

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/11
Reading and Writing (Core) 11

Key messages

- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should read the questions carefully to identify the exact requirement of each one. Answers should be brief and use language from the text. Responses which include additional information should be avoided, as this can affect the mark awarded. In this series, there were many fully correct responses to **Exercise 1**.
- In **Exercise 2**, the texts may include the writer's attitude and opinion, or information that is implied rather than explicitly stated. It is important that candidates read the questions carefully to identify the key elements of each one in order to select the corresponding details in a text. In this series, a small number of candidates omitted one or more individual items in **Exercise 2**.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates should focus on writing brief notes using the language from the text. The number of bullet points indicates the number of responses required for each question, and candidates should make sure that their answers correspond to the correct question. In this series there were some notes entered for the wrong question, and a number of additional notes included below the lines, which could not be credited.
- In **Exercise 4**, it is essential that responses stay within the word limit of 90 words, as any correct Content point included after the limit cannot be credited. Although there were some responses which continued beyond the required length, overall this series showed an improvement in the length of summaries.
- In **Exercise 5**, there were many successful responses which showed an awareness of the target audience through the use of informal language. The purpose of writing was generally well recognised and ideas were appropriately developed. In this series, a number of responses exceeded the suggested word range by a considerable amount, and this risked affecting the total mark through repetition of information and the inclusion of unnecessary irrelevant details.
- In **Exercise 6**, responses should be written in a more neutral or formal register, different from **Exercise 5**, to suit a different audience. In this series, this was not always achieved, which affected the mark awarded. Many responses also lacked organisation, and it was evident that the use of basic punctuation continues to be an area for practice.

General comments

Overall, most candidates were correctly entered at this level. **Exercise 1** appeared to be a good indicator as to the overall level of achievement on the paper as a whole, with good performance in **Exercise 1** being generally reflected in good performance throughout the paper.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

This exercise was generally well attempted by candidates, with individual questions providing differentiation. Many candidates selected the relevant section of the text in answer to the key requirements of the questions and provided precise information. A number of candidates omitted one or more questions in this exercise.

Question 1

This was well answered, with the majority of candidates correctly selecting *'three'*. The incorrect answer *'seven'* referred to the number of different kinds of animals in the horse family, not the number of types of zebra, as the question required.

Question 2

Many candidates provided two correct answers *'more aggressive'* and *'they bark'* to this question. Incomplete responses which did not include the comparative *'more'* could not be credited. More precise reading of the text was required for the second answer which relied on understanding the phrase *'unlike horses'*.

Question 3

Many responses provided the correct detail, *'UK'* in answer to the question *'Where did the experiment take place?'* Precise reading of the text was required to eliminate *'California'*, the university where the professor worked, and *'Tanzania'* where he had previously studied zebras.

Question 4

Many responses correctly featured *'used to humans approaching them'* to correspond to *'why were the zebras suitable?'* Some responses used the phrase in the question, *'they were in the wildlife conservation programme'* or wrongly selected *'study animals in their natural environment'*, which could not be credited.

Question 5

This was a more challenging question. While some correctly selected *'they bounced off'*, the question appeared to have been misinterpreted, as many responses focused on the idea of *'animals with stripes'*, in the question, and matched this with *'horses with striped jackets'* and others incorrectly selected *'far fewer landed on zebras'*.

Question 6

The majority of candidates provided two correct answers to this question. The key details that the cows could *'feed without interruption'* and that painting the cows *'improves their welfare'* were well identified. Occasionally the incorrect focus of the answer, as in *'the farmers can feed them without interruption'* was given, which could not be credited.

Question 7

This question was more challenging. Most responses identified the section of the text in which to find the details. Some candidates correctly selected *'reading stories about African animals'*, to correspond to the key elements in the question, *'What first inspired her?'* while others focused more on Alison's experiment, and gave details of her findings, *'stripes keep zebras cool'* or *'black stripes get hotter than white ones'*, which could not be credited.

Exercise 2

This exercise was well attempted, and a number of candidates achieved full marks. Many responses showed a good level of understanding of the texts and achieved at least half of the available marks. Candidates appeared to find **Questions (a), (b) and (d)** the most accessible. The most challenging questions proved to be **Questions (f), (g) and (h)**.

Question (f) centred around the idea that sometimes the museum had to close *'due to circumstances beyond its control'*, with the correct answer being found in Text B, *'poor weather conditions ...prevent the site from operating'*. Text D was a common incorrect answer, which suggested that candidates may have been misled by the phrase *'it shut soon afterwards, operating online only'*. Although this phrase included the idea of *'close'*, without providing the reason why, such a response did not provide a complete answer.

In **Question (g)**, the key focus of the question was that there were different ways to get to the museum. The sentence which paraphrased this idea was found in Text A, *'The best way to reach the site is to hike or cycle'* and *'a guided bus tour might be a good alternative'*. A common incorrect answer was Text B, where candidates may have misinterpreted the information *'explored by swimming, diving or from a glass-bottom boat'* as ways of getting to the museum. These referred instead to different ways of viewing the underwater

sculptures, and there was only one option for getting to the museum, *'All visitors are taken there by boat from their hotel'*.

In **Question (h)**, the central idea referred to being *'aware of the importance of creative ideas'*. The correct answer was found in Text C, *'visitors can not help being reminded of what it is possible to achieve by thinking differently'*. Text B was a common incorrect answer, which suggested that many candidates may have been misled by the information contained in the sentence, *'The sculptures were designed by a team of ... artists and the idea is certainly full of imagination.'* This did not fully support the key idea in the question and could not be credited.

Exercise 3

Candidates responded well to this exercise. Overall, the exercise produced some differentiation, with the more able candidates achieving maximum marks. Most candidates showed enough understanding of the text to be able to provide four or five correct answers which were generally in the form of brief notes and written within the space provided. Greater success in selecting correct details was achieved in Question 10 than in Question 9.

Question 9

This question appeared to be generally accessible, and many candidates achieved two or three of the available six points. All six points were used, with points 1 to 3 being the most frequently selected. Point 6 was commonly incorrectly placed as an answer to Question 10, which could not be credited. Incorrect notes tended to be the result of the omission of key details. For example, *'interviewed people about their sportswear requirements'* could not be credited without the key idea of people *'in gyms'*. Similarly, *'no one was making sportswear for men'* without the essential detail of *'luxury'* suggested that more precise reading of the text was required.

Question 10

There was a more successful response to this question and many candidates achieved full marks. Three points from a total of five were required and all five points were equally selected. Responses could not be credited when misspelling changed the intended meaning, for example, *'kites'* or *'kids'* for *'kits'*; *'lunch'* for *'launch'*; *'cloths'* for *'clothes'* and *'stuff'* for *'staff'*. Additionally, a number of responses lacked the key detail. For example, the brothers' plans for the future of the company were to expand and open pop-up stores *'overseas'*, and they planned to launch new clothes collections *'for specific sports'*. Without these key ideas, the answers lacked precise focus and could not be credited.

Exercise 4

In this series, candidates were required to summarise the reasons why the potato has become popular, and there were many successful responses which addressed the topic and included all the points available. Candidates are advised to read the rubric carefully to ensure that the focus of their summary is correct, as a number of responses concentrated more on the history of the potato than on its popularity. This loss of focus and the inclusion of information not relevant to the task resulted in words being wasted and often put the summary over the 90-word limit, which had an impact on the total mark.

Successful responses highlighted all the key ideas in the text within the 90-word limit and expressed them clearly and logically through the use of connecting words and phrases. More able candidates often saw a link between two ideas and were able to present them in a single sentence, *'scientists were able to produce potatoes that are adapted to local climate and are disease-resistant.'* or *'potato plants do not take up much space, yet still produce a significant amount of the vegetable that provides crucial vitamins for humans'*. This presentation of sentences in a different grammatical form from the text and the use of synonyms demonstrated successful summary skills and resulted in higher marks for Language.

Many candidates were able to gain marks by copying the Content points from the text and providing cohesion to their summary by using a range of linking words or phrases, such as *'not only... but also/as well as/then/because/so that'*. However, such reliance on the text placed the mark for Language in the middle band. Other responses attempted to use words from candidates' own vocabulary, such as *'not expensive/affordable'* for *'cheap'*; *'limited space/tiny area'* for *'small space'* and *'big quantity'* for *'large amount'*. To achieve higher marks for Language, candidates should attempt to express the ideas in their own words as far as possible.

Exercise 5

In this series, there were many successful responses which fulfilled the task and achieved full marks. Most emails showed a good sense of purpose and were organised through the use of paragraphs and connecting phrases. Ideas were generally developed appropriately, and information was conveyed in a conversational style. Many responses showed awareness of the target audience by engaging with the reader in a lively way from the start in a short opening paragraph, *'It's a long time since I heard from you – how've you been?'*, and finishing with a suitable sentence to finish the email, *'Believe me you'll have fun – see you there!'*. Generally, there was an improved sense of audience throughout the email as well, with phrases such as *'It's exciting, is not it'* and *'I can not wait!'*. However, some responses appeared inconsistent in tone and register, when words and phrases more suited to formal writing were used. For example, *'I'm writing to inform you that...'*, or *'Finally I can get tickets...'* The mix of informal and formal language throughout the email affected the mark awarded.

Most responses addressed all three prompts with satisfactory or good development. Development of the first prompt varied greatly. Candidates had to explain why their town was chosen for the event, and the majority of responses first suggested a named event, which generally fell into one of two categories – a sports-related event or a cultural event. On the sports side, many featured marathons, Formula 1 races, the World Cup, motorbike races and the Olympics, and the cultural events often centred around festivals to celebrate singing, dancing and food from different countries. There were many reasons provided for the event being in their town, ranging from the quality of the facilities that could be provided, such as parks, stadiums or wide streets, to the characteristics of the people living there, *'so friendly and environmentally aware'*. Some reasons for the event were related to a description of the town or the population, *'it's so clean and the streets are very wide'*, *'we have such a diverse population'*, while others featured the idea that their town had successfully put on a similar event in the past, or that it had been chosen as a result of winning a competition. Less successful responses did not name the event, which resulted in awkwardness of expression throughout the email, when simply *'the event'* was used, and which had an impact on the mark awarded for Content.

The second prompt required candidates to provide a description of what was going to happen at the event and the most successful responses demonstrated a link between the event and the reason the town was chosen, *'it's going to be a football competition to celebrate the opening of our new sports centre'*, *'he was born here that's why he's coming back'*. Most descriptions centred around activities that could take place outdoors. These included visits by famous singers or sports people, and street performers. Other attractions featured competitions, parades, food stalls and small shops where international items could be bought. Generally this prompt was developed in an imaginative and effective way. Some less effective emails focused on the preparations for the event rather than what would happen at the event itself. *'the topic of our event was climate change, and two months ago a team of volunteers planted trees on parks'*, and in some instances the inconsistency in grammatical tenses made it unclear whether the event had already happened or was a future event, which affected the mark awarded.

For the third prompt, candidates were asked to suggest a way to get tickets for the event. This had a mixed response – some provided considerable development, ranging from family members who are working for the event, or taking part in it and can get free or discounted tickets; the writer having a connection with a musician performing, so will be able to get VIP tickets, or the tickets being free for residents of the town. Other responses highlighted a place to get the tickets, such as *'the kiosk near my house'* and *'from a local store'*. Many also provided details of the cost of tickets. Less successful emails merely suggested getting the tickets online, or that the writer already had a ticket and that the friend should get their own.

The whole range of Language marks was awarded. There were many good attempts at more complex sentences, *'To be serious, I feel like your town would be a better choice, but they chose ours because it has a more welcoming appearance.'* and *'My father was gifted two tickets from his company but he is not that interested in sports so he told me I could take both tickets.'* Other responses attempted more complex language but tended to lack accuracy, *'I think they choose my town because have a long big road.'* Some responses used commas for full stops or omitted basic punctuation, which resulted in long rambling sentences in which the focus was lost and the meaning became unclear. To achieve higher marks for Language, it is important that responses demonstrate grammatical accuracy, a range of vocabulary and correct basic punctuation.

Exercise 6

Most responses engaged well with the debate about starting and finishing school later. The topic appeared to be one which appealed and which candidates could express an opinion on. There were four prompts –

two for and two against the suggested topic, to support candidates with their ideas. There were persuasive arguments on both sides, and the majority opinion was to keep the current situation in their school unchanged, *'Changing everything will make it too difficult for the teachers'*. The more successful responses supplied original ideas which went beyond the written prompts. For example, many ideas centred around the health benefits of waking up early, *'Waking up early is healthy for the human body and gives the body a good energy.'* and *'Waking up early helps you feel more productive.'* Other supporting ideas suggested that *'getting up early is good discipline and will help us when we start work'* and as a counter argument, *'waking up later means that we can wake up relaxed and not tired, which helps in performance at lessons and exams.'* While the benefits of waking up early were often well developed, the idea of finishing school later was less clearly addressed. Some responses which argued for starting later suggested that school should continue into the evening, or even have night classes, however, the majority of arguments favoured the importance of having time after school to *'meet up with friends and do homework.'* This tended to result in responses which promoted the idea of a shorter school day, which did not fulfil the task and could not be credited with marks in the top band for Content. Other less successful articles focused entirely on the benefits of getting up early, without reference to the school timetable as the task required, and such responses could not be awarded with high marks. A tendency to centre arguments entirely around the written prompts, with little or no further development was evident in some articles, and candidates are advised that higher marks can be awarded when ideas are developed through the use of examples, reasons or explanation.

From a Language point of view, there were some well organised articles, with simple cohesive devices used to good effect to separate ideas or to indicate a change in the direction of writing, *'On the plus side'* *'Another point worth noting is...'*, *'Not only that, but...'* and these fully supported cohesion in writing. There were examples where candidates made over-ambitious attempts at a more formal register, *'sailing to the other harbour'*, *'naysayers proclaim'* *'on the same side of the canopy'*, and such phrases only produced unnatural sounding language. Candidates are advised that because ideas can be lost or obscured through the over-use of such language, simple connecting phrases used accurately can be more effective. At times, responses showed that the meaning of some connecting words and phrases was not fully understood, when *'although'* *'nevertheless'* and *'however'* were used to add further points to an idea, rather than to indicate a contrast, and this often resulted in a confused and contradictory discussion.

In this exercise, the lack of basic punctuation was noted. This often produced articles where ideas ran into each other without any indication as to which side of the argument they contributed to, resulting in a loss of cohesion which affected the overall mark.

Many articles included suitable vocabulary connected to the topic, such as *'night owls'*, *'sleep deprived'* and *'extra-curricular activities'* which in combination with a range of grammatical structures and good use of linking phrases to signpost the direction of writing and provide cohesion contributed to an effective article.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/12
Reading and Writing (Core) 12

Key messages

- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should read the questions carefully to identify the exact requirement of each one. Answers should be brief and use language from the text. Responses which include additional information should be avoided, as this can affect the mark awarded. In this series, there were many fully correct responses to **Exercise 1**.
- In **Exercise 2**, the texts may include the writer's attitude and opinion, or information that is implied rather than explicitly stated. It is important that candidates read the questions carefully to identify the key elements of each one in order to select the corresponding details in a text.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates should focus on writing brief notes using the language from the text. The number of bullet points indicates the number of responses required for each question, and candidates should make sure that their answers correspond to the correct question.
- In **Exercise 4**, it is essential that responses stay within the word limit of 90 words, as any correct Content point included after the limit cannot be credited. This series there were a number of responses which were beyond the required length.
- In **Exercise 5**, most responses were on topic and showed an awareness of the target audience, using an appropriate, informal register. It is important in this exercise and in Exercise 6 that candidates read the rubric carefully to be aware of what information needs to be shared, before they start to write, and to refer again to the rubric while writing to ensure that nothing important is omitted.
- In **Exercise 6**, most candidates were able to write in a more formal or neutral style for their school magazine. Some candidates were able to achieve a degree of success in developing their own ideas at an appropriate length.

