

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/12 Essay
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Key messages

- Write between 600 and 700 words.
- Choose the question carefully.
- Make a plan to ensure there is enough to write about and that the essay has a clear structure.
- Use a formal register.
- Use ambitious vocabulary appropriately.
- Take time to proofread the essay to correct any slips or errors.
- Focus on the specific wording of the question, not the general topic.
- Ensure the introduction is clearly focused on the issues posed by the question.
- Analyse and evaluate each point made in the argument.
- Try to include a range of points of view in the argument with some balance where appropriate.
- Include clear examples to support the argument.
- Avoid repetition of ideas and arguments.

General comments

The vast majority of candidates wrote sufficiently clearly to be understood and there were some good examples of a range of vocabulary and appropriate lexis for each of the questions. Vocabulary was a strength in many responses, including words like 'critique', 'paradigms', 'humanitarian', 'moratorium' and 'marginalised' and phrases such as 'social cohesion' and 'economic powerhouse.' There was also good use of technical language on more technical tasks like **Question 5** and **Question 7**. Sometimes candidates used complex language inappropriately and there were occasions where over-verbosity was evident. It is better to make a point clearly and concisely. Grammar was very unclear in several essays. Verb and tense agreement and issues with articles and prepositions were the most common error seen with 'has' and 'have' and 'are' and 'is' often being used incorrectly, and phrases like 'One of the most important thing...' used in some responses. Other frequently seen issues were run on sentences and sentences starting with 'which' as well as some inability to use 'and' before the last item in a list. Spelling was generally a strength, but there were common misspellings such as 'definitely' and a small number of made-up words such as 'surveilled.' Homophones were a problem and confusion between 'its' and 'it's' was evident. Register was generally very good as learners often had a good understanding of what constitutes formal language. There were, however, issues with learners using contractions and non-academic constructions such as 'humongous' and 'skyrocketed' which are inappropriate informal terms for an academic essay. Exclamation marks also appeared quite frequently, which is unnecessary. Structural non-academic phrases were also used by some candidates, e.g., 'In this essay I will,', 'To begin with...', 'To finish it off' and 'etc'. It is better to avoid using these mechanical links and phrases. Some of the weaker responses had a lack of appropriate punctuation, sentence control and paragraphing. The use of commas instead of full stops was sometimes seen.

Many learners had good knowledge of the topic they chose to write about. The better responses applied appropriate, detailed evidence to construct a developed argument that went into evaluation. Often these responses focused on developing a few ideas in detail, rather than briefly covering a wide range of ideas. Listing of ideas was an issue for some candidates, for instance writing a list of what the Government was doing to help the environment in **Question 5**. Some responses were very descriptive and did not create an argument. Weaker responses detailed everything known about the subject, sometimes without giving an opinion that answered the question. Many answers could be improved with better structuring of the argument. Many candidates did not begin to evaluate or analyse until the end of the response: earlier paragraphs were often explanatory and, although relevant and focused, could have made better use of evaluative skills. It would be a good practice to write more about less, selecting, for instance, four or five angles to discuss rather than nine or ten, and considering them in more detail.

Better responses had named, developed examples that supported the argument and often had a point – evidence – develop, structure to their paragraphs that created a valid argument. Most responses included a reasonable range of examples to support an argument. Weaker responses sometimes just relied on description of the evidence or general assertion of an opinion without much supporting evidence. Better responses often deployed more than one example to illustrate a point, this strategy was used productively in some essays to demonstrate that there may be more than one angle to an issue. This allowed for greater depth of argument and a degree of nuance.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

International aid never reaches those communities that are most in need. Discuss.

Better responses demonstrated an in-depth awareness of the politics underpinning international aid and were usually written very well, considering, for instance, the moral imperative of helping other nations alongside the benefits of doing so in terms of soft power and influence. Responses demonstrating less awareness of these issues tended not to go beyond the moral issues raised: such answers were relevant but lacked depth or illustrative range. However, in other cases reference was made to how aid is misused and fails to reach those in need. The nature of aid tended to focus on monetary support rather than other forms of aid such as infrastructure. The problem of corruption was highlighted with some learners demonstrating detailed knowledge of how respected aid agencies are compelled to bribe officials in order to ensure that aid reaches those who need it. The fact that powerful nations exact a high price on countries in need by imposing conditions, often involving extracting their mineral wealth, was also mentioned. One candidate reflected upon the fact that donor countries are often ‘unfamiliar with the socio-economic structures’ of foreign lands and that such ‘ignorance often leads to aid not being effectively targeted’. The efforts of non-governmental agencies were sometimes recognised like religious organisations and specifically *Medecin sans Frontiere*. Prompt responses to natural disasters were noted but candidates were aware that in these circumstances local and regional authorities can be obstructive. Occasionally learners would spend time defining terms unnecessarily. Focus was not always on International Aid and some candidates used examples of how the less fortunate in their country were supported by the government. This was not strictly what the question was asking for.

Question 2

Evaluate the view that increasing surveillance threatens people’s privacy.

