

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/12
Reading

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- attempted all parts of all three questions, working through the question paper in the order set
- paid attention to the marks allocated, word guidance and the space available for answers to help them to organise their response time efficiently
- followed task instructions carefully, basing their answers on the correct text and/or section of text
- responded appropriately to the command word(s) in the question
- focused on the particular evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for each type of question
- avoided repetition of ideas
- did not include unrelated opinion/generic comments and/or invent material not tethered to the text
- used their own words carefully where appropriate, avoiding unselective copying and/or lifting from the text
- organised the ideas they were intending to use in longer answers before writing their response
- checked and edited their responses to correct any unforced errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated that they were familiar with the format of the Reading paper and the demands of each of the three questions had largely been understood. There were very few instances where whole tasks had not been attempted, though on occasion answers to part questions were incomplete or missing and/or responses were uneven, limiting the possibility of scoring higher marks. There were also some candidates who did not pay careful attention to the marks available in each question and/or key details of the texts/tasks and so missed opportunities to target higher marks as a consequence. A few candidates offered very limited evidence of their skills by playing back arbitrary sections of text containing incomplete ideas, diluting the evidence that they had understood what they had read.

Across the range, candidates appeared to find all three Reading texts equally accessible. Most seemed to find the texts engaging and there were very few examples of significant misreading, though some missed details and/or did not consider context when interpreting vocabulary, limiting the effectiveness of their response. There were many excellent answers to all three questions, though candidates do need to ensure that they do not spend too long on one question at the expense of another. In some of the least successful answers, a failure to respond to all aspects of a task and/or a loss of focus on the rubric or text, negatively affected the evidence of understanding and skills offered. For example, a few candidates tried to discuss several examples in **2(c)** (where there were just 3 marks available) at the expense of choices and explanation in **2(d)** (where there were up to 15 marks to be scored).

This session it was pleasing to note that most candidates had clearly selected one example for explanation in **2(c)**, three examples from each of the correct paragraphs in the language question **2(d)** and that relatively few had written more than the maximum of 120 words advised for the selective summary **Question 1(f)**. A number of candidates needed to plan more carefully to include a full range of relevant ideas in their responses to **Question 3**. Candidates are also reminded that the word guidance offered in **Question 2(d)** and **Question 3** is not a requirement of the task in itself and there is no need for them to spend time counting every word – the guidance is offered to help candidates organise their time efficiently and offer sufficient evidence of their skills and understanding to target higher levels.

In **Question 1**, candidates scoring highly had worked through the tasks in the order presented and made efficient use of their time, for example by paying attention in comprehension questions **1 (a)–(e)** to the marks and space available as a helpful indicator of the length and detail they needed to offer in each response. They did not add further unnecessary and/or contradictory material but focused on answering each question as set. Most candidates were careful to follow the line or paragraph references in the questions to help them to move down **Text A** in order and the best had reworked material where appropriate to show secure understanding of implicit as well as explicit ideas. Almost all candidates remembered that in a test of comprehension their responses to these initial short answer questions need to be derived from **Text A** in order to evidence their Reading skills and are not based on their personal opinion, imagination or experience.

Less successful responses attempted to include extra guesses in response to **Questions 1(a)–(e)** taking up valuable examination time by doing so, as well as diluting evidence of understanding. Others simply copied out sections of text with limited modification – often negating any suggestion of understanding by doing so. A number of candidates addressed only part of the question in their answer. Such responses provided limited evidence of understanding as a consequence and missed out on marks they might reasonably have been expected to target – for example in **1(b)(ii)** ‘research’ was often repeated rather than explained. In **Question 1(f)** a few candidates relied heavily on the language of **Text B** and/or copied out lines of text, limiting the available evidence of their own skills and understanding as a result.

In **Question 2** candidates needed to identify (in **2(a)**) and explain (in **2(b)**) words and phrases from the text, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer via **Question 2(c)** and on to the language task, **Question 2(d)**. Stronger answers were careful to refer back to Text C to locate relevant choices and consider their precise meaning in context. In **Question 2(a)** those who copied out longer sections from the text rather than identifying the exact word/phrase that matched the sense of just the underlined word/phrase in the question were not providing secure evidence of their understanding. Likewise, opportunities for marks were missed by a few candidates in **Question 2(c)** who did not clearly identify one example from the text in their explanation and attempted to offer a generalised overview instead. To aim for higher levels in **Question 2(d)**, candidates should ensure that they explore and explain the meaning of each of the words they have chosen in some detail before moving on to consider associations and connotations or suggest effects. Most candidates were able to suggest three potentially useful examples for analysis in each half of the **2(d)** task, though a number of candidates selected less interesting words and/or were not sufficiently clear, careful or detailed in the examination of their choices. In less successful responses, repetition of the language of the text, generalised comment and/or labelling of devices without explanation of how these were working in this instance meant opportunities to target higher levels were missed. A few candidates did not address the **Question 2(d)** task effectively, offering little relevant comment in one or both halves of the question.

In **Question 3** most responses had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task, though a few candidates lost focus or apparently ran out of time and had rushed/not completed bullet 3. Most candidates dealt confidently with the time shifts in the narrative, with the best also recognising opportunities to interpret events from the perspective of a journalist writing for an audience that had all but given up hope. Responses across the cohort covered the full range of levels of achievement, with top level answers creating lively, convincing articles that incorporated a wide range of ideas, carefully interpreted and extended with detail from the text in support. Mid-range responses often missed opportunities as a consequence of uneven focus on the bullets of the question, a lack of planning beforehand and /or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text overall. Less successful responses either offered only brief reference to the passage and/or included evidence of misreading – a few repeated sections from the text with limited or no modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text in order to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and should be avoided.

Paper 1 is primarily a test of Reading, though marks are available for Writing in **Question 1(f)** and **Question 3**. In these questions, it is important that candidates consider the clarity, organisation and register of their writing. It is advisable to plan and review responses to avoid inconsistencies of style, errors that could impede communication of ideas and awkward expression. Candidates should be aware that inaccurate writing where meaning becomes unclear is likely to limit their achievement, as will over-reliance on the language of the passages. Leaving sufficient time to read back and correct responses is advisable.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Comprehension and summary task

Questions 1 (a)–(e)

Short answer questions **1(a)–(e)** required candidates to read, locate and respond to key ideas and details of **Text A**. Stronger responses paid attention to the paragraph references and command words in the instructions to demonstrate efficiently the evidence of understanding required. Some mid-range responses missed opportunities to target higher marks, for example through offering overlong explanations in early questions at the expense of carefully explained answers to three-mark Questions **1(d)(ii)** and **1(e)**. Less successful responses often repeated the language of the text where own words were required and/or relied on copying longer sections of text with little or no modification to address the question as set.

Successful responses provided evidence that candidates had understood the need to interpret and use details in the text carefully to answer each of the comprehension questions to show what they could do and understand. They followed the order of the sub questions to work through **Text A** from the beginning, picking up on pointers where appropriate to help them to identify just the relevant material and to infer ideas. Occasionally, opportunities to evidence understanding were missed where explanations offered were unclear or simply copied without taking account of the need to modify the original text – candidates are reminded that whilst Writing is not assessed in questions **1(a)–(e)**, answers do need to be sufficiently precise to communicate details from the text accurately.

- (a) Give two examples of animals which migrate (other than humpback whales) according to paragraph 1.**

In **Question 1(a)**, most candidates recognised that paragraph 1 named monarch butterflies and European swallows as further examples of animals that migrate, though a few read less carefully and offered incorrect answers such as ‘zebras’ (not mentioned in paragraph 1) and ‘humpback whales’ (redundant since ‘other than’ was specified in the question).

- (b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:**

- (i) ‘incredible endurance’ (line 5)**
(ii) ‘facilitated research’ (line 7)

In **Question 1(b)** task guidance makes it clear that use of own words is required to evidence understanding. Where answers failed to score both marks, it was sometimes the result of having explained just one aspect of the phrase using own words, for example in **Question 1(b)(ii)** offering a meaning for ‘facilitated’ only and repeating, rather than explaining, the word ‘research’. Effective answers were able to indicate secure understanding of meaning in both aspects of the question, often offering straightforward synonyms that worked in the context of the text. For example, in **1b(i)** successful answers often explained ‘incredible endurance’ simply as meaning ‘extreme stamina’. Less successful answers offered meanings out of context (such as ‘fascinating’ for ‘incredible’) and/or did not convey secure understanding of meaning due to imprecise suggestions – for example offering just ‘strength’ for ‘endurance’ without making any implicit or explicit association with resilience or perseverance. Some candidates misread ‘facilitated’ as ‘facilities’.

- (c) Re-read paragraph 2, (‘Despite ... animal movement.’).
Give two ways in which migration differs from other types of animal movement.**

In **Question 1(c)** candidates re-reading paragraph 2 closely were able to identify the two differences specified in the text between migration and other types of animal movement as ‘migration involves a return journey’ and ‘migration happens seasonally’. Less focused responses repeated details about the animals themselves.

- (d) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4, (‘Astonished ... GPS-tagged zebras’).**
(i) Identify two things scientists had to do before they were able to study how far the plains zebras travelled during migration.
(ii) Explain what researchers in the second study did to test what might influence the direction in which migrating zebras travelled.

Candidates who paid attention to clear indicators in the text recognised that paragraphs 3 and 4 dealt with two separate studies and did not confuse material and details relevant to each. Those focused on the

command/key words in each part of the question were best placed to offer creditworthy responses and make efficient use of their time. Successful answers in **1d(i)** were able to identify just the relevant ideas in relation to study one which was concerned with the distance travelled by zebras during migration. Careful answers made use of the two bullets in the response area as an efficient way to present their ideas and then check that their answers were distinct. Likewise, in **1d(ii)**, candidates paying attention to the command word 'explain' used, rather than simply repeated, information from the text, reworking it to offer secure evidence of close reading and score the maximum 3 marks. On occasion, candidates diluted evidence of their understanding – for example, suggesting incorrectly that researchers 'Stimulated zebras' and/or considered 'theories based on precipitation'. Very occasionally, candidates offered no evidence of understanding by copying out long sections of the specified paragraphs of text without any modification or recasting of the material, failing to take note of the instruction to 'explain'. It is worth noting here, that the three mark tariff for **1(d)(ii)** should guide candidates to offer three separate points in their answers. A number of responses, for example, only comprised one research action – usually the comparison with real zebras' tracks/the GPS data – limiting the marks they could target.