General comments

The majority of candidates were entered at the right level. Candidates who appeared to find reading **Exercises 1 – 4** challenging responded well to writing **Exercises 5 and 6**.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Responses varied though there was a good number of candidates who successfully identified all the key information.

Questions 1, 2, 4 and 6 were generally well answered.

Many appeared to find **Question 3** difficult. The question was 'Which parts of life on the Faroe Islands are controlled by Denmark?' The answer was to be found in what the Faroe Islanders do not govern themselves at present. The two aspects are their currency and their justice system, which are still controlled by Denmark. Not many scored the two marks available. Usually, one correct answer was followed by an incorrect answer, often 'trade policy.' In such cases the response could not be credited.

For **Question 5** there were a number of distractors in the text, all of which were chosen by many as their response, for example 'helicopter service between all islands', 'airport on main island' and 'ferries' The most recent improvement to the transport system were the road tunnels that had been built to connect several islands.

In **Question 7**, many responses featured the distractor, 'Visit Faroe Islands', but that was the name of the organisation that arranged the event, not the required *name of the event* which was called 'Closed for Maintenance (weekend)'.

For **Question 8**, what amazed the writer were the grass roofs on the houses. It was the group, to which he belonged, that was amazed by how colourful the houses around the harbour were. Many chose this fact, incorrectly, as their answer.

Exercise 2

This proved to be a challenging exercise for many candidates, though a number of candidates achieved full marks. Candidates are required to not only skim and scan the text, but also identify the key words in the question and ensure that the text selected fully supports their choice of answer. They should look for synonyms and rephrasing of the ideas.

Candidates generally found 9(a), 9(d), 9(e) and 9(h) to be most challenging.

- (a) Candidates needed to find a description of the effect writing had on Joanna, which was stated in option C, 'losing herself in the story was her way of relaxing after a busy week'. Candidates appeared to focus on the effect of one novel as opposed to Harris' work as a writer.
- (d) This question was fairly well-answered. Candidates were asked when she planned each section of the story. The most common incorrect answer was C, 'She looked forward to her writing sessions on Sunday mornings'. Candidates appear to have focused on the word 'when' in the question rather than 'planned'. The correct response is B. It is important to focus on all the key words in the question stem.
- (e) This question was quite well answered. The question asked for 'information about the books she *had already written*'. The correct answer was A, 'It's now more than twenty years since the publication of *Chocolat*... By this time, two of her novels had been published'.
- (h) This question was fairly well-answered. Candidates were asked about '*differences* between the content of this story and her previous ones'. The answer was C 'she had never written about her own family before'. Common incorrect responses tended to be B.

Exercise 3

Overall, candidates performed better in **Question 10** than in **Question 11**. Some candidates achieved full marks and many responses were well written in the form of brief notes.

In **Question 10**, many responses omitted key details, such as the two verbs – 'received' in **Item 4** and 'set up' in **Item 5**. Other examples were not including 'of Sciences' after 'member of Bologna Academy' in **Item 2** and 'in science' after 'doctorate' in **Item 3**.

Question 11 proved to be more challenging. Candidates were required to identify key information from the text such as, 'and in fact there is now a high school in Bologna named after her' and 'There is also a crater on the surface of the planet Venus that is known as Bassi'. Many responses referred to the National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Physics, but did not get to the point about the research ship, which the organisation renamed Laura Bassi, after they had bought it from the British Antarctic Survey.

Exercise 4

Successful responses highlighted all the key ideas in the text within the 90-word limit and expressed them clearly and logically through the use of connecting words and phrases. Many of the less successful responses, however, wasted a large proportion of the 90 words recounting the introduction to the text, which told of what activities the school had organised for its candidates and how they could get to the park. It was inevitable that such an opening would, in most cases, lead to going above the permitted total for the summary and several correct responses not being credited.

Overall, many candidates found 6, 7 or 8 rules the Sculpture Park had instituted for the safety of visitors. Some were able to write several rules together, for example, 'visitors are not allowed to climb on the

sculptures, play ball games or feed the animals in the park'. Misuse of 'pick up the flowers' as a paraphrase for 'pick the flowers' created a different meaning and the mark was not awarded.

Exercise 5

In this series, there were many successful responses which fulfilled the task and achieved full marks. Most emails showed a good sense of purpose and were organised through the use of paragraphs and connecting phrases. Ideas were generally developed appropriately, and information was conveyed in a conversational style. Many responses showed awareness of the target audience by engaging with the reader in a lively way. There were many inventive descriptions of why they took part, what they did to relieve the boredom during the challenge and how their behaviour and habits had changed as a result of the week away from technology.

Centres are reminded that all three bullet points should be addressed for responses to achieve marks in the highest bands.

The whole range of Language marks was awarded. There were some attempts at more complex language though control of past tenses continues to be an area for improvement.

Exercise 6

In this exercise, responses relied more heavily on the language included in the prompts. Less successful responses tended to feature little or no development of ideas. In the final paragraph, the prompts would often be repeated to form the writer's own judgement on the issue. However, many responses effectively argued the points, recognising the logical consequences the prompts offered them and many effectively used rhetorical questions to engage with their readers.

From a Language point of view, there were some well organised articles, with simple cohesive devices used to good effect to separate ideas or to indicate a change in the direction of writing. At times, responses indicated that the meaning of some connecting words and phrases was not fully understood, when '*although*' '*nevertheless*' and '*however*' were used to add further points to an idea, rather than to indicate a contrast, and this often resulted in a confused and contradictory discussion.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/21
Reading and Writing (Extended) 21

Key messages

In **Exercise 1**, answers should be as brief as possible. Too much information lifted from the text may well include incorrect details which could negate the answer. Candidates should avoid unnecessary repetition of the wording in the question.

In **Exercise 2**, the letters which convey the answer should be clear and on the appropriate line. If candidates change their response, they should cross the original out and rewrite the new response.

In **Exercise 3**, candidates' answers should be brief and in the form of a note. It is important to carefully read the wording of the question heading and to supply a verb where necessary.

In **Exercise 4**, some candidates write in excess of 120 words. Centres are reminded that correct Content points included after the limit cannot be credited.

In **Exercises 5 and 6**, candidates should focus on writing responses which contain sufficient detail and development. In **Exercise 5**, in order to gain access to the higher mark bands for Content, candidates must address all three bullet points in the rubric. In **Exercise 6**, if candidates use the prompts, they will be given credit for adding original and independent detail.

General comments

Overall, the vast majority of candidates were correctly entered at this level.

The paper offered a range of tasks within the six exercises, requiring the candidates to demonstrate a variety of practical skills of reading and writing. There were degrees of difficulty within each exercise and differentiation was achieved in individual questions and across the paper as a whole.

Candidates should be advised that throughout the paper the spaces and number of lines are arranged to guide them as to the length of answer required and they should not consistently exceed this.

Candidates should use the three blank pages at the end of the booklet as a continuation of their answers, especially for **Exercises 5 and 6**, but they need to indicate clearly to the examiners where extra work has been added.

All first drafts and plans for answers should be written on the three blank pages at the end of the paper and then clearly crossed out.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

This exercise was generally well attempted by candidates with individual questions providing differentiation.

Question 1

This was generally well attempted although a small number of candidates selected the distracting information 'seven', which was the number of all the different types of the horse family not just the zebras.

Question 2

This was a two-mark question and was generally well answered. Most candidates recognised the first option on the mark scheme but occasionally could not be credited because the response did not include the comparative 'more'. For the second option, the single word 'bark' was sufficient to gain the mark. Some candidates prefaced their answer with 'unlike horses' and were successful, but others appeared to have misread the text and started their answer with just 'horses' which conveyed the opposite meaning and could not be credited.

Question 3

This was well attempted and almost all candidates avoided the distractor 'Tanzania'.

Question 4

This was well answered, and most candidates successfully lifted the 'used to' idea from the text.

Question 5

This question was quite well attempted, and most candidates wrote the brief correct answer 'bounced off'. Occasionally there was inaccuracy with the spelling of 'of' instead of 'off'.

Question 6

This was a two-mark question and was very well answered. Occasionally candidates appeared to have misinterpreted the information in the text and wrote that it was the farmers that could feed the cows without interruption.

Question 7

This was very well attempted.

Question 8

Most candidates recognised the key details of 'black stripes get hotter than the white ones' and 'sweat through ends of their hairs' and these were the most successfully attempted of the five options. Other responses often lacked key words, and this was the main reason why higher marks could not be awarded. For example, 'black hairs move up and down' could not be credited without the important detail of 'in the heat'. Similarly, 'striped pattern is unique' was incomplete without the mention of 'each zebra'. The most common incorrect answer was 'the function of the stripes was to keep the zebras cool'.

Centres are reminded that this final question in **Exercise 1** is more challenging. Candidates should be prepared to review the stimulus article as a whole because key information may appear at any point in the text.

Exercise 2

Question 9

This exercise was generally well attempted, and a large number of candidates were awarded at least 8 marks. There were many occasions where candidates changed their mind as they compared the wording of the texts with that in the individual questions. This demonstrates the kind of thought process required for this exercise when selecting from the different texts. The more able candidates approached the task in a logical manner by underlining key words in each question and then searching for the equivalent phrase in the texts.

It is important to note that once an answer has been decided upon, the candidate should write the letter clearly on the designated line. If the first answer is changed, it should be crossed out and a new response provided rather than overwriting the original.

Questions (a), (c), (d) and (f) were the most successfully answered by candidates of all levels. Many also found questions (e), (g), (i) and (j) accessible and scored well here. The most challenging proved to be (b) and (h) and only more able candidates were credited.

In Question (b), candidates needed to match the statement *'which museum was once featured in a movie'* with the detail in text E, *'became famous recently as a setting in the horror-comedy film Sightseers'*. The most common incorrect answer was A, where candidates appeared to link the statement with the detail *'just like being on a Hollywood movie set'* in text A. The obvious 'word spot' was 'movie' in both statement and text, but the detail was too general and did not convey the idea of a specific film.

In Question (h), the statement asked which museum *'has to sometimes close due to circumstances beyond their control'*. The correct match was with text B and the observation *'poor weather conditions do occasionally prevent the site from operating'*. The key to success in this question was to find the wording in the text which conveyed the idea of *'sometimes close'*. Many candidates selected statement D, *'The museum started in 1997, although it shut soon afterwards, operating only online'*, which clearly signified that the closure was permanent.

Exercise 3

This exercise was very successfully answered by the majority of candidates. Many were able to show enough understanding of the text to score well here, with brief answers in note form. The bullet points and the length of the lines are always a guide to candidates as to how to present their answers in this exercise.

Question 10 – *Reasons for the success of the brothers' sportswear company*

The full range of possible correct answers were chosen by candidates and many candidates managed to convey at least three of them correctly. Points 2, 3 and 6 on the mark scheme were particularly well attempted and most candidates were awarded a mark for each. On occasion, candidates omitted key words from their answers and could not be credited. For example, in point 1, they did not include the important idea of *'in gyms'*, and also in point 4, some answers lacked the key detail of *'keen to'*. Very few candidates selected the option *'Fusion jacket'* in point 5, but the alternative *'unique products'* was well identified.

Question 11 – *The brothers' future plans for the sportswear company*

This question proved to be equally accessible to most candidates and many achieved 3 out of the 4 possible marks. Candidates accessed all possible answers on the mark scheme and points 2 and 5 were very well identified and correctly conveyed. Other options often lacked precision due to omission of key words and detail. In points 1 and 4, for example, responses needed to convey the idea that the company's future plans extended beyond the UK and so the key word *'overseas'* was essential in both answers. In addition, in point 3, candidates omitted the important detail of *'specific sports'* and the answer *'launch new clothes collections'* was too imprecise.

Exercise 4

The summary proved to be a good discriminating exercise and there was a full range of marks awarded. All the content points proved accessible, and most candidates were able to identify at least five relevant details successfully. The task was to write a summary about the Polar Academy, an organisation that takes teenagers on expeditions to the Arctic. There were two aspects to this question, namely what the Academy wants the teenagers to gain from the experience and what the teenagers need to do to be chosen for the expedition. The most successful responses conveyed relevant detail and wrote with a good sense of organisation and balance when addressing both aspects. There was good use of appropriate linking words and cohesive devices such as *'moreover'*, *'furthermore'*, *'in addition'* and also, *'on the other hand'* and *'as a result'* which helped to give a natural flow to the summary and to differentiate between the two aspects. Candidates who used *'firstly'*, *'secondly'*, *'thirdly'*, *'also...also'* conveyed the idea of sequencing, but this was a limited use of cohesive devices and tended to read like a list.

A significant number of candidates completed the summary outside the prescribed 120-word limit. This occurred generally when candidates wasted words with redundant introductions, such as describing Craig Mathieson and his team, the conditions that they were likely to meet in the Arctic and the difference between the expedition team and the leadership team. In other words, there was too much emphasis on the first three paragraphs which contained little detail relevant to the specifics of the question. Consequently, some summaries were overlong and key details were often only addressed after the 120-word limit and could not be credited.

From a Content point of view, credit could not be given if key words were omitted. For example, in order to convey precisely what the teenagers needed to do to be chosen, the *'challenges'* needed to be accompanied by some idea of *'underwater'* and the difficulty of the hike had to be conveyed with words or expressions such as *'tough'* or *'in the hills'*.

Centres are reminded that higher marks for Language are available to those candidates who make an attempt to paraphrase. In this particular summary, for example, more successful candidates changed *'motivation to succeed'* to *'incentive to achieve'*, *'work as a team'* to *'function as a group'* and *'control their fear'* to *'manage their terror'*. By contrast, in their attempt to use their own words, some candidates did not convey the meaning accurately enough. For example, *'controlling emotions'* did not precisely convey the idea of *'fear'*, and *'show a presentation'* was not the same as *'give a presentation'*. Likewise, the grammatical slip of *'hardly hiking'* for *'hard hiking'* could not be credited. The most successful responses contained a mixture of vocabulary from the text and candidates' own words, together with a good level of grammatical accuracy.

Exercise 5

General comments

There are three bullet prompts in **Exercise 5** and arguably each one deserves a paragraph to give the whole piece appropriate balance. The most successful responses featured paragraphs which provided an effective division between different ideas.

Candidates must, of course, address and develop all three bullet prompts in order to achieve higher marks for Content in the writing marking criteria.

Many candidates made a good attempt to supply a suitably brief introduction and concluding statement, in an informal register. There were fewer prolonged greetings and conclusions than in past series and those candidates who included pre-learnt expressions generally ensured that they were relevant to the recipient of the email and the requirements of the task. Similarly, there was far less evidence of inappropriate idioms being used.

Candidates should attempt to use more complex vocabulary and structures to achieve higher marks for Language. It is important that the writing should be grammatically accurate, particularly in the use of past, present and future verb tenses. The response should be well organised with paragraphs and full stops used appropriately to separate ideas.

Question 13

Most candidates appeared to relate well to the task, and many answers were well-developed with an appropriate, informal tone and register. Successful responses conveyed a full description of why their town

was chosen as the location for the event and what will happen there, together with suggestions as to how they could get tickets to watch it.

For the first bullet point, examiners were looking to credit candidates who could present a credible reason for the choice of their town. Candidates chose a variety of different events ranging from The Football World Cup, The Olympics and The Eurovision Song Contest to arts festivals, road races, video games tournaments and themed competitions. Many candidates had obviously drawn on real experiences in their hometowns. This provided the opportunity to supply a good range of reasons why their town was chosen, and popular choices included the size of the stadiums, the ample space and state-of-the-art facilities, the beautiful environment and to honour the fact that the main participant at the event was born in the town itself. The most successful responses managed to convey a feeling of pride that their town had been chosen. For example, *'Can you believe that our small town, whose residents can be counted on one hand, will be on national television – what a dream come true'*. Less successful responses featured choices that were brief and predictable, such as food stalls and games, and some wrote about *'the event'* without actually providing any specific detail as to what it involved. Similarly, their reasons why their town was chosen were limited with the minimum of detail such as *'the people were nice'* or *'there was a beach'*.

