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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

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In English Language (4EB0) Paper 01R

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Introduction

The texts were accessible across the full range of abilities and enabled candidates to respond appropriately. Examiners commented on the engagement with the topics that the candidates showed.

Better candidates were able to engage fully with both texts and respond with sensitivity and fluency. In their writing they produced lively and confident responses which were well controlled and accurate. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages. Their writing lacked coherence and the use of idiomatic English.

Most examiners commented that a significant number of candidates did not use own words in the questions that ask for them. It is essential that candidates should try to use their own words in order to be successful in responding to these questions.

There are still a few candidates who copy out all or considerable chunks of the extracts in response to Question 11. This can never be a successful way to respond as candidates are required to produce their own work and show the ability to adapt the original texts for a different audience and purpose. Similarly responses to Question 12 should be original and not prepared essays or re-worked plots from novels, games or films.

Some responses to Questions 11 and 12 lacked paragraphing, not just the weaker ones. Candidates must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response.

There was some evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this examination and some examiners commented that many candidates seemed well prepared on the whole.

Section A (Questions 1-10)

This section consists of mainly short answer questions that require candidates to locate and retrieve relevant information. Some questions required candidates to use their own words. Question 10 is longer requiring candidates to give a personal response and justify it with references to the text. There were some very good answers to questions 1-9 but many candidates continued to have difficulty with the requirement for own words thus limiting their performance. Questions 1, 2, 5 & 9 generally produced successful responses although examiners did comment that a few candidates lost marks on Question 5 by failing to include 'globally' for bullet point 7 or wrote about what the internet is rather than what it allows people to do. Some examiners also commented that candidates used their own words when these questions were simply retrieval questions. Examiners commented that responses to the short questions requiring candidates to use their own words (Questions 3, 4, 6 & 7) quite often had direct lifting from the texts. This seemed to be a continuing problem with some candidates using quotations from the texts in quotation marks. If candidates do not attempt to use their own words their responses to these questions will not be successful. However some examiners commented positively on candidates' attempts to use their own words. In responding to Question 3 most candidates were able to identify the relevant points, but many

struggled to express them in their own words or adapt the text sufficiently. Examiners commented that 'unhealthy', 'prepared for adult life' and 'healthier, happier, safer' were commonly lifted from the text. Question 4 also produced responses which had lifted material from the text but one examiner commented positively on candidates' attempts to use their own words. Some candidates did not focus on the question and wrote generally about why teenagers like to be with their peers from their own perspective. Examiners commented that there was some lifting in the responses to Question 6 but many candidates attempted to use their own words. There were some who misread the text, believing that the writer was angry with the elderly lady or that the elderly lady and her generation were to blame for climate change. Question 7 produced some good responses with candidates clearly attempting to use their own words but examiners also commented that many candidates lifted material from the text, common examples were 'no manners', 'ignorant, selfish, lazy and rude'. Centres need to work with candidates to develop their vocabulary and ensure that they realise they must attempt to produce responses to these questions using their own words.

Question 8 - Many candidates were able to identify relevant points and provide support for them. However a significant number of candidates did not use their own words for their points, despite the rubric and layout of the question, which meant they could not achieve any marks. A number of candidates produced paraphrases of their chosen support as their point – often too close to the text to be rewarded. A number of candidates did not consider carefully the demands of the question and wrote about the behaviour of their generation rather than focusing on the writer's behaviour. Centres need to work with candidates to ensure they understand that they must attempt to provide points in their own words and not use quotations from the text for their points.

Question 10 provided varied responses with most candidates able to make some sort of choice but only the more able could provide the developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. If candidates are able to offer two clear reasons why they have chosen a text and support them with two clear references (quotations or developed explanation) and a clear reason for not picking the other text with appropriate support they will produce a successful response. Better responses had clearly identified reasons and appropriate support for their choices. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement. One examiner commented that there were a surprising number of candidates who offered perfectly valid reasons, but no supporting evidence. Many responses recognised that Text One included examples of teenage behaviours and experts whereas Text Two was from a personal point of view. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the texts, retelling the passages or produced content based responses. Some weaker candidates made their choice based on the difficulty of the vocabulary or that they thought one of the texts was boring or used generic reasons such as 'it was interesting'. Choices were balanced with no overall favourite. Some examiners commented that some candidates seemed better prepared for this question than in previous series. Centres need to continue to work with candidates to make sure they have a clear understanding of valid ways of responding to texts.

Section B (Question 11)

There was evidence of some good teaching and learning in the responses to this section.

There was some evidence of planning which was pleasing. Plans should be in the answer booklet rather than on an additional sheet.

