ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/11
Reading and Writing (Core) 11

Key messages

- In **Exercise 1**, it is vital that candidates read the questions and the text with care, so that the key requirements of each question can be identified, and that they are less tempted by distracting information. They should also avoid copying too much information from the text, as this could contain detail that could make the answer incorrect and affect the mark awarded.
- In **Exercise 2**, candidates should scan all the texts to look for details which correspond to the key elements of each question. This information could be expressed using different words and structures, so candidates should look for synonyms and paraphrases. Texts may include the writer's attitude and opinion or information that is implied.
- In **Exercise 3**, candidates should focus on writing short notes using language from the text. Each note should correspond to the correct question. The number of bullet points indicates the number of answers required, and each answer should be placed on a separate line.
- In **Exercise 4**, candidates should read the question carefully in order to decide what information is required for the summary and what can be considered irrelevant and therefore not required.
- In **Exercise 5** in this series there were some good responses, which showed an awareness of the target audience by using appropriate informal language and a conversational style. The purpose for sending the email was generally recognised and many responses included sufficient development to gain marks in the top band for Content.
- In **Exercise 6** a more formal style for the report to the Headteacher was required. The report was to contain both details of how the sports day had gone and how it could be made more enjoyable next year. The response should be well organised, and ideas should show some development of the information from the prompts as well as new ideas from the candidates themselves.

General comments

Overall, most candidates were entered at the correct level. The need for more precise reading of the questions and the rubric was evident throughout the paper. This was particularly evident in **Questions 1**, **3** and **4**.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Many candidates found this to be a challenging exercise, but there were those who scored full marks. Some questions proved to be quite challenging and there was evidence that the text had been not fully understood. Candidates need to be aware that there may be distracting information in the text, and that when they have located the section of the text where the answer can be found, they should read this section closely in order to decide on the key information. More successful candidates interpreted the questions and selected relevant and exact details. Less successful answers were characterised by the frequent selection of distracting details from the text.

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Question 1

In this question many chose the distractor '*in the nineteenth century'* as the response. It was, in fact, in other European countries that beavers died out in the nineteenth century. It was three centuries earlier in Scotland. Responses which gave '*after the sixteenth century'* from the text were not credited. Putting '*after'* before '*sixteenth century*' gave another meaning. It was during the sixteenth century, not after, that beavers died out in Scotland.

Question 2

The question asked what clothing made from beaver fur was especially popular. The correct answer was '*hats*'. Those who offered '*hats and coats*' could not be awarded the mark.

Question 3

The correct answer was 10 years from 1995 to 2005. Some gave incorrect answers, choosing the distractor '*three years'*. Others appeared to add the three years to ten and offered '*thirteen years*' as their answer.

Question 4

Most candidates found the correct answer to this question. Those who chose the distractor '*the beavers' habit of blocking rivers would create floods*' could not be awarded the mark.

Question 5

There were many incorrect responses to this question which asked them which group of people were most strongly against the reintroduction of the beavers. Candidates chose one of the two distractors, most often '*local fishermen*' or '*the SWT*'. The correct answer was '*the region's farmers*', whose 'objections…regarding flooding were far harder to overcome' according to the text.

Question 6

Candidates were required to give two answers for this question. Many gave one correct answer of the two available in the Mark Scheme. Incorrect answers included '*conservation of the species*' instead of '*made a protected species by the government*' and the omission of '*allowed to*' before '*move to new territories'*.

Question 7

In answer to the question, many responded with '*the silent wave spreading across the water*'.

Question 8

This question was generally correctly answered. The favourite description of the writer concerning beavers was '*natural engineers*' and not '*eager beavers*' which was commonly seen.

Exercise 2

Question 9

Overall, there was a varying degree of success in this exercise. However, unlike in previous series, where this exercise proved difficult, candidates found this to be more accessible. A number achieved full marks. The questions where candidates generally gained marks were **9(b)**, **9(c)**, **9(d)** and **9(h)**. The most challenging were **9(a)**, **9(e)**, **9(f)** and **9(g)**.

(a) The first question asked who had found their accommodation smaller than they were expecting. The answer was to be found in Text C, where the key phrase was 'but the only ones available this year were probably half the size'.

(b) The key information appeared in Text A: 'perhaps they should have spent more time cleaning the holiday home'.

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(c) The answer was to be found in Text B: 'I can't say the colours the owners had painted the walls were to my liking…'

(d) The key fact was to be found in Text A: 'so we only went back to the house to sleep'.

(e) The answer was found in Text C. Having lost her passport, Alicia had to ask the owners to help her, as translators, with the report to the police.

(f) The answer was found in Text B: 'I can't remember how many times we got lost driving there'.

(g) The answer was found in Text A: 'I'd love to have been there when everything was frosty and white'.

(h) The answer was found in Text C: 'I reserved a couple of rooms for my parents and me next spring'.

Exercise 3

Candidates responded well to this exercise. The whole range of marks was awarded, and many scored full marks.

Question 10

Many were able to identify two correct details of the three available in the Mark Scheme. The very few who wrote two correct answers on the same line, for example '*originated in India around 5000 years ago'*, could only be awarded one mark.

Question 11

In the Mark Scheme there were six acceptable responses, and all were identified by the candidates. The most common wrong answer given was '*yoga can help with weight loss*', but as the text says this '*requires far more investigation before any firm conclusions can be drawn*', it was not an acceptable response.

Question 12

This question appeared to be the more challenging of the three. The most common error was to omit an important detail, for example, many wrote simply *'frustration'* as the response, when the problem was '*frustration at the lack of progress*'. It was the same for those who chose for their response '*yoga was not intended as a replacement for exercise' as* '*targets'* was the key word and its omission meant the response could not be credited.

Exercise 4

Most candidates were able to score well for Content, by selecting the advice given by the writer to those intending on attending the festival. Many were able to score full marks. Those who scored less had often spent at least half the total number of words on an introduction that did not answer the rubric requirements. Responses which successfully paraphrase and include suitable connectives were awarded marks in the top band for Language.

Exercise 5

An email to a friend

In this series there were many successful responses which achieved marks in the top band for both Content and Language. Most showed a good sense of purpose and were well organised following the prompts as a guide. Most successful responses showed an awareness of the target audience. Some candidates suggested a third person, often a parent of the addressee might be more suitable to be asked to help with the problem. Many responses had a problem with a Maths, or occasionally a Science, homework. Often it was being absent from the class when the homework was set, that had caused the problem or perhaps inattention in the classroom.