For the second bullet point, examiners were looking to credit candidates who were able to convey a description of what will take place at the event. The most successful responses gave the impression that they had real knowledge and experience of such an event and were able to express clear and detailed descriptions of the key features. Many included a general programme of the event but also added personal touches such as the stars who were taking part, the food and merchandise stalls where they could go to sample and buy as well as the large screens where they could watch the proceedings. Some more able responses also featured happenings around the main event, such as *'The match will include a band playing patriotic songs for both sides as well as cheerleaders to motivate them'*. Others who had chosen a sporting event such as football, Formula One or a marathon were not able to develop this idea as well and did not venture beyond the technical details of the matches or a description of the racecourses.

For the final bullet point, the most successful responses were very well developed. Some responses suggested that they could volunteer to help and could be given tickets as a result or that they could work and earn enough money to buy them. The most successful responses provided as much detail here as for the other two bullet points. Less successful responses were not well developed and included only brief detail, suggesting that the tickets could be bought online or from the local store.

From a general Language point of view, most candidates were able to write in a suitably informal register. The most effective responses were written as if to a real friend, with expressions such as: *'Trust me, you won't regret it'* or *'To be honest, there is no-one else I would rather go with...'*. Many responses used a variety of different tenses when addressing the three bullet points and were successful in making the change from past to future time frames. Spelling was generally good even when more ambitious language and structures were used. However, more common basic errors appeared with *'choosen'*, *'heared'* and *'though'* for *'chosen'*, *'heard'* and *'thought'* respectively. There was also confusion with *'ower'* for *'our'* and *'weather'* for *'whether'*.

Most responses used paragraphs to good effect to divide ideas and basic punctuation was generally sound. Less successful responses substituted commas for full stops throughout the whole piece, thus producing long rambling sentences. Capital letters at the beginning of sentences were also sometimes overlooked and there were some responses which showed a lack of organisation and structure. By contrast, some responses featured very short sentences throughout with no clauses or connectives.

Exercise 6

General comments

There are two prompts – one for and one against the statement in the title – to support candidates. However, there needs to be evidence that if candidates use these prompts, they can develop and widen their ideas and views and persuade the reader of their convictions in order to gain access to the higher mark bands for Content.

A clear, organised sequence of views and arguments is very important. Some candidates appeared to have begun their response without evidence of any prior planning. This often results in repetition of both language and content.

To achieve higher marks for Language, candidates should attempt to use more complex vocabulary and structures and it is important that the writing should be in a more formal register with persuasive language suitable for the requirements of an article. Where arguments for and against the topic are expressed, paragraphs tend to help to separate ideas.

Question 14

Most candidates were able to adopt a more formal tone and register for this final exercise. Successful responses effectively presented ideas well beyond the suggestions of the prompts and produced a balanced article, focusing on the wider advantages and disadvantages, not only within the school context but also in society generally. Those who advocated retaining an early start to the school day for the 'early birds', emphasised the considerable inconvenience of disrupting the established daily routine of both students and parents, who are often involved in providing transport to school. They argued that any change from the existing situation could seriously disrupt family life as well as making life more difficult for teachers. In addition, some candidates looked to the future and were of the view that an early start was good preparation for working life. Others argued that it was indeed the habits of individual students that needed to change by going to bed earlier rather than starting the school day later.

Those responses which pressed for a change in the times and a later start to the school day often mentioned the fact that it would give more time for the 'night owls' to start the day in a more relaxed fashion with the chance to have a good leisurely breakfast. They also referred to the wider advantage of an easier journey to school because there would be less traffic after the rush hour. Specific reference to sleep and health issues was often made and was used in support of both sides of the argument. For example, *'It is scientifically proven that waking up early...does wonders for your body'* as well as *'an early start results in them waking up tired and having a hard time focusing in class'*. More able candidates connected sleep and health with the school timings and used these factors to address the specific requirements of the question. Other responses included general information about students' sleeping habits and late-night socialising without linking them to the idea of a later start and finish to the school day and could not be awarded marks in the higher bands for Content.

From a Language point of view, the most successful responses achieved some variety of style by the use of rhetorical questions such as *'Have you ever thought about how school life would be if...?'* Paragraphs and linking words were generally well used and provided a balance when conveying both sides of the argument. Cohesive words and expressions such as *'it goes without saying that'* and *'those who oppose this point...'* significantly helped the flow when there was additional argument or a change of direction in the article. There were also ambitious phrases and adjectives such as *'from a psychological viewpoint'*, *'utterly groundless argument'* and *'triggered many debates'*. Occasionally, less successful responses made no attempt to break the content into more reader-friendly sections and produced a full-length piece with just one paragraph only. The most frequent common spelling errors were the use of *'studing'*, *'belive'* and *'their'* for *'studying'*, *'believe'* and *'there'* respectively.

Overall, a good number of candidates responded with a structured argument, both for and against, and were able to produce articles that were persuasive. A good balance to the writing was established by providing an introductory comment on the topic and a concluding opinion, both of which helped to give a sense of cohesion to many of the pieces. More able candidates provided a different form of words in the concluding paragraph to that used in the main article and avoided repetition of the same vocabulary and expressions.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/22
Reading and Writing (Extended) 22

Key messages

In **Exercise 1**, candidates should read all questions carefully to ensure they provide a relevant response. Candidates should ensure they spell words in the response correctly and do not write a different word (e.g. glass for grass) which changes the meaning of the response. They should also take care not to include incorrect information with a correct response.

In **Exercise 2**, candidates should provide a response to all questions and write the letter given as the response clearly. They should look in the text for synonyms and paraphrasing of key details in the question.

In **Exercise 3**, candidates should carefully consider the requirements of the heading and ensure notes include key details in response to the requirements of the headings.

In **Exercise 4**, it is essential that responses stay within the word limit of 120 words, as otherwise correct Content points included after the limit cannot be credited. They should focus on the requirements of the summary task and avoid including irrelevant details.

In **Exercises 5 and 6** candidates should adopt an appropriate style and register for the text type and ensure the content is sufficiently developed.

General comments

Most candidates were entered correctly for the extended paper. They should attempt a response for each question, considering the entire paper and dividing the time available according to the difficulty and total points for each exercise, so that time is allocated appropriately.

Candidates should carefully read and recognise the requirements of individual questions, ensuring responses are precise and that questions are interpreted accurately.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Precise answers are required for this exercise. Candidates should ensure they focus on the requirements of the question and locate the relevant section of the text when responding. They should read carefully around what they recognise as the correct response to check there is no further information that negates or changes this.

Question 1

This question was very well answered. The most common incorrect responses were 'Norway and Iceland' and 'North Atlantic Ocean'. These responses suggest that candidates did not link 'their nearest neighbour is in fact Scotland' with the question.

Question 2

This question was very well answered. Some candidates gave other dates mentioned in the text such as 1914 and 1984, and appeared not to connect 'became largely independent' in the text with 'get their own government' in the question to provide the correct response '1948'.

Question 3

A significant number of candidates provided at least one incorrect detail out of the two required for this question. 'Trade policy' was the most common incorrect answer. In order to locate the correct details 'currency' and 'justice system' in the relevant paragraph, candidates needed to follow the linking and reference words which were the signposts to this information.

Question 4

This question was well answered. The most common incorrect response was 'The islands have changed in terms of transport', which follows the month and year mentioned in the question but is moving on to another aspect of change. Other incorrect responses referred to young people moving away and returning to the island, which contributed to the change in the population trend but did not answer the question.

Question 5

A significant number of candidates gave incorrect responses to this question. Responses referred to other aspects of transport in the text such as 'airport and helicopter services' or 'ferries'. This was sometimes included with the correct response, which meant the mark could not be awarded.

Question 6

This question was very well answered. A few candidates gave the incorrect responses such as 'harsh weather', which was not specific enough, or 'rain', which was mentioned in the text but incorrect.

Question 7

This question was quite well answered. A significant number of candidates responded with 'Visit Faroe Islands', which was the name of the organisation *holding* the event. A few candidates omitted 'Closed' from the name of the event, so the mark could not be credited.

Question 8

This question was generally well answered. Some responses referred to the colourful houses, not noting from the text that the writer had already seen pictures of these. Some gave the correct response 'grass roofs' but also mentioned the colourful houses, making the answer incorrect. A few candidates wrote 'glass roofs'. As this misspelling forms a different word, the response could not be credited.

Question 9

This question was well answered and a significant number of candidates gained the full four marks available. The most common incorrect details were 'learned about facts and figures' with no reference to the key detail 'guide', and 'taking photographs', which the writer did, but this something he appreciated about the group holiday. Some candidates wrote 'going on walks', not specifying *long* walks, which were the kind of walks he did not do alone.

Exercise 2

This matching exercise was challenging for many candidates. There were some who provided ten correct responses and most candidates gained at least five of the ten marks available. **Questions (a), (e), (f), (g) and (j)** were the most challenging. Candidates were required to not only skim and scan the text, but also identify the key words in the question and ensure that the text selected fully supports their choice of answer. They should look for synonyms and rephrasing of the ideas.

- (a) **D** was the most common incorrect response. Candidates needed to find a description of the effect writing had on Joanna, which was stated in option **C**, 'losing herself in the story was her way of relaxing after a busy week'. Several candidates gave **D**, possibly because the text states: 'the novel

seemed to pour out of her'. Candidates appeared to focus on the effect of one novel as opposed to Harris' work as a writer.

- (b) This question was quite well answered. **D** was the most common incorrect response. Candidates were asked how other people felt about her writing style. Candidates needed to focus on this rather than the idea that she 'received several awards' and had 'best-selling novels' in **D**. 'Neither commercial nor fashionable enough to succeed' in **B** clearly references her style of writing.
- (c) This question was very well answered. It was about getting the book published being her priority. 'Publication was not her reason for writing' in **A** enabled candidates to identify the key word 'published' and link this with the word 'Publication' in the section.
- (d) This question was fairly well-answered. Candidates were asked when she planned each section of the story. The most common incorrect answer was **C**, 'She looked forward to her writing sessions on Sunday mornings'. Candidates appear to have focused on the word 'when' in the question rather than 'planned'. The correct response is **B**. It is important to focus on all the key words in the question stem.
- (e) This question was fairly well answered. **B** was the most common incorrect answer. Candidates needed to locate 'an explanation of how she felt about being a teacher', which was in text **D**, 'She recalls... leaving her job at a school, which she enjoyed and believed she was good at'. Candidates choosing **B** may have incorrectly linked 'she had coped with everything' and 'that it all felt normal to her' in **B** with the question, identifying 'felt' as the key word.
- (f) This question was quite well answered, with **D** as the most common incorrect response. The question asked for 'information about the books she *had already written*'. The correct answer was **A**, 'It's now more than twenty years since the publication of *Chocolat*... By this time, two of her novels had been published'. Candidates may not have grasped the timeline of her career as in **D** it states, 'Since *Chocolat* was published, Harris has also written several more best-selling novels.'
- (g) This question proved challenging, and a significant number of candidates gave either **B** or **C**, rather than the correct response **D**. They were asked which section suggested that she wrote the book in a surprisingly short time. The answer was in text **D** 'Harris recalls that the novel seemed to pour out of her, as if it was unstoppable.' In **B**, the phrase '40-minute drive ... gave her the chance to think out the story' and in **C**, '... the novel came together, as if she had just completed it yesterday,' may have misled candidates. Candidates may have focused on adverbials of time in response to the use of the word 'time' in the question stem.
- (h) This question was fairly well answered, with **A** being the most common incorrect response. The suggestion that it seems like she wrote the book very recently was in section **C**, 'she can clearly remember the way that the novel came together, as if she had just completed it yesterday'. In **A**, candidates may have incorrectly linked the idea that her book was 'adapted to produce a successful film *just a few years later*' with 'very recently' in the question.
- (i) This question was fairly well answered. Candidates were asked about the fact that she was unaware of having to balance her work and life'. **B** was the correct response: '...working full time, and being a mother. Her response was that it all felt normal to her – these things just happened.' The most common incorrect response was **D**. Candidates may have incorrectly linked the question to 'the novel just seemed to pour out of her' in this section.
- (j) This question was fairly well-answered. Candidates were asked about '*differences* between the content of this story and her previous ones'. The answer was **C** 'she had never written about her own family before'. Common incorrect responses were **B** or **D**, which refer to 'content' but not 'differences'.

Exercise 3

Candidates responded very well to this note-taking exercise, with a large number of candidates gaining the full nine marks available. Notes could not be credited when they omitted key information or were supplied under the wrong heading. It is important that notes focus clearly on key ideas that relate to the heading and communicate this as succinctly and accurately as possible, without omitting essential information.

Question 11

This question was well attempted and many candidates correctly provided five clear notes from the possible six options. A few candidates gave responses which omitted key details, writing notes such as 'offer of paid teaching' and 'private laboratory'. These notes should have included the idea of *receiving* an offer paid teaching, and *setting up* a private laboratory to indicate what Laura Bassi was the first female to do. Other responses that omitted key details were 'professor' and 'member of Bologna Academy'. A few candidates gave unconnected responses such as 'she took part in a public debate' or 'she opened a school at her own house'. Although these points were mentioned in the text, they did not support the context of the required notes. Occasionally, candidates gave notes that were responses for Question 12. These included 'a scholarship' and 'a street named after her', but did not explain what she was the first woman to do.

Question 12

This question was well attempted and a significant number of candidates provided the required four correct notes out of a possible five. Sometimes, however, candidates selected unconnected responses. These included 'The National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics' and 'The International Astronomical Union', which were mentioned in the text but irrelevant to the notes required in the heading. Sometimes a note was attempted but key information was omitted such as 'planet Venus known as Bassi' or 'the planet Venus'. These responses needed to be more specific stating that a *crater* had been named after Laura Bassi. Occasionally responses were incorrectly expressed as in 'she went on to open a school in her name', rather than a school being named after her.

Exercise 4

In this exercise, candidates were required to provide eight discrete, relevant content points. They should aim to express the content of the summary as far as possible in their own words, not exceeding the 120-word limit. Candidates should be encouraged to read the requirements of the summary carefully to ensure the focus is correct. They must also understand the importance of the length of their response. This will ensure marks are not lost for both Content and Language by exceeding the word limit.

In this exercise, several responses were over 120 words. Candidates were required to write a summary about the cookery skills a teenager learnt while attending a course, and the advice he would give to future students. Some candidates included information about the teenager's feelings towards the course and a description of what it was like, rather than focussing on the requirements of the summary. This meant that they either missed out relevant points or made these after having already written 120 words. However, a significant number of candidates included at least four of the ten possible points, with some providing the required eight or more.

With regard to Content, some candidates attempted to make points but expressed them imprecisely or with key information omitted. For example, a number of responses featured phrases such as 'garnish the food' or 'decorate the food' which does not have the same meaning as arranging the food. Similarly, some responses included 'get used to' or 'adapt to' the recipes', which does not have the same meaning as 'adapting recipes'. Some responses did use appropriate synonyms to express the points. For example, 'modify' or 'change' for adapting recipes, and 'organising their workspace' for tidying the kitchen. Candidates were asked to summarise the skills learned and advice for future students. Occasionally, candidates expressed skills learned as advice. Such points were incorrect and could not be credited.

Language marks were awarded across the whole range with the majority of candidates gaining three to six marks. In order to achieve seven or eight marks (top band) for language, candidates must attempt to use their own words and organize the content points. Some candidates made little or no attempt to use their own words when giving content points, copying directly from the text and connecting the ideas with linking words. This reliance on language from the text meant they could only be awarded a Language mark from the lower bands. Some responses successfully re-phrased and linked the content ideas, writing for example, 'Additionally, he recommends eating a satisfying meal before class to keep you full, and lastly snapping photos as a helpful reminder of previously used techniques.' Examples of this type of language was awarded marks in the higher bands.