Most candidates understood the requirement of the task and were able to use the appropriate register for a newspaper article. More successful responses had a good focus on the texts and the ability to write a convincing article. It was generally felt candidates engaged with this task and some produced lively and convincing responses. The topic of Teenage Behaviour seemed to engage the majority of the candidates. Most candidates tended to use the content of the extracts but some added examples about their own life experiences, emotions and hormones, respect for adults and cultural ethics. Examiners commented positively on the range of techniques used successfully by candidates. There were some effectively written and structured responses and the more able were able to integrate their comments on the three bullet points. Some candidates did not cover the three bullet points in sufficient detail (the third one on views of adults and teenagers was most commonly missed). To gain high marks, candidates should cover a good range of points in detail. Examiners commented that some candidates directly lifted content from the original texts which affected the overall quality of the response. Examiners did comment that some candidates used columns to layout their responses which is not necessary and could, potentially, waste the candidate's time. Language controls were not always secure, especially grammar, and some responses lacked paragraphing. The three bullet points provide a rudimentary structure which should help students to use basic paragraphing. Centres need to remind candidates that lack of accurate paragraphing will limit their achievement. Centres should work to ensure candidates have a clear idea of how to write appropriately for different audiences and purposes and can select relevant material from the texts and adapt it for the task in their own words.

Section C (Question 12)

12b was the most popular.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. There was evidence of planning in this section which is to be encouraged.

However the use of very long plans or draft essays is to be discouraged as they are not a good use of time. Candidates should be encouraged to plan their response in the answer booklet rather than on separate additional sheets.

Examiners commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

Question 12a produced a few well written responses clear and developed arguments. Candidates did engage with the topic but the discursive style needed for this question stretched the abilities of many. Some examiners commented that weaker candidates produced responses that were very similar to responses to Question 11. The rubric for Question 12 clearly tells candidates not to retell the events from Text One and Text Two from the

extracts booklet. Weaker candidates had problems with both maintaining a clear argument and structuring their responses. Better responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, however the weaker responses had poor language controls and weak paragraphing. Centres need to ensure that candidates who choose this option are well prepared in argumentative, discursive and rhetorical techniques and are able to develop their ideas effectively.

Question 12b: The title 'I wish I had never said that' produced some original ideas with a wide range of interpretations of the title. A full range of responses was seen. Many candidates handled this task with enthusiasm and demonstrated the ability to develop a well-constructed short story. Some examiners commented that some of the ideas were a little far-fetched or covered rather unpleasant events. Some candidates were too ambitious and used either too much information or an over-complicated plot. Some of the narratives were fairly predictable and often pedestrian. Better responses were able to create tension and use effective description and dialogue with good technical accuracy. Weaker responses lacked development of ideas or the ability to maintain a narrative together with poor language controls. Centres need to ensure candidates have a secure understanding of narrative techniques and the ability to develop a coherent personal response.

Question 12c produced some well written responses that were fully focused on the task of describing a kind person. Successful responses described in some detail the chosen kind person and examiners commented positively on effective writing techniques and wide-ranging vocabulary used to describe the chosen person. Mothers, fathers, siblings, other relations or close friends were commonly identified as kind. One examiner commented that there appear to be a lot of young people with absolutely amazingly kind mothers or fathers who work 18 hours a day to provide for their offspring. Some candidates described the qualities that a kind person has as opposed to writing about a specific person. Better responses were detailed and lively with fully developed ideas. Weaker candidates tended to produce responses that tended to be pedestrian, narrative and lacked detail. Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

Better responses were accurate using a wide range of grammatical constructions, punctuation and vocabulary.

As in previous series, there was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar/expression. Some of this was unidiomatic English but there were also problems with tenses and sentence structure. These problems limited the effectiveness of the communication.

Centres need to focus on developing accurate and effective grammatical

structuring and idiomatic English to enable candidates to express themselves clearly and access the higher mark bands.

Summary

Most successful candidates:

- read the texts with insight and engagement
- selected relevant points, from the appropriate part of the text, in response to the reading questions
- used their own words in response to questions that required them
- wrote clearly with a good sense of form, audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- selected and adapted relevant information for Question 11
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed, well developed and controlled (Question 12)
- used accurate paragraphing
- used ambitious vocabulary
- wrote with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Least successful candidates:

- did not engage fully with the texts
- did not find enough relevant points in response to the reading questions
- did not attempt to use their own words in response to questions that required them
- did not write in an appropriate form or register in response to Question 11
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- sometimes copied the original texts (Question 11)
- were not able to develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Question 12)
- did not use paragraphs
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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