

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/11 Essay
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Key messages

- Essays should be written in formal English.
- Do not use abbreviations e.g. don't, won't, etc
- Proofread answers afterwards and correct errors.
- Do not spend too long writing an introduction.
- Use paragraphs to construct a coherent argument.
- Successful conclusions are those which step back and form an independent judgement on the issues discussed.
- Do not contradict opinions expressed in an essay.
- Answer the question set rather than writing a generalised essay on the topic.
- Give appropriate examples to support ideas and opinions.
- When evaluating, aim to include short-term and long-term impact.
- Evaluate a problem from a range of different perspectives e.g. social, political, economic, educational etc.
- Avoid generalising or using extreme, dramatic examples when discussing an issue, e.g. not all online friendships are affected by catfishing.
- Use legible handwriting.

General comments

Many essays were written in clear language. There were many responses that included inappropriate informal register such as: 'yes, it's okay to think...', 'you guys', 'a bunch of', 'gonna' and contractions such as 'don't', 'couldn't'. Some candidates were predicating sentences with 'Well...', 'So...' and 'Sure...'. Hyperbolic language such as 'crazy', 'insane' and 'humungous' were also prevalent and out of place. These are all inappropriate in a formal, academic essay. Other typical errors included: 'alot' in place of 'a lot', confusion of 'they're/there/their', 'lead' used as past tense instead of 'led', 'everyday' confused with 'every day', 'nowadays' written as 'now in days' or 'now and days', problems with subject/verb agreement, comma-splicing and a number of stream of consciousness responses with few or even no full stops and/or paragraphing.

Essays were generally well structured with a clear introduction and conclusion. Some candidates spent too long on their introduction, writing a number of examples which were later included in the main body of the essay and developing ideas which were then repeated in the essay. Many candidates began paragraphs in a very formulaic manner: 'To start off...', 'secondly...', 'To wrap things up...'. This is to be discouraged as it not appropriate academic register and leads to very stilted essays. There were a good number of effective conclusions where the candidate stepped back and offered a judgement on the topic and the arguments already formulated. Less successful conclusions were either very brief or simply repeated all of the main arguments that had already been presented.

Some candidates offered few or no examples or very general and implausible ones. Examples need to be more specific, e.g. name an artwork if talking about art; personal anecdotes can be effective if used appropriately, such as one answering **Question 9** who discussed meeting a cousin of theirs in the military, by accident in a chat room, and then making a point of answering their calls to provide moral support. Better responses included specific, relevant examples that helped develop the argument and make it more convincing. Generalised, dubious, or potentially fictitious examples of newspaper or university research or statistics are to be avoided.

Whilst there were many well developed and thoughtful essays, there were a large number of candidates who presented very brief essay and those that were generalised on the topic or had very vague ideas and views.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Exploration of the oceans is vital for the survival of the planet. Discuss.

There were many well developed responses that offered a range of valid and interesting arguments. Some candidates misread *exploration* as *exploitation* in the question and there was a tendency to describe the oceans as if they were not integral to our planet. Those who misread the question, however, managed some relevance by arguing that our pollution of the oceans and activities such as indiscriminate fishing would have catastrophic effects if left unchecked. Those who saw terrestrial life and ocean life as being independent of one another often wrote essays about exciting and strange life forms that might be discovered in the depths of the oceans and several candidates thought we might find the fabled Kraken. Others thought we might discover something, such as a virus, that could wipe out all life on Earth. Those candidates with genuine knowledge examined interesting and meaningful examples; for instance there were references to the horseshoe crab and its potential in cancer research and the fact that squid ink has antimicrobial properties and can act in a similar way to an antibiotic, which supported the argument that further exploration of the sea could discover other organisms with medical applications. Some candidates saw the double danger of *exploitation* and *exploration* in their comments on deep ocean mining and its potentially harmful effects on marine life. However, candidates rarely considered the 'opposing' arguments in any detail or questioned the extent to which it would be accurate to judge how 'vital' it was to explore the oceans.

Question 2

Advertising is ineffective without visual images. To what extent do you agree?

Better responses offered clear examples to support their arguments such as the use of images of perfect products in McDonalds and KFC advertisements, which looked little like the products we actually get when we visit such venues. There was exploration of how other forms of advertising that did not use visual images could still be effective, such as those on the radio, which offered only sound. These stated that the use of music, voices and sound could create an attractive and desirable product and, thus, a successful advertisement. There was frequent comment that we prefer to see something and respond better to visual stimuli. It was pleasing to encounter some candidates incorporating analytical commentaries related to visual images in political advertising which proved to be a valid way of placing their arguments in a wider and more distinctive context. Less successful answers focused on a narrow range of ideas or offered few, if any, examples to support their views. These responses did not recognise that other forms of advertising do exist other than those seen on television. There was comment on how advertising interrupted a television programme and, therefore, was annoying. Whilst this did make the point that advertising with visual images can be ineffective, this did not always help develop an overall argument.

Question 3

Television will always be the most popular form of entertainment. To what extent do you agree?

Television meant different things to various candidates, such as the physical television set or the service provided that can be watched on the set, including streaming services. These approaches were all valid. Better responses focused on 'will always' in the question and used this to enable them to explore and evaluate a range of arguments. Many candidates wrote about the history of television, a number saying it was now just for older people, as younger people have a really short attention span, more suited to TikTok and YouTube. A large number of candidates saw television as simply 'a box' doomed to become irrelevant because it is not portable, whereas others focused on the content of television, many realizing that it was also available on apps that they could download onto their phones and tablets. Some linked television's longevity with its adaptability. Few recognised that phones and the internet are not free alternatives to expensive television. It was stated in some arguments that television is still a vital part of family and social life. Several candidates wrote that reading books is becoming more popular among the young, whilst others commented that the high cost of attending sports' events meant that sport is primarily watched on TV. Many discussed that video games are played using the television and a few wrote that access to television is still limited in certain parts of the world. There were many who discussed that doing physical exercise, or experiencing the world for themselves was far more important and desirable than watching television and

therefore these were more popular forms of entertainment. Less successful responses focused on a description of what television was and what it provides without engaging with the wording of the question. There were also a number of brief and unstructured responses with a focus on what candidates liked and disliked about television – these did not focus on the wording of the question and, as a result, did not formulate a coherent argument.

Question 4

To what extent is further development of renewable energy desirable in your country?

There were few vague or unclear responses to this question and most candidates has some knowledge of the topic and the issues. Less successful responses described geographical processes, for example the creation of fossil fuels or how energy can be harvested from renewable sources, but did not link those directly to the question or the country they reside in. Many more successful candidates were able to develop their arguments by seeing the global context that may result from their country 'leading the way' in developing renewable energy, whether their country was or was not a leading 'supplier' in non-renewable energy sources. Many candidates were able to draw on a wide range of content to generate well-developed arguments that were also sharply analytical and evaluative, for instance, focusing on the environmental and economic impacts of the extraction of lithium and cobalt, both components used in the production of electric car batteries. The negatives of renewable energy were also discussed: some candidates described wind farms as unsightly and taking up too much space as well as exploring problems with solar and water power including location and expense. Worries were expressed about the...?. There were some arguments for a nuclear/renewable mix, while being mindful of the problem of nuclear waste.

Question 5

The removal of works of art from public view is necessary when what they represent is now seen as unacceptable. Discuss.

Many candidates were able to discuss and reflect upon what constitutes the 'unacceptable' and the legitimacy or otherwise of those authorities who succeed in having works of art removed. Graffiti featured prominently in a few essays and there were local examples offered where authorities had painted out graffiti, not because it was obscene but because it was politically sensitive in their eyes. Better responses looked at art beyond the traditional interpretation of being static, aesthetic works. This meant that a few candidates were able to engage with art in the form of music, album cover work for music releases, novels and plays/performances. The recent controversy over Michelangelo's naked 'David' was mentioned, as was the removal of certain books from libraries and schools including Harper Lee's 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. The removal of statues was seen by most as counter-productive. Several candidates wrote about practices that are deemed unacceptable by today's standards that should nevertheless still be seen. In better responses the key words in the question – 'removal' and 'unacceptable' – were used astutely. Some candidates also focused on art which they deemed should never be displayed and explored why. Less successful arguments lacked examples or focused on a narrow range of ideas.

Question 6

To what extent are all disabled people provided for in your country?

The overriding positive with responses to this question was that hardly any candidate was unable to provide examples of the provisions made for members of the disabled community. In addition, candidates considered members of the disabled community beyond those with physical impairments, including members with behavioural or emotional disabilities, sensory-impaired disorders and developmental conditions. The level of knowledge (often reflecting some personal involvement within the family) was impressive and often vociferously stated when the provision was deemed to be lacking. There was frequent comment that more should be done for both the blind and the deaf communities. Less successful responses to this question listed the facilities for the disabled, which served as examples but did not provide stimulus for evaluation: the provision of access ramps, parking spaces, user friendly restrooms and so on. Such responses were descriptive and did not develop into a balanced, evaluative argument.

Question 7

The use of animals in sport can never be justified. Discuss.

The vast majority of candidates were able to consider a range of sports involving animals including horse or greyhound racing; dressage; pig, dog or cat shows; pitbull or bull fighting and dog agility. Some candidates did succumb to the emotive appeal of the issue, and this was often accompanied by register issues with some aggressively worded, passionate responses written in a very colloquial manner. The required context 'sport' was missed by some candidates and these essays were focused on how animals deserve protection and affection. Many candidates restricted animal sports to horse racing and dog racing with a few references to hunting, thus narrowing the argument. Comments were often focused on animal cruelty in sport such as animals being beaten to achieve a better performance. Others expressed the views that animals were well-treated because the owners wanted to get the best out of them. More successful arguments were balanced, exploring when using animals in sport could be justified but evaluating those situations where it could not be, before reaching a final judgement focused on the word 'never' in the question.

Question 8

Democracy is the best form of government. Evaluate this view.

In general, this was a question that was successfully answered where those who had engaged with modern political history were able to provide a wealth of examples of different governmental institutions including parliamentary democracies, semi-presidential parliamentary democracies, federal parliamentary democracies, autocracies and theocracies. Even candidates that did not have the breadth of examples to engage with were able to outline the positive and negative aspects of the democratic institutions they were most familiar with in order to evaluate the statement in the question. Several candidates referred to both the French and American revolutions as necessary precursors of democratic rule in both countries. Historical and current examples of dictatorships featured prominently with references to Hitler, Pol Pot, Putin and the North Korean leadership. There were many mature and thoughtful responses. Weaker candidates focused on a description of the American system and failed to make comparisons with other forms of government. Others simply began each paragraph with a different type of government and said what they felt was good and bad about it but did not directly address the words in the question – especially 'best'. There seemed to be a naïve view that unless a country is like the USA, it means that every other system is not a democracy, for instance suggesting that communism was never democratic, or several believing that in modern monarchies the Monarch 'rules' and has all the power and are an example of autocracy. The UK was used as an example as not being a democracy in several responses and there were some broad generalisations e.g. America good/North Korea bad.

Question 9

Genuine friendships can never be made only online.

There were a large range of responses to this question. Many candidates missed the word 'only' in the question and only discussed the positive and negatives of making friends with people online. Many candidates used personal experiences as evidence to debate the extent to which the statement of the question could be seen as a valid one. This only became problematic when candidates could not look at these from an objective standpoint. Candidates who described how friendships they had personally made were formed without engaging with the tenets of a genuine relationship, unfortunately, produced self-limiting responses. Many candidates, as if using a pre-prepared essay, outlined the dangers that came with social media such as catfishing and scamming; however, in this case, overly focusing on describing those dangers was self-limiting as candidates did not use those examples to define why that demonstrated the online realm could not be a place where genuine friendships are forged, especially when they used it as an opportunity to advise the reader of what they should do if they found themselves being in these situations. Candidates who began to consider the different forms of friendship on a conceptual level, such as physical support, the importance of body language and facial expressions, and how these informed our understanding of the friend, were more successful as they were then able to begin to evaluate the difference that the absence of these caused. Weaker responses were undeveloped or simply commented on the positives and negatives of forming friendships online with no consideration of other spheres where friendships could be made.