(e) Re-read paragraph 5 ('Preliminary ... lead scientist').

Using your own words, explain why some people might not accept the findings of the study as conclusive.

In **Question 1(e)** the most successful explanations reworked the relevant information only, using their own words as appropriate to tease out implicit ideas, identifying from the five available three distinct reasons in their explanation of why some people might not accept the findings of the study as conclusive. Many candidates identified that more monitoring over a longer time would be required for the findings to be accepted and suggested that the failure to consider the effects of predators was an issue, as was the indication that genetics could play a part. A few noted the lead scientist's quotation as indicating that even they were unsure of the findings themselves and/or raised concerns that the memory simulation only predicted 'more accurately' – both alternative ideas that could be credited. A few candidates missed opportunities to target full marks by simply copying sections of text without reworking the material to 'explain why'.

(f) According to Text B, what are the reasons why changes to animal migrations have occurred and why are these changes worrying?

You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible. Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

In their responses to **Question 1(f)** most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of some relevant ideas from **Text B** and some understanding of the requirements of the task. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea, misreading and/ or inclusion of extra details or comment meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks. Stronger responses reorganised and grouped the information; weaker answers spent too long re-wording the narrative opening and confused more complex ideas such as the effects on parasites of changes in the migration of host animals.

Where responses were most effective, candidates had made a consistent attempt to use their own words to convey relevant ideas efficiently and accurately to their reader. Overview of the material was evidenced in some of the most successful answers where relevant ideas had been carefully selected from different parts of the text and organised helpfully. Less well-focused responses copied from the text, with minimal or no rewording or reorganisation of the original, often resulting in redundancy. Whilst candidates are not expected to change all key words or terms in their prose response, they should not rely on lifting whole phrases and/or sentences from the text. Indiscriminate copying of the passage, repetition and adding comment or example should all be avoided as these do not allow candidates to successfully address the selective summary task.

The most successful responses to the selective summary task showed evidence of candidates having planned the content of their answer before writing their response. Many had produced and followed a flow diagram or bullet point plan, and the best were careful to turn around implicit ideas to answer the question explicitly. For example, focused and well-planned answers often grouped the effects of human actions such as deforestation, global warming and urbanisation when summarising the reasons for the changes, ahead of going on to consider why the changes these caused were so worrying. Careful planning also helped many candidates to avoid/correct examples

of misreading that were evident in less effective responses – for example they did not suggest that parasites migrated and/or were threatened as a result of changes in migratory patterns. This session there were some particularly effective and well-crafted responses that demonstrated both concision and secure understanding of a wide range of relevant ideas.

Most candidates appeared to be aware of the need to try to use their own vocabulary where feasible, though not all had understood why they needed to do this/how it would evidence their understanding. For example, some less successful answers simply looked to substitute some of their own words into copied sections of text irrespective of whether or not these sections contained relevant ideas that answered the question. Often these responses also overlooked the need for concision in a selective summary task and offered either very long responses and/or only touched on a few appropriate ideas within their answer. Copying from the text often betrayed a lack of understanding in the least successful scripts, for example where answers suggested that: ‘birds using gps discovered that a few pals skipped this year’s migration’ or that one problem was ‘mountains falling’. Candidates producing effective answers were able to demonstrate that they had understood the opportunities the task offered to demonstrate their Reading and Writing skills by including a fairly wide range of relevant ideas, communicated clearly and concisely in their own words.

The majority of candidates showed at least some awareness of the need to include only those ideas relevant to the focus of the question, though not all were able to select ideas efficiently to navigate around more obviously redundant material – such as illustrative examples and the antics of Zozu. For example, references in partially effective responses to ‘limiting insect consumption, seed dispersal and pollination’ were more succinctly covered by umbrella phrases such as the ‘harm being done to the eco-system’ in stronger answers. Where candidates had simply tried to paraphrase the text rather than select only those ideas necessary to answer the question, their responses often contained superfluous detail compromising both evidence of Reading (excess / indiscriminate selection) and Writing (lack of concision). More effective responses were not dependant on the structure or language of **Text B** to communicate their ideas and were consequently able to offer more concise explanations.

A small number of candidates added in extra detail from outside the text – such as examples of elephants migrating or comments on how humans should protect animals and stop harming the earth – suggesting a lack of understanding of the summary task. A few responses were almost entirely reliant on the language of the original, providing little or no evidence of their own reading or writing skills and not addressing the requirements of the task.

Advice to candidates on Question 1(f):

- read the task instructions to identify the focus of the summary task then re-read **Text B** to identify just the relevant ideas for use in your answer
- discard any ideas or extra details which are not relevant to the specific focus of the question
- do not add details, examples or comment to the content of the passage
- reflect on the ideas you have highlighted in your plan – check that they are distinct and complete
- check whether there are repeated ideas or examples which could be covered by one ‘umbrella’ point
- return to the text to ‘sense check’ any ideas you are unsure of before you try to use them
- organise your ideas to make them clear to your reader – do not rely on repeating ideas in the order of the original text
- write informatively and accurately in your own words, avoiding errors which affect meaning
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the text themselves would understand
- check back to ensure that you have included all of the ideas you planned to
- though it is not necessary to count every word, you should keep in mind the guidance to write ‘no more than 120 words’ and aim for concision.

Question 2

- (a) **Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:**

- (i) **The vehicle that Lotta hired was inexpensive.**
- (ii) **Seeing the flashing signals on the computer screen stops Lotta worrying that the trackers will not work.**
- (iii) **Even though there are still a few bird species left alive, there is no longer any money available to pay for scientists to study them.**
- (iv) **Lotta explains how the migrating birds begin by taking different routes before they rejoin each other to find where the fish are.**

Focused responses to **Question 2(a)** clearly identified in each part the correct word or phrase from **Text C** to correspond with the meaning of the underlined example – simply and efficiently giving the exact word or phrase only as their answer. Other responses added unnecessary time pressure by copying out the entire question in each case, substituting the word or phrase from the text and then bracketing or underlining the relevant section of their answer.

Marks were sometimes missed where answers were unfocused – for example, in **2(a)(i)** adding in extra words from the text (rental car) that went beyond the meaning of the underlined words in the question. Very occasionally, candidates offered a word/phrase that did not match the meaning of the underlined words in the question (for example, 'endangered' was offered incorrectly by a few candidates as their answer to part **(iii)**).

- (b) **Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:**

- (i) **vessel**
- (ii) **pinpoint**
- (iii) **witness**

In **Question 2(b)**, some answers offered just one carefully chosen word or phrase as their answer, whilst others offered evidence of understanding through longer explanations. Either approach could be creditworthy, though candidates should be careful not to dilute evidence of understanding by offering various suggestions and extra guesses of different meanings that are contradictory and/or not in line with the text. Answers that included other potential meanings and guesses that were not correct in context could not be credited. For example, 'vessel' in **2(b)(i)** referred to Ennis' boat or ship, not a car/office/cabin as some suggested. Successful answers had considered the precise meaning of each of the underlined words as they were used in the text. A few candidates were unsure of the meaning of 'pinpoint' – for example, suggesting that it meant to follow. Likewise, meanings of 'vessel' – 'connected to a pipe which is inside our body' or a 'glass or cup' were not appropriate in this context.

- (c) **Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests Lotta's attitude to the project.**

Use your own words in your explanation.

I'm not sure when dreaming of this last desperate project began, but it's part of me now as much as the instinct for breath. It swallowed me whole – a fantasy quest, securing a place on a fishing vessel and having its captain carry me far south following the longest natural migration of any living creature.

In **Question 2(c)**, those candidates who had focused clearly on using just one example taken from the text extract as instructed were best placed to demonstrate their understanding. Some underlined their chosen example in the text, others copied it out as a subheading for their explanation – either approach was acceptable.

Successful answers included those which began with an explanation of the meaning of their example in context, ahead of going on to explain how that might suggest Lotta's attitude to the project. Many effective responses centred their answer around all or part of the use of imagery in 'It swallowed me whole – a fantasy quest', explaining for example how it helped 'to convey the sense of a heroic adventure that had completely consumed Lotta's thoughts'. Others showed some awareness in their explanations of how 'it's part of me now as much as the instinct for breath'

suggested the importance of the project to Lotta, with stronger answers going on to consider how instinct for breath indicated it was essential to her life, and she had no choice but to do it. Those selecting 'dreaming of this last desperate project' sometimes missed opportunities to offer a comprehensive explanation and target full marks by not dealing with the word 'last'. Some of the least successful answers only repeated words from the text or question to offer insecure, unconvincing explanation – for example, offering responses such as 'The writer says Lotta finds this a fantasy quest as she dreamed for it and felt desperate.'

The most successful responses had carefully noted the number of marks available, along with the instruction to use their own words, and focused on making three distinct points in relation to their one chosen example. Some candidates did not pay attention to the instruction to 'use one example from the text' and attempted to discuss two or more – time that might have been more profitably spent in **Question 2(d)** where there were up to 15 marks available. A few of the weakest responses attempted unwisely to rewrite the whole extract in their own words and/or discuss it in very general terms only.

(d) Re-read paragraphs 1 and 13.

- **Paragraph 1 begins 'I'm watching ...' and is about the actions of Lotta and the bird.**
- **Paragraph 13 begins 'Months later ...' and is about what Ennis and Lotta discover when they land at the end of their journey.**

Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose three examples of words or phrases from each paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear and careful analysis of three relevant selections from each paragraph – often beginning by explaining literal meaning and then moving on to suggest effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language through detailed discussion of focused choices centred around images, individual words or phrases. Where candidates had considered all of the key words in slightly longer choices, they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses and offer more secure evidence of understanding.

Some candidates used each of their choices as a sub-heading for their explanation and were often able to offer more focused explanations as a result, though some still repeated and relied on the language of the text within their explanations, missing opportunities to target higher marks. Stronger responses considered words within their chosen phrases individually first, using their own words to explain meaning, as well as suggesting how the key words worked together within the longer phrase and/or in the context of the description as a whole. Rather than attempting to deal with all the potential choices in each half they came across and/or the most 'obvious' literary devices, successful responses set out to narrow down their options and decide which six of those relevant selections that they felt best able to explain. Some of the strongest responses had identified choices in each half that worked well together, exploring how those judiciously selected choices both worked individually and combined to influence the reader's impression, building to an overview. Responses evidencing understanding at level 5 frequently showed imagination and precision when discussing language use and offered answers that were balanced across both parts of the question.

