the whole, and Examiners found that the narrative recount overwhelmed any developed descriptive content at this level. Narrators climbed the tree usually as an escape from some criminal or animal (and some zombies) or they observed or overheard some criminal activity from the tree. The pretext for climbing the tree usually drove candidates into narrative in order to resolve the story and it would perhaps improve candidates' performance at this level if there was a better understanding of how to begin and end descriptive pieces in order to avoid this narrative trap.

Marks in Band 1 and high Band 2 for style and accuracy were awarded for the most controlled writing in which an ambitious range of descriptive vocabulary was used precisely and effectively. Band 1 responses were characterised by an assured and effective style in which surprising and striking effects were achieved using carefully chosen language and imagery.

In the middle range and below, a more straightforward vocabulary was employed and where there was sufficient control and accuracy a mark in Band 3 was awarded. In some cases, the writing was overwhelmed by strings of verbless sentences – one of the pitfalls of descriptive writing for some in this range – so that Examiners were precluded from awarding marks in Band 3. Tenses were also insecure at this level often with past and present tenses mixed within paragraphs and even sentences. The use of commas instead of full stops was very prevalent in Band 4 responses, even where there was some effective descriptive content and a variety of vocabulary. Here, as in the other genres, this weakness in the control of sentences was a very frequent reason for Examiners to award marks in Band 4 rather than Band 3.

#### Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

- **Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.**
- **Remember the differences between descriptive and narrative writing and look to create atmosphere rather than recount events.**
- **Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.**
- **Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.**

#### Question 4

##### Narrative Writing

- (a) **Write a story which begins with the words 'Nothing could have prepared me for what I had to do next.'** **(25 marks)**

OR

- (b) **You have the power to go back 24 hours to change what happened or what was said. Write a story involving this power, making it clear why you needed to make changes.** **(25 marks)**

The first question was by far the more popular of the two options and although there were relatively few which merited marks in Band 1 for content and structure those that did were polished and engaging narratives. At this level the opening words were interpreted in some creative ways, often involving some difficult personal crossroads rather than a more dramatic, action-packed narrative scenario. Decisions of various kinds, often with potentially drastic consequences, also featured in effective stories. The opening line was integrated into the narrative and there was no difficulty in starting the story at this point rather than a more conventional chronology.

Average responses were more common for this question than either outstanding or weak narratives. The given beginning of the story was often followed by 'It all began...' or some other way to return to a more straightforward chronological recount. There were many battle-zone stories as well as some frightening diagnoses of illness, unexpected requests for heroic deeds in sport, singing or dancing competitions and many other interpretations of the opening line. As usual, where responses showed some skill in creating characters and establishing settings, often building some tension in the main body of the response, it was possible for Examiners to award marks in Band 3. Many stories at this level were not resolved in convincing ways but had enough shape and overall cohesion for 7 or 8.

Weaker responses lacked control over an overwhelming number of events and sometimes did not use the opening line in productive ways. Occasionally, there was no real link between the opening line either syntactically or narratively. Examiners gave marks in Band 4 when the narrative became 'a series of events' with limited attention paid to characters and their motivations, thoughts and feelings. Band 5 narratives in response to this question were less common, suggesting that candidates would fare better if they had a better understanding of how to create convincing characters and settings as well as events and incidents in their stories.

The second question was quite rarely selected and responses were usually weaker, although there were one or two engaging narratives where the idea of repeating the last 24 hours was handled more thoughtfully. One response, for example, was built around a powerful sense of longing for a return to happier times after a personal tragedy rather than a magical power. Another response involved a horrifying account of being stuck in a time-loop in which the previous traumatic 24 hours replayed continuously. Most responses, however, were much weaker, Band 3 or 4 narratives in which the origins of the power to erase the last 24 hours was not really explained and the narrative content was less engaging for the reader. In some, where Examiners could award a mark in Band 3, there was some credibility and cohesion in the build-up to the use of the power in narratives about missed goals, rejected marriage proposals and other mistakes or tragedies. As for responses to the alternative question, however, sequences of events with little focus on character and setting were limited to marks in Band 4.

Marks for style and accuracy varied considerably among those who chose the narrative option. Better responses used a range of sentence structures and well-chosen vocabulary to help create specific effects and to add colour and pace to their narratives. A controlled, competent style secured a mark in Band 3 and even where candidates wrote in a fairly pedestrian style but punctuated sentences accurately, Examiners could award a mark of 7 or 8. Weaknesses in constructing sentences, comma-splicing or frequent basic spelling and punctuation errors resulted in marks for style and accuracy below Band 3. The use of commas where full stops were needed was more common here than in some previous series and depressed marks for responses which were otherwise fairly accurate and clear. Relatively few responses were so error-prone as to obscure meaning. These were given marks lower than Band 4.

#### **Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved**

- **Plan how to resolve your story in an interesting way.**
- **Consider more creative interpretations of titles.**
- **Characters' thoughts and feelings help to involve your reader in their story.**
- **Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes. Be sure that commas are used within sentences and not instead of full stops.**

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

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Paper 0522/04  
Coursework Portfolio

## Key messages

In this component, candidates should aim to:

- reflect in their writing their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them;
- choose assignments that challenge them to write at the highest standard of which they are capable;
- write independently of undue guidance from published materials or from teachers;
- demonstrate variety of style, use of language and genre in the three assignments;
- write in fluent and varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and other punctuation;
- revise, edit and correct first drafts in their own handwriting;
- proof-read their work carefully, as marks are deducted for typing errors.

## General comments

Although the number of Centres entering for this component was significantly lower than in the summer, there were many entries. Some Centres entered complete cohorts, some a small group of candidates, and there were candidates who repeated the examination from the summer session.

This report explains some of the problems that were apparent to Moderators, but there was general praise for the efforts by candidates in presenting their work which was neat and well processed. Although there were some shortcomings, Moderators also praised Centres for taking on the amount of planning and administration that was involved in completing the work for this component.

The assignments were generally in keeping with the requirements of the syllabus and most offered a sufficient challenge to candidates marked in Bands 1 to 3. However, some assignments, for the purpose of this component, did not challenge all candidates appropriately.