Many candidates were clearly well-informed on the issues raised by surveillance and used their knowledge of the issues effectively, looking at how CCTV cameras can assist in providing evidence in relation to solving crimes and how surveillance of online activity can be effectively used to promote safety and remove malign activity. This was invariably balanced with an understanding of the implications for privacy as well as the danger of surveillance being used for the wrong purposes. Those who answered this question usually spotted the key words ‘threatens’ and ‘privacy’, but a few candidates wrote in general terms about the need for surveillance to ensure road safety and prevent crime. A few saw ‘people’ as ‘celebrities’ and devoted too much attention to invasions of their privacy. There were a number of interesting essays that pointed out that India’s antiquities, temples for example, require surveillance in order to protect the country’s heritage. There were some relevant references to the dystopian world envisaged in Orwell’s ‘1984’ with the suggestion that some countries were already monitoring their citizens in a similar manner. There were some arguments that lost focus slightly by starting to focus more on how to keep yourself safe and some candidates refashioned the question to focus on the media and internet. Essays examined how some people’s lives suffer examination and intrusion from phishing and third-party involvement, mostly through advertising and online shopping. The dangers of involvement in the gaming community or other forums and social media links were important to include but this was sometimes at the expense of the broader issues such as the protection of people and property as well as the monitoring of traffic for safety reasons. Broader and more incisive definitions of what surveillance is, and its advantages and dangers were common features of the better essays.

Question 3

People achieve more success working in a group than on their own. Discuss.

Those arguing that groups were more successful than individuals included comments about access to more ideas in groups and being able to get more done with examples given of successful businesses and school projects. Those arguing that individuals were more successful included the possibilities of conflict in groups and the fact that some people might contribute less than others whereas individuals faced none of these issues. The best responses made points like successful businesses were often the result of one person's ideas but that it then took a group of people to bring them to fruition. Weaker responses sometimes spent too long writing about personal experience without developing much of an argument. Many essays focused on group work and omitted any real consideration of individual endeavours. Some did celebrate the way major figures gained fame from their work such as scientists, civil rights advocates and controversial political figures. However, the common conclusion was that all these people relied on a team to support them, hence group collaboration was important. Examples included sportspersons and their coaches and medical staff or, more specifically, Steve Jobs and Bill Gates who needed a team behind them. Less effective answers, although generally relevant, lacked a range of ideas and answers lacked depth as a consequence. An absence of examples reduced the impact of some otherwise well-written and thoughtful responses. Debate and sound expression were creditable features of these essays but without specific examples these essays did not reach their full potential. The advantages of collaboration in classroom projects, mass movements to highlight injustice and various types of support groups were also offered as examples of how success can be achieved.

Question 4

A person's welfare is the responsibility of their family. To what extent is this true in your country?

Many candidates wrote about how families in India are very close-knit and discussed traditional mother and father roles, but some spent too much time describing how families work rather than the issue of who was responsible for a person's welfare. There were stronger arguments that considered how family dynamics are changing and how issues such as moving away for work would make it harder for families to be responsible for each other and also some good arguments that considered the restrictions that women face, in particular. There were a number of unfocused answers that concentrated on the issue of personal welfare with limited reference to the context of family. There was also some misunderstanding about the meaning of '*a person's welfare*'. There was evidence that welfare was related to health, so arguments referred to how parents care for their children up to a point and then the parents are cared for in their later life, as part of a lasting family relationship and tradition.

Question 5

Not enough is being done in your country to tackle climate change. Discuss.

Many arguments struck a balance between what is being done and what is not being done in tackling climate change. The poor air quality in several cities was often referred to but seen as an unfortunate consequence of much needed economic growth. There were references to the growing popularity and use of electric vehicles while indicating that their prohibitive cost meant the vast majority still relied on heavily polluting vehicles of all types. The lack of charging stations was also seen as a barrier to the use of electric vehicles. Many arguments highlighted India's diverse culture with particular emphasis on festivals and celebrations which, unfortunately it was argued, generate pollution because of the excessive use of firecrackers. On the other hand, afforestation programmes and the creation of solar parks were seen as positive developments across India. Stronger responses were those that focused on what the national and regional governments along with businesses and other groups were actually doing and evaluated how successful this was. More basic responses would mention the Swatcha Bharat Government initiative and give an example about tree planting or something similar whilst stronger arguments went into detail about how effective such schemes were such as by referring to issues with corruption and the fact that things often were not sustained after the initial fanfare. There were some irrelevant references to noise and water pollution but generally learners were well focused on valid issues when answering this question.

Question 6

To what extent is migration from rural to urban areas beneficial to a country?

Many candidates showed an impressive depth of knowledge of migratory patterns within India as well as their impact. There was much discussion of how population increases in Delhi or Mumbai, for example, had brought over-crowding and pollution, but also a lot of informed debate about the economics of migration and how, if effectively managed, it could benefit both urban and rural areas. Sometimes the focus on economics was a little too strong though and this could take learners away from the question. Many learners picked up on positives like more employment/education opportunities and explained how this would benefit the country. Negative points were around the creation of slum areas and the impact on important sectors like agriculture if people were leaving the countryside in large numbers. The best responses took an evaluative approach and often concluded that the level of benefit would be dependent on the resources and infrastructure provided to support migration. Some essays were concerned with migration in general terms, both home and abroad, with little comment on the benefits of migrating from rural to urban areas.

Question 7

Clinical trials for new medications should always be ethical. Discuss.

There were some very good, reasoned viewpoints about the dangers of trials balanced against them being essential. Many candidates confined most of their discussion to the rights and wrongs of animal testing. The use of animals in the development of insulin and a vaccine for polio was convincingly defended as necessary if not ethical. There were references to the recent pandemic and again the main argument was that trials, whether ethical or not, should not have been a concern in the face of such a threat. The advancements in transplant surgery, where animals are involved, was also seen as necessary and vital to prolong human life. The word *ethical* proved challenging for some candidates and some candidates wrote generally about the ethics of animal testing without really exploring the range of issues generated by the question. There were some very good essays which challenged ethics and submitted that it was impossible to search for cures without some controversial approaches being adopted. Some weaker responses included a for and against animal testing argument, but the best offered a thoughtful approach as to whether medical urgency and saving lives could justify non-ethical testing.