Question 10

To what extent do richer nations have a responsibility to help the world's poor?

The less convincing arguments were as a result of candidates focusing on it being the responsibility of rich individuals to donate to charity and to helping poorer people, rather than engaging with the country-focused context of the question. Some essays described what countries did to help the world's poor without discussing 'to what extent' the richer nations are responsible for this. There were many well-focused arguments that explored how richer nations simply helped the poor for their own benefits, giving colonial empires as an example, stating that they only helped the world's poor so they could take their land, resources and labour-force. Many arguments recognised and explored the moral argument for providing aid and how it could be mutually beneficial. A good number explored the idea that unless issues at home were improved first, such as unemployment, poverty and declining infrastructure, there could be no help for poor people in other countries. This often meant that the term 'richer nations' was evaluated and there was exploration as to who these nations are.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/12 Essay
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Key messages

- Make a plan and keep it brief.
- Write a focused introduction that is not descriptive or tangential.
- Avoid listing the arguments in the introduction.
- Develop and link arguments to the question.
- Apply a range of appropriate examples to support the arguments.
- Conclude by evaluating and not simply repeating points.
- Punctuate accurately, especially with commas, to guide the reader.
- Use paragraphs and logical connectors to organise the response.
- Use a range of vocabulary appropriate to the context.
- Write legibly and avoid excessive cancellations.
- Set time aside to check for grammatical errors, especially in agreement, articles and tenses.

General comments

Although some questions proved more popular than others, answers were seen to every question. Top-level essays were also seen for every question. Most candidates chose questions that they understood and could respond to and there were only a small number of essays that were very limited or irrelevant. However, many candidates still tended to pick topics which they felt they knew a lot about rather than basing their decision on how well they could answer the question itself. A good example of this was **Question 7** where most of the responses described uses, advantages and disadvantages of mobile phone use with superficial address of the key terms of 'connect' and 'social isolation'.

There has been improvement in the provision of examples and most candidates tried to support their opinions with illustrations, facts and statistics. Less successful responses were carried away in explaining or describing their examples to the point where the argument became lost in the over-abundance of details. For instance, in **Question 2**, with lengthy descriptions of particular battles, weapons, and wars, it appeared that candidates sometimes forgot that the point of bringing up examples of military victories or weaponry was to argue for or against the continuing importance of armed forces for countries in today's world. Candidates should refrain from citing implausible or exaggerated statistics and sources as these do not bolster arguments.

Strong responses analysed and evaluated. They provided nuanced opinions and approached questions from a variety of perspectives. They consistently addressed all the key terms of the question in their arguments and provided clear and thoughtful conclusions. Less successful responses tended to 'tack on' a reiteration of the question or its key terms at the close of each paragraph in an attempt to show that the question has been answered, when often, the paragraphs have been purely explanatory or descriptive. Most concluding paragraphs simply repeated the material covered in the essay and some were not conclusions but just another paragraph with a new point.

There was a wide range in the quality of English; the very best candidates wrote with fluency, accuracy and confidence. Very few responses were in the lowest level for communication and errors of grammar, vocabulary and punctuation were all factors in such cases. Most responses were clear overall, with noticeable errors which might have been avoided if time had been allocated to correcting them. It is important for candidates to maintain a formal register as the tone and expression varied in a significant number of essays. The use of contractions (don't and can't) and informal words ('wanna' and 'kids') should be avoided.

Poor punctuation posed problems for examiners as commas were frequently omitted or misplaced, thus obscuring meaning. The ambitious but often incorrect use of colons and semi-colons was less of an issue as was the omission or misuse of apostrophes.

A very common grammatical error was the confusion of singular and plural nouns and verbs ('...mobile devices. It is...' or 'Every countries make ally...'). Some candidates found the omission or inclusion of the definite and indefinite articles tricky, for instance, 'the responsibility of ensuring healthy lifestyle' or 'Watching the movies at home is enjoyable'.

The use of ambitious vocabulary is encouraged though this needs to be done with discrimination. There were instances of complex words that were used incorrectly or inappropriately, where perhaps simpler and more common words might have been more precise. The best writing uses a wide vocabulary with confidence but without drawing attention to itself. Similarly, lengthy sentences and paragraphs run the risk of loss of control.

Many candidates were keen to write as much as they could but this often resulted in writing that was difficult to read, with disorganised content and a rushed conclusion. It is advisable to write a well-planned and concise essay of 600 – 700 words in the allotted time.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Assess whether your country's traditions are holding back its development.

The answers to this question were usually informative and enjoyable to read. Most candidates showed knowledge of traditions in their country, though weaker answers tended to be descriptive. The majority of candidates adopted a critical position regarding the role of traditions holding back national development. Those critical of traditions tended to ascribe the country's lack of development to traditions which, in particular, hold back the progress of girls and women in general (early marriage, exclusion of females from education and the work force) thus wasting talents that would otherwise help develop the country economically and in other ways. Candidates argued that many of those practices were more commonly observed as occurring in rural areas where male power is predominant. Candidates also referred to the discriminatory caste system and the negative impacts of dowries.

However, there were some who argued that traditions represent a unifying agent in the country, and therefore are a source of pride. In addition, the customs and traditions of the country are a large factor in drawing tourists to the country, and a source of revenue to be used to help develop the country economically. Some looked at specific traditional festivals, observing how they might be regressive in some ways yet serve to bring different tribes, regions and groups together, thus strengthening national cohesion and pride.

Some candidates argued that factors other than tradition, such as illiteracy, nepotism and political corruption are more responsible for holding back their country's progress. This added another perspective to their responses although a few candidates lost sight of the question and neglected to discuss the role of traditions.

Question 2

Assess whether countries still need armed forces in order to remain powerful in today's world.

Candidates generally argued that powerful armed forces are still required to safeguard national sovereignty and to act as a deterrent to prevent incursions by hostile neighbours. Candidates often discussed past conflicts, the Cold War, and of course the war between Russia and Ukraine. The USA was identified as a country which uses its military might to defend democracy throughout the world. China was described as a country which exerts power through economic interest, in developmental projects in Pakistan, or in Africa whilst maintaining strong armed forces. Some candidates argued that conventional forces are less crucial these days as greater threats exist regarding cyber security, nuclear weapons and chemical or biological warfare. Some smaller countries, such as Singapore or oil rich states were said to be powerful, despite not having strong or large armed forces. International alliances and organisations such as the United Nations were discussed as a means to seek and hold power indirectly.

Weaker answers simply described the use of armed forces in conflicts or peace-keeping activities in various places. Better answers explored more carefully what makes a country powerful, looking at trade, material resources, investment and presence in other countries. Candidates also talked about the 'soft power' of cultural influence via films, music, fashion and sport. These other areas of power were often judged to be insufficient on their own and that armed forces are still needed to deter aggressors or repel invasions. Examples were often quoted, especially the present war in Ukraine.

Some candidates reflected on the role of nuclear power as a deterrent and its role in avoiding major conflicts because no nation was prepared to risk the consequences. However, nuclear weapons were also seen as a means by which some countries, like North Korea, balance their disadvantage of a smaller, less equipped armed force.

Question 3

Examine the impact of international aid on ending world poverty.

This question was not often attempted but most answers showed a reasonable understanding of the issues. There were also a good number of top-level answers. Candidates generally argued that rich countries have an obligation to help poorer ones, especially since poor countries are often former colonies of rich nations which exploited them for their resources. Specific examples were used with varying degrees of accuracy, and relevant factors considered, such as donations from more powerful countries to exert control over the weaker ones and initiate trading arrangements that were favourable to the former. There were good discussions about whether donations always achieve their objectives or are diverted to other areas as corruption in the receiving countries means the money is criminally siphoned off.

Generally, candidates argued that it was very difficult for aid to have a long-term effect on the welfare of citizens in poor countries but it could be of assistance in times of crises, such as a natural calamity or outbreak of disease. Candidates sometimes described effective ways that aid can tackle poverty, such as infrastructure development, loans and scholarships for bright candidates who hopefully return and help in national development. Some candidates argued that the reasons for poverty could be attributed to inefficient or corrupt governments, illiteracy, over-population and were sceptical about how international aid could solve this multi-faceted problem.

The main problem with less successful responses was the tendency to define aid and poverty, describe the process with examples but fail to effectively analyse the impact of aid on ending world poverty.

Question 4

To discover and learn, it is necessary to travel. Evaluate this statement.

This was quite a popular question and it attracted many candidates who tended to list the benefits and disadvantages of travel or simply going on a holiday. There were also answers which were vague and generalised, agreeing that travel enables one to experience different cultures and languages without developing the ideas or giving any examples.

Candidates acknowledged that travel has led to some revolutionary discoveries in the past and has changed and advanced our understanding of history and science. Candidates saw that travel enhances the cultural experience and that various aspects from language to traditional attire to food are best learned through travel. Without travel, customs and practices of less common cultures get diminished and reduced to words and pictures on a website. Some argued that 'effective' learning is best achieved by travel and personal experience rather than the curated content of social media creators.

Candidates asserted that much could be learned and discovered from television, films, books and the internet. The issue of the expense of travel was often raised, some suggesting that exploring much closer to home was a valuable and cheaper learning experience. Some suggested that people can attend classes to learn a language or skill.

Stronger responses made the point that travel is an immersive, multi-sensory experience which creates a lifetime of memories. Some better responses dealt with the question's implicit idea that discovery and learning are related to the self, as much as anything else. Insightful answers talked about the differences between learning and discovery – contrasting deliberate intention with serendipity. The best answers used specific examples, explaining how certain places had to be visited in person to gain the fullest knowledge and most authentic experience.

Question 5

It is every parent's responsibility to ensure that their children have a healthy lifestyle. Discuss.

The third most popular choice of question but not many evaluative responses were seen. Most answers fully accepted the premise that parents are responsible for their children's lifestyle and there was very little consideration of other factors or influences and the extent of their responsibility. Candidates spent most of their time describing all the features of a healthy lifestyle, usually concentrating on diet and limiting screen time. Some misinterpreted the question and referred to parental responsibilities in general, that is, to educate their children or pay for living expenses.

Better answers looked at exercise, mental health, companionship and socialising, and parents supervising medical checks as necessary. The responsibility of parents to teach and be role models in their own behaviour and relationship was often discussed. Better answers considered the responsibility of children themselves as they grow older, the responsibility of their friends and peers, of schools and teachers. Very few looked at the state's responsibility in educating or regulating lifestyles, for instance, by making physical education compulsory in schools, placing age restrictions on the sale of alcohol and cigarettes or running vaccination programmes for babies and children.

It is important with questions such as these, that candidates look at the argumentative aspects and do not take it as an opportunity to off-load as much information as they can.

Question 6

Trees have little importance in our increasingly developed world. Discuss.

The candidates who did well on this question were those who not only had a good knowledge of the various functions of trees and uses of wood but were able to see both sides of the argument. Most essays covered similar material: trees as oxygen givers; how trees mitigate air pollution, the effects of floods and landslides; provide habitats for animals and other organisms and provide raw materials and food. Candidates also looked at the problems of deforestation though many gave much tangential information about climate change. The aesthetic value of trees was not ignored, and the simple pleasure and restorative value of spending time in nature was discussed. The point of wood being useful for arts and crafts was often made too.

Better answers offered some balance to their discussions and looked at why trees may need to give way to the development of infrastructure or urbanisation. They talked about the ability of technology to supply some of the functions of trees but few mentioned balancing afforestation with development or the use of sustainable wood.

Question 7

Mobile devices designed to connect people actually increase social isolation. Discuss.

The most popular question – this attracted a wide range of candidates. Many introductions narrated a history of the mobile phone and its predecessors. The need to focus on the question in the introduction was very marked here. Weaker answers enumerated the good and bad points of mobile phones without a clear eye on the question.