Choices from paragraph 1, often centred around the actions and reactions of the bird. Many answers identified the 'heartbeat pounds fast and fragile' as a potentially interesting image to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the suggestion of fear in the bird, though some had misread the reference suggesting it was Lotta's pulse that was racing. Some of the best answers explored the delicate and precious nature of the bird, often then going on to link this to Lotta's careful actions in other choices such as 'edging away' and/or contrasting it with the bird's retaliation as it 'explodes free, swooping at [her] suddenly'. Many candidates identified 'place her back in the nest' as indicating Lotta set the bird free after tagging it, though often missed opportunities to consider the associations/connotations of words such as 'nest' and 'place' separately and/or repeated both words in their explanation. A number of candidates selected 'clips the hair-thin wire' though misinterpreted the basic meaning of 'clips' with some attempting to explain it as a noun rather than the small delicate nudge it suggested in context. Others assumed incorrectly that 'ruffles' is synonymous with 'flapping' and that the reaction was a violent one.

Less successful responses to **2(d)** sometimes offered plain, literal selections from paragraph 13 – such as ‘Months later,’ or ‘The boat can go no further, so we continue on foot towards the ridge’ – which did not offer useful opportunities for analysis. Meanwhile, limiting their comments to an explanation of just one word within longer choices meant other candidates offered partially effective explanations only – for example, not all considered the meaning of the words ‘dipping’ and/or ‘diving’ when selecting ‘dipping gracefully, diving hungrily’, offering imprecise explanations that described the birds as travelling/flying around without any sense that the movement is downwards and deliberate. Many weaker answers dealing with popular choices such as ‘heart breaks and then jumps’ often did little more than repeat/replay the wording of the text and/or failed to unpick the contrasting emotions it described. A good number selected ‘hundreds of terns smother an expanse of unspoiled ice’ but did not then explore or explain the meaning of the words ‘smother’ and ‘expanse’, often limiting their explanation to there being ‘a lot of birds’ and the ice being ‘untouched’. Others diluted evidence of understanding by relying on recycling examples from the text to try to explain other examples – for instance, ‘dance upon the air’ was described as ‘moving gracefully’ or ‘swooping and soaring’.

Often better answers had recognised and explored something of the contrasting/conflicting feelings of the narrator in paragraph 13 – sometimes noting movement from initial disappointment, through daring to hope and finally to the sense of elation, revelling in the abundance, serenity and beauty of the discovered area. Many recognised and drew attention to the regal/magical image of the whale emerging from the water and the joyous movements of the birds as they flew. The strongest answers offered extended analysis of images, developing their descriptions of each choice over a number of lines, allowing them time to explain and revisit each word within the choice, noticing and drawing attention to elements they may not have spotted on first reading.

The least successful answers to **2(d)** did little more than repeat the words of one/both paragraphs and/or offered generic empty comments such as ‘This hooks the reader’ or ‘this uses vivid imagery to describe for the reader’. Comments like these are not helpful to candidates since they do not evidence understanding of how language is working in a particular given section of the text and can create a false sense of security, meaning candidates move on without saying anything more concrete. Satisfactory responses offered a clear explanation of the literal meaning of each example they had chosen, whilst stronger answers also identified effect.

In **Question 2(d)**, it is the quality of the analysis when considering how language is being used which attracts marks. Answers which simply list literary devices used are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks. Selections in **Question 2(d)** need to be clear and deliberate, helping to focus the analysis which follows. Long quotations with only the first and last words identified are not useful, as key words within are often not identified clearly and/or explained with any precision. Similarly insecure selection where only part of a complete example is chosen can make it difficult to investigate effects and/or lead to an incorrect reading of meaning. The most successful answers were often able to ‘talk their reader through’ their understanding of words within relevant choices, considering different possibilities of meaning, associations and connotations, ahead of arriving at an understanding of how and why these particular words might have been used by the writer in this context.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:

- make sure that any quotations you select from the text are precise: do not copy out lines or chunks of text, miss out key words or include only part of the choice
- in each part of **2(a)** make sure that your selection is clearly identified – remember you are looking for just a word or phrase from **Text C** to match precisely the sense of the only underlined words in the question
- in **2(b)** be careful that your explanation is consistent with how the word is used in context (if unsure, try substituting your answer in the text to check it fits)
- in **2(c)** try to say three separate things about your one chosen example
- in **2(d)**, choose 3 examples from each of the two specified paragraphs (6 choices in total)
- only offer an overview in **2(d)** if you have spotted that there is a relevant connection between your chosen choices from a paragraph
- where you are trying to explain meaning, read your answer back to check that you have not repeated the words of the choice
- when explaining how language is working avoid empty comments such as ‘the writer helps us to imagine the scene’ – try to suggest exactly how each of the words used helps you to do that

- when you are unsure how to explain the effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice and work from there
- when you are trying to explore and explain images, consider the connotations and associations of the words within choices (try to think about why the writer chose that particular word rather than any other word with a similar meaning)
- allow time to edit your answers – for example, to add in further detail and/or correct errors to help show you have read carefully and understood.

Question 3

You are a journalist. You have interviewed Ennis and Lotta months after they have returned from their trip. You write a magazine article about Lotta's research project and the conservation work they are both now involved in.

In your article you should:

- **describe what Lotta did to prepare for the research project and the challenges Lotta faced**
- **explain why Lotta needed Ennis's help with the project and why Ennis decided to help Lotta**
- **explain how Ennis and Lotta felt about what happened on their journey and the changes they hope to bring about in the future.**

Write the words of the article.

Base your article on what you have read in Text C but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Having worked through **Question 2** and already familiarised themselves with **Text C**, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to broaden their perspective away from that of the narrator to take a wider view and reflect on the experience of both Ennis and Lotta. The task guidance invited candidates to write an article looking back on their trip, exploring and explaining the motives and behaviours of both characters as well as the implications for the future of their discoveries. A few candidates missed the opportunity to develop a wide range of key ideas appropriately – for example, by writing an interview with Lotta and/or by speculating on aspects of Lotta and Ennis' lives prior to the narrative that were not suggested in the text. Some skimmed over details and/or confused them, undermining evidence of understanding/close reading in places – for example, suggesting that Lotta and Ennis were both scientists, or that Ennis knew where the fish were and could help Lotta to find them. Candidates are reminded that their response to **Question 3** needs to include and interpret details from the whole text accurately in order to successfully evidence their Reading skills.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood both the narrative and task in at least general terms. Many were able to offer straightforward explanations in response to bullet one of what Lotta did to prepare and the challenges she faced, with the better answers recasting relevant material from the text and extending ideas via commentary from the journalist to suggest how/why things were challenging. Where candidates had planned their response beforehand, they were often able to offer a balanced response across all three bullets of the task and by revisiting the text during planning pick up on more implicit ideas such as the abundance of other wildlife/fish in the water.

Candidates who had engaged with both task and text to offer competent or better responses, often took time to interpret details rather than simply repeat them and showed they had read the whole text with some care. For example, in bullet two reference to the name of Ennis' boat was often included in answers in passing (Ennis Malone. Captain of the fishing boat Raven) though was not always acknowledged as evidence of his own interest in birds as indicated later in his response to Lotta's questioning.

In bullet three, many candidates were able to pick up on suggestions that the discovery offered renewed hope for the future though fewer had considered how Ennis and Lotta felt about what had happened on the journey itself and so missed chances to broaden the range of ideas they offered. Some mid-range responses that relied on mechanically tracking back through the text and replaying the passage touched on ideas that were potentially relevant for bullet 3 – for example noting some of what happened (such as the storm and the appearance of a whale in the water) though not all mentioned finding the place to which the birds had migrated and/or discovery of the huge flock of terns which was the purpose of the project in the first place. The least successful responses copied sections of text with minimal modification.

The best answers showed evidence that candidates had identified a good or wide range of relevant ideas and details from the text before writing, considering which bullet the information they had located best suited.

On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of an article, and many were able to craft a response with a strong sense of audience, attempting a lively journalistic style. Occasionally, over-reaching with vocabulary clouded meaning and/or resulted in some awkward expression in some responses, though generally writing was clear and sometimes effective indicating the potential to target higher marks.

Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to read back through their response to correct any mistakes or inconsistencies in their use of language – for example, to ensure that meaning is in no doubt, that the register sounds appropriate and that they have used their own words consistently. In the least effective answers, lifting in relation to all three bullets was an issue, with copying of whole sections of text not uncommon in these responses. This affected evidence of both Reading and Writing skills. There were however also some very powerful articles with extensive, feasible development rooted in the text that were written in a measured and convincing style and on occasion even employed wordplay to good effect – for example, with 'Lotta and Ennis believing that all had 'terned' out for the better'.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- remember to base your answer to **Question 3** on just the ideas and details you find in **Text C**
- pay attention to details of the task as set – for example, note the form of the response and the perspective/viewpoint you need to adopt
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- do not invent information and details beyond the scope of the passage; look for the clues and evidence in the text to help you make judgements about characters and situations
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points to help you to identify a wide range of relevant ideas you can use in your answer
- plan a route through your answer beforehand: you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and/or link ideas from each
- do not copy directly from the text: use your own words as far as you can to express ideas
- try to do more than just repeat details of what happened: developing ideas allows you to better show your understanding, for example by explaining feelings or commenting from the point of view of the character you are writing as
- leave sufficient time to edit and correct your response.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/22
Directed Writing and Composition

Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were fifteen marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

Scripts awarded high marks showed evidence of candidates' ability to:

- use an appropriate form, style and register in both questions
- structure ideas and organise responses effectively to persuade and engage the reader
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions or engaging, credible narratives
- understand how different audiences, purposes and genres determine the style adopted
- construct varied sentences accurately, with a clear attempt to influence and interest the reader
- use precise and wide-ranging vocabulary, appropriate for the task.

General comments

Most candidates were familiar with the format of the examination paper and understood what was required for both the directed writing and composition questions. There were only a few very brief scripts, incomplete scripts or scripts in which the instructions regarding which questions to answer were not followed. There were a small number of responses to **Question 1** which were entirely copied from the reading texts, though Examiners noted that some quite large sections of responses were lifted, even where a more focused approach was taken later. However, nearly all candidates understood the instructions for the examination and attempted **Question 1** as well as either a descriptive or narrative writing task. Most responses were written in candidates' own words. Some lifting of phrases or sentences was very common but where this lifting of material was more extensive, marks were inevitably limited for both Reading and Writing.

