

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/12 Essay
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Key messages

- Keep introductions short and focused on the question
- Use examples to support points being made
- Ensure the essay has a conclusion which steps back and forms a final judgement on the topic
- Write using an appropriate formal academic register, avoiding contractions such as 'don't' and 'it's'
- Proofread the essay at the end to correct errors
- Write in a sustained formal register

General comments

Candidates clearly engaged with the questions and were able to develop essays of an appropriate length. There were very few short responses and every candidate had made an attempt at answering the question. Some responses did not fully grasp the meaning of the question and wrote generally on the topic, meaning the arguments were only partially relevant and focused.

A good number of responses were written in an appropriate formal style and had a range of vocabulary, including some appropriately used advanced terminology. Register was often inappropriate: with informal direct address such as 'You guessed it', 'you see' and overuse of the verb 'to get'. Phrases such as a 'lot of', 'lots of', 'alot of'; paragraphs opening with 'Let's start with', 'Moving on', 'To close out'; 'gonna' and 'etc' indicated a lack of development and thought. There were several essays written with many errors of all kinds which were difficult to follow, such as the haphazard use of capital letters and 'like' being used conversationally instead of 'as'. There was evidence of the overuse of metaphors and attempts to employ more complex phrases and vocabulary which sometimes was unsuccessful and led to misunderstanding or an unclear meaning. However, when in control, candidates displayed a lively, original and confident use of language and expression that warranted high marks.

Most essays were comfortably placed in L3. Whilst there were many errors noted of various kinds this did not prevent the general meaning being lost. Hence, the expressions 'some control' and 'everyday vocabulary' were entirely apt for many essays. When sentences were overlong, and lacking the divisions needed for an effective sequence of points, the assessment began to drift towards L2. Scripts in this level lacked control and invariably needed careful reading or complete re-reading to interpret the candidate's intentions.

Many candidates wrote a balanced argument, exploring both sides before reaching a suitable conclusion. Several responses were filled with assertions such as 'All people spend the whole day glued to their screens.' This is not true and it is advisable for candidates to avoid using assertions by using words such as 'many people' or 'might'. Essays were often well structured, with a clear introduction, several paragraphs of development with examples and a clear conclusion. A large number of candidates spent too longer than necessary on the introduction, defining what the topic is about, listing the areas that will be covered and offering a general view on the topics. It would be better to make the introduction focused on the question, but relatively short so as not to repeat material or examples that will be used later on. There were a number of essays with very brief conclusions that did little more than repeat a point or two from the main part of the essay. More successful conclusions offered an evaluative assessment by stepping back from the material and commenting on the key arguments, giving their own independent views.

There was evidence of candidates introducing material in their analysis that was linked to the theme but not necessarily clearly focused on the topic. For example, there were many long explanations of global warming as being an element of overpopulation in response to **Question 1**. Many points raised lacked support and therefore remained in L3. It is important to have a clear path from the introduction of an idea, through development and discussion, with some consideration of options and perspectives, concluding with a

viewpoint. Candidates seemed to want to give the ideal, or personal view and seemed reluctant to examine opposing sides to produce a more balanced and fair assessment of a case. Conclusions were mostly fair and logical when they emerged. Most candidates seemed more intent on providing descriptions of as many aspects of the question as possible rather than making a closer example of key points and components of arguments.

Examples were used in many essays to support the main points being made. Some essays had very general examples or anecdotal ones, which were less convincing. The most successful responses explored a range of valid and specific examples which allowed a convincing argument to develop. Weaker essays, instead of integrating an example within their argument, would write 'Let's start with an example' or not give any specific examples by writing 'the list of examples could simply go on and on'. A strong response to **Question 7** wrote: 'With the introduction of emojis, gifs, stickers, text is being rendered insignificant'. The essay then went on to illustrate what these are. There was clear evidence that candidates are selecting appropriate information to support their case. Examples were generally 'applied' and used 'to support the main ideas and opinions.' However, there was a tendency to include examples in a detached way rather than using them as an integral part of the argument. The listing of examples was common and sometimes deflected the direction of the essay by imagining that the addition of names and protracted descriptions of achievements would carry weight and worth. The strategic employment of examples and information is key to the unlocking of levels 4 and 5 and when this was achieved the essay gained strength and stature.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Discuss the ways that overpopulation is the most serious threat to the world today.