Candidates are advised to maintain the informal style throughout the email in this exercise.

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Exercise 6

This exercise proved to be more challenging than the previous exercise. Many responses did not successfully employ a suitable tone or register for a report for the Headteacher of the school.

Less successful responses concentrated on one aspect, usually the sports day itself, giving less emphasis to how it could be made more enjoyable next year. The more successful responses weighed both aspects well, often stating their own opinions rather than those of others and giving ideas of their own for making sports day more enjoyable for all by including, for example, a refreshment stall.

Most used the ideas in the prompts for improvement next year, including a timetable for when events were to start, so that everybody knows when an event is to start. Many wrote that there should also be no obligation to take part next year.

From a Language point of view, there were some good examples of more formal cohesive devices to introduce these new ideas, and some linking phrases to signpost the direction of argument. Some candidates took the opportunity to use some less common vocabulary such as '*no obligation'* and '*feedback*', which contributed to the formality of the report.

Generally, a greater emphasis on a wider range of vocabulary, and accuracy of simple grammatical structures is an ongoing area for improvement.

Candidates responded well to this paper and the full range of marks was achieved.

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ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/21
Reading and Writing (Extended) 21

Key messages

- Candidates should carefully read the instructions and recognise the requirements for each question, providing precise responses. They should note reference and linking words in the texts (e.g. those, this, the former, on the other hand, while, whereas).
- The spelling of any key word in a response should not form a different word which will change the meaning of the response. Handwriting should be legible.
- In **Exercise 1** candidates should ensure that no incorrect information is included with a correct response.
- In **Exercise 2**, candidates should read the paragraphs as a whole, as identifying the correct answer often involves following discourse markers in consecutive sentences rather than simply recognising a single key word or synonym.
- In **Exercise 3** notes should be precise and provide key details. These may include verbs or adjectives that relate to the requirements of the headings. There should be one note per bullet point and extra notes cannot be credited.
- In **Exercise 4** candidates must keep within the 120-word limit or they may lose marks as content points made after 120 words cannot be credited. They should focus on the requirements of the summary and include only what is relevant. They should try to avoid lifting whole sentences or phrases containing content points directly from the text with no attempt to express points in their own words.
- In **Exercises 5** and **6** candidates should attempt to develop the response as fully as possible. Shorter responses are unlikely to cover the requirements of the task adequately or develop the task sufficiently.

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.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Precise answers are required for this comprehension 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.

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Question 1

This question was well answered. The most common incorrect response was 'after the sixteenth century'. This may have been because candidates read, 'with no recorded sightings there after the sixteenth century' without fully considering the context. Some candidates also gave '*nineteenth century*', which was when beavers died out in many European countries.

Question 2

This question was very well answered. Occasionally, the response '*coats*' was seen. Candidates may not have focused on 'popular' in the question. A few candidates wrote '*hats and coats*', which could not be credited as an incorrect detail was included.

Question 3

This question was quite well answered. Incorrect responses included '*further 3 years'* and '*13 years'*. This may have been due to not noting the requirements of the question, which asked about the preparation of the first application. Occasionally, responses omitted 'years', which meant this incomplete response could not be credited.

Question 4

This question was well answered. The omission of the key detail 'ancient' from the response was the main reason why responses could not be credited. A minority referred to concerns about beavers '*blocking rivers'* or '*creating floods'*. However, the text states that this was 'not seen as a serious issue'.

Question 5

This question was quite well answered. Most incorrect responses referred to other groups of people such as fishermen or the SWT. These groups are mentioned, however, the SWT was supportive of reintroducing beavers, while the fishermen's concerns were short-lived. The text states, 'but objections from the regions farmers. were far harder to overcome', showing clearly that farmers were most strongly against the reintroduction.

Question 6

This question was quite well answered. Some responses featured two correct details, but a significant number only included one, and in some cases, none. The key idea of 'being allowed' to move to new territories was sometimes omitted for one detail, and other incorrect responses such as '*SWT made further proposals'* were given. A few candidates wrote '*proposals regarding the conservation of the species'*, when in fact the important decision made was to conserve or protect beavers. Occasionally, candidates added an incorrect date to the response, e.g. '*made a protected species in 2018'* when this was in 2019, 'the following year'.

Question 7

This question was fairly well answered. A significant number of the following incorrect response was seen: '*a small, silent wave*'. This was what the writer looks for, but it is not a sound, as required in the question. Candidates should consider both the question and the text carefully in order to locate the correct answer.

Question 8

This question was very well answered. The most frequent incorrect answer was '*eager beavers'*. This phrase is mentioned but the text states that the writer prefers to call them 'natural engineers'. Carefully reading of referencing and linking devices in the text was required.

Question 9

This question was generally well answered, and some candidates gained the full four marks available. The most common incorrect responses did not include all the significant details which were required for a correct answer. For example, they claimed that beavers had '*died'* as opposed to 'died out', which changes the meaning. They also omitted key details such as the fact that they died out in the 'nineteenth century' and that this was in 'many European countries', or that they had survived '*until the eighteenth century'* and that this

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was in 'England'. Some responded with the population of beavers had '*increased worldwide'* as opposed to the idea that it 'was increasing'. There were some responses which referred to things like '*blocking rivers'*, '*building dams'* or that beavers had been '*hunted for fur'*. The question asked for details about beavers other than those in the Scotland.

Exercise 2

Most candidates responded very well to this matching exercise, gaining at least six of the ten marks available. There was a significant number of candidates who provided ten correct responses. Generally, **Questions (a)**, **(b)**, **(e)** and **(f)** proved the most challenging. A small minority of candidates left some or all of the questions unanswered. Candidates are not only required to skim and scan the text, but also identify the key words in the question and ensure that the text they select fully supports their choice of answer. They should look for synonyms and rephrasing of the ideas, rather than the same words or phrases in the question and text. Candidates should read the paragraphs as a whole, as identifying the correct answer often involves following discourse markers in consecutive sentences rather than simply recognising a single key word or synonym.

(a) This question was generally well answered. Candidates needed to identify someone whose accommodation was smaller than expected. This was phrased in option **C** as the 'usually huge' rooms being 'this year…half the size' and therefore 'a bit of a shock'. A few candidates gave **B**, possibly because the text states, 'normally pictures...on websites…make the rooms look bigger'. **D** was another commonly chosen incorrect answer, perhaps because the house was 'small'. However, for **D**, the size was not unexpected: 'we thought it'd be fine'.