Question 8

To what extent are works of non-fiction more important than fictional works?

Many responses argued effectively with the key phrase 'more important' being fully appreciated. This meant that a good number of essays were evaluative. What was particularly impressive were the many responses that distinguished between the two genres while offering intelligent and nuanced approaches. For example, candidates recognised that non-fiction is not easily categorised. One essay referred to history textbooks as being 'constructs', in that 'history is often written by the victors' and that consequently it is 'hard to distinguish facts from propaganda'. Several candidates advanced the view that fiction can provide real-life lessons just as much as non-fiction accounts of real events. Most learners accessed a range of appropriate examples from Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children', Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Great Gatsby', Jane Austen's novels, Shakespeare's plays, Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale', Maya Angelou's 'The Caged Bird Never Sings', and Harper Lee's 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. These candidates argued convincingly that many fictional works show what the real world is like through their treatment of issues like discrimination, excess of ambition, poverty and wealth. Non-fiction texts discussed by candidates included historical documents, documentaries and even car manuals. Several candidates used 'The Diary of Ann Frank' to suggest, among other things, that this poignant text blurs the distinction between the two genres. Another candidate saw the real-world military possibilities of Harry Potter's 'invisibility cloak' and how the science fiction genre of H G Wells, through Asimov, to Star Trek has become today's reality. Many candidates referred to the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore and the novels of Naipaul to demonstrate some of the glories of India's literary world. Some carefully crafted approaches highlighted how a fictional story or character might parallel or parody a real-life situation or life-story from which lessons can be learned. A small number of less successful essays did not include any or many examples to support their arguments. Some arguments showed a lack of clarity about what non-fiction was as there were often references to dramas based on real-life which were not non-fiction. Stronger responses used examples like these to comment on the blurring between fiction and non-fiction and used this as an argument for why you could not say one was more important than the others.

Question 9

The ability to communicate in more than one language is unnecessary. Discuss.

Learners covered benefits of learning foreign languages such as for business, tourism and cultural awareness and also covered potential drawbacks like cost, difficulty and the availability of translation aids. Stronger responses also discussed potential weaknesses with translation aids and often made convincing points about the personal benefits of learning a foreign language. Less successful essays discussed communication and language in a generalised way and did not fully engage with the wording of the question. The importance of English as an essential language for career progress was to the forefront of many essays though there was acknowledgement of Cantonese being so widely spoken. There was consideration of there being no need for rural communities to speak any other language and the main conclusions were clearly connected to those living in urban areas or having the opportunity to pursue an education leading to a career. The advantages of having more than one language were invariably contextualised within Indian cultures and communities, but the global significance of the premise was not always explored.

Question 10

Evaluate the importance of live music to people in your country.

The question was focused on *'live music'* but some candidates wrote about the importance of music in general terms. Therefore, listening to music at home for therapeutic or recreational reasons or even while at work through headphones did not sufficiently connect with the experience of live music. However, many essays discussed the ways regional, traditional and classical music could only be experienced live and how recorded music failed to engage the listener in the same way as a live, concert experience. Many good examples emerged in support of interesting reviews of live performance, notably by Indian musicians who relied so much on spontaneous improvisation and traditional instruments. The links between live performance and Indian cultural and social life became evident and was an indicator of a high level of engagement with the question. Many arguments recounted experiences at live events: Coldplay and Ed Sheeran being frequently mentioned. The economic importance and the bonding experience of attending these live events was often alluded to. There were many interesting answers that described and examined the tradition of Indian classical music, Indian folk music, and the ceremonial music and chants to be heard in places of religious worship. The consoling sounds of the sitar and tabla were also referred to. One candidate wrote that today's Sufi singers have 'reignited the flame of passion' for old forms of music and poetry. Negative points were around the cost of tickets and potential issues with crowd control at live events. The possibility of evaluation often lay in arguments around accessibility due to cost or in the differences between the generations with young people favouring modern music for excitement and older people favouring traditional music.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/22 Comprehension
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Key messages

All candidates are advised to read thoroughly the material provided in the insert, and all the questions, before they begin writing any response in either **Section A** (logical reasoning) or **Section B** (reading comprehension). They should then be well placed to understand precisely what is expected for each of the question types set. It is good examination practice to ascertain from the outset:

- which part of the material contains relevant information, particularly if specifically directed, e.g., in **Section A**, to focus only on the Additional Information (**Questions 1(c)(i)** and **1(c)(ii)**), on the television interview extracts (**Questions 1(d)(i)** and **1(d)(ii)**) and the format of the proposed referendum, as outlined in the Background (**Question 1(e)**). In **Section B**, candidates are generally directed to the appropriate section of the material by means of line references (in 'word count' and 'own words' questions) and/or key words from the material appearing in question stems.
- how much information to offer in response to each sub-question, considering the number of marks available, whether development of ideas is expected (e.g., **Question 1(a)**, the extended response question, and **Question 1(b)** asking for three developed disadvantages), and any instructions regarding the number of reasons or ideas to provide (e.g., **Questions 1(b)**, **1(c)(i)**, **1(c)(ii)**, **1(e)**, **2(a)(i)**, **2(a)(ii)**, **2(b)**, and **2(e)**).
- the rubrics specific to certain styles of question, such as 'using your own words as far as possible' (**Questions 2(c)**, **2(f)(i)** and **2(f)(ii)**), or to summarise part of the material within a specified number of words (**Questions 2(a)(ii)**, **2(b)**, **2(d)** and **2(e)**).
- when use of continuous prose (full sentences) is essential for full credit (**Questions 1(a)**, **2(a)(ii)**, **2(b)**, **2(d)** and **2(e)**).
- which questions, if any, demand candidates to apply their own knowledge, interpretation or wider thinking, i.e., the answer does not appear in the material (**Question 1(e)** explanations).