An important aspect of this question was the focus on 'the ways' overpopulation is a serious threat to the world today or not. Some candidates misread the question and spent too long considering other areas that are serious threats to the world. Some consideration of this is acceptable but should not form the majority of the response. Stronger responses explored how overpopulation has caused many problems for the world: the impact on resources including food, water and fuel; competition for jobs and a good education; the issues caused by an ageing population; the need for shelter and the destruction of large areas of land to enable this. There was also exploration about how overpopulation can benefit the world in that more people means more great minds and ideas and therefore more ingenious solutions to problems. Some of the more evaluative essays stepped back and considered the importance of family planning and other policies in controlling future population growth. For example, one essay stated that 'the myth that a large family ensures economic prosperity is widely held in India, especially in the rural areas'. Some candidates challenged 'one child' policies on ethical and emotional grounds.

Question 2

The only way to achieve equality in society is for the rich to pay more tax. Discuss.

A large number of candidates chose to spend a large amount of the first part of the essay defining the various types of taxation systems such as directive and regressive taxation. This was helpful but was not directly answering the question and less time should have been spent on this. Candidates would have been better to immediately focus their arguments on whether the rich paying more tax was the only way to achieve equality. More successful responses considered whether it was a good idea for the rich to pay more taxes to achieve equality and many good lines of argument were explored including whether it was disincentivising people from working or persuading the rich to find tax avoidance measures. Wider ranging essays explored other possible effective ways of achieving equality in society, including areas such as race, gender and sexuality.

Question 3

It can never be justified to prevent a person from receiving an education. Discuss.

Candidates often wrote passionately about why no one should be denied an education. Some explored what reasons were given to deny people the right education, whether that be for religious reasons or because of gender-related issues and then explored why these were unacceptable approaches. A few essays remarked that it is never justifiable but sometimes understandable that people are prevented from having an education. 'Some countries simply cannot afford to finance educational opportunities' wrote one candidate who went on

to say that 'some countries struggle to provide food for their people and that is a more pressing need than education'. So, not only evaluative but also well expressed. A broader range of examples would have made responses more enlightening.

Question 4

There is no longer any justification for humans to eat meat. Discuss.

There were a good number of thoughtful responses to this question where candidates explored both sides of the argument: the benefits to health of eating a balanced diet, including meat, to those who assessed whether meat was necessary when so many viable alternatives are now available. There were some very knowledgeable candidates who had a clear grasp of the issues. Less successful arguments were too narrow in focus and a little too assertive, dismissing either those who eat meat as murderers or those who refuse to eat meat as overly sensitive, denying their bodies crucial nutrients. Several candidates referred to the environmentally negative consequences of intensive farming. One candidate wrote 'that while eating meat might have been necessary in the past, today with new technology and food science we can achieve environmental balance and avoid cruelty to other species'. This is a cogent and evaluative point. Weaker arguments assumed that 'people are forcing all the non-vegetarians to turn into vegetarians'. There were some unconvincing answers about plants and their capacity to feel pain.

Question 5

Not enough is being done to prevent the loss of life caused by natural disasters. Examine this statement.

There were a few mostly well-informed responses to this question based largely on recent cataclysmic events. The work of international organisations was often recognised and praised. One candidate wrote that less economically developed countries 'cannot afford the preventative measures that the U.S.A. and Japan take to reduce the deaths and destruction caused by earthquakes'. This has an evaluative tone and a balanced approach. Some candidates distorted their answer to this question by simply blaming capitalism and greed for the lack of successful measures. A small number of essays did not distinguish between natural disasters and those caused by humans such as war and its consequences. Several candidates spent longer than necessary listing natural disasters and saying what we could do to ensure a greater survival rate. Better responses focused on pre-emptive measures that could be adopted: systems for detection of disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Good responses often evaluated that these were acts of nature and it was not always possible to prepare for every eventuality.

Question 6

Modern technology has done little to prevent crime. Discuss.