Candidates were usually keen to describe some of the uses of mobile phones in helping people to keep in touch with each other and often spent a little too long in the body of the essay, describing some of the historical difficulties of keeping in touch. There were probably more assertions made in these answers than to any other question. For instance, that 'everyone has a mobile', 'all family meals are accompanied by mobile phone usage' and 'teenagers prefer to stay in their rooms on their mobile phones rather than go out and speak to people face to face'. When describing the negative aspects of over-use of mobile devices weaker candidates tended to generalise or exaggerate, describing worst-case scenarios and often attributing mobile phones as a cause of divorce, mental instability and suicide. Many painted a bleak picture of young people completely enslaved to their phones in the hope that such extreme portrayals would add substance and support to their arguments.

The prevalence of online friends was also a concern. Young people in particular might be susceptible to the predatory behaviour of people they might never have seen in person. This applies to the reclusive in nature who have problems fitting in with their peers and are more comfortable with their virtual friends. By depending on their online friends, they are abandoning their physical friends. This was a common point in many of the essays and the better candidates argued these ideas in a measured manner. More positive responses often described the friendships made by the gaming community, or the many positive outcomes from using social media.

One positive characteristic of better essays was the examination of how phones 'connect' as well as the dangers of social isolation which they could bring about. Candidates were able to make a balanced judgement, some agreeing and some disagreeing with what the question suggested. There was much knowledge on display, and strong candidates incorporated what they knew in a thoughtful and mature debate.

Question 8

The main purpose of architecture is to add beauty to the environment. To what extent do you agree?

This was not a popular question but provided much scope for well-informed candidates who exemplified their answers with buildings ranging from the Taj Mahal to the Palace of Versailles and the Burj Kalifa. Some stronger responses included some historical context as to why these were built and the reasons behind their designs as well as their aesthetic value. Good answers wrote effectively of the need for architecture to combine beauty and functionality, as well as safety. It was pointed out that beauty is a subjective concept and beautiful architecture is costly. Candidates often give pertinent example of buildings which are a source of national and local pride.

Some answers focused on the economic value of architecture as tourist attractions, in terms of their external appearance and function, such as the Louvre. A few candidates offered more unusual examples, citing roads and bridges. Less successful answers were lacking in examples which was an essential element of this question.

Question 9

The best way to watch a movie is at home. Discuss.

This was the second most popular question and perceived by many candidates to be 'easier' in terms of judgements that they could make. This meant that most answers made some kind of assessment based on the convenience of watching movies at home: lower cost, choice of movies (streaming services) and refreshments, comfort and timing. This was often juxtaposed with the positives and negatives of the cinema experience such as superior audio and visual quality, socialising with friends versus inconsiderate patrons and high costs. Many candidates were more inclined to watch movies in the comfort of their own homes where they are largely free from outside pressures.

However, answers were usually confined to describing the benefits or disadvantages of the two settings with little or no evaluation offered. Hence, few answers were seen at the highest level. The better answers examined in some detail why and when films are much better viewed in the cinema and whether particular genres lent themselves to this. Strong answers were able to give specific examples of movies where the cinema and technology such as 3D and IMAX enhance the immersive experience.

Question 10

To what extent do visual arts play a vital role in today's world?

This was not a popular choice of question and while there were several strong answers, most responses were very thin on specific and relevant examples. Some candidates spent too much time on moving images: film and television shows and digital technology. These ignored the historic and cultural impact of visual art forms such as paintings, photographs and sculpture. The emotional and intellectual impacts of visual arts were discussed by several candidates, although nearly all answers concerned themselves, not with traditional art galleries, but with photography, television advertisements and AI-generated images.

More successful candidates were able to examine the various roles played by visual arts in spreading propaganda, in marketing, in conveying messages without language and also in children's education. Less

successful candidates were unsure about visual arts and some thought they were genres such as music and literature.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/13 Essay
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Key messages

- The opening paragraph should be focused on the wording of the question and should indicate briefly the approach to the topic in question.
- Examples should be used to illustrate and develop the argument or debate.
- Appropriate knowledge of the chosen topic is essential.
- Evidence to back up opinions is essential in order to avoid assertion.
- Clear paragraph links indicate a progression of ideas. Paragraphs should be clearly indented.
- Demonstrate personal engagement with the topic being written about.
- Make sure that terminology specific to the question attempted is used.
- Questions are designed to encourage analysis and evaluation not simple description.
- Make sure that only ONE question is attempted.
- Conclusions should be a focused reflection on the essay's overall argument.

General comments

While **Question 1** on working from home and **Question 9** on digital media were the most popular questions, there was significant interest in most of the other questions. **Question 2**, for example on the rights of minority groups sparked considerable interest and often interesting answers. Candidates, who chose that question, had arguments to make and clearly wanted to be persuasive. Better responses to this question, and the other questions, chose their words carefully, adopted an appropriate tone and presented evidence carefully to support arguments. These essays recognised opposing points of view and other or additional approaches to the questions. With these elements of synthesis essays usually avoided repetition and assertion.

The popular **Question 9** occasionally elicited a list of several digital platforms as though that was enough in itself. What was required was an argumentative thread that weighed up the beneficial and not so beneficial aspects of digital media. A few candidates were too keen to point out the lurid and dangerous aspects without considering the circumstances where digital media can do good.

A few minutes devoted to planning would help with this question and others. For example, two columns with brief notes, one headed 'good', the other 'harm' would point the way to the discussion you want to develop.

Vague references to other studies or articles that support your opinion are not really helpful. Such references need to be precise and they need to convince the reader that they are relevant and have actually been read. Above all, the reader is interested in what you think.

Evidence of a personal anecdotal nature may be relevant but should not be relied upon too much. A few responses to **Questions 1** and **9** contained unnecessarily extended quotations describing family members' experiences of either working from home or using digital platforms.

Finally, allow yourself time to read through your essay. Look out for errors, assertions, casual modes of expression, unexplained abbreviations and the use of text-speak instead of formal English.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

To what extent is working entirely from home preferable?

This was a very popular question and the recent experience of Covid lockdown enabled candidates to write knowledgeably and persuasively. Higher level responses considered why working from home might not be preferable and a few made the point that essential workers have to work outside of the home. Effective opening sentences were seen such as 'Despite a lack of human interaction, working from home allows for comfort, money saving and schedule flexibility'. Immediately the probable shape of the essay is established. This candidate, having made four clear points in the introduction, went on to develop them and concluded that this was 'a complex question with as many negative as positive aspects when considering how and where we work'. Other persuasive responses considered the possibility of relationships being strained if work is done entirely at home. The danger of social isolation was remarked upon by several candidates. A few found it difficult to develop a good argument because they failed to consider 'extent' and seemed to think that the question was inviting an endorsement of 'preferable'. A few responses showed excellent knowledge and awareness of the problems faced by the neurodivergent, concluding that working from home enabled them to flourish in the less threatening environment of their own homes.

Question 2

The rights of minority groups should be supported in your country. Discuss.

There was definitely a strong bias in favour of minority groups although a few candidates argued that positive discrimination can lead to injustice for those in the majority groups. One essay, for example, made the interesting argument that simply filling diversity quotas, robbed 'people of the respect they might deserve'. Nevertheless, historic injustice was recognised by all. One of the many excellent essays on this topic opened as follows: 'From slavery, to serfdom, to segregation, to civil rights movements, people have had to fight for their rights to exist and be treated equally' and another high-level response concluded with the sentence, 'Support for these rights is important so that everyone has an equal opportunity to experience the American dream'. There were no responses where strong opinions overwhelmed discussion although there was often criticism of the forces of law and order. Many candidates showed that they were aware of the problems encountered by migrants and the disabled. In addition, there were a few poignant references to name-calling in school and to the restrictions imposed upon teachers and schools in matters related to what can be discussed or taught. The belief that all citizens should have equal rights was widely held and a few responses gained high marks by arguing that individuals as well as the state or country have responsibilities in these matters. The expectation that '**your**' country would be the primary focus was fulfilled. In that context there were interesting responses from candidates in countries where religion has a significant impact on people's attitudes.

Question 3

Companies that manufacture medicines are only interested in profit. Discuss.

This question was responded to by a few candidates. There were no outstanding answers because assumptions about capitalism and the profit motive resulted in more polemic than discussion. A few credited companies with saving lives and were able to give examples of products that had done so. Others were able to name popular medicines and point to their unintended side effects. Answers tended to lack detail and exemplification and the overall conclusion was that *Big Pharma* makes huge profits by selling overpriced medicine to sick people. The affordability of insulin was a common example. Only one essay sought to include in its argument healthcare systems in countries other than their own. Better essays highlighted the heavy investment in drug experimentation and trials. Personal family anecdotes related to the care of the elderly and the very young were included to develop points of view in a few essays.

Question 4

To what extent can human societies learn valuable lessons from the natural world?

Interesting answers to this rarely attempted question made the point that human societies are part of the natural world and that there is a codependent relationship between us and other species. A few candidates wrote about the therapeutic benefits of being close to nature while gardening or walking, breathing in fresh air. These candidates often went on to highlight how we, as a species, are destroying the deep-down

freshness of things by subjecting the environment to plastic and chemical pollution. The harmful effects on marine life were often cited as were the effects of deforestation on animals and insects of all kinds. A few essays made the point that we have much to learn from the resilience and adaptability of other species. Enjoyment of the natural world did not feature prominently and that may be a sad commentary on our contemporary experience. One candidate, however, did remark 'my hobby is photography and without the creatures in my backyard, there would be nothing but concrete'. The question was never challenged; all of the respondents agreed that valuable lessons can be learned and none saw 'valuable' in monetary terms. There were no weak responses to this question.

Question 5

With reference to your country, evaluate which environmental issue should have the highest priority.

All the responses to this question demonstrated that careful reading of the question is important. Candidates' own countries were the focus although the most successful answers took account of the global perspective and referred to other environmental issues in order to establish which one should have the highest priority. The most frequently mentioned threats were pollution, deforestation, rising sea levels, acidification in rivers and oceans. Global warming and its effects were often seen as the issue of highest priority because in the words of one candidate 'if left unattended it will quickly lead to the depletion of life on Earth'. There were many appropriate examples: emissions from cars and factories, coral reef bleaching, litter in the cities and plastic in the oceans. Most of the responses were informed and evaluative, showing an awareness of the social, economic and political pressures that contribute to how we care for our environment.

Question 6

To what extent do you agree that people should avoid eating genetically modified foods?

There were only a few responses and many of these misinterpreted the question. Before attempting this or indeed any question, candidates should ask themselves if they really understand what the question is about. A common mistake was framing an answer around fast and processed food. Consequently, addiction to junk food with numerous examples of products seen as harmful to health became the focus of too many essays. There was, however, evidence of some understanding. One candidate suggested a range of health risks associated with GM food and another, the most convincing essay seen, wrote about crop resilience, the prevention of soil degradation, cheaper yields and pesticides being unnecessary in the cultivation of GM crops. There was also reference to GM food being part of the solution to eradicating hunger in the world. All of this was relevant.

Question 7

To what extent is the shortage of housing a problem in cities around the world?

This question was not a popular choice. Nearly all the responses were undeveloped. The advice is to write an essay of 600 – 700 words but several were only 200 – 300 words in length. Candidates struggled to name cities and focused on homelessness which may be a symptom but is not one of the causes of the shortage of housing. The more successful responses showed knowledge of the housing problems in a variety of cities including Tokyo, Chicago, New York, New Delhi and Lagos. These responses identified some of the causes of housing shortage such as developers holding on to land to improve their profit margins and the high cost of existing housing preventing people from securing their own home.

Question 8

To what extent does dance play an important role in the life of your country?