General comments

The vast majority of candidates demonstrated understanding of the material in both **Section A** and **Section B**, and there was a good degree of engagement with the questions set. Very few rubric infringements were observed, and completely blank response areas were relatively rare. Indeed, many candidates wrote at some length in response to **Question 1(a)**, among others. The vast majority of candidates appeared to be well prepared for the range of question styles they would handle, and very few scripts scored low total marks.

Candidates generally communicated their ideas successfully and clearly in written English, and most organised their writing in the appropriate response areas. Very few responses were unintelligible as a result of grammatical, spelling or expression errors, although occasional answers did lack full clarity and precision, or were ambiguous in their possible interpretations, sometimes negatively impacting the marks awarded.

Most candidates found it more challenging to select the essential relevant points from the material, and to offer sufficient detail and precision in their responses, in those questions with more specific rubric demands. This was particularly true of those questions which imposed a word limit (**Questions 2(a)(ii)**, **2(b)**, **2(d)** and **2(e)** this session) or which required ideas to be presented mainly in candidates' own words (**Questions 2(c)**, **2(f)(i)** and **2(f)(ii)**).

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The important principle in **Section A** is that of 'logical reasoning', which requires candidates to demonstrate understanding of the overall context and situation when making their selections of relevant material to include and, when asked to do so, to develop or explain. The March 2025 **Section A** material related to making a choice between two proposals designed to commemorate the passing of a long-reigning monarch in the fictional nation of Karimba. Candidates seemed to engage well with the premise and generally showed understanding of the most important considerations and stakeholders. Some lapses of focus and logic were evident, as well as occasional factual inaccuracies. However, on the whole, where marks could not be awarded for points attempted, this tended to be because they lacked precision and detail, rather than due to any actual misunderstanding. Please see below for specific examples.

Questions 1(a) and 1(b) both required candidates to 'develop' points for full credit. This necessitates explaining the importance or relevance of the material selected, in respect of the proposal under consideration, or the ability to make connections between pieces of information found in different parts of the material. It is important to keep the sense of the material in mind, as well as the general principle that the points made must be the 'logical choice', i.e., must be specific to the proposal central to the question and not true of both options, or more generally. Arguing by means of features of the other proposal, in **Questions 1(a) and 1(b)**, is specifically forbidden in the rubric, although comparatives are permitted. Candidates might say that the road bridge would be *more expensive* or *represents a greater burden on taxpayers*, since both proposals could be described as expensive and both require some input from taxpayers/state funds to complete, but both are more clearly disadvantages of the bridge (Proposal B).

- (a) In this extended writing question, with its levels-based marking, candidates were required to offer and develop four points to obtain the maximum ten marks. Scores on this question tended to be good as there was ample material for candidates to deploy and with which to demonstrate their ability to make logical connections across the material. A good number of candidates gained marks in Level 4 or at the top of Level 3, with few responses being placed in the lowest level or low in Level 2. Most candidates offered at least two or three reasons why the commemorative statue was more likely to be chosen. (This could be interpreted to mean its general advantages and/or reasons why people might vote for it in the referendum.) Most candidates also successfully developed at least two of the points they had chosen, sometimes doing so very well, and many connected at least three points with other information from the material, or explained their significance to the scenario at hand. Such an approach meant that a good number of candidates reached mid-Level 2 and above. Responses remaining in Level 3 usually either included one or more 'minimal' developments and/or featured some losses of focus, or lapses of clarity and precision. Answers evidenced by only one development being offered, even though two, three or more valid individual ideas had been presented, did not exceed Level 2, since the key skill of analysis was not sufficiently demonstrated to gain higher marks. A small number of responses were placed in Level 1, characterised by the selection of just a couple of relevant points, by one isolated and minimally developed point, or by severe weaknesses of expression and clarity, this latter instance being rare.

Weaker responses tended to rely somewhat on description or narration of what might have been relevant points, had they been given more context. These included references to the appearance and content of the proposed statue, its placement in the large square in front of the national art gallery in the capital city of Mosman [both from the Proposal A details], or the length of the late King Viktor's reign [in the Background]. While specific to the commemorative statue, such points needed to be linked to other parts of the material to convince as likely benefits. When this occurred, these often resulted in a series of sufficiently developed points. (Successful links to these points were made, in better responses, by discussing the suitability of a work of art to honour the late monarch; referencing the late king's fondness for art, as evidenced by his 'collection of... paintings... displayed in the national art gallery..., which the late king himself formally opened' [Additional Information point 15] or his 'patronage of the local arts scene' [Additional Information point 13], which could also be linked with Berti Andersen's having 'trained at an art college in Mosman' [Additional Information point 5].) Two successful, very well-developed examples included: *The sculpture is going to be made by Berti Andersen, who was born in Karimba and has graduated from an art college from Mosman, so he has a lot of experience and knows the history of his country and ruler, so he can create the sculpture with context and The people will likely find a work of art a fitting way to honour the memory of a king who was adored for his patronage of the*

local arts. The statue, if built, will stand in front of Karimba's national art gallery where King Victor himself cut the ribbons, and which displays his private art collection. This may appeal to people as a way of neatly packaging the King's legacy in art.