It is important that Content points remain clear when re-expressed as marks cannot be awarded if the meaning changes. Practice with verb, noun and adjective synonyms, along with practice in forming alternative grammatical structures is beneficial to enable candidates to attain the higher bands.

Exercise 5

In this exercise, candidates complete an email task based on fulfilling the requirements specified in three bullet points. It is also important that candidates relate the email to the context set in the exercise, in this case taking part in a 'no technology' challenge. The extent to which the bullet points are addressed and developed within the context will determine the band achieved for Content. If any bullet point is not addressed, this has a significant effect on the Content mark. For a mark in the higher bands, candidates should demonstrate a good or excellent sense of purpose whilst developing and effectively communicating the content. Examiners are looking to reward candidates who write using an appropriate and consistent register. The mark for language will depend on the accuracy, range and organisation of the language used.

Some responses were less than 150 words, so there was not sufficient development for higher band content marks. Candidates should attempt to write *at least* 150 words. In general, candidates responded to this task successfully. Some fulfilled the task skilfully and effectively and developed the email to include a range of information and ideas. Most candidates addressed all three bullet points. Candidates generally used a suitably informal register, though this was not always consistent. For example, phrases such as 'I would like to inform you' or 'In conclusion'.

A range of reasons was given for taking part in the challenge such as being forced by parents due to using technology too much, doing it for environmental reasons or in order to complete school assignments. With regard to the difficulties, these included being unable to use phones, microwaves or air conditioning, along with being unable to contact friends. How habits had changed was often covered by candidates describing what was different while they were doing the challenge, such as spending more time doing other activities rather than using social media or their phone. Popular ideas were playing sport, reading, playing with siblings or spending more time talking to family members. Other responses detailed the changes in their life after they had completed the challenge, with many of them describing a reduction in the hours they spent on their phones, going to sleep earlier or doing more sport.

Effective emails connected the content of the email to the recipient, writing for example, 'I heard you recently tried to do a no tech challenge, so I decided to get myself and my family to do it too ...' or 'I suggest you start this challenge as well – trust me it's worth it!' Such emails showed good cohesion and began with natural openings that contain interest in some aspect of the recipient's life, family or a reference to a shared recent experience, leading into the body of the email.

Most candidates wrote using a good range of well-organised language. There were a few who used mainly simple structures and were more limited in range and accuracy. Some candidates were able to construct accurate sentences of different lengths, which included more complex structures and a range of appropriately used, less common vocabulary. Most emails included paragraphing, which when used appropriately, aided effective organisation of the task.

Language deserving of the higher bands included 'It was an enlightening experience, though. I've got back into the habit of reading, and my family plays board games together instead of watching TV. I think we're much closer as a family now as we spend more time interacting with one another.' In this example, complex language is used accurately and effectively. Some responses attempted more complex language but could not produce this accurately in terms of grammar, punctuation or spelling as in 'My sister and me always playing phones. It's not good at our eyes and we need to do some exercises in outside.' Some emails included mainly very short sentences (subject + verb + object), which were accurate but did not demonstrate a sufficient range of language for the higher bands. Candidates should try to ensure language used is accurate, appropriate and demonstrates a range of structures and vocabulary, along with correct punctuation and spelling.

Exercise 6

In this exercise, candidates may be required to write an article, a review or a report for a particular target audience. It is important that they read the task carefully and consider the two prompts, which are given to help form ideas on the subject. For a mark in one of the higher bands, candidates might include other points and ideas relevant to the task, along with developing the views in the prompts if they choose to, expressing these in their own words. The style and register should be appropriate for the task type.

Most candidates fulfilled the task with a generally good sense of purpose and audience, some referring to the ideas in the prompts and others also introducing ideas of their own. Some candidates wrote in such a way as to really connect with the reader and communicate their views effectively and skilfully. These kinds of responses attempted the style of an article, rather than just looking at the pros and cons of each medium. For example, an introduction like 'We can now read on a screen or even listen to audio books. Though does this mean reading in books is inferior to its digital counterpart?' effectively draws in the reader with the use of 'we' and a rhetorical question. In terms of ideas, candidates compared the cost of physical books and cost of downloaded audio versions. They considered the best way to improve language skills, and harness the imagination. They discussed which way of accessing stories was more productive and efficient in terms of time and quality of experience. They also mentioned the fact that listening is an opportunity to access stories for those unable to read physical books.

The full range of marks was awarded for Language, with most candidates attempting some more complex structures and some less common vocabulary. There were candidates who demonstrated a good range of complex structures with only occasional non-impeding errors, enabling them to achieve the precision required for marks in the top band. Their writing included accurate, varied sentence structures, good punctuation and paragraphing, along with ambitious vocabulary. This quality of language is exemplified in 'Reading develops your critical thinking more as you are able to think in depth about what's been written.' Some candidates attempted more complex language which included errors as in 'Moreover, some students in my class they are more interested about listening to stories on the radio as more effeciency.' In general, the majority of candidates used language with a good level of accuracy that included non-impeding errors when attempting more complex structures.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/31
Listening (Core) 31

Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to provide clear and legible responses. The formation of individual letters must be clear.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read the rubric carefully for each question on the paper. This is particularly important where a word limit must be adhered to. This applies to **Exercises 1** and **2**.
- Candidates should be made aware of distracting information in listening texts and practise listening for specific detail which is required as the intended answer.
- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should establish what a question is asking for, by highlighting the question words, e.g. how, why, when, and the key words in the question. In most cases, short, direct responses are most successful. Responses must also stay within the word limits as stated in the main rubric for each applicable section.
- In the gap-filling exercise (i.e. **Exercise 2**), candidates should be encouraged to predict the answers in the gaps. At the end of each section, candidates should also check their responses carefully to make sure they fit grammatically and are within the word limit.
- In **Exercise 2**, candidates should be reminded **not** to include words that are printed in the statements on the question paper before or after each gap as part of their answer.
- In **Exercise 2**, it is advisable for candidates to practise using the framework provided by the gapped statements, to guide themselves through the audio text. This technique will help candidates locate the required missing detail and ensure that this detail is inserted in the appropriate gap.
- In the matching speakers question (**Exercise 3**) and the multiple-choice questions (**Exercise 4**), candidates should be encouraged to make it very clear which answer they wish to be taken as their final selection by examiners.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates need to be reminded to use each letter only once.
- Candidates' awareness should be raised of the importance of using the correct singular/plural form of nouns and prepositions as these can alter the key meaning.
- When making phonetic attempts, it is recommended that candidates try to mimic the number of syllables in the word that has been heard and also to try to re-create the vowel and consonant sounds accurately. However, phonetic attempts that create a homophone are not accepted (e.g. sea/see, weak/week).
- More pronunciation awareness activities, particularly of connected speech (e.g. assimilation of sounds, omission of sounds), would be beneficial to candidates. Candidates should also be made aware of the importance of transcribing voiced and unvoiced consonants accurately as these may change meaning (e.g. s/z as in 'prices' and 'prizes').
- Some questions involve transcribing numbers, and these should therefore be practised. For example, it is useful to help candidates to distinguish between the pronunciation of eighty and eighteen. Candidates would benefit from more practice in writing larger numbers correctly and the standard form of abbreviations of common units (e.g. 'min' for minutes, 'km' for kilometres).

- Candidates should practise a range of listening skills (e.g. listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for grammatical/lexical detail) in various formats (e.g. announcements, informal dialogues, formal talks).

General comments

- Candidates were required to use a set number of words for **Exercises 1** and **2**. A large number of candidates, although with correct responses, could not be credited as they exceeded the required number of words.
- Successful responses were those which provided short, clear answers and which adhered to the word limit required.
- Candidates should be reminded that the answer will be heard; they must not make up an answer.
- Candidates should be reminded that no two questions will have the same answer.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Overall, this section was well answered. There were few omissions, but responses could not be credited when more than the required words were written.

Question 1

- (a) Majority of the candidates identified the correct response 'jewels'. Several candidates chose 'clothes' and 'weapons'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'jewels and clothes', 'jews' and 'joules'.
- (b) There was a very mixed response here. Quite a few candidates provided 'phone' in addition to the correct response 'sunglasses'. Many candidates wrote 'glasses'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'songlasses' and 'sumglasses'.

Question 2

- (a) This was very well attempted, and the vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark. A significant number of candidates wrote 'every week' or 'every month' and lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were 'very summer' and 'every summer'.
- (b) This was generally well answered. Incorrect responses included 'scalf', 'scurf' and 'scarve'. Some candidates lost the mark by including a colour with the correct answer, e.g. 'blue scarf'.

Question 3

- (a) This question was very well answered with '24th' being the most common incorrect response. Quite a few candidates wrote '20 third' or 'by the 23rd' and lost the mark. Some candidates included the wrong month with their answer, e.g. '23rd of December', which could not be credited.
- (b) This question was exceptionally well answered. Some candidates went for the distractor 'car'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'trian', 'trane' and the plural 'trains'.

Question 4

- (a) This question was quite poorly attempted. The distractor 'poetry' was frequently selected while some wrote 'English book'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'nowel', 'novella' and 'navel'.
- (b) There was a mixed level of success here. Many candidates selected the distractor 'pizza' and included it with the correct answer, i.e. 'pizza and pancake'. Several misspellings could not be credited.

Exercise 2

Question 5

Large parts of this question were answered well by many candidates. Responses containing repetition of words, either preceding or following the gap, were not credited as they led to an incorrect grammatical fit. In some cases, incorrect singular and plural nouns meant that candidates could not be credited. Some parts of the question were left blank by a few candidates.

- (i) There was a mixed level of success here. The distractors 'chest and 'stomach' were often selected. Other responses that could not be credited were 'lab', 'lamb' and 'legs'.
- (ii) On the whole, this question was very well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates lost the mark by writing 'size' while others wrote 'protection' and 'alteration'.
- (iii) There was a mixed level of success here. 'Mechanical engineer' was the most common incorrect answer. Some examples of responses that could not be credited were 'craft designer', 'desinger' and 'decigner'.
- (iv) The vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark here. Quite a few candidates chose '1969'.
- (v) This was generally well attempted by the majority of candidates although some candidates left it blank. However, some candidates wrote 'seats' and lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were 'comport' and 'comfortable'.
- (vi) This was extremely well attempted by the vast majority of candidates although there were some unusual answers that could not be credited. Amongst these were 'a fee', 'safety' and 'fortune'.
- (vii) This was quite poorly attempted with many candidates writing 'Japan' as their answer. Some of the other responses that could not be credited were 'Austrilia' and 'Austrila'.
- (viii) There was a very mixed level of success here. 'Manufacturing' was the most common incorrect response, while some candidates lost the mark by writing 'injury' and 'research'. There were a large number of candidates who did not attempt the question.

Exercise 3

Question 6

Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the task and obtained full marks.

A few candidates used the same letter more than once. In this case, no marks were awarded even if one of those letters was the correct response in the intended box. Candidates need to ensure that they cross out inaccurate responses clearly to avoid the duplication of letters for each response.

Exercise 4

Question 7

Generally, candidates responded very well to this question.

A few candidates failed to clarify their final response, thus giving two answers. It should be noted that if a candidate changes their mind about their original intended response, they should clearly cross out their first answer. There should be absolutely no ambiguity regarding which answer is intended as the candidate's definitive response.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/32
Listening (Core) 32

Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to provide clear and legible responses. The formation of individual letters must be clear. When altering their responses, candidates should simply cross these responses out and write their corrections next to them.
- Candidates should be reminded of the importance of using the correct singular/plural form of nouns, as these can alter the key meaning.
- When providing spelling attempts, the intended meaning of the attempted word should not be in doubt. Spelling attempts that create a homophone are not accepted (e.g. bored/board).
- Candidates should be encouraged to read and listen to the rubric for each part of the paper very carefully to ensure they meet the exact requirements of each particular exercise.
- In **Exercise 1, Questions 1 to 4**, candidates should try to establish what a question is asking for by highlighting the question words, e.g. *how*, *where*, *when*, and the key words in the question. In most cases, a short, direct response is most successful. In cases where candidates decide to supply additional information, in addition to the expected key answer, and the extra information is incorrect, such attempts cannot be credited. For this reason, candidates should be encouraged to provide concise answers.
- In the gap-filling **exercise 2** candidates should be encouraged to try and predict the answers in the gaps (e.g. a number, a name, etc.) before listening. Candidates should not only listen for the correct meaning of the targeted detail, but also for the correct form used in the recording. At the end of each listening section, candidates should also check their responses carefully and make sure the word forms used fit each gap on the question paper.
- In **exercise 2**, candidates should also be reminded **not** to include words, or ideas, which are already printed on the question paper before or after each gap, as part of their answer.
- In the multiple matching items, **Exercise 3**, and the multiple-choice items, **Exercise 4**, candidates should be encouraged to make it very clear which option they wish to be taken as their final answer. If there is any uncertainty about which option is intended as the candidate's definitive choice, such attempts may not be credited.
- It is also important to emphasise that, if two boxes are filled in with the same letter in **Exercise 3**, then even if one of the responses given is correct, it cannot be credited. Similarly, for each item in **Exercise 4**, if two boxes are ticked rather than one, then no marks can be given.

General comments

- Few candidates wrote over their initial answers or over half-erased attempts. Most corrections were clearly crossed out and new responses were written next to these. The vast majority of answers were very clear and legible. However, there were still a small number of candidates who tried to write over their initial attempts, which often resulted in their final answer being illegible. In some cases, it was difficult to determine whether a candidate had included the final 's' to indicate the plural form. Other letters that often proved difficult to decipher included t/l, i/e, a/u and o/a. It would be beneficial to encourage learners to write by hand as often as possible.
- The vast majority of candidates adhered to the required word limit set out in the rubric of each exercise. However, there are still some candidates who write their answers as long sentences, especially in **Exercise 1**.
- There was very little evidence of exam techniques being used by candidates (e.g. prediction of answers and parts of speech in gap-fill exercises, highlighting key words in questions in **Exercise 1**, etc.).

However, when used, in some cases this still needs to be done more effectively, as some candidates tend to underline all words, rather than selecting the key words in each question.

- Most candidates seemed aware of the distracting information in the listening exercises and did not include these in addition to the correct detail. However, there were still some instances where candidates provided the distracting detail in addition to the expected answer, especially, in **Exercises 1 and 2**. Such attempts could not be credited.
- There were minimal instances of candidates using the same letter more than once in **Exercise 3** and ticking more than one box in **Exercise 4**. However, a few candidates left all three boxes unticked for some of the items in **Exercise 4**.
- There were a relatively low number of No Responses in **Exercises 1 and 2**.
- Overall, most candidates dealt relatively well with listening for gist and speakers' opinions, but more practice of listening for correct specific detail is recommended. Listening to longer talks proved challenging for some candidates, and some would benefit from more practice to ensure they can follow, and *navigate* themselves, through longer texts (e.g. talks and presentations).
- Candidates would also benefit from practising a wide range of listening skills, including listening for grammatical detail (e.g. singular/plural nouns, participle verb forms and other word forms, etc.) as well as phonetic detail (e.g. the pronunciation of different consonants 'ship' versus 'chip', voiced and unvoiced consonants – 'foot' versus 'food'/syllable stress in numbers – 'thirty' versus 'thirteen', etc.). Although some candidates selected the correct detail, they did not always transcribe the word in the correct form that they heard. By changing the word forms, candidates' final answers did not always make the required fit in **Exercise 2** (e.g. 'strengthen' instead of 'strength'). Learners should also be made aware of changes in the pronunciation of words when they're used in continuous speech, or in isolation (e.g. omission or assimilation of sounds).
- Most candidates provided correct or very recognisable variants of the targeted ideas (e.g. library, mountains, cousin) and more subject specific words (e.g. heartbeat).

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Questions 1 – 4

Overall, this section was fairly well attempted by most candidates. Most marks were lost where candidates selected the distracting detail in error instead of the correct answer. This was a particular issue in **Questions 2(a), 3(b) and 4(a)**. Other reasons for loss of marks are outlined below. There were minimal instances of No Responses for this part of the test.