Many responses referred to CCTV, IT, profiling, data bases, facial recognition technology, tagging, DNA analysis and various security systems. There were some well-informed arguments. Several were adept at pointing out that technology gives rise to crime and helps it in the various forms of cybercrime such as hacking, trolling and the dissemination of pornography. Some arguments referred to military technology as criminal but did not achieve nuance in their answers except for one who wrote that the use of such technology 'can amount to crimes against humanity'. Exploratory answers that step back and evaluate the issues in a balanced way are to be encouraged. Some candidates chose simply to describe the methods of crime detection rather than evaluate their effectiveness. Crime prevention was sometimes discussed in social terms rather than considering the first part of the question (modern technology). The best responses considered types of crime and the application of different technological solutions with some evidence of examining and evaluating outcomes. The inclusion of success criteria was a high-level approach.

Question 7

The increasing use of social media is damaging people's communication skills. Discuss.

Many essays interpreted the question as being 'The increasing use of social media is damaging people' with insufficient focus on communication skills. Weaker responses provided little more than a critique of the different sources of social media available to young people. The broader aspects of social media in assisting emergency services, governments, and the full age range profile was often overlooked. When communication skills were examined and outlined there was as good range of reference evident including shortened words, abbreviations, and the use of icons that have emerged within the social media community.

This added strength to arguments if developed and explained in terms of their advantages and disadvantages. As with most questions that have any flavour of the internet and social media, so many responses were narrow and personal, revealing a lack of breadth in experience of consideration of communication and its demise. The best responses focused on the key word 'communication' referring to it throughout. Some arguments recognised that social media has promoted skills and jobs and is not just a negative factor. One candidate wrote that 'young entrepreneurs have harnessed social media to make money and provide enjoyment to millions' which is thoughtful and evaluative. Unfortunately, too many candidates, anticipating what they thought adults or examiners wanted to see, wrote very assertive responses best illustrated by a response which stated without any qualification 'children in today's world are lethargic, anti-social and are glued to electronic gadgets rather than spending time outdoors'. 'All children' is too assertive and it would have been better to write 'many'.

Question 8

Nature is always presented positively in books, paintings and music. To what extent do you agree?

Most answers to this question included examples, although there were some essays that indulged in poetic expression for expression's sake. There were references to Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice', the use of pathetic fallacy, Van Gogh, Bruce Springsteen and Michael Jackson and 'The Jungle Book'. Very few noticed the phrase in the question 'always presented positively'. This meant that the darker, more ominous side to Nature was rarely examined, although there was occasional effective reference to works such as Melville's 'Moby Dick' and Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons'. Most essays considered each of the art forms separately and wrestled with the meaning of the question with some not being sure what was meant by 'presented.' Those that focused on the word 'always' in the question were more likely to be balanced and evaluative.

Question 9

To what extent are traditional arts and crafts a vital part of your country's heritage?

Many responses to this question contained a variety of interesting examples such as dance, architecture, music and religious ceremonies. One essay stated that while arts and crafts are vital in our heritage 'they are incomparably more vital in sustaining our country's economy through tourism' which was well expressed and evaluative. There were some very good attempts which outlined the importance of arts and crafts in Indian culture, though with a tendency to be descriptive. The inclusion of 'vital' proved to be an important trigger word as it generated responses that considered how many traditional methods were being passed over in favour of 'progress' and mechanisation. Candidates seemed aware of globalisation and westernisation (notably in music) and how this was eroding traditions that may well disappear in the next generation.

Question 10

To what extent can advertising be trusted?

This was a popular question and many of the aspects of advertising such as celebrity endorsement, scams, the danger to the young and impressionable of perfect images leading to anxiety and body shaming were often referred to. Some responses referred to the consequences of not reading the 'small print' carefully, particularly when financial products are being promoted. Some arguments referred to advertising that encourages compassion and giving to worthy causes. A number of essays were anecdotal and descriptive, merely listing products bought that did not live up to expectations. There was evidence of good employment of examples showing some detailed knowledge of different approaches to advertising. The best essays explored successes and failures and considered the dangers of advertising in a variety of contexts. Some essays successfully explored the concept of trust in a variety of contexts including how facts might be manipulated to adjust and influence public perceptions by governments.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/22 Comprehension

Key messages

Candidates are advised to read all the questions very carefully before beginning their answers, to ensure they know exactly what they are required to do. Noting the number of marks available will give an indication of how many points to offer, for example, and this may also be stated specifically in some questions (e.g. **1(b)** 'Explain four advantages...') Similarly, it is important to recognise when a response demands to be mostly in candidates' own words, or whether any word limit is applied. Such rubrics must be observed strictly. Conversely, where an answer does not require the use of 'own words', because it is testing location and selection of relevant points, candidates who attempt to phrase their responses in their own words are more likely to miss some of the essential detail or nuance, or to change the meaning or emphasis of what they write, thereby missing out on marks.