(b) This question was correctly answered by the majority of candidates. The correct response was person **D**, who referred to 'quite a bit of tension' when the two families had conflicting interests. Option **C** was the most common incorrect response, possibly because the text states, 'I can't think of anything worse than sharing'.

(c) This question was well answered. Most candidates correctly identified **A** as the 'rather dirty' accommodation, linking this to 'perhaps they should have spent more time cleaning' in section **A**. **B** was the most commonly chosen incorrect response, possibly due to the statement: 'there was no need to clean', which suggests the accommodation wasn't dirty.

(d) This question was very well answered. Very few candidates failed to identify **B** as the correct response. The question asked about someone who admitted not liking how the accommodation was decorated. This was linked to phrase of being not 'to my taste' in **B**.

(e) This question was very well answered. Candidates needed to find the person who spent little time in their accommodation during the holiday. This was **A**, as she 'only went back to the house to sleep'. The most common incorrect response was **D**, possibly due to a misreading of the reference to 'spending far more time in the house…than we were hoping'.

(f) This question was fairly well answered. Candidates had to identify a person who had to ask the accommodation owners for help. The correct answer was **C** and required the candidates to link the statement, 'it belongs to a lovely family' in one sentence with 'I had to get them to translate' in the next. A common incorrect response was **A**, possibly because of the statement: 'The owners…gave us tips'.

(g) This question was very well answered. A significant majority of candidates chose speaker **B**, correctly linking the meaning of 'had difficulty finding the way' in the question with 'we got lost' in the text.

(h) This question was quite well answered. Candidates were required to find someone who 'wishes they'd stayed… at a different time of year'. This was expressed in text **A** as 'I'd love to have been there when everything was frosty'. **C** was the most common incorrect response, perhaps due to references to the seasons, although the person states, 'I've always enjoyed it whatever time of year'.

(i) This question was very well answered. Almost all candidates correctly chose option **D**, linking the idea of 'explore the area' in the question to 'make the most of … things to do in the region'.

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(j) This question very well answered. Nearly all candidates chose the correct answer of **C**, successfully connecting the synonyms of 'booked' and 'reserved' in the question and text, as well as connecting the ideas of 'go back to the same accommodation' and 'there…next spring'.

Exercise 3

Candidates responded very well to this note-taking exercise, with a large number of candidates gaining the full nine marks available. Notes were not credited when they omitted key information or if incorrect information was included. It is important for notes to focus on key ideas related to the heading and whilst the notes should be succinct and accurate, they need to contain essential information. Very few candidates wrote notes under the wrong heading.

Question 11

This section was very well attempted, and all candidates correctly provided two clear notes from the possible three options. Some responses combined two ideas by one bullet point, for example, '*yoga originated in India and was developed 5000 years ago*', but still identified a third correct note for the second bullet point to access full marks. A few responses featured unconnected responses, for example, '*it's a set of combined physical, mental and spiritual exercises*'. Although the information was included in the text, the response did not give information about the history of yoga. Some responses omitted key details, writing notes such as '*nineteenth century in western nations*', '*around 5000 years ago*'. These should have been prefaced by 'introduced' and 'developed' to include a key verb. Occasionally responses omitted key words as in '*developed 5000 years'* or provided incorrect information as in '*developed 500 years ago'*.

Question 12

This section was very well attempted, and the majority of candidates identified four correct responses out of a possible six. Candidates generally included key details from the notes. Sometimes a note was attempted, but key information was omitted such as 'back pain'. This response needed to be focused regarding the proven benefits of yoga as in 'reduces back pain'. A few candidates gave '*it helps with weight loss'*, which was not an example of a proven benefit of yoga but a possible benefit requiring more investigation.

Question 13

This section was very well attempted with most candidates identifying three correct responses as required out of a possible six. Some candidates provided unconnected responses, for example, '*some teachers may be untrained'*, which is mentioned in the text, but is not an example of a problem that can occur when doing yoga but a cause of the problem 'learning wrong techniques'. Some candidates gave responses which omitted key details, for example '*short sessions may cause frustration'* or *'frustration'*, whereas the problem was 'lack of progress'. Responses needed to describe the problem that can occur doing yoga rather than feelings. Some responses included additional information, for example, '*You may learn the wrong techniques if the teacher isn't trained'*, where the additional information did not negate the correct response.

Exercise 4

In **Exercise 4**, candidates are 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 counting the number of words they write. This will ensure they do not lose marks for both Content and Language by exceeding the word limit.

In this exercise, a significant number of candidates provided eight content points correctly and most gave at least four. Some responses, however, exceeded the word range guidance and some featured a lot of lifting from the text with little attempt at paraphrasing. This affected the mark that could be awarded for language.

Some responses featured a lengthy introduction summarising the first paragraph of the text. This did not contain content points, which meant that some content points were made after 120 words as much of the summary was initially irrelevant and could not be credited. Some points did not include key details. For example, incomplete advice given was '*grow a few'* whereas the advice was to 'grow a few to begin with'. Certain points made were incorrect. For example, an advantage was that 'it can be done in different locations', but this is not the same as 'done in any location', and could therefore not be credited.

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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 responses featured standard linking/sequencing words like 'firstly', 'secondly', 'in addition', 'moreover' while others connected the information very skilfully using referencing words or phrases such as '*something else to take into consideration is* …'. The imperative also lent itself well to providing advice. For example, '*always check the condition of the plants you buy'*, which very effectively covered the idea of 'select your plants carefully' There were some responses seen which very successfully re-phrased and linked the content ideas, writing for example, '*Bear in mind that plants cultivated should be chosen mindfully and that your garden needs plenty of sunlight*.' Such language was deserving of 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 having difficulty with a piece of homework. The extent to which the bullet points are addressed and developed within the context will determine the mark awarded 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.

Content

Generally, candidates wrote relevant emails in a mainly consistent style and register. It was noticeable that some responses were less than 150 words, which generally meant there was not adequate development of the task for higher band marks to be awarded.

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. These were sometimes lacking in detail and expansion, especially if the response was slightly short. Candidates generally attempted an informal register, though this was not always consistent. For example, phrases such as 'I would like to inform that I have some difficult homework' or linking words such as 'in conclusion' and 'furthermore' are considered formal and not wholly appropriate in this kind of email.