This question was responded to by a few and while use of English was not always secure, the information presented was often fascinating and informative. Essays provided a window into the rich culture of Central and South American countries with dance examples from Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, Brazil and Argentina. The passionately expressed Argentine tango, the Joropo from Venezuela, the Cumbia, a courtship dance from Colombia, Salsa, Samba, and Merengue were among the many dances referred to in these essays. The essays showed how integral to various cultures these dances are in festivals, rituals and everyday enjoyment. Other responses mentioned ballet and one US candidate wrote, 'the dancing in West Side Story shows how different cultures become united in the USA'. Dance was linked to wellbeing, both mental and physical and one candidate wrote that when she dances, she is 'telling a story with her movement'. There was a generally expressed regret that dance rarely features in a school's curriculum.

Question 9

Digital media does more harm than good. Discuss.

It is unsurprising that this question proved to be the most popular of all. Some of the responses were too descriptive but several candidates while demonstrating knowledge of the topic engaged in discussion, debate and evaluation. One thoughtful essay began, 'many people could argue that digital media is detrimental but it could be the beginning of a more sensitive, cultured and intelligent society'. Immediately the reader is alerted to the candidate's nuanced approach. The 'detrimental' aspects which weaker candidates focused on were mentioned in this essay but did not dominate. Instead, this essay, along with others, discussed the positive opportunities provided by digital media. Online friendships, while their dangers were noticed, were often seen as positive because interests can be shared, other cultures can be better understood on a personal level and a broader perspective can be gained of current situations around the world. Occasionally, those essays more concerned with the negative aspects of digital media, were insightful and thought provoking. One candidate provided an evaluative edge to the matter of cyberbullying by writing that 'the perpetrator never sees the victim so it's harder for the bully to empathize or connect'. Many candidates wrote powerfully about the suffering of victims but it was unusual to see a perspective on the topic that recognised how perpetrators are insulated from their behaviour. Other candidates wrote thoughtfully about exposure to unattainable beauty standards creating in the words of one 'an expectation of perfection among women and by extension young girls'. The feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, perhaps leading to anorexia or bulimia, were referred to by several candidates.

Finally, a few candidates welcomed the creative opportunities of digital media through the streaming and posting of music, song and dance. There were many examples of talent being discovered in these ways.

Question 10

Assess the view that the main aim of children's fiction is to encourage a love of reading.

This topic had the potential to appeal to those young people who have 'a love of reading'. Unfortunately, this did not prove to be the case. There were descriptions of books read when very young and general statements about how these books helped to build vocabulary but not of how they sparked an interest in reading. Several essays included only one or two examples. It was encouraging, however, to come across a few essays that demonstrated how early reading had created an interest in fiction that has persisted into teenage years. There were references to the delight in Greek and Norse mythology adapted for younger readers that continued when the candidates came across Harry Potter. One candidate mentioned 'an obsession with the wizarding world that continues to this day and I am now sixteen'. Those candidates who linked their early reading experience to current experience did well. One of these referred to Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' as an 'academic and moral' text that shows the dangers of succumbing to our 'natural instincts of following an alpha leader'. Another candidate referred to Orwell's 'Animal Farm' in the same context. These essays showed that books appeal to the imagination and contain detail and aspects of characterisation that encourage young people to continue reading works of fiction.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/21
Comprehension

Key messages

- In **1(a)**, some candidates showed that they had excellent organisational and analytical skills. These candidates incorporated connectives, conjunctions and linking phrases to good effect, so that their answers were fluent and structured in such a way that the factors offered were signposted clearly as advantages for Mr Daan if he were to employ Davido. For example, 'Furthermore', 'In addition', 'It is also a plus that' and 'Another factor is that' were all seen. Their answers were nuanced, gaining credit by using modal verbs (e.g. 'he may begin studying landscape and garden design', 'it can be inferred that' and 'this could facilitate') and employing words such as 'likely' and 'unlikely' (e.g. 'he is likely to be an enthusiastic worker' and 'quietly determined leadership skills that are unlikely to annoy people and are also effective'). They exhibited a strong command of the language, using expressions such as 'He showed up to the interview wearing formal attire', 'he dressed to impress', 'Davido's appearance may also sway Mr Daan', 'Mr Daan would not have to micromanage him' and 'proving that he thrives in his areas of expertise'. A few responses included informal language (such as 'wanna' and 'gonna'), but many candidates used the correct register (e.g. 'By referring to', 'as indicated by', 'This proves that', 'which suggests', 'which makes his seem' and 'is made evident by'). Most candidates followed the instruction to answer in continuous prose. However, a significant number of responses matched the criteria found in Levels 1 and 2. Responses that were too generalised, too assertive and/or too speculative were seen.
- Unless a question specifically requests a personal opinion or an overall view, it is essential that candidates offer responses that are precise, detailed and based on relevant material from the Insert. Broad generalisations and personalised responses attract little to no credit. It is strongly recommended that candidates keep referring back to both the questions and the material in order to familiarise themselves with the relevant details as much as possible, then include all such details in their responses.
- It is highly recommended that if a question does not instruct the candidate to write a response in their own words or within a certain word limit, candidates copy the relevant wording from the material. Responses in own words to certain questions (for example, **1(c)(i)**, **(ii)**, **(iii)** and **(iv)**, and **2(a)(ii)**) were sometimes not detailed enough to gain credit. The use of the candidate's own words had unnecessarily affected the precision of their responses.
- Many candidates noted the word limits in **2(a)(ii)**, **2(b)(i)** and/or **2(b)(iii)** and adhered to them; however, some candidates wrote more than was permitted. One of the key skills examined on this paper is the ability to compose succinct responses, resulting in responses appearing after the word limit not gaining credit. It is highly recommended that a candidate does not include an introduction, repeat the question and/or start their sentences with, for example, 'Firstly, ...', 'Secondly, ...' or 'Another advantage of this collaboration is ...'. In addition, some candidates offered responses that were not written in complete sentences in order to overcome the restriction of the word count, thereby affecting the credit awarded.
- In **2(b)(ii)** and **2(c)**, some candidates copied words and phrases from the material and placed them in quotation marks. Unfortunately, when responding to questions requiring the use of the candidate's own words, words and phrases that are copied from the material cannot be credited even when the candidate acknowledges and attributes them by placing them in quotation marks. With reference to **2(b)(ii)**, this also applies to a word that is in quotation marks in the material (e.g. 'can').
- It is essential that candidates read the question carefully and respond to the focus required by that question. For example, in **1(a)**, some candidates offered the advantages for Davido himself if he were to be offered the summer job, rather than the factors that might make Mr Daan choose Davido. In **1(b)**, some candidates cited the disadvantages of the job for Davido himself, while a few offered the advantages the job would provide for Davido or Pierre.
- It is important that candidates note the section of material that they have been directed to in the question (e.g. lines 46 to 51 in order to answer **2(b)(ii)** and lines 26 to 31 in order to respond to **2(d)(ii)**).

General comments

- Some candidates did not supply answers to all the sub-questions. It is highly recommended that a candidate attempts every part of a question.
- It is recommended that when candidates are allowed to copy from the material, they copy words carefully. For example, the words '*charismatic*', '*relief*' and '*catalyst*' proved to be difficult words to copy for some candidates.
- It is recommended that candidates write their answers as legibly as possible to ensure that responses can be read in their entirety and gain the most credit.
- It is recommended that candidates indicate clearly if their answer to a question is not in the correct response area for that question. When candidates cannot fit their response into the response area, they are advised to request an additional booklet rather than write in the margins.
- It is not a requirement of the paper that a candidate needs to write a word count at the end of each question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Candidates gaining the most credit exhibited the ability to interpret the evidence offered in the material and read between the lines to show understanding of the factors that might make Mr Daan choose Davido for the summer job. They understood that the most convincing responses are nuanced ones. Candidates gaining high marks gathered pieces of information from across **Section A** and put them together to create three clear and cogent factors. They would offer points that had been developed, whether by explanation, exemplification and/or linking two pieces of information from different places in **Section A**, thereby highlighting the ability to present sustained and relevant analysis of the scenario presented. Examples of well-developed points included the following: 'Davido considers himself a hard worker and this is proven by his reference which said he was hardworking, which would make Mr Daan believe that he could handle a busy department and even work extra days when needed'; 'Davido has applied to a horticultural college to learn landscape and garden design; meaning, if he were to get the job permanently, Davido could apply and suggest ideas about gardens to Mr Daan, which could benefit the garden centre'; 'When Davido showed up late for his interview owing to his father's car not starting, he was very remorseful. The fact that he took a taxi showed his problem-solving skills and ability to take accountability', and 'Davido applied for the job because he loves gardening, and for an employer, an employee who enjoys his job is one that will be likely to do better work and stay at the company longer.' Valid points beyond the mark scheme that were seen included the following: the point that Davido was already an experienced gardener being developed with the explanation that 'Davido might be more familiar with the tools in the shop and could assist customers with gardening issues he has possibly faced before'; the point that he studied Geography A-Level being a relevant factor 'because one of the key factors for maintaining and keeping plants healthy is knowing the history of environments and how to keep plants alive in certain conditions'; and points about his personality (such as his shyness meaning that he might not be confrontational about the low pay; how he showed 'resilience by making an appearance even though his father's car had broken down' and his respectfulness 'which might make him easier to work with'). Many candidates followed the instruction not to refer to Pierre, the other applicant, in their response.

Some candidates could have attained higher marks if they had offered more analysis, rather than simply citing a list of points with little or no development, meaning that their responses were limited to Levels 1 and 2. Some candidates did not note the focus of the question and offered the advantages of the job for Davido (for example, that the knowledge he would gain doing the summer job would help his levels of attainment in college or that Mr Daan would help Davido get more experience and knowledge before the latter goes to college). Some responses were too vague to gain any credit (e.g. 'which is useful/advantageous/perfect/sought after in a job applicant') as there was no explanation as to why this would be the case regarding this particular job. Some were too generalised, meaning they could apply to both applicants (e.g. references to meeting some/several/many of the criteria in the checklist), so they required more detail to be creditworthy.

Some were too speculative, as well as not being focused on the question (e.g. Davido's mother is retiring soon, so Davido will work harder/will need the money to support his mother or he will not have time to do the job). Common misunderstandings included that Davido had already gone to horticultural college (so not noting '*Davido has applied to a horticultural college*'), that he had already received his A-Level grades or that his A-Level grades were good (so not noting '*Awaiting A-Level results*'). Some candidates selected random facts, then cited them in their responses without any development or indication as to how they linked to the question, so that their answer was more of a narrative than an analysis. Weaker responses were also characterised by the repetition of factors, and/or a factor and its development being separated from each other in the answer, thus affecting the clarity and fluency of the response.

- (b) Stronger responses were characterised by candidates being able to interpret the evidence and read between the lines to show that they could clearly communicate three disadvantages if Mr Daan were to choose Davido for the job. Candidates gaining high marks gathered pieces of information from across **Section A** to create disadvantages that had been developed, whether by explanation, by exemplification and/or by linking two pieces of information from different places in **Section A**. In addition, they used nuanced language in their responses. For example, 'He is quite shy, as noted in the Extracts from the interviews as well as his reference; this may make it difficult for him to provide good customer service in the café', 'Davido wants to go to horticultural college to study landscape and garden design. If he gets into that college, then he may not take the permanent job if offered it' and 'Davido does not have a driver's licence and relies on his dad to drop him off, which could result in Davido getting to work late.'

Examples of a good command of English were seen: 'he is dependent on', 'which could be an issue if it were a recurring problem', 'poses the risk of getting to work late in the future' and 'which would make him ineligible to do delivery work for the garden centre'. Many candidates followed the instruction not to refer to Pierre, the other applicant, in their responses.