There was indiscriminate 'lifting' from the material of such features as the late king's active support for 'the work of several disability charities' [Additional Information point 13] and/or to the sculptor's having overcome 'his life-long hearing impairment' (said by Bernardo, the politician interviewed for the television broadcast). When connected, these two points made a clear link; on their own, their relevance to the choice of a commemorative statue were too vague to credit. The number of people resident in Mosman, similarly, was barely convincing when presented merely as a fact, and needed explanation in terms of the number of potential local visitors and voters for the proposal, and the proportion of Karimba's population this number represented.

Examples of developed points formulated by selecting and successfully explaining in context, rather than being specifically linked to other information, included: *The key historical events of King Viktor's reign would be displayed along with his varied interests. It would help people and tourists to understand King Viktor's contributions to his country and Berti Andersen's rise from being hearing impaired to becoming Karimba's pride and joy would also be positive coverage that can only make the decision makers look good.*

Most candidates made reference to the possibility of increased tourism, successfully linked to one or more of the international reputation of sculptor Berti Andersen, the proximity of Karimba's only international airport at Mosman, and the popularity of the national art gallery, with the statue's potential to improve the look of the square dramatically. There was, however, some reliance on repetition and assertion in this regard, whereas more nuanced responses looked at the local, national and international level, and suggested that *tourism and its associated revenue may increase.*

The use of recycled materials in the statue's composition was frequently selected as a valid feature beneficial to this proposal. Minimal developments either made a general comment about environmental credentials or were assertive in stating the likely impact on Karimba's litter or rates of recycling. Better responses picked up, from Additional Information point 3, the 'few environmentally friendly policies' currently in place and Prime Minister Simone Gilovski's desire 'to improve this record', thereby making a clear connection across the material. Linguistic precision was sometimes key here too, as there is an important semantic difference between 'few' and 'a few'. Nicely expressed examples here included: *The materials used would be eco-friendly and recycled, which is something Prime Minister Simone Gilovski is very keen about. This could be seen as a political win for her./Planned to be made from recycled materials, the statue will act as the face of Simone Gilovski's improved environmentally friendly policies.* An alternative example of a very well-developed point here was: *The statue is made from recycled materials. King Viktor would probably approve of environmentally friendly materials as he had an interest in animals. He was also involved in a solar energy project, which is a project that cares for the environment.*

Financial costs featured in many responses, with some candidates making a useful distinction between construction and longer-term maintenance costs, the latter being minimal due to the choice of materials. Both aspects were clear advantages of the proposed statue. Successful calculations determined that only \$1 million would need to be found by the taxpayer to fund the statue, after the royal family's donation, thereby connecting the Proposal A details with Additional Information point 2. Even stronger development was offered by those who linked these ideas to King Viktor's contributions to the public purse and his apparent desire to relieve the burden on taxpayers, as evidenced by Additional Information points 4 and 9. An occasional response made thoughtful use of Additional Information point 11: *The statue would commemorate the late King Victor's interests and key historical events; this would help remind people of the good the monarchy has done and potentially reduce the anti-monarchy sentiment in Karimba.*

- (b) Candidates were required to offer three developed advantages to gain the six available marks. In general, candidates seemed to find plenty to say here, and a good number of candidates scored more than half the available marks, as they developed or explained at least one of the three points offered. As in **Question 1(a)**, successful answers identified features specific to Proposal B, the new road bridge, and then explained the significance of the selected points, or made connections between related pieces of information found in different parts of the material. In this question, the focus was more specific than in **Question 1(a)**, referring only to disadvantages of making this choice. As such, reasons why fewer people might vote for it were not answering the question set.

As in **Question 1(a)**, there was mileage in separating the costs of construction (significantly higher than the statue, and not fixed, with under half the total budget being met by the royal family's contribution, thereby imposing greatly on taxpayers) and the long-term maintenance (also much more expensive and could be linked to the imposition of tolls, on a region whose inhabitants are already the poorest in the country). Some candidates imaginatively surmised that people may avoid using the bridge to circumvent the tolls, or that there may be civil unrest as a result. Another successfully explained point here included: *The bridge connects Froyan, a city [sic] with very few inhabitants, to Nelia, an ugly industrial city. Associating the King, who served Karimba for the majority of his life, with unappealing and unattractive cities might be disrespectful.* The tolls and the unattractive nature of both the industrial city of Nelia and the poor region of Froyan, set to be connected by the road bridge, were also often linked with the notion that any expected increase in visitor and tourist numbers might prove wildly optimistic. One such example, offering more than the minimum required to credit a developed point, was: *Nelia is an ugly, industrial city and does not have the kind of attractions that would entice tourists to go there. This is consolidated by a politician, so it seems that there is not even political support which might entice locals to want to go there. The bridge could be largely unused by locals and tourists.* In contrast, a misunderstanding relating to this information was: *The bridge would allow/cause Nelians to mass migrate to Froyan as Nelia is an ugly city, which would overburden Froyan.*

The point about the impact of the bridge on the Dokkla 'river estuary's wildlife', from the Proposal B details, was a popular inclusion and was, more often than not, successfully linked with the drive for more environmentally friendly policies, as outlined in Additional Information point 3. It was rare, but equally valid, to reference King Viktor's love for animals (from the statue description), given that the bridge was to be named after him and to act as a tribute to his long reign. Another successful suggestion looking to connect the bridge proposal with the notion of a fitting tribute to the late monarch was: *The bridge does not offer a significant tribute to the former king, with the only reference to him being it named after him. It is not a very significant memorial as the bridge will be better known for its convenience than its name.*

As with **Question 1(a)**, when candidates stated an idea without context or explanation, it was not always clear why this was a disadvantage, so could gain little credit. Examples include references to the population size of Froyan and Nelia, and to their distance from Mosman, at the other end of the country. Similarly, responses casting disadvantages in a positive light (*The remainder of the budget will be met by taxpayers*, for instance, or *Long-term maintenance will be funded by central government, supplemented by tolls for users*) could not be awarded marks.