General comments

Candidates engaged very well with the material in both Sections A and B although, as is frequently seen on this paper, tended to find it easier to score marks in response to questions set in Section A (**Question 1**, logical reasoning) than Section B (**Question 2**, reading comprehension). Generally this was due to a lack of precision in the detail provided in the responses to **Question 2**, especially when limited to a certain number of words (**2(b)**, **2(c)(i)**, **2(c)(ii)** and **2(e)(ii)**) or asked to re-work points largely in their own words (**2(a)(ii)**, **2(e)(i)** and **2(e)(iii)**). Please see detailed comments below relating to these questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The vast majority of the candidates appeared to find the material for Section A accessible and quite engaging. The responses to **1(a)** and **1(b)** usually offered sufficient points to match the mark tariffs, with the discrimination coming from the level of logic, accuracy and detail provided. There were occasional misunderstandings of the language used, for example the '10-strong design team', worked in by Sandrine Jonas, was sometimes taken to mean *10 teams*, or even *10 strong teams*.

However, candidates are advised to read all the material in the Insert carefully. In Section A, this includes noting any details contained with the opening 'Background'. While more candidates than usual this session made some use of this part of the material (for example, Diamond D-ZINE's being active in the international film and music industries, and the proposed team size to manage; see comments on **1(a)** below), a number of candidates relied upon one or other of the potential employees being 'well qualified', whereas the 'Background' made it clear that both were, so this would not be a clear, logical advantage for either Richard Bradfield (**1(a)**) or Sandrine Jonas (**1(b)**).

- (a) The key skills being assessed in questions such as **1(a)** and **1(b)** are comprehension, logic and, most importantly, the ability to make connections across different parts of the material. To form a developed point, candidates need to explain or make a link between distinct elements, for example the requirement for the successful candidate 'to lead a team of 25 people' (from the 'Background') and Richard Bradfield (from the bullet points under his name) currently being 'a deputy manager of a team of 22', i.e. having some leadership experience with a team of very similar size (**1(a)**). This was a clear advantage for this candidate over Sandrine Jonas, who has only worked 'within a 10-

strong design team', sometimes erroneously cited as an advantage for her in **1(b)**, and which thus lacked logic.

Similarly, a number of candidates mentioned Bradfield's *five years of experience* as an advantage, even when they (correctly) noted Sandrine Jonas' 12 years' – therefore much longer – experience at a global company in **1(b)**. Richard Bradfield's having worked in two quite different work environments already, thus having more variety of experience, could have been a logical advantage in comparison with the rival candidate but, on its own, was too vague and lacked logic when looking at the material and context as a whole. Several candidates correctly noted that already living in Yaramanta was an advantage, since *the company would not have to pay relocation costs*. This detail was important, whereas suggestions relating to *travel costs*, or Richard Bradfield's general convenience, were not valid, since there was no suggestion Sandrine Jonas intends commuting 900 km. Some thoughtful responses, making this a clear benefit for Richard Bradfield himself, related to his being able to continue his association with the local homeless shelter and/or drama group, since he would not need to move house.

In addition, detail and nuance are vital in questions such as this. For example, a number of candidates selected Richard Bradfield's preference for casual clothes as *aligning well with Diamond D-ZINE's casual dress code* – a potentially valid point – but without making clear that this was not the case all the time, i.e. applied only in the day-to-day office environment. This understanding was needed to secure the development of that idea, in contrast with the demands made when meeting clients. Some candidates used this point to highlight Bradfield's preference for *letting his work do the talking for him* as a positive point, but generally lacked convincing development. Another nuance which was quite frequently missed related to Richard Bradfield's claimed creativity, the only evidence for this being his own opinion and frustrations at his former workplace, therefore a weaker point when contrasted with Sandrine Jonas and her paintings (**1(b)**).