Some candidates did not note the focus of the question and, instead, offered the advantages of the job for Davido or the disadvantages of the job for Pierre. Some responses were too vague to gain any credit as they lacked the consequence of the disadvantage (e.g. 'communication is important' or 'this could cause problems'). Some responses were confusing: candidates citing a disadvantage being the possibility of Davido going to horticultural college, but linking it to the summer job (rather than the permanent one). Some were too generalised as they could apply to both applicants, so they required more detail to be creditworthy (e.g. 'he doesn't meet all/half of Mr Daan's requirements'). A few responses were too speculative: 'if he had a car accident' (with regard to being late for work), and 'Davido will have to look after his mother' and 'Davido will spend less time gaining experience in the garden' (both relating to his mother retiring). Common misunderstandings seen included the following: some candidates did not note that it was a job for a school leaver, citing the issues of Davido either not having enough experience or being too young to work the hours required. Weaker responses were also characterised by the repetition of disadvantages cited with slightly different wording but having the same meaning.

- (c) In (i) and (ii), many candidates correctly identified the statement that was an exaggeration and the statement that was a lie, quoting the relevant statements in full. However, some candidates omitted key details by, for example, missing out '*regularly*' in (i) and '*today*' in (ii). Some candidates confused the lie and the exaggeration. Some candidates offered statements such as '*I'm a motivated self-starter*'. Many candidates gained credit in (iii), recognising the fact that Sonja had not mentioned to Mr Daan that she and Pierre's mother were friends. However, a few candidates offered answers in their own words that were too vague (e.g. 'Sonja knows information about Pierre'). In (iv), some candidates recognised that the fact that Davido's mother retiring soon was the least relevant point. However, some candidates cited a point that they subsequently used in a response to 1(d) or 1(e), such as Additional Information Points 1 or 4, so, in reality, not the least relevant.
- (d) In (i), insightful responses regarding his father being a motivational speaker and/or how Pierre was regarded by his peers at school were noted: 'his father might have inspired him and influenced the way he talks', 'which most likely boosted his ego', 'he learnt a lot about self-motivation' and 'making Pierre think too highly of himself'. Misunderstandings seen included that Pierre was still a candidate, that he was so confident because he knew Sonja (the reason why he would be confident about getting the job, rather than why he was so confident talking about himself) and that he had to present the best version of himself to make a good impression. In (ii), many candidates noted that Mr Poole had had no contact with Pierre for the year since he had left school,

developing the point with, for example, 'other job experiences would be a plus point, but slacking off at home might be a red flag' or 'apparently, he decided not to occupy himself with studies, hence the question'. A few candidates gained credit by linking the reference to challenging behaviour at school with Mr Daan needing to find out if his behavioural issues had improved over the past year. Misunderstandings included the following: it was Mr Poole's fault that there had been no contact, and references to Pierre lying (as Mr Daan did not know he was lying).

- (e) Apart from references to not being up to the required standard, creditworthy responses referred to the school leavers perhaps only wanting a summer job to fill up time or earn some money before going off to college, which potentially affected the quality of their work. A few thought that the previous successful applicants might have been offered the permanent job, but refused it, especially considering the remuneration involved. Weaker responses were characterised by candidates not noting that it was a job aimed at school leavers and citing that they were too young or too inexperienced. A few candidates referred to Davido and Pierre rather than explaining why nobody had yet been employed permanently.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) In (i), candidates gaining credit quoted the two qualities in full from the material. However, some candidates offered '*status*' instead of '*status quo*' (different meaning) or did not include '*in their stride*' (so too vague a response). In addition, other responses were too vague as candidates used their own words and omitted key ideas.

In (ii), candidates offering the relevant advantages in complete sentences and including the essential details scored well. Weaker responses were characterised by candidates writing out the question or structuring their response with, for example, 'Firstly' or 'Another advantage of the collaboration', so using up the word count without gaining any credit. Some responses were too vague, for example, 'talking about equality' and 'to reject stereotypes'. A few candidates referred to the magazine creating these advantages for young girls, whilst some candidates did not summarise the advantages cited in lines 6 to 15, preferring to give their own personal opinions on female equality.

In (iii), many candidates correctly identified one of the two female explorers who had not yet achieved an 'exploration' first. However, some candidates cited Jada Yuan, as they did not understand '*inaugural*', or Namira Salim, as they did not note the four examples of her 'exploration' firsts in the material.

- (b) In (i), candidates gaining credit noted the key details in lines 17 to 22 and offered two benefits in complete sentences within the word count.

Some candidates' responses, though, were too vague (e.g. offering 'Namira Salim advocates for peace', omitting the fact that Namira was the founder of Space Trust or neglecting to mention that Space Trust promotes global peace in space). Some candidates made reference to her achievements as an explorer, despite the question including the phrase 'when not exploring'.

In (ii), candidates gaining credit most often cited that Azar had 'created' a podcast or that she 'was the founder/creator of a podcast' for '*Azar started a podcast*'. Other points successfully communicated in a candidate's own words included the following: 'show that girls are just as capable of participating in frightening activities' for '*girls could do scary things too*', 'the purpose of the podcast was to instil in their minds that they are capable of anything' for '*The podcast is all about exposing young girls to the idea of "can"*', and that 'she was worried' or 'it was troubling for her' for '*she was concerned*'.

The phrases most commonly lifted from the material were 'started a podcast', 'the idea came about', 'felt that her story had shown them that girls could do scary things too', 'they already felt that they couldn't do something' and 'all about exposing young girls to the idea of "can"'. Some candidates did answer using their own words, but did not gain credit for the content of their responses as they were too vague (e.g. 'she made a podcast' or 'she had a podcast'). Common misunderstandings seen included the following: a few candidates confused her podcast with when she shared her experience with her sister's classmates (so confused bullet points 4, 5 and 9 in the mark scheme), thought that the sisters climbed Everest together, thought that the classmates had

climbed Everest with her, or did not note the line references and included information about Alyssa's early life. Some responses did not focus on the material but offered generalised comments or personal opinions on the issues facing young girls.

In (iii), candidates gaining credit offered responses incorporating concisely all the key ideas in complete sentences (e.g. 'She developed a foundation to help educate women in Nepal, thus giving them freedom in their careers').

Some responses were too vague (e.g. 'She inspires' for the idea of 'She supports' in bullet point 3 in the mark scheme). Some candidates made reference to her achievements as an explorer, despite the question including the phrase 'when not exploring'.

- (c) Most candidates gaining credit successfully recast '*She respects*' by using such synonyms as 'She admires', 'She is inspired by' and 'She appreciates'. Some candidates offered suitable synonyms for the second bullet point in the mark scheme: 'for their achievements as they had no access to modern technology' and 'their ability to achieve so much with so little'.

The phrases most commonly lifted were '*She respects*', '*were able to accomplish*' and '*despite their limited means*'. Some candidates thought that '*old*' was a reference to the explorers' age, so they offered responses about their infirmity because of their advanced years.

- (d) Responses gaining credit noted the instruction to identify the exact word in the material and quoted only the relevant word that had exactly the same meaning, so, for example, offered '*globetrotters*' in (i) rather than '*globetrotters by nature*' (which was not creditworthy); '*groundbreaking*' in (iv) rather than '*groundbreaking trips*' and '*sovereign*' in (v) rather than '*sovereign nation*'. Some candidates quoted the whole sentence in which the word was located. Some candidates misread the question and offered their own definitions of the word, gave instances from the material that they thought exemplified the word (e.g. '*After watching the movie, Svensson knew she had to start climbing*' in (ii)), cited antonyms (e.g. 'conquered' for '*sovereign*') or offered a word that did not appear in the material. Some candidates did not note the grammatical form of the word and offered '*embark*' or '*stride*' in (i), '*extraordinary*' in (ii) and '*traverse*' or '*accolades*' in (iv). However, apart from (iv) appearing to be difficult for candidates, many did score well on this question as a whole.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/22
Comprehension

Key messages

Candidates must ensure that they take sufficient time to read all the questions, and the material, carefully before they commence writing. It is especially important to establish clearly what is required to gain maximum marks in any question or sub-question. Candidates should identify:

- The number of points or ideas they should offer; this may be specified in the question stem (e.g. **1(b)** (three points explained, for six marks), **1(d)(i)**, **2(c)(i) – (iii)** and **2(e)(i)** and **(ii)**), or be implied by the number of marks available (**1(c)(i)**).
- Whether the question requires valid points simply to be located and identified (most of **Section B**), or explained and developed (e.g. **1(a)** and **1(b)**).
- Whether any word limit is imposed; if so, the response needs to be succinct, yet precise, in conveying the meaning of the necessary points (**2(b)(i)** and **(ii)** and **2(e)(i)** and **(ii)**).
- Whether it is permissible to use the same terms found in the material, or whether ideas should be communicated mainly in candidates' own words (**2(d)(i)** and **(ii)**).
- Any line numbers given (e.g. **2(c)(i) – 2(c)(iii)**), or clues in the wording of the question (**Section B**), which assist in the location of the correct responses from the material.
- Whether a question requires interpretation or wider thought, i.e. the answer is not directly to be found in the material (e.g. **1(d)(i)** and **(ii)**).

General comments

In general, candidates demonstrated good levels of understanding of the material in both **Sections A** and **B**. In **Section A**, most candidates found plenty to write in the extended responses (**1(a)** especially, but also **1(b)** and **1(c)(i)**). Blank response areas were uncommon, and relatively few scripts scored very low total marks.

While spelling and grammatical errors were in evidence, even in words copied from the material, the vast majority of candidates demonstrated the ability to communicate points clearly in written English, and to organise their work in the answer spaces provided. Most also offered an appropriate number of points relative to the available marks for the question.

There were, nevertheless, errors made in locating and supplying the required points from the material with sufficient focus, detail and precision, especially in **Section B**. Similarly, the particular requirements of some of the questions in the reading comprehension were not always adhered to strictly, such as word counts and use of own words.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Good levels of engagement and understanding were demonstrated in the logical reasoning section of the examination, the context being that of a successful blogger being approached by two publishing companies with a view to making a book. Most candidates were able to provide a number of suggestions in their responses to the higher-tariff **Questions (1a, 1b and 1(c)(i))**. The differentiation in candidates' marks came from the degree to which they were able to make logical connections across different parts of the material and/or explain the significance of selected points (**1(a)** and **1(b)**), and to offer evidence in support of their statements, such as in **1(c)(i)** and **1(c)(ii)**.

- (a) Questions such as **1(a)** (and **1(b)**) assess the skills of comprehension, logic and, most importantly, the ability to make connections across different parts of the material. Listing relevant pieces of information, with no analysis, would gain a mark no higher than in the lower part of Level 2, therefore. To form a developed point, candidates need to explain or make a link between distinct elements presented to them and retain a clear focus on the question set; in this case, the factors which might make Sandro choose Tomasei Publishing. A number of candidates made a great deal of the fact that Tomasei Publishing was located in Flindis. When connected to this also being Sandro's home or his love for his country, a simple explanation could be credited. Desiring to support a local business was a stronger development. Similarly, the idea of gaining popularity in the local area had some validity, but even reaching all the 15 million people in Flindis would not logically be an advantage, when compared with Limoni Books' global reach. Contact and networking opportunities with popular local authors was, however, a more plausible reason. Another successful angle was: 'As Tomasei Publishing is the sole publishing company in Flindis, Sandro may already know of them and trust the name.' However, it was surely over-stating matters to rely so heavily, as some responses did, on all the links to Flindis being the reason why an aspiring author would select this company, especially for reasons of convenience, given the 'online meetings' initially held. Several candidates attempted to link Sandro's local charity work with the location of Tomasei Publishing, usually without conviction.

Another popular piece of information selected was that Tomasei Publishing would permit Sandro to have 'full editorial control over the content of his book' (Additional Information point 7). Again, convincing developments were relatively rare, perhaps understandably, given his inexperience. However, some candidates perceptively suggested that this would enable Sandro to retain the authenticity of style and content that had helped his blog to go 'viral' and become 'an internet sensation' (Situation). This was very good use of the material. An example included: '...as an editor would probably restrict his style rather than improve it, and the major part of his popularity comes from his unique style of story-telling'. Other explanations included that Sandro would feel a greater sense of ownership and achievement if making decisions over style and content, especially for his first book, or because the subject matter involved his own pets and daily life.