- (c) (i) There were 17 pieces of Additional Information from which to select and only a small number of candidates correctly identified Additional Information point 8 as the 'least relevant' when choosing which proposal to pursue. Correct responses to this style of question will either have no bearing on either option or, as in this case, be identical for both, and thus of limited relevance. Popular distractors included points 4, 5, 9, 11, 12 and 16.
- (ii) Most candidates successfully identified that Additional Information point 7 provided evidence to refute Justina's claim about the neglect of her region by 'decision-makers in Mosman', made in her interview for the forthcoming television programme.
- (d) (i) A number of responses repeated parts of Justina's interview and therefore remained too general in focus, as they could apply to any business or resident in the Froyan region, whereas the question specifically sought evidence that Justina herself would benefit, hence the term 'vested interest'. Correct responses recognised that she is identified as 'a restaurant owner in Froyan' and linked this to her desire to see increased numbers of tourists coming, to 'try our tasty foods'. Valid explanations, along the lines of this being likely to increase her sales/customers/revenue and similar were also permitted, as these too were specific to Justina's business and outlook. It was too speculative, given the lack of detail relating to the size of Froyan and the location of Justina's restaurant, to claim as an advantage *the potential revenue from workmen whilst the bridge was being constructed.*
- (ii) Most candidates identified the correct part of Bernardo's interview for their response, but occasionally answers lacked the precision needed for credit, particularly if they only included the 'no one really cares!' element. This, on its own, did not answer the question, as it simply paraphrased it. His ignorance of the location of Froyan, or indifference to it, was key, hence creditworthy responses needed to include either 'I've no desire to go to Froyan' or 'wherever that

might be'. Many candidates did copy his whole sentence, however, so easily gained the single available mark.

- (e) Candidates generally engaged well with this question and successfully criticised the proposed format of the referendum. Some responses, however, did not focus on the format but suggested other reasons why the outcome might, in their view, not be fair. These included detailed points about the relative population sizes of Mosman and the Nelia/Froyan region, more appropriate to **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)**. There was also mention of the models and sketches to be shown on the television show, which was not answering the question either, and inadvertently using material deemed 'least relevant' in **Question 1(c)(i)**. As often happens with questions of this type, there was also some tendency to be rather vague and general, making claims relating to *bias*, and to being *unfair*, *unreliable*, *unrepresentative*, and similar. Comments need to be specific and related to this referendum and its format, rather than applicable to any such activity.

More focused answers referred to the minimum age limit being set at 30, thereby excluding a large number of adults whose lives would be impacted by the choice for longer and/or who might already be taxpayers and thus contributing to something over which they would have no say. Another successful explanation of the age-limit angle was: *This can make the younger population feel marginalised which would further fan the flames of the anti-monarchy movement*. These were all examples of explained points, worthy of two marks. Another point that was often well explained was the fact that the referendum was to be held online only, thus was reliant on technological infrastructure, technical reliability and participant capabilities. Successful answers sometimes also referenced the poverty in Froyan as being likely to contribute to lower internet penetration rates. Links were similarly made to the older age group in this regard.

The screening of the broadcast, on only one evening, and six weeks prior to the referendum, was also a useful angle, though vaguer answers referenced *in the evenings*, missing the point that the broadcast would only occur once. A good example here, containing more than enough detail to gain two marks, was: *It would be impossible for everyone to see the programme. As it will only be screened once, by definition, there will be people who will need to work during the time of the screening. This will mean that some will either not vote, or if they do, they will not be basing the vote on facts*. Candidates sensibly suggested that not everyone would see the programme (again, poverty and television access could gain credit here) and would be likely to have forgotten all about it by the time of the referendum, especially the details of the two proposals. These were insightful comments, also worthy of crediting as explained points. One thoughtful candidate proposed that *Any sparkle associated with screening the broadcast on the day of King Viktor's 100th birthday will almost certainly have been lost six weeks afterwards*.

Section B

Question 2

Candidates generally engaged well with the material in **Section B**, on the subject of the Operation Mincemeat plot from the Second World War. There were occasional misunderstandings of the details involved, especially when distinguishing between elements of the real historical events and those portrayed in the recent film and stage adaptations of the same story. A few candidates were also under the impression that the naval intelligence officers had killed the poor man at the centre of it all, rather than deploying an already-dead person. However, these were mostly minor points of detail and did not impact marks significantly. As always in **Section B**, differentiation was mostly evident in how successfully candidates located the correct material in response to the questions set, and then how precisely they communicated those ideas. The additional rubric requirements of **Questions 2(a)(ii)**, **2(b)**, **2(d)** and **2(e)** (word limit/summary) and **2(c)**, **2(f)(i)** and **2(f)(ii)** (own words) posed additional challenges to some candidates.