Regarding the kind of homework, Maths, Science and English were the most common subjects causing problems, but there was also a range of tasks such as planning an event, creating a video or giving a power point presentation. Some less common topics were reports on Covid 19, marketing strategies, nutrients in food, world cultures, and art. The most frequently given reason for the difficulty was that the candidate had been ill and had missed class, so needed the lesson notes from their friend. Other reasons given were not being good at that subject, being too busy with other subjects and having no time to spend researching, or not being able to use the internet to find information. Candidates asked for help by inviting the friend round to study together, having an online meeting, or emailing notes. The help was sometimes implied when a candidate had explained in detail what they were struggling with, and then acknowledged how good the friend was at the subject or whatever the homework required. This bullet point was often the least well developed as details of the help required were limited.
Effective emails included a suitably conversational style where the writer connected personally to the recipient. They effectively covered the three bullet points and began with natural openings that contained 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 such as, '*How are you? I hope that your history test went well. I'm writing to you because you're the only one that can help me with this, so please don't make fun of me*.'

Language

Most candidates attempted a good range of well organised language. There were a few who used generally simple structures, which were limited in range and accuracy. Some candidates were able to construct accurate sentences of varying lengths, with more complex structures and a range of appropriately used, less common vocabulary. Most emails included paragraphing, which when used appropriately, helped to organise the response.

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Language deserving of the higher bands should demonstrate a high level of grammatical accuracy, with complex structures. There should be a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. An example of such language is, '*However, I'm probably finding this task so hard because the day my teacher explained these topics, I was completely distracted by my classmate Livia, the strawberry blonde girl I introduced you to a couple of months ago, who was crying non-stop*.' In this example, complex language is used accurately and effectively. There were candidates who attempted more complex language but could not produce this accurately in terms of grammar, punctuation or spelling such as, '*The homework is about reaserching on fantasy books, and according then to invent an own story, but all the fantasy books I read, which are digital books, because I don't like read paper books, are eliminated just I finished them'*. A significant minority of candidates used commas instead of full stops, writing whole paragraphs that only contained one sentence. This tended to impede communication. Candidates should try to ensure language used is accurate, appropriate and demonstrates a range of structures and vocabulary, along with correct punctuation and spelling. Paragraphs should ideally be included to guide the reader.

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 type of task.

Content

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. As this report was for the headteacher, it required a degree of formality, although for some candidates the headteacher was clearly not a distant figure but someone approachable, who would listen to and respect their views. As long as the register is appropriate and consistent regarding the relationship to the target audience, this is acceptable. A number of responses successfully used sub-headings, which was an appropriate format.

The positive aspects of the sports day often included the idea of being inspired by participants who excelled, but candidates offered a range of benefits to the event such as good food, smooth running organisation, celebrity visits and having time away from study. Ways to make it more enjoyable included medals/prizes, a longer or a shorter time for the day, the provision of water or shade, and different activities for those students not keen on sport. How to make it more enjoyable was sometimes just implied, taking the form of what wasn't good about the event, rather than being about future change for the better. Candidates should ideally aim for clarity when fulfilling the task to attain content marks in the top band. A minority of candidates omitted to mention how the event could be more enjoyable, and the whole report focused on what was good about the day, which affected the content mark.

Language

The full range of marks was awarded for language. A number of candidates clearly attempted to employ more complex structures and more sophisticated vocabulary. There were candidates who demonstrated a range of advanced structures, with very few errors, enabling them to achieve the precision required for marks in the higher bands. Their writing included accurate, varied sentence structures, good punctuation and paragraphing, along with ambitious vocabulary. This quality of language is exemplified in '*Others said that the festival should have included the younger students too, and that they might enjoy it even more than we did*' and, '*I believe this is an amazing and original initiative as it is a good way for students to meet new people who practise the same sports as them, as well as it helps with school community bonding'*. Some candidates attempted more complex language which included noticeable errors as in, '*In these day, sports and prejudice are linked, for example a girl that play volleyball is going to have bigger non feminin arms or a boy that dance is less masculine*.' Other lower band responses used generally simple structures with frequent errors, which often impeded communication. Examples include '*I know that would enjoy the student because there is going to be any different game*.' Again, a few candidates used commas instead of full stops to punctuate their writing. In general, the majority of candidates used language that was either satisfactory or competent.

Overall, many responses were cohesive, clear and well-balanced.

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ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/31
Listening (Core) 31

Key messages

- Candidates need to be reminded to provide clear and legible responses. The formation of individual letters should 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 absolutely 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 etc.).
- More pronunciation awareness activities, particularly of connected speech (e.g. assimilation of sounds, omission of sounds), would be beneficial to learners. Learners 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, etc.).
- Learners should practise a range of listening skills (e.g. listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for grammatical/lexical detail, etc.) in various formats (e.g. announcements, informal dialogues, formal talks, etc.).

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.

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- 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 should 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 ‘castle’. Several candidates chose the distractors ‘market’ and ‘museum’.

(b) There was a very mixed response here. Some candidates did not include the preposition and just wrote ’river’ while a large number of candidates wrote ‘in the river’. ‘River’ was sometimes spelt as ‘rever’ or ‘reever’. Other responses that could not be credited were ‘hotel’, ‘station’ and ‘neither the river’

Question 2

(a) This was very well attempted, and the vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark. Some candidates went for the distractor ‘laptop’ and some candidates lost the mark by writing the plural ‘printers’. Other responses that could not be credited were ‘print’, ‘printed’ and ‘printing’

(b) There was a mixed level of success here. Quite a few candidates included ‘receipt’ or ‘guarantee’ with the correct answer ‘instructions’ and lost the mark. Incorrect responses included ‘last instructions’ and ‘the last one’.

Question 3

(a) This question caused difficulty for most candidates and proved to be very challenging for many weaker candidates. A large number of candidates wrote ‘electricity card’. Quite a few candidates wrote the plural ‘electricity bills’ and lost the mark.

(b) This question was exceptionally well attempted, with many candidates scoring the mark by writing the correct spellings. Some candidates chose the distractor and wrote ‘energy’ while a few had spelling issues.

Question 4

(a) This question was fairly well attempted. Most of the candidates chose the distractor ‘giving directions’. Very few wrote ‘handing out water’. A large number of candidates had issues with the spelling of ‘registration’.

(b) This question was extremely well answered. However, some candidates wrote ‘finishing lane’ and lost the mark while some candidates went for the distractors ‘first aid tent’ and ‘starting point’.