Some candidates sensibly noted, from the information given in the pie charts, that 'modern fiction' constituted the largest share of Tomasei Publishing's work, but relatively few were able to explain why this would suit Sandro. More detail relating to the nature of his work was needed for full credit to be awarded. Similarly, occasional candidates mentioned that Sandro's contact was direct with the head of the company/the daughter of its founder, but very few managed to extend or explain the point.

In addition, detail and nuance are vital. It was illogical to cite the company's stable of 500 authors, since it constituted only 10 per cent of the number represented by Limoni Books. However, some candidates themselves aptly used nuance to suggest that the smaller number ('only 500') meant Sandro would be more likely to gain attention when required, or that he would feel less overwhelmed. Indeed, many candidates simply copied out the turnover and author numbers (Additional Information point 12), not recognising that neither constituted a logical advantage of Tomasei Publishing, in comparison with Limoni Books. Similarly, their having been in business for 10 years did not compare favourably with Limoni Books' near-century of operations. The advance on offer (\$25, 000) was half that proposed by Limoni Books, so attempts to explain this as an advantage, in terms of Sandro's potential flat purchase, were also illogical here (see **1(b)**).

General or vague points common to both companies could not gain credit as advantages of choosing Tomasei Publishing. (This applies also to **1(b)**, in reverse.) An example includes that Sandro had been approached by Emilia, since the same was also true of Zio. Relatively few candidates picked up on the DM details here, such as the fact that Emilia's is enthusiastic ('Adore... brilliant... Love to work with you') and makes reference to specific elements of Sandro's blog (the dogs' names and his 'relating adventures from their point of view'), showing she has read and enjoyed it. Such an approach would surely flatter and encourage Sandro. Similarly, Emilia's use, in the online meeting, of the same terminology found in Sandro's blog ('Tig and Tag's "human"') was rarely mentioned. A number of responses did connect Emilia's dog ownership with Sandro, as a potential means of establishing common ground, but this sometimes led to fanciful speculations about the three dogs playing together, or Emilia 'dog-sitting' while Sandro wrote his book. There was appealing use too, in at least one response, of the term 'dog parent'. An example of a developed point here was: 'In her DM and talk, Emilia expressed her adoration for dogs,

something which would resonate with animal-loving blogger Sandro who writes about his interactions with his own pets. This may (nuanced) incline him towards Tomasei Publishing.'

Many candidates did elicit the fact that Tomasei Publishing was offering more overt individual support of its authors, gleaned from Emilia's claim quoted in the Background information. Few responses were able to do much more than reproduce this, although it was occasionally linked to Emilia's friendly demeanour, by way of evidence. A good example of a development of this point was: 'Tomasei Publishing's obvious awareness of the competition may provide Sandro with sufficient assurance that they will put in their best efforts for him.'

The vast majority of candidates observed the rubric instruction to write in continuous prose and not to refer to Limoni Books. Occasionally, the latter requirement was ignored, and direct comparisons offered, for example between the approaches of Emilia and Zio. Some candidates, perhaps aware of the requirement for balance in previous sessions, offered a disadvantage. This was irrelevant on this occasion. A final issue, most often seen with Emilia's attitude and approach, was to recycle similar ideas and present them as development. These included that she was warm, friendly, welcoming, kind, supportive, and that Sandro was comfortable talking to her, and similar. One successful and well-phrased example, however, was: 'Emilia, the head of Tomasei Publishing, was very friendly and welcoming both in her DM and in the meeting. She went out of her way to reassure him of her support, thus making Sandro likely to gravitate towards working with this outfit.'

- (b) The majority of responses featured three factors which might influence Sandro to choose Limoni Books, but the explanations varied in accuracy and conviction, with some overlap and conflation of ideas relating to sales, international reach, reputation, influence and similar. Most successful answers were able to connect the more generous advance (\$50,000) with the \$70,000 required for Sandro to achieve his dream of purchasing his own flat in Flindis (Additional Information points 5 and 1 respectively) or with the implications of 'the arrival of several huge bills at once', mentioned in the blog extract. The references to turnover and author numbers, while clearly an advantage of working with Limoni Books, proved more difficult to link to Sandro, since the benefit was more likely to be indirect. Some attempted developments merely repeated the evidence or point offered, such as 'serving many millions of readers worldwide' being restated in terms of the firm's reach, rather than the likely impact on sales or potential international acclaim *for Sandro*, which were creditworthy explanations. A nicely-phrased example (explaining the international offices and global readership, and Limoni Books' longer years of experience, respectively) included: 'This would enable Sandro to tap into the international market and reach out to a much broader audience... The company knows all the tricks of the trade.'

Some responses were too vague to reward (large advance, bills to pay, successful/experienced company) and needed the precision of 'larger advance' or the actual amount involved, the fact that Sandro is struggling to pay the 'huge bills', and that the company has been in operation for nearly a century/has been established for longer, respectively. Where the royalty figure of 10 per cent was mentioned, this was true of both offers (Additional Information point 5), so needed to be explained in the context of the company's wider/global reach, bigger turnover and excellent sales and marketing strategy. The 10 per cent would most likely be applied to greater sales and thus generate larger sums, hence would be (much) more valuable to Sandro.

Misunderstandings, or lapses of logic, occurred when candidates attempted to include the *requirement* for Sandro to work with a script editor, with the nuance of this being imposed by Limoni Books often missed. However, it was possible to gain some credit for the explanation, if mentioning how this might benefit an inexperienced author working on his first book, for example by improving the quality of the outcome or making the book more culturally sensitive or appealing, or more commercially viable.

As with **1(a)**, there were also points which were too vague to credit, since they might well have been true of both companies, such as 'offering guidance'. There was also similar misuse of the pie charts, with a number of candidates seeing Limoni Books' largest interest being in non-fiction as an advantage. While Sandro's dogs, Tig and Tag, exist, their ability to voice their thoughts and adventures in a blog or book is necessarily fictional. Similarly, the wider range of book styles offered by Limoni Books was unconvincing, especially when candidates mentioned genres such as 'crime', or suggested this would offer him a free choice of styles.

A final point common to both **1(a)** and **1(b)** is that ideas found in the same part of the material do not count as being developed when simply presented together. They need separate comments or

connections with other parts of the material to constitute explanation. An example from **1(b)** includes the first two lines of the Background information for Limoni Books: 'It has been at the forefront of international publishing for nearly a century, with offices across four continents and its publications serving millions of readers worldwide.' There were, potentially, four angles worthy of explanation here (reputation, longevity, international range and reach/popularity). As mentioned above, there needed to be a link to Sandro's potential reach, sales, popularity or profit, to develop each idea.

- (c) (i)** Most candidates were able to attempt some inference regarding Zio's character. The best responses were able to connect characteristics with evidence found in the DM and/or his talk with Sandro, such as the wearing of a suit for an online meeting demonstrating formality, and his 'devious smile' appearing when Zio learned that Sandro had limited business experience and was confused by the jargon and terms employed. Zio's suggestion, that he then go away and rewrite the outline, was taken as evidence of his intention to manipulate and exploit Sandro's naïveté. Examples of this point: 'This hints that he preys on naïve authors and exploits them for the company's profit.'/'Zio tries to commodify people rather than humanise them.' Less successful attempts to use this same part of the material, however, incorrectly inferred that Zio was kind and patient, taking the time to redraft and explain the terminology more clearly to a beginner.

The most common points credited included Zio's serious and formal tone and modes of dress/address, his business-like approach and desire to waste no time, his lack of overt interest in the specifics of Sandro's project or Sandro as a person, and his intimidating nature. There was also reference to his somewhat arrogant expectation that Sandro would jump at the chance to accept Limoni Books' offer, in his DM, and that Sandro would be free again later to come back to discuss the revised outline, in the talk.

Some candidates made direct contrasts with Emilia's tone and approach, which was not an acceptable approach. Others tended to recycle similar ideas in different words, and only gained credit for each iteration of a concept. Most commonly, these included single-word characteristics, such as serious/professional/formal, ideas relating to Zio's straight-to-business approach (frequently miscommunicated as 'straightforward', which does not align with 'devious')/wasting no time/talking immediately about the contract, or the DM being standard, almost templated/showing no specific reference to Sandro/being cold and impersonal.

- (ii)** Most candidates were able to infer some aspects of Sandro's character from the Additional Information. There was an occasional tendency to list perceived characteristics, such as 'kind, caring and generous', whereas better responses linked these to evidence. Examples of connected points, each worth two marks, include: 'Sandro is patient because he demonstrates the necessary skills to be good at his job looking after the elderly people in the care home.'/'Sandro is kind-hearted because his two dogs were found in the local dog rescue and rehoming centre.'/'Sandro is a generous man because he regularly raises money for charities in Flindis.'

Misunderstandings were occasionally evident, such as 'his local dog rescue and rehoming centre' being taken to mean that Sandro owned or ran it, or vaguer claims relating to his charity work, such as his donating a lot of money, or 'does charity'. Some credit could be given for inferences relating to ambition, in Sandro's desire for flat ownership, whereas the concept of his 'patriotism' was deemed to be overstated, from the throwaway comment 'his beloved Flindis' in Additional Information point 8.

- (d) (i)** Most candidates were able to offer at least one relevant idea here, with many gaining both available marks. Answers could be framed either from the perspective of hard-copy books or digital formats, or both. The most common correct responses related to breaks from screen time; the impact on the eyes of blue light from screens; nostalgia and tradition; the physical appearance and appeal of books/collections on a shelf; tangible effects such as the smell and feel of pages; the ability to make notes and comments; accessibility/reliance on power or internet access; the cost of devices, and the emotional aspect of gifting a book, possibly with an inscription inside. Notable creditworthy examples included: 'Some people like to flaunt their literary tastes by displaying their library.'/'Candidates cannot write any comments in the margin of an e-book.'/'They may wish to get the book signed by the author.'/'When looking for a book in a bookstore, people might discover more interesting books while browsing.'

Responses which were not creditworthy tended to be vague, to restate the question or to make a point which might have been true of either format, such as general ideas about cost, access, portability, durability, benefit to authors, or personal preference.

- (ii) The majority of candidates offered a considered response to this question and provided some sense of the meaning of the quotation, for the single available mark. It was possible to interpret the concept either literally or more figuratively. Occasional responses were too vague to credit, or merely restated the question terms relating to reading and freedom, adding nothing new. Popular ideas included imagination and escape into different worlds; acquisition of knowledge about a wide range of subjects; freedom from ignorance and exploitation, and the ability to form viewpoints independently. Noteworthy examples included: 'Information is stored with words and reading is understanding those words, so once you learn how to read, knowledge is boundless so long as you seek it.'/'Reading liberates us forever from the shackles of illiteracy and ignorance.'/'Books have the power to take the reader to imaginary places where they have absolute freedom to be whatever they want.'/'It may mean that once you learn how to read, you can read books and travel through endless times and perspectives. You are not chained to a single point in time in a single perspective, and in a single place.'

Section B

Question 2

In general, the subject matter of the material in the reading comprehension proved accessible. This comprised the contrasting but complimentary focuses of the 'paratransit' transport system prevalent in many African cities and carpooling versus single-occupancy vehicles in other major world cities. Both sections focused on the impact and lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic transport restrictions. There were occasional misunderstandings of some parts of the material (please see question-specific comments below). However, where (full) marks could not be awarded, this more often resulted from a lack of precision or detail in the responses offered and/or insufficient focus on the question rubrics. Candidates almost always, and as a cohort, scored fewer marks in **Section B** than in **Section A**.