While the rank orders of most Centres were sound, the mark range was sometimes narrow, typically from 44 to 34. Marking, particularly of writing, did not always recognise the standard at the bottom of Band 3, and Band 4 was rarely used. Marking was often lenient and it appeared that the four main objectives, content, structure, style and accuracy, were not always applied in equal proportions, even allowing for very limited commutation. The annotation of error was haphazard and often entirely missing, and some very inaccurate scripts were endorsed with a general comment that they were mainly accurate.

Successful Centres demonstrated the following

### **Good Practice:**

- There was an understanding that coursework provided an opportunity for candidates to learn to be better writers over a period of time, by expressing their own ideas and experiences of the world about them.
- After initial, brief guidance by teachers as to the nature of tasks, candidates were left to write as individuals and to think with originality for themselves.
- Teachers monitored their efforts, checking for authenticity and offering general suggestions on early drafts, but remembering that their advice should not constitute correction.
- Written assessments of assignments not only recognised achievement but identified areas where candidates could make improvements.

- Candidates were encouraged to proof-read their work, looking particularly for errors of punctuation. Successful candidates were correct in their use of full stops at the ends of sentences and were sparing in their use of semi-colons, showing understanding of where they were appropriate.

Candidates aiming for marks in Bands 1 and 2 demonstrated their independence as writers, formulating their own versions of tasks and thinking inventively and at a high level of maturity. The best Centres used at best only a small amount of stimulus material for the first assignment, briefly introduced tasks capable of flexible responses, allowed a short time for candidates to discuss possible approaches and then set candidates to work on their own. Some Centres prepared for coursework by teaching skills, such as how to structure an effective speech and the type of language that was appropriate, or how a short story works, studying the presentation of characters, the build-up of tension and the provision of an effective climax. They were careful to ensure that tasks were appropriate in maturity for a sixteen-year-old and that they required a suitable level of thought and the opportunities to demonstrate skills. They understood that coursework was provided for educational reasons so that by practice, each candidate could improve as a writer and thinker.

Many Centres clearly understood the rationale behind coursework and approached it with enthusiasm and energy.

### **Bad Practice**

Unfortunately, a number of Centres regarded coursework as a way of awarding their candidates a mark no lower than Band 3. It sometimes appeared that coursework had been undertaken without a full understanding of the rationale behind it. Some of the points listed below are detailed further in later sections of the report.

- Candidates were frequently not left to work independently of published material or undue guidance by teachers. This resulted in similar responses that showed little or no originality of thought. While the style and accuracy may have been satisfactory, the overall mark was affected by too much adherence to what should only have been a stimulus and not a template for content or structure.
- In Assignment 3, where all candidates had responded to the same text, it sometimes appeared that they had been guided to select certain ideas and opinions. Since the selection was part of the reading mark, this was an inappropriate practice.
- For reading, it was clear in some cases that the mark scheme in the syllabus had either not been used or not fully understood.
- A large number of candidates were unaware of the need to place a full stop at the end of a sentence or to use an appropriate conjunction to join sentences into a fluent pattern of thought. As a result they wrote groups of short sentences with commas (and sometimes nothing) between. In addition, some candidates used virtually no commas at all. There were many examples of the wrong use of semi-colons, sometimes splitting a simple sentence into two halves for no reason. Often there were far too many semi-colons in a piece of work. There was frequently no indication that these errors had been noticed, or if they were, had not been taken into consideration when awarding marks. Given the excellent opportunities for drafting and redrafting and for discussing work in general terms with the teacher, advantages not available in the alternative Component 3, it was expected that candidates would have identified and corrected these errors.

Centres are particularly warned about providing candidates with too much support, especially about the content and structure of assignments and about making specific corrections on early drafts.

Details regarding the educational aims and objectives are set out in the Syllabus, in all published reports to Centres and in the Coursework Training Manual. It is vital that all Centres offering the coursework entry read these documents and understand and follow the advice.

### **Task setting**

Tasks in all cases followed the requirements of the syllabus and were generally appropriate in the degree of challenge offered to the best candidates. However, many of the tasks appeared to come from a common source and were not always suited to the particular interests and abilities of candidates or the specific demands of this component.

There were some exceptions to the suitability of tasks.

In Assignment 1, the tasks 'Don't get me started...', 'Three things I would like to be rid of in the twenty first century', and 'Room 101' were rarely done well for reasons that are detailed later in this report. These tasks have been set over a number of years and are not ones that are recommended by CIE.

In Assignment 2 the increasing use of monologues gave many candidates problems that they did not encounter when writing stories, descriptions and accounts from their own experience.

In Assignment 3, some candidates were disadvantaged by the choice of texts which contained few ideas and opinions with which they could engage or which argued strongly for an issue that was undeniable. The continued use of the weak 'Educating Essex' text disadvantaged candidates, and this should not be used again.

## Assessment of coursework

### Writing

In most cases, the rank order of candidates within the Centre was satisfactory, but the marking was frequently lenient. In most cases this involved a slight adjustment of the original marks, but in some cases the over-marking was significant. In one case, a Centre used a mark scheme that was not the one set by CIE. There was reluctance among Centres to use Bands 4 and 5 and some Centres' distribution graphs were too heavily skewed to Bands 2 and 3.

Some Centres did not fully understand the application of the mark scheme. The assessment consists of content, structure, style (including a sense of audience) and accuracy. These are assessed in broadly equal proportions. There is some room for commutation, but this is limited.

In many cases it appeared that due account had not been taken of accuracy and of some stylistic features. For example, one candidate awarded a mark on Band 1 made a total of 89 errors, and it was quite common to find candidates in Band 1 who had made over 50 errors. One single story, given a mark at the top of Band 3, contained 57 mistakes, and another folder, high in Band 3 totalled 103. It is clear from the mark scheme that work where error was so evident could not be in Band 1, or anywhere near it.