Most candidates were able to select at least three relevant advantages, the most popular ones not already mentioned being Richard Bradfield's linguistic prowess (linked with the need to travel abroad and the international nature of the business and its clients), his keen following of trends in horror films (relevant when thinking of new angles for promotion of the same), and his work experience scheme and efforts to help the homeless locally (aligning with Diamond D-ZINE's emphasis on corporate social responsibility and support of local charities respectively). Slightly less convincing, but valid in this same regard, was his current (enthusiastic) work on the government's healthy-eating and anti-smoking campaigns.

Some candidates made use of the fact that Bradfield has been working for the government and might thus have contacts or be familiar with procedures for tendering for contracts and similar, if required in the new post. This was excellent use of the material and demonstrated very good independent thought. It was rare to see anyone make use of the podcast information, but those who did suggested it boded well for the interview presentation, another element which was almost completely overlooked in candidates' responses. The 'group activity' part of the selection day was rarely, if ever, mentioned but could easily have been linked to his (deputy) leadership role as a likely advantage. Similarly, very few candidates made reference to the fact that Bradfield is already seeking his third post after five years of employment, and looking to move from deputy manager to manager of a team, thus indicating ambition, as an advantage. This point could also have been used as a disadvantage, as it may make the new employers cautious, thinking he might not stay very long, or that he lacks the ability to get on with his co-workers.

There was some fruitful use made of Richard Bradfield's response to the unexpected question, suggesting a level of confidence under pressure (the whole purpose of the exercise) and an ability to think logically, creatively and on his feet, skills which some candidates were able to link to the job description, especially for management of a team and dealing with demanding clients. An example of a very well-developed point here was: *He exudes confidence and shows character when put under pressure, as illustrated by his response to the unexpected question. Moreover he is meticulous and pays attention to detail which was proven when he said 'You did say in and out?'* His response also revealed a love of flying, deemed useful for the foreign business trips sometimes required at short notice, although there was some confusion over his living 'on the flight path' and whether this should necessarily be assumed to be *close to the airport*.

Balance ('one disadvantage') was also required to gain all the available 10 marks for this question and, as ever with this type of question, it was necessary to develop this idea negatively, rather than offer mitigation. For example, candidates often correctly identified that Richard Bradfield preferred

not to wear suits. Successfully developed balance points went on to connect this with Diamond D-ZINE's requirement to dress formally 'when meeting clients' (Additional Information point 2), perhaps even suggesting that *he might refuse and damage the company's reputation*, whereas some candidates merely suggested that he could overcome this reticence. The other common disadvantages cited related to his awkwardness when socialising with current colleagues outside the workplace, linked with the expectation of the same at Diamond D-ZINE (from Additional Information point 7) and his favouring his private office as deputy manager, compared with the more open, collaborative and flexible arrangements on offer at Diamond D-ZINE and which he was likely to find challenging (Additional Information point 6).

There were occasional issues with logic and balance, where candidates offered either an equal number of advantages and disadvantages, or even conveyed more disadvantages than advantages successfully. This defies the logic of the question, the thrust of which was why Richard Bradfield was 'the more suitable candidate for the vacancy'.

- (b) The vast majority of candidates were able to identify four valid advantages relating to Sandrine Jonas. The most frequent ones chosen were her 12 years of experience in a global company (though most candidates found it difficult to develop either part of this convincingly, generally just re-working the idea of 'experience' and missing the international angle); her being accustomed to sharing desk spaces and therefore likely to be comfortable in Diamond D-ZINE's informal working environment; her emphasis on smart presentation being a huge advantage when asked to attend events or meet clients and a good impression would be essential; her father's job in television meaning she is used to meeting famous people, linked to the requirement to attend VIP events and be comfortable/*not become tongue-tied or star struck* in such company; her artistic tendencies as demonstrated by her love of painting (though relatively few connected this successfully to creativity, while even fewer linked the subject matter – wildlife and landscapes – with Diamond D-ZINE's environmental interests), and her scheme to promote local artists. Overall, this point was explained and developed less successfully, usually relying on the corporate social responsibility angle; a much more convincing consideration for Richard Bradfield.