- (a) (i) The vast majority of candidates identified the correct response here. Those who chose to render the answer in their own words risked losing the precision of the original, for example by changing 'the semi-official paratransit sector' to the much less precise 'vehicles' or 'public transport'. The most common reason for candidates not gaining the single available mark, however, was missing the crucial element 'temporarily'. As such, candidates tended to be less successful in responding to 2(a)(i) than to 2(a)(ii).
- (ii) Most candidates correctly identified the opportunity 'to reform the paratransit sector'. Some successful re-working of the term 'reform' could be credited, such as 'improve' or 'upgrade'. Many candidates also included the second possible creditworthy response, regarding making the sector 'more efficient, reliable and customer-friendly'. Where the mark was not gained, this tended to occur because the comparative element was missed, or a candidate's use of own words had lost the precision or the sense of the original. In these opening questions, where there is no requirement for summary skills or use of own words, candidates are advised to copy their chosen information directly from the material, in order to retain the same precision.
- (b) (i) In this question, and indeed in all four of the 'word count' **Questions (2(b)(i), 2(b)(ii), 2(e)(i) and 2(e)(ii))** this session), the requirement was to answer 'in about 20 words', for two marks in each case. Aside from imprecision in conveying the points sought, the most common reasons for not gaining (both available) marks were exceeding the word limit imposed and/or not writing in complete sentences. The former most often occurred when candidates wrote an introduction, such as repeating the question stem. (In this question, for example, beginning with 'The paratransit sector is important because...' uses up 6 of the 20 words permitted – 30 per cent of the total – but gains no marks.) The use of incomplete sentences, on the other hand, is simply not in the spirit of questions specifically testing summary skills.

Most candidates had some idea of the paratransit sector being a means of delivering people to their places of employment, though the shorter 'workplaces' was clearly preferable to 'places of work' in a summary question. What was sometimes missing, however, was the notion of 'essential'. Since 'so important' was in the question, this was insufficient to credit the idea of the sector as 'vital' or 'crucial'. Some candidates managed to conflate the idea of 'reliance' for journeys from home to work with the later idea regarding distance, since both elements included places of

work/employment. An example includes: 'The sector provides an essential link between homes and workplaces too far away to reach on foot.' (17 words, written as a full sentence, so worthy of 2 marks.) A successful way to convey the idea of 'the poorer residents of a city, who cannot afford cars' (10 words) more succinctly was to conflate the two elements into 'those unable to afford cars' (5 words). The sense of 'place of employment may be too far to access on foot' was often rendered with insufficient precision, with words such as 'inaccessible' potentially suggesting issues regarding difficult terrain, rather than distance. A better example here included 'workplaces too far to walk to'. A good example of all three valid points (maximum of two marks available) being conveyed in a single sentence within the word limit was: 'People too poor to afford cars rely on it to reach workplaces too far away from home to walk to.'

- (ii) Further to the comments in **2(b)(i)** (above) relating generally to summary questions, most candidates managed to convey the concept of 'better regulation'. Some also communicated the idea of 'providers required to apply for and obtain an operating licence', although some omitted the 'apply for' and others only reached 'operating licence' after the word limit. There were also occasional incorrect references to 'driving licences'. Very few candidates offered the necessary precision relating to vehicle registration in the sector, namely that the example related solely to the government in Kampala. This idea came second in the material, among the three creditworthy responses. Along with the tendency to introduce the answer by means of the wordy 'Governments will reform the sector...' (5 words, so 25 per cent of the permitted words used, but for no credit), this explained why so many responses ran out of words before the 'operating licence' point had been completed. As such, candidates performed better in response to **2(b)(i)** than to **2(b)(ii)**.

- (c) (i) Precision and focus were essential here, as in most parts of the reading comprehension. Many candidates were able to identify the benefits of ride-hailing apps in terms of 'the formalisation and management of the industry' and 'registering vehicles and deciding routes'. Occasionally, one or other of the two elements was omitted, however, especially in the second of these pairings. Additionally, unnecessary attempts to re-work the ideas in their own words sometimes led to loss of precision, especially with 'formalisation'. It was also necessary to recognise that the 'connection' mentioned was between 'customers' and 'riders and drivers', rather than between 'riders and drivers', and that its key benefit was that it would occur 'contactlessly'. Once again, synonyms for 'contactless(ly)' frequently proved inaccurate ('easily', for instance).

Erroneous responses tended to miss the nuance of the original when presenting the points as advantages. The two main examples were the 'GPS-enabled smart meters' to enable boda-boda drivers 'to find their customers and determine their fares' and customers paying 'using their smartphones'. In both cases, these measures had been, or were set to be, compulsorily introduced ('regulations that require all...' and 'will have to pay using...' respectively). The imposition of these measures suggested that they would not necessarily be considered universally advantageous. To gain credit for the GPS angle, there needed to be a recognition that such a system had already been used with success in Kigali, for example. This approach was very rarely seen, however.

- (ii) A number of candidates offered responses here which were correct for **2(c)(iii)**, rather than **2(c)(ii)**. The focus here was on disadvantages for customers (already) 'using the technology', rather than wider implications for the industry. The sole correct answer was 'they will *have to* pay using their smartphones', i.e. this being a requirement. Perhaps because they had erroneously mentioned this aspect as an advantage in **2(c)(i)** (see comments above), candidates did not repeat the idea here, where it was the far more logical answer. Some candidates missed the prompt 'Identify...' and the line references given, which made it clear that the answer was to be found in the material. Instead, they provided their own suggestions, relating to such issues as fraud, technical malfunction, lack of access to the technology, and similar. These could not be credited.
- (iii) Guided by the line references at the start of **2c**, and the rubric term 'Identify...', most candidates selected the correct parts of the information from the material. However, they did not always convey their chosen points with the necessary level of detail. When there is no limit imposed on the number of words to use, nor any requirement to respond using mainly one's own words, it makes sense for candidates to copy the relevant information. Most candidates were credited with the point about higher fares/prices, the comparative being essential here. Those making reference to the '15 per cent fare increase', however, tended to miss the point that this was a specific example, from the context of Accra, in Ghana, rather than a more generally applicable figure. While many candidates offered the idea that 'vehicles cannot operate to full capacity', this on its own was not necessarily a disadvantage, since it implied more space available to each passenger or greater

safety. The concept of the fare increases being imposed 'to compensate' for this eventuality was essential in conveying the disadvantage.

It was relatively rare for candidates to pick up on either the idea of the price increase being 'fully passed on to consumers' or this being 'likely... (to) be the case with other reforms, too'. There were several attempts to convey the notion of fears over suppression of the/this industry/the paratransit sector. Some candidates broadened this too much, to '(any/some) industries' but this could gain credit if followed by one of the elements of the following mark scheme point: the various positive features of the sector. Since it came first in the list, the reference to 'employment' was most commonly the one which secured the former mark. Very few candidates offered all four elements to gain the mark for that final creditworthy point listed on the mark scheme, however.

- (d)(i) The most important instruction here, and in **2(d)(ii)**, was 'using your own words as far as possible'. While certain terms (e.g. vehicles, roads, seats, cars and people) are difficult to rephrase and have no obvious synonyms, copying the relevant points mostly or entirely as they appear in the material will not be a successful strategy in such questions. Most candidates who scored a mark here did so for conveying the sense of there being fewer vehicles in circulation/decreased traffic, if too often by substituting 'the number of' with the ungrammatical 'the amount of' or using 'less' for 'fewer' before the plural noun. It is acceptable to form a noun from a verb, and similar, in 'own words' responses, hence 'reduction' was acceptable. Occasional responses also managed to convey the notion of traffic jams (for 'congestion') being less frequent, or lower prices/fares (for 'with 20 per cent of the... cost'). Very few successful renderings of 'pollution' were seen. Most attempts were too vague, with references to 'the environment' more broadly. Those who referred to 'lower emissions' gained the mark, however. Similarly, there were few successful attempts at the ideas of 'filling all five seats' or transporting 'the same number of people' by carpooling. Occasional responses managed terms such as 'maximum capacity'.

Some candidates also selected information which did not answer this question, including some of the details which were relevant in **2(d)(ii)**. There was also some inaccurate calculation evident when candidates rephrased the idea of 'with 20 per cent of...', i.e. there would be only 20 per cent of the original remaining. Some alternatives implied that this was the proportion removed (80 per cent left). Successful attempts included 'with one fifth of'. Examples of succinct three-mark responses: 'Using a five-seater car to its maximum capacity (1) allows it to carry those passengers for one-fifth of the expense (1) and with fewer traffic jams (1).'/ 'Carpooling will limit the traffic on the streets (1). By using a vehicle at its maximum occupancy (1), it is possible for... people to travel with just a fifth of the traffic (REP) and price (1).'

- (ii) Once again, although words such as 'cars', 'roads', 'cities' (and city names), 'restaurants' and 'car parks' have few obvious synonyms and therefore could be taken from the material and used in the response, it was important that other terms be rendered mostly in candidates' own words. A number of candidates copied words and phrases including 'daily driven', 'as much as 60 per cent', 'globally', 'compared to', 'remaining', 'flowing freely', 'such as', 'built', 'changes', 'pedestrianising', 'creating', 'bike lanes' and '(even) opening'. Since it was acceptable to copy 'restaurants' and 'car parks', this was often the only creditworthy point which could be awarded, as long as candidates supplied an alternative to 'built', 'creating' or 'opening' to demonstrate the idea of 'setting up', 'introduced' or 'established', for example.

It should have been quite straightforward to convey '(saw) daily driven kilometres reduce' as 'distance travelled every day decreased', or 'by as much as 60 per cent' as 'dramatically' or 'significantly'. (Good examples here included 'plunged' and 'plummeted'.) Successful synonyms for 'globally' included 'worldwide' and 'in the major cities of the world'. The idea of 'remaining cars on the road flowing freely' was suggested by 'other cars travelled without traffic jams' or 'with the leftover cars moving along the roads with negligible traffic', for example. Very few candidates successfully rendered the notion of 'pedestrianising streets', in the sense of roads being closed to vehicular traffic. Most attempts at this point either reused the same terms or merely offered 'footpaths' and similar, which is not quite the same. Similarly, the concept of dedicated 'bike lanes' did not appear to have been universally understood.

Some candidates also selected information which did not answer this question, but which should have appeared in **2(d)(i)**, such as the impact on pollution levels. There was also a tendency to repeat the comparative, rather than the superlative, relating to traffic and congestion. There was some inaccurate calculation in attempts to rephrase the idea of 'saw... reduce by as much as 60 per cent', such as suggesting that the distance remained at 60 per cent of what it had been

previously. More successful efforts included 'almost two thirds' and 'well over half'. Although more creditworthy points were available for the three marks, candidates tended to be less successful in **2(d)(ii)** than in **2(d)(i)**.