The chief reasons for reducing Centres' writing marks were as follows:

- 1: Punctuation errors, particularly of full stops, commas, semi-colons, semi colons and apostrophes.** There was frequently a misunderstanding of where to use semi-colons and they were often made to divide what ought to have been longer sentences into short ones. The functions of colons and semi-colons were sometimes confused. Colons were often inappropriately used to introduce lists of words rather than phrases and sentences. Some pieces of work had far too many semi-colons: they should be used sparingly. There was an odd error of confusing dashes with hyphens, and dashes were also used too often where a well-constructed sentence was preferable.
- 2: Straightforward, sometimes limited range of language.** This is a strong discriminator when marking writing. Candidates in Bands 1 and 2 should use a wide range of vocabulary with some assurance. Candidates who use a limited range of mostly simple words are often placed in Band 4.
- 3: Insecure structuring of sentences and lack of fluency.** This is another strong discriminator. Candidates often wrote either simple sentences or sentences which were at best only two clauses joined together. Good candidates managed complex sentences with assurance. Some candidates wrote very long, convoluted sentences that confused the reader. One such sentence lasted over 150 words and another 125.
- 4: Simplistic responses to undemanding tasks,** particularly in Assignments 1 and 3.
- 5: Failure to proof read.** Some errors were so simple that they did not indicate the candidate's lack of knowledge. There was no excuse for their not being correct.
- 6: Poor use of the spell check leading to the use of wrong words and wrong spellings.** This included candidates who discussed 'notational service', and referred to 'a gust of wing', 'venerable children' and 'prophetic legs'. 'Definitely' became 'defiantly', 'assess' became 'asses' and there was a '5 start hotel'.

## Assessment of reading

This assessment was generally satisfactory, but again there was a tendency to be lenient, and some Centres gave marks in Band 1 without there being sufficient quality in the responses to warrant it. Some Centres presented a good range of marks typically from 9 to 4.

There were, however, some excellent answers. These showed that candidates had grasped the text and the attitudes of its writer as a whole, and their responses consisted of a cohesive set of ideas, integrating much of the detail of the passage. There was a secure understanding of the text and responses elucidated what the writer was saying. They were clearly worth a mark in Band 1.

Many answers were worth Band 2. These made a selection of ideas and opinions, often in a random order, and evaluated each one in turn. They separated fact from opinion and identified bias and inconsistencies, developing arguments for and against what was written. This constituted evaluation and it did not need to be consistent for a mark of 7.

Candidates in Band 3 made a satisfactory selection of ideas and opinions, but either did little more than to summarise them or provided some very straightforward comments, such as expressing agreement or disagreement with the writer (typical of a mark of 5). Sometimes the comments were so weak or the work so incomplete that a mark in Band 4 was appropriate.

Centres should use the published mark scheme, which is found in the syllabus under 6: *Appendix*.

## Administration by Centres

The work of the Moderators was not merely to scrutinise the quality of the work but also to make a number of clerical checks on the marks submitted by Centres.

The first document that was needed was the **Coursework Assessment Summary Form**, or CASF (otherwise known as WMS). This form was the record of the actual marks agreed on after Internal Moderation and was required for all candidates and not just those in the moderation sample. The Moderator noted all the changes that had been made at Internal Moderation and also used the document to check the range of marks awarded for reading. The document gave the Moderator some guidance as to the marking of different teachers in the Centre.

The Moderator then checked the marks on the CASF against those on the copy of the **MS1** (or electronic equivalent). Where there was a discrepancy, this was recorded on the CIE marks system. A check was also carried out against the marks on the folders in the sample. There were frequent discrepancies that were discovered during these checks.

Most Centres supplied a copy of this essential form, but some did not. It was not sufficient to record moderated marks on the folders alone. Sometimes the only form that was submitted was for the candidates in the sample. A frequent comment by Moderators was that there was no evidence of Internal Moderation.

Copies of all articles used for Assignment 3 were required by the Moderator who had to read them before addressing the work. These were almost always supplied.

An early draft of **one** piece of work was also required. This was usually included and in some cases there was a draft for all three pieces of work. The Moderator needed the draft to make two separate checks, although this did not normally affect the marking of the folder.

Many Centres did not include the top and bottom folder from their mark range in addition to the sample that was requested.

Finally the regulations stipulated that each folder in the sample should be securely fixed and that it should not be in plastic folders, which only added to the complicated handling job that the Moderator had to undertake. For example, where a large number of folders were submitted, the Moderator had to make an initial sub-sample across the mark range and then a subsequent choice of folders to examine certain points in the range. It was not always safe to use paperclips, and a few folders were not fixed together at all. The most convenient method was by stapling.



## Summary of the contents of the folder

- 1: The folders required from each Centre by CIE.
- 2: In addition, the top and bottom folder in the Centre's mark range.
- 3: The CASFs(WMS) for all the candidates in the Centre.
- 4: The Moderator's copy of the MS1 or electronically submitted mark list.
- 5: An early draft (see below) of one of the assignments.
- 6: A copy of the article used for Assignment 3, preferably with the candidate's annotations.

## Annotation

It was only by reading the comments by teachers that Moderators were able to understand how the marks had been awarded. They looked for a summative comment on the cover of each folder, comments at the bottom of each individual assignment, and the annotation of errors on final drafts.

Some Centres were meticulous in their annotation. However, many final drafts carried no comment or annotation whatsoever and in one case, the Centre had not even made comments on the front covers.

It was important that errors should be annotated on final drafts, yet it was common practice not to do this or only to make some token annotations. This resulted in comments such as 'mainly competent use of spelling, punctuation and grammar' when a quick check showed that this was patently untrue. The reason why such annotation is essential has already been given in this report.

Much comment was made in the margin and consisted of identifying when a particular objective had been achieved at a certain level. While this system was helpful, it was misleading, since the final assessment of any piece of work consisted of those objectives that had been achieved in the assignment as a whole and not at one particular moment. Hence, the rationale for placing work in a mark band came at the end of the assignment and was not placed at various points in the margin.

Many assessments were too positive and made no indication to candidates where improvements in their work might be made. This meant that some assessments gave the impression that the work was better than in fact it was,

## Drafts

Some Centres were meticulous in commenting on drafts at the end of the assignment.

The point of a draft is that candidates should be prepared to make amendments by

- Revising and making improvements to whole sections, for example changing an ending or altering the length of a particular section;
- Editing, by changing words and phrases to improve the effectiveness of their communication;
- Correcting punctuation, grammar, proof-reading errors and so on.