More unusual and thoughtful points included the dedication to the new job Sandrine Jonas was showing, in being prepared to move so far from her current location, and also the loyalty she has demonstrated to her current employers, by remaining in post for 12 years. Another effective and original angle was to link the local artist scheme not only with the potential to attract future employees or encourage collaboration, but also to suggest *this might allow employees a new hobby, tied to the encouragement at Diamond D-ZINE for a life outside work* (as claimed by Anton). Occasional inspiration was drawn from the relocation angle (from 900 km away): *As she is moving to Yaramanta, she wouldn't have friends here, allowing her to socialise after work with her office members, building strong professional work relations in and outside the office, as desired by Diamond D-Zine*.

Less logical choices, however, included Sandrine Jonas' fluency in a local language. Spoken only in a region 900 km from Yaramanta, this was not a clear advantage for her, when compared with Richard Bradfield's linguistic competence and the international nature of Diamond D-ZINE's operations. Some candidates also attempted to use Jonas' experience of working in a group of 10 as an advantage. Once again, as mentioned in **1(a)**, the deputy-manager experience of her competitor, in a team much closer in size to that requiring to be managed in the post sought, was a more logical advantage for Richard Bradfield. If referring to the payment of relocation expenses, it was necessary to explain this as an advantage for Ms Jonas herself, since it was a more obvious advantage to the company if appointing Mr Bradfield, and thus more valid in **1(a)**.

- (c) Candidates engaged well with this question and were often able to deduce at least the required two ideas as to why the interviewers may not have been impressed by Sandrine Jonas' response to the unexpected question. The most common responses related to her lack of confidence, stuttering and hesitation, often supported by specific examples from the material (*Um...er...gosh* or *Maybe...um...*), her guessing rather than making any attempt to calculate logically, her lack of precision (*quite a lot/around 200 000*) and the rather dismissive and defensive way in which she queries the relevance of the question. Some candidates missed the point made in the material, that the intention was to see how potential employees performed under pressure, rather than needing any particular knowledge, or the production of a 'correct' answer. Indeed, the material deliberately does not state whose response is more accurate. Furthermore, while some credit could be gained for mentioning Sandrine's lack of experience of flying, the distance she lives from Yaramanta was not valid, as the interviewers would have known this already when conducting the initial round of

interviews. A small number of candidates seemed to be under the impression that Sandrine was *afraid of flying*, which was inaccurate.

- (d) This question proved challenging for many candidates, and as such a good discriminator, in that it required elucidation, from the material ('Referring only to the quotes...'), regarding how to account for Helena's and Anton's differing impressions of the work culture at Diamond D-ZINE. A number of candidates either simply described their views, often missing the subtlety of Helena's and focusing too much on the work pressures only. A large number of responses were too speculative, suggesting that the two current employees hold different roles, work in different departments or that Helena had held an easier position prior to working here. Most candidates who gained any marks here noted that Anton makes a contrast between his more pressured previous work environment and this one, and a further mark could be gained by offering more detail regarding the two positions he has held, and his attitude towards work-life balance or having a social life outside work. For a third mark, there needed to be a clear point made about Helena, since the question focuses on contrasts, but relatively few candidates recognised that she compares the workload with the facilities on offer and seems happy with this balance, even thriving on the atmosphere and choosing to spend a lot of time at the offices. A good example of a three-mark answer was: *Anton's past job had a more cumbersome workload with no structure of work timings, so he appreciates the shorter work hours and increased socialising promoted at Diamond D-ZINE, whereas Helena is more concerned about work pressure regarding clients and claims to have no social life but appreciates the facilities offered.*
- (e) While there were occasional misunderstandings evident in responses to this 'application of own knowledge' question (focusing, for instance, on Diamond D-ZINE's overall corporate social responsibility policy), most candidates were able to select at least one valid example of a policy or activity which could contribute to 'carbon-neutral offices', such as planting trees or bringing in potted plants, recycling, car-pooling, reducing the use of air conditioners and similar, installing solar panels or switching to other methods of renewable power generation. Some candidates offered several examples but did not manage to explain how these would contribute, whereas the question asked for 'one way' to be explained. Examples of well-focused, two-mark answers: *Companies could plant more trees outside the office area which would absorb carbon dioxide and cancel out the carbon-dioxide emissions from their refrigerators and air conditioners. / Reducing their carbon footprint by conducting meetings with international clients online instead of flying there.*

Section B

Question 2

The majority of candidates seemed to grasp the essential points from the material and to find the content accessible, since there were few real misunderstandings of the material demonstrated in the attempted responses.