Question 1

- (a) This question was answered very well. Most candidates provided the expected detail 'shirt'. Also, the majority of responses were spelled correctly. Where candidates provided spelling variants, most were deemed ambiguous and could not be credited. Some candidates also lost the mark for providing the plural form 'shirts', as this form changed the intended meaning. A few candidates included an extra detail. Where this was true to the script (e.g. 'bargain shirt'), the mark was given. However, details which were random adjectives, and therefore wrong, could not be credited (e.g. green shirt, sports shirt). Weaker candidates misheard the key detail as 'skirt' or provided the distractors 'scarf' or 'jumper' in error. Also, no marks were given to attempts which were too general (e.g. clothes, present).
- (b) This question was attempted with a reasonable level of success. More than half of the candidates provided the expected detail 'cousin'. Some creditable responses were provided as part of a longer phrase (e.g. the man's cousin, his cousin relative). Most marks were lost where spelling variants put the intended meaning in doubt. Other incorrect answers included 'himself' or the distractors 'neighbour' and 'colleague'.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates dealt fairly well with this item and gave the expected answer 'mountains'. The singular form 'mountain' was also accepted. While some recognisable spelling variants were credited, ambiguous attempts were not. Most marks were lost where candidates selected the distracting

detail 'seaside' or 'lake'. Some candidates provided both, the correct detail in addition to the distracting detail 'lake and mountains' and lost the mark.

- (b) The expected answer was 'ship' and most candidates were very successful at providing this detail. However, 'boat' was also credited as a reasonable alternative. Some candidates provided the expected detail as part of a longer phrase 'using a ship', 'through local ship' and gained the mark. Weaker candidates often selected the distracting details 'by car' or 'by air' and lost the mark. Marks were also lost where candidates provided the location 'local port' rather than the means of transport.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates dealt fairly well with this question. The expected detail here was 'library'. Most candidates who provided the correct detail also provided the extra detail 'outside'. Such responses gained the mark. 'Near the library' was also allowed. Some marks were lost, however, where candidates gave one of the distractors as their response (e.g. museum, gallery, city centre). While some spelling attempts were creditable, others were deemed ambiguous, and no marks could be given. Marks were also lost where candidates included a detail which altered the overall meaning (e.g. behind the library).
- (b) There was a mixed level of success for this question. Around half of the candidates provided the correct detail 'vase'. Most marks were lost due to the inclusion of distracting details 'portrait' and 'local artist'. Most candidates who selected the correct detail spelled it correctly. Spelling attempts which put the intended meaning in doubt or changed the meaning were not credited. Weaker candidates misheard the targeted idea as 'bars'.

Question 4

- (a) This was another question with a mixed level of success. The expected answer for this question was 'rainy', but 'raining' and 'rain' were also credited. Most attempts were spelled correctly. However, spelling attempts that put the intended meaning in doubt could not be given the mark. Some candidates chose to provide their response as longer phrases, for example 'rainy weather' or 'rainy sunrise' and these were allowed. However, phrases which changed the overall meaning could not be credited. Most marks were lost due to the inclusion of the distracting detail 'sunny'.
- (b) This was a reasonably well attempted question with more than half of the candidates providing the correct detail 'snow'. Just as in the previous question, other forms were also allowed (e.g. snowy, snowing). Some candidates provided the detail as part of a longer phrase: 'snow in places'. There were a lot of responses which also contained the distracting details in addition to the correct detail (e.g. 'snow and frost', 'cold night snow') and such responses could not be given any marks. Ambiguous spelling attempts were not credited.

Exercise 2

Questions 5(a) – 5(h)

Most candidates achieved a fair level of success in this Exercise. On average, candidates scored 4 marks. The most successful attempts were for **Questions (a), (f) and (h)**. Candidates were less successful with **Questions (c), (d) and (e)**. There were minimal instances of No Responses.

Question 5

- (a) There was a fairly high level of success here, with the vast majority of candidates selecting the correct detail 'street'. However, 'road' was also credited as a reasonable alternative and so were responses including a correct extra detail (e.g. 'local street'). The plural form 'streets' was not allowed as this altered the intended meaning. The vast majority of responses were spelled correctly. Spelling attempts which could not be credited were rare. Weaker candidates selected the distracting details 'sports centre' and 'park' in error. Weaker candidates also tended to provide random nouns.
- (b) The correct detail 'three/3' was selected by more than two thirds of candidates. Marks were lost here due to the inclusion of the distracting numbers '1', '2' or '5'. Weaker candidates misheard the

targeted number as '30'. All candidates who provided the number written as a word spelled it correctly.

- (c) This item was answered reasonably well by more than half of the candidates, who provided the targeted detail 'strength'. Most spelling attempts were deemed recognisable and therefore credited. Marks could not be given, however, for ambiguous attempts. The distracting details 'fitness' and 'speed' were often selected in error.
- (d) This was one of the less well attempted items in this part of the exam, with only half of the candidates successfully selecting the expected detail 'heartbeat'. However, 'heart rate' and 'heart speed' were also credited as reasonable paraphrases of the key detail. Spelling attempts such as 'hear beat' and 'heart bit' could not be allowed as they put the intended meaning in doubt. Weaker candidates often selected the distracting detail 'footsteps', included random nouns (e.g. attitude) or provided nouns that did not feature in the recording (e.g. breathing). Such attempts could not be given any marks.
- (e) This item was another item which was attempted with a mixed level of success. The expected answer was 'poetry', but most candidates selected the distracting details 'news' and 'music'. Creditable answers included attempts which conveyed the same idea, such as 'poems'. While most spelling attempts gained the mark here, there were some that put the intended meaning in doubt and could not be given any marks. Weaker candidates also provided spelling attempts which created a new meaning and gained no marks.
- (f) The question targeted something that the speaker enjoyed looking at during her runs. The expected detail here was 'trees' and most candidates gave that as their response. Where marks were lost, this was mainly due to the inclusion of the distracting details 'sky' or 'clouds'. Weaker candidates also misheard the plural form and included the singular form 'tree'. Answers that were too general (e.g. surroundings) also gained zero marks.
- (g) This question was reasonably well attempted by more than half of the candidates. The expected detail was 'railway', but 'railroad' was also accepted. Spelling attempts which were considered recognisable were credited. However, a number of candidates provided spelling attempts which put the intended meaning in doubt or created a new meaning. The plural form 'railways', and 'rail' on its own, also lost the mark. Weaker candidates tended to select random details from the recording (e.g. route, transport).
- (h) This was one of the better attempted questions in this exercise. Most candidates provided the targeted detail 'ice-cream', but attempts such as 'ice-cream rewards, or 'rewards' (on its own) were also given the mark. The plural form 'ice-creams' was also deemed creditable as it fitted the gap. However, attempts which were deemed too general (e.g. food, eating) could not gain any marks. The vast majority of spelling attempts were accurate or unambiguous. Weaker candidates often selected the distracting detail 'chocolate' in error.

Exercise 3

Most candidates dealt reasonably well with this part of the test. The majority matched between 3 and 4 speakers correctly with the expected letter. Candidates dealt extremely well with matching the correct answer to speakers 1 and 5 but were less successful with speakers 2 and 6. The most common errors included opinion B being given as the answer for speakers 2 and 6. Weaker candidates often reversed the answers for speakers 2 and 6, and for speakers 4 and 5.

There were minimal omissions in this part of the test and fewer candidates used the same letter twice.

There were few candidates who overwrote their initial answers after changing their mind. However, when this was the case, these attempts were often illegible, and this led to a loss of marks.

Exercise 4

This part of the test was attempted with a mixed level of success, on the whole, with most candidates scoring between 3 – 4 marks. Candidates were particularly successful with **Questions (a), (d) and (h)**. Weaker candidates tended to be less successful with **Questions (c)** – option A was sometimes given in error, **(e)** – option B was often wrongly selected as the answer, and **(f)** – option A tended to be the wrong answer here. Some candidates continue to tick more than one option for individual questions.

Instances where candidates did not tick any options for some of the answers were far and few between.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/41
Listening (Extended) 41

Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to provide clear and legible responses. The formation of individual letters must be clear.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read the rubric carefully for each question on the paper. This is particularly important where a word limit must be adhered to. This applies to **Exercises 1, 2 and 5**.
- Candidates should be made aware of distracting information in listening texts and practise listening for specific detail which is required as the intended answer.
- In **Exercise 1**, candidates should establish what a question is asking for, by highlighting the question words, e.g., *how, why, when*, and the key words in the question. In most cases, short, direct responses are most successful. Responses must also stay within the word limits as stated in the main rubric for each applicable section.
- In the gap-filling exercises (i.e. **Exercises 2 and 5**), candidates should be encouraged to predict the answers in the gaps. At the end of each section, candidates should also check their responses carefully to make sure they fit grammatically and are within the word limit.
- In **Exercises 2 and 5**, candidates should be reminded **not** to include words that are printed in the statements on the question paper before or after each gap as part of their answer.
- In **Exercises 2 and 5**, it is advisable for candidates to practise using the framework provided by the gapped statements, to guide themselves through the audio text. This technique will help candidates locate the required missing detail and ensure that this detail is inserted in the appropriate gap.
- In the matching speakers question (**Exercise 3**) and the multiple-choice questions (**Exercise 4**), candidates should be encouraged to make it very clear which answer they wish to be taken as their final selection by examiners.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates need to be reminded to use each letter only once.
- Candidates' awareness should be raised of the importance of using the correct singular/plural form of nouns and prepositions, as these can alter the key meaning.
- When making phonetic attempts, it is recommended that candidates try to mimic the number of syllables in the word that has been heard and also to try to re-create the vowel and consonant sounds accurately. However, phonetic attempts that create a homophone are not accepted (e.g. sea/see, weak/week).
- More pronunciation awareness activities, particularly of connected speech (e.g., assimilation of sounds, omission of sounds), would be beneficial to candidates. Candidates should also be made aware of the importance of transcribing voiced and unvoiced consonants accurately as these may change meaning (e.g. s/z as in 'prices' and 'prizes').
- Some questions involve transcribing numbers and these should therefore be practised. For example, it is useful to help candidates to distinguish between the pronunciation of *eighty* and *eighteen*. Candidates would benefit from more practice in writing larger numbers correctly and the standard form of abbreviations of common units (e.g. 'min' for minutes, 'km' for kilometres).

- Candidates should practise a range of listening skills (e.g., listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for grammatical/lexical detail) in various formats (e.g., announcements, informal dialogues, formal talks).

General comments

- Candidates were required to use a set number of words for **Exercises 1, 2 and 5**. A large number of candidates, although with correct responses, could not be credited as they exceeded the required number of words.
- Successful responses were those which provided short, clear answers and which adhered to the word limit required.
- Candidates should be reminded that the answer will be heard; they must not make up an answer.
- Candidates should be reminded that no two questions will have the same answer.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Overall this section was well answered. There were few omissions, but responses could not be credited when more than the required words were written.

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates identified the correct response 'jewels'. Several candidates chose 'clothes' and 'weapons'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'jewels and clothes', 'jews' and 'joules'.
- (b) There was a very mixed response here. Quite a few candidates provided 'phone' in addition to the correct response 'sunglasses'. Many candidates wrote 'glasses'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'songlasses' and 'sumglasses'.

Question 2

- (a) This was very well attempted, and the vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark. A significant number of candidates wrote 'every week' or 'every month' and lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were 'very summer' and 'every summer'.
- (b) This was generally well answered. Incorrect responses included 'scalf', 'scurf' and 'scarve'. Some candidates lost the mark by including a colour with the correct answer, e.g. 'blue scarf'.

Question 3

- (a) This question was very well answered with '24th' being the most common incorrect response. Quite a few candidates wrote '20 third' or 'by the 23rd' and lost the mark. Some candidates included the wrong month with their answer, e.g. '23rd of December', which could not be credited.
- (b) This question was exceptionally well answered. Some candidates went for the distractor 'car'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'trian', 'trane' and the plural 'trains'.

Question 4

- (a) This question was quite poorly attempted. The distractor 'poetry' was frequently selected while some wrote 'English book'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'nowel', 'novella' and 'navel'.
- (b) There was a mixed level of success here. Many candidates selected the distractor 'pizza' and included it with the correct answer i.e. 'pizza and pancake'. Several misspellings could not be credited.

Exercise 2

Question 5

Large parts of this question were answered well by many candidates. Responses containing repetition of words, either preceding or following the gap, were not credited as they led to an incorrect grammatical fit. In some cases, incorrect singular and plural nouns meant that candidates could not be credited. Some parts of the question were left blank by a few candidates.

- (i) There was a mixed level of success here. The distractors 'chest and 'stomach' were often selected. Other responses that could not be credited were 'lab', 'lamb' and 'legs'.
- (ii) On the whole, this question was very well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates lost the mark by writing 'size' while others wrote 'protection' and 'alteration'.
- (iii) There was a mixed level of success here. 'Mechanical engineer' was the most common incorrect answer. Some examples of responses that could not be credited were 'craft designer', 'desinger' and 'decigner'.
- (iv) The vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark here. Quite a few candidates chose '1969'.
- (v) This was generally well attempted by the majority of candidates although some candidates left it blank. However, some candidates wrote 'seats' and lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were 'comport' and 'comfortable'.
- (vi) This was extremely well attempted by the vast majority of candidates although there were some unusual answers that could not be credited. Amongst these were 'a fee', 'safety' and 'fortune'.
- (vii) This was quite poorly attempted with many candidates writing 'Japan' as their answer. Some of the other responses that could not be credited were 'Austrilia' and 'Austrila'.
- (viii) There was a very mixed level of success here. 'Manufacturing' was the most chosen incorrect response, while some candidates lost the mark by writing 'injury' and 'research'. There were a large number of candidates who did not attempt the question.

Exercise 3

Question 6

Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the task and obtained full marks.

A few candidates used the same letter more than once. In this case, no marks were awarded even if one of those letters was the correct response in the intended box. Candidates need to ensure that they cross out inaccurate responses clearly to avoid the duplication of letters for each response.

Exercise 4

Question 7

Generally, candidates responded very well to this question.

A few candidates failed to clarify their final response, thus giving two answers. It should be noted that if a candidate changes their mind about their original intended response, they should clearly cross out their first answer. There should be absolutely no ambiguity regarding which answer is intended as the candidate's definitive response.

Exercise 5

Question 8

There was a mixed response to this question. Some responses provided were not always a grammatical fit and incorrect singular and plural nouns meant that some candidates could not be credited. There were a few questions that were not attempted by some candidates.