These changes should be made in the candidate's handwriting and in a different colour from that of the teacher's notes.

Best practice was that the teacher's notes were set out at the end of the work, not in the margin or in the body of the text. There were still examples of teachers who circled individual errors in the text or who corrected them. This is specifically not allowed because it is the candidate's responsibility to make alterations and corrections to a draft, not the teacher's.

It was disappointing that some first drafts were merely copies of the final draft, thus missing the educational point of drafting.

## Internal moderation

Where there was more than one set it was essential that Internal Moderation should take place in order to provide a reliable rank order. On the whole, this was done well, although some Centres made very few changes to candidates' marks. This may have been because the marking was standardised throughout the course.

Where there was some disagreement it was usually due to problems in the assessment, for example by not assessing the quality of candidates' responses for reading correctly or by not paying due regard to the important discriminators for writing.

It was very helpful to Moderators that some Centres included a brief account of how Internal Moderation had been carried out.

### **Authenticity**

Centres should be aware that Moderators do take care to spot pieces of work that may not be the candidate's own. It is important to plan the work so that it is monitored and the possibility of copying from elsewhere is diminished. The easiest way to do this is to set tasks that reflect the candidates' personal experiences and thoughts and to create the first draft in class. This can be checked. The next stage, presumably the second draft, can be done at home and can then be checked against the first draft. The final draft can be done in class, (or the second and third stages can be reversed). In any case, monitoring should ensure that teachers feel confident that the work is original. If the work is suspicious, it is wise to check by using an internet search engine. Where cases of copying are discovered, the offending work must be removed before the folder is assessed.

While there was no doubt that the work was largely that of the candidates, there were unfortunately a number of examples of copying that were easily detected by Moderators.

All suspected cases were forwarded to the Regulations Team at Cambridge for investigation and further action where appropriate.

### **Assignment 1**

The best tasks were those that set the words of a speech or presentation on a particular topic. Even if some of the content was not original, it was nearly always adapted to the genre and to the audience, and was accompanied by a good deal of the candidate's own thoughts and arguments. The fact that it was meant to be spoken, albeit formally, gave the candidate freedom to explore the topic from a personal standpoint. The work was frequently more entertaining, sounded more convincing and was more passionate than traditional essays. Nearly all of the presentations were well structured and candidates did not fall into the trap of becoming too informal. However, a common distraction was the frequency of rhetorical questions. Used sparingly, these were effective, but used too often, they interrupted the flow.

While writing that argued a case tended to attract the higher marks, there was also a place, particularly for the average candidate, for writing informative accounts of school, sporting and family events and particularly of spare time activities that were unusual or that had been taken to a high level. One candidate wrote engagingly about his participation in a band that had some success. Writing an account of work experience was a valid option. Family histories were also successful, although candidates had to be careful not to stray into the territory of Assignment 2 and write narratives. Visits abroad and to museums and art galleries were done well and there were some excellent accounts of towns and cities round the world written by people who no longer lived there.

Essays were often uninteresting to read because they were too formal and there was rarely any sense of audience or of involvement by the candidate. There was also the concern as to where the content came from and Moderators were more likely to be suspicious about the origin of these pieces. Because the ethos of this coursework is built round the thoughts, feelings and experiences of candidates, this type of writing was somehow out of place.

Centres also needed to check film reviews and restaurant reviews for originality. One review had been cobbled together from two websites. The Moderator's suspicions were aroused because the quality of writing for the review was markedly different from that of the other two pieces.

Rants such as 'Don't get me started' very rarely gave candidates any advantages and were often the weakest pieces in the folders. Unfortunately, many Centres set them. There were examples of attacks on challenging topics that were cohesive and sustained and which used appropriate language, but these were few and far between. The problems were as follow:

- 1: Content: This was often unchallenging. Candidates who wrote about TV commercials, coughing without putting your hand over your mouth, Year 7, and bus drivers were not likely to reach Bands 1

or 2. Sometimes their arguments against these topics were only to express disgust or annoyance, so that their arguments were weak.

- 2: Structure: the topics were so unchallenging that candidates had difficulty in sustaining their arguments which were typically repetitive or weak.
- 3: Style: Many of these responses confused formal and informal language, sometimes to a serious degree. Expressions included 'how the hell?', 'gob', 'drive me bananas', 'bugs you', 'or summin', and 'shoot me now'.

It was too easy for candidates to fall into these very obvious traps, and while some of the diatribes were amusing, they did not properly match the demands of the mark scheme. It is recommended that no more rants should be set.

There were several tasks involving leaflets, but these were not always successful because they did not give opportunities for sustained, cohesive writing and because the content was often too straightforwardly informative.

It was not good practice to set the same topic to a large number of candidates.

The good news was that there was a real variety of topics, many of which were clearly of personal concern to the candidates. Many candidates wrote about social media, video games and issues concerning animals. These were done well, but the less usual topics included:

*War today, graveyard tomorrow*  
*An argument against going to university*  
*The media and body images*  
*An application to be head boy*  
*Celebrities*  
*Women's soccer*  
*Irish dancing*  
*Syria*  
*'My Mum'*

## **Assignment 2**

This assignment was the opportunity for candidates to think imaginatively rather than to create arguments, and to demonstrate their command of vocabulary. The best candidates used language appropriately and with assurance, so that meaning was never in doubt and the reader was supplied with realistic images that engaged attention.

Some candidates tried too hard, and their use of decorative language obscured meaning. There were examples of images that did not connect well with the object that they described and it was clear that there was a lack of understanding of the function of imagery. Many candidates used a disappointing range of vocabulary, and the writing was sometimes flat or even simple.

The range of tasks consisted of narratives, descriptions, monologues and writing from personal experience. One Centre successfully set the theme of homelessness and another asked candidates to imagine they were at the top of a high building so see whether they could fly. Despite the potential dangers of putting such ideas into their heads, the writing was gripping.

Many of the narratives were sadly, violent, giving a negative view of life. Where the violence and the blood became gratuitous, this spoiled the effect of the story because the events were no longer convincing. Many Centres opted for a gothic story, although there was not much evidence that candidates knew much about the genre. Too often it reverted to the common denominator of entering a stereotypical house with a big wooden door and occasionally the protagonists were surrounded by a horde of zombies.