Exercise 2

Question 5

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

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(i) Overall, this question was well attempted, with quite a few candidates writing the distractor 'construction'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'designer' and 'next'.

(ii) On the whole, this question was quite well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates lost the mark due to spelling issues e.g. 'flexiball' and 'flexibile'. There were some random wrong answers that could not be credited e.g. 'welcoming' and 'hall'.

(iii) There was a mixed level of success here – responses were fairly evenly divided between the key 'sound' and the distractors 'light' and 'windows'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'quietness' and 'noise'.

(iv) There was a mixed level of success here, with the most popular incorrect response being 'the view'. Some candidates wrote 'roof stops', 'break times' or 'roof shops' which could not be credited.

(v) This was generally well attempted by majority of candidates although quite a few candidates left it blank. However, some candidates wrote 'art stadium' or 'art facility' and lost the mark.

(vi) This was fairly well attempted. Many candidates gave the distracting detail 'music practice rooms' while others wrote 'local community' or 'sporting centre' which could not be credited.

(vii) There was a very mixed level of success here. In majority of cases, the incorrect response was the distractor 'December' while a large number of candidates had spelling issues.

(viii) This was generally well answered but the following incorrect responses were often encountered: 'display room', 'tour' and 'displace'.

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.

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ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/41
Listening (Extended) 41

Key messages

- Candidates need to be reminded to provide clear and legible responses. The formation of individual letters must be clear. Where handwriting cannot be read, no marks can be awarded.
- 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 absolutely 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 etc.).
- More pronunciation awareness activities, particularly of connected speech (e.g. assimilation of sounds, omission of sounds), would be beneficial to learners. Learners 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, etc.).
- Learners should practise a range of listening skills (e.g. listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for grammatical/lexical detail, etc.) in various formats (e.g. announcements, informal dialogues, formal talks, etc.).

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.

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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.

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(b) There was a very mixed response here. Some candidates did not include the preposition and just wrote ’river’ while a large number of candidates wrote ‘in the river’. ‘River’ was sometimes spelt as ‘rever’ or ‘reever’. Other responses that could not be credited were ‘hotel’, ‘station’ and ‘neither the river’

Question 2

(a) This was very well attempted, and the vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark. Some candidates went for the distractor ‘laptop’ and some candidates lost the mark by writing the plural ‘printers’. Other responses that could not be credited were ‘print’, ‘printed’ and ‘printing’

(b) There was a mixed level of success here. Quite a few candidates included ‘receipt’ or ‘guarantee’ with the correct answer ‘instructions’ and lost the mark. Incorrect responses included ‘last instructions’ and ‘the last one’.

Question 3

(a) This question caused difficulty for most candidates and proved to be very challenging for many weaker candidates. A large number of candidates wrote ‘electricity card’. Quite a few candidates wrote the plural ‘electricity bills’ and lost the mark. Other responses that could not be credited were ‘electricity pill’, ‘electricity belt’ and the distractor ‘credit card’.

(b) This question was exceptionally well attempted, with many candidates scoring the mark by writing the correct spellings. Some candidates chose the distractor and wrote ‘energy’ while a few had spelling issues.

Question 4

(a) This question was fairly well attempted. Most of the candidates went for the distractor ‘giving directions’. Very few wrote ‘handing out water’. A large number of candidates had issues with the spelling of ‘registration’ and wrote ‘regstration’ or ‘regitestion’.

(b) This question was extremely well answered. However, some candidates wrote ‘finishing lane’ and lost the mark while some candidates went for the distractors ‘first aid tent’ and ‘starting point’.

Exercise 2

Question 5

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

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(ii) On the whole, this question was quite well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Some candidates lost the mark due to spelling issues e.g. 'flexiball' and 'flexibile'. There were some random wrong answers that could not be credited e.g. 'welcoming' and 'hall'.

(iii) There was a mixed level of success here – responses were fairly evenly divided between the key 'sound' and the distractors 'light' and 'windows'. Other responses that could not be credited were 'quietness' and 'noise'.

(iv) There was a mixed level of success here, with the most popular incorrect response being 'the view'. Some candidates wrote 'roof stops', 'break times' or 'roof shops' which could not be credited.

(v) This was generally well attempted by majority of candidates although quite a few candidates left it blank. However, some candidates wrote 'art stadium' or 'art facility' and lost the mark.

(vi) This was fairly well attempted. Many candidates gave the distracting detail 'music practice rooms' while others wrote 'local community' or 'sporting centre' which could not be credited.

(vii) There was a very mixed level of success here. In majority of cases, the incorrect response was the distractor 'December' while a large number of candidates had spelling issues.

(viii) This was generally well answered but the following incorrect responses were often encountered: 'display room', 'tour' and 'displace'.

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.

Part A

(i) This was generally well attempted by most candidates. Many wrong answers resulted from mishearing e.g. 'motoways' and 'motor waves'. There were some random guesses from some candidates e.g. 'birds'. Some candidates wrote 'routes' and 'airways' and lost the mark.

(ii) There was a mixed level of success here. 'Area controller' and 'airport' were the most common incorrect answers. Some responses that could not be credited were 'approaching' and 'proach'.

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(iii) This question elicited many incorrect responses and was quite poorly attempted. There were several spelling issues. Some responses that could not be credited were ‘holding pan’, ‘holding pannel’ and ‘holden pattern’.

(iv) There was a very mixed level of success here. The distractor ‘control centre’ was often encountered. Quite a few candidates wrote ‘control tower’ and lost the mark. Other attempts that could not be credited were ‘tour’, ‘office block’ and the plural ‘towers’.

(v) This was really well answered by the vast majority of candidates. Incorrect responses were the distractors ‘English’ and ‘attention’.

Part B

(i) This was really well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. There were some alternatives but quite a few variations in spelling. The most common incorrect response was the distractor ‘wild flowers’. Some responses that could not be credited were ‘sell fish’, ‘sheel fish’ and ‘fish’ on its own.

(ii) There was a mixed level of success here. The vast majority of candidates were able to pick out the correct answer ‘tides’ but there were many spelling issues. Some candidates lost the mark by giving responses such as ‘seasons’, ‘time’ and ‘climate’.

(iii) This was extremely well attempted, and the vast majority of candidates were able to score a mark here. Some candidates lost the mark when they went for the other numbers they heard e.g. 1400 and 19.

(iv) There was a mixed level of success here as some candidates selected the distractors ‘passenger’ or ‘helicopter’. Some other responses that could not be credited were ‘emergency landing’ and ‘emergence’.