- (a) (i) There was a mixed level of success here, with a high number of spellings that could not be credited.
- (ii) This was very poorly attempted, and most candidates struggled to pick the correct response. A large number of candidates gave the distractors '15' or '50' although some other figures appeared as well, e.g., '90' and '20'.
- (iii) This question elicited many correct answers. Occasionally, the answer to this question was used for **part (iv)**. The distractor 'being chased' was frequently encountered. Some of the incorrect responses were 'flaing', 'flyng' and 'filing'.
- (iv) This was fairly well answered although 'flying' was a very common incorrect answer. Other incorrect responses were 'feature taste', 'tast' and 'taist'.
- (v) This was very well answered by the vast majority of candidates. Incorrect responses were 'men', 'women' and 'chidren'.
- (b) (i) There was a mixed level of success here – responses were fairly evenly divided between the key 'philosophy' and the distractor 'religion'. Quite a few candidates wrote 'psychology' and lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were 'philofosy' and 'philosopher'.
- (ii) This was extremely well answered by the vast majority of candidates, although there were some unusual answers, e.g. 'frames' and 'faces'. Some candidates wrote the singular 'phrase' and lost the mark. Other incorrect responses were 'fraces' and 'phrages'.
- (iii) This was generally well answered. Some of the incorrect responses were 'percinnality', 'persoinality' and 'imagination'.
- (iv) This was generally well answered. Many candidates gave 'signals' and 'messages' as incorrect responses.
- (v) This question was consistently well answered by the vast majority of candidates, but many candidates struggled with spelling. Some responses that could not be credited were 'segnitar' and 'sigtire'.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/42
Listening (Extended) 42

Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded to provide clear and legible responses. The formation of individual letters must be clear. When altering their responses, candidates should simply cross these responses out and write their corrections next to them. Candidates should not write over, or try to erase, their initial answers.
- Candidates should be reminded of the importance of using the correct singular/plural form of nouns, as these can alter the key meaning.
- When providing spelling attempts, the intended meaning of the attempted word should not be in doubt. Spelling attempts that create a homophone are not accepted (e.g. bored/board).
- Candidates should be encouraged to read and listen to the rubric for each part of the paper very carefully to ensure they meet the exact requirements of each particular exercise.
- In **Exercise 1, Questions 1 to 4**, candidates should try to establish what a question is asking for by highlighting the question words, e.g. *how*, *where*, *when*, and the key words in the question. In most cases, a short, direct response is most successful. In cases where candidates decide to supply additional information, in addition to the expected key answer, and the extra information is incorrect, such attempts cannot be credited. For this reason, candidates should be encouraged to provide concise answers.
- In the gap-filling **exercises 2, 5A and 5B** candidates should be encouraged to try and predict the answers in the gaps (e.g. a number, a name, etc.) before listening. Candidates should not only listen for the correct meaning of the targeted detail, but also for the correct form used in the recording. At the end of each listening section, candidates should also check their responses carefully and make sure the word forms used fit each gap on the question paper.
- In **exercises 2, 5A and 5B**, candidates should also be reminded **not** to include words, or ideas, which are already printed on the question paper before or after each gap, as part of their answer.
- In the multiple matching items, **Exercise 3**, and the multiple-choice items, **Exercise 4**, candidates should be encouraged to make it very clear which option they wish to be taken as their final answer. If there is any uncertainty about which option is intended as the candidate's definitive choice, such attempts may not be credited.
- It is also important to emphasise that if two boxes are filled in with the same letter in **Exercise 3** then, even if one of the responses given is correct, it cannot be credited. Similarly, for each item in **Exercise 4**, if two boxes are ticked rather than one, then no marks can be given.

General comments

- Most corrections were clearly crossed out and new responses were written next to these. The vast majority of answers were very clear and legible. However, there were a small number of candidates who tried to write over their initial attempts, which often resulted in their final answer being illegible. In some cases, it was difficult to determine whether a candidate had included the final 's' to indicate the plural form. Other letters that often proved difficult to decipher included t/l, i/e, a/u and o/a. It would be beneficial to encourage learners to write by hand as often as possible.
- The vast majority of candidates adhered to the required word limit set out in the rubric of each exercise. However, some candidates wrote their answers as long sentences, especially in **Exercise 1**.
- There was very little evidence of exam techniques being used by candidates (e.g. prediction of answers and parts of speech in gap-fill exercises, highlighting key words in questions in **Exercise 1**, etc.). However, when used, in some cases this still needs to be done more effectively, as some candidates tend to underline all words, rather than selecting the key words in each question.

- Most candidates seem to be aware of the distracting information in the listening exercises and do not include these in addition to the correct detail. However, there were still some instances where candidates provided the distracting detail in addition to the expected answer, especially, in **Exercises 1 and 2**. Such attempts could not be credited.
- There were minimal instances of candidates using the same letter more than once in **Exercise 3** and ticking more than one box in **Exercise 4**. However, a few candidates left all three boxes unticked for some of the items in **Exercise 4**.
- There were a relatively low number of No Responses in **Exercises 1, 2 and 5A and 5B**.
- Overall, most candidates dealt relatively well with listening for gist and speakers' opinions, but more practice of listening for correct specific detail is recommended. Listening to longer talks proved challenging to some candidates, and some would benefit from more practice to ensure they can follow, and *navigate* themselves through, longer texts (e.g. talks and presentations).
- Candidates would also benefit from practising a wide range of listening skills, including listening for grammatical detail (e.g. singular/plural nouns, participle verb forms and other word forms, etc.) as well as phonetic detail (e.g. the pronunciation of different consonants 'ship' versus 'chip' and 'foxes' versus 'boxes', voiced and unvoiced consonants – 'foot' versus 'food'/syllable stress in numbers – 'thirty' versus 'thirteen', etc.). Although some candidates selected the correct detail, they did not always transcribe the word in the correct form that they heard. By changing the word forms, candidates' final answers did not always make the required fit in **Exercises 2, 5A and 5B** (e.g. 'strengthen' instead of 'strength', 'landscaped' instead of 'landscape' and 'climate changing' instead of 'climate change'). Candidates should also be made aware of changes in the pronunciation of words when they're used in continuous speech, or in isolation (e.g. omission or assimilation of sounds).
- Most candidates provided correct or very recognisable spelling variants of the targeted ideas for both high frequency words (e.g. library, mountains, cousin) and more subject specific words (e.g. landscape, flood waters, chemicals).

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Questions 1 – 4

Overall, this section was fairly well attempted by most candidates. Most marks were lost where candidates selected the distracting detail in error instead of the correct answer. This was a particular issue in **Questions 2(a), 3(b) and 4(a)**. Other reasons for loss of marks are outlined below. There were minimal instances of No Responses for this part of the test.

Question 1

- (a) This question was answered very well. Most candidates provided the expected detail 'shirt'. Also, the majority of responses were spelled correctly. Where candidates provided spelling variants, most were deemed ambiguous and could not be credited. Some candidates also lost the mark for providing the plural form 'shirts', as this form changed the intended meaning. A few candidates included an extra detail. Where this was true to the script (e.g. bargain shirt), the mark was given. However, details which were random adjectives, and therefore wrong, could not be credited (e.g. green shirt, sports shirt). Weaker candidates misheard the key detail as 'skirt' or provided the distractors 'scarf' or 'jumper' in error. Also, no marks were given to attempts which were too general (e.g. clothes, present).
- (b) This question was attempted with a reasonable level of success. More than half of the candidates provided the expected detail 'cousin'. Some creditable responses were provided as part of a longer phrase (e.g. the man's cousin, his cousin relative). Most marks were lost where spelling variants put the intended meaning in doubt. Other incorrect answers included 'himself' or the distractors 'neighbour' and 'colleague'.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates dealt fairly well with this item and gave the expected answer 'mountains'. The singular form 'mountain' was also accepted. While some recognisable spelling variants were credited, ambiguous attempts were not. Most marks were lost where candidates selected the distracting

detail 'seaside' or 'lake'. Some candidates provided both the correct detail *in addition to* the distracting detail 'lake and mountains' and lost the mark.

- (b) The expected answer was 'ship' and most candidates were very successful at providing this detail. However, 'boat' was also credited as a reasonable alternative. Some candidates provided the expected detail as part of a longer phrase 'using a ship', 'through local ship' and gained the mark. Weaker candidates often selected the distracting details 'by car' or 'by air' and lost the mark. Marks were also lost where candidates provided the location 'local port' rather than the means of transport.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates dealt fairly well with this question. The expected detail here was 'library'. Most candidates who provided the correct detail also provided the extra detail 'outside'. Such responses gained the mark. 'Near the library' was also allowed. Some marks were lost, however, where candidates gave one of the distractors as their response (e.g. museum, gallery, city centre). While some spelling attempts were creditable, others were deemed ambiguous and no marks could be given. Marks were also lost where candidates included a detail which altered the overall meaning (e.g. behind the library).
- (b) There was a mixed level of success for this question. Only half of the candidates provided the correct detail 'vase'. Most marks were lost due to the inclusion of distracting details 'portrait' and 'local artist'. Most candidates who selected the correct detail spelled it correctly. Spelling attempts which put the intended meaning in doubt or changed the meaning were not credited. Some candidates misheard the targeted idea as 'bars'.

Question 4

- (a) This was another question with a mixed level of success. The expected answer for this question was 'rainy', but 'raining' and 'rain' were also credited. Most attempts were spelled correctly. However, spelling attempts that put the intended meaning in doubt could not be given the mark. Some candidates chose to provide their response as longer phrases, for example 'rainy weather' or 'rainy sunrise' and these were allowed. However, phrases which changed the overall meaning could not be credited. Most marks were lost due to the inclusion of the distracting detail 'sunny'.
- (b) This was a reasonably well attempted question with more than half of the candidates providing the correct detail 'snow'. Just as in the previous question, other forms were also allowed (e.g. snowy, snowing). Some candidates provided the detail as part of a longer phrase: 'snow in places'. There were a lot of responses which also contained the distracting details in addition to the correct detail (e.g. 'snow and frost', 'cold night snow') and such responses could not be given any marks. Ambiguous spelling attempts were not credited.

Exercise 2

Questions 5(a) – 5(h)

Most candidates achieved a fair level of success in this Exercise. On average, candidates scored 5 marks. The most successful attempts were for **Questions (a), (f) and (h)**. Candidates were less successful with **Questions (c), (d) and (e)**. There were minimal instances of No Responses.

Question 5

- (a) There was a high level of success here, with the vast majority of candidates selecting the correct detail 'street'. However, 'road' was also credited as a reasonable alternative and so were responses including a correct extra detail (e.g. local street). The plural form 'streets' was not allowed as this altered the intended meaning. The vast majority of responses were spelled correctly. Spelling attempts which could not be credited were rare. Weaker candidates selected the distracting details 'sports centre' and 'park' in error. Weaker candidates also tended to provide random nouns.
- (b) The correct detail 'three/3' was selected by more than two thirds of candidates. Marks were lost here due to the inclusion of the distracting numbers '1', '2' or '5'. Weaker candidates misheard the

targeted number as '30'. All candidates who provided the number written as a word spelled it correctly.

- (c) This item was answered reasonably well by more than half of the candidates, who provided the targeted detail 'strength'. Most spelling attempts were deemed recognisable and therefore credited. Marks could not be given, however, for ambiguous attempts. The distracting details 'fitness' and 'speed' were often selected in error.
- (d) This was one of the less well attempted items in this part of the exam, with only half of the candidates successfully selecting the expected detail 'heartbeat'. However, 'heart rate' and 'heart speed' were also credited as reasonable paraphrases of the key detail. Spelling attempts such as 'hear beat' and 'heart bit' could not be allowed as they put the intended meaning in doubt. Weaker candidates often selected the distracting detail 'footsteps', included random nouns (e.g. attitude) or provided nouns that did not feature in the recording (e.g. breathing). Such attempts could not be given any marks.
- (e) This item was another item which was attempted with a mixed level of success. The expected answer was 'poetry', but most candidates selected the distracting details 'news' and 'music'. Creditable answers included attempts which conveyed the same idea, such as 'poems'. While most spelling attempts gained the mark here, there were some that put the intended meaning in doubt and could not be given any marks. Weaker candidates also provided spelling attempts which created a new meaning (e.g. pottery) and gained no marks.
- (f) The question targeted something that the speaker enjoyed looking at during her runs. The expected detail here was 'trees' and the vast majority of the candidature gave that as their response. Where marks were lost, this was mainly due to the inclusion of the distracting details 'sky' or 'clouds'. Weaker candidates also misheard the plural form and included the singular form 'tree'. Answers that were too general (e.g. surroundings) also gained no marks.
- (g) This question was reasonably well attempted by more than half of the candidates. The expected detail was 'railway', but 'railroad' was also accepted. Spelling attempts which were considered recognisable were credited. However, a number of candidates provided spelling attempts which put the intended meaning in doubt or created a new meaning (e.g. runway). The plural form 'railways', and 'rail' on its own, also lost the mark. Weaker candidates tended to select random details from the recording (e.g. route, transport).
- (h) This was one of the better attempted questions in this exercise. Most candidates provided the targeted detail 'ice-cream', but attempts such as 'ice-cream rewards, or 'rewards' (on its own) were also given the mark. The plural form 'ice-creams' was also deemed creditable as it fitted the gap. However, attempts which were deemed too general (e.g. food, eating) could not gain any marks. The vast majority of spelling attempts were accurate or unambiguous. Weaker candidates often selected the distracting detail 'chocolate' in error.

Exercise 3

Most candidates dealt very well with this part of the test. The majority matched between 4 and 6 speakers correctly with the expected letter. Candidates dealt extremely well with matching the correct answer to speakers 1 and 5 but were less successful with speakers 2 and 6. The most common errors included opinion B being given as the answer for speakers 2 and 6. Weaker candidates often reversed the answers for speakers 2 and 6, and for speakers 4 and 5.

There were minimal omissions in this part of the test and fewer candidates used the same letter twice.

There were few candidates this session who overwrote their initial answers after changing their mind. However, when this was the case, these attempts were often illegible, and this led to a loss of marks.

Exercise 4

This part of the test was attempted reasonably well, on the whole, with most candidates scoring between 5 – 6 marks. Candidates were particularly successful with **Questions (a), (d) and (h)**. Weaker candidates tended to be less successful with **Questions (c)** – option A was sometimes given in error, **(e)** – option B was often wrongly selected as the answer, and **(f)** – option A tended to be the wrong answer here. Some candidates continue to tick more than one option for individual questions.



Instances where candidates did not tick any options for some of the answers were far and few between.

Exercise 5

Part A

There was a reasonable level of success in this Exercise, with most candidates scoring 2 – 3 marks. Candidates particularly excelled in **Questions (a) and (b)**. Candidates were least successful when attempting **Question (e)**. The majority of marks were lost due to the inclusion of distracting information instead of the correct detail. Candidates also struggled to navigate themselves through the talk.

Question 8A

- (a) Candidates attempted this item fairly well. The expected answer was '2013', but 'twenty thirteen' and 'two thousand thirteen' were also accepted. Weaker candidates tended to put the distracting years 1600 and 2015.
- (b) This question was fairly well attempted by most candidates. The expected answer here was 'foxes'. Some candidates provided their answer as part of a longer phrase 'fox attacks' and, as it closely conveyed the targeted idea, it was also credited. Spelling attempts which did not put the intended meaning in doubt were accepted. Candidates who misheard the form of the key detail as 'fox', or provided a response that was too general did not gain any marks here. Weaker candidates often selected the distracting detail 'deep water', or provided random nouns from the recording which were linked lexically (e.g. security). In both instances no marks could be given.
- (c) This question was attempted with a mixed level of success. The required detail was 'flood water', but 'floods', 'flooding' and 'flood water flow' were also credited here. The vast majority of candidates spelled the key detail correctly. There were only a few spelling variants which put the intended meaning in doubt and were disallowed. No marks were also given to attempts which omitted the key detail 'flood' and were therefore too general (e.g. water flow, river, and water on its own). Some marks were lost where candidates selected the distracting detail 'storms' in error.
- (d) There was a reasonable level of success here. The expected detail was 'chemicals'. Most spelling attempts were deemed recognisable and, therefore, credited. However, there were a few ambiguous spelling variants which could not be credited. Longer phrases which retained the targeted idea were allowed (e.g. chemical elements), but attempts which were too general (e.g. pollution) could not be accepted. Weaker candidates often misheard the plural form as singular 'chemical', or provided a phrase which paraphrased an idea from the text on the question paper (e.g. agricultural fields). In both cases no marks were awarded.
- (e) This question was attempted with a low level of success. The question asks for something that was recently damaged due to beavers' habits. Only a small number of candidates provided the correct detail 'plants'. Most successful attempts also included the extra detail 'garden'. However, weaker candidates misheard the extra detail as 'govern plants' or 'golden plants' and, consequently, lost the mark. The singular form 'plant' was also disallowed. Most incorrect attempts included the distracting details 'fruit trees', 'trunks' and 'fences'.

Exercise 5

Part B

Part B was attempted fairly well, with most candidates scoring 3 marks on average. The more successful attempts were for **Questions (a) and (e)**. Candidates were less successful when attempting items **(b) and (c)**. The most common reason for the loss of marks was the inclusion of distracting details. There was a higher number of No Responses in this part of the test compared to the rest.