- (a) (i) Candidates performed well on this opening two-mark question to **Section B**, with many correctly identifying all three of the creditworthy points within their response. An occasional misunderstanding reversed the respective significance of Greece and Sicily.
- (ii) Questions testing summary skills, by means of an imposed word limit – in this case, 'in about 20 words' – require candidates to be precise about the material they select and how they convey it. Relatively few responses exceeded the word limit by excessive amounts, in any of the four summary questions. There were few responses 'wasting words' which cannot gain credit, by opening with a lengthy introduction or repetition of the question stem. Similarly, with the rubric instruction now reminding candidates to write in 'continuous prose', there were few instances of

responses which subverted the form of summary questions by writing in bullet points or note form. Some answers, however, were not written in full sentences and were therefore limited to a maximum mark one mark below the full tariff for the question, i.e., to a single mark (in two-mark questions, as here and in **Question 2(e)**) or to two or three marks in **Questions 2(b)** and **2(d)** respectively.

It is also worth noting that a new approach to assessing word-limited questions was adopted in March 2025. Examiners were asked to count the exact number of words specified in the question stem but to read to the end of any phrase or idea started *before* that point. As before, a maximum of one mark could be gained by including material found after the word limit featured in the question rubric. However, this slightly more flexible approach allowed credit for points which might not have been deemed to be complete within less flexible limits. For future series, it is proposed that only a 'reasonable' number of words beyond the limit be considered, however.

In this sub-question specifically, the omission of the definite article ('the') changed the meaning of 'invested in the fiction', becoming too general and referring inadvertently to the later points about writers and creativity. However, many candidates did successfully convey this point, and at least one other, to gain the full two available marks. While being succinct is clearly important in response to questions asking for an answer 'in about 20 words', there was sometimes too much conflation of the ideas surrounding the man's faked new identity/name, (military) rank and fictional fiancée, although most candidates did gain a mark for at least one of these points. Similarly, candidates tended to conflate 'a convincing backstory' with one or more of the above-mentioned features, sometimes also omitting reference to 'for the corpse' or similar. A successful succinct example, worth two marks, was: *They gave the corpse both a convincing backstory (1) and an entirely new identity (1).*

- (b) In this second summary question, candidates had 'about 30 words' in which to convey their answers about the 'wallet litter'. Prompted by 'each' in the question stem, it was necessary to specify the three items provided and their purpose, although a valid general intention, covering all three, could be credited once, i.e., *to make the man's story more authentic/so that he would appear to be like any other/normal soldier*. There was some lack of precision regarding, for example, the 'note' from the bank manager, with some candidates writing 'bank note', an entirely different thing from a letter. Most candidates gained at least one of the three available marks, however, most often either for the bank letter showing his overdrawn status, along with the reference to ticket stubs for clubs and theatres, demonstrating that he liked the nightlife. It was not uncommon for candidates to 'run out' of words by the time they had commenced their third point, about the love letters to the fictional fiancée, Pam. The new approach adopted to marking such questions this session (please see details under **Question 2(a)(ii)** above) seemed to benefit a number of candidates in that respect. A successfully concise response, gaining all three marks in 28 words, included: *A note from the bank said he was overdrawn (1), receipts from clubs showed his love for nightlife (1) and, as evidence of a wartime romance, he had love letters (1).*

- (c) When questions require candidates to respond in their 'own words as far as possible', there will be one or two key terms, or one phrase, per available mark, which candidates cannot copy from the material but will need to render using their own vocabulary. Certain words from the material are permitted, such as technical terms, or words for which it is otherwise difficult to provide sensible synonyms. Different verb forms from those in the material are allowed (e.g., *imagining*, from 'imagined'), as are nouns derived from verbs found in the original (*imagination*, from 'imagined'), and similar permutations, such as the adjectival use of 'war' in *war zone*, from the noun 'war'. However, exchanging only singular and plural forms of nouns is not deemed to demonstrate sufficient independence from the material, e.g., *heroes* (from 'hero').

While some candidates gained neither of the two available marks, even with nine sections of language to attempt for credit, most achieved at least one mark. Occasionally, more than the maximum of two creditworthy points had been conveyed with sufficient precision and without undue reliance on the original material. Some examples of creditworthy responses included: *They were prevented from participating in* [for 'people who were unable to take part in']; *actively fighting/the physical fighting* [for 'the actual war']; *picturing/visualising their roles* [for 'they imagined themselves']; *fighting in secret behind the scenes* [for 'a parallel underground war'] and *They made a significant difference without their identity being known/whose profound contributions remain unsung/achieved great success but were entirely unacknowledged* [for 'the idea of a hidden hero']. Two-mark responses included: *People who were not able to participate in the conflict physically (1) thought their job to be one where they covertly fought (1).*