On the other hand, there were some good aspects of story writing, particularly where the ending was well thought out. There were examples of time lapses, alternate narrators, and drip-feeding, all devices that created interest.

There were many descriptions. Most of these were well written, but some of them were lists of images that were loosely connected rather than creating a cohesive picture overall. It is important for a description to

have some shape. This can be achieved by describing what happens over a limited period of time or by describing a scene from different angles or through different eyes. Static descriptions proved difficult to sustain.

Some of the monologues were well written, but they tended to become outpourings of emotions that had limited variety, and there was less content in them than in narratives. Like the descriptions they were best when they were not static such as happened when the narrator was reacting to a single event.

Comparatively few candidates wrote about their own experiences. For some who have had eventful lives, this is a source of some excellent writing and there is a case for ensuring that every folder has one example of writing from experience. It is of course possible to write partly from experience, but to change events to make a good story.

Some titles included:

### **Narrative**

*Hate behind a white veil*  
*Skylines and turnstiles*  
*The lighthouse*  
*Breaking point*  
*Sound in the dark*  
*The boy who never sleeps*  
*Lost in the forest*  
*Mist at sea*

### **Descriptive**

*Tsunami*  
*A day in the life of a pub*  
*A perfect fall day*  
*The end of the School day*  
*A theme park*

### **Own experience**

*My first flying experience*

### **Assignment 3**

Many of the articles chosen for this assignment were appropriate. However there were some exceptions, as follow:

- Newspaper stories that just recorded events and did not discuss them
- Internet articles written in short, unstructured paragraphs, with much repetition and little argument
- Multiple articles, usually in twos or threes, that gave candidates too much to deal with
- Overlong articles of more than two sides of A4.

Most articles were controversial, contained at least some identifiable arguments, ideas and opinions, and were about themes that candidates could easily relate to. However, several reports on individual Centres mentioned that the chosen article only had a small number of ideas and opinions and that this was not beneficial to the candidates. This included a particularly graphic account of the death penalty applied to a criminal in the United States, which described the event and did not debate the issue.

Some texts argued a case with which no normal person could disagree. Where the stages in the argument were logical it proved very difficult for candidates to respond. They were open to develop ideas, but in good texts this development had often been done already and there was little else that could be said.

A number of articles, such as the article on 'Educating Essex' had been in circulation for several sessions and some were common to several Centres. It is recommended that Centres find some fresh articles of their own.

This assignment generally followed the guidelines in the syllabus and was often well written. Most candidates made a satisfactory selection of ideas and opinions and many of them gave evidence of at least some evaluation and development.

Texts used for this assignment included:

*Voting for 16-year-olds*

*Sunbeds*

*Hosting the world cup*

*Free range childhood*

*Parents know best*

*Gun crime chaos*

*Mid-pregnancy abortion (chosen for US candidates)*

*Child soldiers*

*Compulsory sport in Schools*

*A teenager in favour of School uniform*

### **Final comments**

This report has underlined some of the issues that urgently needed addressing. However, a good deal of the work was well planned and carried out with an understanding of the educational advantages of the component. Where there were discrepancies, it proved that coursework was not something that could be lightly undertaken and that there was a good deal of commitment and hard work that was necessary to achieve the results that Centres obviously wanted.



# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

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Paper 0522/05  
Speaking and Listening

## Key messages

The main messages:

- **Compliance.** Read carefully and thoroughly the instructions in the syllabus relating to how this component should be carried out. For example, in the syllabus, the required timings of both parts of the test are clearly stipulated. There is also detailed guidance and support in the *Speaking and Listening Handbook* which should be consulted. We recommend that Centres using more than one Examiner utilise this as an aid to train and standardise the examining team.
- **Using scripts.** Please ensure that candidates do not use scripts or rely on extended notes. Reading entirely from a script is not permitted and it is contrary to the ethos of this test. Centres should discourage this at the planning stage and insist on candidates using a variety of prompt material instead. The syllabus suggests a postcard size prompt card, but other aids could be used, for example, images, graphs or a prop. Candidates will not be able to score high marks if they simply read from a script; awareness of audience and an attempt to use a range of devices to engage the audience are key skills being tested in Part 1.
- **Speaking not reading.** The test is an assessment of speaking skills in Part 1. Over-reliance on scripted material and the use of extended notes promotes reading and writing skills over speaking skills. In cases where Moderators detect that full scripts have been used, or extended notes have been read out, it is likely that the Centre's work will be regarded as maladministration and passed on to the CIE Regulations Team to investigate further. In some cases, this may result in candidates' marks for the component not being accepted.
- **Safeguarding.** There were some instances where candidates spoke about topics which are inappropriate in the context of a public examination. It is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that such topics do not feature in this examination. Cambridge does not issue a list of inappropriate topics; but Examiners need to be aware of their responsibility to advise candidates on the suitability of their chosen topic.
- **Out of window tests.** The syllabus is very clear of when this speaking and listening examination can and should take place. The 'test window' is usually two months. For this session, this was September 1st to October 31st. Any tests conducted outside of this time will have been investigated by the CIE Regulations Team for non-compliance.
- **Absent candidates.** When a candidate is absent, an A must be recorded on the mark sheet (MS1) and not a zero. The latter implies that the test was indeed conducted and no marks were awarded. In such cases, we would expect an explanatory note and the candidate's recording.

Other messages:

- Moderators suggest that some candidates need to prepare more thoroughly for the examination. Success in Part 1 is clearly linked to researching the chosen topic, planning for a confident and assured delivery, practising the delivery, but also preparing for a strong contribution in Part 2.
- Generally, candidates should try to make their Part 1 presentations more lively, by perhaps incorporating more creative presentational styles, but certainly by relying less on reciting factual information. There is scope for further creativity in Part 1 – e.g. taking up a 'voice' or presenting a dramatic monologue. Presenting empathic work using literary texts often leads to quality work.