In **Section B**, most candidates understood how the content of descriptive and narrative writing differs, although there were some more narrative responses to descriptive writing questions which made it difficult for Examiners to award high marks for Content and Structure, as well as some tendency to adopt a more discursive style which lacked focus on either description or story-telling. **Question 2** responses sometimes injected narrative incidents in response to the 'dramatic' in the question, for example, rather than seeing the landscape itself as potentially dramatic, and some responses to this question were simple accounts of holidays rather than focused descriptions. These approaches sometimes limited the Content and Structure mark available.

Nearly all responses showed a clear understanding of and engagement with the question of whether young people should accumulate and keep books for **Question 1**. Most responses were written in an appropriate style and format for a speech to an audience of young people. The register required here was interpreted in different ways with some responses more formal in style while others adopted a conversational tone which showed an awareness of what would engage a younger readership. While both approaches were often effective, some used an overly colloquial, less accurate style, using words such as 'kinda', 'gonna' and 'y'all', perhaps in an attempt to appeal to a young audience. Effective responses made use of more subtle stylistic devices to show an understanding of young people, their lives and concerns. The speaker, for example, sometimes shared that impressing older relatives with shelves of books, even if unread, was a relevant concern for their young audience and raised their standing in the eyes of adults.

As mentioned above, the majority of candidates approached the topic using their own words rather than lifting or copying the words in the passages. More effective answers here also tended to structure responses independently, selecting and commenting on the details in the texts in a coherent response. Some opinion was usually given, based on ideas in the texts, about whether keeping books rather than disposing of them when read, with a minority simply reporting the facts and ideas in the texts with no real comment on them. More effective responses tended to comment on specific ideas in the texts rather than offer general impressions about the value of keeping books and to probe some ideas in the texts rather than reproduce them. Rather than simply outlining the various attitudes about keeping books which appeared in the texts, some interesting discussions addressed the ways in which keeping books gave young people opportunities to return and learn lessons from them or indulge in the nostalgia of childhood. The ethical, environmental or social implications of keeping many books were addressed by candidates at the highest level.

Less effective responses tended to repeat the ideas in the texts, rather than selecting points and commenting on them. There was sometimes at this level some drifting from the focus of the question to discuss the value of reading itself to increase knowledge or give pleasure, rather than the implications of keeping books.

Most made good use of the bullet points in the question to help structure the response and the ideas in the texts were scrutinised thoughtfully in more effective responses. Effective evaluation often addressed ideas about young people's social or environmental responsibility to share books or challenged assertions in the texts that simply having books, rather than reading them, would increase their intelligence. Less well considered responses sometimes gave a summary of the ideas in the texts but did not engage with them. The structure and organisation of ideas required in a speech, often including some rhetorical devices or clear lines of argument, were used more effectively in better responses to persuade and argue a case. Less effective responses were often written in a straightforward style with less consistent awareness of the audience and purpose of the task.

In **Section B**, effective responses to the composition questions were characterised by a clear understanding of the genre selected, descriptive or narrative, and of the features of good writing in each.

Descriptive writing at the highest level was evocative and subtle and most responses gave a range of descriptive detail without resorting to narrative. There were some imaginative descriptions of many types of landscapes for **Question 2**, including some effective battleground scenes, the aftermath of various dramatic natural phenomena and some beautiful mountain vistas at particular times of the day or year. Less effective responses to this question were sometimes framed narratively with overlong preambles about holidays and in some there were dramatic incidents such as shootings or fights which seemed out of place with the surroundings. For the second descriptive question, there were some highly original interpretations of 'a moment of frustration' caused by a wide range of succinctly described circumstances and focused on the sensations experienced by the protagonist. Weaker responses here described the cause of the frustration, such as a lost key or a missed deadline, but quickly ran out of ways to describe the frustration itself.

Both narrative writing questions proved popular across the range of abilities. In **Question 4**, the title was used in a very wide variety of interesting ways. Effective narratives constructed around the idea of an incessant and intrusive noise were used figuratively to suggest an insistent inner voice undermining or sometimes urging the protagonist. There were also many successful narratives in which the sound was more literally interpreted as a child crying or the voice of a lost loved one. This use of sound to help structure the narrative was often important in the creation of a believable response to this question.

Question 5 elicited some highly engaging and well-constructed narratives. Effective narratives included both those in which reaching new heights involved actual mountains and more metaphorical endeavours which were significant in different ways and gave stories cohesion and interest. Less effective **Question 5** responses tended to be simple chronological accounts of hiking up mountains. A number of responses at this level involved ascents of Mount Everest which lacked real credibility.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Write a speech to an audience of young people about attitudes to owning books and keeping them.

In your speech you should:

- **evaluate the ideas, attitudes and opinions in the texts about buying and keeping books**
- **give your own views, based on the texts, on some of the factors which should influence young people's attitudes to buying and keeping books.**

Base your article on what you have read in both texts, but be careful to use your own words.

Address both of the bullet points.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 25 marks for the quality of your writing.

Examiners awarded high marks for Reading where there was some probing and evaluation of the ideas in the reading material, rather than a straightforward listing and reproduction of the points in the texts. Where the article was also accurate and ambitious in vocabulary and style, with a clear understanding of the appropriate style and register for the specific task of a speech and for an audience of young people, Examiners could award high marks for Writing.

More effective responses here focused carefully on the implications of ideas in the texts, with the highest Reading marks awarded for those which handled the different, often conflicting views evaluatively and with confidence. The extent to which the implicit ideas and opinions contained in the texts were probed and scrutinised tended to determine the level of candidates' achievement in the Reading component of the mark. These implicit ideas often involved the use of books as a way only to display the owner's education, the need for social and environmental responsibility in sharing the pleasure of reading books and the highly personal cache of memories and experiences represented by particular books. Many responses, for example, discussed the nostalgia of childhood memories evoked by some books as a valid reason to keep them and some thoughtful responses assessed the implied hypocrisy in Text B of displaying books in order to impress others, rather than deriving knowledge from them by reading. Some candidates suggested that Text A's writer showed more social responsibility by sharing read books with others who may not be as privileged or who did not have access to the internet to read books in other ways. Similarly, some candidates discussed the apparent claims in Text B that simply having books made a person more intelligent, arguing that, rather than encouraging more reading, unread books would induce guilt and self-judgement.

Inferences which could be drawn from some ideas in the texts were also used in more effective responses.

Some, for example, compared the experience of reading physical books with reading online, describing the pleasure of turning pages and the smell of a new book to suggest that online texts offered a more limited pleasure.

One less common but valid inference considered the environmental waste of hoarding books. While many abhorred the idea of shredding books, there was some thoughtful probing of keeping books after only reading them once when the resources used to produce them were finite.

More evaluative discussions of reasons to keep books, implied by the ideas in the texts, were also rewarded in more successful responses. Some argued that the internet was less reliable and verifiable than published books and in any case the experience of reading books was more than the accumulating of knowledge but a pleasure in itself which stimulated the imagination.

In less effective responses where sensible use was made of the texts without such probing and challenging of ideas, there were often valid opinions about which books should be kept and which could be disposed of. Some straightforward reproduction of explicit ideas often concluded with a judgement that it should be each person's decision whether or not they kept books and no value judgement should be attached to such a decision. In many middle-range responses, fairly simple compromises were suggested, based on the reading material though not really probing the ideas. These included opinions such as only keeping the books that are important or not buying books which you will not read. These conclusions showed a clear understanding of the points made in the texts but were not always alert to the implications of those ideas, especially for young people.

Marks for reading

The most effective responses adopted a consistently evaluative, critical stance and read effectively between the lines of the texts, drawing inferences and making judgements about the values underpinning our attitudes to reading, the changing significance of books in the lives of young people and what keeping books means in modern life.

Most responses in Level 5 or 6 for Reading included reference to various ways in which hoarding books for oneself was environmentally wasteful and could be viewed as socially irresponsible. More nuanced and developed ideas included the notion that displaying your library of books, whether read or not, implied some kind of cultural snobbery and sense of privilege. One candidate wrote, *'You might be able to fool your grandmother into thinking you're some kind of genius, but if you really were you wouldn't need to brag about it with your wall of books.'* Another candidate commented on the way in which particular books became embedded in a person's memories and experience: *'It's hard to let go of books which gave you insight and enlightenment at different stages in your life, although I can count on one hand how many of those I have. Most books, even presents from loved ones, don't stay in your mind and can easily be given away.'* The extent to which these kinds of ideas were addressed often determined whether a response could be given a Level 5 mark for Reading and in some cases a range of more evaluative comments merited a Level 6 mark.

Responses awarded marks in Level 5 characteristically offered one or two evaluative ideas but sometimes with less consistent probing and challenging of ideas in the texts. There were often sensible ideas about how giving away books could benefit others who might not be able to afford them but wider considerations about the ethics of book hoarding were not really addressed. Most candidates at this level took at face value, for example, the idea in Text B that simply having books made one healthier and happier.

Where some comment or opinion was offered, mostly without specific reference to particular points in the texts but generally relevant to the ideas in them, marks in Level 4 were usually awarded. These comments were usually less selective and followed the sequence of the texts even where ideas contradicted each other. More general, if valid, ideas were also typical at this level with many responses including suggestions about how many books should be kept (*'Don't have more than one shelf in your room.'*) rather than examining whether and which books should be kept. At this level, there was often also some fairly frequent lifting of phrases from the texts which could not be credited for Reading or Writing.

Examiners usually awarded marks in Level 3 for Reading where there was some coverage of the texts, and some selection of ideas from them, but these were listed or simply recorded. Often, there was a clear paraphrase of both texts but limited comment on them. Where there were some brief opinions, usually at the end of the response, they tended to be more general and not strongly anchored in the specific ideas in the texts. There was sometimes some drifting from the main focus of the task to a discussion of the benefits of reading rather than keeping books or, more commonly, a simple assertion that reading was not an activity that young people enjoyed and there was therefore limited reason to keep books.

Comments made at this level were given mostly in candidates' own words, though often with lifted phrases and sentences. Less successful responses tended to paraphrase and list ideas and many given marks in low Level 3 and below contained much copied material. In a few cases the entire response was copied from the texts. Where a mark of 6 was awarded, some firmer roots in the passages were needed, whereas 5 was generally given for thin or lifted responses in which there was some secure grasp of the ideas in the passage.