(v) This question was consistently well answered by the vast majority of candidates. Very few candidates gave the distractor ‘square’ but the mark was lost because of spelling issues. A few candidates wrote the plural ‘triangles’ which could not be credited.

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ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (SPEAKING ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0993/51
Speaking

Key messages

- The conduct and administration of the tests was generally good, with most examiners displaying high levels of professionalism in their interactions with candidates.
- In **Part D**, the assessed part of the test, most examiners engaged with candidates and encouraged them to expand their responses to individual prompts using open questions. Examiners should explore individual prompts in more detail and link their questions to what candidates have said.
- Examiners are reminded that they are marking the candidate for what they can do and not what they cannot do.
- Examiners are advised to use a timer to ensure that Parts B, C and D are of the appropriate length.

General comments

Part A

This part of the test was generally conducted well, although some examiners paraphrased rather than read the script, which sometimes resulted in the loss of important information.

Part B

This part was well conducted. Most examiners followed the recommended timings, though there was a tendency for slightly short **Part Bs**. In most cases, the examiner used the warm-up to put candidates at ease. They mostly asked appropriate questions, focusing on hobbies, interests and family.

Part C

The majority of examiners chose a topic card related to the interests expressed by the candidates during the warm-up. However, there were some tests where choices appeared to have been made in advance. Most examiners announced the topic card chosen and encouraged candidates to take their allocated preparation time even if they indicated that they were ready. Most centres used the full 2–3 mins. Candidates rarely asked for clarification. Occasionally examiners read through the prompts before the preparation time began. Some examiners repeated the instructions for **Part C** when handing out the card.

Part D

Most examiners developed a conversation with the candidate, reacting well to the candidate's responses to the prompts and using open questions to develop the discussion. In a few cases, monologues were encouraged, with minimal intervention from the examiner. Some examiners went too rapidly through the prompts, resulting in conversations considerably shorter than the recommended minimum length of six minutes. They then had to add topic-related questions of their own at the end. Prompts were normally used as they appear on the card and not paraphrased. Many examiners supported candidates by asking appropriate open questions, developing ideas arising from the prompts.

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Application of the marking criteria

The marking criteria were applied accurately by most examiners.

Structure

There was generally accurate marking in this area. When inaccuracy occurred, it was usually in the lower to middle mark range. The overall tendency was to mark generously in the higher mark range, perhaps based on how much the candidate said, rather than the range and accuracy of the structures used. In such cases, the higher mark should be reflected in Development and Fluency. The main difficulty seemed to arise when deciding a mark for candidates who spoke accurately, but without much ambition or for candidates who showed a lot of ambition but made frequent errors. Ambition should be rewarded when more complex structures are attempted.

Vocabulary

On the whole, examiners demonstrated a good understanding of the level of vocabulary expected and applied the marking criteria well. There were some instances of stronger candidates not being awarded marks for the use of idioms, phrasal verbs and collocations. Vocabulary tended to be slightly generously marked in the higher mark range, with examiners not appearing to notice that shades of meaning and sophisticated ideas were not being communicated. Examiners should reward topic-specific vocabulary and attempts to use appropriate strategies to use synonyms. However, when candidates use extended explanations, this does not meet the Band 1 Vocabulary criteria for ‘precision’. It is worth noting that informal language is just as valid in terms of linguistic skills as formal language, but was not always rewarded.

Development and Fluency

Most centres accurately marked candidates’ performance in this area. There was occasional slight severity in the middle mark range. Examiners should engage in conversation so that candidates have the opportunity to show that a conversation is being maintained, and that they can respond to changes in direction. Some candidates’ performance was marked generously, either when candidates had been allowed to deliver a monologue and there was little evidence of a ‘competent conversation’, or when examiners had given the candidate little opportunity to develop or expand the topic as a result of going through the prompts too quickly. Candidates who spoke with deliberation and took their time to choose more sophisticated vocabulary and included a range of structures, were sometimes marked down in centres where ‘fluent’ was interpreted to mean ‘fast’.

Administration

Recordings

The sound quality of most recordings was good. However, some candidates’ responses were not clear which might have been because the candidate was not close enough to the microphone. In a few cases, background noise was an issue or tests were interrupted by people entering the room.

Documentation

Most centres used the PDF version of the summary form (SESF) and were accurate in entering and organising the data. Some centres scanned and uploaded handwritten versions of the form; others took photographs of the completed form. In both of these cases the quality of the image was variable. There were some errors of incorrect addition/transfer of marks and candidates not appearing in candidate number order. At some centres too many examiners were used.

Internal moderation

While some centres carried out internal moderation fully and accurately, many did not carry it out at all, despite using more than one examiner. Where internal moderation is carried out, it should always be recorded in the right-hand column on the Speaking Examination Summary Form, even if there are no changes to the marks.

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Comments on specific questions

Card A – Popular places

This card was frequently chosen. Some candidates gave examples of famous natural landmarks such as waterfalls, mountains and parks, while others mentioned cities and monuments, using terms such as 'tourist attraction' to explain their popularity. Prompt 2 provided more detail about specific attractions such as animal parks, aquariums and the creatures observed there. Candidates were able to expand on prompt 3 using vocabulary to express feelings (e.g. 'serenity, 'relaxation') along with comparatives to describe both the advantages and disadvantages (e.g. 'more pleasant', 'more secure', 'less protected'). Prompt 4 elicited broad agreement and candidates developed their answers using modals and linking words to express the need for protection. Although tourism brought economic benefits and the opportunity to experience other cultures first hand, the downside was the pollution, littering and damage caused by too many tourists. Prompt 5 saw nuanced responses to explain that the internet could be a useful starting point, while acknowledging that not everyone can afford to explore new places in person. Most candidates agreed that real life experience was better than seeing things on a screen, and that searching the internet for information before a trip was useful.