- (d) This was the summary skills question with the highest mark tariff, requiring responses to be conveyed 'in about 40 words'. Most candidates gained one or two marks, but the third and fourth proved more elusive for many, especially if their attempts at brevity omitted details, or if they had misunderstood key points. Examples include those who believed that James Bond was an author, rather than a character in a series of novels written by Ian Fleming, who came up with several possible deception plans. The most common points attempted related to the need for those involved to 'draw on their creative resources'/'think like writers' and the link between authors and spies, that both 'create a false world and convince someone else that it's true'. However, some of the attempts to render these two ideas more concisely resulted in conflation or overlap between the specifics of the Operation Mincemeat plan and the more general principles outlined in this paragraph of the material, such that sometimes, only one of those two marks could be awarded. A successful conflation of two valid points within just 14 words was: *Many excellent authors, such as Ian Fleming, who inspired the deception, were also spies*. The following candidate's response achieved four points within 39 words: *They needed to think like writers (1) because the greatest novelists were often spies. (1) Officers needed potential ways to deceive the enemy and this was inspired by Ian Fleming. (1) Spies convince everyone by creating a justification for their false world. (1)*
- (e) The fourth and final word-limited question asked candidates to answer 'in about 20 words'. This question proved a successful discriminator, since most candidates gained the first mark, for recognising one or both of the gender swaps which had occurred in the casting of two of the key characters. The second mark, however, proved more elusive, mainly on the basis of precision and understanding, rather than because a word limit was imposed. The related idea, that a man therefore sings the love song based on the fictional letters from 'Pam', was seldom conveyed in its entirety, while a number of candidates relied on describing the problem the casting decisions had been intended to solve ('a story in which the vast majority of the characters were white men'). It was possible, however, to turn this into the second of 'the two ways in which the theatre company updated the story for modern audiences', as the question stem demanded, by mentioning that they had *changed the cast from being mainly white men by casting Natasha Hodgson as Montagu/having Leggett played by a man* (2 marks). Some responses were rather vague (*they tried to improve the diversity of the cast*; an aim, rather than a 'way') or had the wrong focus (*they added music/songs/made it a musical*).
- (f) (i) In this second 'own words' question, most candidates omitted the opening of the short paragraph indicated by the line numbers, in which two points could be conveyed, relating to being easily carried away with the exciting narrative. Most responses attempted to address the need to 'find someone' [e.g., *locate a person/a person was required*], 'who would not be missed' [such as *that no one cared about/who had no family to come looking for him/a person who would not be grieved or longed for/The man would be a disposable nobody*], 'a body they could treat' [*a corpse to be used/a dead person they could handle*] 'as if he had never lived' [*whose existence they could extinguish/as if the man had had no previous life/leaving no trace of his former identity/as though erased from the world itself/strip him of his personality*]. Presumably because the concepts involved were accessible here, and because many candidates' attempts covered between two and four of the above-mentioned points, there were many higher-scoring scripts awarded both available marks here. One successful two-mark response, rendering the ideas of 'had to find someone / who would not be missed' included: *A person, a John Doe, without any family ties had to be discovered*. Another two-mark answer conveyed the notions of 'who would not be missed / as if he had never lived' by means of: *A homeless man, with no connections, was chosen and he was subsequently erased from history*.
- (ii) The final question requiring candidates to respond mainly in their own words was challenging, especially for those candidates who had not clearly grasped who Michelle Ashford was and who therefore confused her concerns with those of Montagu. Nonetheless, many candidates provided sensible alternative renderings of 'keen to address' [*wanted to explore/show*]; the tension felt by Montagu [*Montagu's moral dilemma/the stress experienced by Montagu*]; 'But what else are we going to do?' [*There was no better option/They had no alternative/What other course of action was there?/The dilemma of choosing the lesser of two evils/Having to proceed with the lesser of the two evils and having no other way out*], and '(making) terrible choices' [*difficult decisions/immoral solutions/reprehensible decisions*]. A successful two-mark response rendering 'the tension felt by Montagu / (that) what we're doing is really questionable' was: *Montagu was stressed by the morally dubious, difficult options*.

- (g) Occasionally responses included ideas that were not in the material, rather than selecting those offered in the material, suggesting why it was important that the Nazis should be defeated, decrying the reprehensible atrocity of using a dead body in such a way, or explaining how the plan would have been executed differently if it were to occur in the present day. Some also focused on the morality of using a dead body or choices made in war, similar to **Questions 2(f)(i) and 2(f)(ii)**. Such approaches were not answering the question. A small number interpreted 'Operation Mincemeat' as '*Operation Mincemeat*', i.e., the film, and so gave irrelevant answers relating to CGI being used these days, and similar. Nonetheless, the majority of candidates demonstrated some understanding. The most frequently awarded point related to the final statements from the material, i.e., that the operation represented *a really important moment in history/really made a difference/strategically altered the course of the war*. The specific success, with the invasion of Sicily, was also picked up by some candidates, as were the two related points that *the dead man's gravestone (in Huelva) shows both his names and so honours/recognises his service to his country*. Those few candidates who attempted to explain the invasion of Sicily as a 'diversionary tactic' sometimes lacked precision in their phrasing, implying sometimes that it was the dead body which was the decoy, which lost the sense of the original.
- (h)(i) Precision is important, in particular in not providing more words than necessary, when responding to questions requiring the location, in the material, of a synonym for a given word or phrase. The general principle is that it should be possible to read the sentence with either version of the selected word or phrase in place, and for this to make sense, both grammatically and in terms of meaning. Many candidates correctly gave a single-word answer. In the case of the first such sub-question, the past (-ed) ending provided a clue, but lead to candidates erroneously proposing such terms as *seconded*, *suggested*, *succeeded*, *sourced* and *provided*, none of which offered the sense of 'impeded', from the question stem, which could only be conveyed by *stymied*. Of the three sub-questions, but by a very small margin, this was the one candidates most frequently identified correctly.
- (ii) Perhaps misled by the -ly ending of 'wily', occasional candidates sought to provide an adverb here, rather than an adjective. As such, this proved the most challenging of the three sub-sections. Other, less easily understandable incorrect responses included *ambitious*, *formidable*, *poor*, *appetite*, and *overdrawn*. A small majority selected *shrewd*, the correct answer.
- (iii) Minor miscopying is tolerated, provided that the intended word is clear and does not create a new word, such as *benefitting*, in place of the correct response (*befitting*). Other distractors included *whirlwind* and *aspiring*, while *poignantly* was seen across all three sub-questions in **2(h)**.