Marks for Writing

25 marks were available for style and register, the structure of the answer and the technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Style and audience

Candidates needed to adopt an appropriate style and register for an engaging, informative speech for an audience of young people. Most responses showed a clear understanding of the required, largely formal but engaging register, even where technical writing skills were weak, and this allowed for Examiners to consider marks for Level 4 and above where a 'sometimes effective style' was required. Some high scoring responses used a more consciously rhetorical style, presenting their arguments in a more combative way or including observations which showed a shared understanding of the landscape of young people's lives. These responses made their case effectively and with some impact. At the highest level, responses were more subtle, often adopting a direct, personal tone which gave a sense of a shared experience between the young person writing the speech and those reading it. One candidate wrote, for example: *'Of course we all loved our first picture books and even those first novels that made an impact on us, but I don't think I'll be storing my Physics textbooks like treasure! Which books meant the most to you?'*

In the middle range of marks, Examiners could sometimes award marks for Writing in Level 4 even where more technical writing skills were lacking if the style and register adopted were appropriate for the task and the audience. A clear, consistent attempt to engage young people often worked well. Some responses, however, were generally accurate but were largely summaries of the reading material rather than adopting the style of a speech or the register appropriate for a young audience. Sometimes, in reaching for an engaging, age-appropriate style and register, colloquialisms and slang were used, detracting from the maturity required by the arguments and the requirements of an examined assessment.

Level 3 marks were usually awarded where the reading material was largely reproduced so that the organisation and sequence of sentences and paragraphs reflected the original and were not adapted to create a coherent style. Where the reading material was heavily lifted or copied, there was often little of the candidate's own style for Examiners to reward. Phrases and words from the texts were often copied but in some cases several sentences were also copied. More commonly, a range of expressions was lifted to express some ideas which could then not be credited for either Reading or Writing. For example, the reference to 'Books will help you be happier, earn more, and even stay healthier' in Text B was commonly lifted and the grammar of some copied sentences or phrases was not suitably adapted. In more effective responses, ideas were incorporated into the writer's own style and selected for their usefulness to the overall argument rather than copied.

Structure

Responses awarded high marks for Writing handled the material confidently and presented their arguments cogently. The issues addressed were combined so that the judgements which emerged were clearly derived from the ideas in the texts, but the response was not dependent on them for its structure and sequence. At the highest level, the lines of argument were set from the introductory paragraph and the issues in the two texts were addressed but as a cohesive piece, though this was rare. The opening and concluding sections of the most effective responses tended to introduce and sum up the main points, with the intervening sections arguing a coherent case. The argument being pursued determined the sequence of ideas in these responses rather than the sequence of the original texts.

Responses given Level 5 marks for Writing tended to reflect a range of points made in each text but were reordered to some degree in a response which was sensibly structured and paragraphed. An overall coherence and structure were required for this Level which was usually less evident in responses below Level 5.

Less effective responses sometimes struggled to provide a coherent argument and were more dependent on the sequencing of the original texts. In most cases the information given in the texts was offered with some rewording but not reordering of ideas, often leading to some contradiction of points taken from each text. While some simple opinion was sometimes given at the end of the response, these views did not usually, at this level, emerge from an examination of the ideas in the reading material.

Accuracy

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled as well as subtle in tone and register was given a Writing mark in Level 6. These responses were not only engaging in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. There was a range of precisely selected and complex vocabulary and sentence structures varied and were consciously used, often rhetorically, to engage the reader. Some complex sentences structures were chosen which helped to balance and weigh up contending views and complex clauses were controlled by careful punctuation within sentences. One error noted by Examiners at

all levels of achievement was a mis-agreement between 'books' and 'is' or other singular verb forms. At the highest level, this serious error was sometimes the only error in the response but at all levels it was common.

Level 5 responses were usually purposeful and clear, though perhaps not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary or as precise in register or style as those given higher marks. Level 4 responses, as described in the marking guidelines, were 'sometimes effective' but not consistently so. Although the style was usually fairly plain, the language used was generally accurate. Where candidates adopted a more colloquial style, perhaps in an attempt to show their understanding of the required register, slang terms such as 'gonna' were used inappropriately. A range of quite basic errors was made at this level which limited the effectiveness of the style but did not affect clarity of meaning. There were lapses in the use of definite and indefinite articles (usually omission) and some grammatical mis-agreement, often between plurals and verb forms. Common spelling errors in this mark range included some frequently used words from the reading material such as 'pastime', 'independent' and 'research.'

Faulty sentence structures, fluctuating tenses or too much lifted or copied material often kept Writing marks for **Question 1** below Level 4. These responses often showed reasonable clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation and grammar errors which meant that Examiners could not award marks in Level 4. The omission of definite or indefinite articles was quite common, as were tense errors, and agreement errors were more frequent and more damaging to meaning at this level. In rare cases, material from the texts was copied and responses where this occurred more substantially could not be given marks in Level 4 for Writing or for Reading because neither the content nor the style of the response was the candidate's own.

Ways in which this type of answer could be improved:

- **Be prepared to challenge the ideas in the reading texts.**
- **Look for contradictions in the arguments and point them out.**
- **Group ideas from both texts together and discuss them rather than repeat them.**
- **Think carefully about the kind of style which suits your task and the audience, but avoid slang in an examination.**
- **Check your writing for basic punctuation errors, such as missing definite or indefinite articles, weaknesses in grammar or misspellings of key words which are in the passage.**

Descriptive writing

Write a description of a dramatic landscape.

Write a description with the title, 'A moment of frustration'.

The first descriptive writing question was a popular choice for candidates and Examiners awarded a wide range of marks for these responses. A sense of place, brought to life in some vivid ways in the most effective responses to this question, was often key to the success of the piece. Sometimes combined with contrasting times of day or season, many responses focused on beautiful mountainous or coastal seascapes, using contrast and comparison to create a cohesive, well organised description. These descriptions included some vivid imagery, sometimes extended across the whole response but not in excess, of the waves during a dramatic storm or the sun rising and setting over a mountainous, snow-covered valley. Sense impressions, such as the 'crunch of dry snow as it settled under my feet' or the smell of salt spray as the waves beat against rocks, helped to place the protagonist in the scene and engage the reader.

There were also more striking interpretations of the question such as the description of a battleground scene in the aftermath of a deadly onslaught. There was sometimes some subtlety in the avoidance of repetitive or gory details in responses at the highest level. In one response, for example, the colourful laces on the boot of what only later was shown as a severed foot gave the narrator the opportunity to imagine the background and personality of a young soldier. In another battle scene description, the carnage was contrasted poignantly with the beauty of the natural surroundings. The writer adeptly followed the flight of a crow to provide changes in the setting, which was quite powerful in its effect and created the cohesion which was characteristic of high-level descriptions.

Question 3 was a less popular choice but elicited some effective responses where candidates were able to concisely construct a scenario then focus on the sensations of frustration rather than the cause of the frustration. Examination scenarios were quite common and often very effective because the period of time described was circumscribed and intense for the narrator, helping to create a focused, cohesive response

with a range of details. Detailed descriptions of the surroundings sometimes helped to evoke tension as in one response in which, as the narrator's frustration mounted, time seemed to speed up: *'I suddenly noticed the ticking of the clock on the gym wall as it mocked me, taunted me with its ability to wipe out my future in the stroke of time. Ten minutes left and a world of disaster awaited me.'*

Other successful responses used different kinds of scenarios. In one engaging response, for example, the narrator described their reactions while waiting for someone to answer an important text. The content of the original text message was never completely revealed but the sensations experienced by the narrator as they waited made clear the significance of it. The anxiety and tension described were made more concrete by the inclusion of physical details: *'My room was a blur of untidy mess, nothing my eyes could fix on and steady my beating heart. What if she never returned to sit on this messy floor and laugh at my silly childhood figurines with me ever again?'* Where candidates were able to capture a moment in time and use the physical surroundings to express the sense of frustration, responses were often more sustained and less repetitive than if the focus was only on the thoughts and feelings of the narrator.

In both descriptive writing questions, striking, closely observed details created engaging, evocative scenes in the best responses. Where they were sustained and developed and showed skill in building a detailed, convincing overall picture, Examiners could award marks for Content and Structure in Level 6. These consciously crafted pieces held the reader's attention by linking the different elements described in an interesting, cohesive response. Level 6 responses often employed this cohesive structure, as well as carefully chosen detail and striking images or extended motifs which held the piece together.

Level 5 responses tended to use a wide range of details and were well-constructed, if a little less effective and cohesive overall. Where the examination scenario was depicted, for example, there was often at this level some successful description of the narrator's frustration at not being able to recall some fact but this reliance on thoughts and feelings made for a less wide-ranging response. At the bottom of Level 5 and in Level 4, responses were competently organised but usually more predictable or less ambitious. Selected scenes and details at this level tended to involve less striking images and more stereotypical ideas or, as was sometimes the case for **Question 3**, were a little repetitive or sometimes brief as candidates ran out of ideas to describe the same sensations of frustration.

Level 4 descriptions for Content and Structure tended to become more narrative in intent, especially for **Question 3**, and while most responses at this level were organised and paragraphed, the details included were simple and there was less use of images or a range of vocabulary. In **Question 2**, the use of the term 'dramatic' in the question was interpreted narrowly in less effective responses. At this level, a fairly competent description of a scene was followed incongruously by some 'dramatic' incident, such as a fight or a robbery, which then led the response into narrative. For both questions, weaknesses in sustaining the description without narrative or repetitious vocabulary were characteristic of lower Level 4 responses.

A lack of awareness of the essential elements of descriptive writing was evident in responses at Level 3, although they were sometimes fairly accurately written. These were often entirely narrative, brief or undeveloped.

Ways in which descriptive writing can be improved:

- **In descriptive writing, avoid lengthy preambles and explanations and use ideas and images which evoke a specific atmosphere.**
- **Practise developing extended metaphors which add cohesion to your response.**
- **Check your writing carefully for tense switching.**
- **Make sure you write in complete sentences and avoid archaic words. Practise creating effects with simple vocabulary and sentences which can be powerful in shaping a response.**

Narrative writing

Write a story which includes the words, '... I could not escape from the noise ...'.

Write a story with the title, 'Reaching new heights'.

Both narrative writing questions were popular choices for candidates across the mark range though **Question 4** proved to be a more common option than **Question 5**. There was a very wide range of plots, characters and scenarios in these responses as candidates took the opportunities offered by the open questions to determine the genre, style and content for themselves. Examiners occasionally saw narratives

which did not comfortably fit with either title, which sometimes seemed more suited to titles set in previous examinations or were pre-prepared. In some cases, this lack of relevance affected the mark for Content and Structure because the words to be included in the narrative in **Question 4** responses, or the central idea in **Question 5**, were incidental rather than integral to the narrative as a whole.