Card B – The importance of music

This card was frequently chosen. Prompt 1 gave candidates the chance to demonstrate a range of vocabulary to describe emotions, to talk about musical genres such as classical, jazz, gospel and pop, and to use specific terms to deal with music itself, for example 'lyrics', 'voice', 'rhythm' and 'beat'. Prompt 2 elicited descriptions of the atmosphere of live music events (e.g. 'energetic', 'noisy', 'crowded'). Live performances ranged from a school talent show to a festival in a stadium in Europe, complete with lighting show and sale of merchandise. Candidates described these experiences using a range of adjectives, e.g. 'phenomenal', 'incredible', 'amazing'. In response to prompt 3, candidates expressed definite opinions: 'I prefer … because…', ' People lie to themselves when they say they can concentrate…'. Others weighed up pros and cons using modals: 'It can help you focus.', 'You can easily get distracted.' Using instrumental music as an aid seemed popular because it helped concentration, promoted a calm mood and assisted memory. On the other hand, the wrong music could be distracting and counter-productive. Prompt 4 gave the opportunity for candidates to name various instruments and suggest positive outcomes, for example, providing a challenge and improving muscle memory as well as the chance to play with others. Candidates agreed that learning to play an instrument should not be mandatory. Modals of possibility were employed in responses to prompt 5: 'it could be uplifting', 'it can be therapeutic.' Considered opinions were introduced using terms such as, 'It depends'. There was strong agreement that most music improved mood, bringing a sense of joy, an escape and relaxation but that sad music could cause greater sadness.

Card C – Greeting people

There were some interesting responses to prompt 1, acknowledging different customs and status in society. Specific vocabulary was included to depict this, for example 'genuflect', 'prostate', 'elaborate salutations'. Most candidates were able to explain that the manner of greeting often depended on familiarity and level of formality – 'greetings aren't always the same'. Prompt 2 saw candidates use some effective collocations, e.g. 'show respect', 'speak politely', 'smile nicely', 'interact fully'. When discussing prompt 3, being able to use a few basic words and phrases together with awareness of cultural differences of the host country was considered important. Prompt 3 elicited strong approval for the idea: 'it makes people more comfortable', 'shows willing to learn about the country and its customs', 'no matter how good you are, you are always learning.' In response to prompt 4, candidates agreed that the topic of conversation differed according to who you were talking to and finding out what things they had in common helped communication, making the distinction between personal, private and the trust built up between friends which allowed them to share secrets. Prompt 5 also distinguished between face-to-face conversations and written communications, exploring the idea of personal and public. Candidates were able to expand on the idea that we communicate a lot more using the written word on social media while also warning that people 'could expose themselves too much on social media.

Card D - Markets

Many candidates who discussed this topic had quite strong opinions. To start, they used a variety of structures, present and past tenses, and descriptive language to talk about markets. Stronger candidates described their appearance, characteristics and atmosphere ('chaos', 'festive', 'commotion'). Candidates drew on personal experiences and used a range of comparative constructions to list the positive and negative aspects of markets and shopping malls. Modals were used to discuss thoughts and feelings about working on a market. Stronger candidates used hypothetical structures. Opinions regarding street food were

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often expressed using conditionals, modals and comparatives. Stronger candidates used personal anecdotes and a range of past tenses. Candidates used present structures to give their opinions about shopping trips, using language to describe the benefits. Most responses included a range of appropriate vocabulary, e.g. ‘rowdy’, ‘ambience’, ‘cramped’, ‘tolerate’, ‘processed food’.

Card E – Sharing meals

When talking about their eating preferences, most candidates supported their answers and expressed their opinions using a variety of structures. Stronger candidates expanded their responses using modals and linking words. To talk about a special meal, candidates often used a variety of past tenses and descriptive vocabulary (e.g. ‘I choked’, ‘my grandmother made a scene’, ‘made from scratch’, ‘a fancy-looking restaurant’). Weaker candidates did not always take advantage of the opportunity to use past tense here whilst stronger candidates skilfully described something that happened. Candidates used comparative and conditional constructions to express the pros and cons of cooking with others, often using personal anecdotes (e.g. ‘If you cook with a friend…’, ‘On the other hand, if you cook with family…’). Most candidates agreed that electronic devices should be switched off during meals, and used mostly present structures to explain their opinion. Candidates had experience of trying local food whilst travelling abroad. Some just gave their general opinion, whereas others gave detailed accounts of their holidays. Stronger candidate justified opinions using appropriate modals and expanded ideas using sophisticated vocabulary, e.g. ‘hypocritical’, ‘disrespectful’, ‘leftovers’, ‘doggy bag’, ‘wholesome’.

Card F – Hot and cold

Candidates had quite strong opinions on weather and temperatures. They used present structures to express their weather preferences. Stronger candidates expanded on why they liked a specific type of weather, using a range of adjectives and adverbs. Stronger candidates demonstrated the use of a variety of past tenses to describe what happened to them in an extreme temperature. The third prompt required the use of comparatives and superlatives. Stronger candidates also used language to talk about hypothetical situations. Although some candidates had not experienced both extreme cold and extreme heat, they were able to talk about the effects of such temperatures and the need for appropriate clothing. Stronger candidates skilfully expanded their responses using conditionals. The final prompt encouraged the use of future structures and modals to talk about possibility. Many candidates knew a lot about global warming and described its potential negative impact in the future. Most responses included a range of appropriate vocabulary, e.g. ‘perspiration’, ‘environmental’, ‘climate change’, ‘put up with’, ‘light complexion’, ‘sensitive’.

Card G – TV programmes.

A wide range of descriptive vocabulary was produced when candidates enthusiastically described their favourite programmes (e.g. ‘mysterious facts’, ‘freak photos’, ‘detained’, ’investigated’, ‘gangs’, ‘sabotage’). A broad range of grammatical structures was also evident, including passive voice and conditionals. Many candidates used conjunctions and modals to give details. Stronger candidates described some aspects of the plot, characters and acting. Some candidates, however, needed clarification of the phrase ‘TV programme’. When exploring reasons as to whether they would like to be in a TV programme, many candidates used modals and conditionals (e.g. ‘If I were to choose, I’d…’). When considering the pros and cons of watching television as a shared experience, candidates used comparatives, conditionals, superlatives, and modals. Those who gave examples used past structures in addition to the present. Modals were used to explore whether TV programmes should teach us something. Candidates had strong opinions about restrictions on children watching TV. They used present structures and a variety of modals to express opinions and provide reasons. This topic gave candidates the opportunity to use some relevant vocabulary, such as ‘animates’, ‘sensation’, ‘addiction’, ‘conflict’, ‘disturbance’, ‘prolonged’, ‘hooked in’.