Question 8B

- (a) Most candidates coped very well with this item and gained the mark by providing the expected detail. The vast majority of responses were spelled correctly. Weaker candidates sometimes selected the distracting details 'England', 'Canada' and 'North America' in error.

- (b) Candidates attempted this question with a variable degree of success. The expected answer was 'birds', but most correct responses also included the extra detail 'resident'. Answers that were too general and, therefore, not creditable included: 'species', 'animals' and 'creatures'. Where the key detail was misspelled, most of these attempts were deemed ambiguous and were given zero marks. The singular form 'bird' was another common reason for the loss of marks here. Weaker candidates sometimes misheard the extra detail 'resident' and included an incorrect adjective as part of their response, for example, 'nesting birds'.. Weaker candidates often selected the distracting detail 'frogs' in error.
- (c) Candidates achieved a low level of success when attempting this question. The targeted idea was 'landscape', but the plural form 'landscapes' was also credited. Most spelling variants were considered recognisable and, therefore, credited. However, where spelling attempts created a new meaning (e.g. land escape) or put the meaning in doubt, no marks were given. Some candidates also provided the key detail in a different grammatical form. For example, 'landscaping' and 'landscapes' were still considered creditable, but 'landscaped' was not and did not score any marks, as it did not fit the gap. The distracting detail 'wetlands' and 'ecosystems' were often provided in error by weaker candidates.
- (d) This question was attempted with a fair level of success by most candidates, who gained the mark by providing the expected detail 'climate change'. The plural form 'climate changes' was also allowed here. Most spelling attempts were unambiguous and, therefore creditable. However, there were a few variants which put the meaning in doubt and could not be allowed.
- (e) This item was attempted very well. The expected answer was 'documentary', and the vast majority of candidates provided this as their response. There were a wide range of spelling attempts and most of these were credited. However, ambiguous spelling attempts could not be given any marks. Weaker candidates sometimes provided responses that did not convey the right meaning (e.g. film) or often selected the distracting detail 'research' or 'research paper' in error.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/51
Speaking 51

Key messages

- Tests were generally well conducted. Most examiners demonstrated an ability to get the best from the candidates.
- Centres should ensure that background noise is eliminated as far as possible and that the tests are conducted in a quiet, secure area.
- Speaking test cards should not be selected in advance. Examiners should use the warm-up in **Part B** to select a suitable topic which will engage the candidate.
- Internal moderation must be carried out where there is more than one examiner.
- For guidance on how to conduct the speaking test, examiners should watch the Speaking Test Video on the School Support Hub.

General comments

Part A

This was mostly conducted well, with examiners providing the candidate name and number, and reading out the instructions as they appeared on the card. Some examiners chose to paraphrase the instructions which sometimes made them more difficult to understand.

Part B

The majority of warm-ups were well conducted and achieved their objective to make the candidates relax and ease them into the exam situation. Some examiners asked open questions that elicited information about the candidate's interests and enabled them to choose an appropriate card. It can be difficult to maintain a balance between asking candidates questions which help identify a topic for discussion in **Part D** and avoiding discussing exam topics themselves. The best results were obtained by examiners who asked general questions about a candidate's interest or experience of a topic, such as foreign travel, then moved quickly on.

Part C

Generally, the preparation period lasted for the recommended 2–3 minutes. Some examiners suggested to candidates that they should say when they are ready to begin **Part D**. This potentially puts pressure on some candidates to rush the preparation period rather than use the full time allotted. Not all examiners announced the specific card they had chosen for each candidate.

Part D

Most examiners used the given prompts in order and developed the conversation based on ideas emerging from them, responding to what the candidates said. In some tests examiners ran through the prompts without developing the conversation naturally with additional questions. At times this resulted in monologues or examiners asking additional questions at the end of the test to fill the time. Examiners who expanded on the prompts with open questions conducted the most effective tests. Stronger candidates demonstrated the ability to change direction in conversation, develop ideas and return to the initial premise of discussion. It is important that examiners participate in the conversation with the candidate.



Application of the marking criteria

Structure – This was generally accurately applied. There was a tendency towards slightly severe marking at the lower end and more generous marking at the top of the range. Examiners need remember that it is not necessary for structures to be perfect for candidates to achieve the full marks. Candidates should be credited for using a range of tenses and attempting more complex structures.

Vocabulary – This was mainly accurate, but sometimes tended to be under-marked, perhaps because examiners were looking for more sophisticated or specific vocabulary related to the topic, while ignoring some appropriate use of everyday language with which the candidates conveyed their ideas. It is important to reward precise vocabulary and synonyms for words in the bullet points.

Development and Fluency – This was mainly accurate, although some centres reward faster speakers and clear pronunciation, rather than development of ideas. Development and Fluency was sometimes hard to assess when the examiner allowed monologues to develop and did little to promote a two-way conversation.

Administration

Recordings were sometimes hard to listen to because the microphone had been placed too near the examiner, and too far away from the candidates. Levels of background noise were excessive at some centres. Some centres did not asterisk the sampled candidates on the summary sheet. Where scanned versions of the summary sheet had been uploaded to Submit for Assessment, they were sometimes hard to read.

Internal moderation

Some larger centres with more than one examiner did not carry out internal moderation as required, or only applied internal moderation to candidates in the sample.

Some smaller centres carried out internal moderation when it was not required, and in such cases, it was often not clear who was involved in the process, or on what basis the marks had been changed.

Comments on specific questions

Card A – Shopping for food

This topic elicited present tenses and conditionals. Candidates were able to refer to various world dishes in connection with the first two prompts. Special celebrations included weddings, festivals and holiday periods. Candidates talked about shopping at supermarkets were mentioned and their experiences of buying food during lockdown. Most candidates compared shopping locally where they knew the owner to doing 'a big shop' in a supermarket. In responses to prompt 4, candidates talked about food being part of culture. Stronger candidates spoke about implications for the environment of shipping food. Candidates agreed that buying locally produced food was better for the environment but that not all areas or seasons could provide enough choice. Candidates felt it was wrong to waste food and suggested both buying less food and giving excess food to the homeless and poor.

Card B – Being multilingual

Many candidates claimed that learning languages assisted in travelling abroad, accessing different cultures and being able to communicate and even work with people from all over the world. Japanese seemed to be a popular choice of a preferred language to learn. Some candidates were able to relate personal anecdotes about a time when they had to speak a foreign language (e.g. translating for their parents), while other candidates mentioned the fact that they were multilingual and how useful knowing languages can be when travelling to another country. In prompt 3, candidates offered general tips, such as listening to songs, reading, having conversation classes. Candidates often responded to prompt 4 by referring to a translator/online translator. Candidates spoke about body language, sign language and animals communicating in response to prompt 5. Ideas were often well developed, for example the connection between learning languages and the job market.

Card C – Clothes

This card elicited a range of present and past tenses, comparisons, passive voice and modal verbs. The first prompt was accessible for candidates of all abilities who were able to speak about various pieces of clothing.

Candidates agreed that jeans, hoodies, T-shirts and trainers were both comfortable and popular items of clothing. Reasons given for choosing particular clothes included 'dress code' and season. When responding to the second prompt, most candidates were able to relate anecdotes about special events they had attended. Prompt 3 caused some debate; candidates in favour of wearing a uniform explained that it was easy to put on a uniform in the morning and it helped them avoid being judged by their peers. There were also examples of professions such as doctors who needed to wear uniforms. Candidates explored the links between personality and style of clothing. In response to prompt 4, candidates talked about fast fashion, charity/thrift shops, brand clothing, being in control of what they wear ('my style'), the use of fur, gender and clothing.

Card D – Watching films

Candidates generally found this an engaging topic, and responded well to prompts 1 and 2, using film-related vocabulary such as 'screen', 'actor', 'director', 'special effects', 'genre', 'plot' and 'characters'. Both prompts elicited use of modals, e.g. 'I would like to make a film about climate change'. Prompt 3 enabled stronger candidates to use more complex structures such as if-clauses, relative clauses and passive forms. Prompt 4 led to comparisons with other jobs and roles: 'After all, they're not saving lives – they're just making a movie'. In response to prompt 5, stronger candidates used a range of structures and vocabulary to talk about, for example, the importance of a balance between special effects, soundtrack and storyline, e.g. 'the soundtrack is necessary to help us understand the storyline.'

Card E – Being motivated

The main sources of motivation discussed in response to prompt 1 were job or study opportunities as well as future ambitions such as 'doing research', 'becoming a doctor', 'to achieve my dream'. Many candidates were able to offer well developed responses, and this led to some effective use of collocations, e.g. 'push yourself to the limit', 'setting goals'. Prompt 2 enabled candidates to use narrative tenses to tell the examiner about a time when they had to motivate someone, with ideas ranging from encouraging a friend to work harder to trying a new sport or auditioning for a play. Stronger candidates used a range of vocabulary and structures, e.g. 'I reassured her that she would be really good'; 'I took him aside and started talking to him'. For the third prompt, candidates frequently spoke about exercise as 'good for your health' and the impact of physical activity on 'self-esteem'. Some candidates reacted more negatively to the idea of adult pressure: 'Nagging will not help; children should be given opportunities.' The fourth and fifth prompts were often well developed, with both the positive and negative effects of the social media and celebrities described in great detail.

Card F – Foreign travel

Most candidates used past tenses effectively when responding to prompt 1, along with vocabulary such as 'sightseeing', 'monuments' and 'hospitality'. In prompt 2, candidates used phrases such as 'bucket list', 'see with my own eyes'. Prompt 3 elicited a wide range of collocations, including 'business purposes', 'job opportunities', 'experience different cultures'. Almost all candidates were able to give a number of reasons why people travel abroad, such as 'vacations' or 'to see family and friends'. In response to prompt 5, some candidates acknowledged the need to protect the planet, but thought the idea impractical, while seeking to justify their own preference to continue travelling by air: 'Banning or reducing flights may be good for the environment but not for happiness or businesses'.

Card G – Sports competitions

Prompt 1 elicited a range of sports including football, handball, tennis, basketball as well as reasons for watching them. Responses to prompt 2 were mainly descriptive, using past tenses, with candidates talking about who they played against and if they won. Some candidates talked about the emotional side of playing in a competition and how they felt about being away from home for the first time. In response to prompt 3, candidates talked about earning a lot of money, having a good life, being healthy and being famous. Disadvantages mentioned by some candidates included having no privacy, being recognised when you were eating in a restaurant, missing important family events if competing in a tournament. Prompt 4 enabled candidates to talk about not giving up, getting certificates, learning to have respect, listening to the coach, playing fairly etc. The final prompt allowed candidates to use modals and conditionals while talking about being able to learn how to do sports and the importance of the Olympics.

Card H – The working week

Candidates tended to give Friday as the answer to prompt 1 as they had the weekend to look forward to. For prompt 2, candidates talked about having a particular project to complete, doing revision, having exams and feeling anxious about them. A variety of adjectives were used to describe their emotions. Candidates answered that they felt the weekend could be a day longer for them to relax and prepare for the following week. Prompt 4 enabled candidates to express their opinions, with most agreeing that they should be paid more as they cannot enjoy the weekend with their families and relax. Some candidates talked about it depending on the type of job that was done. For prompt 5, candidates thought that giving people the choice when to work and study would be very difficult to achieve, with stronger candidates discussing jobs, such as teaching, and reasons why they needed to be done during the working week.

Card I – Parks

When responding to prompt 1 candidates tended to describe the size of the park, and facilities, the natural features, the type of people who visit the place. For prompt 2, many different reasons were mentioned including: 'to study animals', 'to have parties', 'for educational reasons', 'to run around', 'play games' and 'enjoy being in nature'. Prompt 3 enabled candidates to use a variety of modals when explaining what people should and should not do in a park. Most candidates thought that there should be some rules, and mentioned 'no littering', 'not going on the grass', 'not making too much noise'. Stronger candidates were able to explain that certain behaviour would disturb other people and make the park less peaceful. For prompt 4, candidates tended to talk about the relief of not being at home studying rather than the benefits of being outdoors. Some talked about being sociable, seeing or learning different things. For prompt 5, most candidates focused on the positive effect of keeping parks rather than effects of building new houses. Many candidates mentioned parks helping to ease stress and helping their state of mind.

Card J – Meeting people

Prompt 1 gave candidates the opportunity to use synonyms, expressions of contrast, time phrases, modal verbs and simple narratives. Candidates were able to list places such as a cinema, park and coffee bar. Many successful responses to prompt 2 included appropriate words and phrases such as 'then', 'after that' 'later' to sequence the events. Descriptions of celebrations such as birthdays and weddings included references how candidates felt about those events. In response to prompt 3, most candidates agreed that it was not possible to meet people without a smartphone. This was contrasted with the past and how people used to communicate. For prompt 4, it was considered better to meet people face to face. Stronger candidates were able to employ a range of phrasal verbs and verb phrases related to meeting friends, such as 'hang out with' 'get in contact with' 'stay in touch with'. In response to prompt 5, most candidate said that people should turn off their phone when meeting their friends, because using a phone would be rude. This often led to discussions about feelings and first impressions.

Card K – At the seaside

Prompts 1 and 2 gave candidates the opportunity to use a range of vocabulary related to the seaside, (e.g. 'coast', 'sandy beaches'), names of water sports, as well as some appropriate adjectives and collocations (e.g. 'the fresh aroma of the sea', 'sunlight reflected on the water'). Prompt 1 elicited the use of linking words when listing advantages and disadvantages of living by the sea and living elsewhere. In response to prompt 2, candidates used past tenses to describe a trip to the seaside. Prompt 3 enabled candidates to express their views using modals of obligation and the second conditional. Stronger candidates were able to elaborate on alternatives to the idea in the prompt. In prompt 4, stronger candidates discussed opinions about healthier lifestyles and used a range of cause-effect structures (e.g. 'because', 'as', 'since', 'due to'). Responses to prompt 5 included vocabulary related to the environment, e.g. 'litter that contaminates the beach'; 'is not polluted as much'.

Card L – Public transport

This card was rarely selected by examiners. In response to the second prompt, some candidates said they did not use public transport, but were able to relate an anecdote about a friend or family member. The final three prompts produced more extended responses and allowed candidates to speak at length. Prompt 3 invited the use of more complex structures to compare various means of transport (e.g. 'even though', 'not as fast as', 'more convenient'). Stronger candidates used modal verbs here ('might', 'could'). Prompts 4 and 5 enabled candidates to use conditionals. Stronger candidates were able to demonstrate vocabulary such as 'fines', 'restrict', 'license plates' or 'congestion charge'. They were also able to employ lexis related to environmental issues, such as 'the impact of climate change' and 'global warming'.



Card M – Town and countryside

Candidates at all levels were able to give a description of their local area in response to prompt 1, and introduce adjectives such as 'busy', 'peaceful', 'crowded' which were expanded in prompt 2. In prompt 2, more chose to recall a countryside visit, often setting context, 'When I was younger', 'two years ago'. Linking words (e.g. 'so', 'and then') were used to establish a narrative, as well as emotive terms and intensifiers to describe responses to what happened, for example visiting an event, 'really excited' or 'getting lost, 'pretty scared'. Prompt 2 also gave an opportunity to use past forms, with stronger candidates demonstrating a range of structures ('I had not been there before/we were visiting ... when ...'). When responding to prompt 3, candidates were able to employ comparative forms and vocabulary linked to pollution, noise, entertainment. The ideas raised here were further developed in prompt 4, with some answers bringing in wider issues of freedom versus health. Responses to prompt 5 often included complex discussions of the impact of different types of environment on children.

Card N – Looking after your health

Most candidates were able to name sports they played regularly and developed their responses by talking about exercise and eating habits. Prompts 1 and 2 drew on personal experience and allowed candidates to use a range of structures related to routines such as adverbs of frequency as well as comparatives and past forms. Prompt 3 allowed weaker candidates to give a clear opinion, while stronger answers used linking phrases such as 'on the other hand' to look at the broader picture of people having more exercise options but also easier access to more junk food. Prompt 4 elicited concrete ideas, and most candidates offered practical suggestions, often using more complex structures such as passive voice and conditionals (e.g. 'if gym classes were included in the curriculum...'). Prompt 5 produced some very sophisticated language and again often drew on personal experience ('If I'm feeling relaxed, I'm more likely to feel like going to the gym').