Effective responses were well organised and thoughtful interpretations of the title which used engaging, credible ideas to create developed stories. An ability to shape the narrative and to produce moments of tension, mystery or drama and to vary the pace of the story were essential elements of more effective responses to both questions. In **Question 4**, more effective responses often used the device of the noise in the question to drive the narrative. These varied across the ability range though similar scenarios were used in responses which were both less effective and highly successful. For example, in some stories the noise was interpreted more figuratively as the narrator's own inner voice, often undermining or mocking in tone and jeopardising them in some way. In one interesting tale, the careful characterisation of the main character as an anxious, shy young woman made the incessant undermining voice in her head as she embarked on a journey to college for the first time very credible and engaging. As she got on a crowded bus, the noise in her head grew insistent: *'My parents hovered anxiously outside the bus, being jostled by ignorant vendors and people rushing for buses. 'They're glad you're going, you silly girl' the voice said. 'They've had enough of you clinging to them like a pathetic puppy.'*

In other responses, a similar, metaphorical interpretation of the noise in the question was used to shape the narrative and bring a satisfying resolution. The noise in another effective response was, at the beginning, the soothing voice of an absent parent which became stultifying, disabling the narrator and preventing them from taking risks and living a full life. There were also inner voices of guilt or shame for some past mistake which blighted narrators' lives in different ways but, as always, the success of the response often relied on how well realised the characters were or how well the descriptive elements in the narrative helped to bring alive the setting and make credible the scene depicted.

The noise in the question was commonly created more literally in responses at all levels of achievement. There were noises of helicopters coming to rescue characters who had become stuck on mountains, sea cliffs as the tide came in or held captive by criminals. Dreams haunted by cries of help also featured in some narratives, in which locating the voice and rescuing its owner became the cohesive thread of the story. Most narratives addressing this question were chronological accounts with varying degrees of development, characterisation and shaping although some candidates chose more ambitious structures, telling the story from the vantage point of hindsight or from two different characters' perspectives. While such structures were more difficult to control, Examiners could often reward these approaches for their ambition and engagement.

More commonly in the middle range, narratives were fairly straightforward accounts in which events tended to dominate and there was more limited attention paid to characterisation and setting. Plotlines often involved more mundane scenarios in which the noise was discovered to be a broken machine in a domestic setting or, conversely, rather unlikely, extreme scenarios. These narratives were often organised and somewhat cohesive but did not really engage the reader.

Examiners saw some stories which were not always well-adapted but based on previous questions or which sometimes had limited relevance to the task in hand. Content and Structure marks were sometimes detrimentally affected in these cases.

For **Question 5**, there were many different plotlines, characters and events which allowed candidates to show their narrative writing ability. In many responses, the question elicited stories of personal ambitions reached in sport, academic achievement or other endeavours while in others there were more literal 'heights' to be scaled in the shape of high mountains. In one story in which the question was used more metaphorically, the narrator was a famous criminal, known for evading capture in ingenious ways. The story opened with him cornered by armed officers, some depicted economically with some highly effective characterisation, and concluded with a daring escape. There was much skill in the way such a character was portrayed adeptly and engaged the reader's sympathy.

As mentioned above, these scenarios were common to responses across the mark range but successful responses relied less on events and more on characterisation, the withholding of some information to create intrigue and descriptive elements which brought the scene alive. More literal interpretations in which mountains were scaled were often quite successful if some sense of jeopardy or drama was included and the characters and relationships were interesting.

Less effective responses to this question tended to focus on climbing a mountain, often Mount Everest, in which characters lacked some subtlety and depth compared with the more well-realised scenarios mentioned above. Sometimes, unlikely events and details made the narrative rather naïve and lacking credibility. In one story, for example, the Everest base camp was reached in half a day and the protagonist enjoyed spending money on the tourist trinkets being sold in a market there. Most plotlines at this level involved similar themes such as climbing a mountain, scoring the winning goal in a football match or working hard to pass an examination. Sometimes, turns of events in stories were not properly signalled and the characters were often not developed enough to engage the reader's interest and sympathy.

Weaker responses to this question were typically simpler versions of these scenarios in which there was some organisation but little sense of character emerged or where brevity and simplicity precluded Examiners from awarding higher marks for Content and Structure.

Examiners awarded marks in Level 6 for Content and Structure for narratives which created convincing, interesting scenarios and characters in responses to both questions. While the events in a story were important in creating such credibility, Level 6 responses paid attention to characterisation and how events were driven by character traits, choices and relationships.

Narratives given marks in Level 5 were usually more straightforward in structure and approach but nonetheless cohesive and reasonably credible for the reader. Examiners could award marks in Level 5 for Content and Structure where the narrative was organised and there was a clear attempt to create a developed, relevant story. Responses in this range were more usually chronological accounts but contained a suitable ending depicting some satisfying, if not always engaging, resolution. Whichever interpretation was given to the tasks in both narrative questions, for Level 5 marks for Content and Structure stories needed to be well-managed with some conscious shaping of the narrative beyond a simple retelling of events.

Level 4 marks for Content and Structure were awarded for stories which were relevant to the task but were less developed and used fewer elements of effective narrative writing. Characters and narrators tended to be more simply drawn and responses were often more dependent on a series of events, lacking attention to characterisation and setting. A simplicity of content or a lack of development rather than weaknesses in organisation were typical at this level. In **Question 4**, for example, these resolutions sometimes involved simple accounts of getting lost in forests, caves or haunted houses from which characters were rescued by others carrying torches. At this level there was a tendency to say simply what happened or to state who the characters were rather than drawing the reader in by characterisation and setting. Characters were identified but there was more time and emphasis given to relating events than developing credible characters. While the majority of less effective narratives had some simple but clear sequence of events, there were fewer features of a developed narrative and the reader was less engaged as a result.

High marks for Style and Accuracy for all composition questions were given for responses where the writing was engaging and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects. The characteristics of Level 6 writing included a fluent and flexible use of language which was subtle enough to create a range of effects to engage the reader. Punctuation within sentences, especially in the use of dialogue, was secure in responses in Level 6 and where coupled with a sophisticated and precise range of vocabulary, the highest marks were given. Correct punctuation of speech was rare, even where responses showed a high degree of accuracy otherwise.

Responses awarded marks in Level 5 tended to be less ambitious and complex but still mostly accurate while Level 4 responses were plain in style and there was a more limited range of vocabulary. Speech punctuation was almost always problematic at this level, creating confusion for the reader, although the writing had few serious errors which affected the clarity of meaning, such as weak sentence control, sentence separation and grammar errors.

One persistent error, mostly but not exclusively seen in the descriptive writing tasks, was the use of incomplete sentences without finite verbs. In some descriptions, strings of verbless sentences dominated the whole response, creating a stunted, list-like style even where the vocabulary and ideas used were quite wide-ranging. Switching of tenses between past and present in narratives and descriptions was also noted by Examiners in many responses. Other jarring effects were sometimes created by the use of archaic vocabulary, often imprecisely and excessively employed.

Ways in which narrative writing can be improved:

- Think about how to interest and intrigue the reader in shaping your narrative.
- Practise more imaginative ways to tell your story, not just a chronological account.
- Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader. Do not rely on actions.
- Check your writing for errors which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling and punctuation mistakes. Accurate speech punctuation will help to lift your mark.
- Use complicated vocabulary only where you can do so with precision and consider the power of simple words and sentences to create particular effects.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/03 Coursework Portfolio

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and context for each of the three assignments
- read critically and thoroughly evaluated the implicit and explicit ideas, opinions, and attitudes they identified in a text
- supported their analysis, evaluation and comments with a detailed and specific selection of relevant ideas from a text
- assimilated ideas from a text to provide developed, thoughtful and sophisticated responses
- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of events and situations.
- demonstrated a high level of accuracy in their writing
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of appropriate vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of argument, description, or narrative
- engaged in a process of careful editing and proofreading to identify and correct errors in their writing.

The best practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was when:

- centres used the new checklist to ensure that all instructions for submitting a coursework sample were followed carefully
- centres followed the guidelines and instructions set out in the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook
- appropriate texts were used for **Assignment 1**, which were of an appropriate length and contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond, and were relevant to their interests
- centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience
- teachers gave general but helpful advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- following feedback, candidates revised and edited their first drafts to improve their writing
- candidates checked, revised, and edited their final drafts to identify and correct errors
- teachers provided marks and summative comments at the end of the final draft of each assignment which clearly related to the appropriate mark level descriptors
- teachers indicated all errors in the final drafts of each completed assignment
- centres engaged in a process of internal moderation and clearly indicated any mark adjustments in the coursework portfolios, on the Individual Record Cards, and on the Candidate Assessment Summary Forms.

General comments

A significant number of candidates produced interesting coursework portfolios which contained varied work across a range of contexts. There was evidence to show that many centres set tasks which allowed candidates flexibility to respond to subjects related to their personal interests or experiences. The majority of coursework portfolios contained writing of three different genres. There were few incomplete folders.

Most centres provided the correct paperwork and completed all relevant forms accurately. Some centres provided summative comments closely related to the mark schemes at the end of each completed assignment. These were usually helpful in helping moderators to understand how and why marks had been awarded and centres are thanked for following the process as instructed in the Coursework Handbook.

A major concern in this session was that some markers of the coursework portfolios did not indicate errors in the final draft of each assignment and/or provide a summative comment which referred to the marking level descriptors to justify the marks awarded. Failure to follow this process usually resulted in inaccurate or inconsistent marking and was one of the main reasons for adjustment of marks.

Some rough drafts had too much guidance for improvement. Centres are reminded that only general feedback should be offered at the end of the response. No errors should be identified on rough drafts and no corrections should be indicated. Some rough drafts did not match the final assignment; this is a requirement to ensure that moderators can see how a candidate has developed and improved the response after feedback.

Administration

Successful administration was when centres:

- indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment
- carried out a thorough process of internal moderation which was clearly signposted on the assignments themselves as well as all relevant documentation
- supplied marks and specific comments relating to the mark schemes at the end of the final draft of each assignment
- accurately completed the Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC) and the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF), including any amendments made during internal moderation
- ensured that each coursework folder was securely stapled or tagged and attached to the Individual Candidate Record Card (ICRC)
- submitted their sample of coursework folders **without** using plastic or cardboard wallets.