Card H – Hopes for the future

In responses to this topic, all candidates were able to share their thoughts about the future. Prompts 1 and 2 elicited present tenses, and many candidates expresses the view that the best thing about their life now was not having the responsibilities that will come later. They talked about freedom, the opportunity to enjoy their childhood, friends, family and being healthy. Future events included going to a concert, finishing exams, sports events and travelling. Conditionals were used for prompt 3 and a combination of past and future tenses and comparatives were used for prompts 4 and 5. There were some discussions about celebrity culture and if it is hard work or luck that ensures success. Most candidates had sufficient vocabulary to express their ideas. Stronger candidates used effective collocations and idioms to talk about their current and future lives, e.g. ‘taking the weight off my shoulders’, ‘satisfy your inner self,’ ‘you can’t procrastinate,’

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'without goals you have no motivation to achieve anything,' 'it gives your life more meaning,' 'be a better version of yourself,' 'a support mechanism,' 'no man is an island'.

Card I – Growing older

Candidates talked about sports players, musicians and members of the family in response to prompt 1. Prompt 2 elicited ideas about jobs, houses and family. There was a range of opinions about what 'being older' meant. Some candidates thought that this applied to people in their 20s when their career was established, or they had a family. In response to prompt 3, candidates gave examples of older family members who had learned a new skill (e.g. using technology, baking, playing a musical instrument) and used the first conditional and modal verbs to discuss this. There were comparisons of the younger/older generations' feelings in prompt 4. Some candidate stated that children did not always understand their parents. The past tense was effectively used in prompt 5 when candidates discussed personal experience. Many candidates developed their responses using a range of effective words and phrases: 'determined', 'focused', 'idol', 'natural talent', 'a changing society', 'social rules have change', 'pass the baton', 'life lessons', 'a modern outlook'.

Card J – Modern buildings

Many responses to prompt 1 included language which was limited to the present tense and simple descriptions. Prompt 2 gave candidates the opportunity to use past tenses and to give accounts of trips to other cities. Prompt 2 elicited conditional structures and discussions about AI apps. Present and future tenses, along with more colloquial language (e.g. 'hang out', 'chatting') and modal verbs were used in responses to prompt 4. Some candidates disagreed with prompt 5 but said that cities were already expanding. Others discussed the economy and class, saying that workers were still needed in rural areas, but young people would not be able to achieve their dreams unless they lived in cities. Appropriate vocabulary was used by the majority of candidates, e.g. 'I aspire to build a home for my loved one', 'it's more stressful and overcrowded', 'acquiring land and building a mansion'.

Card K – Saving time

In response to the first prompt, candidates talked about things done quickly, such as school projects, assignments, exams, the consequences of oversleeping and buying from shops. Past, present and active/passive tenses were used. There was some discussion about using time-saving apps and multi-tasking in prompt 2. Candidates made comparisons between fast food and traditional food and the amount of time needed in prompt 3, with most candidates disagreeing with the statement. Conditionals were used in prompt 4. Prompt 5 elicited discussions about the need to use technology correctly and its potential negative impact; 'fall into that trap', 'time/cost efficient', 'being productive', 'you are constantly being exposed to stimulating things', 'people may be addicted'.

Card L – New experiences

Prompt 1 elicited some personal narratives, with many candidates describing challenging activities, such as extreme sports. For the second prompt, most candidates were able to come up with reasons for their aversion to a particular sport or food. A variety of responses to the third prompt included candidates' preferences for trying new experiences with friends (more fun, sharing memories) or on their own (possible embarrassment). No candidates argued against the opinion in prompt 4, which often allowed for greater development and expansion using a variety of modals and conditionals. Prompt 5 was generally agreed with, although many candidates felt that it depended on what the skill was and the mindset of the individual. The saying 'practice makes perfect' was often used in this context.

Card M – Groups

Candidates drew on personal experiences of social or recreational occasions (parties, holidays, concerts) in their response to the prompt 1. For the second prompt, candidates generally had strong opinions on their preference for studying on their own (lack of distraction, ability to concentrate) or for studying in a group (helping each other, sharing ideas). Responses to prompt 3 gave candidates the opportunity to introduce some precise vocabulary, such as 'tolerate/accept others', 'cooperate', 'be respectful/polite', 'leadership', 'follow instructions'. Candidates' responses to the fourth prompt often revealed their own struggles to organise group activities and mentioned factors such as having to fit in with everyone's schedule, or difficulties in communicating with others. For the last prompt, very few candidates felt that it was possible to make real friends via social media. More often the opinion was that people could present 'fake' impressions

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of themselves online, and there was a general awareness that this type of contact could not be trusted in the same way as face-to-face interactions when it came to deciding who might be your friend.

Card N – Birthdays

This card was a popular choice. The first prompt allowed candidates to describe a very concrete and clearly defined personal experience. The second prompt often elicited responses in favour of letting others do the planning, thus allowing for an element of surprise. Some candidates needed the examiner's help in understanding what 'other events' could refer to in the third prompt, and this was generally explained in terms of things like graduating from school, or an engagement party. Some candidates were adamant that the intensely personal nature of a birthday party, which places them at the centre of their family and friends' attention, makes it the most important of celebrations, but others felt that the fact that it is an annual event makes a birthday less important than once-in-a-lifetime events such as graduation. In response to the fourth prompt, some candidates emphasised the importance of the people who are gathered together when celebrating something, but many were in agreement that food plays a central role on such occasions. For prompt 5, few candidates felt that a day off work or school was justified, and some argued strongly for being able to spend the day at school celebrating among friends if your birthday falls during term time.

Card O – Messages

This card was frequently chosen. Most candidates had a lot to say on this topic, based on their own personal experience. Responses to the first prompt generally focused on the importance of messaging family and friends, usually as a way of keeping in touch. No candidates expressed a preference for long emails when it came to the second prompt. Reasons given tended to emphasise the imposition such extended forms of communication placed either on the sender or the receiver, or both. When discussing advantages for the third prompt, candidates tended to focus on the immediacy of images over words ('more in the moment', 'direct', 'instant reaction'), on how an image can reinforce a message ('prove a point', 'adds meaning'), or on the way that images can convey emotions that they would never be able to express in words ('capture how they're feeling'). Disadvantages were harder to come by, but sometimes focused on whether a particular image would be appropriate or might be thought too informal or lacking in seriousness. Responses to the f prompt 4 were sometimes mixed, with some candidates arguing that it depended on who you were communicating with, or how important your message was. This also tended to be the way some candidates responded to the fifth prompt, although in general it was felt that face-to-face communication would still play a role, often for reasons to do with not always being able to trust individuals encountered online, but also sometimes referring to the difficulty of understanding the other person's emotional state when not in face-to-face contact with them.

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