- In Part 2, Moderators would like to hear stronger evidence that candidates are aware of their expected role in the discussion. The candidate's role should not be that of a passive interviewee, but should be one which is more proactive and seeks to engage with the listener in a collaborative manner.
- It is permissible for teachers to work with their candidates (once the candidate has decided upon a topic) to help enhance the content and to advise upon the approach taken for the delivery. Differentiation by task setting is therefore encouraged for this component. A more capable candidate is likely to attempt a more ambitious presentation and to engage with more sophisticated content - and such a candidate should be encouraged to do this. Moderators recommend more teaching of general speaking and listening skills in the context of a topic-based presentation and subsequent discussion. Over-rehearsal with candidates is not encouraged, but broad-based coverage of useful methodologies is encouraged.
- Please restrict Part 1 to 4 minutes, and Part 2 to between 6 and 7 minutes - as specified in the syllabus. It is difficult to justify the awarding of high marks to Part 1s which are short (under 3 minutes) and it is counter-productive to allow Part 2 to run over 7 minutes. This session again saw problems at some Centres with timings, and problems here often lead to problems elsewhere. The timings for the two parts of the test are distinct - i.e. short Part 1s cannot be compensated for with longer Part 2s (or vice versa).
- Please would all Centres use digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or a USB drive. Please use recognised audio file formats that can be played by common computer software (e.g. mp3, wav, wma). A list of the candidates in the sample, their numbers, and the mark given to each, either on the CD cover (but not on the CD itself please) or on a separate sheet is appreciated. Please re-name the individual tracks on the CD to the candidate number and name only (instead of track 1, track 2, etc.).

Messages relating to assessment:

- In Part 1, Moderators advise Examiners to be sure that a candidate has met the criteria for Band 1 fully before awarding 9 or 10 marks. If an individual presentation is of the standard, factually-based, reportage style, even if well done, then a low Band 2 mark is likely to be the highest available, and a Band 3 mark perhaps more appropriate.
- More mundane and pedestrian presentations should be placed in Band 3.
- Candidates who present very short Part 1s or those which rely too much on notes are not likely to achieve higher than Band 4, where "delivery is not secure, resulting in some loss of audience interest" is the most likely and appropriate descriptor.
- Extremely short Part 1s (under one minute) are likely to satisfy only the Band 5 criteria: "Content is mostly undeveloped....and the audience is generally lost".
- Very long Part 1s do not satisfy Band 1 requirements, as they lack the required control, structure and poignancy. An over-long Part 1 is one that runs for beyond 5 minutes.
- Examiners are reminded not to award marks for content per se - it is the *development* of the content which is being assessed; in both Parts 1 and 2 of the test. For example, "What work experience did for me..." could achieve a Band 1, or indeed, a Band 5, depending on how the content has been planned, is introduced, is organised, and then presented and developed.
- We recommend that Centres with more than 30 candidates conduct internal moderation - i.e. a systematic revision of a sample of candidates, covering a good spread of marks. This is often successful when completed as a team effort, and should achieve consistency among assessors and highlight any outlying marks for specific candidates.

An important message relating to protocol:

- The test should be conducted only once. It is a terminal examination and as such, candidates must not be given a second attempt. If a test has been conducted twice, the Centre should inform Cambridge directly of the rationale and reasons for this.

A message relating to preparation by the Teachers/examiners

- It would be a good idea for Examiners to obtain a list of the topics that candidates are planning to talk about in advance of the examination, perhaps the day before. This would allow the Examiner to 'think ahead' and consider areas which might be productive in Part 2. However, these must not be shared with the candidates prior to the examination. The aim in Part 2 is for both parties to be involved in an organic discussion - if scripted or practised material is found to be present in this part of the examination, this is likely to result in maladministration of the test.

## **General comments**

The more interesting and successful individual tasks were from candidates who spoke from brief notes rather than scripts, and about a topic they felt passionately about and which they had researched thoroughly. Some successful tasks included some kind of visual presentation to the Examiner, such as sharing a Powerpoint slide or some photographs. Other interesting presentations were done in the form of a 'muse' or monologue – sometimes in the form of a conversation with an invisible character. The most successful standard presentations were given by candidates fired by a passion who also utilised a variety of devices to maintain their listener's interest. In all the best examples there was a real sense of engagement with the topic. Where candidates chose well, prepared thoroughly and were fully committed to the task the results were usually good.

Conversely, where Centres were ill-prepared for the test and Examiners were not fully aware of their role, the candidates were not as successful. In these Centres, the candidates' preparation of their topics was not always conducive to performing successful speaking tasks, and they were often ill-prepared for the discussion part of the examination – and these factors were usually more significant than the choice of topic. Less successful tasks were usually read from notes and this tended to detract from the overall effect – appearing to be rather lifeless and certainly monotonous. Some less able candidates relied heavily on a script and talked in a monotone about a subject they had not researched sufficiently or which they did not feel particularly strongly about. There was certainly too much reliance on Wikipedia in cases where topics had been chosen with less care. Every candidate is encouraged to choose a topic of personal interest and to talk as freely as possible about this. Some candidates will perform better by taking this approach rather than relying too much on notes.

Centres are reminded that for Part 1, the candidates should be involved in the choice of topics. While Moderators understand that at large Centres, it is easier to manage the tests if generic themes are followed, the same theme for all candidates is not recommended. It may well be that in larger Centres it makes sense for each classroom teacher to propose a range of themes so that candidates can work in groups and practise presenting their topics to each other. Peer assessment and formative feedback is certainly encouraged. However, the use of generic themes must allow for individual expression. Be aware, however, that the responsibility for the preparation of content lies with the candidate.

Please note that this is a formal examination and as such an appropriate examination room is required. Candidates should not be examined in the presence of other candidates. A quiet, secure room is crucial for the success of the examination. Some Centres are reminded that the test should be conducted by a single Examiner. While a second person may be present, the test itself must be conducted entirely by one Examiner - i.e. it is not permissible for two people to be asking questions or discussing matters with the candidate.

### *Materials required by the Moderator*

As a reminder to Centres, Cambridge requires three different items in the package sent to the Moderator: (1) the recorded sample on as few CDs/DVDs as possible (or preferably, on a single USB drive) and using separate re-named tracks for each candidate, (2) the Summary Forms for the entire entry, and (3) a copy of the Mark Sheet that has already been sent to Cambridge confirming the final marks. In addition, any letters relating to the work undertaken by the candidates or regarding issues experienced by the Centre should also be placed in the package for the attention of the external Moderator.