- (e) (i) Further to the comments offered in **2(b)(i)** (above) relating to all four word-limited questions, the most commonly conveyed points related to the increased demand for cars/SOVs and the avoidance of public transport. These seemed to be relatively straightforward to communicate with sufficient precision in one or more full sentences within 20 words. Indeed, of the four such questions, candidates tended to be most successful in this one. Fewer candidates attempted the perhaps more obviously verbose idea that 'a future of efficient transport systems could now be further away than we had originally hoped'. The idea of reliance on – rather than mere popularity or frequent use of – SOVs was often missed. The two remaining valid points within the line references, regarding financial pressures faced by public-transportation networks and the Covid-induced requirement to recommend carpooling with just a single passenger, were often completely eschewed. A good example of a sentence which included three valid points (for a two-mark question) well within the permissible number of words was: 'Demand for cars increased (1) because people refused to take public transportation (1), placing the public-transport networks under financial pressure (1).'
- (ii) As well as the observations made regarding **2(b)(i)** (above) and summary questions more generally, the main omission which denied marks here was the detail relating to *whose* measures to encourage ride-sharing were being proposed, i.e. missing reference to 'local authorities' and/or 'governments'. Only one reference was needed for each set of valid points, however, in the interests of brevity. There were also lapses of precision relating to the comparative 'stronger incentives'. Two of the 'local authorities'-related measures proposed 'increasing' and 'expanding', i.e. the schemes (congestion charges and reserved lanes for high-occupancy vehicles) existing? already. Therefore, suggestions that these should be 'introduced' were clearly inaccurate. Even in a summary question, 'expanding schemes' alone was too brief and vague to gain credit. With the two related government-based measures, which could easily be conflated to fit within 20 words, there was fairly frequent misunderstanding of 'tax incentives', with some candidates presuming, illogically, that taxes would be levied or raised in such cases. This would hardly be an incentive for increased carpooling.
- (f) (i) While the line numbers provided in the question stem directed candidates to the right answer, many responses quoted too much of the material and thereby lost the precision sought for credit. The correct answer '(with) reduced political pain' was sometimes included as part of a longer phrase, usually 'to start reforming the sector with reduced political pain' but sometimes with the whole section starting 'A major barrier to reform...' While candidates seemed to find both parts of **2(f)** challenging, they were slightly more successful with **2(f)(i)** than **2(f)(ii)**.
- (ii) As with **2(f)(i)**, the most common reason for the mark not being gained was a lack of discernment by candidates regarding how much of the material to reproduce in their responses. With both **2(f)(i)** and **2(f)(ii)**, it was rare for answers to be discounted due to 'run-ons', since both correct phrases fell at the ends of sentences in the material. However, it was very common for candidates to quote the entire sentence beginning 'Regardless of how many roads...' Minor misspellings were tolerated, for example of 'transportation' or 'habits', but clearly it is better when the correct phrase is copied accurately: '(we) cannot "pave" our way to better transportation habits'. A reasonably common incorrect answer here was 'the broken transportation systems (that we rely on)'.

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8021/23
Comprehension

Key messages

- It is essential that candidates read the question carefully and note the required focus for each question. For example, in **1(a)**, candidates needed to focus on the advantages for Nicoletta only. In **1(b)**, **(c)** and **(d)** it was important to note which of the three friends was the focus of the question as well as only focusing on the advantages or disadvantages, as stated in the question.
- In **Section A**, there were frequent instructions asking candidates not to refer to Footpath Focus or Total Tartaruga. Candidates who did not follow these instructions were unable to gain credit for their responses. Furthermore in **1(f)**, candidates were asked to not repeat material from **Section A**. Candidates offering responses referring to conservation, litter picking, or a long-lasting impact were unable to gain credit.
- Where candidates are instructed to answer using their own words, it is essential to avoid using the words in the original text. It is unlikely that words from the original material will gain credit, however technical vocabulary is occasionally allowed.
- In word count questions, **2(b)**, **2(c)** and **2(e)(i)** candidates must note the word count and provide succinct responses. Unfortunately, responses appearing after the word limit will not gain credit. Candidates are advised to avoid an introduction or repeating the question in their answer.
- In **Question 2(a)(i – iv)**, candidates were asked to identify an exact word or phrase. Those who copied out a full sentence could not gain credit as the question asked for the exact word or phrase only.

General comments

- It is recommended that candidates write their answers as legibly as possible.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) In this question, candidates were asked to explain why Nicoletta was more likely to favour Footpath Focus. Here, candidates were required to make connections across different parts of the **Section A** material. Candidates gaining the highest credit were able to develop three clear advantages. For example, 'Nicoletta runs triathlons at a competitive level so the 3 km walk to the work site will be easy for her and Footpath Focus wholeheartedly embodies her interests. In addition, she wants to be part of something with a visible, long-lasting impact and Footpath Focus' goal of creating a path for the next half century's visitors fits this goal well. Furthermore, Nicoletta already has a tent which is a requirement for the volunteer work. This means that Nicoletta is well prepared for the trip.'

Some candidates noted three advantages but did not develop their responses. For example, 'Footpath Focus offers Nicoletta the opportunity to create something that will be around for fifty years. She is capable of doing the physically demanding work. Nicoletta owns a tent which is big enough for all of her friends.' In order to achieve higher marks, this response would require development by explanation or by linking two pieces of information from different places in **Section A**. Those who are able to provide analysis are able to access the higher marks.

Some responses were too generalised to gain credit, meaning they could apply to Footpath Focus or Total Tartaruga. Such examples include references to a remote location, natural beauty and the

outdoors. These responses required more detail to be creditworthy. Less successful responses were characterised by the repetition of the material in the insert and the selection of random facts. Furthermore, candidates who discussed the advantages for Jamil and Simon were unable to gain credit.

- (b) This question assessed candidates' ability to explain two disadvantages for Jamil if the friends chose Footpath Focus. Once again, candidates were required to make connections across different parts of the **Section A** material. Candidates gaining the highest credit were able to develop two clear disadvantages for Jamil. For example, 'Strenuous physical activity could potentially cause damage to Jamil's previously broken ankle and Footpath Focus is physically demanding. Jamil is anxious about being in a large group and he would have to spend his time with 32 people.'

Many candidates followed the instruction not to refer to Total Tartaruga in their response.

Some candidates provided vague or generalised responses which did not gain credit. One common misunderstanding was 'Jamil's family are not very well off so they would not be able to afford Footpath Focus'. As Footpath Focus is the cheaper option of the two activities, the cost of Footpath Focus cannot be used as a disadvantage here. Less successful responses were characterised by the repetition of the same disadvantages with slightly different wording.

- (c) This question assessed candidates' ability to explain two disadvantages for Jamil if the friends chose Total Tartaruga. Once again, candidates were required to make connections across different parts of the **Section A** material. Candidates gaining the highest credit were able to develop two clear disadvantages for Jamil. For example, 'Jamil will likely be left disappointed after the trip as he has expressed an interest in animals, and he wants to go into conservation. However, reviews by recent volunteers claim that they did not see many turtles and spent more time clearing trash. Jamil's family are not very well off. Travelling to the location would cost at least \$380 on top of the \$600 fee.'

Common misunderstandings included references to Jamil's anxiety in large groups, his recovering ankle and physical labour. Some responses lacked the necessary detail and could not be awarded credit. For example, 'Reviews state that volunteers did not see any turtles.'

- (d) In this question, candidates were asked to explain two reasons why Simon would prefer Total Tartaruga. Again, candidates were required to make connections across different parts of the **Section A** material. Candidates gaining high marks were able to develop two clear reasons. For example, 'Simon is very keen on languages and hopes to study at least two. With volunteers coming to Total Tartaruga from all over the world, Simon could meet people who speak different languages. Total Tartaruga offers a meat-free menu and Simon is a vegetarian.'

Some responses were too vague or generalised to gain credit. For example, 'Simon likes computers, it would be a small resort, Simon wants an environmental project, he would like the menu.'

- (e) Many candidates were able to use evidence from the conversation to suggest why Nicoletta may be seen as a bossy character. The highest achieving candidates gave clear and precise responses. For example, 'Nicoletta uses very assertive language to tell Jamil that he 'must' bring his guitar. Nicoletta is shown to quickly dismiss Jamil's and Simon's opinions of Total Tartaruga. She calls Simon 'shallow' for not wanting to do physically demanding work in harsh weather and writes off Total Tartaruga as too expensive.'

Less successful responses were characterised by the repetition of the conversation and some candidates only listed quotes in their response. It was very rare for responses using ellipsis to score. Furthermore, candidates who gave vague answers or tried to re-word 'bossy' could not gain credit.

- (f) Candidates gaining full credit on this question were able to offer a convincing example of voluntary work as well as a valid reason why this would be a worthwhile experience. Candidates provided worthwhile reasons from the point of view of the volunteer as well as the voluntary organisation or charity. Both approaches were creditworthy. For example, 'Volunteering in a country with a lack of potable water would be worthwhile. Building a well or a water spigot would have immediate positive effects on an entire community.' 'Working in a retirement home would be extremely worthwhile. You will be able to help those in need and build lasting relationships with those you helped.'

The question instructed candidates that they should not repeat any material from **Section A**. Less successful responses repeated voluntary work examples from Footpath Focus and Total Tartaruga. Some candidates referred to Nicoletta, Jamil and Simon and made suggestions regarding their possible preferences. Such responses were uncreditworthy.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Responses gaining credit noted the wording of the question and successfully identified the exact word or phrase in the material. For example, in (i), 'steady rotation' gained credit but 'a steady rotation of crews' did not. Candidates were most successful in finding the synonym for 'absorbs' and '(to) take apart'.
- (b) In 2(i), candidates gaining the most credit were able to link Tim Peake's observations to the wider consequences for our planet. For example, 'Tim Peake mentions what we put into the Earth's atmosphere is really important because that small layer is keeping us alive. Releasing fossil fuels and other pollutants into the sky is reckless.' Some responses only mentioned Tim Peake's observations and did not, therefore, fully answer the question. Less successful responses attempted to reword Peake's findings but were too vague to gain credit. For example, candidates needed to express the fragility of the atmosphere. Generalised and vague answers were unable to gain credit.

Question 2(ii) required candidates to answer the question in about 10 words. Candidates gaining credit were able to correctly answer the question within the word count. For example, 'Humans can now make homes away from their own planet.' In word count questions, candidates are advised to avoid introductions and repetition of the question. Less successful responses could not gain credit as they did not provide a correct and complete sentence within the word limit.

- (c) Again, candidates were required to answer the question using a word count. Candidates achieving the most credit were able to clearly note the key points in about 40 words. For example, 'It meant that NASA could collaborate with Russia which had many experienced space engineers. This lowered the cost of the ISS. They did not want the Soviet space experts being snapped up by rogue states.' Less successful responses went way beyond 40 words, were too generalised or did not mention all of the required points.
- (d) In this question, candidates were instructed to answer using their own words as far as possible. Candidates gaining credit were able to offer some excellent synonyms: 'it is an important stepping stone' and 'this puts us in a great position' for '*will stand us in good stead*'; 'minimal research has come from the ISS' for '*the scientific returns have been modest*' and 'the ISS has spearheaded extremely important advancements in large-scale space construction' for '*we have learned how to assemble huge structures in space*.' Less successful responses contained a large amount of lifted material which was unable to gain credit. Vague and generalised responses were also uncreditworthy.
- (e) In 2(e)(i)?, candidates were required to answer in about 20 words. In word count questions, candidates are advised to avoid introductions and repetition of the question. Candidates achieving the highest marks were able to explain what has been learned about the impacts of prolonged periods of zero gravity on the human body within the word count. For example, 'Astronauts can avoid muscle loss by working out. It takes years for a person's bone density to return.' Less successful responses went beyond the word count and credit worthy responses appeared after the word limit. Common misunderstandings included the confusion between bone density and muscle loss. For example, 'It can take years to recover muscle loss.'

In 2(e)(ii), higher achieving candidates were able to explain why this knowledge will be significant for NASA's future space missions: 'if NASA wants to send people to the Moon and Mars, they need to know how to minimise the side effects of space travel' and 'long-term missions to the Moon or Mars will also have to deal with these effects of microgravity, so knowing how to mitigate them beforehand improves astronaut health.' Some candidates focused on the idea of being better prepared and were able to gain some credit. Less successful responses were too generalised or repeated the correct answer from 2(e)(i) which was uncreditworthy in 2(e)(ii).

- (f) This question required candidates to choose one of the three examples of private enterprise interested in taking over the ISS and explain why their choice is most likely to be successful. Candidates scoring marks were able to note specific, valid reasons for success: 'the Texas-based company's deal with NASA is more likely to create a long-term investment in the ISS'; 'adventure movies have a worldwide audience and with famous actor and stuntman Tom Cruise starring in the movie, filmed in outer space, the amount of fans purchasing tickets to watch the movie would be out of this world' and 'the reality TV contest sending a winner to the ISS creates a sense of connection and hope for ordinary individuals.'

Less successful responses included a repetition of the material and offered little or no justification. Some candidates made very generalised statements suggesting that their choice would be interested in space, popular and make money. Statements which would be applicable to more than one option were too vague and uncreditworthy. Some candidates misunderstood the question and discussed Professor Ian Crawford.