In Section B, some questions are summaries and have a strict word limit for the responses, the key skill then being to select the relevant information and to convey the essential points succinctly. In particular, this means not 'wasting' words repeating the question stem or including material that is not directly answering the question. An occasional candidate attempted to circumvent the word limits (here **2(b)**, **2(c)(i)**, **2(c)(ii)** and **2(e)(ii)**) by not writing in full sentences, either partially or, more rarely, completely. This is not in the spirit of such questions and the final mark awarded will reflect this.

Other Section B responses demand the relevant information to be conveyed, as far as possible, in candidates' own words, so little or no credit can be gained by copying from the material, except those terms which are technical, proper nouns or for which clear synonyms do not exist. Any line references given in the question will show clearly from which part of the material the answer may be derived. (In other cases, this is signalled by asking for the views of a named person, e.g. **2(d)**, or similar use of the wording of the material.)

- (a) (i) Both the situation and the cause needed to be identified here for two marks to be awarded. Some candidates went outside the line references given in the question for their responses, such as by saying that Faruk Hossain had *to leave his house*. This was an answer to another question, so could not gain credit here. There was also some linguistic confusion, with candidates writing *inhabitable*, rather than *uninhabitable*, meaning the exact opposite. Causes of the difficulty were sometimes too vague (*rising/flood water, the storm, flooding caused by Super-cyclone Amphan*),

whereas the accurate reason was the fact that *the waters had not retreated/the house had not reappeared from the water* and been *claimed by the river*.

- (ii) In this, the first of the three 'own words' questions, the points most commonly rendered with sufficient detail in candidates' own phrasing were those relating to Faruk Hossain's *moving out of his family/ancestral home, never to return/permanently*, the family having *resided there for generations/many decades*, and watching the remaining parts *slowly succumb /submerged by the waters*. Occasional candidates wrote speculatively or attempted to empathise with Hossain's likely feelings, i.e. without reference to the information given in the material, so had overlooked the question rubric giving line references. A successful response, which had rendered more than the three ideas required for full credit, included: *He would be particularly distressed that the final remains of this home (1) are getting submerged into the river (1), especially since he stayed there for around half a year (1) with several severe hardships (1) – max. 3.*

- (b) This was the first question in Section B requiring candidates to limit themselves to a certain number of words. Quite a few candidates did exceed this number and there were some responses in which potentially correct answers did appear, but partly or wholly after the end of the word count. In many such cases, some of the allowable 30 words had been 'used up' in introducing the positive and negative developments, or stating the death toll from Cyclone Bhola, which did not answer the question. Candidates are advised not to repeat the question stem or to offer any kind of introduction in response to such questions, and to place first the answers with which they feel most confident, to maximise the chances of creditworthy material featuring within the permitted number of words.

The only notable misunderstanding arising in answers to **2(b)** was that *the death toll from Bhola* had reduced, which made no logical sense; the *falling* tolls *since* then was the sole creditworthy positive development. The other point commonly scored here related to the *people being homeless/stranded*. While some reference was made to the *frequency of natural disasters*, the comparative 'more difficult', in relation to *recovery*, and needed for credit, was most often omitted. Similarly, the *18 villages remaining underwater* were sometimes mentioned but with no reference to the place, which was essential in showing concentration, and thus severity.