- (1) Please note that without the recordings, Cambridge is unable to moderate the work from a Centre and this will affect the results issued to candidates.
- (2) The Summary Form is the form that records the separate marks awarded to the two parts of the test, in addition to the total mark. The Examiner who conducts the examination is responsible for filling out the summary form. He or she should sign the form and date it – in effect; this is the form which is the working record of the examining undertaken, and is therefore of most use to the external Moderator. Please identify the candidates in the sample by using asterisks on the Summary Form. It would also be very useful if the candidate numbers can be recorded on the summary forms as they appear on the mark sheets.
- (3) The Moderator needs a copy of the mark sheet in order to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the marks from the summary forms.



## **Comments on specific questions**

### ***Part 1 - The Individual Task***

The dominant task in Part 1 remains the informative presentation. Candidates select a topic and provide historical and/or contemporary information about it. A small number of these presentations remain purely factual, but many engage with an issue or controversy relating to the topic. Where the chosen topic relates directly to the candidate's personal situation or their country or location, there is usually scope for more engaging content.

Personal experiences and interests are a common focus - for example, recent trips abroad, reading, sport, music. These kinds of presentations vary in their degree of success, with less successful tasks simply describing likes, dislikes and experiences without further exploration, depth or insight.

Candidates sometimes attempt to use techniques such as addressing the listener and using rhetorical devices, but care needs to be taken so that these approaches are effective and not just a gesture.

Centres and candidates are of course free to focus on topics which lend themselves to standard presentations. However, Moderators encourage topics with a specific focus; along with a greater range of presentational styles.

### ***Some examples of productive Part 1 tasks from this session:***

- poverty in the UK
- the rise of the Dystopian novel
- the pros and cons of social media for teenagers
- are women's rights really equal in today's world?
- the use of humour as a political tool
- talking to my younger self (as a monologue)
- do not we all have tragic flaws?
- do we really need censorship?
- what money means to a teenager
- conspiracy theories, including one of my own
- seven reasons why I hate football
- what is a fair rate of pay for a job?

### ***Part 2 - Discussions***

Moderators are happy that in many cases, Examiners were very much part of the discussions, entering into the spirit of the occasion, and that the conversations were generally productive extensions of the individual tasks. This is clearly a strength of this examination.

It was clear in many cases that candidates had planned for further discussion. The best way to do this is to imagine being the Examiner and to draw up a list of probable questions, or areas of interest that might be appropriate for further discussion given the scope of the topic.

However, where this had not occurred, Moderators felt the discussions were lacking. It is not the sole responsibility of the Examiner to work hard to sustain discussion - the candidate needs to plan for this and this element of Part 2 has indeed been built into the assessment criteria for both listening and speaking. It is, however, the responsibility of the Examiner to move the discussion along and to ensure that a 6 to 7 minute conversation occurs. Ideally, this would be a scaffolded discussion, and more challenging ideas and content would be introduced as the discussion develops.

The most effective Examiners clearly took notes as the candidates completed their presentations, and then based the discussions very closely on what the candidates had actually spoken about. This usually led to conversations which arose naturally from the individual task. More work is needed, however, for candidates to take a greater part in developing the discussions. Some candidates, and some Examiners, seemed to be unaware that this is expected. In a number of Centres, there seemed to be an understanding that the candidate would deliver his or her talk and then wait to be formally questioned by the Examiner. This clearly led to a more stilted and less effective discussion. In the stronger Part 2 performances the candidates were encouraged to take control of the discussion and there was a genuine feeling that it was a two-way conversation based on an equal footing between the candidate and the Examiner.

Examiners should therefore avoid adopting a very formal 'interview' approach in Part 2. The aim is to be supportive of the candidate; to share an interest in his/her topic, and to share views, ideas and to work with the candidate to develop the conversation. It is important that the spontaneity of discussion is maintained.

In general however, candidates and Examiners stayed on task, though there were a few instances of Examiners using the allotted time to involve candidates in discussions about other matters - for example, their future plans - when this was not part of the candidate's talk. Such transgressions are likely to result in lower marks as the assessment criteria assume that content in Part 2 relates directly to content in Part 1.

Some Examiners had a tendency to ask too many closed questions, which unsurprisingly elicited short and weaker responses which do not encourage development. Open questions are much more effective.

#### *Concluding comments*

It is clear that some Centres need to offer further training to their Teachers/examiners to conduct these task-oriented tests as the syllabus and other Cambridge supporting documentation (e.g. the *Handbook for Speaking and Listening*) stipulate. Where Centres do not comply with the rubrics, the result is often disastrous and the effect is usually felt by the candidates whose achievement and performance is clearly affected. This is unacceptable and such Centres should seek direct guidance from Cambridge when they receive feedback on the work undertaken for the session.

However, Cambridge wishes to commend Centres who have responded well to what might be a new examination for them - Cambridge does appreciate that a different culture is required for what is a new assessment methodology and that this takes time to establish itself. There were many cases where Moderators reported refreshing and lively work, where it was clear that the candidates had enjoyed taking control of their own learning and had responded well to being allowed to be active in the skills of research, oral presentation and subsequent discussion.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (COUNT-IN ORAL)

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Paper 0522/06

Speaking and Listening (Coursework)

## Key Messages

Centres should decide whether to choose Component 05 or Component 06 at the beginning of the planning stage. The components are distinct in their approaches to the Speaking and Listening section of the syllabus. Uncertainty and confusion as to which pathway to follow can lead to Centres entering for the wrong component. This always causes problems for the Centre and the Moderator.

Component 6 is much more flexible in that three separate tasks are required that can be assessed at any time during the course. This flexibility allows a broader range of topics and skills to be assessed but requires Centres to fully embrace the concept that the Speaking and Listening tasks are an integral part of the overall course.

Centres are recommended to use both the current syllabus and 'Speaking and Listening Training Handbook' to ensure the requirements for the administration of the component are met in full. All the relevant information is contained within these documents.