Card O – Reporting the news

This card was rarely chosen. All candidates were able to offer examples of types of news sources, often referring to different generations having different preferences. Prompt 2 personalised the topic and allowed candidates to use speculative language, e.g. 'This job must be difficult' and a range of descriptive adjectives. Prompt 3 elicited a wide range of language, from simpler suggestions regarding writing about 'school gossip' to discussing ideas about producing material which is age appropriate and using formal language to communicate information. Prompt 4 encouraged candidates to express opinions and explore ideas around influence and role models. Prompt 5 produced some well-argued ideas; the most sophisticated used terms like 'global information networks' and explored the role of technology.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (COUNT-IN SPEAKING)

Paper 0991/52
Speaking 52

Key messages

- In general, the tests were conducted well. Most examiners followed the instructions included in the Teacher's/Examiner's Notes.
- Background noise should be minimised as this can affect candidates' performance. This is a formal examination, and a quiet, secure room should be used.
- Examiners should encourage candidates to talk more about personal anecdotes or future predictions, where applicable, to ensure candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.
- Examiners should explore individual prompts in more detail and link their questions to what candidates have said. They should also ask more open questions to elicit more detailed responses from the candidate.
- Examiners should use the warm-up (**Part B**) session to explore the candidate's interests to enable them to select a suitable topic card.
- Examiners should use a timer to ensure candidates are given the correct amount of time for each part of the test.

General comments

Part A

Most examiners introduced the centre's name, number, as well as the details of the exam, the examiner, and the date. The instructions were read out at the beginning of most tests. **Part A** was sometimes paraphrased which led to key details being omitted.

Part B

Most examiners used the warm-up period effectively to put candidates at ease, following the recommended timings. They asked appropriate questions and did not include questions about school or abstract topics more suited to **Part D**. It can help to choose a topic card related to the interests expressed by the candidates during the warm-up. Sometimes the warm-ups were too short or too long.

Part C

Almost all examiners stated the topic before the preparation period. Most of the preparation periods followed the recommended timings, with examiners advising the candidates when the preparation period had ended. Where there were timing issues, it was mostly the candidates not being given enough preparation time, often when candidates felt ready to start. Occasionally, candidates asked for clarification and the examiners provided helpful explanations. It should be noted that all candidates should be encouraged to fully utilise the time available to prepare for **Part D** of the examination.

Part D

Many examiners conducted the tests well and encouraged candidates to develop the conversation. The prompts were used appropriately and not paraphrased unless candidates required clarification. Some examiners did not engage in a conversation or support candidates enough. Some **Part Ds** were too short or too long. Examiners should be encouraged to watch the Speaking Test Video on the School Support Hub to see how this assessed part of the test should be conducted.

Application of the marking criteria

Structure – Candidates were given credit for their ability to use a range of complex structures such as conditional sentences, relative clauses and passive structures. In some centres, there was a slight tendency to be generous towards candidates who were competent in terms of fluency but lacking in their ability to demonstrate a variety of structures, or who had made persistent tense and singular/plural errors. It is important for examiners to reward candidates using the full range of marks available for structures.

Vocabulary – Candidates were credited for using vocabulary effectively to express their ideas with clarity and precision. This included not only sophisticated lexis or subject-specific words (e.g. scientific terms) but also idiomatic language and effective use of collocations and phrasal verbs. Candidates who demonstrate accurate use of shades of meaning and sophisticated ideas should be rewarded with higher marks for vocabulary.

Development and Fluency – Candidates were credited for extending their ideas and providing original contributions. Some examiners credited candidates' speed of delivery rather than their fluency. Examiners should allow candidates sufficient time to respond to questions so they can respond at length without interruptions if they are to access the higher marks for development and fluency.

Administration

Most recordings were of an acceptable quality, though in some cases background noise was evident. This could be distracting for candidates. If possible, candidates should be entered in candidate number order on the summary form. There were few errors in the addition of marks but there were some errors in the transfer of marks from the summary forms to the total marks on Submit for Assessment. Most centres submitted the correct number of samples and included the full range.

Internal moderation

Where applicable, most centres conducted internal moderation to ensure a correct rank order for all candidates at a centre when more than one examiner was used. Centres need to make it clear that internal moderation has occurred, and to indicate changes to the individual assessment criteria following internal moderation. Many centres with only one examiner conducted internal moderation when this is not necessary.

Comments on specific questions

Card A – Interests

In response to prompts 1 and 2, candidates were able to name a variety of interests and things they enjoyed in the past and wished to do in the future, for example, collecting anime cards, going to the park, keeping a diary, playing sports such as boxing and volleyball. Candidates gave a variety of responses to prompt 3, with many agreeing that some similarities in what friends enjoy doing are important. There were some complex sentences that were elicited by this point, e.g. 'Usually it means you have stuff in common so you can relate well to each other'. Responses to the final two prompts included some balanced discussion, with stronger candidates employing structures such as modals verbs and language for speculating. Many candidates attempted to present both sides of the argument.

Card B – Working from home

The first prompt brought out candidates' very recent experience of the pandemic, with stronger candidates using sophisticated vocabulary (e.g. 'outbreak', 'interaction') collocations (e.g. 'morning routine') and accurate structures (e.g. 'helping parents get used to technology'). Common responses to prompt 2 included 'doctor', 'engineer', 'plumber', 'fire fighter', and the idea that 'for some jobs you need to be present at the scene'. The third prompt enabled many candidates to talk about their recent experiences, with candidates citing advantages (e.g. 'flexible', 'save time') of being at home while working. The final two prompts allowed some complex structures to emerge (e.g. 'I agree to some extent but not completely as there would be many distractions'). Most candidates were able to make predictions about people's working lives in the future, e.g. 'technology will take our jobs and lead to poverty', 'jobs that can be done at home are mostly those that can be done on devices'.

Card C – Giving and receiving

The first prompt generated a range of responses; weaker candidates gave shorter answers (e.g. 'white dog', 'PS5') while stronger candidates elaborated on the gift they received (e.g. 'When I was very small, my mum gave me a meaningful gift'). Some candidates needed some encouragement to develop the second prompt, but many talked about giving advice to friends who were addicted to gaming and advising unhappy parents going through a divorce. In response to prompt 3, candidates talked about saying thank you and giving a gift in return. The fourth and fifth prompts elicited some more complex structures based around abstract concepts (e.g. 'It's a 'must' for homeless people.', 'their reaction would make me happy', 'I do agree but it must be a two-way thing').

Card D – Live sports events

This card was frequently chosen. In response to the first prompt, candidates gave examples of a range of events such as 'boxing matches online' or football and basketball games. Stronger candidates were able to talk in a detailed way about their experience ('pushed and shoved/an altercation/that's where it gets really intense'). The second prompt elicited discussions about the live experience where candidates could demonstrate their knowledge of appropriate vocabulary (e.g. 'atmosphere', 'yelling' 'cheering'). In response to the third prompt, most candidates talked about the issues of acquiring tickets to a live event and how expensive they were. Many candidates also talked about the crowds, fights between supporters and travelling to the stadium. The final prompts allowed for a more developed discussion and enabled candidates to use a range of functional language relating to the expressing of opinion (e.g. 'I prefer to', 'I do not agree', 'this is somewhat true').

Card E – Lifestyles

In response to prompt 1, most candidates were able to describe special food that is traditionally prepared for celebrations in their countries, with many stronger candidates expanding this by elaborating on the origin or preparation of the dish, or by evaluating it ('they are boiled in water at high degree', 'calorific food'). For prompt 2, many incorporated anecdotes about family celebrations, using a variety of tenses, linking devices and subject-specific vocabulary. Candidates gave their opinions on the educational aspect of films and TV in prompt 3, and explained how they personally learned about the lifestyles of other nationalities. They were able to provide a detailed justification supported by examples with some original ideas interwoven into their responses. Prompt 4 enabled candidates to use fixed expressions showing agreement and/or disagreement (e.g. 'I could not agree more') and to use a variety of collocations (e.g. 'junk food') when giving examples. Most candidates used appropriate structures to compare their lifestyles to those of their parents, agreeing that theirs is less healthy. They often used 'used to', conditionals and modal verbs. The final prompt allowed candidates to talk at length and use a range of complex structures such as passive voice and relative clauses.

Card F – Teenage life

Candidates were able to name a range of places and activities related to their leisure time when responding to prompt 1. Most of them used phrasal verbs (e.g. 'hang out'). Stronger candidates also used a range of modal verbs to talk about their habits and went beyond simply describing their routines by justifying using relative clauses. Prompt 2 enabled candidates to use a variety of past tenses. Candidates used vocabulary to express feelings ('delighted') and to describe their experiences (e.g. 'nerve-racking', 'emotional rollercoaster'). For prompt 3, candidates expanded their answers and used a variety of clauses with linking words to argue the advantages and disadvantages (e.g. 'If I had not been on social media at that time, I would not have as much knowledge about the conflict as I do now'). Prompt 4 also encouraged expanded answers, with most candidates giving detailed explanations and examples. For prompt 5, most candidates were able to use vocabulary related to the environment (e.g. 'recycle'). The fifth prompt enabled stronger candidates to speculate and to express some original ideas and opinions.

Card G – Times of the year

In prompt 1, candidates named their favourite time of the year and explained what aspects of it they find appealing, often referring to the weather climate and describing nature. Prompt 2 enabled candidates to talk about the time when their families go on holiday, give examples and reasons why certain times are preferable to others. Stronger candidates used this opportunity to incorporate past and future tenses. For prompt 3, candidates described an important festival in their country, providing many details and used a wide range of adjectives. Most candidates used the present simple, with some also using 'will' for present habits. Prompt 4 enabled candidates to outline the advantages and disadvantages of living in a country with similar

weather all year round, use conditional sentences and some sophisticated vocabulary related to the weather. The final prompt gave candidates the opportunity to speculate, to explain past experiences and to use complex structures such as conditionals, passive voice and modals. Examiners sometimes reminded candidates about the climate in other countries for those who had never travelled outside their country.

Card H – The good things in life

The first prompt enabled candidates to give examples and to explain their opinions, with most candidates mentioning friends or family members. For prompt 2, candidates often focused on their successes in tests or sports achievements using a range of past tenses. Stronger candidates generally maintained control over the narrative tenses and used compound sentences with a range of linking devices (e.g. 'although', 'as soon as') Stronger candidates showed some good use of adverbs of manner and modifiers. For prompt 3, candidates often focused on keeping their neighbourhood clean or helping the elderly in their daily lives, sometimes using a range of conditional sentences to explore the idea. Stronger candidates used some sophisticated vocabulary and subject-specific collocations (e.g. 'donate to charities', 'raise awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement'). Most candidates successfully used conditional sentences to answer prompt 4. Prompt 5 enabled candidates to use fixed expressions to give opinion and provide clear justification. Stronger candidates were able to use more complex structures and less common vocabulary (e.g. 'prevalent').

Card I – Where to go

Many candidates had not travelled much due to their age and the Covid travel restrictions over recent years. However, they still made a good attempt to discuss the topic. Candidates were able to talk about places they had visited using past tenses. The first two prompts enabled candidates to use descriptive vocabulary discussing places that they visited and places that they would like to recommend. Comparatives and superlatives were also used. Some candidates were not familiar with travel blogs, but once the examiner explained what they were, they were able to express their opinion about them. Most candidates felt that although they were interesting to read, they were not a reliable source of reference about a place as they were just one person's opinion. When responding to prompt 5, candidates demonstrated their ability to use future tenses and a range of appropriate vocabulary such as 'heritage', 'perspective', 'recommendations', 'stunning'.

Card J – Making and breaking

In response to prompt 1, candidates used past tenses and modal verbs as well as appropriate vocabulary such as 'finished product'. Some candidates spoke about building with blocks and toys when they were younger. Examples given in response to prompt 2 were 'a friend breaking a guitar' and 'breaking a hand trapped in a door'. Prompt 2 also enabled candidates to use a range of sentence structures, including relative clauses and if clauses. Candidates agreed that young people should learn how to make things at school and said that would enhance people's skills and could help to relieve stress from academic studies. In response to the final prompt, candidates mentioned repairing pianos, guitars and violins as they were expensive and could become more valuable with age.

Card K – Learning

This card was frequently used. The first prompt encouraged candidates to use the present perfect and past simple to talk about what they had learnt from parents and grandparents. Examples given for prompt 1 were how to control emotions, cooking and how to be independent. For prompt 2, candidates mostly spoke about helping their friends with school subjects. Several candidates mentioned using online videos to help them learn something on their own. The third prompt encouraged candidates to use comparatives to compare learning on their own with being taught by another person. Future and conditional tenses were used in response to prompt 4, as well as a wide range of vocabulary, including 'relevant,' 'essential,' 'solution,' 'motivation,' and 'successful'. Most candidates agreed with the final prompt.

Card L – Creative arts

This card was usually selected by examiners who had ascertained that the candidate was artistic during the warm-up. A range of tenses and conditional sentences was used to discuss the topic. Candidates spoke about digital art and setting artistic challenges with friends and judging each other's work. A wide range of appropriate adjectives were used to describe creative arts, e.g. 'complex', 'soothing', 'challenging' and 'beneficial'. The fourth prompt encouraged candidates to use modals verbs to give their views about whether talent was needed or not. In response to prompt 5, most candidates agreed that art 'brings colour to your life'.

Card M – Things people do

Candidates were able to relate ways they had helped someone in response to prompt 1. While some used the simple present tense, stronger candidates used a range of present and past tenses: 'when I was 8', 'I've been trying to help my friend' and the emphatic 'I did help someone'. Examples of help ranged from giving water to a man who fell off his bike and taking him to hospital, to helping mum with housework, to breaking up a fight as well as helping siblings with schoolwork. In prompt 2, responses varied from examples of chosen careers (e.g. 'I want to be a chef') to more general plans such as 'I want to go abroad and broaden my horizons'. Candidates used a range of future and conditional tenses to discuss their future plans. For prompt 3, there were many suggestions for improving the environment, such as not burning coal, using less plastic and planting more trees. In prompt 4, the general feeling was that parents, especially mothers, have more influence on children than celebrities. Prompt 5 elicited conversations about the possibilities online discussions had brought during lockdown and the isolation this type of communication sometimes creates.

Card N – Being a visitor

In response to prompt 1, candidates described their country of choice in terms of people, scenery, culture and traditions. Prompt 2 resulted in responses about sleepovers and some reference was made to Covid lockdowns preventing these visits whilst others referred to family dinners. Prompt 3 elicited additional responses to language difficulties and cultural differences. Stronger candidates commented on methods of tackling communication issues (e.g. 'listen to people carefully, 'ask them to speak slower'). When talking about prompt 4, candidates mentioned that the internet should be used to research a place in terms of currency and famous places to visit, with stronger candidates commenting that 'you may not necessarily see what's really on offer'. Prompt 5 allowed candidates to talk about improvements in technology due to the Covid outbreak and how it enabled people to stay in touch. Although most candidates were in favour of improvements technology might bring, there were also comments about how we might misread an online conversation due to inability to see body language.

Card O – Entertainment

Candidates were able to talk about what they did for entertainment with some detail and enthusiasm, with ideas ranging from playing musical instruments to hosting family and friends. Prompt 2 elicited examples of descriptive language and correct use of various past tenses. There were ample opportunities for candidates to demonstrate a wide range of vocabulary. Prompt 3 encouraged some good discussions, with stronger candidates giving relevant examples of concerts they had attended. Candidates who had not attended any live concerts described live concerts they had seen online. In prompt 4, all candidates were able to discuss the key differences using language of comparison, with stronger candidates demonstrating a wide use of tenses and similes. Prompt 5 enabled candidates to give well-defined opinions relating to relevant and current ideas.