Internal Moderation

Centres are expected to carry out internal moderation as directed in the Coursework Handbook. There was a general trend of greater accuracy of marking by centres where there was clear evidence of internal moderation than centres where no internal moderation process was evident on the coursework folders and documentation.

Some centres did not record changes made at internal moderation on the candidates' Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRCs) which caused some confusion about the final mark awarded to candidates. Centres are requested to ensure that any changes made at internal moderation are signposted clearly on the work itself then also recorded on the ICRC as well as on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF).

Using the Coursework Handbook

A cause of concern is that some moderation issues persist even though there are clear instructions in the Coursework Handbook, and the same concerns have been raised in previous Principal Moderator Reports. To ensure effective and accurate marking is achieved, and that all paperwork arrives safely for moderation, it is essential that all the instructions given in the Coursework Handbook, and on the relevant forms, are carefully followed.

Below highlights the three most significant issues related to the administration and annotation of candidates' work which led to mark adjustments following moderation:

1. Indicating all errors in the final version of each assignment

- Some of the assignments showed little or no evidence of complying with the instruction in the Coursework Handbook that markers should indicate all errors in the final draft of each assignment. This process helps markers to effectively and accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of work and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. If this process does not take place, it is difficult for markers to make a balanced judgement. In several centres there was evidence across all three assignments that markers had awarded marks from the higher levels of the

assessment criteria to work containing frequent, and often serious, errors that had not been annotated by the marker. This inevitably led to a downward adjustment of marks by the moderator. It is important for all who mark the coursework portfolios to fully understand the importance of indicating and taking into account all errors in the final draft of each assignment. To avoid adjustment of marks for accuracy, it is essential that centres engage in this process and clearly indicate errors in their candidates' work.

2. Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC)

- Some centres did not attach the portfolios of work to the ICRC in accordance with the instructions in the Coursework Handbook and point 4 on the electronic version of the ICRC.
- On some folders there were errors in the transcription of internally moderated mark changes, or it was unclear to the moderator which mark was the final one. Where internal moderation has taken place, any mark changes should be transferred from the assignment to the ICRC to ensure that the moderator has a clear understanding of all mark changes.

3. Coursework portfolios

- Some centres used plastic wallets or envelopes to present candidates' work as an alternative to securely attaching the individual assignments to the ICRC; this caused extra work for moderators and increased the risk of work being mislaid. Centres are requested not to place coursework folders into plastic or cardboard wallets or envelopes.
- Some rough drafts contained more detailed annotations and specific feedback than permitted; centres are reminded that when markers offer feedback on a
- rough draft, it should be general advice. No errors should be indicated, and the marker should not offer corrections or improvements.

Comments on specific assignments:

Assignment 1

Candidates were successful when:

- they responded to interesting texts which contained engaging content
- they demonstrated analysis and evaluation of the individual ideas and opinions identified within a text
- the form, purpose and intended audience of their writing was clear to the reader
- they wrote in a fluent, accurate and appropriate style.

Many candidates responded to texts which were of an appropriate length and challenge, and which appealed to the interests of the candidates. Successful texts included articles exploring issues relevant to young people in which the writer expressed strong opinions; less successful texts were those which were of limited personal interest to the candidates, or those which were overly factual or informative. Texts selected for **Assignment 1** should be an appropriate length, explore ideas and offer opinions, and use rhetorical or literary devices designed to provoke or sustain the reader's interest to ensure that the text offers scope for candidates to fully engage and respond to it in a sustained piece of writing. Centres are encouraged to use a good range of relevant and up-to-date texts for **Assignment 1**. Other less successful texts were ones where the candidate fully endorsed the writer's views and opinions because they offered few opportunities for evaluation, as required by the mark scheme. It is also crucial to select texts for their quality of written communication: some centres submitted responses to poorly written texts taken from a variety of websites. Many of these were too long and tended to be informative, offering very little scope for rigorous evaluation or analysis.

If centres are unsure about how to approach and set tasks for **Assignment 1**, they can refer to the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Both documents provide advice and guidance about task setting and text selection and can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge website.

Reading

In this moderation session there was a significant trend for many centres to award marks for reading from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the middle-level assessment criteria. Candidates who successfully met the higher-level assessment criteria were those who demonstrated a consistently evaluative approach to most of the ideas and opinions in a text, and provided a developed,

sophisticated response which made direct references to (or included quotes from) the text. Candidates who engaged in a general discussion about the topic or subject of a text, or those who did not thoroughly evaluate a text, tended to produce work which more appropriately met the Level 4 assessment criteria in Table B (reading). The most common reasons for adjustments to a centre's marks for reading were when moderators identified a trend of candidates engaging in a general discussion about the topic of a text/s, or when the number of points covered were 'appropriate' rather than 'thorough'.

Writing

Many candidates responded to texts in an appropriate form and style. Letters were the most popular choice of form, and many candidates demonstrated some understanding of audience and purpose. When candidates were less successful with writing, it was often because the form, intended audience and purpose of the task were not clear. This made it difficult for the candidates to meet the highest-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments to writing marks for **Assignment 1**. Successful responses to **Assignment 1** tasks were those in which the writing was highly effective, almost always accurate, and consistent throughout in the application of form and style. Work which showed insecurity with form and style, such as the omission of an appropriate ending to a letter, a limited or inconsistent use of rhetorical devices for speeches, or lack of clarity of the intended audience, tended to meet the assessment criteria for Level 5 or below, Table A (writing) or below. In this session there was a general tendency for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria.

Another common reason for the adjustment of marks for writing was because of the accuracy of the candidates' writing. When errors impaired meaning, such as the incorrect construction of sentences or use of grammar, typing errors, or the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck, the overall quality and efficacy of the discussion was affected. Errors such as these are classed as serious and make it difficult for candidates to meet the higher-level assessment criteria; this type of writing is more characteristic of writing achieving marks from the middle to the lower levels of the assessment criteria. There was a tendency for centres to over-reward ambitious vocabulary that had some merit in its selection but was not always used precisely or effectively in the response.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:

- thoroughly explore, challenge, and discuss the ideas and opinions in the text
- avoid making general comments about the topic or subject of the text, instead, ensure that comments are specifically related to the ideas, opinions or attitudes identified in the text
- look for, and use inferences made implicitly in the text
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the text and comment on them
- develop points to create a thorough, detailed, and clear line of argument or discussion
- make sure that the audience and purpose is clear and adapt the written style accordingly
- proof-read assignments to ensure punctuation, vocabulary choices and grammar are correct.

Assignment 2 (description):

The majority of tasks set for **Assignment 2** were appropriate and encouraged candidates to write in a descriptive style. Many students wrote engaging and vivid descriptions from experience or their imaginations, which were a pleasure to read. There were a number of descriptive assignments which slipped into narrative accounts; this was sometimes due to the nature of the tasks set, such as describing an experience or holiday. This was quite often a reason for adjustment of marks from Table C (content and structure).

Centres are reminded to set descriptive tasks and remind candidates to avoid using narrative writing techniques in their responses.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those where the candidates had carefully selected vocabulary to create a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place or person, and which were well sequenced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. Successful responses included descriptions of festivals and celebrations, or significant settings or places. Less successful tasks were those which asked candidates to describe events or scenarios of which they had no personal experience, or settings and situations in which the candidate clearly had no interest or engagement. Many of these responses relied on unconvincing descriptive writing which did not engage the reader. This type of writing is characteristic of work achieving marks from the middle to lower levels of the assessment criteria, although it was noticed that many centres awarded marks from the higher-level assessment criteria.

Whilst many candidates showed a secure and confident understanding of language, there was still a general tendency by a number of centres to award marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to work which was highly ambitious, but which contained ineffective overuse of literary techniques and complex vocabulary; this seemed to be actively encouraged by some centres. To achieve marks from the higher-level assessment criteria, candidates need to demonstrate a confident and secure understanding of the use of language for specific effect. This is difficult for candidates to achieve if they over-use adjectives, include inappropriate images or idioms and/or use obscure or archaic language. The overworking of language was a common reason for moderators adjusting marks.

Another common reason for adjustments to marks was when centres awarded marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to writing that contained a limited range of sentence structures, incorrectly constructed sentences, or contained frequent errors with punctuation and grammar. Writing that achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register, and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. A significant number of the assignments receiving marks from centres from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D more frequently displayed the characteristics of writing expected from Level 4 or below. Many candidates 'told' the reader about the scene being described, rather than engaging the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images.

In addition, the work of some candidates contained errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of the writing. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, tense inconsistencies, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Errors which affect the meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as 'minor'. As mentioned earlier in this report, the absence of the indication of all errors made it difficult to determine whether errors had been considered when marks had been awarded; on some weaker assignments no errors had been annotated and the summative comment declared a high level of accuracy. Accurate and effective application of the assessment criteria is achieved through the careful weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and the application of a mark which 'best fits' the assessment criteria. To achieve this, it is essential that errors are identified and indicated by the markers. Engaging in this process allows markers to effectively balance the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and apply marks that are most appropriate to their candidates' work.

Information and guidance on how to apply the mark schemes are given in the Coursework Handbook. Examples of good tasks and exemplification of the standard of work expected at the different levels of the mark scheme are also provided in the Coursework Handbook.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

- use a range of vocabulary suited to the context and content of the description
- create images appropriate for the context and content of the description
- create an engaging imagined scenario using language designed to have an impact on the reader
- avoid slipping into a narrative style
- proof-read responses to identify and correct common errors such as missing articles and prepositions, switches in tenses and typing errors
- avoid repetitive sentence structures; instead use a range of sentences to create specific effects.

Assignment 3 (narrative):

Much of the task setting for **Assignment 3** was generally appropriate and many candidates produced engaging and effective narratives which were well controlled and convincing. Successful narratives were those in which candidates created stories characterised by well-defined plots and strongly developed features of narrative writing such as description, strong characterisation, and a clear sense of progression. The narration of personal experiences and events, or responses where candidates were able to create convincing details and events within their chosen genre, tended to be more successful. Candidates were generally less successful when their understanding of audience and genre was insecure, and the resulting narratives lacked credibility and conviction. This sort of writing was often seen when candidates were writing in the genre of detective or fantasy stories. Stories such as these, although containing a clear beginning, middle and ending, were often unrealistic and incredible, or lacked development of character or plot. Some responses failed to conclude properly, ending with an unconvincing or unsatisfactory cliff hanger. This sort of writing is classed as 'relevant' or 'straightforward' and should expect to be awarded marks from Level 4 or below from Table C (content and structure).