Please be aware that four different items need to be included in the sample package sent to the Moderator. These are: a recorded sample on CD, DVD or USB drive; the Summary Forms for the whole cohort entered; a copy of the marks (the MS1) already sent to Cambridge and the Individual Candidate Record Cards for the candidates included in the sample. Centres are urged to ensure all four of these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process.

The Individual Candidate Record Cards should include specific information about the choices made for each task and not just generic statements.

In some cases clerical and mathematical errors continue to undermine the moderation process although it must be noted that there were far fewer instances this session.

Please check the quality of the recordings before despatching to Cambridge and ensure that the CD, DVD or USB is securely packaged to avoid damage in transit. A jiffy bag is recommended.

A sample representing the full range of the Centre's marks is expected with both the highest and lowest performing candidates included.

We encourage the use of digital recording equipment to generate audio files which can then be transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive in a recognised common audio file format that can be played by standard computer software.

For paired activities it is essential that the Moderator is able to distinguish between the candidates in the activity so that successful moderation can take place. The simplest way of achieving this is for the candidates to introduce themselves and their roles in the activity at the beginning of the recording.

Any candidate who is absent should be recorded as such on the relevant documentation and only those who attempted the activity but who failed to contribute should be given a mark of 0.

Unlike Component 5, there is no specified time duration for Component 6 tasks but it is difficult to see how both candidates in the Paired-Task activity can meet higher level criteria such as 'responds fully', 'develops prompts' or 'employs a wide range of language devices' in a performance lasting less than two minutes. Given that both speaking and listening are assessed, it is important that the activities last long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. Planned, rehearsed and developed

performances will normally justify higher marks in the same way written examination practise encourages more successful outcomes.

### **General Comments**

Through the syllabus, Cambridge provides specific forms for use with Component 6; namely the Individual Candidate Record and the Summary Form. Please note that the Component 5 Summary Form is different and it is not interchangeable with the Component 6 equivalent.

For Component 6, Centres are encouraged to be creative in the choice of tasks as long as the assessment criteria are used as a guide to the skills being assessed.

### **Comments on Specific Tasks**

Well planned and prepared responses to tasks were generally more successful but, in particular, **Tasks 1** and **2** do not benefit from over-scripted and seemingly 'artificial' performances where spontaneity is missing. Candidates aspiring to the higher band criteria need to be able to react positively to changes in the direction of the discussion in **Task 2**.

In response to **Task 1**, it is very difficult to achieve band 1 if the performance is heavily scripted.

#### **Task 1**

Responses generally took the form of an individual presentation. This component allows differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when topics are chosen. This component allows the candidate and teacher to work together through rehearsal and development of the task to ensure the topic choice is suitable.

Some examples of productive **Task 1** activities include:

- My holiday in...
- A personal experience that is relevant, thought-provoking and developed beyond narrative
- Teenagers and technology
- Social media – good or bad?
- A review of a film, book, concert or sporting event where the candidate is thoroughly engaged and able to develop the presentation beyond a literal re-telling of the events.

#### **Task 2**

There should be only two participants in **Task 2**. Where there is an extra candidate, a teacher or a candidate who has been assessed may make up the pair. It is unacceptable and an infringement of the rubric for this task to be performed by three candidates. In effect, any **Task 2** activity comprising of more than two candidates becomes a **Task 3** Group Activity. As three distinct tasks are expected in response to Component 6, this becomes non-compliance and will be treated accordingly.

The Pair-Based Activity is more successful when two candidates of similar ability work as a pair. With regard to role-plays, it should be borne in mind that this is an assessment of language skills rather than drama skills so the language requirements should always drive the assessment criteria.

Responses to **Task 2** that are teacher-led, either with a teacher interviewing a candidate or with two candidates being led by a teacher, are less successful than a developed discussion between two candidates. It is recommended that this approach is only considered where it is deemed the candidates are too weak to initiate the discussion without external assistance.

A popular **Task 2** vehicle is the 'interview' where one candidate acts as the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. This can work well but there is an inherent weakness in the activity if the interviewer does little more than ask a set of pre-prepared questions. This restricts the level of performance, particularly for the Listening element. One way to counteract this problem is for candidates to swap roles halfway through so each has the opportunity to demonstrate a wider range of relevant skills.

Some examples of productive **Task 2** activities include:

- Does the media put too much pressure on teenagers?
- Are video games too violent?
- Topical social issues such as sexism in sport
- Feminism/Gender inequality
- The influence of reality television on the teenage audience
- Planning a holiday
- Role play situations that are developed beyond superficial arguments
- The benefits and pitfalls of social media?
- A moral dilemma such as what to do with a wallet that has been found
- Are politics irrelevant to teenagers?

### **Task 3**

**Task 3** may take various forms but it is most important that each candidate in the group is allowed sufficient scope within the activity to demonstrate their strengths without being dominated by others. A group made up of candidates of similar ability levels is often more successful. In more diverse groupings the weaker candidates are disadvantaged and do not have the opportunity to contribute to the best of their ability. The role of a group leader should be considered as a more successful outcome usually results from having one of the candidates directing the focus of the discussion.

Some examples of productive **Task 3** activities include:

- Characters from a literary text participating in a televised debate
- Performing an extra scene from a play that has been written by the candidates
- Any discussion of a topical issue with each candidate having their own viewpoint
- What to include in a time capsule/school newspaper, etc.
- Championing a character from a film or book where each candidate chooses their favourite.

### **General Conclusions**

- It is gratifying to report that the general level of assessment by Centres is in line with the expected standard.
- There are many Centres where internal moderation has been successful.
- Successful Centres continue to implement the component efficiently and imaginatively. Samples are generally well-prepared and aid the moderation process considerably. Thank you.
- Where problems have arisen, Centres have not followed the instructions regarding sampling and documentation. It is an expectation that Centres provide the requisite documentation and that it is accurate.
- All the documentation asked for in samples is used to check and cross-check as part of the rigour that underpins the moderation process. In the end this is of benefit to Centres and their candidates. It is important to remember that every Centre is moderated in every session and that this process is conducted rigorously to protect the reputation of the component and to maintain the standard so that Centres may have continued confidence in the product they have chosen.