- (c) (i) The second word-limited question again saw some candidates miss credit for later, valid points because they had repeated the question stem regarding the number of displaced people, or had included other erroneous information. Many more candidates, however, missed some of the important details needed to obtain credit here, such as the range of (four) places where shelter had been sought, the *exasperation* of those relocating, the type of huts (on *stilts*) being constructed and where (on *dry land*), and the *poorest* people being affected by the *lost agricultural/planting opportunities*. The only correct point commonly awarded credit here was *the damage caused by Covid-19 to jobs/the economy*.
- (ii) Most candidates managed to make their points here within the word count but still sometimes lacked the precision for full credit for all three valid points, most usually missing the former agricultural success ('very good rice yield') enjoyed by Shahjahan Moral, or not completely making the connection between the ferrying of passengers by boat being enforced by, or a solution to, the fact that those same fields were flooded and submerged. One candidate, deliberately or not, produced a play on words in the response: ... *with pay so little he cannot keep his family afloat*. Most responses showed some understanding of the fact that Moral's earnings were insufficient to support him and his family now, but this was sometimes the point that came partially, or completely, after the end of the word count (30 words). Where the word limit caused problems, it was often because irrelevant material had been included, such as that relating to the fishing, shrimp farms and the selling of vehicles, which appeared earlier in the paragraph indicated by the line references, selection of relevant material to answer the summary question once again being essential. An example of a three-mark response rendered well within 30 words was: *Shahjahan Moral, who used to have good rice yields (1), now sails passengers across flooded fields as his paddy land is submerged (1). Sustaining his family on such little income has become challenging (1).*
- (d) The vast majority of candidates were able to locate the relevant section of the material for their responses but not all recognised that, in order to gain both available marks, a degree of precision was required. Examples include: *proper availability of displacement information*, rather than *displacement information being available*, and *initiatives for creating stable housing*, as opposed to

stable housing. A small number of responses repeated *sustainable solutions* from the question stem, gaining no credit.

- (e) (i) This was the highest-tariff 'own words' question and candidates again sometimes struggled to render the key ideas in their own terms, even when allowed to repeat from the material such words as 'flood embankments', 'storm(s)', 'river', and 'canal', for which few obvious synonyms exist. There was also some lack of focus in responses to this question, as with 2(a)(ii), where candidates ignored the line numbers indicating where the material should be consulted. They instead offered speculative or general comment on the importance of flood embankments, i.e. what they *might* achieve, or why they should exist, or be repaired. While touching on similar ideas to the correct answers, these responses lacked the precision of the original.

The most common correct answers included *embankments constructed after/in the decade since 1960, no longer being effective/having perished/the failed embankments, people suffer from poverty/are poor as a result of these storms*, and *the river failed to drop down/fall back*. A good response rendering of some of the key points, and gaining all four available marks, was: *Bangladesh's existing embankments are obsolete (1) as they were constructed in the 1960s (1). Currently, the government is yet to reply (1) to pleas for renovating the embankments (1).*

- (ii) In this final word-limited question, responses again needed precision and to be succinct in order to include two of the relevant points within 20 words. Some responses omitted 'after similar storms' from the point about embankments going unrepaired, while others seemed to think that *no funding* was available. More accurate ideas related to funding applications *not being approved*, resulting in reliance on *limited annual budgets*. A small number lost the sense of 'not approved' by using terms such as *disapproved*. A number of candidates exceeded the 20 words here. Once again, repetition of the question stem was sometimes responsible for this, and should be avoided.
- (iii) In the last of the three 'own words' questions, candidates most often struggled to find synonyms for 'crowded' and 'population(s)' and there tended to be more success in rendering the point relating to the expansion of slums, along the lines of *slum areas increasing/burgeoning* or *the rapid growth of slums*, rather than the *migration from the countryside to packed urban areas*.

- (f) Not all candidates realised that they were intended to offer their own ideas here, so there was some over-reliance on the context of the material (the specifics relating to the flooding in Bangladesh) which tended to repeat answers to previous questions. Prompted by the material, some responses recognised the limits of the/a national government to take sufficient action, given the scale and recurrence of the problems, but attempted development of this angle tended merely to reverse the same idea (along the lines of *the international community would be better equipped to fund relief schemes*), or to restate the question stem (*hence action from the international community is needed*), which could not gain further credit. There was an attempt, in a number of answers, to address the international responsibility for climate change as a likely driver of increased severe weather events but again, few were able to explain this well in context. There was also some reference to refugees and international trade as likely motivating factors, and occasional mention of moral, humanitarian or global development goals. A good example of a two-mark response to this question was: *Humans are social beings that need to help each other in a crisis, regardless of location. The floods and cyclones are a result of climate change and global warming, making the international community responsible as well.*