Very accurate work containing precise well-chosen vocabulary, and which maintained a consistent register throughout, could be awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D (style and accuracy). As with **Assignments 1 and 2**, there was a significant trend for centres to award marks from the highest levels of the mark scheme to work which contained frequent and persistent errors and which more accurately met the assessment criteria from Level 4 or below in Table D. This was a common reason for the adjustment of marks. The comments made for **Assignment 2** with regards to accuracy and the annotation of errors are also relevant to **Assignment 3** and should be noted by all who mark coursework.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 3:

- create stories that are realistic, credible, and convincing
- remember that characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage the reader
- avoid clichéd scenarios and consider an individual and original selection of content
- carefully proof-read and check assignments for errors in the use of punctuation, prepositions, articles, tenses, and for errors in the construction of sentences.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (ORAL ENDORSEMENT)

Paper 0500/04
Speaking and Listening Test

Key messages

Centre administration was of a high standard with Submit for Assessment (SfA) working well and being used efficiently by centres.

There were relatively few issues reported concerning the general rank order of candidates within centres though the level of accuracy of the assessment was not always appropriate. Where recommendations of scaling were made, it was usually because centres had not differentiated appropriately between different levels of attainment, particularly in **Part 2** and specifically between Level 4 and Level 5.

Part 2 should consist of a conversation between the candidate and the examiner. It follows that a **Part 2** that is in essence a series of (sometimes) unrelated questions is not an appropriate model to use for the most successful outcome. **Part 2** is not a test of the candidate's in-depth knowledge of the topic so closed questions requiring specific answers are not appropriate.

Part 2 should last for 7–8 minutes and it is the responsibility of the examiner to ensure the correct timing is adhered to. Conversations that run for significantly less than the minimum 7 minutes required do not allow candidates the opportunity to access the full range of marks available because certain descriptors in the higher levels cannot be met.

Overlong **Part 2** responses do not affect the range of marks that can be awarded but they are unnecessary.

Changes in the direction of the conversation in **Part 2** do not require the examiner to introduce material that is unrelated to the topic chosen for the **Part 1** talk. Rather, it is a broadening out of the original ideas introduced by the candidate in **Part 1** and is included to test the candidate's understanding of a wider perspective pertaining to the chosen topic and to test the candidate's ability to further expand a conversation effectively.

Administration – General comments

For most centres, administration of the test was diligent, accurate and easy to follow. Summary forms were completed to a high degree of accuracy and samples uploaded to SfA were of a very good sound quality. From a moderating perspective, the introduction of SfA has been a very positive step forward and this seems to be reflected in the way centres have adapted to the system very professionally. It is hoped centres share moderators' enthusiasm for SfA as it does seem to make the whole process much more efficient.

Conduct of the test - General comments

Overall, the standard of examining was very good with candidates being given plenty of opportunities to express their ideas and demonstrate their range of oratory skills productively.

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered:

- It is strongly advised that each test should begin with the examiner's formal introduction and be followed immediately by the candidate performing **Part 1**, the Individual Talk. If an examiner feels that a candidate is very nervous and needs a moment of calming prior to the formal test beginning, it is recommended this is done before the recording is started. Examiners formally starting the test then

engaging in 'off topic' conversation with candidates before asking them to begin their **Part 1** task is strongly discouraged. Any pleasantries exchanged should be completed before the recording is started and the formal introduction is made.

- Given that both Speaking and Listening are assessed in **Part 2**, it is important that the conversations last long enough for candidates to demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation of 7 minutes is met so that candidates are given the fullest opportunity to demonstrate the range of skills they possess.
- It is also important that the conversations offer sufficient challenge to allow candidates to demonstrate their range of skills. Focused questioning and prompts are needed to move the conversation forward, together with an adaptability on the part of the examiner to absorb the candidate's previous comments and to extend the conversation as a result. A **Part 2** that is merely a question-and-answer session is not a natural conversation and as a consequence is limited in terms of the marks that should be awarded.
- Examiners who rely on a pre-determined set of questions disadvantage their candidates, in particular with regard to the mark for Speaking in **Part 2**. A question from the examiner should lead to an answer from the candidate which then may lead to a comment or prompt from the examiner that is connected to the same content matter. This will in turn lead to another connected response from the candidate, so the conversation develops naturally.
- Examiners who dominate conversations or who frequently interrupt candidates during the conversation do so to the disadvantage of those candidates. Good examiners prompt candidates then allow them the opportunity to respond in full and to develop their ideas before moving the conversation forwards again.

Comments on specific sections of the test

Part 1 – Individual Talk

The following comments by moderators reflect performance in **Part 1** in this series:

'Some really interesting topics were well chosen by the candidates.'

Candidates achieving Level 5 were aware of the requirement to use a wide range of effective language techniques.

*Choosing topics of personal interest which allow extended conversation in **Part 2** are always more successful than choosing topics to 'impress' the examiner.*

Memorising a talk word for word is not always productive and can lead to the candidate being distracted from the performance within the talk.'

Almost exclusively, all the responses to **Part 1** were in the form of a presentation. This format remains a safe and acceptable one, particularly if an attempt to analyse and reflect on personal experiences is included. For many candidates this choice remains a safe and productive way to achieve a good mark in **Part 1**, especially when well-timed and clearly structured. Less successful responses to **Part 1** tended to meander somewhat because a strong structure had not been created, and time constraints had not been factored in. Largely narrative responses that follow a linear path, such as talking through the events of a holiday or simply restating facts about a topic choice, tend to be unimaginative and rarely achieve higher than Level 3.

Very strong performances in **Part 1** successfully combined excellent knowledge and development of a topic, a tightly defined structure timed accordingly and a confident delivery style. It should be noted that the bullet point descriptor 'lively' in Level 5 does not have to mean that a candidate delivers an animated performance. A candidate who delivers a talk in a confident and assured tone without being overtly 'lively' can perform equally well for the second descriptor in Level 5. Subtle changes of tone can be very effective in fully engaging an audience.

Almost any topic can be successful if used appropriately but some do seem to lend themselves more successfully than others.

Some examples of **Part 1** topics from this series that worked well include:

- Overrated study tips
- Effect of books on cognitive development
- Public Interest Litigation
- A glimpse into the Egyptian Book of the Dead
- The power of youth
- Traditions of South India
- Ikigai
- Social anxiety
- AI integration
- Teenage roller coaster ride

There were no outstanding examples of **Part 1** topics from this series that were less successful, but it is best to avoid the following:

- AI – too generalised, focus on a specific aspect instead
- Football – too generalised, focus on a specific aspect instead
- Books – too generalised
- Social media – too generalised, focus on a specific aspect instead

Often less successful talks are poorly focused and lack structure. This results in a loss of interest for the audience and timing issues. Some less successful topics are chosen because of their perceived 'serious' nature by candidates who have a limited interest in the actual issues involved. The resulting lack of knowledge is always exposed in the **Part 2** conversation.

Part 2 – Conversation

The following comments from moderators reflect performance in **Part 2** in this series:

*'Asking open-ended questions is the best way to elicit developed responses in **Part 2**.*

*The use of pre-determined questions as the basis of the whole of **Part 2** did not allow candidates to engage in conversation and limited their opportunities to gain higher marks.*

Part 2 is not a test of candidates' knowledge. An examiner who expects specific answers to closed questions is not helping candidates to achieve success.'

Generally, the **Part 2** conversations were well conducted and examiners asked appropriate and interesting questions which enabled the candidates to extend and develop their ideas. After initial questioning to stimulate the conversation, the use of prompts, instead of a steady stream of further questioning, was often more effective in eliciting developed responses from candidates. Unlike in **Part 1**, the examiner can influence the quality of the candidate's performance in **Part 2**.

It should be noted that the 'changes (alterations) in the direction of the conversation' descriptor does not mean that examiners should steer the conversation away from the central topic to something completely different. 'Changes in the direction' can mean introducing a new perspective on the topic or challenging a previously stated opinion but any ensuing conversation should still be focused on the topic matter presented in **Part 1**.

Some examiners struggled to inspire candidates with closed questioning and by offering too many of their own ideas during the conversations. Indeed, where a candidate was moved down a level during moderation, it was often due to a lack of detailed response, caused sometimes by uninspired questioning. The use of pre-determined questions or a perfunctory question-and-answer technique limit the candidate's ability to engage in a real conversation where responses are generated by what is said immediately before.

Advice to centres

- Adhering to the correct timings for each part of the test will allow candidates the best opportunity to be successful.
- Helping a candidate choose the most appropriate topic is key to them being successful in the test. At the planning stage a gentle suggestion to choose an alternative topic may be very beneficial in some cases.
- Try to dissuade candidates from delivering a memorised talk in **Part 1** that may have artificial fluency but lacks any emotional attachment and suffers from robotic intonation. It is much better to prepare using a cue card so that what is said has some level of spontaneity.
- Ensure a full 7–8 minutes is allowed for the conversation in **Part 2**. The examiner can control the timing of this.
- Administering the conversation in **Part 2** can be quite challenging for examiners so it may be necessary to practise just as the candidates should. Knowing the topic in advance and preparing some relevant back-up questions may help the examiner but they should not be restrictive, and the candidate should have no prior knowledge of them.
- Scaffold questions strategically to encourage higher level responses from more able candidates. This will help them to access the higher mark ranges.
- Be careful not to make judgements based on personal interpretations of a comment made by a candidate. This is a test of speaking and listening and not the perceived accuracy of what is said.

Advice to candidates

- Choose a topic you are passionate about and one you can talk about for 3–4 minutes then discuss in even more detail for 7–8 minutes.
- Practise your presentation but do not learn it word for word.
- Have bullet point notes to help prompt you in **Part 1** but not the ‘full speech’. You will be tempted to read it or, at the very least, deliver it without appropriate liveliness and intonation. ‘Talk through’ each bullet point in a confident and enthusiastic way.
- Structure your Individual Talk carefully, making sure that it develops points and stays within the 3–4 minutes allowed. Long talks do not earn more marks. An overlong talk will be regarded as not being ‘well organised’ (a bullet point required for Level 5 marks).
- Respond to the prompts and questions from the examiner in **Part 2** as fully as possible by developing your ideas, giving examples and leading off into other aspects of the topic if you can.
- Watch good examples of speeches/presentations/talks to learn how good speakers make their speeches engaging and interesting. Try to copy these techniques.
- Practise simulations of **Part 2**. There are as many marks available for **Part 2** as for **Part 1** so treat each part as equally important.